

ACCOMMODATION OR COERCION: CHINA'S CHOICES OF ALLIANCE BALANCING STRATEGIES

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A dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of
the department of Political Science
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Boston College
Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences
Graduate School

2022

**Accommodation or Coercion:
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Abstract

Great powers use alliances to amass capabilities. As such, alliance balancing strategies are important part of a balance-of-power system. In order to seek security, great powers frequently employ alliance balancing strategies, which can take two forms: to divide hostile alliances or prevent those from forming (i.e. wedge strategies), and to bind their own allies (i.e. binding strategies). When choosing these strategies, great powers face two options: accommodation and coercion. This dissertation explores the question of how great powers choose between these two options.

I argue that a great power chooses its wedge strategies based on two factors: its leverage over its target and the degree of security cooperation between its target and its adversary. When the great power's leverage is strong, it will opt for accommodative wedge strategies, despite the degree of security cooperation between its target and its adversary. Meanwhile the great power is likely to use coercive wedge strategies as its complementary strategy. When the great power's leverage is weak, it will evaluate the degree of security cooperation between its target and its adversary. When such cooperation is at a high level, the great power will choose coercive wedge strategies as its

primary strategy and accommodative ones as its complementary strategy. In contrast, a great power's choice of its binding strategies is determined by its leverage over its target and its fear of being abandoned by its target. When its leverage is strong, the great power will choose coercive binding strategies as its primary strategy and accommodative ones as its complementary strategy, despite the fear of abandonment. When its leverage is low, the great power will assess its fear of abandonment. Strong fear of abandonment will lead the great power to choose accommodative binding strategies as its primary strategy and coercive ones as its complementary strategy.

I test this theory using qualitative cases studies of China's choices of its alliance balancing strategies. These cases include variation in China's strategic choices that allows me to test the explanatory power of my theory. I examine these cases drawing on archives, government documents, newspapers, and secondary materials from China and the United States. I conclude this dissertation with a summary of my findings and a discussion on implications and future research avenues.

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List of Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
COSVN	Central Office for South Vietnam
CPK	Communist Party of Kampuchea
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DRV	Democratic Government of Vietnam
JCP	Japanese Communist Party
KCNA	Korean Central News Agency
KWP	Korean Workers' Party
NLF	National Liberation Front
NSC	National Security Council
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam
PLA	People's Liberation Army
ROK	Republic of Korea
SFRC	Senate Foreign Relations Committee
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
USAF	United States Air Force
VWP	Vietnam Workers' Party
Xinhua	Xinhua News Agency

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank numerous people and institutions, without whom I would have not been able to complete my dissertation. First, I am grateful to Professor Robert S. Ross, my dissertation committee chair. His in-depth knowledge of international politics and Chinese foreign policy greatly influences my research interests. Conversations with him are always intellectually changing and motivate me to think more thoroughly. I would like to thank his constant encouragement and insights. I am also grateful to Professor Timothy W. Crawford. His scholarship stimulates me to study wedge and binding strategies. I benefit greatly from discussions with him on international relations theories, case studies, and academic writing. I would also like to thank Professor Jennifer L. Erickson. In my research and writing process, she asked many difficult questions that helped me further think about my theories and cases. Her advice on research design and academic writing significantly helps improve my dissertation. I also benefit from her excellent advice on career development.

The dissertation would have not been possible without assistance of numerous institutions and libraries. I am grateful to the Department of Political Science and the O'Neill Library at Boston College. They provided an excellent environment for my research. I would also like to thank staffs at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library for their

research support. Furthermore, I am indebted to the Cold War International History Studies Center at East China Normal University for my archival research. I would also like to thank the Bradley and Fontin Foundation and the Hans J. Morgenthau Fellowship for their generous research grants.

I am also grateful to my parents, Yin Ying and Chen Hongying; and my friends, particularly Andrew Bowen, William Mayborn, and Inhwan Oh, for their unfailing support through years of my research and writing. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Wang Haowei, for her incisive feedback and patience in my most stressing days. I could have not completed this dissertation without her unwavering support.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The Puzzle of Alliance Balancing Strategy

In a system of anarchy, alliance policy is an important form of balancing for states to achieve security. As scholars have pointed out, states use alliances to aggregate capabilities and enhance deterrence of attack on themselves.¹ As such, states adopt one of the two forms of alliance balancing—dividing adversarial alliances or maintaining unity within their own alliances. The first form of alliance balancing is to decrease the aggregated capabilities of rivals. The second form is the flip side of the first; it is to maintain or increase the aggregated capabilities of a state and its security partners. Scholars have termed the first form as wedge strategies and the second binding strategies.²

Throughout history there are abundant cases in which states use alliance balancing strategies. For instance, to counter the threat from Germany, France consistently tried to keep Germany divided, from the seventeenth century to the Cold War. Similarly, the Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or USSR) since

¹ Joseph Parent and Sebastian Rosato, “Balancing in Neorealism,” *International Security* 40, no. 2 (2015): 51-86. Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 43-78. James D. Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances,” *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (1991): 904-33.

² Timothy W. Crawford, “Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics,” *International Security* 35, no. 4 (2011): 155-89. Yasuhiro Izumikawa, “Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-U.S. Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s,” *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2018): 108-20. Daniel H. Nexon, “The Balance of Power in the Balance,” *World Politics* 61, no. 2 (2009): 345-46.

the 1920s had opposed any plan that would unify Europe.³ In 1940 and 1941, Britain used economic assistance to lure Spain into neutrality.⁴ In the 1950s, facing the Soviet wedge strategies toward Japan, the United States employed various binding strategies to maintain the U.S.-Japanese alliance.⁵

In examples presented above, states select various options; in some cases, they provide economic inducement to the target state, while in some cases they threaten the target state, and in other cases they use both strategies. How do states choose their specific alliance balancing strategies? This dissertation addresses this puzzle. Furthermore, this puzzle consists of a set of questions: How do states choose coercive or accommodative wedge strategies? When do states prefer coercive to accommodative binding strategies? When do states choose mixed strategies?

Answering these questions informs the literature on theories of balance of power. As many scholars point out, balance of power does not form automatically; it requires states in the international system to use strategies to achieve it.⁶ Wedge and binding strategies are two important tools that states choose to balance against external threats and reduce their security deficits. Moreover, analyzing this puzzle carries policy implications. Wedge and binding strategies are embedded in major themes of

³ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred Kop, 1948), 134.

⁴ Timothy W. Crawford, "Wedge Strategy, Balancing, and the Deviant Case of Spain, 1940–41," *Security Studies* 17, no. 1 (2008): 7-34.

⁵ Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-U.S. Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s," 112-17.

⁶ The literature is vast. For instance, see, Stuart J. Kaufman, Richard Little, and William C Wohlforth, "Conclusion: Theoretical Insights from the Study of World History," in *The Balance of Power in World History*, ed. Stuart J. Kaufman, Richard Little, and William C Wohlforth (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 228-47. Paul W. Schroeder, "Historical Reality Vs. Neo-Realist Theory," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 133-47. "The 19th-Century International System: Changes in the Structure," *World Politics* 39, no. 1 (1986): 1-26.

contemporary grand strategy debates. Weakening the U.S. alliance system is an important objective for China. Therefore, China has been trying to drive wedges between the United States and its regional allies, such as South Korea, during the 2010s. On the other hand, maintaining its regional alliance system is also in the U.S. national interests. To counter China's wedge strategies, the United States pressed South Korea to install the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system as part of a binding strategy. Subsequently, China changed its accommodative wedge strategies to coercive ones. What explains the strategic choices of China and the United States? How do their respective strategies affect each other's choices? What are the consequences of these strategic interactions? The findings of this dissertation can help answer these policy questions.

The puzzle of a state's choice of an alliance balancing strategy is magnified when it faces an asymmetric distribution of power vis-à-vis its adversary. When the state faces a more powerful adversary, it is critical to use alliance balancing strategies to counter that adversary. But the state's choices are more constrained because its adversary has more resources at its disposal. Given such constraints, what factors does a state consider when choosing alliance balancing strategies?

China often fell into such a difficult position. Since 1949, China has been actively using wedge and binding strategies to compete with two superpowers—the Soviet Union and the United States—both of whom are militarily and economically stronger than China. First, China has tried to separate its neighbors from these two superpowers, preventing and dividing hostile alliances. Second, China has attempted to prevent two superpowers from drawing its allies and security partners away. These dynamics persisted during the Cold War and remain salient in contemporary U.S-China strategic

competitions. When North Korea tilted toward the Soviet Union in the 1960s, China pressured North Korea as part of a binding strategy. In the 2010s, China induced and then pressured South Korea to limit its cooperation with the United States as part of a wedge strategy.

China's strategies across those cases follow one logic: to prevent its adversaries from aggregating capabilities on its periphery and ensure a secure external environment. Specifically, when China considers its alliance balancing strategies, it has three options: "accommodation," which is to provide or promise rewards, "coercion," which is to punish or threaten to punish, and "wait-and-see," which is doing nothing.⁷ When China tries to divide an adversarial alliance, it may provide security accommodation to the target state in return for the latter's defection from that hostile alliance. Alternatively, China can put pressure on the target state to achieve the same objective. Similarly, when using binding strategies to maintain its relations with the target state, China can choose between providing reward and posing threat to the target state. Or, China can choose doing nothing when considering its wedge and binding strategies. It remains unanswered that under what circumstances China chooses one strategy over the other. I will propose a theory to explain the logic underlying China's choices.

1.2 The Argument

This dissertation addresses the following puzzle: What explains variation in a state's choice of alliance balancing strategies? To solve the puzzle, the dissertation proposes a unified theoretical framework and it investigates empirically China's choices in alliance

⁷ This dissertation will discuss the definitions of "accommodation" and "coercion" in detail in Chapter 3.

balancing strategies. The dissertation frames the analysis in terms of general theory for two reasons. First, how states choose their alliance balancing strategies are relevant beyond China. China is only one of great powers that use those strategies to balance against their adversaries. Second, examining China's choices in terms of general theory facilitates comparisons with alliance balancing behavior of other states, thus illuminating the sources of alliance balancing strategies more broadly.

When a state considers its strategic choices, the underlying calculation is how to affect the target state's cost/benefit analysis so that it can influence the target state's alignment decision. In this dissertation, I focus on three variables that shape a state's (the initiator) strategic choices. Regarding wedge strategies, the initiator's leverage over the target state is the first variable that impacts the initiator's choice between accommodation and coercion. In a wedge strategy, when the initiator considers coercion, such as economic sanctions and threat of force, it needs to consider the risk of balancing blowback. In other words, if the initiator pursues coercive wedge strategies, the increased threat from the initiator would give the target state incentives to stand closer to the initiator's adversary, rather than divide them. As a result, if the initiator possesses strong leverage, it chooses accommodative wedge strategies. Because strong leverage over the target state means the initiator can provide valuable resources to the target state, the initiator with strong leverage can induce the target state while minimizing the risk of balancing blowback. When the initiator's leverage over the target is weak, the second variable in determining a wedge strategy is the level of security cooperation between the target and the adversary. If such level is high, it means this adversarial alliance is highly cohesive and poses serious threat to the initiator. Consequently, the initiator will opt for

coercive wedge strategies. If the initiator's leverage is weak and the level of security cooperation between the target state and the adversary is low, the initiator will choose wait-and-see.

Regarding binding strategies, the first variable is similarly the initiator's leverage over the target state. At the beginning of a binding dynamic, the target state has aligned with the initiator and therefore has been receiving valuable security and economic resources from the initiator. Strong leverage means the target state's high dependence on the initiator. As a result, the initiator worries less about the possibility that its coercive binding will backfire. To add, threats are cheap when they work, and in this scenario, they are likely to work because the target state's security highly depends on the initiator.⁸ Thus, strong leverage prompts the initiator to choose coercive binding strategies, such as sanctions and threats of crises. The second variable is the initiator's fear of being abandoned by the target state. When the initiator has weak leverage over the target, fear of abandonment will determine the choice of binding strategies. If the initiator believes the possibility of abandonment is high, it will adopt an accommodative binding strategy toward the target state. If the initiator's leverage is weak and the fear of abandonment is low, the initiator will choose wait-and-see.

The above discussion only considers the initiator's primary strategies. However, it is possible and even likely that the initiator opts for mixed strategies, rather than pure ones. As scholars have noticed, states are more likely to achieve their objectives when they choose mixed strategies over pure ones in crisis bargaining. Those strategies can be useful because mixing coercion and accommodation can "offset the vulnerabilities of

⁸ Thomas C Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard university press, 1980), 177. David A. Baldwin, "The Power of Positive Sanctions," *World Politics* 24, no. 1 (1971): 29-30.

each of the pure strategies.”⁹ For example, an assurance component in a coercive diplomacy can reduce the likelihood of threat backfiring, while a state can include in its accommodation an element of threat to avoid showing lack of resolve.¹⁰ In a wedge or binding strategy, when the initiator chooses coercion, it can use accommodation as a complement for two purposes. By doing so, the initiator can not only signal its restraint to the target state, but also provide an implicit assurance: it will stop coercion if the target state complies with its demands. Similarly, when opting for accommodative strategies, the initiator can use coercion as a complementary strategy to warn the target state that if the target refuses to comply, the initiator may change its primary strategy to coercion and inflict more pains on the target state.

1.3 Contributions

This dissertation makes three contributions to the literature on alliance politics and Chinese foreign policy. The first is to the literature on wedge and binding strategies. While these two strategies have drawn growing scholarly attention, yet there has been comparatively less emphasis on establishing a unified framework for choice of these strategies.¹¹ As discussed above, wedge and binding strategies are two sides of one coin

⁹ Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 279.

¹⁰ Russell J. Leng, *Interstate Crisis Behavior, 1816-1980* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 173. “Reagan and the Russians: Crisis Bargaining Beliefs and the Historical Record,” *American Political Science Review* 78, no. 2 (1984): 338-55.

¹¹ In his dissertation, Yasuhiro Izumikawa tried to build a theory that could explain choices of both wedge and binding strategies. See Yasuhiro Izumikawa, “United We Stand, Divided They Fall: Use of Coercion and Rewards as Alliance Balancing Strategy” (Ph.D Dissertation, Georgetown University, 2002). In a more recent article, he conducts a case study on interaction between the Soviet wedge strategies and the U.S. binding strategies toward Japan. See Izumikawa, “Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-US Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s,” 108-20. I will discuss drawbacks of his theory in detail in the literature review section.

so that it is useful to integrate those strategies into one theoretical framework. Moreover, when one state uses wedge strategies, its adversary is likely to respond with some form of binding strategies, and vice versa. As such, when choosing its own strategies, a rational state would consider its adversary's possible responses. Therefore, by establishing a unified framework for wedge and binding strategies, this dissertation can show interaction between one state's wedge/binding strategies and its adversary's responding strategies and thus present a more dynamic theory of alliance balancing strategies.

Additionally, existing studies on wedge and binding strategies have focused more on pure strategies. Timothy Crawford made distinction between wedge strategies that mix "carrots" and "sticks" to discriminate among adversaries and ones that consistently confront adversaries.¹² Nonetheless, when shifting the analytical focus to specific strategies toward the target state, he paid more attention to pure strategies. In contrast, I develop a theory that acknowledge the prevalence of mixed strategies. As scholars suggest, mixing punishment and reward can increase the effectiveness of one state's policy of influence.¹³ Therefore, by considering a state's option of mixed strategies, this dissertation furthers understanding of a state's choices of alliance balancing strategies.

Moreover, this dissertation contributes to understanding of a state's choice of wedge and binding strategies in a more general sense. While focusing on cases of China's strategic choices, I follow the neorealist assumption that a state is a unitary and rational actor, so that it downplays the role of Chinese domestic politics, individual leaders, and

¹² Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," 160.

¹³ Louis Kriesberg, "Carrots, Sticks, De-Escalation: U.S.-Soviet and Arab-Israeli Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 13, no. 3 (1987): 403-23.

ideology. As a result, my argument can apply to other states' choices of alliance balancing strategies as well.

Second, I contribute to the alliance politics literature. By analyzing choices of wedge and binding strategies. I show that an alliance is a result of dynamic equilibrium, rather than a static outcome.¹⁴ Members of an alliance often face contradictory forces of a divider state's pulling and a binder state's pushing. When those forces can cancel each other out, the alliance will remain stable; when the force of pushing is greater than that of pulling, the alliance may become even more cohesive. In contrast, if the dividing force outweighs the binding force, the alliance may collapse. This dissertation provides detailed case studies to illustrate these dynamics.

Third, this dissertation contributes to the literature on Chinese foreign policy-making. Since 1949, Chinese foreign policy had sought a secure perimeter. How China has pursued that objective, however, remains unclear. Despite a vast case-study literature on Chinese deterrence, coercive diplomacy, and war-making, there remains a lack of a systemic analysis on how China employs particular strategies to contend with great powers over the alignment of states on its perimeter.¹⁵ This dissertation sheds light on this topic by examining China's choices of alliance balancing strategies. Additionally, one strand of the literature argues that security concerns drive China's foreign policy, rather than domestic politics or ideology. This dissertation reinforces this argument. By examining China's policy toward North Korea during Sino-Soviet split, toward foreign

¹⁴ Studies that consider both wedge and binding strategies in alliance dynamics are few. See, Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-U.S. Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s," 108-20.

¹⁵ In his dissertation, Huang Yuxing discusses how China chose its strategies toward neighboring regions during the Cold War. Nonetheless, he focuses on China's strategies toward different regions, not individual states. Yuxing Huang, "Asymmetric Statecraft: Alliances, Competitors, and Regional Diplomacy in Asia and Europe" (Ph.D Dissertation, Boston College, 2016).

assistance policy for North Vietnam, and toward the communist insurgency in Thailand during the Vietnam War, I show that ideological affinity was not a priority when Chinese leaders made security policy.

1.4 Plan of This Dissertation

In the next chapter, I review the literature on wedge and binding strategies, as well as origins of Chinese foreign policy. In Chapter 3, I lay out my theory of choices of alliance balancing strategies, including a discussion of definitions, measurements, and research design. In Chapters 4-8, I conduct my case studies of China's wedge and binding strategies. First three cases are wedge strategy cases, including China's strategy toward Vietnam between 1975 and 1979, toward Thailand between 1964 and 1975, and toward South Korea between 2012 and 2018. The next two cases are binding strategy cases, including China's strategy toward North Vietnam between 1964 and 1973 and toward North Korea between 1965 and 1970. Finally, in Chapter 9 I conclude with a summary of my findings, as well as a discussion of implications and agendas for future research.

Chapter 2 Alliance Balancing Strategy in the Literature

In this chapter, I first review the existing literature on alliance balancing strategies. While scholars have studied these strategies, the literature remains underdeveloped. Second, because empirically I examine China's strategic choices between accommodation and coercion in its neighboring region, I review the literature on factors that drive China's foreign policy-making.

2.1 The Treatment of Wedge and Binding Strategies in the Literature

Scholars pay more attention to why alliances form than why they do not.¹ They have paid even less attention to theorizing the role of wedge strategies in interrupting alliances formation and dividing alliances. For instance, when analyzing coalition durability during wartime, Alex Weisiger briefly discussed that states fighting independently from their allies are vulnerable to their adversary's wedge strategies.² Nonetheless, treating wedge strategies as simply an intervening variable, Weisiger did not elaborate on these strategies.

¹ For instance, see, Randall L Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances in a Unipolar World," *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (2009): 86-120. Tongfi Kim, *The Supply Side of Security: A Market Theory of Military Alliances* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2016). Benjamin Fordham and Paul Poast, "All Alliances Are Multilateral: Rethinking Alliance Formation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60, no. 5 (2016): 840-65.

² Alex Weisiger, "Exiting the Coalition: When Do States Abandon Coalition Partners During War?," *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2016): 753-65.

Existing literature on wedge strategies largely focuses on specific alliance dynamics. Stacie Goddard analyzed how Prussia chose different strategies during its unification process to prevent hostile alliance formation. She attributed the balancing failure in Europe to Prussia's "legitimation strategies"—the way Prussia justified its expansion. Goddard further explained the conditions for those strategies to be effective.³ In another study, Goddard extended her analysis to the interwar period. She argued that Hitler's "legitimate strategies" led Great Britain to appease Nazi Germany.⁴ Similarly, Victoria Hui explored how the Qin state employed the principle of "divide and rule" to unify the ancient China.⁵ In addition, Robert Hager examined Stalin's wedge strategy during the Second World War. He argued that the Soviet Union promoted conflicts in Europe and the Pacific in order to ensure its security and promote its ideology.⁶ Focusing on the Cold War era, many scholars have examined U.S. wedge strategies against the Sino-Soviet alliance in different phases.⁷ Scholars also analyze U.S. wedge strategies toward China in the contemporary era.⁸

³ Stacie E. Goddard, "When Right Makes Might: How Prussia Overturned the European Balance of Power," *International Security* 33, no. 3 (2008/2009): 110-42.

⁴ Stacie E. Goddard, "The Rhetoric of Appeasement: Hitler's Legitimation and British Foreign Policy, 1938-39," *Security Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015): 95-130.

⁵ Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁶ Robert P. Hager, "'The Laughing Third Man in a Fight': Stalin's Use of the Wedge Strategy," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 50, no. 1 (2017): 15-27.

⁷ Gordon H Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1990). John Lewis Gaddis, "The American 'Wedge' Strategy, 1949-1955," in *Sino American Relations, 1945-1955: A Joint Re-Assessment of a Critical Decade*, ed. Harry Harding and Ming Yuan (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1989). Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). David Allan Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith: U.S. Policy against the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949-1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986). Wang Xiaohu and Xin Qiang, "Cong 'Duikang' dao 'Tiaoshi': Jiyu Taiwanwenti de Meiguo Xiezizhanlue Yanjiu" [From "Confrontation" to "Accommodation": A Study of American Wedge Strategy Based on the Taiwan Issue], *Taiwan Yanjiu Jikan [Taiwan Research Journal]*, no. 1 (2019): 16-27.

⁸ Wang Xiaohu, "'Tongyiyuzu': Meitaiquanhezuozuo de Xiezizhanlue Shijiao" [Alliance Politics and Pre-reunification: Theoretical Analysis of the Wedge Strategy on U.S. Security Cooperation with Taiwan], *Taipingyang Xuebao [Pacific Journal]* 26, no. 3 (2018): 39-48; Wang Peng, "'Duichong' yu 'Xiezi':

Those case studies are not dedicated to developing a parsimonious model that explains a state's choice of specific wedge strategies. They do not intend to explain why a state chooses one particular wedge strategy over others in different situations.

Nonetheless, as those case studies have shown, states choose various wedge strategies under different circumstances. The question then becomes how to explain these variations.

To explain these variations, Crawford and Yasuhiro Izumikawa have provided two different models focusing on states' choices of wedge strategies. Crawford categorized wedge strategies into "selective accommodation" and "confrontation." A divider's perception of the risks of balancing blowback, Crawford argued, determines its strategic choice. For the divider, it worries that confrontation may exacerbate the target state's threat perception and thus alienates the target. As a result, confrontation may unite rather than divide adversaries. This concern will prompt the divider to choose selective accommodation.⁹ In addition, Crawford expanded his analysis by focusing on concerted accommodation: when allies would coordinate their efforts to accommodate and induce their main adversary's potential allies. He argued that when the target had strong war-tipping potentials, allies would agree to coordinate and accommodate the target.¹⁰

Slightly different from Crawford's argument, Izumikawa argued that when a divider has more reward power than its adversary does, it would use reward wedging. In contrast, if the divider does not have sufficient reward power and faces a cohesive hostile alliance, it

Meiguo "Yintai" Zhanlue de Neishengluoji—Xingudian Xianshizhuyi de Shijiao" [Hedging and Wedging Strategies: The Internal Logic of America's Indo-Pacific Strategy from A Neo-Classical Realist Perspective], *Dangdai Yatai* [*Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies*], no. 3 (2018): 5-42.

⁹ Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," 163.

¹⁰ Timothy W. Crawford, "The Alliance Politics of Concerted Accommodation: Entente Bargaining and Italian and Ottoman Interventions in the First World War," *Security Studies* 23, no. 1 (2014): 113-47.

will resort to coercive wedge strategies. Izumikawa also stressed that the divider chooses coercion not because it has more coercive capabilities than its adversary does.¹¹

The drawback these two theories share is the exclusion of mixed strategies. While Crawford briefly mentioned pure and mixed strategies, Izumikawa explicitly stated that when a state's strategy is a mix of reward and punishment, he would determine which one was the dominant strategy and then focus on that.¹² However, as my case studies will illustrate, China often uses both coercion and accommodation toward the target state. Additionally, there are two issues with Izumikawa's key explanatory variable: the divider's reward power. First, he fails to provide a specific measurement of reward power. Without such a measurement, it is difficult to determine *ex ante* whether the divider has strong reward power. Second, he defines the divider's reward power in comparison with its adversary's. As such, the divider with inferior reward power will always opt for coercive wedge strategies. Nonetheless, in some cases of this dissertation China's reward power is weaker than its adversary's, but China's choices of wedge strategies vary across these cases.

In addition to Crawford's and Izumikawa's realist explanations for wedge strategies, Mark Hass explored the role of ideology in a state's choice of wedge strategies. Examining the U.S. policies in the Middle East, Hass proposed the variable of "ideological polarity," which measures the number of ideological rivals.¹³ He argued that a state is better able to employ wedge strategies in an ideologically multipolar system

¹¹ Yasuhiro Izumikawa, "To Coerce or Reward? Theorizing Wedge Strategies in Alliance Politics," *ibid.* 22, no. 3 (2013): 498-531. "United We Stand, Divided They Fall: Use of Coercion and Rewards as Alliance Balancing Strategy," 27.

¹² Izumikawa, "United We Stand, Divided They Fall: Use of Coercion and Rewards as Alliance Balancing Strategy," 59.

¹³ Mark L Haas, *The Clash of Ideologies: Middle Eastern Politics and American Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6-60.

than in bipolar systems, because an ideologically multipolar system enables leaders of one state to take advantage of their adversaries' ideological differences.¹⁴ The problem with this analysis, however, is that Hass assumed that the divider and its adversaries do not share the same ideology. If the divider and at least one of its adversaries share the same ideology, will the divider still employ wedge strategies? If yes, how will it choose specific wedge strategies? Hass's account does not provide answers to these questions. Moreover, Hass's analysis focuses more on under what conditions the divider's strategies will be effective, rather than how the divider chooses its wedge strategies.

Compared to wedge strategies, binding strategies have attracted even less scholarly attention. As Daniel Nexon pointed out, scholars should treat binding strategies as a form of balancing behavior, to weaken target states' ability to pursue autonomous policies.¹⁵ Thus, binding strategies are one form of alliance management. However, a main body of literature on alliance management have focused on various commitment issues. For instance, Glenn Snyder stated that when a state fears that its allies will abandon it, it is likely to make stronger commitments to maintain the alliance.¹⁶ Similarly, Brett Benson provided a typology of commitments in military alliances. He analyzed how allies balanced the demands of deterrence and the risk of moral hazard by including promises and threats in their alliance commitments.¹⁷ Scholars have also stressed the role of institutions in alliance management. John Ikenberry elaborated on how hegemons bind themselves to institutions to facilitate alliance cooperation.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid., 28-56.

¹⁵ Nexon, "The Balance of Power in the Balance," 346.

¹⁶ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 183-84.

¹⁷ Brett V Benson, *Constructing International Security: Alliances, Deterrence, and Moral Hazard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁸ G John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Differently, Leeds, Mattes, and Vogel stressed the importance of domestic political institutions on maintaining military alliance.¹⁹ In addition, some scholars have also discussed how states rely on issue linkage strategies to maintain their allies' allegiance. Christina Davis analyzed how Great Britain used economic benefits as side payments to affect Japan's alliance decisions and maintain the Anglo-Japanese alliance.²⁰ Similarly, Paul Poast argued that including linkage provisions, especially economic ones, in alliance treaties could improve treaty compliance.²¹

Nonetheless, those accounts explore how states deal with endogenous risks of alliance disintegration. The commitment issue is a result of the anarchic international structure. In an anarchic system, states always worry about credibility of treaties because there is no authority to enforce those treaties. Therefore, states need strategies to bind their allies. This is quite different from the situation in which states have to respond to their adversary's attempt to divide their alliance.

As for exogenous risks for an alliance, scholars have paid much attention to the decline of external threat that alliances face.²² For specific cases, existing research has examined NATO's persistence since the end of the Cold War.²³ In addition, scholars also analyze how allies bargain during crises and war, and how these strategies and bargaining

¹⁹ Brett Ashley Leeds, Michaela Mattes, and Jeremy S. Vogel, "Interests, Institutions, and the Reliability of International Commitments," *American Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 2 (2009): 461-76.

²⁰ Christina L. Davis, "Linkage Diplomacy: Economic and Security Bargaining in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-23," *International Security* 33, no. 3 (2008/2009): 143-79.

²¹ Paul Poast, "Can Issue Linkage Improve Treaty Credibility? Buffer State Alliances as a 'Hard Case'," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57, no. 5 (2013): 739-64.

²² For instance, see, Brett Ashley Leeds and Burcu Savun, "Terminating Alliances: Why Do States Abrogate Agreements?," *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 4 (2007): 1118-32.

²³ Andrea Locatelli and Michele Testoni, "Intra-Allied Competition and Alliance Durability: The Case for Promoting a Division of Labour among Nato Allies," *European Security* 18, no. 3 (2009): 345-62. Robert B. McCalla, "NATO's Persistence after the Cold War," *International Organization* 50, no. 3 (1996): 445-75. Celeste A. Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability: Nato after the Cold War," *ibid.* 54, no. 4 (2000): 705-35.

behavior affect duration of alliances.²⁴ However, these studies do not treat wedge strategies of allies' adversary as a variable that causes discord and centrifugal tendency within alliances.

A state needs to deal with a quite different problem when it considers binding strategies. In such a situation, when state A chooses strategies to keep its ally's (state B) loyalty, an adversary is actively using coercion or reward to induce state B to its side. In other words, for state B, alternative alliance option is not only available but also feasible. As such, this affects state A's cost/benefit analysis when choosing binding strategies.

A theoretical treatment of binding strategies comes from Izumikawa. He tried to theorize the choice of binding strategies with the same set of variables he used to explain the choice of wedge strategies. Categorizing binding strategies into coercion and reward, Izumikawa argued that using coercive binding may "anger the ally and undermine its loyalty."²⁵ On the contrary, using rewards can help reinforce a favorable image of the binder state and will not worsen the status quo if those rewards are not effective. Following this logic, Izumikawa argued that if a binder state does not have sufficient ability to reward its ally, it has to rely on coercion. Otherwise, it will rarely use coercive binding.²⁶ In a similar vein, Brian Blankenship analyzed U.S. reassurance in its alliances between 1950 and 2010. He argued that the United States has incentives to reassure its allies when they are able to make credible threat to exit the alliances and pursue outside options. To add, he argued that the more the allies doubt U.S. reliability, the more the

²⁴ Scott Wolford, *The Politics of Military Coalitions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 152-205. Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises*, 183-281.

²⁵ Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-U.S. Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s," 110.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 110-11.

United States will reassure them.²⁷ His conceptualization of reassurance is different from Izumikawa's definition of reward as Blankenship excludes material assistance from reassurance.²⁸

Izumikawa's analysis contains two drawbacks. First, similarly to his framework of wedge strategies, Izumikawa does not provide a specific measurement for the binder's reward power. Second, he defines a binder state's reward power in comparison with its adversary's.²⁹ Therefore, as his theory predicts, when the binder state can offer more rewards to the target state than its adversary can, reward binding is the preferred strategy. In contrast, if the binder state has weaker reward power, it prefers coercive binding. Nonetheless, China's choices of binding strategies during the Cold War does not fit this prediction. For instance, during the Vietnam War China employed binding strategies to prevent North Vietnam from tilting toward the Soviet Union. If we use Izumikawa's definition of reward power, then compared to the Soviet Union, China lacked the ability to reward North Vietnam. Nonetheless, China employed coercive binding strategies in the first place but changed to reward binding after the Tet Offensive. Izumikawa's theory fails to capture this change.

2.2 Origins of Chinese Foreign Policy toward its Neighboring States

This dissertation also relates to the literature on Chinese foreign policy. There has been a vast body of literature on explaining China's foreign policy toward neighboring states.

²⁷ Brian Blankenship, "Promises under Pressure: Statements of Reassurance in Us Alliances," *International Studies Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2020): 1017-30.

²⁸ Ibid., 1017.

²⁹ Izumikawa, "United We Stand, Divided They Fall: Use of Coercion and Rewards as Alliance Balancing Strategy," 41.

The first category of the literature follows neorealist assumptions and treats China as a unitary actor, only different from other states in terms of its capabilities.³⁰ As such, this literature analyzes China's policy toward its neighboring states as a result of balance of capabilities in the region, external threats, and China's security interests.

Scholars have conducted a vast number of case studies on China's policy toward different states.³¹ Those studies implicitly engage with China's wedge and binding strategies, and reveal some variation and patterns in China's strategic choices. Therefore, it requires a unified theoretical framework to explain China's choices in different cases and across time. A recent study that Huang Yuxing conducted tries to use great power competition to explain if China would adopt a unified strategy or selective strategies toward its weaker neighbors.³² Nonetheless, his study does not explain why and how China chooses particular strategies toward different neighbors. Meanwhile, He Kai

³⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2010), 93-99.

³¹ For China's Vietnam policy in different periods, see, Robert S. Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). Xiaoming Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping's Long War: The Military Conflict between China and Vietnam, 1979-1991* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015). Danhui Li, "The Sino-Soviet Dispute over Assistance for Vietnam's Anti-American War, 1965-1972," in *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the World Beyond Asia*, ed. Priscilla Mary Roberts (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), 289-318. Shuguang Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949-1991* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2014), 207-40. Brantly Womack, "Asymmetry and Systemic Misperception: China, Vietnam and Cambodia During the 1970s," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26, no. 2 (2003): 92-119. "China and Southeast Asia: Asymmetry, Leadership and Normalcy," *Pacific Affairs* 76, no. 4 (2003): 529-48. *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For China's North Korea policy, see, Chin O. Chung, *Pyongyang between Peking and Moscow: North Korea's Involvement in the Sino-Soviet Dispute, 1958-1975* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1978). Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 170-84. For China's policy toward the Korean Peninsula, see, Avery Goldstein, "Across the Yalu: China's Interests and the Korean Peninsula in a Changing World," in *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, ed. Alastair I. Johnston and Robert S. Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 131-61. For more comprehensive accounts on China's policy toward neighboring states, see, Suisheng Zhao, "The Making of China's Periphery Policy," in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (New York: Routledge, 2004), 256-75. "China's Approaches toward Regional Cooperation in East Asia: Motivations and Calculations," *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 68 (2011): 53-67. David Lai, *Asia-Pacific: A Strategic Assessment* (Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2013).

³² Huang, "Asymmetric Statecraft: Alliances, Competitors, and Regional Diplomacy in Asia and Europe."

compared China's negative balancing strategy against the United States and the U.S. one against Russia in the post-Cold War era. Wedge strategy is one type of negative balancing strategy that, according to him, aims to undermine a rival's power.³³ However, He Kai focused on when states are more likely to use negative balancing strategies, rather than choices of those particular strategies.³⁴

Some research has explicitly examined China's wedge strategies. Hyon Joo Yoo examined China's wedge strategies toward Japan in the 1950s. He argued that China used accommodation in order to weaken the U.S.-Japanese alliance.³⁵ Moreover, Sheng Hao Chai explored how policy compartmentalization helped China drive a wedge more effectively between the United States and Australia.³⁶ Nonetheless, these accounts do not focus on factors driving China's choice of particular wedge strategies. In addition, Andrew Taffer argued that the principle objective of China's strategy on its offshore territorial disputes was to prevent or weaken U.S.-led coalitions in China's neighborhood.³⁷ Nonetheless, using territorial disputes is only one form of wedge strategy, among others. Moreover, Taffer contended that a tightened U.S. coalition will prompt China to choose conciliation. As my case studies will show below, this argument does not hold in either the Chinese-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle after 1975 or the U.S.-

³³ Kai He, "Undermining Adversaries: Unipolarity, Threat Perception, and Negative Balancing Strategies after the Cold War," *Security Studies* 21, no. 2 (2012): 166-67.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 169-73.

³⁵ Hyon Joo Yoo, "China's Friendly Offensive toward Japan in the 1950s: The Theory of Wedge Strategies and International Relations," *Asian Perspective* 39, no. 1 (2015): 1-26.

³⁶ Tommy Sheng Hao Chai, "How China Attempts to Drive a Wedge in the U.S.-Australia Alliance," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 5 (2020): 511-31.

³⁷ Andrew D. Taffer, "The Evolution of China's Strategy toward Its Offshore Territorial Disputes, 1992-2014: Escalation, Conciliation, and Coalition Wedging" (Dissertation, Tufts University, 2017). "Threat and Opportunity: Chinese Wedging in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dispute," *Asian Security* 16, no. 2 (2020): 157-78.

South Korean-Chinese interaction after 2015. Instead, when the adversarial alliance tightened in both cases, China ratcheted up its pressure on Vietnam and South Korea.

The second category of the literature attributes China's foreign policy toward its neighbors to Chinese domestic politics. Thomas Christensen argued that Mao Zedong adopted conflictual policies toward Taiwan and the United States because Mao believed it was necessary to use international tension for his domestic mobilization.³⁸ Along the same line, scholars have argued that China's policy to support North Vietnam resulted from Mao Zedong's domestic mobilization.³⁹ To add, Taylor Fravel argued that internal threats in China prompted Chinese leaders to compromise in its many territorial disputes.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, scholars have also paid attention to the role of sub-state actors, such as bureaucracy and the military, in China's foreign policy-making.⁴¹

If we apply domestic politics explanations to China's choices of wedge and binding strategies, the major issue is they cannot explain variation in China's choices. For instance, when China adopted binding strategies toward North Korea and North Vietnam in the late 1960s, Chinese domestic politics factors, such as the Chinese leadership and the Cultural Revolution, were identical in the two cases. Nonetheless, in those cases

³⁸ Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

³⁹ Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 209-11. "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-69," *The China Quarterly* 142 (1995): 356-87. Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 111-16. Donald S. Zagoria, *Vietnam Triangle: Moscow, Peking, Hanoi* (New York: Pegasus, 1967), 63-98.

⁴⁰ M Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁴¹ Michael D. Swaine, *The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 1998). Hongyi Lai and Su-Jeong Kang, "Domestic Bureaucratic Politics and Chinese Foreign Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 86 (2014): 294-313.

China chose two distinct binding strategies: coercive binding in the North Korea case while accommodative binding in the North Vietnam case.

The third category of the literature focuses on ideological factors. Thomas Christensen pointed out that the Sino-Soviet split prompted Mao Zedong to launch an ideological campaign within the international communist movement. This factor contributed to China's North Vietnam policy in the 1960s.⁴² Meanwhile, studies have argued that Mao Zedong's radicalized ideology led China to sponsor communist armed struggles in China's neighborhood.⁴³ However, empirical evidence are not congruent with this line of argument. For instance, between 1968 and 1972 China-Soviet relations had broken and Mao had adopted radicalized revolutionary ideology. Nonetheless, China chose distinct binding strategies toward North Vietnam and North Korea, two states who shared the communist ideology with China. In contrast, China chose similar wedge strategies toward Vietnam and Thailand, one shared the communist ideology with China while the other did not. In sum, the ideology argument fails to capture patterns and variation in China's strategic choices.

Moreover, scholars have attempted to derive China's logics of strategic choices from its "strategic culture" and traditional worldviews. A newly-emerged body of literature focuses on the tributary system that ancient China created and maintained. This literature tries to summarize how China traditionally dealt with its weaker neighbors and

⁴² Thomas J. Christensen, *Worse Than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 146-80.

⁴³ For instance, see, Kuisong Yang, *Changes in Mao Zedong's Attitude toward the Indochina War, 1949-1973*, Working Paper No. 34 (Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center of Scholars, 2002). J. D. Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy: Chinese Foreign Policy and the United Front Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy: Peking's Support for Wars of National Liberation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

uses those patterns to explain China's policy-making today.⁴⁴ This line of argument contains two major issues. First, those scholars have not showed whether and how ancient Chinese thinking and legacies can affect contemporary Chinese foreign policy-making. Second, by introducing Chinese traditional thinking, those scholars treat China as exceptional. Nonetheless, they have not fully explained that why contemporary China behaves distinctively, if at all, in the international system.

⁴⁴ Yongjin Zhang and Barry Buzan, "The Tributary System as International Society in Theory and Practice," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5, no. 1 (2012): 3-36. Xuetong Yan, *Leadership and the Rise of Great Powers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). Zhao Tingyang, *Tianxia Tixi: Shijie Zhidu Zhexue Daolun [The Tianxia System: A Philosophy of World Institutions]* (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005). Fangyin Zhou, "Equilibrium Analysis of the Tributary System," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 4, no. 2 (2011): 147-78.

Chapter 3 Theory of Alliance Balancing Strategy

In this chapter, I develop a theory that explains under what conditions a state chooses coercion or accommodation as its alliance balancing strategies. Wedge and binding strategies are two opposite forms of alliance balancing strategies. No matter whether a state's objective is to divide an alignment or to maintain alignment, it does so to balance against an adversary.

I introduce multiple independent variables to explain a state's choice of wedge and binding strategies. When choosing wedge strategies, the initiator considers its leverage over the target state. Strong leverage will prompt the state to choose accommodative wedge strategies. When its leverage is weak, the degree of security cooperation between the target state and its adversary, determines the state's wedge choices. The higher the degree of such security cooperation, the more likely the state is to use coercion. If such degree is low, the state will choose to wait and see.

Similar to wedge strategies, in binding strategies the initiator's leverage over the target state is the first variable in determining coercion versus accommodation. Strong leverage will lead the initiating state to choose coercion to resist an adversary's wedge strategy. When the state has weak leverage over the target state, it fears abandonment, the other independent variable. The higher the fear of abandonment, the more likely the state will use accommodative binding strategies. If such fear is low and leverage is weak, the state will choose to wait-and-see.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. First, I define the actors that interact in wedge/binding dynamics, explain the dependent variables and the independent variables, and lay out the scope condition of this dissertation. In the second section, I propose a theory that explains choices of alliance balancing strategies and derive hypotheses to test. In the third section, I discuss the research design and explain why I focus on China's choices. I conclude with an overview of my theory.

3.1 Actors, Choices, and Strategic Consideration

3.1.1 Actors and Strategies

I define a wedge strategy, following Crawford's definition, as a state's attempt to prevent, break up, or weaken an adversarial alignment.¹ A wedge strategy dynamic involves three actors: the state choosing wedge strategies (the initiator), the target state, and the adversary. From the initiator's perspective, the adversary is the state that poses a threat to the initiator's security. The target is the state whose security cooperation with the adversary contributes to the adversary's capability to threaten the initiator. Additionally, the target and the adversary are establishing or have established a security alignment, which the initiator finds hostile.

A binding strategy, according to Izumikawa, is a state's attempt to maintain or enhance its alignment with its security partners, when such alignment becomes the target of another state's wedge strategies.² As such, it is the opposite of a wedge strategy. A

¹ Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," 156.

² Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-U.S. Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s," 110.

binding strategy dynamic also involves three actors: the state choosing binding strategies (the initiator), the target state, and the adversary.

Similar to a wedge strategy dynamic, in a binding dynamic the adversary threatens the initiator's security. What is different is the relationship between the initiator and the target state. By the definition of binding strategy, the initiator has a formal or informal alignment with the target state, whereas the adversary employs the wedge strategies and the target may or may not be in an alignment. A binding strategy is thus a reaction to wedge strategy.

When defining wedge and binding strategies, I use “alignment” instead of “alliance” for two reasons. First, as Snyder argues, alliances arise from formal agreements that include elements of specificity, legal and moral obligation, and reciprocity.³ An alliance agreement often involves military collaboration and other political commitments. In contrast, alignments are “expectations of states about whether they will be supported or opposed by other states in future interactions.” Thus, alliances are a subset of alignments.⁴ Using alignment allows investigation of both formal alliances and security collaboration short of an alliance. Second and empirically, in most cases China prefers not to sign a formal treaty while there exists *de facto* alliance between China and the target, such as China-North Vietnam relations prior to the end of the Vietnam War. Moreover, since the 1980s China has announced that one principle of its foreign policy was independence and “truly no-alliance,” which allowed China to maintain its foreign policy flexibility.⁵ In the meantime, China has established an

³ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 8.

⁴ Ibid., 6-16.

⁵ Deng Xiaoping, *Jianshe you Zhonggutese de Shehuizhuyi* [Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1987), 44; CCP Central Archives and Manuscripts Division

extensive partnership network, including more than one hundred states.⁶ Some of these partnership agreements involve security cooperation or contain alliance-like articles.⁷ Therefore, using “alignment” can capture China’s behavior more accurately and expand the scope of the application of my theory.

In this dissertation, I only focus on the initiator’s wedge and binding strategies toward the target state, not toward the adversary. While the adversary is the primary source of threat against the initiator and the target only contributes to such threat, changing the target’s alignment decision can decrease the aggregated capabilities of the adversary-target alignment and thus decrease the adversary’s threat to the initiator. As such, the initiator’s wedge and binding strategies toward the target are important part of its external balancing behavior. Additionally, as the initiator tries to balance against the adversary by influencing the target, in the chain of influence the target comes before the adversary.⁸ Consequently, it is necessary to analyze wedge and binding strategies toward the target first.

ed., *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan* [Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping], vol. 3 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1993), 3, 56-57, 156, 162; *1986nian Zhengfu Gongzuo Baogao* [Government Work Report in 1986], March 25, 1986, the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China, http://www.gov.cn/test/2006-02/16/content_200850.htm

⁶ *Xinhua*, October 9, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/silkroad/2020-10/09/c_1126586666.htm

⁷ For example, Article 4 of the Chinese-Pakistani Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation in 2005 articulates that China and Pakistan will not join any group or alliance that may compromise each other’s security or sovereignty. It is the same as Article 8 of the Chinese-Russian Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation in 2001, and similar to Article 4 of the Chinese-Mongolian Treaty of Friendly Cooperation in 1994. See, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (PRC MFA), https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/tytj_674911/tyfg_674913/t209122.shtml; https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679110/1207_679122/t11111.s.html; https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/tytj_674911/tyfg_674913/t5725.shtml.

⁸ Timothy W Crawford, “The Strategy of Coercive Isolation,” in *Coercion: The Power to Hurt in International Politics*, ed. Kelly M. Greenhill and Peter Krause (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 231.

3.1.2 Options in Wedge and Binding Strategies

For both wedge and binding strategies, the initiator has three options: (a) “coercion,” (b) “accommodation,” and (c) “wait-and-see.” First, coercive wedge/binding strategies use actual or threatened punishments to pose a threat to the target state’s security and/or economic stability and thus influence its alignment decision. Accommodative wedge/binding strategies use actual or promised economic and/or security rewards to affect the target’s alignment decision.⁹

The third option, “wait-and-see,” maintains the initiator’s current policy toward the target state.¹⁰ For instance, in 1949 the United States attempted to prevent China from becoming satellite of the Soviet Union. In September, the Counselor of Embassy in China suggested to Dean Acheson that the United States “let CCP (Chinese Communist Party) learn by experience that USSR has little aid to offer, that Soviet friendship is always one-sided, that China will lose much more than it will gain by such association... Let U.S. do nothing to contribute to comfort of new bed which CCP has made for China.”¹¹

Basically, he suggested that the United States chose wait-and-see.

⁹ Baldwin, “The Power of Positive Sanctions,” 23. Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises*, 195-98. Izumikawa, “United We Stand, Divided They Fall: Use of Coercion and Rewards as Alliance Balancing Strategy,” 49-50.

¹⁰ Liu Feng, “Fenhua duishou lianmeng: zhanlue, jizhi yu anli” [“Dividing Adversarial Alliance: Strategy, Mechanism, and Cases”], *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* [*World Economics and Politics*], no. 1 (2014): 54.

¹¹ The Counselor of Embassy in China (Jones) to the Secretary of State, September 3, 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter cited as *FRUS*), 1949, vol. VIII, the Far East: China, eds. Francis C. Prescott et al. (Washington, DC, 2018), Document 593, 1221. For a more detailed discussion on the U.S. China policy in this period, see, Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust: Chinese-American Relations and the Recognition Controversy, 1949-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 173-94.



Figure 3.1. *Strategic Options in Wedge and Binding Strategies*

Figure 3.1 presents a continuum of options. It is important to note that any point on the continuum is a different combination of coercion and accommodation. Frequently the initiator adopts a mixed strategy. On the left side of the continuum, coercion is the primary strategy while accommodation as the complementary strategy. Meanwhile, the more emphasis the initiator puts on coercion, the further left it is on the continuum. Similarly, the more emphasis the initiator puts on accommodation, the further right it is on this continuum. At the middle of this continuum, the initiator emphasizes equally on coercion and accommodation. Only at the both ends the initiator chooses pure strategies, either coercion or accommodation. In addition, Figure 3.1 does not include the strategy of wait-and-see. By definition, wait-and-see is maintaining the status quo while both coercion and accommodation require the initiator to make change. As such, a wait-and-see policy can occur at any point on the continuum.

I introduce mixed strategies because states often mix coercion and accommodation, which are closely related to each other. After all, as Schelling points out, coercion and accommodation are “names for different aspects of the same tactic of selective and conditional self-commitment.”¹² Mixing coercion and accommodation has drawn extensive attention from the scholarship on deterrence and coercive diplomacy. Robert Jervis argues that successful deterrence requires a combination between assurance

¹² Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 123-34.

and pressure. On the one hand, after convincing the aggressor that it will not achieve its goals by a show of force, the status quo state needs to offer some concessions to indicate that its own aims are limited and it will not use this victory to threaten the aggressor. On the other, if the status quo state finds a retreat unavoidable, it will give up some values while stand behind the remaining ones.¹³

Scholars have also highlighted the role of assurance in coercive diplomacy. As Alexander George notes, policymakers need to decide the combination and sequence of employment of threat and accommodation to help coercive threat achieve its objective.¹⁴ To add, Art points out that positive inducements would likely to increase the likelihood of coercion success if they provide the target state with resources that help it abandon its goal.¹⁵ In a later study that focuses on strong states coercing weak ones, Sechser argues that in the absence of ways to offer credible reassurance, coercion often fails.¹⁶

This logic of deterrence and coercive diplomacy applies equally to wedge and binding strategies. The initiator uses a wedge strategy to persuade the target to change its alignment with the adversary. As George argues, coercive diplomacy entails “efforts to persuade an opponent to stop or reverse an action.”¹⁷ In other words, wedge strategy is a specific form of coercive diplomacy. Similarly, the purpose of binding strategy is to

¹³ Robert Jervis, “Deterrence Theory Revisited,” *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (1979): 304-05.

¹⁴ Alexander L. George, *Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1991), 68, 73. Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, “Findings and Conclusions,” in *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, ed. Alexander L. George and William E. Simons (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 277-79.

¹⁵ Robert J. Art, “Coercive Diplomacy: What Do We Know?,” in *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy*, ed. Robert J. Art and Patrick M. Cronin (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003), 388-410.

¹⁶ Todd S. Sechser, “Goliath's Curse: Coercive Threats and Asymmetric Power,” *International Organization* 64, no. 4 (2010): 627-60.

¹⁷ Alexander L. George, “Coercive Diplomacy: Definition and Characteristics,” in *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, ed. Alexander L. George and William E. Simons (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 7.

prevent the target from changing its alignment with the adversary or to make the target stop its behavior of changing such an alignment. Binding strategy is therefore a particular form of deterrence or coercive diplomacy.

When the initiator opts for coercion, it can use accommodation as a complementary strategy for two purposes. First, with accommodation the initiator can signal its restraint to the target. This consideration will be particularly salient when the initiator worries that its coercion may be counterproductive, pushing the target closer to the adversary. Second, the initiator's coercion against the target state contains an implicit assurance that if the target alters its policy that the initiator does not like, the initiator will stop its coercive pressure. The initiator's accommodation supports this assurance. It is important because, as Schelling notes, "one cannot force spies...to reveal themselves solely by the threat of a relentless pursuit that spares no cost; one must also promise immunity to those that come forward."¹⁸

Similarly, when choosing accommodation as its primary strategy, the initiator can use coercion to complement accommodation. Coercion, in this scenario, can signal that the initiator has committed itself to a "red line" that the target should not cross and leave the next step up to the target.¹⁹ Thus, the initiator can use coercion as a warning to the target state. That is, if the target refuses to comply with the initiator's demands, the initiator may change its primary strategy to coercion and inflict more pains on the target.

¹⁸ Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 134. Daniel Klein and Brendan O'Flaherty provide formal characterizations of the "pure promise," the "pure threat," and the "hybrid." See Daniel B. Klein and Brendan O'Flaherty, "A Game-Theoretic Rendering of Promises and Threats," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 21, no. 3 (1993): 295-314.

¹⁹ Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 72.

Consequently, a central task for the initiator is to mix coercive and accommodative tactics and finding the appropriate mix of the two. The existing literature contains useful discussion to explain this dynamic. First, Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing argue that the relative bargaining power of states in a crisis affects the particular blending of coercion and accommodation. As they note, a state's bargaining power determines benefits and risks associated with accommodation and coercion and thus prompts it to choose a particular mixture of these two.²⁰ Alexander George and William Simons suggest that when neither participant in a crisis views it in zero-sum terms, policymakers are more likely to use both threat and accommodation.²¹ Russell Leng adds to these arguments by finding that states defending the status quo are more likely to mix coercion and accommodation. He further argues that a state's choice of its influence strategies also depends on its opponent's choice of strategies.²² Second, a state's domestic politics affects its choice of strategies. Snyder and Diesing point out that one state's domestic balance of influence between advocates of pure strategies affects its choice of a particular blending of coercion and accommodation.²³ Similarly, George and Simons point out that the extent to which a policymaker is able to combine threat and accommodation relies on his/her political capital, a resource he/she can choose to use or not.²⁴

These perspectives focus on crises in which two parties have conflict of interests over a bilateral issue. In contrast, when the initiator chooses wedge and binding

²⁰ Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises*, 279.

²¹ George and Simons, "Findings and Conclusions," 277-79.

²² Russell J. Leng, "Reciprocating Influence Strategies in Interstate Crisis Bargaining," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37, no. 1 (1993): 30-36.

²³ Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises*, 279.

²⁴ George and Simons, "Findings and Conclusions," 277-79.

strategies, the existence of a third player provides the target with available external support. As a result, compared to two-player crisis bargaining or to deterrence/coercive diplomacy, the initiator determining wedge/binding strategies needs to consider more the response of a third party when weighing its options.

While the international security literature discusses the role of a third player in extended deterrence and pivotal deterrence, dynamics in these two types of deterrence are different from those in wedge and binding strategies. In extended deterrence, the third player protects its ally by threatening the use of force against another state.²⁵ In other words, the initiator (deterrer) and the target state are allies while the adversary threatens the target state. It is different from wedge/binding strategies, in which the dispute is between the initiator and the target is the latter's alignment with the adversary. In pivotal deterrence, the initiator (pivot state) deters two states from going to war against each other.²⁶ Again, it is different from wedge/binding strategies because the pivot state does not aim to divide or maintain an alignment.

In wedge and binding strategies, the adversary is the third player. Its existence complicates the initiator's calculation of strategic options because the target can seek security or economic support from the adversary. Therefore, the initiator's accommodation may invite an unwanted bidding war while coercion may be more likely to stiffen the target's stance if the target can receive support from the adversary.

Subsequent sections of this chapter will explain how the initiator chooses pure or mixed

²⁵ Paul K. Huth, "Extended Deterrence and the Outbreak of War," *American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 (1988): 424.

²⁶ Timothy W. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third-Party Statecraft and the Pursuit of Peace* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 5-9.

strategies and when choosing mixed strategies, how the initiator determines the particular combination of coercion and accommodation.

3.1.3 Leverage, Degree of Security Cooperation, and Fear of Abandonment

I introduce three independent variables in my theory. The first and second independent variables explain choice of wedge strategies. The first and the third independent variables explain choice of binding strategies.

The first independent variable is the initiator's leverage over the target. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines leverage as "the power of a lever; the mechanical advantage gained by the use of a lever," and "advantage for accomplishing a purpose."²⁷ As it implies, leverage has broader denotation than Knorr's definition, according to which leverage is "one actor *using* a lever to gain advantage over another actor (emphasis added)."²⁸ Leverage can also mean that one actor *has* the capability to gain advantage over another actor. As such, I define the initiator's leverage over the target state as the target's vulnerability to the initiator's influence for foreign policy-making.²⁹ This definition of leverage is similar to Jeffrey Hart's conception of power as control over resources, insofar as control over resources is the source of leverage.³⁰

A few aspects of this definition are worth noting. First, this conceptualization of leverage encompasses (a) the initiator's bargaining power vis-à-vis the target, and (b) the potential impact of the initiator's influence attempt on the target's cost/benefit analysis of

²⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "leverage," Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. <https://www-oed-com.proxy.bc.edu/view/Entry/107680>

²⁸ Klaus Knorr, "International Economic Leverage and Its Uses," in *Economic Issues and National Security*, ed. Klaus Knorr and Frank N. Trager (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1977), 99.

²⁹ The form of my definition is based on Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way's definition of leverage for democratization. Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40.

³⁰ Jeffrey Hart, "Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations," *International Organization* 30, no. 2 (1976): 289-91.

its foreign policies.³¹ Second, the initiator can use leverage for either coercion or accommodation. Leverage comes from the initiator's possession of resources valuable to the target state. As such, the initiator can either reward the target by providing resources, or punish the target by denying the latter's access to those resources. Third, leverage is sensitive to the target state's perception. The initiator has leverage because the target values some resources that the initiator possesses. The less valuable those resources are to the target state, the weaker the leverage.

Leverage is a relative concept. As Robert Gilpin notes, "power by its very nature is a relative matter; one state's gain in power is by necessity another's loss."³² The initiator competes with the adversary for the target state's allegiance. The initiator can possess one kind of resource that gives it leverage over the target state. Nonetheless, if the adversary has more of this resource than the initiator, the leverage of the adversary will offset that of the initiator. For example, in 1955 the Soviet Union tried to improve relations with Japan by suggesting the return of the Habomais and Shikotan, two disputed islands, to Japan.³³ Controlling these islands gave the Soviet Union leverage over Japan. Nonetheless, the United States exploited its leverage by raising issues over the sovereignty over Okinawa.³⁴ As this Soviet-Japanese-U.S. dynamic shows, the U.S. leverage dwarfed the Soviet one.³⁵ Consequently, the initiator's leverage over the target

³¹ Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*, 41.

³² Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 94.

³³ Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-U.S. Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s," 114. Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes* trans. Jerrold L. Schecter (Boston: Little Brown & Co, 1990), 89.

³⁴ Memorandum of a Conversation Between Secretary of State Dulles and Foreign Minister Shigemitsu, August 19, 1956, in *FRUS*, 1955-1957, vol. XXIII, part 1, Japan, ed. David W. Mabon, Document 89, 332.

³⁵ Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-U.S. Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s," 116-17.

has little meaning without comparing it with the adversary's leverage over the target state.

In addition, leverage is a bilateral relational concept, in the sense that it is impossible to describe the initiator's leverage without implying its influence on the target state.³⁶ Therefore, analysis of leverage relies on the target's baseline of expectations when the initiator begins to use its leverage, that is, whether and how much the target state expects to receive reward or punishment from the initiator before the initiator uses its leverage. As such, the initiator can use its leverage to adjust the target's expectations in the future. When the initiator uses its leverage to reward the target's compliance, it moves the target's baseline of expectations. If the target state expects substantial reward in the future, withholding reward becomes coercive. Meanwhile, the more substantial the expectation of reward is today, the more coercive such withholding will be in the future.³⁷

This dissertation categorizes leverage into three types: military-strategic, economic, and cultural. Table 3.1 shows specific sources for each type of leverage.³⁸ This table does not exhaust all sources or examples of leverage in wedge and binding strategies. It only provides a checklist to consult with.

³⁶ David A. Baldwin, *Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach* (Princeton University Press, 2016), 50.

³⁷ This discussion is similar to Dahl's analysis of power, which he defines in terms of negative sanctions. See Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 50-51.

³⁸ Izumikawa, "United We Stand, Divided They Fall: Use of Coercion and Rewards as Alliance Balancing Strategy," 32.

Table 3.1. *Sources of Leverage in Wedge and Binding Strategies*

Type of leverage	Examples of leverage
Military-strategic	Territory concession, access to geopolitically important territory, security commitments, arms transfer, and arms sale
Economic	Food aid, international loans, international trade, and non-military technology transfer
Cultural	Ideological affinity, connection to overseas ethnic groups, cultural exchange

I code leverage into a binary variable that has two values: strong and weak. Strong leverage means the target is highly vulnerable to the initiator's influence, whereas weak leverage means the target is not vulnerable to such influence or the target is more vulnerable to similar influence of the adversary. In order to measure this variable, this dissertation utilizes archives and published government documents to assess how the initiator and the target perceive the former's leverage over the latter. It is important to note that leverage is context-sensitive. As Baldwin points out, we need to set the influence attempt in a context to specify "who is trying (or might try) to get whom to do what."³⁹ I therefore use a contextual analysis of leverage, in order to pay attention to various power bases and not to focus exclusively on war-winning capabilities.

I propose two criteria to measure the strength of leverage. First, the more difficult it is for the target to find a substitute for valuable resources that the initiator possesses, the stronger the initiator's leverage is. Geographic proximity can be an illustrative

³⁹ David A. Baldwin, "Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends Versus Old Tendencies," *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (1979): 181.

example. If the initiator is the target's neighbor, it can provide its territory to serve as a buffer zone or a rear base for the target. In such a case, geographic proximity enables the initiator to contribute to the target's security. In contrast, geographic proximity can also make it convenient for the initiator to put pressure on the target by deploying military forces on the border. Thus, geographic proximity gives the initiator leverage over the target. Furthermore, this leverage is strong because it is difficult for the target to find an alternative source to substitute geographic space. For example, assume the target has a remote ally, the adversary, that is militarily stronger than the initiator. As a result, with regard to providing security to the target, the adversary can employ its military might to offset the initiator's advantage in geographic proximity. However, moving military assets from afar can be more costly than the initiator opening its border with the target in wartime. Therefore, it is harder for the adversary to offset the initiator's geographic advantage.

On the contrary, if the target can easily find alternative providers of valuable resources, the initiator's leverage is weak. For instance, in the 1960s China supplied North Korea with several types of raw materials that were critical to North Korea's industrial development. Nonetheless, North Korea could rely on the Soviet Union as an alternative supplier of those materials.⁴⁰ As a result, China possessed weak leverage as a provider of material supplies.

Second, whether the leverage is strong or weak depends on the types of the target's interests that the initiator can influence. There are multiple ways to categorize

⁴⁰ "First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, 'Korean-Chinese Relations in the Second Half of 1968'," January 6, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 1-14. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134218>

national interests. For instance, Snyder puts national interests into two categories: intrinsic and power interests. Intrinsic interests are “end values,” such as values attached to independence, honor, and prestige; power interests are instrumental, including strategic, deterrent, and political interests.⁴¹ Differently, Stephen Krasner defines national interests inductively as the “preferences of...central decision makers,” which can range from satisfying psychological needs to weakening opponents and capturing territory.⁴² The purpose of this brief discussion is not to review the international relations literature on national interests, but to point out that it is possible to make a ranking list of national interests. Correspondingly, the initiator’s leverage can influence different types of the target’s national interests; the more vital such interests are to the target, the stronger the initiator’s leverage is. For instance, in late 1940 Spain experienced an economic crisis and thus was desperate for economic support. Britain’s ability to provide economic assistance to Spain lent Britain strong leverage over Spain.⁴³

I code the variable of leverage as “strong” *only* when both criteria of leverage are strong. Although the initiator can possess some resources that are difficult for the target to find an alternative provider, if the possession of these resources affects the target’s less crucial interests, the target is not vulnerable to the initiator’s influence attempt. Consequently, the initiator only has weak leverage. For instance, in the 1960s Bangkok had concerns about Beijing’s connection with the overseas Chinese community in Thailand. It was almost impossible for Bangkok to find other friendly states that could

⁴¹ Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 31-37.

⁴² Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 13-14.

⁴³ Crawford, “Wedge Strategy, Balancing, and the Deviant Case of Spain, 1940–41,” 7-34.

influence its overseas Chinese population. However, compared to other Southeast Asian governments, Thailand was the most successful state in assimilating its overseas Chinese population.⁴⁴ Consequently, China's leverage over Thailand was weak.

The second independent variable is the degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary. Following Holsti, Hopmann, and Sullivan's behavioral definition of alliance cohesion, I define degree of security cooperation as the ability of states to agree on their objectives and their strategies toward achieving common objectives.⁴⁵ This definition slightly expands the scope of the concept of alliance cohesion, so that it can cover both the phase in which the target and the adversary are not allies and the phase in which they are. Moreover, this variable measures the distance between the target and the adversary's goals and corresponding foreign policies. Consequently, it reflects the level of threat that cooperation between the target and the adversary poses to the initiator.

I code the degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary into a binary variable: it is either "high" or "low." Building on Patricia Weitsman's measurement of wartime alliance cohesion, this dissertation measures the degree of security cooperation from two criteria.⁴⁶ First, I examine the ability of the target and the adversary to agree on their diplomatic and defense objectives. Divergence in their objectives indicates weak cooperation. Second, I assess the capacity of the target and the adversary to coordinate their foreign policies and defense policies. Indicators for this

⁴⁴ Joseph P. L. Jiang, "The Chinese in Thailand: Past and Present," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 7, no. 1 (1966): 39-65.

⁴⁵ Ole R. Holsti, P. Terrence Hopmann, and John D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies* (New York: Wiley, 1973), 16.

⁴⁶ Patricia A. Weitsman, "Alliance Cohesion and Coalition Warfare: The Central Powers and Triple Entente," *Security Studies* 12, no. 3 (2003): 85.

capacity include willingness to provide or reassert security commitment, access to military facilities, and agreement on military presence on each other's soil. Since the first criterion is attitudinal while the second is behavioral, only when both the abilities of the target and the adversary to agree on and coordinate their policies are strong do I code this variable as "high."

The third independent variable is the initiator's fear of abandonment. Abandonment, as Snyder defines it, is "defection." It can take various forms: realignment, de-alignment, abrogating the alliance treaty, failure to carry out commitments, or failure to provide support in contingencies where partners expect support.⁴⁷ Fear of abandonment includes two components: the subjective probability that the partner will defect, and the cost to oneself should the partner defect.⁴⁸

In binding strategies, the probability that the target will defect is a function of the adversary's wedge efforts. As the adversary is inducing the target to desert the initiator, the more efforts the adversary makes, the higher the probability that the target will desert the initiator. The cost of the target's defection is the threat such defection will pose to the initiator's security. The target's defection will affect the balance of power between the initiator and the adversary and thus increases the adversary's threat to the initiator. The greater such impact is, the higher the cost of the target's defection is.

I code the fear of abandonment into a binary variable; it is either "high" or "low." First, when both the probability and potential cost of this abandonment are high, I code the fear of abandonment as "high." In contrast, when both the probability and potential

⁴⁷ Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (1984): 466.

⁴⁸ Michael Mandelbaum, *The Nuclear Revolution: International Politics before and after Hiroshima* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 151-53. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 181.

cost of this abandonment are low, I code this variable as “low.” Second, when the probability of abandonment is high while the potential cost is low, I code this variable as “low” as well. Because the probability is no greater than one, when the cost is low, the fear of abandonment, as the product of the probability and the cost of abandonment, is not likely to be high. Third, when the probability of abandonment is low while the potential cost is high, I code this variable as “high” as well. As realist theorists argue, the “ultimate concern of states is...for security.”⁴⁹ Therefore, when the potential cost of abandonment is high, policymakers of the initiator cannot easily forgo it, despite the low probability of abandonment. I will use the information in the cases to measure how decision makers evaluate the probability and the cost of abandonment.

3.2 Logics of Choice between Accommodation and Coercion

This section develops the theory of choosing wedge and binding strategies. First, I explain how leverage and level of security cooperation between the target and the adversary determine the initiator’s choice of wedge strategies. Second, I show that leverage and the fear of abandonment shape the initiator’s choice of binding strategies.

3.2.1 Leverage, Degree of Security Cooperation, and Wedge Strategies

When the initiator chooses its wedge strategies, the adversary tries to establish an alignment with the target, has established, or consolidates an alignment. The initiator views this (potential) alignment as adversarial and thus tries to drive a wedge between the adversary and the target.

⁴⁹ Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 616.

The initiator's decision-making has two steps. The initiator first considers its leverage over the target. If the leverage is strong, the initiator will choose accommodation as its primary wedge strategy. If the leverage is weak, the initiator will in turn evaluate the degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary. When facing a high degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary, the initiator will choose coercion as its primary wedge strategy. The higher such degree is, the more pressure the initiator will exert on the target. In contrast, if the degree of such cooperation between the target and the adversary is low, the initiator will opt for the wait-and-see strategy. Figure 3.2 summarizes the logic of the initiator's wedge strategies.

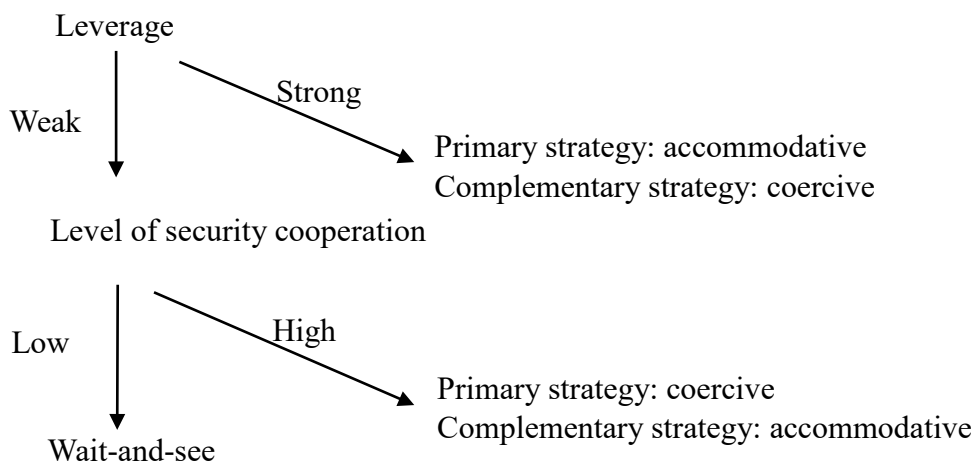


Figure 3.2. *Choices of Wedge Strategies*

When the initiator has strong leverage, it accommodates the target, despite the degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary. This is due to the initiator's concern about the risk of balancing blowback, the risk that wedge strategies will “unite rather than divide its adversaries.”⁵⁰ Using coercive wedge strategies against

⁵⁰ Crawford, “Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics,” 162.

the target, by definition, heightens the target's perception of threat from the initiator. This threat perception, in turn, adds to the target's incentives to align with the adversary. As Walt argues, states tend to balance against threats. According to him, threat perception is a function of aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions.⁵¹ Similarly, Glaser notes that states will respond to not only the balance of power, but also the intentions and motives of other states.⁵² Additionally, the initiator's leverage, as defined above, can be either accommodative or coercive. If the initiator uses its leverage to exert pressure on the target, this suggests to the target that the initiator could have used its leverage to accommodate the target, but chooses not to do so. As such, the initiator's choice of coercion would heighten the target's threat perception and incentivize the target to stand closer with the adversary.

Concerns about this self-fulfilling prophecy will prompt the initiator to choose accommodation as its primary wedge strategy. Accommodation can serve two purposes. First, by making promises and providing actual rewards to target, the initiator directly increases the target's benefits of keeping distance from the adversary. Second, accommodation helps decrease the target's perception of threats from the initiator. As Glaser points out, when state A chooses cooperative policies (I term accommodation), it can reduce other states' sense of insecurity by showing that what drives state A's policies is insecurity, not greed.⁵³

⁵¹ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 21-26.

⁵² Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 28-40.

⁵³ Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 59-60.

Additionally, the initiator's accommodation serves as costly signals to convey the initiator's nonaggressive intentions. As Schelling points out, to make a promise credible requires it to be costly to the promisor.⁵⁴ Accommodating the target can be costly as it incurs sunk costs.⁵⁵ In many cases, accommodative wedge strategies not only involve promises but also provide actual reward, such as military and economic assistance. As such, accommodation can be financially costly *ex ante* and thus communicate credible signals to the target.⁵⁶

Nonetheless, the risk of blowback is not the initiator's only concern. It also worries about the risk of being exploited. First, the initiator also worries that the target tries to draw the initiator and the adversary into a bidding war, in which they try to outbid each other by offering more reward to the target. Involvement in a bidding war will increase the cost of the initiator's accommodation. As a result, the initiator may be reluctant to enter such a bidding war. The initiator will be even more reluctant to do so if it views its capability of rewarding as inferior to the adversary's. Second, the initiator's reward is likely to help the target develop capabilities. If the initiator fails to persuade the target to avoid cooperation with the adversary, the target's increased capabilities will contribute to the power of the adversarial alignment and heighten the threat to the initiator's security.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Thomas C. Schelling, "Promises," *Negotiation Journal* 5, no. 2 (1989): 115-16.

⁵⁵ James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 1 (1997): 82.

⁵⁶ Nonetheless, as the literature on costly signaling suggest, sunk costs is a less effective signaling strategy than tying hands. See, for instance, Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests," 83-84; Matthew Fuhrmann and Todd S. Sechser, "Signaling Alliance Commitments: Hand-Tying and Sunk Costs in Extended Nuclear Deterrence," *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 4 (2014): 919-35.

⁵⁷ Daniel W. Drezner, *The Sanctions Paradox: Economic Statecraft and International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4-6.

The risk of being exploited will prompt the initiator to use coercion to complement its accommodative wedge strategies. Coercion will signal that the initiator's accommodation has limits and that it does not intend to enter a bidding war for the target's allegiance. Additionally, a coercive complementary strategy is an illustrative use of threat, an illustration of what yet to come if the target does not comply. This use of coercion also promises minimum damage if the target complies quick enough.⁵⁸ Moreover, a coercive complementary strategy suggests to the target that it should not ordinarily expect to receive the initiator's accommodation. This is a necessary component of a promise.⁵⁹ Coercion serves as a reminder to the target that received reward is contingent on its compliance. The logic outlined above leads to the first two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: If the initiator has strong leverage over the target, accommodation will be the initiator's primary wedge strategy;

Hypothesis 1a: If the initiator has capability to coerce the target, the initiator will use coercive wedge strategy to complement its accommodative strategy.

When the initiator only has weak leverage over the target, however, the initiator's accommodation may be insufficient to alter the target's cost/benefit analysis of its alignment decision. If so, the initiator needs to choose between coercive wedge strategies and wait-and-see. The high degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary will lead the initiator to opt for coercion as its primary wedge strategy. While the initiator's leverage is weak, the concern for the risk of balancing blowback does not disappear. However, the risk of balancing blowback will decrease with an increasing degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary. As a result, a high

⁵⁸ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 81.

⁵⁹ Schelling, "Promises," 115.

degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary will prompt the initiator to choose coercive wedge strategies.

The higher the degree of security cooperation, the less likely the initiator will use accommodation to complement its coercive wedge strategy. When the initiator believes that whatever it does, the target has been strongly committed to an alignment with the adversary, the initiator will choose coercion as the pure strategy.⁶⁰ In this case, the value of accommodation as the complementary strategy diminishes for two reasons. First, the risk of blowback is very low because there is no much room left for the target and the adversary to enhance their security cooperation. Second, the target strongly committed to the adversary suggests a low likelihood of wedging success. If so, accommodating the target means increasing the aggregated capabilities of its alignment with the adversary and thus meaning stronger threats against the initiator. Meanwhile, when the target has been tightly committed to the adversary, the initiator may still try coercive wedge strategies that have the possibility of success, however low it is. Additionally, the initiator may also try other strategies against the alignment of the target and the adversary, such as internal balancing or confronting the adversary on other fronts.

When the degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary has not reached that extreme end, the initiator will use accommodation as a complement to reduce the risk of balancing blowback. Meanwhile, accommodation serves as a signal to assure the target that if the target complies with the initiator's demands, the initiator will stop putting pressure on the target. As Schelling notes, an ideal coercive action would

⁶⁰ Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," 163-64. Izumikawa, "To Coerce or Reward? Theorizing Wedge Strategies in Alliance Politics," 508-09.

automatically stop upon the target's compliance.⁶¹ While it is difficult to find a perfect type of this action in international politics, an accommodative complementary strategy can add credibility to the automaticity of coercion. It is because an accommodative complementary strategy implies that the initiator's policy is flexible and it is possible for the initiator to recall its coercive action. The logic outlined above leads to the two following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: If the initiator has weak leverage over the target, *and* the degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary is high, the initiator will choose coercion as its primary wedge strategy and accommodation as its complementary strategy;

Hypothesis 2a: The higher the degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary, the more likely the initiator is to use coercion as its pure strategy.

3.2.2 Leverage, Fear of Abandonment, and Binding Strategies

When the initiator considers binding strategies, the situation is opposite to that of wedge strategies. In a binding context, the initiator and the target are alignment partners while the adversary tries to drive a wedge between them. In this situation, the initiator needs to choose binding strategies to offset the adversary's wedge strategies.

The combination of the initiator's leverage and its fear of abandonment determines its choice of binding strategies. When the initiator has strong leverage over the target, it will choose coercion as its primary binding strategy, despite its fear of abandonment. Meanwhile, the initiator is likely to use accommodation as a complementary strategy. With weak leverage, the initiator needs to evaluate its fear of

⁶¹ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 89-90.

abandonment by the target. If the fear of abandonment is strong, the initiator will opt for accommodative binding strategies; if it is weak, the initiator will choose a wait-and-see strategy. Figure 3.3 summarizes the logic of the initiator's binding strategies.

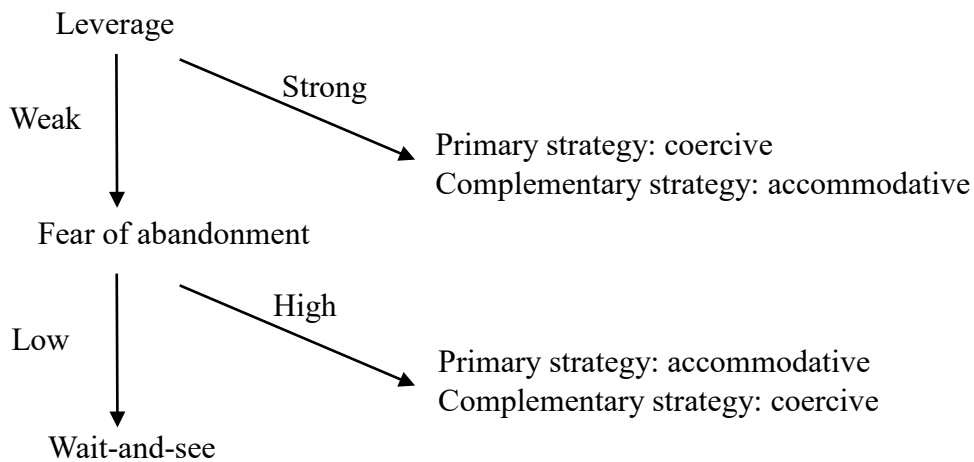


Figure 3.3. *Choices of Binding Strategies*

Strong leverage leads the initiator to choose coercive binding strategies. When considering its binding strategies, the initiator worries about the risk of blowback. In a binding dynamic, this risk implies that the initiator's binding strategy could push away rather than bind the target. The risk of blowback is a function of the initiator's leverage over the target. Such leverage implies that the target's security depends on the initiator. The stronger the leverage, the higher such dependence. Therefore, the likelihood of coercion backfire is lower. Additionally, at the status quo stage, the initiator and the target are in an alignment, so that the initiator's leverage has contributed to the target's

security, and the target expects to receive this “reward” from the initiator in the future. Therefore, when the initiator turns to use its leverage to coerce the target, it will rapidly raise the costs of the target’s tilt toward the adversary. As prospect theory shows, actors are loss-averse, so that the target’s sensitivity to costs will prompt the initiator to choose coercive binding strategies as its primary strategy.⁶²

Nonetheless, the initiator’s strong leverage does not completely exclude the risk of blowback. To minimize such risk, the initiator will use accommodation to complement coercion. Accommodating the target can signal the initiator’s restraint: the initiator could have devoted more resources to punishing the target, but chooses not to do so. To add, the initiator’s accommodation also can signal that, if complying quickly with the initiator’s demands, the target can minimize the costs resulting from the initiator’s coercion.

The initiator will choose coercion as the pure strategy, rather than mixed binding strategies, under two circumstances: (a) when it lacks resources to accommodate the target; and (b) when it believes that the target is determined to desert the initiator. In situations in which the initiator possesses strong leverage over the target, the initiator has the capability to accommodate the target. Therefore, the first circumstance does not apply here. When the target has made up its mind to enter the adversary’s orbit, the initiator will choose coercion as its pure binding strategy. In this case, the value of

⁶² For theoretical treatment of loss aversion, see, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, “Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions,” *The Journal of Business* 59, no. 4 (1986): 251-78. Linda D. Molm, *Coercive Power in Social Exchange* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 251-54. For examples of the application of prospect theory to foreign policy-making, see, Jack S. Levy, “Prospect Theory, Rational Choice, and International Relations,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1997): 87-112. Jonathan Mercer, “Prospect Theory and Political Science,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 8, no. 1 (2005): 1-21.

accommodative complementary strategy diminishes because the risk of blowback is very low because the target has been committed to joining the adversary. Additionally, as a binding strategy only has a low possibility of success, accommodating the target means increasing the aggregated capabilities of its alignment with the adversary and therefore becoming more threatening to the initiator. Nonetheless, as there remains a possibility of success, the initiator may still try binding strategies. Additionally, the initiator may also try other strategies against the target and the adversary, such as internal balancing or establishing new alignments. I derive the following hypotheses from the above discussion:

Hypothesis 3: If the initiator has strong leverage over the target, coercion will be the initiator's primary binding strategy;

Hypothesis 3a: If the initiator has strong leverage over the target, *and* if the target has not dissented the initiator, the initiator will use accommodation as its complementary binding strategy.

When the binder only has weak leverage over the target, the risk of blowback increases. As the binder's leverage is weak, the target's expected benefits of aligning with the binder is low. As such, if the binder uses coercive binding strategies toward the target, heightened threat to the target may outweigh alliance benefits it receives. Such calculation would incentivize the target to terminate its alignment with the binder. As the risk of blowback increases, the binder with weak leverage is likely to refrain from choosing coercive binding strategy.

As a result, the initiator's choice between accommodation and wait-and-see relies on its fear of abandonment. When the fear of abandonment is strong, the target is likely to

desert the initiator and that will pose a serious threat to the initiator's security. Therefore, the initiator cannot do nothing. Meanwhile, as argued above, the initiator's weak leverage implies that coercive binding strategy is likely to accelerate the target's drift away from the initiator. Accommodation thus becomes the primary strategy for the initiator. Because at the status quo stage the initiator and the target are in an alignment, the initiator has been providing some benefits to the target. As such, an accommodative binding strategy provides additional rewards to the target.

Meanwhile, the initiator will use coercion as its complementary strategy. First, a coercive binding strategy serves as a signal to the target: if the target does remain aligned with the initiator, the initiator will impose punishment on the target. Second, because it is in the target's interests to instigate a bidding war between the initiator and the adversary, a coercive binding strategy enables the initiator to signal that it will not participate in such a bidding war. Such signaling can include delay or cancellation of delivery of some materials to the target. This discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: If the initiator has weak leverage over the target, and the initiator's fear of abandonment is strong, accommodation will be the initiator's primary binding strategy and coercion be its complement strategy.

3.3 Research Design: Methods and Case Selections

3.3.1 Methods

This dissertation uses comparative case studies to test the proposed theory, including within- and across-case congruence and process tracing.⁶³ The congruence method is

⁶³ Alexander L George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 181-82, 205-10.

necessary as it checks whether the certain outcome of the dependent variable follows from certain values of the independent variables, as the proposed theory predicts.⁶⁴

Moreover, testing the proposed theory requires process tracing for three reasons. First, process tracing helps highlight the causal mechanisms the proposed theory predicts. Because process tracing requires identification of the intervening steps in a case that hypotheses predict, it allows this dissertation to assess how closely the causal mechanisms fit actual decision-making processes.⁶⁵ Second, the independent variables that this research proposes are context-dependent. It is necessary to measure those variables by analyzing the specific contexts in which China makes decisions. Third, controlled comparison and congruence testing may lead to inferential errors because these methods may overlook variables. Using process tracing helps check for spuriousness and thus reduces the risks of potential inferential errors.⁶⁶

3.3.2 Scope Conditions

In this dissertation, I do not focus on the strategic choice of wait-and-see for two reasons. First, although wait-and-see is a feasible strategy, it is not a desired one. As the theory presented above demonstrates, when considering wedge and binding strategies, the initiator chooses wait-and-see as a last resort. Only with limited capabilities (weak leverage) and limited incentives (low level of security cooperation/low fear of abandonment), the initiator will opt for wait-and-see. Nonetheless, a wedge/binding dynamic begins as the (potential) alignment between the target and the adversary would pose threat to the initiator's security. As a result, the incentive to take action always

⁶⁴ Ibid., 182-92.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 207-16.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 223-55.

exists, be it strong or limited. Meanwhile, if the initiator chooses to wait, the alignment between the target and the adversary may grow and become more threatening in the future. Therefore, opportunity costs of wait-and-see are simply too high to forgo.⁶⁷

Second, empirically it is difficult to observe cases in which the initiator chooses wait-and-see. This strategy requires the initiator to maintain its current policy toward the target. If the initiator has been using accommodation or coercion at the status quo stage, choosing wait-and-see at subsequent stages means to continue the initiator's accommodation or coercion. Thus, it can be indistinguishable between accommodation/coercion and wait-and-see. To add, the initiator rarely chooses to do nothing when facing a changing external environment. For instance, as mentioned above, the United States chose wait-and-see toward the CCP in 1948 and 1949. Nonetheless, although deciding not to take a hostile attitude toward the CCP, Washington did not signal proactive cooperation. In May 1949 the United States listed several conditions under which it would recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC).⁶⁸ These conditions suggested that the United States was trying to postpone its recognition of the PRC.⁶⁹ As such, from the CCP's perspective, the U.S. strategy was a coercive wedge strategy.

⁶⁷ John C. Harsanyi, "Measurement of Social Power, Opportunity Costs, and the Theory of Two-Person Bargaining Games," *Behavioral Science* 7, no. 1 (1962): 67-80.

⁶⁸ Telegram: The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in China (Stuart), May 13, 1949, in *FRUS*, 1949, vol. IX, the Far East: China, eds. Francis C. Prescott, Herbert A. Fine, and Velma Hastings Cassidy (Washington, DC, 2018), Document 23, 56.

⁶⁹ Zi Zhongyun, *Zhuigen suyuan: Zhanhou Meiguo dui Hua zhengce de yuanyiyufazhan* [Tracing to the Roots: The Origin and Evolution of U.S. Policy toward China, 1945-1950] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 2007), 175-76.

In sum, excluding the strategy of wait-and-see may lead this dissertation to overlook some empirical cases. However, the number of those cases would be limited so that this exclusion will not cause much damage to the explanatory power of my theory.

3.3.3 Case Selection

In this dissertation, I focus on alliance balancing strategies in asymmetrical power politics. As such, the universe of cases is comprised of ones in which the initiator of wedge and binding strategies is weaker than its adversary.

I define asymmetrical balance of power narrowly: it only measures states' military capabilities and economic bases. Scholars of international relations, particularly realists, emphasize the role of military capabilities in their analyses. For instance, the mark of the affairs of nations, as Waltz notes, is the "daily presence of force and recurrent reliance on it."⁷⁰ Similarly, when analyzing great power competition, Mearsheimer also focuses on military capabilities and a state's population and wealth which will translate into its military forces.⁷¹ This view of power is incomplete; as subsequent chapters will show, a state's other power resources, such as close connection to overseas ethnic groups, can offset its military or economic inferiority.

In practice, I focus on cases of China's use of wedge and binding strategies. First, these cases of China are a subset of the universe of cases. When China used alliance balancing strategies in the Cold War, its adversary was either the Soviet Union and the United States; China was weaker than these two superpowers. Since the end of the Cold War, China's primary adversary has been the United States. While China has narrowed the gap in capabilities, China remains weaker than the United States. In addition,

⁷⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 186.

⁷¹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 57-75.

different from alliances in Europe and the Middle East, for example, the alignments that China has tried to divide or bind are bilateral. Second, focusing on China allows me to control for several domestic politics variables, such as regime type and leadership. Third, East Asia has been a strategic important region in the Cold War and remains so in the contemporary world. China, as a major power in the region, has devoted considerable efforts to competing with superpowers over allies. Therefore, it is important to understand China's strategic choices.

Nonetheless, focusing on China presents a few problems that may limit the generalizability of my theory. First, when China uses wedge and binding strategies, in most cases its target is a small power, such as North Korea and Thailand. In contrast, when other great powers employ those strategies, they may aim at other great powers. For instance, the Entente tried to induce Italy to realign and intervene in the First World War.⁷² As such, the logic of China's strategic choices against small powers may differ from that against great powers. Second, China has multiple security alignments with other states, but it has had only two treaty allies: the Soviet Union and North Korea.⁷³ Alliances, as Snyder defines, are "formal associations of states for the use (or non-use) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own member."⁷⁴ In contrast, alignment can be informal and thus entails lower commitment costs.⁷⁵ It is

⁷² Crawford, "The Alliance Politics of Concerted Accommodation: Entente Bargaining and Italian and Ottoman Interventions in the First World War," 135-42.

⁷³ John W. Garver, *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 35. Jae Ho Chung and Myung-hae Choi, "Uncertain Allies or Uncomfortable Neighbors? Making Sense of China-North Korea Relations, 1949-2010," *The Pacific Review* 26, no. 3 (2013): 243-64.

⁷⁴ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 4.

⁷⁵ Thomas S. Wilkins, "'Alignment', Not 'Alliance'-the Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment," *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012): 68.

possible that the logic of choice of alliance balancing strategies for alignments is different from that for formal alliances.

I further select cases of this dissertation based on two criteria: (a) cases that provide within- and across-case variation sufficient to test the proposed theory; and (b) cases that control for important variables that neorealism and neoclassical realism emphasize.⁷⁶ Table 3.2 summarizes cases that meet the case selection criteria.

Table 3.2. *Summary of Cases*

Case	Period	Target	Adversary
China's Wedge strategies			
Case I	1964–1975	Thailand	The United States
Case II	1975–1979	Vietnam	The Soviet Union
Case III	2012–2018	South Korea	The United States
China's Binding strategies			
Case IV	1965–1970	North Korea	The Soviet Union
Case V	1964–1973	North Vietnam	The Soviet Union

Four of these five cases occurred in the Cold War era so that I can control for bipolarity at the structure level that neorealism expects to drive states' behavior. Second, across all cases, the adversary was either the United States or the Soviet Union, both of whom were militarily and economically stronger than China. Therefore, China's coercive and reward capabilities were limited. It is very likely that whichever option China opted for, the adversary was able to outmatch it. Meanwhile, in all cases the target was both militarily and economically weaker than China. As a result, the balance of power between China and the target remained constant. Third, three of the cases occurred between 1964 and 1975, during which China had the same leadership and radical

⁷⁶ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 83–84.

domestic environment. As a result, this research can control for domestic political factors that neoclassical realism expects to drive states' foreign policy.

In the Thailand case, China had weak leverage over Thailand and faced a high level of security cooperation between Thailand and the United States. As a result, China opted for coercive wedge strategies. The Vietnam case contains two phases. In the first phase between April 1975 and June 1977, China had strong leverage over Vietnam and chose accommodative wedge strategies as its primary strategy. In addition, China used coercion to complement its accommodation. In the second phase between June 1977 and February 1979, China's leverage weakened and it witnessed increased security cooperation between Vietnam and the Soviet Union. China changed its wedge strategies to coercion.

In the South Korea case, China had strong leverage over South Korea who had a high level of security cooperation with the United States. As the proposed theory predicts, China opted for accommodation. China's choice of wedge strategies between 2012 and 2015 is consistent with the theory. However, in the second period of the case, from 2016 to 2018, the result does not fully fit the expectation of the theory. The theory predicts that China should have chosen accommodation as its primary wedge strategy and coercion as the complementary strategy. Nonetheless, China's actual strategic choices partly deviate from this prediction. Beginning in 2016, the United States sought to enhance its security cooperation with South Korea by deploying the THAAD system. Uncomfortable with this development, China posed economic sanction against South Korea and sent military planes to challenge South Korea's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). But China employed mixed strategies as the theory predicts. First, China

used coercive wedge strategies toward South Korea with restraints. Second, China tried to reassure South Korea by supporting sanctions against North Korean. To be conservative, this research treats the second period of South Korean case as a deviant case.

As the international relations literature on methodology suggests, studying deviant cases enables researchers to identify new variables or bring to light new causal mechanisms.⁷⁷ This deviant case enables this research to test two additional hypotheses. First, in all of the other cases the balance of military and economic capabilities between China and Adversary favors the latter. However, in the South Korean case between 2016 and 2018, China's military and economic capabilities are not inferior to U.S. ones in the Korean Peninsula. Given this balance of power, China is likely to believe its coercive wedge strategy will be effective. As Baldwin argues, threats are cheaper than inducements when they work. This calculation may prompt China to opt for coercive wedge strategies against South Korea. Second, China increased its coercive pressure after the impeachment of Park Geun-hye and before the new government came to office. It is possible that China was trying to use coercive wedge strategy to influence South Korea's domestic politics and shape its new foreign policy favorable to China. Figure 3.4 illustrates how I map these cases onto the theory of choice of wedge strategies.

⁷⁷ Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield," *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 176-78. George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 81. Jason Seawright and John Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options," *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2008): 302-03.

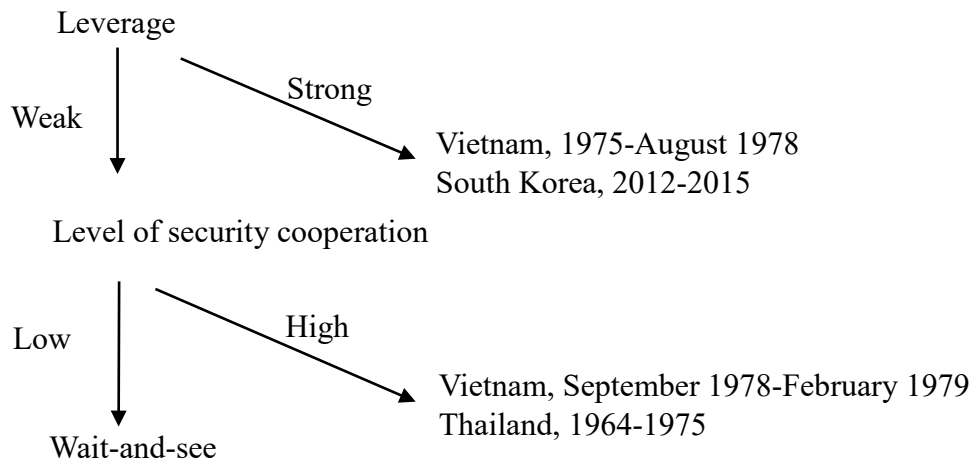


Figure 3.4. *Cases of Wedge Strategies*

There are also two binding cases. In the North Korea case, China had strong leverage over North Korea and its fear of abandonment was weak. As a result, China chose coercive binding strategies. In the North Vietnam case, China's fear of North Vietnam tilting toward the Soviet Union was strong. Nonetheless, between 1964 and 1969 China had strong leverage over North Vietnam so that China chose coercive binding strategy. In contrast, China's leverage became weak after 1969 and its binding strategy turned to accommodation. Figure 3.5 shows how these two cases fit the theory of choice of binding strategies.

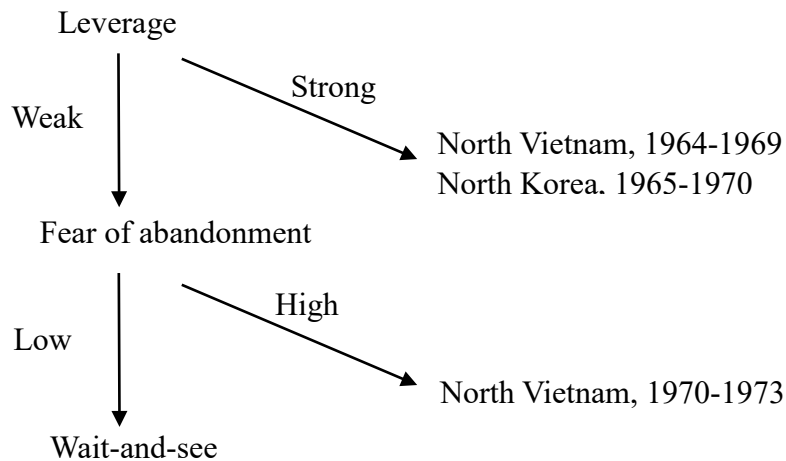


Figure 3.5. *Cases of Binding Strategies*

In addition, the North Vietnam case serves as a “hard” case. “Hard” cases are those with characteristics that could well lead to outcomes different from the expectations of the proposed theory.⁷⁸ If, in a “hard” case, researchers still can find evidence supporting the proposed theory, it provides strong support for the theory.⁷⁹ In the North Vietnam case, the United States posed a severe and imminent threat to China by fighting a war against North Vietnam. Moreover, as being inferior to U.S. capabilities, North Vietnam was desperate for material assistance, especially from the Soviet Union and China. As a result, China would have strong incentives to accommodate North Vietnam

⁷⁸ Aaron Rapport, “Hard Thinking About Hard and Easy Cases in Security Studies,” *Security Studies* 24, no. 3 (2015): 433.

⁷⁹ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 121-22.

by providing economic and military assistance. Nonetheless, China chose coercion as its primary binding strategy toward North Vietnam until the Tet Offensive.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, I develop a theory of the choice of alliance balancing strategy. First, I define three actors in the theory: (a) the initiator that chooses wedge and binding strategies; (b) the target state that is the target of the initiator's strategies; and (c) the adversary that threatens the initiator's security. Second, I define the dependent variable, the initiator's strategic choice, and code it into a dichotomous variable. I assign two values to the dependent variable: "coercion" and "accommodation." Next, I discuss the definition and the measurements of three independent variables: the initiator's leverage over the target, the degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary, and the initiator's fear of abandonment. Third, I lay out the theory that explains the initiator's choices of wedge and binding strategies. I argue that leverage and the degree of security cooperation determines the initiator's choice of wedge strategies while leverage and fear of abandonment determines its choice of binding strategies. To conclude, I discuss case selections and research design.

Chapter 4 China's Mixed Wedging to Detach Vietnam from the Soviet Union, 1975-1979

With the fall of Saigon, China faced a transformed security order in Indochina. With unification, Vietnam became a state with a powerful military and a population of about 50 million. More importantly, Hanoi had been tilting toward the Soviet Union since the Tet Offensive in 1968. Additionally, the U.S. withdrawal created a vacuum in Indochina that the Soviet Union attempted to fill. Therefore, the primary goal of China's Vietnam policy was to prevent further Vietnamese-Soviet cooperation.

From the fall of Saigon to the Chinese-Vietnamese war in 1979, China gradually switched its wedge strategies from accommodative to coercive. Prior to June 1977, China relied mainly on accommodation. As China enjoyed strong leverage over Vietnam, accommodative wedge strategies allowed China to induce Vietnam to keep distance with the Soviet Union while minimizing the risk of driving Vietnam into Soviet arms. Meanwhile, China used coercive wedge strategies to complement its accommodation. However, the ever-increasing Soviet support emboldened Hanoi and undermined Beijing's leverage over Hanoi. As a result, China's strategic choice became a function of the security cooperation between Moscow and Hanoi. When perceiving that such cooperation had reached a high level, China changed its wedge strategies from accommodative to coercive. Meanwhile, Beijing used accommodation as a complementary strategy. Nonetheless, as the security cooperation between the Soviet Union and Vietnam increased, China devoted fewer efforts to accommodation.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. The first section examines Soviet policy in Indochina, China's leverage over Vietnam, and China's wedge strategies between 1975 and June 1977. The second section analyzes change in China's leverage, the security cooperation between the Soviet Union and Vietnam, and corresponding change of China's wedge strategies between June 1977 and February 1979. I then explore alternative explanations and conclude with a summary of this case.

4.1 China Accommodates Vietnam, April 1975-June 1977

Indochina began to polarize in this period. On the one hand, Vietnam secured generous Soviet economic assistance. Vietnam also spared no effort to enhance its "special relationship" with Laos and Cambodia. This policy worked toward Laos. When delivering a speech on the 30th anniversary of Lao independent day in 1975, Kaysone Phomvihane expressed his gratitude to Hanoi's help: "Especially, we will be grateful to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)...for sacrificing blood...and for providing our revolution with your great and valuable support." He also embraced "the special combat solidarity spirit of the Lao, Vietnamese, and Cambodian people."¹³⁹ In a circular, the Secretariat of the Vietnam Workers' Party (VWP) Central Committee stated that it considered Lao revolutionary victory "our own victory," and "the Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian people have had a strong attachment to each other."¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, after taking over Phnom Penh, the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) refused to

¹³⁹ "Speech by Comrade Kaysone Phomvihane, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party at the Meeting in Vieng Xay on the 30th Anniversary of Lao's Declaration of Independence (October 12th, 1975)," in *History of Vietnam-Laos: Laos-Vietnam Special Relationship, 1930-2007*, vol. III (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2012), 363-64.

¹⁴⁰ "Circular of the Secretariat of the Vietnam Workers' Party Central Committee: On Celebrating Lao People's Great Victory," No. 327-TT/TW, December 5, 1975, in *ibid.*, 365-366.

accept the “special relationship” with Hanoi. To consolidate its position, the CPK sought support from Beijing.

To prevent Vietnam from dominating Indochina and prevent the Soviet Union from expanding its influence in the region, China used several instruments to accommodate Vietnam. On issues of economic assistance, overseas Chinese, territorial disputes, and the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict, Beijing adopted a moderate stance to lure Vietnam and undermine the Soviet-Vietnamese cooperation.

4.1.1 The Soviet Attempt to Consolidate Cooperation with Vietnam

To secure economic assistance from the Soviet Union, Hanoi sent Vice Premier Le Thanh Nghi to Moscow. Soviet leaders promised him that “in the coming 5 years, [the Soviet Union] will generously assist the DRV in developing all the main national economic branches.” According to Le Thanh Nghi, Hanoi and Moscow had “solved many important problems with a view to broadening the cooperation between our two brotherly countries.”¹⁴¹ Moreover, Le Thanh Nghi praised Vietnam-Soviet relations in his speech. He asserted that Vietnam and the Soviet Union were “loyal comrades, close brothers, and comrade-in-arms with common goals.”¹⁴²

Following Nghi’s visit, Le Duan traveled to Moscow in October. The joint communique Le Duan and Brezhnev signed showed Moscow’s willingness to strengthen its relations with Vietnam.¹⁴³ From Beijing’s perspective, in this communique Hanoi and Moscow “completely agreed on all issues.”¹⁴⁴ Beijing also believed that Vietnam

¹⁴¹ “Novikov Le Thanh Nghi Sign protocol on Talks,” August 22, 1975, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-75-177, L1-L2.

¹⁴² The Chinese Communist Party Central Liaison Department, *Guoji Gongyun Dashijie 1975 [Major Events of International Communist Movement 1975]* (Beijing: The Chinese Communist Party Central Liaison Department, 1976), (hereafter cited as *GJGYDSJ*), 39.

¹⁴³ Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979*, 60.

¹⁴⁴ *GJGYDSJ* 1975, 45.

supported Soviet efforts to consolidate international peace and détente between Moscow and Washington.¹⁴⁵

Moreover, Moscow agreed to provide 3.2 billion U.S. dollars in aid between 1976 and 1980, contributing 60 percent of the funds for Hanoi's five-year plan; in the first year after the end of the war the Soviet Union would pay \$1.2 billion as granted or earmarked.¹⁴⁶ Through this aid agreement, the Soviet Union also agreed to provide "technical assistance...in the development of the energy, mining, metal, chemical, and engineering industries, and...in equipment and machinery of various kinds for industry, building and agricultural, and...transport means, metals... food and other commodities." Moscow and Hanoi also agreed to coordinate their national economic plans in the next five years.¹⁴⁷ In December, the Soviet Union and Vietnam signed an additional agreement on economic assistance.¹⁴⁸

Another warning sign to China was the Soviet attempt to promote its Asian collective security system. As *Pravda* claimed in August, the Helsinki agreement would "serve as an example for the solution of a number of major problems like...the creation of a system of collective security in Asia."¹⁴⁹

Chinese leaders were alert to these developments in Indochina. In June 1975, Liu Zhenghua, Chinese Ambassador to Albania, told his Italian counterpart that Chinese-Soviet relations in Southeast Asia were "continually worsening." He also complained about Hanoi's policies that represented a Soviet point of view. Finally, observing that

¹⁴⁵ *GJGYDSJ* 1975, 45.

¹⁴⁶ Douglas Pike, "The USSR and Vietnam: Into the Swamp," *Asian Survey* 19, no. 12 (1979): 1164.

¹⁴⁷ "Joint Communique," *Moscow Pravda*, October 31, 1975, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-75-213, L1-L2.

¹⁴⁸ *GJGYDSJ* 1975, 50.

¹⁴⁹ Yu Zhukov and Yu. Kuznetsov, "The Conference has ended, The Work Continues," *Moscow Pravda*, August 3, 1975, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-75-152, August 6, 1975, BB4.

Hanoi was pressing its claim to disputed islands in the Gulf of Siam through military action, he criticized Vietnamese “chauvinism.”¹⁵⁰ Similarly, according to a CIA report, Mao was concerned that the Soviets would use their assistance to “make demands” on Hanoi, such as the establishment of bases in Vietnam and transit rights for Soviet personnel and equipment.¹⁵¹

4.1.2 China’s Leverage over Vietnam

China’s coercive and accommodative leverage over Vietnam came from four sources: its ability to adjust its policies toward the overseas Chinese in Vietnam, the Chinese-Vietnamese territorial disputes, the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict, and China’s economic assistance to Vietnam. In this period, the first three sources lent Beijing strong leverage over Hanoi. The issue of overseas Chinese significantly affected Vietnamese national economy, while the territorial disputes impacted the stability on the border. To add, Hanoi and Phnom Penh were having armed clashes along their border. Beijing’s influence in Phnom Penh could help deescalate the Vietnamese-Cambodian conflict. The last source, Chinese economic assistance, provided China with merely weak leverage as Vietnam could easily find alternative economic assistance from the Soviet Union. In total, China enjoyed strong leverage over Vietnam.

Overseas Chinese played an important role in Vietnamese economy, especially in the southern Vietnam. By 1972, overseas Chinese owned 28 of 32 banks in Saigon. Chinese companies were active in major industries in the south, such as textiles, cement,

¹⁵⁰ National Security Council (NSC), Intelligence Summary, “People’s Republic of China [Includes Cable from Richard Soloman to Henry Kissinger Dated June 29, 1975],” July 4, 1975, in DNSA collection: The History of the National Security Agency: 1945 to the Present.

¹⁵¹ CIA, “The President’s Daily Brief,” July 15, 1975, 1, in Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room (FOIA): President’s Daily Brief 1969-1977, document no. 0006014849.

and steel. They also controlled the rice market and the import-export business in the south.¹⁵² Moreover, China intended to enhance relations between Beijing and overseas Chinese. As the Soviet Embassy in Vietnam reported in 1976, Hanoi was anxious about Beijing's influence over the overseas Chinese community in southern Vietnam.

Vietnamese leaders claimed that they detected a connection between the "subversive appearances of the Maoist in Indochina." Hanoi also accused the overseas Chinese community in southern Vietnam of acting "in conflict with the line of the revolutionary authorities."¹⁵³

The territorial disputes were another source of Chinese leverage. According to Vietnamese sources, there were 90 border incidents in 1974, and 234 in 1975.¹⁵⁴ These incidents drew China's attention. In 1975, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Staff ordered Yunnan, Guangxi, and corresponding military regional and provincial commands to stabilize the border.¹⁵⁵ This offered Beijing leverage as Beijing was able to utilize these disputes to manipulate tension along the border. China could have raised tensions with Hanoi on this issue. Instead, Chinese leaders chose not to do so.

Different from issues of overseas Chinese and the territorial disputes on which Beijing exert influence by doing nothing, China was able to invest in its relations with Cambodia and influence Cambodian behavior. This was a more active use of leverage.

¹⁵² E. S. Ungar, "The Struggle over the Chinese Community in Vietnam, 1946-1986," *Pacific Affairs* 60, no. 4 (1987): 605-07.

¹⁵³ Stephen J Morris, *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia: Political Culture and the Causes of War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 175.

¹⁵⁴ Socialist Republic of Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRV MFA), *The Truth About Vietnam-China Relations Over the Last 30 Years* (hereafter cited as *The Truth About Vietnam-China Relations*), October 1979, in King C. Chen ed., *The Sino-Vietnamese War: Issues in Dispute, Chinese Law and Government* 26, no.1 (1983): 61.

¹⁵⁵ Luo Yuansheng, *Baizhan jiangxing Wang Shangrong* [*Wang Shangrong, A General Experiencing Hundreds of Battles*] (Beijing: Jiefangjun wenyi chubanshe, 1999), 375-377.

Conflictual relations between Cambodia and Vietnam made this possible. Seeking solidarity among three Indochinese states had been Hanoi's policy since April 1975. Nonetheless, different from their counterparts in Laos, Cambodian leaders resisted such a "special relationship" with Hanoi. This rift between Phnom Penh and Hanoi allowed China room to maneuver. By restraining the CPK behavior in the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict, Beijing was able to accommodate Hanoi.

When approaching its victory, the CPK indicated that it might not cooperate with Vietnam. On February 26, the Second National Congress of Cambodia issued a communique, claiming that Cambodia would not "tolerate any military base of aggression on their soil."¹⁵⁶ This statement clearly referred to Vietnamese troops who were then the only foreign troops in Cambodia. Similarly, after taking over Phnom Penh, the CPK declared that "Cambodia will firmly adhere to a policy of...absolutely not permitting any foreign country to install military bases in Cambodia, resolutely opposing all foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Cambodia and vigorously opposing all foreign subversion and aggression against Cambodia."¹⁵⁷

In addition to words, the CPK also took action. Right after taking over Phnom Penh, the CPK asked Hanoi to withdraw its personnel no later than the end of June. Hanoi rejected this request. Moreover, in several locations the Vietnamese and CPK troops exchanged fires.¹⁵⁸ In June 1975, Pol Pot led a delegation to Vietnam. During the negotiation, the CPK raised the border issues. The Vietnamese leadership, however,

¹⁵⁶ "Second National Congress in Liberated Zone," *Peking Review*, no. 10 (March 7, 1975): 24.

¹⁵⁷ "Press Communique of Cambodian Special National Congress," *Peking Review*, no. 18 (May 2, 1975), 19-20.

¹⁵⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea, *Black paper: facts and evidences of the acts of aggression and annexation of Vietnam against Kampuchea* (hereafter cited as *Black paper*) (Phnom Penh: Department of Press and Information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea, 1978), 73-74.

refused to discuss it.¹⁵⁹ Instead, Hanoi proposed to Pol Pot collective foreign and economic policies, and an Indochinese economic cooperation plan. Moreover, according to a CPK source, Hanoi offered Kampuchea economic aid of \$400 million. The CPK turned down all of these offers.¹⁶⁰

In this context, China's Cambodia policy was twofold. First, China provided aid to the CPK to balance against Vietnam. Second, China attempted to moderate the CPK's foreign policy to accommodate Vietnam. Indeed, to achieve the second objective, Beijing needed to help the CPK consolidate its power. On April 24, 1975, Marshall Ye Jianying chaired a Central Military Commission meeting, discussing the emergency shipment of assistance to Cambodia.¹⁶¹ Within days of the CPK takeover of Phnom Penh, Ieng Sary secretly visited China.¹⁶² On May 12, the Broadcast of Cambodia announced that Cambodia would accept aids from any friendly state if no strings attached to those aids.¹⁶³ Chinese emergency food aid started to arrive at Kampong Som. In July, there were seven shipments from China, supplying some 19 thousand tons of rice, 7,000 tons of various types of gasoline, and 3,063 tons of military equipment.¹⁶⁴ In the same month, Pol Pot and Ieng Sary paid a secret visit to China again.¹⁶⁵ In August, China and Kampuchea agreed on economic and technical cooperation.¹⁶⁶ In this month and October,

¹⁵⁹ *Black paper*, 75.

¹⁶⁰ Zhang Xizhen, *Xihanuke Jiazhu [The Family of Sihanouk]* (Beijing: Shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 256.

¹⁶¹ PLA National Defense University, *Xu Xiangqian Nianpu [Chronicles of Xu Xiangqian]* (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 2012), 314-15.

¹⁶² *GJGYDSJ* 1975, 67.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁶⁴ The Complete Register of Imports from China in 1975, cited in Andrew Mertha, *Brothers in Arms: Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 121.

¹⁶⁵ *GJGYDSJ* 1975, 71.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

Chinese Defense Ministry also sent teams of experts to Cambodia to assess defense needs.¹⁶⁷

In 1975, Chinese aid supplies to Cambodia included 61,000 tons of rice, 30,000 tons of fuel, 60 tons of medicines. To add, China also delivered 3,000 tons of “military equipment of all kinds” in this year.¹⁶⁸ A U.S. intelligence summary reported that China not only had been the largest contributor to Cambodian reconstruction since April 1975, but encouraged the CPK to open diplomatic relations with Thailand.¹⁶⁹ China continued to increase its economic and military assistance to the CPK in 1976. Minister of Foreign Trade Li Qiang led a delegation to Kampuchea in early 1976; the two sides signed several economic agreements on a loan of 140 million yuan and 20 million U.S. dollars.¹⁷⁰ These funds were merely for commercial transactions. Beijing and Phnom Penh had signed separate agreements for purchase of weapons.¹⁷¹ As for Chinese military assistance, by the end of 1975, the CPK informed China that they needed ten thousand tons of promised military aid in February or March. Responding to this request, Wang Shangrong, vice Chief of Staffs of PLA, rushed to Kampuchea in February 1976. China promised to deliver four thousand tons of weaponry and thirteen thousand tons of vehicles by the end of March, and soon after that, one hundred 120-millimeter artillery

¹⁶⁷ Nayan Chanda, *Brother Enemy: The War after the War* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1986), 17.

¹⁶⁸ Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 130.

¹⁶⁹ CIA, “Chinese Affairs,” December 9, 1975, in DNSA collection: China and U.S. Intelligence, 1945-2010.

¹⁷⁰ On January 5, 1976, the CPK ratified a new constitution, renaming the country as Democratic Kampuchea. I have used “Kampuchea” for situations that occurred since 1976.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Van Rith in Khpop commune, S’ang district, Kandal province, 20 February 2003 by Youk Chhang, http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Interviews/Sample_Interviews/Former_Kh_Rouge/Van_Rith.htm

pieces and shells.¹⁷² Four days later, China and Cambodia signed a military aid agreement. China agreed to provide “the necessary weapons and equipment for on-the-spot training of core officers” for a new military airport, air-defense equipment, and patrol boats. China would send five hundred military personnel to carry out training.¹⁷³ China speeded up its assistance to Kampuchea after April 1976. By June, China had transferred a production line of weaponry, anti-air radar, and other materials. China also trained military cadres and interns for Kampuchea.¹⁷⁴

Despite receiving these aids, the CPK was by no means subordinate to Beijing. The first example was the CPK treatment of overseas Chinese who had connection with Beijing. *Huayun* was a loose organization of ethnic Chinese in Cambodia. Its core was *Qiaodang*, the Overseas Branch of the CCP.¹⁷⁵ As early as in 1973, Beijing and the CPK had reached an agreement of transferring all the core leaders and members of the *Huayun* to the CPK.¹⁷⁶ However, the CPK did not trust these ethnic Chinese. The CPK delayed issuing passage permits to *Huayun* members, refused to let them return to Phnom Penh, and eventually left most of them in the jungles near Kratié, a town in northeastern Cambodia.¹⁷⁷ Second, the CPK did not follow Beijing’s advice on the treatment of Sihanouk. When Khieu Samphan visited China in 1975, one of his tasks was to bring

¹⁷² Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*, 132.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁷⁴ Discussion between Wang Shangrong and Son Sen, June 2, 1976, cited in You Lan, “The Development of North Vietnam’s Strategy in Indochina under the View of Its Unified War, 1945-1975,” (Ph.D. dissertation, East China Normal University, 2015), 354.

¹⁷⁵ Wang Chenyi, “The Chinese Communist Party’s Relationship with the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s: An Ideological Victory and a Strategic Failure,” *Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Working Paper no. 88* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2018), 26.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷⁷ Zhou Degao, *Woyu Zhonggong he Jiangong [My story with the CCP and the Khmer Rouge]* (Hong Kong: Greenfield Bookstore, 2007), 56-62.

Sihanouk back to Cambodia. Chinese leaders suggested that Sihanouk and the CPK cooperate. Hosting a meeting with both Sihanouk and Samphan, Mao Zedong stressed on solidarity: “The CPK and Prince Sihanouk had conflicts in the past... [but] you have strengthened cooperation and won the war. Now you should not go separate ways. You should unite closely, support each other, and keep peace and neutrality of Cambodia.”¹⁷⁸ Nonetheless, China’s efforts did not guarantee Sihanouk a significant position within Khmer Rouge.

4.1.3 Increasing yet Limited Security Cooperation between Moscow and Hanoi

During this period, China was concerned about Soviet expansion in Asia, especially in Southeast Asia. First, China was anxious about the Soviet military deployment. In September 1975 Vice Premier Ji Dengkui visited Romania. When meeting with Ilie Verdeț, Secretary of the Central Committee of Romanian Communist Party, Ji said that “the 1 million Soviet military men (1/4 of their army) were massed at the border with China.”¹⁷⁹ In April 1976, Geng Biao, Vice Premier and Minister of the CCP Central Liaison Department, delivered a speech. He explained to his audience that letting the “U.S. help us defend in the east” would make it easier for China to deal with the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁰ Second and related, China was worried about U.S. and European “appeasement” toward the Soviet Union. Such appeasement would allow the Soviet Union to focus more on East Asia and China, which, in turn, would enable the Soviet

¹⁷⁸ Zhang Qing, “Zhongjian youhaoshi shang yiduan nanwang de zhanyouqingjie” [“Unforgettable Friendship between Comrades-in-arms in the Chinese-Cambodian Friendly Relationship”], *Waijiaoxueyuan xubao* [Journal of China Foreign Affairs University], no.76 (2004): 64-69.

¹⁷⁹ “Note regarding the Meeting between Ilie Verdeț and Ji Denggui,” September 06, 1975, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, ANIC, CC PCR, Relatii Externe, 275/1975. Translated by Eliza Gheorghe. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121908>

¹⁸⁰ “Geng Biao’s Speech on China-U.S. Relations,” August 24, 1976, in *Zhongguo Wenhua dageming Wenku* [The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database], 3rd ed., ed. Song Yongyi (Hong Kong: Universities Service Centre for Chinese Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2013).

Union to raise its security cooperation with Vietnam. Consequently, Chinese leaders took pains to suggest the United States and European states not to “appease” Moscow. In the address mentioned above, Geng Biao stressed that it is important for China to “repeat to U.S. leaders that détente with the Soviet Union will not work. It is surrender...(Détente) will cost us dearly.”¹⁸¹

Yet, the Soviet-Vietnamese cooperation had not reached its apex. First, the Soviet Union did not maintain a naval presence in Vietnam. As early as in mid-1975, Chinese leaders had told their U.S. counterparts that the Soviet Union had a naval base in Cam Ranh Bay.¹⁸² This was not true as Hanoi refused to permit access to Cam Ranh Bay to the Soviet Union.¹⁸³ In 1976, some Chinese source again reported that the Soviet Union had reached an agreement with Vietnam to use Cam Ranh Bay as a base to supply oil, and transport weaponry and military goods and materials to Vietnam.¹⁸⁴ This was also a false alarm.

Second, although Chinese leaders were alert to Soviet efforts to promote its Asian collective security system, they believed Soviet efforts would be in vain. As Deng Xiaoping told the French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, Soviet efforts “seem bound to fail because we cannot see who would agree with them.”¹⁸⁵ Similarly, Ji Dengkui told his

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² NSC, “Memorandum of Conversation,” July 11, 1975, in DSNA collection: Kissinger Transcripts, 1968-1977.

¹⁸³ Douglas Pike, *Vietnam and the Soviet Union: Anatomy of an Alliance* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 126.

¹⁸⁴ Zhu Yulian et al., *Shijie zhongyao zhanlue diqu tushuo* [Maps and Discussion of Important Strategic Regions in the World] (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 1986), 76.

¹⁸⁵ “Record of Conversation between French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac and Vice Premier of the People’s Republic Deng Xiaoping,” May 12, 1975, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, la Courneuve (MAE), Série Asie-Océanie, Sous-série Chine 1973-1980 (AO), 2174. Archival Reference Code (“Côte”): 752INVA/2174. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Martin Albers and included in CWIHP e-Dossier No. 45. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118650>

Romanian hosts in 1975 that the Soviet-proposed collective security system in Asia resulted from conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States. He went on to comment that “only one or two [Asian states] responded positively to this initiative. Only external Mongolia publicly manifested its agreement (having foreign troops on its territory, they cannot express their opinions freely).¹⁸⁶

4.1.4 China Accommodated Vietnam

China primarily accommodated Vietnam in this period. With multiple sources of strong leverage over Vietnamese interests, China tried to induce Vietnam to keep distance with the Soviet Union, and not to alienate Vietnam. In order to achieve this objective, China provided incentives to Vietnam on several issues.

First, territorial disputes along the border as well as in the South China Sea had been a source of frictions between China and Vietnam. According to the Vietnamese account, in 1975 there were 234 small conflicts on the border.¹⁸⁷ However, China decided not to raise tensions with Hanoi on this issue. Instead, Beijing accommodated Vietnam by shelving territorial disputes. China proposed high-level negotiations on the land border disputes before North Vietnam took over Saigon.¹⁸⁸ While Hanoi rejected this offer, low-level talks at the provincial level had started since August 1974.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, Beijing remained quiet when Hanoi challenged Beijing’s claims. In April 1975, Vietnam

¹⁸⁶ “Note regarding the Meeting between Ilie Verdet and Ji Denggui,” September 6, 1975, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, ANIC, CC PCR, Relatii Externe, 275/1975. Translated by Eliza Gheorghe. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121908>

¹⁸⁷ *The Truth About Vietnam-China Relations*, 61.

¹⁸⁸ SRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Memorandum on Chinese Provocations and Territorial Encroachments upon Vietnamese Territory,” *Hanoi Vietnam News Agency (VNA)*, March 15, 1979, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-79-054, March 19, 1979, K20.

¹⁸⁹ Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979*, 37.

occupied some of the Spratly Islands that China claimed as well. However, no Chinese official media commented on this incident.¹⁹⁰

When Le Duan visited China in 1975, Deng Xiaoping again downplayed the importance of border and offshore islands problems. Deng commented that the land border dispute was “simply...over a few *mu* of land here and there. I believe that the dispute is not great and that the issue is not hard to resolve.”¹⁹¹ As for the offshore islands, Deng acknowledged there was a dispute, but China and Vietnam could “discuss this question in the future.”¹⁹² China’s silence on the territorial dispute was more revealing given that Beijing was actually dissatisfied with Vietnamese behavior. Actually, prior to Le Duan’s visit to Beijing, *Renmin Ribao* [*People’s Daily*], for the first time, reported China’s takeover operation in the Paracels in 1974. In November, *Renmin Ribao* carried an editorial, denouncing “foreign aggressors” in the South China Sea.¹⁹³ Moreover, Beijing directed its diplomats in September to acknowledge the territorial dispute with Hanoi. Beijing also informed its cadres in Hong Kong and South China that its relations with Hanoi were “bad,” and asked them to be prepared for using a new slogan demanding the return of the Spratlys to China.¹⁹⁴

Despite these dissatisfactions, Beijing eventually decided not to put pressure Hanoi on territorial disputes. As Vietnam had yet challenged Chinese interests publicly, China was expecting to exchange its silence on border issues for Vietnamese distancing with the Soviet Union. Tensions on the Chinese-Vietnamese border were escalating in 1976 and

¹⁹⁰ Searching in *Renmin Ribao* and Xinhua News Agency (Xinhua) yields no report of this incident.

¹⁹¹ Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979*, 67.

¹⁹² “Hanoi Goes Back on Its Word,” *Peking Review* no.34 (August 24, 1979), 26.

¹⁹³ *Renmin Ribao*, November 25, 1975.

¹⁹⁴ CIA, “Chinese Affairs,” December 9, 1975, in DNSA collection: China and U.S. Intelligence, 1945-2010.

1977. Hanoi reported that on average three border incidents broke out per day in 1976.¹⁹⁵ However, in 1976 neither China nor Vietnam publicized their border issues.¹⁹⁶

In addition to the territorial disputes, Beijing also kept a detached attitude toward overseas Chinese in Vietnam. After taking over Saigon, Hanoi began to deal with the overseas Chinese community in southern Vietnam. An editorial in *Renmin Bao* reported that up to the end of September, the Vietnamese government had arrested more than 200 “capitalists” and confiscated their property. Most of them held Chinese nationalities.¹⁹⁷ Nonetheless, this editorial adopted a rather detached tone describing these arrests and it did not charge Hanoi of mistreating overseas Chinese.

More officially, in a report in 1975, the Chinese Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua stated that China opposed dual nationality because “for the interest of our country... [This] is not a good practice.” Rather, Qiao claimed, China encouraged overseas Chinese to “be naturalized in the host country so that they can enjoy their civil rights of that country.”¹⁹⁸

Hanoi began to take more systemic measures against overseas Chinese. In August 1976, Hanoi passed a law that called for an 80 percent tax, retroactively, which later increased to 100 percent. Observers believed this law particularly aimed at the ethnic Chinese in Saigon.¹⁹⁹ Subsequently, Hanoi ordered to close all the Chinese newspapers in

¹⁹⁵ Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979*, 101.

¹⁹⁶ CIA, “The President’s Daily Brief,” May 11, 1976, 2-3, in FOIA: President’s Daily Brief 1969-1977, document no. 0006015105.

¹⁹⁷ *GJGYDSJ* 1975, 42.

¹⁹⁸ “Ch’iao Kuan-hua’s Address on the “Current Situation of the World” and Peiping’s “Foreign Policy,” May 20, 1975, in Institute of International Relations ed., *Classified Chinese Communist Documents: A Selection* (Taipei: National Chengchi University, 1978), 568.

¹⁹⁹ “Chinese in Saigon Face Heavy Taxes,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1976, 13.

the south and Chinese-run schools.²⁰⁰ Nonetheless, Beijing remained silent on these issues. Hanoi stepped up its hardline policy towards overseas Chinese in 1977. In February, Hanoi ordered all Chinese residents in southern Vietnam to register their citizenship, an attempt to turn all of them into Vietnamese citizens.²⁰¹ Subsequently, Vietnam began to “clear up the border areas,” and “start in a planned way to expel” ethnic Chinese.²⁰² Yet again, Beijing chose not to comment on this issue.

In addition to accommodating Hanoi on the territorial disputes and overseas Chinese issues by taking no action, Beijing also accommodated Hanoi by trying to moderate the CPK’s Vietnam policy. By keeping a rather neutral policy in the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict, China attempted to prevent Vietnam from further tilting toward the Soviet Union. According to a Chinese diplomat, territorial disputes and conflicts between Cambodia and Vietnam had been a constant topic Chinese and CPK leaders discussed.²⁰³ To accommodate Hanoi, Beijing took a “middle-road” policy in the Kampuchean-Vietnamese conflict. In June 1975, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, and Geng Biao held a series of meetings with Pol Pot and Ieng Sary. In the meetings, Pol Pot explained the CPK domestic policies and their territorial disputes with Vietnam. The Chinese leaders, in response, elaborated on Chinese perspectives of the international situation, competition between the Soviet Union and the United States, and the “Three World” theory. Moreover, Deng explained the CCP experience of carrying out the united

²⁰⁰ Pao-min Chang, “The Sino-Vietnamese Dispute over the Ethnic Chinese,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 90 (1982): 200.

²⁰¹ “History Stood on Its Head: On the Vietnamese authorities’ Position Concerning the Question of Chinese Residents in South Vietnam,” *Peking Review*, no. 27 (July 7, 1978), 28.

²⁰² Pao-min Chang, *Beijing, Hanoi, and the Overseas Chinese* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 22-23. “Overseas Chinese Affairs Spokesman’s Statement on SRV,” *Peking NCNA*, May 24, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-78-101, A6-A8.

²⁰³ Huang Qun, *Liushinina Zhongyue guanxi zhi jianzheng* [Witness to China-Vietnam Relations in Sixty Years] (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2014), 132.

front policy after 1949.²⁰⁴ Details of Chinese advice to the CPK leaders remained unclear. However, as the Chinese leaders stressed on their united front policy and the “Three World” theory, it seems that Chinese leaders suggested their Cambodian guests to modify their stance on territorial disputes.

China’s “middle-road” policy was consistent with its subsequent action. In 1975, Beijing had informed its journalists in Hong Kong that China sided with Cambodia in the Cambodian-Vietnamese territorial disputes, but wanted to avoid a public dispute with Vietnam on this issue.²⁰⁵ Meanwhile, China called for solidarity among three Indochinese states. An editorial in *Renmin Bao* reported Le Duan’s visit to Cambodia in July and commented that Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos were “close neighbors; their destinies were entwined in the struggle. The unity of three nations was extremely important.”²⁰⁶

In May 1976, Kampuchea and Vietnam held their first negotiation on the territorial dispute. Nonetheless, it proved to be fruitless. However, the two governments agreed to maintain the status quo on the border and avoid conflicts.²⁰⁷ In this year, China continued to signal its support for Kampuchea, but avoided choosing side in Kampuchea-Vietnam conflict. For instance, in March the state-run Xinhua News Agency (Xinhua) cited a Radio Cambodia broadcast approvingly: “The Kampuchean people and their revolutionary armed forces are taking and will continue to take a firm stand in defending independent democratic Kampuchea and its national unity.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 124.

²⁰⁵ CIA, “The President’s Daily Brief,” July 9, 1975, 1, in FOIA: President’s Daily Brief 1969-1977, document no. 0006014844.

²⁰⁶ *GJGYDSJ* 1975, 36.

²⁰⁷ *GJGYDSJ* 1976, 50-51.

²⁰⁸ “Radio Cambodia Comment on Foreign Policy Cited,” *Peking NCNA*, March 27, 1976, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-76-061, A12.

In the first half of 1977, on the one hand, China continued to signal its support for the CPK. On the other hand, China encouraged negotiation and avoided to side too close with the CPK. On July 30, 1977, the new Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua explained to his comrades in the Foreign Ministry about China's Indochina policy. He remarked, "Cambodia has had some trouble with its adjacent countries...Why do I not call it conflict or war but trouble? Because it is a trouble for them, and *a trouble for us*. (Emphasis added)" He further explained the delicate situation for China. On the one hand, China was displeased to see the fighting between Kampuchea and Vietnam. Chinese leaders thought it would be "better not to fight this war." On the other hand, Huang admitted, there was "some difficulty in stopping the fighting and bringing the problems to discussion on the table." Huang stressed that for China, "the handling must be discreet," otherwise China would be "in a dilemma."²⁰⁹

China signaled its concerns to Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea. First, China suggest that they "stop all armed conflicts and return to the conference table" because they had "no conflicts of fundamental interest." Second, China was willing to act as a mediator. Third, China linked its material assistance to policies of Indochinese states. China, on the one hand, would "never side with any party to increase tension among them or provide any party with military aid or any form of assistance that may lead to tension." On the other hand, China pledged to "provide as much assistance as she can in the post-war building of democratic, socialist countries."²¹⁰ Finally, China claimed its support for Kampuchea. China would "support Kampuchea and its people's stance of opposing Soviet-revisionist social imperialism...We will support Kampuchea and its people with

²⁰⁹ "Huang Hua's Report on the World Situation," *Issues and Studies* 13, no.11 (1977), 82-83.

²¹⁰ "Huang Hua's Report on the World Situation," *Issues and Studies* 13, no.12 (1977), 79.

all possible aid in all the struggle campaigns for integrity of its territory and against interference in its sovereignty.”²¹¹

It was also clear that China restrained its support for Kampuchea. As Huang Hua explained, when Chinese people in government organs and units, factories, and universities attempted to stage demonstrations to support Kampuchea, “We stopped them.” As he reasoned, the “influence would be no good.”²¹² Moreover, China adjusted its assistance policy to Kampuchea based on its Vietnam policy. Despite its generous aid, China did not just satisfy all that the CPK requested. According to a CPK Central Committee member, the CPK leaders were impatient with the rate at which Chinese aid arrived. “In 1977 it was said that the Chinese did not believe there was a threat to Kampuchea from Vietnam and took a complacent attitude towards the whole problem.”²¹³

According to Chanda’s interviews with Vietnamese officials, Hanoi was unclear about the extent to which China would support the CPK’s provocations against Vietnam in 1977. Actually, China tried to mediate disputes between Hanoi and Phnom Penh. When Pol Pot continued his visit in China in June 1977, Phan Hien, Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister, secretly arrived in Beijing. At Hien’s request, China arranged two meetings between him and two CPK representatives to discuss Vietnamese-Cambodian border issues. Unfortunately, these meetings turned out to be nothing but exchanges of fierce allegations.²¹⁴ Nonetheless, China still refused to invest all assets into Phnom

²¹¹ Ibid., 79.

²¹² “Huang Hua’s Report on the World Situation,” *Issues and Studies* 13, no.11 (1977), 83.

²¹³ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*, 378.

²¹⁴ Chanda, *Brother Enemy: The War after the War*, 199.

Penh. Commenting on this Vietnamese-Cambodian meeting, Deng Xiaoping remarked, “The problems will be resolved by themselves. What we want is for them to carry out good negotiations. We ourselves do not judge what is just or erroneous.”²¹⁵

The last component of Chinese accommodation was its economic assistance to Vietnam. It was delicate. On the one hand, China was unable to outbid the Soviet economic assistance. Therefore, China refused to participate into this competition. On the other hand, China did not want to alienate Vietnam by cutting off its economic assistance. As a result, China adopted a twofold policy. First, China refused to promise new assistance to Vietnam. By turning down Vietnamese requests, Chinese leaders could not only avoid a bidding competition with the Soviets, but also show their dissatisfaction toward improved Soviet-Vietnamese relations. Second, China carried out assistance agreements it had signed with Vietnam before the end of the Vietnam War. Thus, this policy allowed China to accommodate Vietnam, but only to a limited extent.

The Chinese leadership handle this assistance issue cautiously. As Mao stated, “we should not criticize Vietnam before we can see the post-victory development.”²¹⁶ After the fall of Saigon, China acclaimed Hanoi’s victory and promised to offer support. On May 3, Ye Jianying stated in a public speech that China would “continue to firmly support the just struggle of the Vietnamese people.”²¹⁷ Similarly, multiple editorials in *Renmin Ribao* sent the message that China would continue its support for Vietnam.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Ibid., 209.

²¹⁶ “Chiang Chi’ing’s Address to Diplomatic Cadres,” March 1975, in Institute of International Relations ed., *Classified Chinese Communist Documents*, 541.

²¹⁷ *Renmin Ribao*, May 3, 1975.

²¹⁸ For example, see, *Renmin Ribao*, May 2, May 3, June 6, 1975.

Beijing coupled their words with limited deeds. On the eve of the fall of Saigon, China delivered eight MiG-19 fighters to Vietnam.²¹⁹ Subsequently, after the signing of the Soviet-Vietnamese aid agreement on May 12, Beijing also signed an aid agreement with Vietnam. The agreement provided an interest-free loan and a supply of “general commodities.”²²⁰ According to a Chinese report, China’s assistance projects included constructing industrial projects, improving military equipment, and expanding rifle and ammunition plants.²²¹ A CIA report estimated that Chinese aid kept at about \$300 million annually.²²²

In a policy review in early 1977, the Soviet Union assessed that China-Vietnam relations were improving. According to this review, Vietnam informed the Soviet Union that China was “actively helping Vietnam recover its economy.”²²³ China also signaled its moderate attitude toward Vietnam. At a public occasion, Deng pledged, “China...will stand unswervingly on the side of the Third World countries and...strengthen our unity and resolutely fight against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism.” Turning the focus to Vietnam, Deng praised the “long-standing traditional friendship” between China and Vietnam. For two states, he continued, “to preserve and develop this friendship...is in keeping with their fundamental interests. We will spare no effort in doing so.”²²⁴

²¹⁹ CIA, “The President’s Daily Brief,” March 4, 1975, 2, in FOIA: President’s Daily Brief 1969-1977, document no. 0006014736.

²²⁰ CIA, “The President’s Daily Brief,” September 27, 1975, 8, in FOIA: President’s Daily Brief 1969-1977, document no. 0006014913.

²²¹ Commentary, “Why have Sino-Vietnamese Relations Worsened after Vietnam’s Reunification?” *Renmin Ribao* and *Xinhua*, November 26, 1979, in *On the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry’s White Book Concerning Vietnam-China Relations* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1979), 29.

²²² CIA Intelligence Memorandum, “Sino-Soviet Competition in Indochina,” November 14, 1978, 8, in DNSA collection: China and U.S. Intelligence, 1945-2010.

²²³ “On the Situation in China and its Foreign Policy,” in Shen Zhihua et al., eds., *Eluosi jiemi dangan xuanbian: ZhongGuo guanxi* [Selection of Declassified Russian Documents: Chinese-Soviet Relations] (Shanghai: Dongfang chubanzhongxin, 2015), vol.12, 267-268.

²²⁴ “Teng Hsiao-ping’s Speech,” *NCNA*, September 22, 1975, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-77-107, June 3, 1977, A4.

In addition to carrying out its own assistance promise, China also encouraged Vietnam to seek economic aid for the Western world. For instance, China responded positively to the joint communique Pham Van Dong signed with France. Xinhua reported this communique approvingly: “The two sides noted with satisfaction that the remaining problems inherited from the past have been settled or are on the way to settlement and thus a new page in the history of Vietnamese-French relations can be opened.”²²⁵

Similarly, Leonard Woodcock led a U.S. presidential commission to visit Hanoi and discuss normalization of their relations. Neither the Vietnam News Agency nor Xinhua mentioned the 1973 Paris Peace Agreement as condition to normalization.²²⁶

4.1.5 Coercion as A Complementary Strategy

China used coercive wedge strategies to complement its accommodation. By doing so, China was able to signal a restrained accommodative strategy as well as its displeasure with closer Vietnamese-Soviet relations. The major tool for Beijing to drive a coercive wedge was also its economic assistance to Vietnam. As argued above, while delivering promised assistance, China denied new aid programs to Vietnam.

As early as in 1973, China planned to decrease its total foreign aid.²²⁷ Based on this decision, China had rejected many requests from Vietnam in 1975. In April, Beijing decided not to increase the total amount of foreign aid, keeping it at 5 billion Renminbi (RMB) every year. Meanwhile, Beijing decided to decrease the share of foreign aid to

²²⁵ “NCNA Reports on Visit of SRV’s Pham Van Dong to France,” *Peking NCNA*, April 29, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-77-085, A15.

²²⁶ Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979*, 129, 299. “VNA Report on Pham Van Dong-woodcock Meeting Cited,” *Peking NCNA*, March 18, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-77-054, A4-A5.

²²⁷ Ma Jisen, *Waijiaobu Wenge Jishi [Record of the Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry]*, (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003), 241.

Vietnam, North Korea, Albania, Laos, and Cambodia from 70% to 50%.²²⁸ Overall, Chinese economic assistance to Vietnam decreased.

When Le Thanh Nghi visited Beijing, he remarked, “the Vietnamese people are proud to have as their close comrades and brothers the Chinese people who always regard it their bounden internationalist duty to give support and assistance to the Vietnamese people’s revolutionary cause.”²²⁹ In contrast, the Chinese were less enthusiastic. Li Xiannian, in his welcome speech, even dropped the line that “China would continue to perform [its] internationalist duty.” Instead, he merely said, “the Chinese people will, as always, firmly support the just struggle of the Vietnamese people.” In the speech, Li also stressed the “spirit of self-reliance” of Vietnam.²³⁰

China also showed its displeasure toward Vietnam’s Soviet policy when Le Duan traveled to China. Although China signed a new aid agreement with Vietnam after Le Duan return from Moscow, Chinese leaders changed their policy from providing grant aid to interest-free loan, which was less obligated.²³¹ Moreover, in their discussion Mao told Le Duan: “Today, you are not the poorest under heaven. We are the poorest. We have a population of 800 million.”²³²

On November 15, 1976, Pham Van Dong requested aid from China for a number of projects. Nonetheless, Chinese leaders did not reply until February 1977, and the

²²⁸ Ibid., 242.

²²⁹ “Li Hsien-nien Hosts Banquet,” *Peking NCNA*, August 13, 1975, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-75-158, August 14, 1975, A7.

²³⁰ Ibid., A6. For a more detailed analysis, see Ross, *The Indochina Tangle*, 63.

²³¹ CIA, “The President’s Daily Brief,” September 27, 1975, 8, in FOIA: President’s Daily Brief 1969-1977, document no. 0006014913.

²³² Discussion between Mao Zedong and Le Duan, September 24, 1975, in Odd Arne Westad et al., *77 Conversations between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977* (hereafter cited as *77 Conversations*), CWIHP Working Paper no. 22 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1998), 192.

Chinese response was “we have not been able to satisfy your requests.” Moreover, in the reply Li Xiannian explained, “Over 2,000 million yuan earmarked of our aid to Vietnam remains unused, and more than a hundred projects for complete sets of equipment are yet to be constructed...Therefore, we have in no position to provide new aid to the Vietnamese comrades.”²³³ Hanoi complained about the level of Chinese assistance, and claimed that Beijing was applying economic pressure to alter Hanoi’s pro-Soviet positions.²³⁴

China’s economic assistance policy to Vietnam remained the same in 1977. In February, a Vietnamese economic delegation visited China. The only result of their trip was the signing of a “mutual supply of goods and payments agreement for 1977.”²³⁵ Moreover, after Le Thanh Nghi signed new economic agreements in Moscow in August, China signaled its displeasure. When Nghi stopped in Beijing, the Chinese leadership gave him a cool welcome. Not only did *Xinhua* adopt a more restrained tone reporting Nghi’s trip, but also Li Xiannian refused Nghi’s new aid request.²³⁶ Reportedly, by the end of 1977 China had only provided a quarter of the amount Vietnam expected in the 1976-1977 period.²³⁷ These indicated China’s dissatisfaction with closer Soviet-Vietnamese relations.

In addition to its economic assistance policy, China also bluntly voiced its dissatisfaction toward Vietnam. In 1976, Deng Xiaoping complained to Le Duan: “There

²³³ “Memorandum on Vice-Premier Li’s Talks with Premier Pham Van Dong, June 10, 1977,” *Peking Review* no. 13 (March 30, 1979), 22.

²³⁴ CIA, “The President’s Daily Brief,” May 11, 1976, 2-3, in FOIA: President’s Daily Brief 1969-1977, document no. 0006015105.

²³⁵ “PRC, SRV Sign 1977 Goods, Payments Accord,” *Peking NCNA*, March 19, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-77-054, A5.

²³⁶ Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China’s Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979*, 132. “Li Hsien-nien Meets Vietnam’s Le Thanh Nghi,” *Peking NCNA*, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-77-157, August 15, 1977, A8.

²³⁷ Francis Nivolon, “Vietnam on the Aid Trail,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (1979): 38.

have been some problems in the relations between our countries... In fact, you stress the threat from the North...for you, it means China.” After reminding Le Duan that this issue had been raised previously, Deng continued, “For the last few years, such things have still occurred and they seem to be more frequent than before. The threat from the North is the main theme, even in your textbooks. We are not at ease with this.” Deng concluded, “We have not annexed a centimeter of your territory.”²³⁸

4.2 China Turned to Coercion, July 1977-February 1979

China’s accommodation failed to promote Vietnam’s independence from the Soviet Union. Instead, Vietnam moved increasingly close to the Soviet Union. More economic support from the Soviet Union emboldened Hanoi and gave Hanoi confidence to challenge China on the issues of territorial disputes and overseas Chinese. Meanwhile, the CPK proved to be difficult to restrain. It further undermined Chinese accommodation. As a result, China’s leverage over Vietnam gradually became insufficient. Therefore, China’s choice of wedge strategies became largely a function of the level of security cooperation between the Soviet Union and Vietnam. As such cooperation was increasingly high, China began to exert more pressure on Vietnam.

4.2.1 Hanoi Tilted toward Moscow

During this period, Soviet-Vietnam relations rapidly improved. When Pham Van Dong traveled to Moscow in September 1977, he appeared on Soviet television and expressed his gratitude to Soviet assistance. As he remarked, “When you drink water, you must not forget the source.” The Vietnamese premier also pledged to further Vietnamese-Soviet

²³⁸ Discussion between Deng Xiaoping and Le Duan, September 29, 1975, in *ibid*, 192-93.

cooperation: “We assure you that we will make every effort to deepen the friendship and fraternal cooperation.”²³⁹ On the same day, Brezhnev declared that the Soviet Union was “particularly pleased to note that the friendship and cooperation” between Vietnam and the Soviet Union “in all fields have developed more and more vigorously and with a more and more profound meaning.” He further promised that the Soviet Union “will continue to give the Vietnamese people an all-sided assistance and support in your cause of socialist construction.”²⁴⁰

In addition to verbal support, the Soviet Union also stepped up its economic assistance to Vietnam. In December 1977, the Soviet Union and Vietnam signed a trade protocol, in which the Soviet Union agreed to provide “machines and equipment...raw materials and fuel...and supplementary” food to Vietnam.²⁴¹ One month later, Moscow claimed that it had extended loans to Vietnam, assisted Vietnam to build 40 more enterprises, and “determined to assist Vietnam in building a socialist society.”²⁴² In February, the Soviet Union confirmed that it would provide “a large quantity of equipment and materials” to help Vietnam explore its oil and gas deposits.²⁴³ Moscow also sent a substantial number of personnel to Vietnam. According to a CIA estimate, by early 1978 there were about Soviet 3,000-4,000 personnel in Vietnam. Most of them were

²³⁹ “Pham Van Dong Discusses October Revolution on Soviet TV,” *Moscow Domestic Service*, September 2, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-77-173, L1.

²⁴⁰ “Soviet Leaders’ Message,” *Hanoi VNA*, September 5, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-77-172, K2.

²⁴¹ “Trade Protocol, Supplementary Food Pact Signed with USSR,” *Hanoi VNA*, December 18, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-77-243, K1.

²⁴² “USSR, SRV Observe 38th Anniversary of Relations, *Moscow*, January 28, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-78-020, L1-L2.

²⁴³ “USSR to Aid Vietnam in Gas, Oil Prospecting,” *Moscow TASS*, February 25, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-78-041, L2.

involved in economic assistance.²⁴⁴ Allegedly, when China announced that it would withdraw its experts from Vietnam, the Soviet Union offered to replace most of Chinese technicians with Soviet ones.²⁴⁵

Hanoi also changed its position on joining the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON, also known as CEMA), a Soviet-led institution. Despite Soviet constant urging, Vietnam resisted the idea of joining COMECON in 1975 and 1976 because it believed the membership would compromise its independence and hurt its relations with China.²⁴⁶ However, in late May 1977, Vietnamese leaders decided to join the International Bank of Economic Cooperation (IBEC) and the International Investment Bank (IIB), two banks of COMECON.²⁴⁷ These moves were the first step Hanoi took to join the COMECON. Eventually, at the beginning of 1978, Hanoi sent a formal request for the membership of the COMECON.²⁴⁸ In late June the COMECON admitted Vietnam as its member. *Nhan Dan* [*People's Daily*] remarked that this admission was a “logical development of our motherland on the road to socialism.”²⁴⁹

4.2.2 China Lost Its Leverage

Compared to the previous period, Beijing's leverage over Hanoi became weaker. First, increased Soviet economic aid undermined the importance of China's assistance to Vietnam. Second, enhanced Soviet economic and military support emboldened Hanoi to

²⁴⁴ CIA Intelligence Memorandum, “Sino-Soviet Competition in Indochina,” November 14, 1978, 12, in DNSA collection: China and U.S. Intelligence, 1945-2010.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 13.

²⁴⁶ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Intelligence Memorandum, “Sino-Soviet Competition in Indochina,” November 14, 1978, 13, in Digital National Security Archive (DNSA) collection: China and U.S. Intelligence, 1945-2010.

²⁴⁷ “CEMA Investment Bank Admits Vietnam to Membership,” *Moscow Izvestiya*, May 29, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-77-106, June 2, 1977, D4.

²⁴⁸ Morris, *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia: Political Culture and the Causes of War*, 210.

²⁴⁹ “Nhan Dan Comments,” *Hanoi VNA*, July 2, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-78-128, K18.

challenge China on issues of territorial disputes and overseas Chinese. By taking measures to enhance its control over its population of ethnic Chinese and constructing checkpoints along the Chinese-Vietnamese border, Hanoi was constraining Beijing's influence and thus undermining Beijing's leverage. To add, this challenge to China's interests implied Vietnam's confidence in Soviet support and its readiness to align with the Soviet Union.

In March 1978, Hanoi began to "nationalize" the private sector in southern Vietnam. On March 23, a para-security force of 30,000 raided, and confiscated goods from, about 50,000 retailers in Ho Chi Minh city. It forced about 30,000 business operations to close down.²⁵⁰ Within a month, Hanoi announced to unify the northern and southern currencies. This decree essentially deprived the "entire middle and lower-middle class population of their cash assets." The Chinese who lived in southern Vietnam constituted the principal target in the operation and suffered the most. ²⁵¹

In addition, Hanoi chose to publicize its territorial claims in the South China Sea, as well as escalating tension in the border area on land. On the anniversary of the occupation of some islands in the Spratly Islands, *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* [*People's Army Daily*] praised Vietnamese soldiers as striving "day and night...to stand combat ready and firmly defend the fatherland's territorial water."²⁵² On land, Vietnam started to fence off the border, built trenches, and moved in ammunition. By October, 1977, Hanoi had

²⁵⁰ Chang, "The Sino-Vietnamese Dispute over the Ethnic Chinese," 206.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 207.

²⁵² "Army Paper Notes Spratly Archipelago Liberation Anniversary," *Hanoi Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, April 26, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-78-102, K1.

built a new border defense line. This buildup further escalated the border tension as it created “arguments over ownership of territory at many points along the border.”²⁵³

As a result, there was only one source of China’s leverage left: influence in Kampuchea. To maintain its leverage, China continued its assistance to Kampuchea. However, the CPK became increasingly difficult for China to restrain. To consolidate the CPK position vis-à-vis Vietnam, China boosted its support to Phnom Penh. During Pol Pot’s visit, China provided credits of 140 million yuan to Kampuchea in 1977. Subsequently, five Chinese convoys of ships had arrived in Kompong Som, delivering tanks, artillery, and guns.²⁵⁴ In October, Pol Pot paid a high-profile visit to China. *Peking Review* described the bilateral relationship as “unbreakable.”²⁵⁵

According to a defected pilot, China delivered some of its weapons shipments offshore in 1977 and 1978.²⁵⁶ Moreover, a report suggested that by the end of 1978, China had delivered two fast gunships and four patrol boats, two hundred tanks, three hundred armored cars, three hundred artillery pieces, thirty thousand tons of ammunition, six fighters, and two bombers.²⁵⁷ Two days after the failed negotiation that China arranged between Kampuchea and Vietnam, China and DK signed a protocol for arms delivery. The protocol provided a complete set of military equipment.²⁵⁸ China also sent advisors to three Kampuchean divisions, which equipped with Chinese anti-aircraft guns,

²⁵³ CIA, “The Sino-Vietnamese Border Dispute,” undated but information as of March 5 1979 was used in preparing this report, 3, in DNSA: The History of the National Security Agency: 1945 to the Present, document no. 16790856353.

²⁵⁴ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*, 378.

²⁵⁵ “Kampuchean Party and Government Delegation Visits China,” *Peking Review*, no.41 (1977), pp.9-12.

²⁵⁶ “‘Squandered Chinese aid’ spelt Pot Pot’s ruin,” *Bangkok Post*, May 1, 1979.

²⁵⁷ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*, 379.

²⁵⁸ Chanda, *Brother Enemy: The War after the War*, 200.

along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border.²⁵⁹ In late 1978, Chinese advisors started a three-month course, training Kampuchean soldiers.²⁶⁰

Moreover, one source suggested that Beijing helped the CPK purge the latter's pro-Vietnam leaders. One source alleged that Beijing played an important role in the purge of So Phim. So Phim was a senior leader of the CPK, Secretary of Eastern Zone, and Commander of the Highway 7 Front against Vietnam. In April 1977, Beijing called back Zhou Degao, a member of *Huayun*. According to Zhou, he reported Phim's close connection with Hanoi. One month later, Beijing invited Phim to China. Zhou suspected that Beijing relayed his report to Pol Pot, leading to the purge of Phim in the end of 1977.²⁶¹

On the other hand, the CPK was not completely obedient to Chinese advices. First, the CPK leaders did not follow exactly the "Chinese model of revolutionary and construction." For instance, according to a memoir, the CPK told its cadres that it "surpasses Lenin and goes further than Mao" because the revolution in Cambodia was the "most beautiful and most pure."²⁶² Moreover, in a political seminar in July 1978, Ieng Sary expressed his disapproval of both Soviet and Chinese policies: the Soviet Union was "plunging into an inextricable quagmire, with China following the same path."²⁶³

Second, the CPK defied Beijing's advice on the treatment of Sihanouk. As Huang Hua stated in a report in 1977, "It has been confirmed that Sihanouk no longer holds any position." In response, Beijing directed Ambassador Sun Hao to express their necessary

²⁵⁹ Mertha, *Brothers in Arms: Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975–1979*, 81.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

²⁶¹ Zhou, *Woyu Zhonggong he Jiangong*, 77-78.

²⁶² Laurence Picq, *Beyond the Horizon: Five Years with the Khmer Rouge* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 37.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 125.

concern. Moreover, when Sihanouk made a request for settlement in China, China submitted it to the CPK. However, the CPK refused Sihanouk's request.²⁶⁴

According to Sihanouk, in January 1978 he offered his services to the CPK. This was also what Beijing wanted the CPK to accept. Nonetheless, the CPK rejected this offer. As they told Sihanouk, they had just won an "even greater victory than on April 17, 1975."²⁶⁵ China sent Deng Yingchao, a member of the CCP Central Committee and widow of Zhou Enlai, to Phnom Penh. Nonetheless, it was an unsuccessful visit. As Deng Yingchao reported to the CCP Central Committee after she returned to Beijing, the CPK prevented her from meeting Sihanouk.²⁶⁶

Third, the CPK pursued an increasingly provocative policy toward Vietnam. When Vietnam staged large-scale invasion in November 1977, the CPK achieved some successes on the battlefield. Four months later, Hanoi decided to adjust its military strategy, downgrading from large-scale attacks to small-scale ones. This change might embolden Pol Pot to adopt a more provocative strategy. The guideline, as Pol Pot explained, was to take initiative attacks against Vietnamese forces. In his speech in April, Pol Pot asserted that as Vietnam had to take the defensive posture, the CPK would continue to fight until they could make Hanoi publicly succumb to Phnom Penh and sign a cease-fire agreement. "We must continue the triumphant pursuit until Vietnamese military fully retreated and feared of our power."²⁶⁷ In a report in May, the CPK made a more optimistic estimate. The report stated that Vietnam had conflicts with Cambodia,

²⁶⁴ "Huang Hua's Report on the World Situation," *Issues and Studies* 13, no.12 (1977), 80.

²⁶⁵ Norodom Sihanouk, *War and Hope: The Case for Cambodia*, trans. Mary Feeney (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 67.

²⁶⁶ Chanda, *Brother Enemy: The War after the War*, 210.

²⁶⁷ Speech by Pol Pot on the Third Anniversary of Revolutionary Victory and Establishment of the DK, April 4, 1978, Documentation Center of Cambodia (DCC), D00476.

China, Laos, and other Southeast Asian states. Especially, the report stressed, “there are serious political conflicts between Vietnam and China, which have affected Vietnamese economy and military force. This means Vietnamese now are in serious trouble, and the trouble will last a long time.”²⁶⁸

4.2.3 Security Cooperation between Moscow and Hanoi Further Increased

When its leverage became weak, China needed to consider the level of security cooperation between the Soviet Union and Vietnam. As such cooperation had reached a high level in this period, China adjusted its primary wedge strategies from accommodation to coercion. Meanwhile, China used accommodation as its complementary strategy. As Moscow and Hanoi increasingly consolidated their security cooperation, China gradually dropped accommodative wedge strategies. Eventually, when Vietnam signed the alliance treaty with the Soviet Union and fully invaded Kampuchea, China used coercive wedging as its pure strategy.

Prior to Pham Van Dong’s visit to Moscow in June 1977, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) National Assembly Standing Committee declared that Vietnam would make further changes in its foreign policy.²⁶⁹ Although this statement did not articulate what these changes were, Vietnam’s subsequent actions suggested these changes meant greater alignment with the Soviet Union. When Dong traveled to Moscow, he and Kosygin stressed “the great significance of all-round Soviet-Vietnamese cooperation with a view to further consolidating relations of friendship and fraternal solidarity.”²⁷⁰ To add,

²⁶⁸ “Adjustment and Arrangement of the CPK tasks in the Second Half of 1978,” DCC, D17469.

²⁶⁹ “National Assembly 12 May Decisions Announced,” *Hanoi Domestic Service*, May 12, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-77-093, K1.

²⁷⁰ “Meeting with Kosygin,” *Moscow TASS International Service*, June 6, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-77-109, L1.

in their meeting Dong and Brezhnev claimed that the “internationalist policy of the two Communist parties was contributing decisively to strengthening [their] friendship.”²⁷¹

Accompanying this general trend was increased Soviet-Vietnamese military cooperation. In the first half of 1977, the Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap met with his Soviet counterpart Dmitry Ustinov and Brezhnev separately. In those meetings Moscow and Hanoi cleared obstacles in their security cooperation as their leaders expressed the “readiness to promote the expansion and deepening of the friendly ties between the armed forces” of the Soviet Union and Vietnam.²⁷²

Table 4.1. *Estimates of Soviet Military Assistance to Vietnam (million U.S. dollars)*

	1975	1976	1977	1978
Source A	123-150	44-50	75-125	600-850
Source B	25	30	100	190
Source C	280	450	630	720

Sources: A: Douglas Pike, *Vietnam and the Soviet Union: Anatomy of An Alliance* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 139;

B: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Soviet Economic Relations with Selected Client States in the Developing World*, October 14, 1982, cited in Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A Thayer, *Soviet Relations with India and Vietnam* (New York: St.Martins Press, 1992), 118.

C: Thai Quang Trung, “The Moscow-Hanoi Axis and the Soviet Military Build-up in Southeast Asia,” *Indochina Report* (Singapore) 8 (October 1986), cited in *ibid.*, 118.

The first indicator of this increased level of security cooperation between Moscow and Hanoi was the former’s military assistance to the latter. The above table showed the rise of Soviet military assistance to Vietnam. Although different sources provide different absolute size of Soviet military assistance, all of those sources show a general trend of increased Soviet assistance in 1977 and 1978. Following Giap’s visit, the Soviet Union

²⁷¹ “Meeting with Brezhnev,” *Moscow Domestic Service*, June 6, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-77-109, L1.

²⁷² “Hanoi Report,” *Hanoi Domestic Service*, May 4, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-77-087, L1. “Apparent Text of ‘Report’ on Giap Visit Published, *Moscow Khransaya Zvezda*, March 22, 1977, FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-77-074, L1.

reportedly sent two destroyers and four squadrons of MiG-21's to Vietnam.²⁷³

Subsequently, in later July a twenty-one-member Soviet military delegation, consisted of three branches of the Soviet armed forces, visited several places of military interest in southern Vietnam, including Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay. As a result of this visit, Moscow agreed to deliver two old submarines, one destroyer, patrol boats, and four squadrons of MiG-21 fighters. Meanwhile, the number of Soviet military advisors in Vietnam began to rise.²⁷⁴

With enhanced Soviet-Vietnamese security cooperation, Hanoi and Moscow also consolidated their relations with Laos. After a Lao military delegation visited Moscow in early 1977, in September ten MiG-21 arrived in Vientiane.²⁷⁵ In February 1978, a high-level Soviet military delegation visited Laos. The delegation inspected strategically important locations as well as pledged to increased Soviet military assistance to Laos.²⁷⁶ Shortly after this visit, Vietnam and Laos held the second session of the Lao-Vietnam Economic Cooperation Commission and signed several protocols regarding Vietnamese economic aid and loans to Laos in 1978.²⁷⁷ These moves suggested an expansion of Vietnamese, as well as Soviet, influence in Indochina.

As the tension mounted in Indochina, the Soviet Union not only increased its supply of military equipment to Hanoi, but also signaled its readiness to get involved in

²⁷³ Takashi Tajima, "China and South-East Asia: Strategic Interests and Policy Prospects: Introduction," *The Adelphi Papers* 21, no. 172 (1981): 12.

²⁷⁴ Chanda, *Brother Enemy: The War after the War*, 189-90. Tajima, "China and South-East Asia: Strategic Interests and Policy Prospects: Introduction," 12.

²⁷⁵ Martin Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations between the Communist Parties of Thailand and Laos," *Asian Survey* 19, no. 4 (1979): 337.

²⁷⁶ "Increased Soviet Aid Cited," *Vientiane Domestic Service*, February 4, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report FBIS-APA-78-025, I1-I2.

²⁷⁷ "16 March Banquet Speeches," *Vientiane Domestic Service*, March 18, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report FBIS-APA-78-054, March 20, 1978, I1-I3.

Indochina. In April 1978, Brezhnev and the Minister of Defense Dmitry Ustinov visited Khabarovsk and Vladivostok. They observed a “combined-arms tactical exercise” on the Soviet-Chinese border. More importantly, they observed a large joint exercise consisted of the Soviet Navy, Marines, and Air Force.²⁷⁸ In the same month, a Soviet delegation from Vladivostok visited Haiphong and discussed with Vietnamese leaders on “strengthening relations” between two ports.²⁷⁹ At the same time, Vietnamese Chief of Staff Van Tien Dung paid a highly publicized visit to Haiphong. Dung inspected a Soviet-built missile base, located about 60 miles from the Chinese border, as well as observed Vietnamese soldiers’ maneuvers. Dung reminded his soldiers that one of the “pressing tasks to be carried out” was to “constantly heighten combat readiness.”²⁸⁰ In May, a portion of the Soviet Pacific fleet, consisted of four missile-equipped warships, sailed southward and into the water off the coast of the Philippines. Deng Xiaoping, in a conversation with a “foreign dignitary,” said this movement of Soviet ships was associated with the Chinese-Vietnamese tension.²⁸¹

In late July, a high-ranking Vietnamese military delegation visited Moscow. Reportedly, after this visit the Soviet Union raised the level of representation of their military mission in Hanoi.²⁸² On November 3, Moscow and Hanoi signed the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. To China, the most alarming content

²⁷⁸ Harry Gelman, *The Soviet Far East Buildup and Soviet Risk-Taking against China* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1982), 175.

²⁷⁹ “Vladivostok Delegation in SRV,” *Vladivostok Domestic Service*, May 10, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-78-100, L2.

²⁸⁰ Nayan Chanda, “Exit the Wolf, Enter the Bear,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* 100, no. 20 (May 19, 1978): 13.

²⁸¹ “USSR Accused of Being Behind Recent SRV Moves,” *Paris AFP*, June 1, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-78-107, A12-A13.

²⁸² CIA Intelligence Memorandum, “Sino-Soviet Competition in Indochina,” November 14, 1978, 13, in DNSA collection: China and U.S. Intelligence, 1945-2010.

of this treaty probably was Article 6, which stated, “in case either party is attacked or threatened with attack, the two parties...shall immediately consult each other...and shall take appropriate and effective measures to safeguard peace and the security of the two countries.”²⁸³ After signing of the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty, the Soviet Union further increased its military and economic assistance to Vietnam. In November and December 1978, the Soviets delivered two Zhuk-class coastal patrol craft and two Petya-class frigates to Vietnam.²⁸⁴ By the end of 1978 the Soviet Union had sent six hundred military advisors to Vietnam. ²⁸⁵

Enhanced Soviet security cooperation with Vietnam heightened Beijing’s threat perception. Chinese leaders were highly concerned with Soviet threat. In a speech in May 1977 in Daqing, Hua Guofeng remarked, “We must be prepared for war. Do not let opportunity slip; time wait for no man.” On a different occasion, Ye Jianying also commented on the tension between the Soviet Union and the United States: “War is just a matter of time.” Ye warned his comrades to “pay attention to the possibility that a major war may break out soon.” Similarly, in an interview with a British journalist, Vice Premier Li Xiannian stressed on the Soviet threat to the world; he promised, “if the Soviets attempted to expand in some region, China will not stand idly.”²⁸⁶

In September, Huang Hua delivered a speech in the United Nations. He stressed that the international situation “becomes more intense, risk of war is increasing...

²⁸³ “Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,” *Chinese Law & Government* 16, no. 1 (1983), 16.

²⁸⁴ Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), “Military Developments in Indochina,” January 23, 1979, in DNSA collection: China and U.S. Intelligence, 1945-2010.

²⁸⁵ Chanda, *Brother Enemy: The War after the War*, 190.

²⁸⁶ “информация: по китайскому вопросу для руководства братских партий социалистических стран” [Information on the Chinese issue for the fraternal parties of socialist countries], undated (probably September 1977), in East China Normal University, *Collection of Copies of Russian Archives: Sino-Soviet Relations*, vol. 18, 4579-4589.

Socialist imperialism is especially dangerous.” Huang concluded that appeasing socialist imperialists could only make war more likely. Therefore, he continued, China was against war but also not afraid of war.²⁸⁷ As another indication that China was worried about the Soviet threat, Chinese leaders repetitively stressed to U.S. and European leaders the importance of opposing appeasement. For instance, the topic of opposing appeasement also appeared in Hua Guofeng and Li Xiannian’s speeches in 1977.²⁸⁸

Developments in Soviet-Vietnamese security cooperation in 1978 further alarmed China. Responding to Soviet and Vietnamese military coordination, Defense Minister Xu Xiangqian claimed that the Soviet Union had increased its preparations for an “aggressive war against China” and it posed a “direct military threat to China.”²⁸⁹ Xu further denounced Cuba as “Soviet mercenaries” and asked, was there “any region where a change is taking place or a disturbance is going on where the evil shadow of Soviet social-imperialism does not loom?”²⁹⁰ Not coincidentally, Chinese leaders started to call Vietnam the “Cuba of the East.”

A month later, *Renmin Ribao* carried an editorial analyzing the Soviet foreign policy. On how to deal with the Soviet Union, the editorial stressed, “First, we must be alert and seriously prepare for anti-invasion war. Second, we must confront imperialist head-on. Wherever they invade, we must defeat them. Third, we need to oppose appeasement. Appeasement can only make war break out sooner.”²⁹¹ On November 1, Ye Jiangying emphasized on the importance of defense preparation. He explained, “invaders

²⁸⁷ *Renmin Ribao*, September 30, 1977.

²⁸⁸ For instance, see, *Renmin Ribao*, April 28, May 5, and September 21, 1977.

²⁸⁹ Xu Xiangqian, “Tigao jinti, zhunbei dazhang” [“Heighten Vigilance, Be Ready to Fight”], *Red Flag*, no.8 (August 1, 1978), 42-50.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁹¹ *Renmin Ribao*, September 19, 1978.

will intrude if we are not prepared. If we are well prepared, when the Soviet revisionists plan to launch attack, they have to consider twice.”²⁹²

It is notable that in this period another factor contributed to China’s decision to switch from accommodative wedge strategies to coercive ones. That is, China enjoyed support from the United States. In May, Brzezinski visited China. In his discussion with Huang Hua, Brzezinski assured Huang that the United States still enjoyed “significant technological advantages” in the strategic balance of power vis-à-vis the Soviet Union; the United States would compete with the Soviet Union. Brzezinski also expressed U.S. concerns over the situation in Indochina. With a clear reference to the Soviet Union, Brzezinski explained that U.S. and Japanese involvement in Southeast Asia had contributed to “greater invulnerability to imperialist designs.” He also told Huang that U.S. “military presence in Southwest Pacific will also continue.”²⁹³ The United States also signaled its security cooperation with China. At the time China sent ships to Vietnam, U.S. aircraft carrier *Enterprise* visited Hong Kong. Chinese officials and *Xinhua* journalists visited the vessel.²⁹⁴ As the discussion below will show, after Brzezinski’s visit, China significantly increased its pressure on Vietnam.

4.2.4 China Opted for Coercive Wedge Strategies with Restraints

Losing leverage over Hanoi and observing increased security cooperation between Moscow and Hanoi, Beijing changed its wedge strategies to coercion. Meanwhile, Beijing was concerned about the risk of balancing blowback so that it applied coercive wedge strategies to Vietnam with caution. With ever increasing level of the security

²⁹² *Renmin Ribao*, November 2, 1978.

²⁹³ Memorandum of Conversation, May 20, 1978, in *FRUS 1977–1980, vol. XIII, China*, 396-403.

²⁹⁴ “Late Report: PRC Ship Visits Linked to USS Enterprise,” *Hanoi Domestic Service*, June 19, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-78-118, K21.

cooperation between Vietnam and the Soviet Union, the risk of alliance backfire decreased. China thus gradually enhanced its coercion against Vietnam.

First, different from its previous position, China took a more hostile position in this period on the overseas Chinese issue. During his meeting with Pham Van Dong in June 1977, Li Xiannian raised the overseas Chinese issue for the first time. Li accused Hanoi of treating overseas Chinese in southern Vietnam with “coercion...and regardless of their own wish.” He also brought up the example of heavy taxes on “Chinese residents who want to retain their Chinese nationality.” Li explicitly expressed his dissatisfaction: “You have now unilaterally taken measures to compel Chinese to adopt Vietnamese nationality without consulting us, thus placing us in an awkward position politically.”²⁹⁵

In late 1977 and early 1978, Chinese leaders sent a series of confidential notes to their Vietnamese counterparts, declaring Beijing’s objection to the treatment of overseas Chinese.²⁹⁶ Accompanying these notes was an editorial that Liao Chengzhi, Chairman of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, wrote in *Renmin Ribao*. Liao wrote that while China encouraged overseas Chinese to become citizens of their host countries, “it is impermissible to compel overseas Chinese to choose one nationality or another...The motherland has the duty to protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese who retain Chinese nationality.”²⁹⁷

However, Hanoi refused to heed Beijing’s warnings. As mentioned above, in the first half of 1978, Vietnam took a series of steps to “nationalize” its economy in southern Vietnam and seriously hurt economic interests of overseas Chinese. As a result, China

²⁹⁵ “Memorandum on Vice-Premier Li’s Talks with Premier Pham Van Dong,” 21-22.

²⁹⁶ “Foreign Ministry Issues Communique on May-June Notes with PRC,” K14.

²⁹⁷ *Renmin Ribao*, January 4, 1978.

stepped up its warning. On April 30, 1978, Liao Chengzhi reiterated China's policy towards overseas Chinese. Different from his previous editorial in *Renmin Ribao*, this time Liao singled out Vietnam: "Recently, large numbers of Chinese residing in Vietnam suddenly began to return to China. We are concerned about this and are closely following the developments."²⁹⁸

This warning failed again. Xuan Thuy, Secretary of the VWP Central Committee, declared that if overseas Chinese wanted to leave Vietnam, they simply needed to make a formal application.²⁹⁹ Responding to Hanoi's incomppliance, China sent a note in May with a more severe warning. After complaining Vietnamese treatment of the overseas Chinese, Beijing warned, "Vietnamese side considers China's sincere desire to preserve Sino-Vietnamese friendship...as a weakness and thinks it can bully China...It is...seriously impairing the friendship between the two peoples."³⁰⁰

On May 24, the day after Brzezinski left Beijing, China again stepped up its warning. China "demanded" that Vietnam "immediately stop implementing the... erroneous policy of ostracizing, persecuting and expelling Chinese residents...Otherwise, the Vietnamese Government should bear full responsibility for all the consequences arising from these unwarranted measures."³⁰¹ This was the first time Beijing publicly used these polemics when describing Vietnamese policy on overseas Chinese.

²⁹⁸ "Teng Hsiao-ping, Keng Piao at Party for Overseas Chinese," *Peking NCNA*, April 30, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-78-084, A1-A3.

²⁹⁹ "Xuan Thuy Interviewed on Chinese Residents Returning to PRC," *Hanoi Domestic Service*, May 4, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-78-088, K1-K2.

³⁰⁰ "Foreign Ministry Issues Communique on May-June Notes with PRC," K15.

³⁰¹ "Statement by Spokesman of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China on Viet Nam's Expulsion of Chinese Residents," May 24, 1978, in *On Viet Nam's Expulsion of Chinese Residents* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1978), 6.

Two days later, Beijing announced that it would send ships to bring the overseas Chinese back to China.³⁰² An article in *Dagong Pao*, a pro-Communist paper located in Hong Kong, explicitly stated China's objective of sending ships: "dispatching ships to pick up overseas Chinese will be a new test for the Vietnamese authorities... We are waiting to see what Vietnam will say and do."³⁰³

A more direct warning came from Deng Xiaoping. Commenting on the overseas Chinese issue, Deng Xiaoping confirmed that China had reduced aid to Vietnam as retaliation. He further warned, "We tolerated patiently until the Vietnamese had taken ten steps. When they took the eleventh step, we took our first retaliatory step. When they take the twelfth step, we will take our second step."³⁰⁴ Nonetheless, Chinese warnings failed again. Vietnam not only set obstacles to the evacuation of overseas Chinese, but also essentially rejected China's demand of opening a consulate in Ho Chi Minh City, in which a large number of Chinese lived.³⁰⁵

Hanoi's defiance further provoked China. In June Beijing closed all of Vietnamese consulates in China, and recalled its ambassador from Vietnam.³⁰⁶ Meanwhile, Beijing stepped up its warning. In August, Beijing sent a delegation to Hanoi to hold talks on the issue of overseas Chinese. Nonetheless, China mainly used this forum to send warnings to Hanoi. At the second session, Zhong Xidong, head of the Chinese

³⁰² "PRC to Send Rescue Ships," *Peking NCNA Domestic Service*, May 28, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, PRC, FBIS-CHI-78-104, A22.

³⁰³ "Ta Kung Pao on Ships Dispatched for Overseas Chinese in SRV," *Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao*, May 27, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, PRC, FBIS-CHI-78-106, N1-N2.

³⁰⁴ "Comments on SRV Dispute," *Tokyo Kyodo*, June 5, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, PRC, FBIS-CHI-78-108, A8-A9.

³⁰⁵ Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979*, 184.

³⁰⁶ "Chen Chih-Fang Returns," *Paris AFP*, June 16, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, PRC, FBIS-CHI-78-117, A5. On an analysis on the diplomatic purpose of the withdrawal of the ambassador, see, Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979*, 311, endnote 54.

delegation, claimed that the sending of ships to Vietnam was Beijing's "legitimate right to protect the interests of its nationals." Zhong further condemned the Soviet-Vietnamese "collusion" on this issue.³⁰⁷ In his subsequent speeches in September, Zhong charged Hanoi of "seeking regional hegemonism." Hanoi, Zhong commented, "has long made its mind to make the Soviet Union its ideal patron. As for the Soviet Union, it wants to push its global hegemonism and control the Southeast Asian countries... Therefore [the Soviet Union] needs the service of Vietnam's regional hegemonism and wants it to play the role of an outpost in Southeast Asia." Zhong Xidong also claimed that Vietnam did "not have any intention to settle questions through negotiation. What they believe in is force." As a result, Zhong concluded, it was "impossible for the talks to go on."³⁰⁸

A Chinese statement in September referred to a bloody conflict at *You Yi Guan* (Friendship Pass), where the Vietnamese border guards shot at overseas Chinese exodus across the border. The statement warned that Hanoi "have now gone far enough along the road of antagonizing China and ostracizing Chinese nationals." The statement also "demand that the Vietnamese authorities stop forthwith the persecution and expulsion of Chinese nationals."³⁰⁹

China also signaled more its support for Kampuchea in the Kampuchean-Vietnamese conflict. This stance, in turn, was coercive against Vietnam, showing China's displeasure with Hanoi's enhanced cooperation with the Soviet Union. On the banquet welcoming Pol Pot in October 1977, Hua Guofeng asserted, "Both China and Kampuchea

³⁰⁷ Statement by Chung His-tung, Leader of the Chinese Government Delegation at the Second Session of the Sino-Vietnamese Talks," August 19, 1978, in *On Viet Nam's Expulsion of Chinese Residents*, 59-70.

³⁰⁸ "Statement by Chung His-tung, Leader of the Chinese Government Delegation at the Seventh and Eighth Sessions of the Sino-Vietnamese Talks," September 19 and 28, 1978, respectively, in *ibid.*, 94-119.

³⁰⁹ "Statement by Spokesman of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China on Viet Nam's Expulsion of Chinese Residents," September 4, 1978, in *ibid.*, 26-28.

are developing socialist states, belonging to the third world. In the struggle of opposing imperialism and hegemonism, two states will stand with other third world states side by side.”³¹⁰

However, in late 1977 and early 1978, Chinese leaders still tried to manage tensions between Phnom Penh and Hanoi. For instance, a Chinese military delegation visited Phnom Penh in November 1977. As one source claims, when Cambodian staff prepared an official speech, they had to delete a sentence from the original text: “The government of Democratic Kampuchea and the Communist Party are certain of being able to count on the aid of the sister Chinese army in case of need.”³¹¹

Moreover, in November Beijing sent Vice Premier Chen Yonggui to Cambodia. During his visit, Chen focused his speeches on acclaiming Kampuchean agricultural achievements. He praised that Kampuchea was “developing toward the right direction...within two years, Cambodia will be able to manage the issue of food independently.”³¹² On the one hand, it was reasonable since Chen was inexperienced in foreign affairs. On the other hand, Chen visited the Eastern Zone, the frontline against Vietnam. However, neither Chen nor Chinese official media commented on the situation there. This silence suggested China’s reservation.

Even after the large-scale conflict broke out in December 1977, Beijing still sought a negotiated solution between two Indochinese states. Before Deng Yingchao left for Phnom Penh, Phan Hien, reportedly, arrived in Beijing. According to a “diplomatic

³¹⁰ *Renmin Ribao*, September 28, 1977.

³¹¹ Picq, *Beyond the Horizon: Five Years with the Khmer Rouge*, 137.

³¹² Speech by Pol Pot on the Third Anniversary of Revolutionary Victory and Establishment of the DK, April 4, 1978, DCC, D00476.

source,” his trip was for “consultations with the Chinese government.” Vietnamese Embassy in Beijing did not deny this trip.³¹³

In February 1978, China voiced its support for negotiation. When the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Don Jamieson visited China, Chinese leaders explained to him that Hanoi and Phnom Penh “should cease all hostilities...initiate talks leading to a peaceful resolution...They should properly settle [the dispute] among themselves.” Chinese leaders also assured Jamieson that China had not “instigated in any way the present border dispute.” In the end of their discussion, Chinese leaders also accused the Soviet policy of seeking to “extend its...hegemony” in Southeast Asia, and especially Vietnam.³¹⁴

However, after Vietnam further defied Chinese demands for treatment of overseas Chinese and border issues, China turned to more and more resolute support for Kampuchea, and eventually abandoned its neutral stance. According to Brzezinski, “the extent of concern shown by all of the Chinese leaders” about Vietnamese aggressiveness towards Cambodia had surprised him. China, Brzezinski commented, was concerned with Soviet efforts to create Vietnamese domination in Southeast Asia.³¹⁵

In the beginning of 1978, Deng Yinchao, vice chairman of the National People’s Congress, received a Kampuchean delegate. She highly praised the achievements of the CPK: “The victory of Cambodia sets an example of a weaker state defeating a stronger one. The Kampuchea Communist Party is a Marxist party, standing at the frontline of

³¹³ “AFP Reports Vice Foreign Minister Phan Hien in Peking,” *Hong Kong AFP*, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-78-025, K3.

³¹⁴ “Comments on SRV-Cambodia Dispute,” February 4, 1978, *Hong Kong AFP*, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-78-008, A21-A22.

³¹⁵ “Conversation between Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda and Zbigniew Brzezinski,” May 23, 1978, in DNSA collection: Korea, 1969-2000.

anti-imperialism, hegemonism, and colonialism struggle.”³¹⁶ In June, Xinhua provided extensive coverage of Ieng Sary’s travel in Asia, citing Sary’s remarks that Vietnam attempted to “annex and swallow Kampuchea...carry out acts of aggression and subversion...to...force Kampuchea to join the Indochina federation.”³¹⁷ This was the first time Chinese media used such polemics to refer to Vietnam on this issue.³¹⁸ In July, *Renmin Ribao* carried an editorial supporting Cambodia. It denounced Vietnam: “When imperialists invade Vietnam and Cambodia, China support Vietnam and Cambodia, and assistance to Vietnam is way more than assistance to Cambodia.” It continued, “Now Vietnam is invading Cambodia, it is no doubt that China will support and sympathize Cambodia.”³¹⁹

After Vietnam and the Soviet Union became allies, China stepped up its support for Kampuchea. At a press conference, Deng Xiaoping condemned Vietnam as invading Cambodia under the instruction of the Soviet Union. He continued to denounce Vietnam as “Cuba of the East”: “After signing the treaty with the Soviet Union, Vietnam will increase its hegemonic policies. We must be alert to the Cuba of the East... We have to wait to see how far it will go. First, we need to see to how further it will invade Cambodia. We will make our policy according to how far Vietnam will push its hegemonic policy.”³²⁰ In the same month, Wang Dongxing visited Kampuchea to signal China’s support. In his speech, Wang claimed, “China firmly opposes any excuse for regional hegemonism or intervention...Whoever tries to expand and invade other states,

³¹⁶ *Renmin Ribao*, January 20, 1978.

³¹⁷ *Renmin Riabo*, June 26, 1978. See, also, the series of reports by *Peking NCNA*, June 10, June 11, and June 12, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-78-114, A10-A11.

³¹⁸ Ross, *The Indochina Tangle: China's Vietnam Policy, 1975-1979*, 191.

³¹⁹ *Renmin Ribao*, July 12, 1978.

³²⁰ *Renmin Ribao*, November 9, 1978.

it will fail eventually.”³²¹ Reportedly, Wang also suggested that the CPK store food and dispense weapons to civilians.³²²

Although stepping up its support for Kampuchea, China’s Kampuchea policy also revealed its prudence. Since the summer of 1978, Son Sen, Nuon Chea, and Pol Pot visited Beijing respectively. According to Pich Cheang, North Korean Ambassador to China, after condemning Hanoi’s “ingratitude,” Deng Xiaoping noted that it was Cambodia’s responsibility to resist against Vietnam. Nonetheless, Deng told Pol Pot that China would not send troops to Cambodia.³²³

Why did China choose not to send troops to Kampuchea, even after the Vietnamese invasion in December? The major concern was possible Soviet intervention. As Geng Biao explained, the Soviet Union, the “behind-the-scene boss of Vietnam,” wished that China “send...troops to Cambodia.” If the Chinese military engaged with the Vietnamese forces, Geng reasoned, “according to the treaty signed between the Soviet Union and Vietnam, the Soviet Union will have reasons to send its troops to our northern border and, along with the Vietnamese troops, attack us on both sides.” Therefore, Geng concluded, China decided not to send troops to Kampuchea.³²⁴

Nonetheless, according to Geng Biao’s report, China decided to “give incessant assistance” to Kampuchea and “support the Cambodians to fight to the end.” After the war broke out, more than 1,500 Chinese remained working in Kampuchea. “Some of them engage in construction work and some others are helping the Cambodians to fight

³²¹ *Renmin Ribao*, November 7, 1978.

³²² Zhou, *Woyu Zhonggong he Jiangong*, 80.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 80.

³²⁴ “Keng Piao’s Report on the Situation of the Indochinese Peninsula,” *Issues and Studies* XVII, no.1 (1981), 87.

on the battlefield.” As Geng Biao explained, all of them “volunteer to renounce their Chinese nationality...and to take part in this war of salvation against Vietnam.”

Therefore, Beijing had “no way to prevent them from doing so.” Beijing’s principle was “not to encourage, not to oppose, and not to prevent.” Furthermore, China did not deny the existence of these people.³²⁵ Therefore, by doing so China was able to signal its support for the CPK while avoid direct Soviet involvement.

Beijing also put pressure on Hanoi by decreasing its economic assistance. In the end of 1977, Le Duan traveled to China after visiting Moscow. The Chinese expressed their dissatisfaction with improved Soviet-Vietnamese relations. At the welcoming banquet, Hua Guofeng reminded his Vietnamese guest “the forces against superpower hegemonism are daily expanding.” China, Hua contended, was “determined to act according to... [the] theory of the differentiation of the three worlds.” Therefore, China would “ally with all countries...to form the broadest possible united front against superpower hegemonism.”³²⁶ Implication of this statement was that China opposed allies of Soviet “hegemonism.” Nonetheless, Le Duan fought back right away. Replying to Hua’s speech, Le Duan in his speech remarked that Vietnam believed that China “will not allow any class of exploitation or any reactionary force to rear up and change the color of the new China.”³²⁷ These words were harsh for a communist leader. Nonetheless, Le Duan’s visit was not completely fruitless. In November 1977 and January 1978, China and Vietnam signed two agreements on scientific and technical cooperation, and

³²⁵ Ibid., 88.

³²⁶ “Hua Speaks at Banquet,” *Peking NCNA*, November 20, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-77-224, November 21, 1977, A11-A13.

³²⁷ “Banquet Held 20 Nov,” *Hanoi VNA*, November 21, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-77-224, K3-K7.

exchange of goods, respectively.³²⁸ The day after Le Duan left China, *Xinhua* attacked COMECON. The article accused the Soviet Union of using COMECON to “reduce the economy of its...partners to the status of appendage of its own economy...to bring the economy of these countries and their “limited sovereignty” and everything else under its domination.”³²⁹

Moreover, Beijing tried to prevent Hanoi from receiving economic assistance from the United States. According to a U.S. memorandum, since the dispute between Beijing and Hanoi escalated in the summer of 1978, China had turned its attitude towards U.S.-Vietnamese normalization from positive to negative. On November 3, Li Xiannian raised the issue of normalization when talking to Schlesinger. Reportedly, Li was furious and remarked that it was “no use trying to draw Vietnam economically or politically away from the USSR.” On a different occasion, Deng Xiaoping also told some U.S. officials, “It is delusory to think that the establishment of diplomatic relations will extract Vietnam from the influence of the Soviet Union, and it would be impossible for the U.S. to use economic aid to Vietnam to lure Vietnam away from the Soviet Union.”³³⁰

Indeed, Chinese leaders not only opposed U.S. economic assistance to Vietnam, but also complained that the Chinese assistance of “\$20 billion” was not enough to prevent Hanoi from tilting towards Moscow. Therefore, China was worried that Western economic assistance to Vietnam would render China’s termination of aid to Vietnam

³²⁸ *Renmin Ribao*, November 3, 1977; January 10, 1978.

³²⁹ Hsin Ping, “‘Drawing Together’ under Moscow’s Pressure,” *Peking NCNA*, November 26, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-77-228, A3-A5.

³³⁰ DCI, Memorandum, “Chinese Attitude towards U.S.-Vietnamese Relations,” November 21, 1978, in DNSA collection: China and U.S. Intelligence, 1945-2010.

useless. According to a U.S. report, “the Chinese prefers to let the Vietnamese stew in their Soviet juice.”³³¹

Two days after Vietnam joined COMECON, Beijing issued a warning toward Hanoi. *Xinhua* accused the Soviet Union of using the COMECON banks to “shackle the economy of other...member states and extort usurious profits.” The report also encouraged Vietnam to expand its economic relations with the West by suggesting that Eastern European states were “actively developing financial relations with the West.”³³²

With the bilateral relations further deteriorating, China completely cut off its economic aid to Vietnam in 1978. On May 4, the same day Xuan Thuy gave his statement on overseas Chinese, Beijing began to withdraw its experts from a Vietnamese textile.³³³ On May 12, 20, and 30, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade sent three notes to Vietnam, informing that China would terminate some of China-assisted projects to fund relocation of Chinese refugees.³³⁴ Eventually, on July 3 China informed Vietnam that China terminated all economic and technical assistance, and would withdraw all technicians who remained in Vietnam. Subsequently, China asked all Vietnamese interns in China to return to Vietnam.³³⁵

China also exerted pressure on Vietnam on the territorial dispute. When Phan Van Dong visited China in June, Li Xiannian blamed Hanoi on provoking disputes on the land border issue and creating tension on the border. Li also told Dong that the offshore islands now became a “major subject of dispute in Sino-Vietnamese relations” as “you

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² “Soviet Union Accused of Exploiting COMECON Banks,” *Peking NCNA*, June 2, 1977, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-CHI-75-158, A4-A5.

³³³ “Foreign Ministry Issues Communiqué on May-June Notes with PRC,” *Hanoi VNA*, June 17, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-APA-78-118, K4.

³³⁴ Shanghai Municipal Archives, document no. B-32-2-268, 3, 7-8.

³³⁵ Ibid., 39.

create this dispute.”³³⁶ He declared that China hoped Hanoi “will return to their original stand on this question.” Nonetheless, Li proposed “negotiations on the land boundary as soon as possible. Pending a negotiated settlement, each side should strictly maintain the status quo.”³³⁷

Similarly, Huang Hua in his report stressed Chinese sovereignty over the Paracels: “Now our troops, fishermen, and administrative institutions are on the Xisha Islands...On several occasions, the Vietnamese requested that we hold talks with them on the problem of the Xisha Islands, but we refused to do so. About April 20 Pham Van Dong visited China and also made the same request. Once again, we turned it down. If Vietnam...carries out an invasion against the Xisha islands...our border troops...will resolutely and completely root out any foreign troop that invade or harass the Xisha Islands.” Turning to the Spratlys, however, Huang expressed a cautious stance: “the crux of the problem is the Nansha Islands...we refrain from dealing with the problem of the Nansha islands for the time being...You may exploit them as you like; but we will confiscate all of them in due time.”³³⁸

In 1978, China gradually put more pressure on the Chinese-Vietnamese border. The earliest border firefight in 1978, according to a CIA estimate, occurred on February 13 and 15 in two different locations. Chinese border guards fired on the Vietnamese and killed 30 Vietnamese. A more serious incident occurred on August 25, when unarmed Chinese border officials confronted Vietnamese soldiers at the You Yi Guan.³³⁹

³³⁶ “Memorandum on Vice-Premier Li’s Talks with Premier Pham Van Dong,” 21.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

³³⁸ “Huang Hua’s Report on the World Situation,” *Issues and Studies* 13, no.12 (1977), 81.

³³⁹ CIA, “The Sino-Vietnamese Border Dispute,” 2-3.

Following these tensions on the border, China exerted more pressure on Vietnam with a display of force. Between May and the fall of 1978, China fighters penetrated into the Vietnamese airspace, and conducted overflights in the Gulf of Tonkin near Vietnamese coastal cities. Meanwhile, China made defensive preparations along the border.³⁴⁰ In September, the Chinese Foreign Ministry warned that Hanoi “must shoulder all responsibility for the consequences arising from the...encroachment on Chinese territorial integrity and sovereignty.”³⁴¹

By October, the situation on the border further deteriorated. Responding to Vietnamese military buildup along the border, Li Xiannian remarked that the “dispute had gone beyond possible conciliation and that the situation would not be helped even if China were to cede its two border provinces to Vietnam.” He continued to state that China was now preparing for a “nasty and protracted ordeal.” A week later, Deng Xiaoping told a visitor that China had “given up” on Vietnam, but hoped to avoid armed conflict. He further asserted, however, if Hanoi started the fight, they “will get into trouble.”³⁴² On October 26, the Chinese Foreign Ministry lodged a strong protest; China “solemnly demands” that Vietnam “stop at once all of its acts of encroachments.”³⁴³ On the same day, *Xinhua* delivered a more severe warning: should Hanoi continue to “obdurately go their own way, continuing to act provocatively on the border...and to threaten China with war, they will eventually be the victim of their own evil deeds. Let’s see how much further the Vietnamese authorities have decided to go.”³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 3.

³⁴¹ *Renmin Ribao*, September 18, 1978.

³⁴² CIA, “The Sino-Vietnamese Border Dispute,” 5-6.

³⁴³ *Renmin Ribao*, October 26, 1978.

³⁴⁴ “Let’s see how much farther Hanoi will go,” *Peking NCNA*, October 26, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report PRC, FBIS-CHI-78-208, A17-A19.

4.2.5 China and Vietnam Went to War

The apex of China's coercive wedge strategies was the war in 1979 and the decade-long bombard in the border area following the war. The war in February was not only punitive, but also an illustrative use of force. As Vietnam signed the alliance treaty with the Soviet Union and invaded Kampuchea, Beijing believed the Vietnamese-Soviet security cooperation had been so cohesive that accommodation was unnecessary. Consequently, China chose coercive wedge strategy as its pure strategy. By waging a limited war against Vietnam, China radically raised the costs for Vietnam to cooperate with the Soviet Union. Following the war, China kept shelling various locations in the border area over a decade. By doing so, China divided its punishment into pieces and signaled to Hanoi that should it stop cooperating with the Soviet Union, China could stop exerting pressure.

Antipathy to Vietnam's "collusion" with the Soviet Union and its invasion in Kampuchea, China was considering the punitive use of force against Vietnam. On the one hand, since the end of 1978 China had stepped up its warning against Hanoi. In December, China issued two more warnings. The warning on December 13 stated, "There is a limit to China's forbearance and restraint." On the same day, Li Xiannian remarked explicitly, "the Vietnamese authorities are deluding themselves by thinking that we are weak and can be bullied." *Renmin Ribao* conveyed another warning on December 25, in which Beijing for the first time explicitly used the term "punishment." The editorial stated, "We wish to warn the Vietnamese authorities that if they, emboldened by Moscow's support, try to seek a foot after gaining an inch and continue to act in this

unbridled fashion, they will decidedly meet with the punishment they deserve...Do not complain later that we've given you a clear warning.”³⁴⁵

On the other hand, a November Central Military Council meeting decided it was “necessary” to use force against Vietnam.³⁴⁶ In mid-December, Beijing ordered the Guangzhou and Kunming Military Regions to deploy troops on the border.³⁴⁷ Moreover, in December the South Sea Fleet began to patrol in the South China Sea and monitor Soviet naval and air forces activities.³⁴⁸

On the eve of the Chinese-Vietnamese war, Soviet media stepped up its polemics, criticizing China for exerting military pressure on Hanoi. However, they failed to address Soviet contingent plans should China attack Vietnam. According to a U.S. estimate, Moscow probably wished to avoid committing it to any particular course of action. Moreover, Moscow did not issue any explicit public warning towards China.³⁴⁹ An authoritative *Pravda* article, published on February 10, 1979, commented on the Chinese military buildup on the Chinese-Vietnamese border. While the article criticized Chinese policy, it failed to refer to the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty or imply a Soviet intervention.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁵ CIA, “The Sino-Vietnamese Border Dispute,” 6.

³⁴⁶ Zhang Zhen, *Zhang Zhen huiyilu [Memoir of Zhang Zheng]* (Beijing: jiefangjun chubanshe, 2003), vol.2, 165-66.

³⁴⁷ Guangzhou Military Region Political Department ed. *ZhongYue bianjing ziwei huanji zuozhan: Guanxi fangxian canzhanbudui zhengzhi gongzuo jingyan huibian [The Counterattack in Self-defense on the Sino-Vietnamese Border: Compilation of Selected Experiences of Political Work of Military from Guangxi]* (Guangzhou: Guangzhou Military Region Political Department, 1979), vol.1, 50-51.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., vol.2, 274-295.

³⁴⁹ DCI, Alert Memorandum, “China-Vietnam-USSR,” January 19, 1979, in DNSA collection: The History of the National Security Agency: 1945 to the Present.

³⁵⁰ I. Aleksandrov, “On the Issue of the Chinese Provocation against the SRV,” *Pravda*, February 10, 1979, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-79-030, C1-C2.

As a U.S. intelligence report observed, the Soviet Union failed to use specific terms to describe possible retaliation if China went “too far.” More importantly, the report observed no military augmentations on the Chinese-Soviet border.³⁵¹ This was a rather accurate judgement. In the eve of the Chinese-Vietnamese war, the Soviet leaders expressed their concerns with reservation. Head of Soviet First Far Eastern Department M.S. Kapitsa met with Mongolian First Deputy Foreign Minister D. Yondon on February 9. Kapitsa suggested that although the Soviet Union was closing watching the situation along the Chinese-Vietnamese border, it was not determined to intervene with force. He explained, “The Chinese are really scared of the USSR. China will probably make a single strike against Vietnam. Probably they will do it like they did it in 1962, when they make a strike against India, going in 20-30 kilometers.” Kapitsa further assured his Mongolian colleague: “if it requires attacking China to protect Vietnam, we will inform you.”³⁵²

When Deng Xiaoping visited the United States in January 1979, he informed President Carter of China’s plan to give Hanoi an “appropriate limited lesson.” On possible Soviet reaction, Deng was rather optimistic. He remarked that since the Vietnam question arose, Moscow was clamoring but he “had not seen much increase in their forces.” When Brzezinski mentioned “some indication that the Soviets had increased their ground forces near the Chinese frontier,” Deng responded that the “addition of one or two divisions along a border of several thousand kilometers would not make much

³⁵¹ DCI, Intelligence Brief, “Sino-Soviet,” February 23, 1979, in DNSA collection: The History of the National Security Agency: 1945 to the Present.

³⁵² “Mongolian Record of Conversation with Soviet Officials in Moscow,” February 9, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Mongolian Foreign Ministry Archive, Ulaanbaatar, fond 2, dans 1, kh/n 440b. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Sergey Radchenko.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113310>

difference.”³⁵³ In a subsequent meeting, Deng explained to his U.S. hosts that Moscow “could not shift their forces to the Far East that quickly. Their existing forces in the Far East are too limited.” Furthermore, Deng told his U.S. host that in the winter, “large-scale operations in the North are not easy. If our action in the South is quickly completed, they won’t have time to react.”³⁵⁴ According to the conversation memorandum, Chinese and U.S. leaders exchanged their information and attitudes towards Soviet military buildup related to Vietnam. It was likely that the United States shared with China the information on limited Soviet military buildup along the Chinese-Soviet border.

To add, U.S intelligence showed there had been no Soviet naval presence in Vietnam by late January 1979, at neither Cam Ranh Bay nor any other Vietnamese naval facility. Moreover, there had been no sign of installation of heavy equipment to service large naval vessels at Cam Ranh Bay.³⁵⁵ On the eve of the war, the Soviets increased their reconnaissance in the South China Sea. However, they did not undertake “any detectable military moves of their own.”³⁵⁶ Nothing could prevent China from waging the war.

On February 17, China launched attack from Guangxi and Yunnan. The direct objective of this war was to save the CPK from complete destruction. Through this war, China tied down 16 Vietnamese divisions, nearly half of its army.³⁵⁷ As a result, China was able to ease some pressure on the CPK and prevent Hanoi from achieving a quick

³⁵³ Memorandum of Conversation, January 29, 1979, in *FRUS 1977–1980, Volume XIII, China*, 750-753.

³⁵⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, January 29, 1979, in *ibid.*, 767-770.

³⁵⁵ DCI, “Military Developments in Indochina,” January 23, 1979, in DNSA collection: China and U.S. Intelligence, 1945-2010.

³⁵⁶ DCI, Alert Memorandum, “China-Vietnam-USSR,” February 14, 1979, in DNSA collection: The History of the National Security Agency: 1945 to the Present.

³⁵⁷ DCI, Intelligence Brief, “Sino-Soviet,” February 23, 1979, in DNSA collection: The History of the National Security Agency: 1945 to the Present.

and decisive victory in Kampuchea. Second, Beijing aimed to raise the cost of Vietnam's cooperation with the Soviet Union. As Chinese leaders repeatedly referred to Vietnam as a "Cuba of the East," they suggested that the Soviet Union emboldened Vietnam and Vietnam advanced Soviet objectives in Indochina.

With the war, China showed Vietnam that security cooperation with the Soviet Union was costly. Nonetheless, this war did not make Vietnam drift away from the Soviet Union. On the contrary, in the subsequent years Vietnam enhanced its cooperation with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union not only increased its military assistance to Vietnam, but also established and expanded its naval presence in at Cam Ranh Bay.³⁵⁸

To maintain coercive pressure on Vietnam and divide Hanoi and Moscow, China kept using force along the border. Deng Xiaoping explicitly explained this rationale to U.S. Vice President Walter Mondale. In August 1979, Mondale visited China and held talks with Deng Xiaoping. Elaborating China's strategic calculation in Indochina, Deng explained, "in deciding what to do with regard to Indochina, it is not merely a Sino-Vietnamese or an Indochina problem alone." He continued to remark, "the Soviet control in Vietnam is very tight," and "Vietnam is not yet in enough of a difficult position to accept a political solution."³⁵⁹ To prevent Vietnam from establishing an Indochina Federation and drive a wedge between Vietnam and the Soviet Union, Deng stated, Vietnam had to

"be bogged down in Kampuchea, bogged down in Laos, international difficulties will have to magnify, perhaps after three years, five years, there may be a new situation there. So if we are to work for such a change, at least in the coming three years, we will have to increase

³⁵⁸ Sally W. Stoecker, *Clients and Commitments: Soviet-Vietnamese Relations, 1978-1988* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1989), 13-19.

³⁵⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, August 27 and 28, 1979, in *FRUS 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China*, 944-45, 952.

the pressure from all aspects. And this would include putting pressure on the Soviet Union... So it is imperative now for all of us to keep up all kinds of pressure on the Vietnamese—political, economic pressure, and *military pressure on our part.* We do not expect other people to exert military pressure... In that way it will increase difficulties, and this burden on the Soviet Union will grow heavier and heavier. Things will become more difficult. In time the Vietnamese will come to realize that not all their requests to the Soviet Union can be met (Emphasis added).”³⁶⁰

To keep up military pressure on Vietnam, China continued to carry out attacks along the border. Throughout the 1980s, the Chinese and Vietnamese armed forces exchanged artillery fire and competed for control over mountainous positions.³⁶¹ Nonetheless, it took ten years of conflict and tension for China to achieve its objective of dividing Hanoi and Moscow.

4.3 Alternative Explanations

First, Crawford’s theory of wedge strategies provides a powerful alternative explanation. The theory would argue that because Chinese leaders worried about the risk of balancing blowback, they chose to accommodate Vietnam. Subsequently, when Vietnam’s going into the Soviet orbit seemed inevitable and the situation could not become worse, China turned to use coercive wedge strategies against Vietnam. China’s choices basically fitted this explanation.

Nonetheless, this theory downplays the likelihood that China used mixed strategies, not pure ones. Indeed, when China chose accommodative wedging between 1975 and 1977, it also used coercive wedging as its complementary strategy. Similarly,

³⁶⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, August 28, 1979, in *FRUS 1977–1980, Volume XIII, China*, 952-54.

³⁶¹ For a detailed account of this prolonged conflict, see, Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping's Long War: The Military Conflict between China and Vietnam, 1979-1991*, 141-68.

when China turned to coercive wedge strategies after mid-1977, it adopted mixed strategies until the end of 1978.

The second alternative explanation I examine here is Izumikawa's theory of wedge strategies. According to him, a divider state would choose accommodative wedge strategies (Izumikawa terms as reward wedging) if it has more reward power than its adversary. On the contrary, if the divider's reward power is inferior to its adversary's and the divider faces an alliance that seriously challenges its security, it will use coercive wedge strategies.³⁶² For the Vietnam case, this theory would argue that because China had less reward power than the Soviet Union and China worried about the threat of increase Soviet influence in Southeast Asia, China would choose coercive wedge strategies.

This explanation contains a few drawbacks. First, similar to Crawford's theory, Izumikawa's explanation overlooks mixed strategies. Second, Izumikawa did not provide specific guidance to measure reward power. As he admitted, reward power can be difficult to measure.³⁶³ As such, it is difficult to evaluate Izumikawa's explanation against empirical evidence. Third, China changed its wedge strategies between 1975 and 1979. However, based on Izumikawa's definition, the distribution of reward power between China and the Soviet Union remained the same. This suggests that other factors were driving China's strategic choices.

4.4 Conclusion

³⁶² Izumikawa, "To Coerce or Reward? Theorizing Wedge Strategies in Alliance Politics," 508-09.

³⁶³ Ibid., 507.

In sum, the case of China's wedge strategies toward Vietnam supports my theory. After the fall of Saigon, China enjoyed strong leverage on Vietnam. China provided economic assistance to Vietnam and played an important role in restraining Kampuchea's hostile policy toward Vietnam. Additionally, China was able to use the issues of territorial disputes and overseas Chinese to exert influence on Vietnam. Consequently, when the Soviet Union tried to enhance its relations with Vietnam, China responded with accommodative wedge strategies. Simultaneously, China restrained its economic assistance to Vietnam in order to warn the latter against standing close with the Soviet Union.

This began to change in the mid-1977. Receiving a large amount of Soviet equipment and economic assistance emboldened Hanoi to step up its control over the overseas Chinese community and disputed territories. Meanwhile, it turned out China was unable to restrain Pol Pot. Consequently, those developments undermined China's leverage. Meanwhile, Vietnam continued to enter the Soviet orbit; in November 1978 two states signed the alliance treaty. Therefore, China adjusted its primary wedge strategies from accommodative to coercive.

Chapter 5 Strategic Use of Insurgency in Thailand in China's Coercive Wedging, 1964-1975

As a U.S. ally in Southeast Asia, Thailand played a supportive role in the Vietnam War. For instance, upon U.S. request, Thailand allowed United States Air Force (USAF) to use Thai bases for air strikes in Vietnam and Laos. Thailand also contributed a large number of troops in Vietnam. As China viewed the U.S. war as a threat to its security, Thai cooperation with the U.S. war in Vietnam made China believe that Thailand was contributing to U.S. threat to China. Consequently, China sought to pressure Thailand to decrease its cooperation with the United States.

China applied coercive wedge strategy against Thailand. The main instrument of this strategy was the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), the major internal rival against the Thai government in Bangkok. This chapter argues that, instead of exporting communist revolution to Thailand, the CCP used the CPT and its insurgency as a device to exert pressure on Bangkok to detach it from the United States.

This chapter argues that China's use of coercive wedge strategy largely resulted from a high degree of security cooperation between Thailand and the United States. First, because China lacked sufficient leverage over Bangkok to compel it to shun cooperation with the United States, Beijing faced limited strategic choices. As China only had weak leverage over Thailand, accommodative wedging became less a viable option. In turn, as the theory predicts, China considered the degree of security cooperation between Thailand and the United States. Between 1965 and 1968, the United States reiterated its

security commitment to Thailand. From China's perspective, the U.S.-Thailand alliance was highly cohesive. As a result, using coercive wedging was unlikely to backfire and thus became China's primary wedge strategy. To add, lacking leverage made it difficult for China to use accommodation as a complementary strategy. This is because, compared to the United States, China did not have valuable resources to offer Thailand.

Nonetheless, China still tried to restrain its coercive wedging. After 1968, the degree of security cooperation between Thailand and the United States decreased. Meanwhile, China's leverage remained weak. As a result, weak leverage compelled China to use coercive wedging as its primary strategy toward Thailand. At the same time, as some leverage emerged, China opted for accommodation to complement its coercion.

The rest of this chapter divides into four sections. The first one looks at the period between 1964 and 1968. Observing Thailand's increasing involvement in the Vietnam War and the U.S. reiteration of its security commitment to Thailand, China increased its support for the CPT insurgency, attempting to coerce Bangkok to decrease its engagement in Vietnam. However, China's efforts did not work as Thailand deepened its involvement in the war. The second section explores interaction among Beijing, Bangkok, and Washington between 1969 and 1975. This period witnessed U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, shakier U.S. commitment to Thailand, and the end of the Vietnam War. Consequently, China maintained its support for the CPT insurgency. Meanwhile, China employed accommodation to complement its coercive wedging. China's strategies worked. Thailand first gradually withdrew its troops from Vietnam. After the war was over, Thailand decreased its hostility against China and eventually

established formal diplomatic relations with China in July 1975. The last two sections consider alternative explanations and summarize this case.

5.1 The Communist Insurgency as a Wedge, 1964-1968

5.1.1 China Viewed Thailand as being tied to the “U.S. War Chariot”

In this period, China viewed the United States as an increasing threat that was enhancing its military presence in China’s periphery, and Thailand was an integral part of the U.S. containment against China.¹ From Beijing’s perspective, Thailand, with its increasing engagement in Laos and Vietnam, contributed to the U.S. threat to China.

As the civil war in Laos escalated in 1964, Thailand and the United States increased their intervention into Laos.² In February, Thailand allowed a U.S. special air warfare unit to train Lao pilots in Thailand.³ Two months later, a right-wing coup broke out in Vientiane, directly challenging the government led by Souvanna Phouma. Worried about subsequent military responses of the Pathet Lao, Thailand issued a note claiming, “Should the highly dangerous situation in Laos be allowed to continue...Thailand might be obliged to reassess her position as a party to the [Geneva] Agreements of July 1962.”⁴ Shortly after this coup, Thailand agreed to the use of Thai bases for U.S. reconnaissance

¹ A *Xinhua* commentary stated, “The entry of U.S. ground and air force units into Thailand is aimed at spreading the war flames...In the so-called “crescent” from Japan through South Vietnam, Thailand, to India, both U.S. war preparations directed against the socialist countries and its repressive measures against the national liberation movement have become more aggressive and reckless.” “U.S. Troops in Thailand Pose Threat,” *Xinhua*, May 22, 1962, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-62-101, BBB1-BBB4.

² MacAlister Brown and Joseph J Zasloff, *Apprentice Revolutionaries: The Communist Movement in Laos, 1930–1985* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 92-94.

³ “Testimony of William H. Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs,” in *The United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations*, (hereafter cited as *The Symington Hearings*) the Ninety-first Congress, October 1969, Part 3 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 369.

⁴ Melvin Gurtov, *China and Southeast Asia: The Politics of Survival* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1971), 20.

flights in Laos.⁵ Meanwhile, the number of U.S. aircraft and military personnel in Thailand started to increase. The first U.S. aircraft arrived Thailand in 1964. In August, Thailand removed any restrictions on launch of combat sorties out of Thailand by U.S. aircraft.⁶ By the end of the year, there had been 75 USAF aircraft and 6,300 troops based in Thailand.⁷

China watched this development in Laos with apprehension. Right before the coup in Laos, Phouma concluded his successful visit in China and the two governments issued a communique that praised their “friendly relations.”⁸ The Chinese believed the coup was a U.S. plan to establish a stronghold in Laos.⁹ Meanwhile, China also criticized Thailand’s involvement. A *Renmin Ribao* editorial stated that Thailand was directly involved in Laos on behalf of the United States and the Laotian right-wing force.¹⁰

In June, when Thai pilots bombed Khang Khay where the Chinese economic and cultural delegation was located, one Chinese was killed and five wounded. China issued a note to the Geneva Conference, calling to stop U.S. aggression and provocation.¹¹ Meanwhile, a *Renmin Ribao* editorial commented that this incident demonstrated that the United States was “ready to enter a phase of direct and open armed aggression in Laos...to enlarge its armed aggression in Indochina.” The editorial also accused Thailand

⁵ “Testimony of William H. Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs,” in *The Symington Hearings*, 369.

⁶ “Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State,” August 10, 1964, the Lyndon B. Johnson Library (hereafter cited as LBJL), National Security File, Country File, Singapore and Thailand, Box 282, vol. II, Cables.

⁷ The Royal Thai Embassy, *The Eagle and the Elephant: Thai-American Relations since 1833* (Washington, D.C.: The Royal Thai Embassy, 2009), 160.

⁸ “China-Laos Joint Communique,” *Peking Review*, no. 15 (April 10, 1964), 10-11.

⁹ *Renmin Ribao*, May 27, 1964.

¹⁰ *Renmin Ribao*, May 13, 1964.

¹¹ Liu Shufa, ed., *Chen Yi Nianpu [Chronology of Chen Yi]* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1995), 1035. Arthur J. Dommen, *Conflict in Laos: The Politics of Neutralization* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 259.

of joining the U.S. “gang” by sending troops to the “neighborhood of Vientiane.”¹² In September, *Renmin Ribao* directly criticized Thailand as provoking along the Thai-Cambodian border and within the Cambodian territory.¹³

After the Tonkin Gulf incident, the United States started to bomb North Vietnam, a military campaign that required greater Thai involvement. Air strikes from Thai airbases began in February 1965.¹⁴ In March, the U.S. Department of State requested to send more USAF aircraft to Thailand, in order to deal with the threats from North Vietnam and China. They requested to send an F-4 squadron to Thailand involving 18 aircraft and about 600 personnel. Three days later, Bangkok permit this request.¹⁵ More than half of U.S. aircraft flying in the Rolling Thunder missions were from Thai bases.¹⁶ The next year witnessed the greatest expansion of USAF presence in Thailand. In February, Bangkok agreed the deployment of the 606th Air Commando Squadron to train the Royal Thai Air Force in counterinsurgency. Meanwhile, USAF deployed three additional squadrons of F-4s and F-105s for air strike operations against North Vietnam. In December, USAF had about 25,000 personnel and 400 aircraft in Thailand.¹⁷ Table 5.1 documents the expansion of U.S. military presence in Thailand.

¹² *Renmin Ribao*, June 15, 1964.

¹³ *Renmin Ribao*, September 15, 1964.

¹⁴ “Statement on United States-Thai Security Relations presented by Ambassador Leonard Unger,” in *The Symington Hearings*, 615.

¹⁵ “Telegram from Department of State to Embassy in Bangkok,” March 27; “Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State,” March 30, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Singapore and Thailand, Box 282, vol. II, Cables.

¹⁶ “Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State,” March 23, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. III, Cables.

¹⁷ “Statement on United States-Thai Security Relations presented by Ambassador Leonard Unger,” in *The Symington Hearings*, 615.

Table 5.1. *Number of U.S. Military Personnel and Aircraft in Thailand*

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Army Personnel	3,300	4,700	8,000	10,300	11,300
USAF Personnel	3,000	9,000	25,000	33,369	33,500
Aircraft	75	200	400	527 (25) ^a	600

Note: a: in 1967, USAF stationed 25 B-25s at U-Tapao air base.

Source: “Statement on United States-Thai Security Relations presented by Ambassador Leonard Unger,” in *The Symington Hearings*, 615-18.

Two important decisions marked greater Thai involvement in Vietnam in 1967. First, in January Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn announced publicly that Thailand would send ground combat forces to South Vietnam. To justify this decision, he claimed that the communists were “supporting all underground movements...to undermine the peace in the kingdom of Thailand...Should communist aggression in Vietnam achieve success, Thailand would be the next target.”¹⁸ In October, Bangkok announced to dispatch 11,000 troops to South Vietnam. It was a major contribution as this number accounted for approximately 14 percent of the Thai army strength.¹⁹ Table 5.2 shows the increasing size of the Thai troop in Vietnam.

Table 5.2. *Thai Troop Increment in Vietnam*

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Personnel	16	-	200	2,207	11,000

Source: “Statement on United States-Thai Security Relations presented by Ambassador Leonard Unger,” in *The Symington Hearings*, 624.

¹⁸ “Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State, January 6, 1967, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. V, Cables.

¹⁹ “Statement on United States-Thai Security Relations presented by Ambassador Leonard Unger,” in *The Symington Hearings*, 624.

Second, the United States stationed B-52s at U-Tapao air base. U.S. decision-makers believed that this would help shorten the Vietnam War.²⁰ Upon request, on March 2, Thailand agreed to permit the U.S. use of U-Tapao base for B-52 operations. Bangkok and Washington announced this decision on March 22.²¹ In July 1968, the United States proposed to deploy additional forces in Thailand, including more B-52s at U-Tapao, and Prop aircraft and gunships, out of Udorn, aiming to interrupt North Vietnamese infiltration route.²² Again, Bangkok agreed.

These movements reinforced China's perception that Thai cooperation with the United States increased the U.S. threat to China. Beijing described Thailand as a forward base for U.S. aggression in Indochina. An article in *Peking Review* denounced the increasing Thai cooperation with the United States: "To an ever greater degree, Thailand...has become a base for U.S. aggression." The article also accused the United States of "using Thai bases to strike at the neighboring countries...and building Thailand up as a center of aggression."²³ Another news article accused the Thai government of "devotedly serving as one of Washington's pawns on the Southeast Asian chessboard" and "taking a direct part in the U.S. war against Vietnamese and Laotian peoples." The article concluded with a warning: Thai leaders would "soon have to lie in the bed they have made for themselves."²⁴ At the end of 1965, Thailand attacked a Cambodian frontier post. China viewed this action as a deeper Thai involvement in the Vietnam War.

²⁰ "Prepared Statement of Secretary of Defense during Thai Leaders' Visit, March 19, 1967, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. IV, Cables.

²¹ Circular Cable, March 22, 1967, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VI, Cables.

²² "Telegram for Bundy from Brown and Steadman," July 1968, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VIII, Cables.

²³ "Bases in Thailand: Where U.S. Bombers Strike Out," *Peking Review*, no. 15 (April 9, 1965), 27.

²⁴ "Thailand—Bridgehead of U.S. Aggression against Indochina," *Peking Review*, no. 42 (October 15, 1965), 8-10.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry condemned this action as a U.S.-engineered aggression. The statement also described Thailand as a U.S. “vassal.”²⁵ Echoing this statement, a commentary in *Peking Review* remarked, “Bangkok is being tied to the U.S. war chariot.”²⁶

With deeper Thai involvement in the war, China believed that Bangkok was increasing its contribution to the U.S. threat to China. In January 1967, the Chinese Foreign Ministry denounced Bangkok’s decision of sending 1,000 troops to Vietnam. The statement accused the United States of expanding its presence in Thailand and “directing the spearhead of its aggression against China.” The statement warned that since “Thai reactionaries have decided to throw in their lot with U.S. imperialism, they will definitely come to no other end than utter destruction.”²⁷ Responding to U.S.-Thailand announcement that the United States would station B-52 bombers in the U-Tapao base, a commentary in *Renmin Ribao* remarked that by doing so, the Thai government jeopardized the “security of all Asian people.” It warned, “The traitorous government of Thailand is only courting its own doom by stubbornly serving as U.S. imperialism’s tool for aggression and making itself an enemy of the Vietnamese and other Asian people.”²⁸ Moreover, *Xinhua* broadcast an article claiming that Thailand became not only a second front for the Vietnam War, but also part of the U.S.

²⁵ “Foreign Ministry Statement Condemns U.S.-Engineered Thai Aggression against Cambodia,” *Peking Review*, no. 2 (January 7, 1966), 4.

²⁶ “Thailand and South Vietnam as Cat’s-Paws,” *ibid.*, 17.

²⁷ Chinese Foreign Ministry Statement, January 19, 1967, in R.K. Jain ed., *China and Thailand, 1949-1983* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1984), 125-26.

²⁸ *Renmin Riabo*, April 2, 1967.

encirclement against China. It stated that enlarging U.S. bases in Thailand would enable Washington to “attack the underbelly of China.”²⁹

5.1.2 Beijing’s Lack of Leverage

Viewing Thailand as contributing to the U.S. threat to China, Beijing decided to drive a wedge between Bangkok and Washington. The question is how to choose particular strategies. During this period, Beijing lacked leverage over Bangkok. This lack of leverage resulted from three factors. First, geography was not in China’s favor. Thailand was not bordering China since Laos and Burma separated those two states. Consequently, there was no territorial disputes that China could use to pressure Thailand.

Second, Beijing and Bangkok had almost no formal contact after 1957. In September 1957 and October 1958, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat launched two coups and overthrew the Phibun government. The new Sarit government enhanced Thailand’s commitment to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), issued Revolutionary Decree No. 53, and prohibited import of goods from China in 1959.³⁰ Furthermore, the Sarit government stepped up its anti-communist campaign in 1959.³¹ Between 1959 and 1962, the Thai police carried out raids and sweeps and arrested 1080 suspected communists and “plotters.”³²

Third, as Thailand’s ally, the United States provided a large amount of economic and military assistance to Thailand and kept a military presence in Thailand. The major form of U.S. assistance was its military assistance program (MAP). As Bangkok devoted

²⁹ “U.S. Building Thailand into Military Base,” *Peking NCNA International Service*, April 3, 1967, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-67-064, BBB1-BBB2.

³⁰ Daniel Dudley Lovelace, *China and "People's War" in Thailand, 1964-1969* (Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1971), 32.

³¹ Gurtov, *China and Southeast Asia: The Politics of Survival*, 8.

³² Donald E Weatherbee, *The United Front in Thailand: A Documentary Analysis* (Columbia: Institute of International Studies, University of South Carolina, 1970), 23-24.

large part of its expenditures to counterinsurgency programs, MAP played a significant role in supporting the Thai government. For instance, in early 1965, recognizing the importance of MAP, U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Graham Martin urged Washington to put the Thai MAP in the same special category as Laos and South Vietnam to deal with the CPT insurgents.³³ As Table 5.3 shows, after the decline in Fiscal Year (FY) 1964 and FY1965, the size of MAP was increasing. Meanwhile, the absolute size of MAP made it impossible for China to compete with the United States.

Table 5.3. *Level of MAP (million dollars)*

	FY1963	FY1964	FY1965	FY1966	FY1967	FY1968
Personnel	71.8	35.2	30.8	42.3	59	76.5

Source: The Symington Hearings, 633.

Overseas Chinese in Thailand was China's leverage, although a weak one. Overseas Chinese, as a rather large community, played an important role in Thailand. According to a 1960 census, the ethnic Chinese constituted about 12 percent of the total Thai population.³⁴ Based on a CIA estimate, in 1968 the population of overseas Chinese were almost 5 million, about 15 percent of the total population. Moreover, the overseas Chinese in Thailand were largely active in commerce.³⁵ Similar to other Southeast Asian states, Thailand had concerns about potential influence of Beijing on its Chinese community. For instance, China announced to establish a Thai Nationality Autonomous Area in southern Yunnan province. The Thai leaders, consequently, feared that China was attempting to challenge the legitimacy of the Thai government and stir up a "Pan-

³³ "Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State," March 23, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. III, Cables.

³⁴ Jiang, "The Chinese in Thailand: Past and Present," 39.

³⁵ CIA, *Intelligence Memorandum: Ethnic Minorities and Insurgency in Thailand*, May 1, 1968, 2, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP84-00825R000100510001-9

Thai” movement in Thailand’s northern provinces.³⁶ Although the Thai government may have overestimated the significance of this Thai autonomous region, this indicated Bangkok’s concern about its ethnic Chinese community and their connections with Beijing. With the tension in Indochina escalating, the Thai government stepped up its campaign against its ethnic Chinese population. The government arrested ethnic Chinese for “communist subversive activities,” searched Chinese merchants and Chinese schools, and shut down Chinese newspapers.³⁷ To add, in 1963, the local authority made some arrests of communists in Nakon Phanom province, directing against ethnic Chinese.³⁸

Meanwhile, Beijing attempted to cultivate its relations with overseas Chinese to exert influence. As a Chinese document stated, “Relations with Chinese internationals are an important component of the state’s foreign relations work.” Consequently, in 1958 the China Expatriate Committee described part of its responsibility as “encouraging and promoting Chinese internationals’ development of the international Chinese united front,” and conducting “propaganda work aimed at Chinese internationals.”³⁹ On the strategy for overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, the China Expatriate Committee recommended to follow the Five Principles for Peaceful Coexistence. This was a rather flexible recommendation. As the committee noted, “The basic policy is identical. However, in the specific application of these policies, special observance must be paid to the different qualities of separate areas. Their central objectives will be determined

³⁶ Lovelace, *China and "People's War" in Thailand, 1964-1969*, 30. Weatherbee, *The United Front in Thailand: A Documentary Analysis*, 20.

³⁷ Wang ed., *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Wajiaoshi*, vol. 2, 69.

³⁸ Weatherbee, *The United Front in Thailand: A Documentary Analysis*, 29.

³⁹ “Policy for the China Expatriate Committee’s Expatriate Strategy,” 1958, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Archives X42-1-56. Obtained for CWIHP by Hongwei Fan and translated by Max Maller. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118257>

separately to draw up specific reasoning for policymaking.”⁴⁰ To add, Liao Chengzhi delivered a speech during the Expatriate Committee in 1959. He stated that regarding the issue of overseas Chinese in nationalist states in Southeast Asia, Beijing called on those overseas Chinese “not to participate in local political struggles, to subject themselves to the law of the land, not to engage in illegal activities.” Nonetheless, he also explained that if in those states there was no “robust leadership of the proletariat and the communist party... power wielding national bourgeoisies need to change.”⁴¹ Although at the time he was referring to Burma and India, Beijing could apply the principle Liao described to Thailand, should the situation change.

Nonetheless, the potential use of this leverage was limited for China. Compared to other Southeast Asian states, Thailand did the best to assimilate its overseas Chinese group and frictions between the Thai society and the ethnic Chinese community was “minimal.”⁴² As a result, this restrained China’s potential use of the issue of overseas Chinese as leverage over Bangkok.

5.1.3 Fight for a Firmer Security Commitment to Thailand

Thailand always worried about potential threat from China. Therefore, it kept seeking for a firm commitment from the United States. By exerting pressure on Thailand, China’s strategies impelled Thailand to demand firmer U.S. commitments. If this demand exceeded the extent to which the United States was willing to supply, China could

⁴⁰ “Recommendations for the China Expatriate Committee’s Expatriate Affairs,” 1958, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Archives X42-1-55. Obtained for CWIHP by Hongwei Fan and translated by Max Maller. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118256>

⁴¹ “Policy Documents for Expatriate Affairs related to the CCP Central Committee, Expatriate Committee, and District Committees (1956, 1957, 1959),” January 04, 1959, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Archives X42-1-72. Obtained for CWIHP by Hongwei Fan and translated by Max Maller. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118258>

⁴² CIA, *Ethnic Minorities and Insurgency in Thailand*, 2.

successfully drive a wedge between Thailand and the United States. Unfortunately, as we will see below, Thailand had concerns about the credibility of U.S. commitment. However, the United States was able to reassure Thailand and thus rendered China's strategies ineffective.

As Thailand's contribution to the Vietnam War was necessary, the United States was willing to reassure Thailand. U.S. Ambassador Martin well described this logic. In a report to the Department of State, he warned that when the Vietnam War began to falter, indication of U.S. withdrawal from Southeast Asia would lead Thailand to suspect that the United States stopped fulfilling its commitment to Thailand. Such implication, according to Martin, would be consequential.⁴³ Therefore, during this period U.S. leaders found ways to ease their Thai colleagues by reasserting its commitment.

The foundation of U.S. security commitment to Thailand was the SEATO Article IV and the Rusk-Thanat Communique in 1962. SEATO's Article IV read, "If...any party...is threatened in any way other than by armed attack...the parties shall consult immediately in order to agree on measures which shall be taken for the common defense."⁴⁴ Recognizing the vagueness of this article, Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman and Secretary of State Dean Rusk issued a joint communique. The Rusk-Thanat Communique specified U.S. commitment to Thailand as the U.S. "firm intention...in resisting communist aggression and subversion." It further announced this U.S. obligation was independent of the SEATO Treaty.⁴⁵

⁴³ "Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State," January 26, 1966, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. IV, Memos.

⁴⁴ R. Sean Randolph, *The United States and Thailand: Alliance Dynamics, 1950-1985* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1986), 29-30.

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1962* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 1093.

With the Indochinese situation quickly deteriorating, the importance of Thailand for U.S. policy in Southeast Asia increased. Consequently, Washington recognized the importance of reaffirming its security commitment to Thailand. As Rusk explained to President Johnson in a memorandum, key to U.S. Thailand policy was to “bolster Thai confidence in our determination to check the spread of Communist power in Southeast Asia.”⁴⁶ Similarly, when preparing for the SEATO Council Meeting at London in 1965, the U.S. Department of State pointed out one of U.S. objectives was to “reassure Thailand of firm SEATO backing against the incipient signs of externally-instigated Communist insurgency.”⁴⁷

On the other hand, Thai leaders kept expressing their desire for a firmer commitment from the United States. This was partly due to their concern that Thailand’s greater involvement in the war would invite aggression from North Vietnam and China. During a meeting with President Johnson, Deputy Prime Minister Praphat Charusathian expressed considerable concern about U.S. determination in Southeast Asia. Johnson assured him that so long as “Thailand continued its fight against communism, it could rely fully on the continued friendship and support of the United States.” Praphat responded to this statement positively. He said strong statements from Johnson and the appointment of General Maxwell Taylor as the Ambassador to South Vietnam removed such concern.⁴⁸ Similarly, when visiting the United States in the end of 1966, Thanat requested a “new and firmer commitment” from the United States. Although Martin

⁴⁶ “Request for Appointment-General Prapass Charusathiara, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand,” July 14, 1964; “Memorandum from the Secretary of State for the President,” July 24, 1964, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Singapore and Thailand, Box 282, vol. I, Memos.

⁴⁷ “Scope paper for Council Meeting at London,” May 3-5, April 7, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. III, Cables.

⁴⁸ “Memorandum of Conversation,” July 24, 1964, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Singapore and Thailand, Box 282, vol. I, Memos.

believed the Thai leaders were satisfied at the time, he reminded his colleagues and supervisors, “We must, however, recognize that time will erode the current Thai sense of satisfaction. This is true for the simple reason that the dependability of the American commitment to the security of Southeast Asia is, for the Thai, a question of national survival. Thai need for assurance is, therefore, essentially insatiable. It is a constant factor in our relations and we must recognize that the speed with which Thai confidence erodes will depend...on the realism with which the U.S. government deals with the specific problems of our relations with Thailand.”⁴⁹ In another telegram, Martin also pointed out, “The extent to which RTG (Royal Thai Government) will remain forthcoming in our cooperative efforts in Southeast Asia is degree to which Thai accept our assurances we prepared to stay on consistent course and do all that is necessary to defeat communist aggression.”⁵⁰

Before granting the permission of stationing B-52s at U-Tapao, the Thai leadership expressed their concern to their U.S. counterparts. Thanom told Ambassador Martin that the use of B-52s at U-Tapao would give communists a “pretext to attack, possibly by air, but much more likely by increased covert attack.” Under this circumstance, the prime minister asked Martin, how would the United States “assure that it will assist Thailand in meeting these increased dangers?” If Thailand would agree to base B-52s, he further asked, in what form “more definite American commitments [would] be recorded” because the collective security arrangement was not applicable.

⁴⁹ “Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State,” November 11, 1966, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. V, Cables.

⁵⁰ From Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State, March 23, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. III, Cables.

According to Martin, other senior Thai leaders were convincing Thanom that his policy of total cooperation with the United States was not in the best interest of Thailand.⁵¹

In addition, in return for sending additional troops to Vietnam, Bangkok requested enhanced U.S. air defense in Thailand, as a reassurance that the United States helped offset the additional communist threat resulting from the presence of USAF within Thailand. According to Leonard Unger, who succeeded Martin as U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, this request suggested Thai leaders' desire to "create a defense establishment capable of making a respectable show in event of attack by anything less than a massive sweep by Chinese hordes. This desire is heightened...by the prospect of an end to the present war." Communist propaganda against U.S. use of Thai air bases heightened the fear of air or missile attack against these bases. Bangkok informed Washington that they received intelligence showing Chinese-North Vietnamese discussion of the possibility of "launching aerial attacks against Thai bases."⁵²

However, during this period U.S. commitment to Thailand was under attack. The first challenge came from Senator Fulbright, Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) and a constant critic of U.S. policy toward Thailand. In 1966, he publicly raised questions about the validity of U.S. commitment to Thailand. He expressed his concern that Thailand would become a second Vietnam, that is, the United States was increasingly involved in counterinsurgency in Thailand.⁵³ At the hearing before the SFRC, William Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific

⁵¹ "Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State," February 2, 1967, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. V, Cables.

⁵² "Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State," September 17, 1967, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VII, Cables.

⁵³ John Finney, "Fulbright Presses for Public Hearings on Thailand Policy," *New York Times*, September 21, 1966, 9.

Affairs, stated that U.S. military presence in Thailand did not mean deep or direct involvement in fighting the CPT insurgency.⁵⁴

This criticism clearly made the Thai leadership nervous. In response to Fulbright's comments, Thanat informed Rusk that he wanted a security guarantee from the United States, maybe in the form of a bilateral security treaty. Thanat stated that he wanted a "reasonable guarantee" if Thailand's involvement in Vietnam would attract retaliation that "might very well come."⁵⁵ Subsequently, Thanat formally requested a bilateral defense treaty with the United States.⁵⁶ A few weeks later, in a conversation with Rusk, Thai Minister of National Development Pote Sarasin again referred to Fulbright's comments. He proposed that President Johnson make a statement during his visit to Bangkok, explicitly divorcing the U.S. government from Fulbright's statements on Thailand. While Rusk turned down this proposal, Pote insisted that Thailand needed "something on the record directly addressing to the point." Pote continued to point out that U.S. commitment under the SEATO Treaty did not require an automatic U.S. reaction, which was different from the one in the NATO Treaty. Therefore, he requested some restatement of U.S. commitment, including one that U.S. commitment would apply even when in the future a U.S. administration wanted to pull out of Southeast Asia.⁵⁷ On January 27, 1967, Thanat delivered a speech, more explicitly expressing his dissatisfaction with the United States: "There are Westerners, pundits and commentators

⁵⁴ "Prepared Statement for Assistance Secretary Bundy before Senate Foreign Relations Committee," September 19, 1966, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. IV, Memos.

⁵⁵ "Memorandum of Conversation," September 22, 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, vol. XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia, Document 323.

⁵⁶ "Memorandum for the President," October 13, 1966, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. V, Memos.

⁵⁷ "Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State," February 27, 1967, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. V, Cables.

who are trying to use us as pawns, to move us from one checker board's square to another. They...said that the independence of a small nation in Southeast Asia is not worth the sacrifice of American soldiers or other soldiers... If we give in to them in South Vietnam, we will have to give in to them in Laos, in Cambodia, and perhaps in whole of Southeast Asia.”⁵⁸

In addition, Thai leaders complained about U.S. military and economic assistance to Thailand. In June 1965, several senior generals spoke at the Thai Army War College and voiced their dissatisfaction with the delayed and declined MAP level. For instance, Major General Saiyud Kerdpol, Supreme Commander of the Thai Armed Forces, stated his dissatisfaction bluntly. He claimed U.S. officers neglected or misunderstood what they saw and tried to avoid his request. He further asserted that he now understood why other Southeast Asian states refused U.S. aid. In the end, he concluded that he did not “believe or trust at all U.S. support (by force) to Thailand when the communists invade Thailand.” Similarly, General Boriboon Julacharit, Chief of Staff of the Army, said, the “Thai point of view and the U.S. one over the problem of the Communist threat are not the same... When the Thai army tries to beg aid for strengthening and equipping the regular units of the army, the United States never understands the problem...So the Thai army should prepare itself to meet the enemy and all problems in the condition of shortness of everything as now exists. Now we know why the U.S. fails in every field in Southeast Asia and in the world to the communists with such a political system.”⁵⁹

Echoing these generals' concerns, Praphat at a press conference claimed, “American

⁵⁸ “Telegram from Department of State to Embassy in Bangkok,” October 10, 1966, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. V, Memos.

⁵⁹ “Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State,” June 15, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. III, Cables.

cooperation (in building up Thailand's defenses against potential communist attack) is still not sufficient." He also warned that if the United States did not deal with this matter soon, "it might be too late to cope with the situation."⁶⁰ As a result, as a Department of State officer observed in Thailand, "Many if not most senior Thai feel a sense of uneasiness about the totality of the commitment to the United States which their government has accepted."⁶¹

This situation did not improve in 1966. In a discussion with then Vice President Richard Nixon in August, Thanom pressured for \$70 million for FY67 MAP, and he clearly linked the U.S. MAP with Thai contribution in South Vietnam. He told Nixon, the "national interest of Thailand...is nakedly and dangerously exposed...Thailand had had the same choice as Cambodia. Thailand could have chosen the course of accommodation. It could have remained uninvolved as had other SEATO nations...Had we done so, perhaps the United States would have remained as solicitous of Thailand as it was of Cambodia and Pakistan."⁶²

To settle Thailand's dissatisfaction and concerns, the U.S. decision makers reiterated its security commitment to their Thai colleagues. The United States reasserted its commitment based on the SEATO Treaty and the Rusk-Thanat communique. When President Johnson visited Bangkok in October 1966, he delivered a speech. Addressing on the Vietnam War, Johnson remarked, "We know the risks you and we both run to

⁶⁰ "Bangkok World: "Praphat: U.S. Military Cooperation Inadequate," August 5, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. III, Cables.

⁶¹ "Memorandum for McGeorge Bundy," June 10, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. III, Memos.

⁶² "Conversation between Prime Minister Thanom and Vice President Nixon," August 6, 1966, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. IV, Memos. "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Bundy) to Secretary of State Rusk," September 17, 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, vol. XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia, Document 332, 700-01.

meet the common dangers. But we know also that we act from a joint conviction of common interest. Let me assure you in this regard that Thailand can count on the United States to meet its obligations under the SEATO treaty. The commitment of the United States under the SEATO treaty is...a commitment of the American people as a nation. And I repeat to you: America keeps its commitments.”⁶³ Washington believed that Johnson’s speech successfully “removed Thai pressure for a bilateral security treaty.”⁶⁴ Subsequently, at a press conference in April 1968, Thanat announced that he had received assurance from Rusk that the United States would not pull out of Southeast Asia. He further implied that Thailand would not accept submission to the communist states as the price of peace in South Vietnam and Southeast Asia.⁶⁵

Moreover, to ease Thai leaders’ concerns about the U.S. MAP, Washington decided to increase its MAP to Thailand. In October 1966, the Department of State authorized Martin to inform the Thai government that “despite a cut in global MAP availabilities, the Thai program will be significantly greater than that of last year.”⁶⁶ Moreover, in November 1967, Washington agreed to provide Hawk battery and U.S. personnel to operate such equipment, in order to enhance Thailand’s air defense capabilities.⁶⁷

⁶³ “The President’s Toast at a State Dinner in His Honor in Chakri Throne Hall,” Bangkok, Thailand, October 28, 1966, Lyndon B. Johnson, *Lyndon B. Johnson: 1966* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967), 1275-276.

⁶⁴ “Memorandum for the President,” October 4, 1967, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VII, Memos.

⁶⁵ “Foreign Minister’s 11 April Press Conference,” *Bangkok Domestic Service*, April 11, 1968, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-68-074, J1-J2.

⁶⁶ “Telegram from Department of State to Embassy in Bangkok,” October 19, 1966, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. V, Cables.

⁶⁷ “Telegram for Ambassador from Bundy,” November, 1967, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VII, Cables.

While reasserting its commitment to Thailand, the United States refused to broaden this commitment. In the meeting in September 1966, when Thanat asked an expanded U.S. commitment, Rusk refused and insisted U.S. commitment under the SEATO Treaty was sufficient. Disappointed at Rusk's response, Thanat complained: "There was no guarantee in the SEATO Treaty." Thanat further stated that Thailand was a small state who were defeated in wars would just vanish. He asked Rusk, whether it was too hard to put the U.S. commitment in words "in black and white."⁶⁸ Regarding requirement for the station of B-52s in Thailand, the Department of State instructed Martin, if Thailand request new U.S. commitment when discussing the deployment of B-52s, Martin should "show that the existing security guarantee under SEATO would not be made more binding even if a bilateral defense treaty were to be entered into."⁶⁹

5.1.4 China's Support for the Communist Insurgency in Thailand

Viewing Thailand as contributing to the U.S. threat to China's southern border, Beijing attempted to drive a wedge between Thailand and the United States. Coming to the strategic choice, the combination of lacking strong leverage over Bangkok and the high degree of security cooperation between Thailand and the United States, China used the CPT insurgency as an instrument of its coercive wedging. As President Johnson remarked, communists were attempting to frighten the Thais with the prospect of a second front to get a "fight going in the family." Thanom agreed with this statement and added that "enemies" were trying to "sow suspicion and dissension."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation," September 22, 1966, in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, vol. XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia, Document 323.

⁶⁹ "Telegram from Department of State to Embassy in Bangkok," February 27, 1967, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. V, Cables.

⁷⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation," May 9, 1968, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VII, Memos.

While the CPT decided to begin armed struggle as early as in 1961, there had been neither material assistance from the CCP to the CPT nor frequent connection between the two communist parties until 1964.⁷¹ The Vietnam War altered the outlook in Southeast Asia, and China kept a vigilant eye on Thailand's involvement in Vietnam. In his conversation with Le Duan, Mao Zedong noted that Thailand was critical in Southeast Asia. Without Thailand's support, he explained, the United States would have difficulties fighting a war.⁷² For instance, in a conversation with Pakistani President Ayub Khan, Zhou Enlai indicated that Thailand had sent some troops to South Vietnam.⁷³ In 1966 when Bangkok hinted that it would reinforce a small naval and air contingent in South Vietnam, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement, warning: "if you openly participate in the U.S. imperialist aggression in Vietnam, you cannot escape the linking of the Vietnam battlefield to Thailand itself."⁷⁴

On January 6, 1967, Thanom announced that Thailand would send 1,000 troops to South Vietnam. Two weeks later, the Chinese Foreign Ministry denounced the Thai decision. The statement also warned Bangkok, "The Thanom clique should be aware that Thailand is right beside Indochina. In so doing, are you not afraid that the flames of the war kindled by the United States will spread to yourselves...The Thai people, too, will certainly rebel against you extensively and in enhanced unity... Since the Thai

⁷¹ Chris Baker, "An Internal History of the Communist Party of Thailand," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 33, no. 4 (2003): 528.

⁷² Discussion between Mao Zedong and Le Duan, August 13, 1964, cited in Yang Kuisong, "Mao Zedong dui Yinduzhinazhanzheng Taidu de Bianhua (1949-1973)" ["Changes in Mao Zedong's Attitude toward the Indochina Wars"], in *Zhongguo yu Yinduzhinazhanzheng [China and the Indochina Wars]*, ed. Li Danhui (Hongkong: Tiandi Tushu, 2000), 83-84.

⁷³ *Zhou Enlai waijiao huodong dashiji, 1949-1975* [Chronology of Zhou Enlai's Major Diplomatic Activities, 1949-1975] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Press, 1993), 445.

⁷⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, May 14, 1966, 1.

reactionaries have decided to throw in their lot with U.S. imperialism, they will definitely come to no other end than utter destruction.”⁷⁵

Consequently, Beijing decided to support the CPT to press Bangkok. According to a CIA estimate, at some point between the CCP Central Committee Conference of June 1964 and the embarking U.S. airstrike against North Vietnam in August, Beijing decided to “organize anti-government Thais into a united front of political and military opponents.”⁷⁶ Mao’s conversation with Le Duan supported this estimate. In their August conversation, Mao stressed the need to help Thai revolutionaries establish an armed force and facilitate a Thai revolution in five to ten years.⁷⁷ Additionally, China was not shy about its intention. On December 8, 1964, for the first time Radio Peking called for the overthrow of the Thai government.⁷⁸ Chen Yi, in January 1965, told a French diplomat that a “war of national liberation might start in Thailand by the end of this year.”⁷⁹

China’s assistance to the CPT was feasible as there was an organizational tie between the CCP and the CPT. The CPT leadership was primarily Chinese who received their training in China in the 1950s.⁸⁰ Moreover, the type of propaganda in the CPT leaflets suggested an “effective communication net and regular contract” between the CPT and the CCP.⁸¹ The CPT also stressed the importance of learning Chinese guerrilla

⁷⁵ “Thai Reactionaries Denounced,” *Peking Review* no. 5 (January 27, 1967), 29.

⁷⁶ CIA, *Intelligence Report: Ten Years of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy: South and Southeast Asia*, POLO XXVII, April 4, 1968, 18, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP85T00875R001000010026-8.

⁷⁷ Discussion between Mao Zedong and Le Duan, August 13, 1964, cited in Yang, “Mao Zedong dui Yinduzhinazhanzheng Taidu de Bianhua (1949-1973),” 84.

⁷⁸ CIA, *Peking’s Support of Insurgencies in Southeast Asia*, 67.

⁷⁹ “Statement on United States-Thai Security Relations presented by Ambassador Leonard Unger,” in *The Symington Hearings*, 626.

⁸⁰ CIA, *Intelligence Report: Peking’s Support of Insurgencies in Southeast Asia*, POLO LIII-RSS No.0065/73, April 1973, 56, 61, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP85T00875R001000010052-9.

⁸¹ CIA Special Memorandum No. 22-65, *The Threat of Communist Subversion in Thailand*, September 10, 1965, 5, in FOIA Collection, document no.0001468088.

warfare tactics.⁸² Meanwhile, the CPT did not intend to hide its close relations with the CCP. In October 1964, Xinhua broadcast a message of the CPT in English. The CPT called for the cooperation of all anti-government elements in a patriotic democratic united front. It also charged the Thai government with adopting a hostile policy toward China. It stressed that as the “revolutionary struggle develops in Thailand; the relationships between the peoples of our two countries will grow closer and closer.”⁸³

Chinese leaders expected that the CPT insurgency would help prevent Bangkok from getting further involved in South Vietnam. When discussing with Albanian leaders on foreign troops in South Vietnam, Zhou Enlai remarked, “Thailand is also having difficulty sending troops from its country, because it has its own problems.”⁸⁴ Later, Zhou raised this issue with Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu again: “Since for Thailand there is the issue of Laos, they will not be able to send too many troops... The Americans tell their allies that if the American troops withdraw from South Vietnam, then other countries will also ask that American troops withdraw... For example, in Thailand, if the people do not rise up, then the Americans will be able to stay for a while. That is why the Americans do not want to leave from anywhere, even if the people have risen against them, because they are afraid that [other] people will [also] break their shackles.”⁸⁵

⁸² “Message on Founding of Thai Communist Party,” *Voice of the People of Thailand (Clandestine)* (hereafter cited as *VOPT*), January 7, 1967, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-67-006, NNN1-NNN4.

⁸³ “Thai Communists Message,” *Peking NCNA International Service*, October 1, 1964, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-64-193, BBB11-BBB14.

⁸⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation, between Comrade Zhou Enlai and Party and State Leaders of Albania, 27-29 March 1965,” March, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Central State Archive, Tirana, AQPPSH-MPKK-V. 1965, D. 4. Obtained for CWIHP by Ana Lalaj and translated for CWIHP by Enkel Daljani. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117704>

⁸⁵ “Minutes of a Conversation Between the RCP Leadership led by Nicolae Ceausescu and the CCP Leadership Led by Zhou Enlai,” March 26, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive,

Mao Zedong was also optimistic about using the CPT insurgency to drag the United States to Southeast Asia. On a meeting in July 1967, Mao remarked, “The international situation is promising... Burma has great geographic condition and vast space for maneuvering. The geographic condition in Thailand is very good as well. The armed struggle is stepping up in Burma and Thailand, so that the United States is totally dragged to Southeast Asia.”⁸⁶ In the end of this year, Mao Zedong met with representatives of the CPT. When learning that the CPT had established bases with China’s aid, Mao was delighted: “The development of revolutionary forces in Thailand is important.” He also commented that with this development, there would be a sphere of revolutionaries, connecting Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Malaya.⁸⁷ Mao also told Thakin Ba Thein Tin, the Chairman of the Communist Party of Burma, “U.S. military stationed in Thailand...The CPT is doing well, is very promising.”⁸⁸

Beijing’s support for the CPT insurgency consisted of three major aspects. First, China played a major role in training the CPT cadres. While the CPT sent an increasing number of Thais to both China and North Vietnam for training, there appeared to be a division of labor among Beijing, Hanoi, and Vientiane. On the one hand, North Vietnam and Laos helped train lower-level CPT recruits. During the 1960s, the largest training location was a camp in Hoa Binh near Hanoi. According to prisoners and defectors, they

ANIC, Bucharest, Romania. Fond CC Chancellery, 39/1965, pp. 53-86. Obtained and translated by Mircea Munteanu. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116535>

⁸⁶ “Speech after Receiving Reports on the XXX Meeting,” in *Mao Zedong Sixiang Wansui* [Long Live the Mao Zedong Thoughts], 1969, vol. 4, 318-19. The title of the meeting is redacted in the original record.

⁸⁷ Discussion between Mao Zedong and the CPT Members including Jiang Hong and Zhang Shi, November 9, 1967, cited in Yang Kuisong, “Mao Zedong dui Yinduzhinazhanzheng Taidu de Bianhua (1949-1973),” 94-95.

⁸⁸ “Discussion between Mao Zedong and Thakin Ba Thein Tin,” November 27, 1967, in *Jimidangan Zhong Xinfaxian de Mao Zedong Jianghua* [Newly Discovered Talks with Mao Zedong in Secret Archives], ed. Song Yongyi (Hong Kong: Guoshi chubanshe, 2018), 272.

would receive basic training at the camp, including propaganda, recruitment, and small-unit tactics. On the other hand, the CPT sent exceptional persons to Beijing, where they received specialized instructions.⁸⁹ Beijing provided training to high-ranking CPT cadres, emphasizing ideological and strategic indoctrination. Moreover, China started to give the training of the Thai language priority in Beijing's newly-established Foreign Language Institute.⁹⁰ In September 1964, the Institute started to provide a three-year intensive course in Thai. Clearly, this was not an academic project as the Institute announced to educate people in political research work and assist Thailand to "unite with the Asian people."⁹¹ Bundy also confirmed this division of labor among China, North Vietnam, and Laos.⁹²

Second, China provided necessary weapons, equipment, and financial support to the CPT. Evidence showed the smuggling of materials, including arms, equipment, and documents, into Thailand through Laos.⁹³ Meanwhile, on behalf of Bank of China, Po Sang Bank in Hong Kong purchased 20 million Thai *Bath*. This purchase suggested preparation for financing the CPT insurgent activities.⁹⁴ According to a Thai official source, in 1965 China's financial support for the CPT was worth \$1 million.⁹⁵ To add, though The CPT insurgents emphasized the use of locally acquired weapons, the Thai

⁸⁹ WSEG Report 133, "Counterinsurgency in Thailand," vol. IV, Appendixes: the Insurgent Threat and the RTG Counterinsurgency Efforts, June 1968, 26-28. CIA, *Intelligence Memorandum: Communist Insurgency in Thailand: Strengths and Weaknesses*, August 11, 1966, 8, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP79T00826A001200010024-6.

⁹⁰ CIA, *The Threat of Communist Subversion in Thailand*, 3.

⁹¹ Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), *The Communist Threat to Thailand* (Bangkok: Thai Sambhand Press, 1967), 17.

⁹² "SFRC Executive Session on Thailand," September 20, 1966, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Singapore and Thailand, Box 283, vol. IV, Memos.

⁹³ CIA, *The Threat of Communist Subversion in Thailand*, 5.

⁹⁴ "Telegram for Bundy from the Ambassador Martin," January 19 and 20, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Singapore and Thailand, Box 282, vol. II, Cables.

⁹⁵ General Saiyud Kerdphol, *The Struggle for Thailand: Counter-insurgency 1965-1985* (Bangkok: S. Research Center Co., Ltd, 1986), 32.

authority captured weapons and ammunition of Chinese origin during their suppressing operations.⁹⁶ CPT cadres also received training in China and learned the use of U.S. weapons.⁹⁷

Beijing clearly attached to its aid the condition of opposing the United States. When Ho Chi Minh visited China in 1965, Mao told his Vietnamese counterpart, “China is ready to render economic and weapons aid, [but] the largest [part of the] aid should be rendered to Southeast Asia (Laos, Thailand, Cambodia) with the demand to carry out active military actions against the United States.”⁹⁸

Third, to signal its warning to Bangkok, China mobilized its propaganda machine to attack Bangkok’s cooperation with the United States, as well as to endorse the CPT’s armed struggle. The Voice of the People of Thailand (VOPT), a clandestine radio station located in Yunnan province, was a major venue for broadcasting in the Thai language. China’s propaganda effort started to enhance in 1965. In May, Beijing increased its broadcasts in the Thai language.⁹⁹ Later, the VOPT increased its daily broadcast programs to 30 minutes of propaganda, including verbal attacks on the United States, the Thai government, and endorsement of the CPT insurgency.¹⁰⁰

In addition to the VOPT, *Renmin Ribao* carried weight as the mouthpiece of the CCP. For instance, on April 28, 1965, *Renmin Ribao* carried a commentary accusing Thai security cooperation with the United States. It warned Bangkok to be “aware of attracting

⁹⁶ CIA, *Communist Insurgency in Thailand: Strengths and Weaknesses*, 9; SEATO, *The Communist Threat to Thailand*, 32.

⁹⁷ CIA, *Communist Insurgency in Thailand: Strengths and Weaknesses*, 9.

⁹⁸ “Note by East German Ambassador Kohrt on the Current Policy of the Chinese Leadership,” December 11, 1965, in *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16, 385.

⁹⁹ CIA, *Ten Years of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 18.

¹⁰⁰ SEATO, *The Communist Threat to Thailand*, 32, 14-15.

flame to burn itself.”¹⁰¹ A few months later, *Renmin Ribao* linked Thailand’s U.S. policy to possible communist rebellion.¹⁰² To add, a *Renmin Ribao* editorial warned the Thai leadership that they had “miscalculated if they think they can gain something by relying on U.S. influence and poking into Vietnamese and Indochinese affairs.” “It is certain,” the editorial continued, “that the wider the Thai government throw open the door to the U.S. wolves...the more widespread and intensified the patriotic struggle become in Thailand.”¹⁰³ In January 1966, *Renmin Ribao* published an appeal from the Thailand Patriotic Front (TPF). The appeal accused the United States of turning Thailand into a base for invading Indochina, and directing Thailand toward destruction. Therefore, the appeal urged Thai people to support and join the armed struggle in the northeast, and expand it into a people’s war.¹⁰⁴

Additionally, *Renmin Ribao* indicated China’s support for the CPT insurgency. An editorial denounced Bangkok’s counterinsurgency activities, and encouraged the CPT that “as long as they employ mobile and flexible strategy and tactics...develop their own strength, and establish and consolidate revolutionary base areas, they can gradually change the balance of force in their own favor.”¹⁰⁵ In another editorial, *Renmin Riabo* hailed the CPT armed struggle as a “direct blow at U.S. imperialism’s aggression to carry the war to Indochina as a whole” and a “major contribution to the national liberation movement in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ *Renmin Ribao*, April 28, 1965, 4.

¹⁰² *Renmin Ribao*, July 8, 1965, 3.

¹⁰³ *Renmin Ribao*, October 7, 1965.

¹⁰⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, January 15, 1966.

¹⁰⁵ *Renmin Riabo*, June 1, 1967.

¹⁰⁶ *Renmin Riabo*, October 8, 1967.

Probably more alarming to Bangkok was China implicitly encouraging North Vietnam to fight within Thailand. On June 23, 1966, *Renmin Ribao* carried a message of the TPF in an approving tone. The message not only called for the Thai people to support the armed struggle in the northeast and the south, but also claimed, “As the Thai government is violating the sovereignty of Vietnam by sending troops, Vietnamese people have the right to enter Thailand and fight.”¹⁰⁷

Moreover, China also supported various “united front” groups coordinating with the CPT. In November 1964, the Thai Independence Movement (TIM) announced to establish. The announcement also stated the objective of the TIM was to overthrow the Thai government and drive out the U.S. imperialists. It also emphasized its friendship with China.¹⁰⁸ Three months later, Radio Peking broadcast a message that announced the establishment of the TPF, calling for all patriotic forces to expulse U.S. imperialists.¹⁰⁹ Reportedly, those “united front” organizations operated their liaison offices in Beijing.¹¹⁰

Leaders of both the TIM and the TPF were relatively unknown Thai political exiles in China.¹¹¹ The most famous Thai leader in exile in China was the former Prime Minister Pridi Panomyong, and China attempted to take advantage of Pridi to exert pressure on Thailand. In February 1964, Deng Xiaoping met Pridi Phanomyong twice in Guangzhou. According to a Chinese document, the purpose of these meetings was to “educate Pridi” and “expect him to cooperate with the CPT and help the cause of the CCP

¹⁰⁷ *Renmin Ribao*, June 23, 1966.

¹⁰⁸ *Renmin Ribao*, November 1, 1964.

¹⁰⁹ “Thai Front Asks Expulsion of Imperialists,” *Peking NCNA International Service*, February 4, 1965, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-65-024, BBB3-BBB4.

¹¹⁰ “China’s Interest in Thailand,” *China Mail* (Hong Kong), November 30, 1965, in Jain ed., *China and Thailand, 1949-1983*, 109-10.

¹¹¹ CIA, National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), No. 52-66, *Communist Insurgency in Thailand*, July 1966, 6, in National Intelligence Council (NIC) Collection, document no. 0000012498.

in the future revolutionary struggle in Thailand.”¹¹² One year later, *Renmin Ribao* reported that Pridi met with the consul general of North Vietnam in Guangdong Province, and indicated his support for the anti-U.S. effort in South Vietnam.¹¹³ Subsequently *Renmin Ribao* reported an occasion on which Mao received Pridi.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, it appeared that Pridi refused to lend his name to either the TIM or the TPF.¹¹⁵

In April 1965, the TPF leaders visited Beijing and met with Liao Chengzhi and the acting head of the NFL permanent delegation. At the banquet, Liao claimed that supporting the Thai people’s struggle against U.S. imperialism was an “inescapable responsibility of the Chinese people.”¹¹⁶ Moreover, in August Radio Peking invited Thai government officials, especially military and police, to make covert contact with the communist front organizations.¹¹⁷ It was unclear if Beijing sought to open a “back channel” to negotiate with Bangkok. However, it was likely that China was attempting to expand a “united front” of left-wing forces and alter the balance of political power within Thailand. In 1963, Thanom announced that he intended to return to constitutional parliamentary forms in 1965. The TIM, in its “manifesto,” described itself as an inheritor of the left opposition and hinted to pursue political change under the Thanom government.¹¹⁸ Therefore, arranging meetings between the TIM and the Thai officials might help expand the TIM’s influence in Thai domestic politics.

¹¹² Zhong Yanlin, *Wenge qian de Deng Xiaoping: Mao Zedong de fushuai (1956-1966)* [Deng Xiaoping before the Cultural Revolution: Mao’s “Vice Marshal” (1956-1966)] (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2013), 402.

¹¹³ *Renmin Ribao*, February 12, 1965.

¹¹⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, October 7, 1965, 1.

¹¹⁵ CIA, *Ten Years of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 17.

¹¹⁶ “Banquet Honors Thai Patriotic Front Member,” *Peking NCNA International Service*, April 19, 1965, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-65-075, BBB11-BBB12.

¹¹⁷ CIA, *The Threat of Communist Subversion in Thailand*, 3.

¹¹⁸ “Manifesto of the Thailand Independence Movement,” in Weatherbee, *The United Front in Thailand: A Documentary Analysis*, 30-34, 48.

In the end of this year, the TIM held a reception in Beijing to celebrate the first anniversary of its founding. Liao again delivered a speech, asserting that he hoped the Thai patriotic forces would grow rapidly and achieve victories in the struggle against the U.S. imperialists and the reactionary government.¹¹⁹ At the same day, the TIM also announced to join the TPF.¹²⁰

Phayom Chulanond, who appeared as the second “independent leader” of the TPF, delivered a speech at the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity conference at Winneba, Ghana. After praising China’s support for the TPF, and accusing of the United States of turning Thailand into its colony and a base for aggression in Southeast Asia, Phayom called for Thai people to fight back with all measures, including armed struggle.¹²¹

Despite various forms of support, it is worth noting that in this period China restrained its support for the CPT in two aspects. First, China’s material support was limited to quantities that the CPT was able to absorb.¹²² Second, despite the existence of a large group of overseas Chinese within Thailand, there was no serious attempt to motivate them.¹²³ Meanwhile, no evidence showing that there were substantial number of Chinese nationals participated in the CPT insurgent force.¹²⁴ Beijing’s decision of not mobilizing overseas Chinese in Thailand could result from two factors. First, China attempted to signal to the Thai government that China was using coercive wedge

¹¹⁹ “Anniversary of Thai Independence Movement,” *Peking Radio in Thai*, November 2, 1965, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-65-217, BBB12-BBB13.

¹²⁰ “Statement by Thai Movement Representative,” *Peking NCNA International Service*, December 14, 1965, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-65-241, BBB7-BBB8.

¹²¹ “Taiguoaignozhenxian daibiao Naiparong Zhulanuan zai Yafeilarenmintuanjiehuiyi shang de jianghua,” [“Phayom Chulanond’s Speech at the Afro-Asian solidarity conference”] *Dongnanya Yanjiu* [Southeast Asia Studies], no. 2 (1966): 40-43.

¹²² DCI Backup Briefing for January 25 WSAG Meeting, Insurgency in Thailand, January 24, 1974, 4.

¹²³ CIA, *The Threat of Communist Subversion in Thailand*, 6.

¹²⁴ CIA, *Memorandum: New Challenge to Thailand?* February 25, 1972, 14, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP79R00967A001500020002-2. *Ethnic Minorities and Insurgency in Thailand*, 2.

strategies with restraint. Aware of Bangkok's concerns about Beijing's potential influence on the overseas Chinese, the Chinese leaders signaled to their Thai counterparts that they had not used all resources at disposal to pressure Thailand by not trying to mobilize the overseas Chinese in Thailand. Second, Beijing might have difficulties to mobilize those overseas Chinese. As mentioned above, compared to other Southeast Asian states, friction between the Thai society and the community of overseas Chinese was more limited.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, the Thai government was concerned about implications of a large population of overseas Chinese for its national security.¹²⁶ Given this perception, the Thai government could view Beijing's no attempt to mobilizing the overseas Chinese community as a signal of restraint.

5.1.5 The Failure of China's Wedge Strategy

In this period, Chinese assistance helped the CPT escalate its insurgent activities. However, this insurgency did not inflict costs high enough on Bangkok. As a result, China failed to make Thailand decrease its support for the Vietnam War. With support from China and North Vietnam, the CPT insurgents became increasingly active. On the one hand, the CPT publicly appealed to overthrowing the Thai government with people's warfare. In June 1965, the VOPT accused the Thanom administration of selling Thailand out to the United States. It further urged Thai people to drive U.S. imperialists out and overthrow the Thanom administration.¹²⁷ On September 27, the VOPT broadcast a message, claiming that the United States was planning to "start a war in Thailand similar

¹²⁵ CIA, *Ethnic Minorities and Insurgency in Thailand*, 2.

¹²⁶ Supang Chantavanich, "From Siamese-Chinese to Chinese-Thai: Political Conditions and Identity Shifts among the Chinese in Thailand," in *Ethnic Chinese as Southeast Asians*, ed. Leo Suryadinata (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1997), 252.

¹²⁷ VOPT, June 15, 1965, *Dongnanya Yanjiu* [Southeast Asia Studies] no. 1 (1966), 27-28.

to that in South Vietnam.” It also stated that the Thai people would deal with this plan with people’s war.¹²⁸ This was the first time the VOPT used the phrase “people’s war.” It may suggest a closer relationship between the CPT and the CCP. On the other hand, the CPT recruited more cadres as well as guerrilla fighters. Table 5.4 documented this increase.

Table 5.4. *Number of the CPT insurgents*

	1965 ^a	1966 ^a	1967 ^b	1968 ^b
Personnel	650	1,000-1,200	1,300	1,500

Sources: a: CIA, *Memorandum: The Insurgency Situation in Thailand*, November 23, 1966;

b: NIE No. 52-68, *Communist Insurgency in Thailand*, 4.

c: CIA, *Intelligence Memorandum: Insurgency in Thailand*, March 28, 1972, 3.

With greater manpower and equipment, the CPT increased its activities in northeastern Thailand. They operated in mountain areas, distributed propaganda materials, and held public meetings in villages denouncing the United States and Thai government. Newspapers, business leaders, and government officials in Bangkok had received the manifesto the TIM issued.¹²⁹

In October, with China’s support, the CPT decided to shift from defensive to offensive tactics.¹³⁰ The insurgents started to attack government officials, village leaders, and police informers. Subsequently, the CPT insurgents started to attack Thai armed police forces.¹³¹ In August, a major conflict broke out between 20 provincial police and 15 insurgents in Nakon Phanom province, one policeman and one insurgent killed.¹³² By

¹²⁸ “Clandestine Radio: U.S. To Face People’s War,” *VOPT*, September 27, 1966, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-66-188, p. NNN1.

¹²⁹ “Progress report on the Thailand internal security Plan,” January 28, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Singapore and Thailand, Box 282, vol. II, Memos.

¹³⁰ *Ten Years of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 18.

¹³¹ *Communist Insurgency in Thailand: Strengths and Weaknesses*, 7.

¹³² “Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State,” August 10, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. III, Cables.

the end of this year, the CPT intensified their activities by attacking minor outposts. These activities intensified again in 1966 when the insurgents began well-planned ambushes of regular Thai army personnel.¹³³ Insurgent attacks started to spread from northeastern Thailand into the north in 1967, when there were about 50 CPT-initiated incidents.¹³⁴ Table 5.5 illustrates this trend.

Table 5.5. *Communist Insurgent Incidents, 1965-1968*

	1965 ^a	1966 ^a	1967 ^a	1968 ^b
Personnel	45	585	921	1,084

Sources: a: "Intelligence Situation Thailand," August 10, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VI, Cables;

b: CIA, *Intelligence Memorandum: Insurgency in Thailand*, March 28, 1972, 4.

Thai leaders well perceived threat and pressure from China. Thanom asserted in January 1965 that China had sent agents into Thailand.¹³⁵ Two months later, he publicly raised the possibility that Thailand would face the communist threat.¹³⁶ Thailand expressed their concern over the increasing China-backed threat to Thailand on the eastern flank. In 1965, some Thai newspapers reported that China would stockpile armaments and station armed forces in Cambodia for guerrilla war against Thailand.¹³⁷ When visiting Bremen, Germany, in August 1966, King Adulyadej Bhumipol stated that China and North Vietnam were threatening Thailand.¹³⁸ Similarly, in an announcement in January 1967, Thanom claimed that there was evidence showing Chinese support for the CPT insurgency: "We have arrested terrorists, some of whom are Red Chinese, while

¹³³ NIE, no. 52-66, *Communist Insurgency in Thailand*, July 1966, 6.

¹³⁴ CIA, *Intelligence Memorandum: Insurgency in Thailand*, March 28, 1972, 17.

¹³⁵ CIA, *Ten Years of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 18.

¹³⁶ *Bangkok Post*, March 11 and 15, 1965.

¹³⁷ "Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State," May 14, 1965, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. III, Cables.

¹³⁸ Thomas A Marks, *Making Revolution: The Insurgency of the Communist Party of Thailand in Structural Perspective* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994), 61.

some others are North Vietnamese... We have also confiscated a large number of weapons, weapons sent from Red China, such as sub-machineguns, hand grenades, and land mines. All this shows even more clearly that both Red China and North Vietnam have already started aggression against Thailand.”¹³⁹

Nonetheless, China’s wedge strategy failed to drive Thailand away from the United States, nor did it prevent Thailand’s involvement in the Vietnam War. As Table 4.2 mentioned above suggests, Thailand kept a rather large number of troops in South Vietnam. Moreover, air bases in Thailand kept permitting USAF operations. In response to China’s threats, Bangkok’s primary measure was seeking firmer U.S. commitment and more U.S. assistance, not leaving the United States.

5.2 China Mixed Coercion and Accommodation, 1969 to 1975

The outlook of Indochina changed in 1969. While the Vietnam War was still ongoing, Hanoi gradually gained upper hand on the battlefield. Beijing started to view Hanoi’s victory as a “matter of time.” On the other hand, the United States started to withdraw its troops from Vietnam. Correspondingly, However, as its leverage over Thailand remained weak, China continued to use coercion as its primary wedge strategy by maintaining its support for the CPT insurgency. Meanwhile, due to the adjustment of U.S. policy in Indochina, Thailand had expressed its concerns about the U.S. commitment more frequently. This change opened some avenues for China to accommodate Bangkok. Indeed, in this period China not only reassured Thailand on the issue of overseas Chinese, but also provided diesel oil that Thailand urgently needed.

¹³⁹ “Telegram from Embassy in Bangkok to Department of State,” January 4, 1967, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 283, vol. V, Cables.

5.2.1 U.S. Commitment Looked Shaky

With President Nixon's "Guam doctrine," the United States started to withdraw its ground troops from Vietnam. Meanwhile, Nixon turned to the Paris talks, seeking a breakthrough he was unable to make on the battlefield. On the other hand, based on the development of the Vietnam War, the United States gradually adjusted its policy toward Thailand. These two factors, combined together, led Thailand to doubt the U.S. commitment.

Observing recent developments in Vietnam and the changing U.S. domestic politics after 1968, Thai leaders again raised the issue of the U.S. commitment to Thailand. First, President Johnson's announcement of not running for president cast doubt on the continuity of the U.S. security commitment to Thailand. In addition, Senator Fulbright and some of his colleagues resumed their critic of the U.S. policy in Thailand. At the Symington Hearings, Fulbright heavily criticized the U.S. involvement in Thailand. He questioned not only if there were material interests for the United States to get involved, but the White House's agreement to equip and fund the Thai forces in South Vietnam. He further questioned the Thanat-Rusk communique, criticizing the communique as turning the SEATO collective security commitment into a bilateral one between the United States and Thailand.¹⁴⁰ To add, several senators were fearful that the large number of U.S. troops in Thailand or the major U.S. military construction program starting in 1965 might lead to the U.S. involvement in Thailand's insurgency problem.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ "Hearing on Kingdom of Thailand," in *the Symington Hearings*, 649-97.

¹⁴¹ "Cable from Embassy in Bangkok to the Secretary of State: U.S. Senate Sub-Committee Hearings on Thailand," May 1970, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP72-00337R000200020026-7

On the question of U.S. commitments to Thailand, William H. Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, explained that the commitment to Thailand was under SEATO. It was a “solemn treaty commitment,” but there was no way to “enhance it.” When the committee counsel Roland Paul continued to comment that the “language of the SEATO Treaty is ambiguous as far as the nature of the American response,” Sullivan admitted, “it is true.”¹⁴² In another session, Fulbright said bluntly that some people in Thailand were exploiting U.S. military assistance programs.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Counsel Roland Paul asked whether the U.S. commitment to Thailand would “require a greater American participation in fighting in Thailand” if they experienced the same situation in Laos. Similarly, Senator Stuart Symington stressed that under the SEATO Treaty, the United States had the right unilaterally to decide whether it was the U.S. obligation.¹⁴⁴

These developments compelled Thai leaders to voice their concern about U.S. commitment publicly. In an interview, Thanom commented on the U.S. commitment to Thailand. He remarked that if Robert Kennedy became the next president, “there could be a radical change in U.S. foreign policy which would mean abandonment of Southeast Asia by America.” If this happened, “Nobody would trust the United States again.” Turning to threats from communist states, Thanom implied, “We are a small nation. We are not so much afraid of North Vietnam because it is too tired out by the war, but what we are afraid of is Communist China.” Furthermore, he expressed Thailand’s need for the United States: the counterinsurgency program depended on the “continuation of U.S.

¹⁴² *The Symington Hearings*, 523-524.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 540.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 587.

military and economic assistance. If this is continued, we can hold the communists at bay.”¹⁴⁵

On April 16, Thanat implied that if the United States decided to withdraw from Southeast Asia, “no appeal for future aid would be effective.” Therefore, he attempted to prepare Thailand to protect itself by forming alliances among states in Southeast Asia. Thanat further warned that if Southeast Asian states let themselves be “swallowed up one or two at a time, a major war will unquestionably break out. And I can say with emphasis, that those who support America or Europe to give in to the communists, allowing the communists easily to take over South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand and Malaysia, are the ones who have begun to lay the seed of the Third World War.” As Unger observed, Thanom and Thanat were seeking to test the firmness of the U.S. commitment to Thailand.¹⁴⁶ In August, Thanat delivered a speech in the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Thailand, implicitly criticizing the United States: “The partners to the (SEATO) Treaty will carry out that treaty obligation only if their national interests are concordant with us, but not otherwise. So, we believe that we can rely only on ourselves.”¹⁴⁷

To reassert the U.S. commitment to Thailand, the two governments released a joint communique after Thanom visited the United States. It stressed that in dealing with the “externally-supported, Communist-directed subversion and insurgency in Thailand, especially in the northern and northeastern regions,” the United States made clear its

¹⁴⁵ “Thanom Remarks on Speech,” *Bangkok Post*, April 1, 1968, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VII, Memos.

¹⁴⁶ “Thanat’s Disquiet over Course of U.S. Policy,” April 1968, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VII, Cables.

¹⁴⁷ Randolph, *The United States and Thailand: Alliance Dynamics, 1950-1985*, 127.

intention to “continue its assistance to Thailand to help provide the Royal Thai Government with the means of meeting illegal Communist activities.” The communique also emphasized the “determination of the United States to stand by its treaty commitments to Thailand” and Johnson’s pledge made in Bangkok in 1966.¹⁴⁸

To further ease the U.S.-Thailand relations, newly-elected President Nixon took pains to reassure his Thai counterpart. In March 1969, he privately assured Thanom of the firmness of the U.S. commitment, while Marshall Green, new Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, delivered the same message to Thanat.¹⁴⁹ Subsequently, in his visit to Thailand in July, Nixon noticed Thailand’s “special interest in the strength of America's determination to honor its commitments in Asia and the Pacific.”¹⁵⁰ Responding to this, he asserted in a speech, “We will honor our obligations under that [SEATO] treaty... the United States will stand proudly with Thailand against those who might threaten it from abroad, or from within.”¹⁵¹ Two months later, Nixon reasserted this commitment to Thanom in Washington.¹⁵²

Despite these efforts, Thailand’s importance in the U.S. policy in Southeast Asia started to decrease. Analyzing U.S. interests in Thailand, National Security Study 51 Memorandum (NSSM 51) stated, “Thailand is not of great strategic value vis-à-vis China. However, Thailand is and will remain an important intelligence base for the monitoring of Chinese activities.” Therefore, NSSM 51 concluded that Thailand was “not of vital interest to the United States.” If not jeopardizing U.S. immediate goals or U.S.

¹⁴⁸ “Joint Communique: Visit of Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn of Thailand,” May 8-9, 1968, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VII, Memos.

¹⁴⁹ “U. S. Assures Thanom of Commitment,” *Bangkok Post*, March 30, 1969

¹⁵⁰ *Foreign Affairs Bulletin* 8 (June-July 1969), 430.

¹⁵¹ *Department of State Bulletin*, August 25, 1969, 153.

¹⁵² “Memorandum of Conversation,” September 18, 1969, in *FRUS, 1969–1976, vol. XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972*, Document 27, 59-60.

credibility in Southeast Asia, NSSM 51 reasoned, decreasing Thailand's dependence and scaling down the U.S. commitment could be desirable.¹⁵³ Meanwhile, Nixon elaborated on his foreign policy at a press conference. While reaffirming the U.S. commitment to Thailand and other states in the region, he stated that the United States "shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense."¹⁵⁴

Related to this U.S. policy adjustment, Thailand also started to withdraw its forces from South Vietnam. On September 30, 1969, the United States and Thailand announced that they would withdraw about 6,000 U.S. military personnel from Thailand.¹⁵⁵ In September 1970, the two governments started the second round of military consultation, in which they agreed a further withdrawal of 9,800 military personnel.¹⁵⁶ In a discussion with Zhou Enlai, Kissinger told the Chinese Premier that both the United States and Thailand were also prepared to withdraw their forces from Laos.¹⁵⁷

More importantly, the United States started to cut back its financial support for Thailand's counterinsurgency campaign. In 1969, Washington cut program costs of United States Information Service (USIS) and Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) in Thailand, two agencies that helped Bangkok fight the CPT insurgents.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ "Summary Paper in Response to National Security Study Memorandum 51," August 5, 1970, in *FRUS, 1969-1976, vol. XX, Southeast Asia, 1969-1972*, Document 82, 163-66.

¹⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State, *United States Foreign Policy, 1969-1970: A Report of the Secretary of State* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State Publication, March 1971), 36-37.

¹⁵⁵ *The Symington Hearings*, 648.

¹⁵⁶ Randolph, *The United States and Thailand: Alliance Dynamics, 1950-1985*, 141.

¹⁵⁷ "Memorandum of Conversation," February 16, 1973, in William Burr, ed. *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 104.

¹⁵⁸ Randolph, *The United States and Thailand: Alliance Dynamics, 1950-1985*, 144-45.

5.2.2 Continued Support for the CPT Insurgency after 1968

As the Vietnam War continued, Thailand's involvement in the war continued to contribute to the U.S. threat to China. Meanwhile, China's leverage over Bangkok remained weak. As a result, China continued using coercive wedging as its primary strategy against Thailand. First, China kept training the CPT cadres and insurgents. In order to take advantage of the tension between the ethnic minority group (Meo people) and the Thai government, the insurgency spread to northern Thailand in 1967.¹⁵⁹ To help train guerrilla fighters, both Chinese and North Vietnamese instructors trained Thai hill tribesmen at two CPT training centers in northern Laos.¹⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the CPT established a major training base close to the Lao-Thai-Cambodian border juncture. The training cadres consisted of Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese personnel assisted by Chinese advisors. By 1968, the camp had trained four battalions of 800 men each, consisting of Thais and Thailand-born Chinese.¹⁶¹ China also helped train some leaders of the CPT, especially those who operated in northern Thailand. By the end of 1974, over 300 CPT cadres had received training in Beijing and Nanjing.¹⁶² Moreover, in November 1970 U.S. senior intelligent analysts reported a major Chinese-supplied guerrilla base in Nakhon Phanom Province in northeastern Thailand.¹⁶³

Second, China continued its supply of weapons and equipment for the CPT. As a result, the CPT insurgents' equipment switched from locally acquired arms to weapons of

¹⁵⁹ CIA, *Peking's Support of Insurgencies in Southeast Asia*, 70.

¹⁶⁰ CIA, *Ten Years of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 18.

¹⁶¹ "Memorandum for Record: Conversation with General Praphat, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interiors, and Commander in Chief, Royal Thai Army. (with W. C. Westmoreland)," October 16, 1968, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VIII, Memos.

¹⁶² Chak Wing David Tsui, *China and the Communist Armed Struggle in Thailand* (New Delhi: Radiant Books, 1995), 20.

¹⁶³ Tad Szulc, "U.S. Analysts Say Thai Rebels Have a New Chinese-Supplied Base," *New York Times*, December 2, 1970.

communist manufacture. The U.S. intelligence suggested the use of China-produced AK-47 assault rifles by CPT insurgents.¹⁶⁴ By 1972, the insurgents had about 1,800 Chinese and Soviet-produced small arms, such as AK-47 assault rifles and SKS Type 53 carbines.¹⁶⁵ Although the specific number of China-provided weapons remained unclear, CIA reported no evidence suggesting fundamental reduction in China's support for the CPT insurgency.¹⁶⁶ Meanwhile, according to Unger, Beijing played the leading role in supporting the CPT while Hanoi only played a secondary role.¹⁶⁷ According to a CIA's estimate in 1974, China and North Vietnam kept providing major training and logistical support. Nonetheless, the estimate concluded that this external support was limited to quantities the insurgents could absorb and had not played a critical role in the CPT insurgency.¹⁶⁸

Regarding material support, the most important move China made was the road construction in Laos. The first phase of this project, a 50-mile highway, completed in 1963, connecting Yunnan province and Phongsali, the capital of Phong Saly province in Laos. While there was a five-year pause after the first phase, extending this road network was always in Chinese leaders' mind. In April 1965, when discussing road constructions, Mao told Ho Chi Minh, "Because we will fight *large-scale battles in the future*, it will be good if we also build roads to Thailand (emphasis added)."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ "Statement on United States-Thai Security Relations presented by Ambassador Leonard Unger," in *The Symington Hearings*, 626.

¹⁶⁵ CIA, *Intelligence Memorandum: Insurgency in Thailand*, March 28, 1972, 11, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP85T00875R001100130043-5.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁶⁷ "Statement on United States-Thai Security Relations presented by Ambassador Leonard Unger," in *The Symington Hearings*, 626.

¹⁶⁸ CIA, *Insurgency in Thailand*, January 24, 1974, 4, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP79R01099A002200010004-9.

¹⁶⁹ "Discussion between Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh," May 16, 1965, in Odd Arne Westad et al., 77 *Conversations between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977* (hereafter cited

Beijing resumed this construction project in 1968. The new project started from Botene, on the Chinese-Laotian border, connecting Muong Sai, a town firmly controlled by the Pathet Lao and very close to an area of CPT insurgent activities. China completed this new road in January 1969 and tried to extend it to Muong La, where the road would connect to a trail from North Vietnam. Potentially, this road could link up with the North Vietnamese road system at Dien Bien Phu. After full completion, this project would provide motorable roads allowing China to provide more support to the CPT insurgents more efficiently.¹⁷⁰

Asian diplomatic sources reported that there were approximately 20,000 Chinese troops building the road in northern Laos.¹⁷¹ China had deployed the 125th regiment of 3,000 soldiers, equipped with antiaircraft weapons, along the road. This construction could connect with Route 46 leading to the Mekong at Pak Beng in Laos, a route the communist insurgents used to infiltrate Thailand.¹⁷² To add, the CPT also maintained a headquarters in northwest Laos, where the China-constructed road extended.¹⁷³ Bangkok immediately viewed this road construction as a manifestation of Chinese threat.¹⁷⁴

as 77 *Conversations*), CWIHP Working Paper no. 22 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1998), 84-85.

¹⁷⁰Paul F. Langer, *The Soviet Union, China, and the Pathet Lao: Analysis and Chronology* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1972), 21-23.

¹⁷¹ "China Road Force in Laos at 20, 000," *New York Times*, October 16, 1969.

¹⁷² CIA, Intelligence Information Cable, "Situation Appraisal of Possible Motives behind the Construction of Roads in Northern Laos by the Chinese Communists," December 2, 1968, in Tet Declassified, document no. 00012514.

¹⁷³ "Statement on United States-Thai Security Relations presented by Ambassador Leonard Unger," in *The Symington Hearings*, 626.

¹⁷⁴ CIA, *Intelligence Memorandum: Insurgency in Thailand*, October 30, 1972, 14, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP85T00875R001100130105-6.

Third, Beijing emphasized the strategy of people's warfare. On January 1, 1969, the CPT announced the establishment of the "Thai People's Liberation Armed Forces" (TPLAF) under its "Supreme Command." It was notable that *Radio Peking* was the first one to report this news.¹⁷⁵ In this year, Beijing discarded "united front" groups of the CPT while stressing the direct leadership of the CPT of the insurgency.¹⁷⁶ Given the critical role of "people's armed force" and a communist party in China's theory of people's warfare, it appeared that Beijing was offering strategic suggestions to the CPT.

Moreover, unconfirmed reports suggested that between 1971 and 1973, about 200 Chinese military advisers infiltrated into northern Thailand. In contrast, some interviews suggested these personnel were possibly "raw recruits from the youth rather than from the military."¹⁷⁷ Whatever these personnel's identities were, it appeared that China had some presence in northern Thailand. Bangkok could view this development with suspicion.

Fourth, Beijing kept its propaganda attack on Bangkok. Starting in the summer of 1968, Radio Peking and the VOPT began Meo-language broadcasts to the tribal insurgents. The theme of these broadcasts was oppression of the Meo people by the Thai government and the United States. For instance, a VOPT broadcast read, "the U.S.-Thanom clique has constantly looked down upon the Meo people...The CPT is leading the people to rise and stage a revolution...The Meo people have no alternative...than to take arms and fight against the U.S.-Thanom clique."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ CIA, *Peking's Support of Insurgencies in Southeast Asia*, 73.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 66.

¹⁷⁷ Tsui, *China and the Communist Armed Struggle in Thailand*, 23.

¹⁷⁸ "Tribesmen Urged to Fight Government," VOPT, August 31, 1969, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-69-176, J1.

Moreover, the number of reports on the CPT and its insurgency appearing in *Renmin Ribao* reached the apex in 1969, and remained at a high level until 1972.¹⁷⁹ For instance, at the reception of the fourth anniversary of the founding of the TPF, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Guo Moruo delivered a speech. He not only praised the CPT's armed struggle, but also claimed that China would render "more powerful backing to the revolutionary people of Thailand in winning complete victory in their revolution."¹⁸⁰ Similarly, *Renmin Ribao* carried a commentary that praised the TPLAF's insistence on strategies and tactics of people's war. The commentary also acclaimed, "Flames of the Thai people's revolutionary armed struggle are raging ever more fiercely" against the U.S.-Thai reactionaries. In the end, the commentary announced that China "firmly support the Thai people's liberation struggle."¹⁸¹ In August 1971, Xinhua broadcast an article acclaiming "relatively consolidated revolutionary base areas have been set up in certain regions in north Thailand."¹⁸² A year later, Xinhua again praised the CPT and encouraged the TPLAF to fight on and grow in strength under extremely difficult conditions.

In 1972, Thai leaders asked Beijing to stop the VOPT's broadcasts. Beijing rejected this request and allowed the VOPT to keep operating in China. As the VOPT celebrated its eleventh anniversary, "The VOPT has served as a voice in...encouraging the people throughout the country. It has voiced its entire support for the armed struggle...The Thai people, under oppression by the U.S.-Thanom clique, have as their

¹⁷⁹ Tsui, *China and the Communist Armed Struggle in Thailand*, 88.

¹⁸⁰ "Kuo Mo-Jo Addresses Thai Reception in Peking," *Peking NCNA International Service*, January 3, 1969, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-69-003, A1-A2.

¹⁸¹ *Renmin Ribao*, January 8, 1969, 1.

¹⁸² "NCNA Reports Thai Editorial on Struggle Anniversary," *Peking NCNA International Service*, in FBIS Daily Report FBIS-FRB-71-156, August 8, 1971, A10-A11.

propaganda weapon and their voice this VOPT...No matter what methods, tricks, or how slanderous a propaganda campaign it resorts to, the bandit U.S.-Thanom clique will never thwart and destroy the VOPT.”¹⁸³

Similar to its advice to North Vietnamese in the previous period, in this period Beijing still encouraged Indochinese communist forces to operate within Thailand. In his discussion with Kaysone Phomvihane, the leader of the Pathet Lao, Mao suggested that the Pathet Lao intrude into Thailand: “Last time I mentioned to you whether or not you could organize an army to fight in Thailand. This is because the Thais attacked you. If you can attack me, why cannot I attack you?” “Imperialism has dug the grave for itself. Its purpose is to occupy more territory, and it will find more people to bury it.” He continued to state, “The guerrilla forces...in Thailand have achieved some development, although their scale is not large. The guerrilla force is a school for training cadres.”¹⁸⁴

Moreover, Beijing clearly signaled its intention to support the CPT-led insurgency. In March 1971, Zhou reaffirmed China’s support. He told his North Vietnamese comrades:

“The Thai government is very much afraid of the Thai Communist Party’s armed forces. It knows that weapons to the CPT armed forces are transported via Vietnam and Laos. It also knows that China has a road that runs to the Sino-Lao border. Therefore, it faces the threat of the war expanding all over Southeast Asia. *We hold that support to the peoples’ revolutionary struggles cannot be sacrificed for the sake of relations between governments. Only traitors do that.* (Emphasis added)”¹⁸⁵

Reportedly, in 1974 Mao reaffirmed that China’s policy toward Thailand would be twofold: diplomacy on the one hand and support for the CPT insurgency on the other

¹⁸³ *Peking’s Support of Insurgencies in Southeast Asia*, 81. “VOPT Celebrates 11th Anniversary of Broadcasting,” *VOPT*, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-73-044, March 1.1973, J2-J4.

¹⁸⁴ “Discussion between Mao Zedong and Kaysone Phomvihane,” July 7, 1970, in *77 Conversations*, 168-72.

¹⁸⁵ “Discussion between Zhou Enlai, and Le Duan and Pham Van Dong,” March 7, 1971, in *ibid.*, 35.

hand. Also reflecting this twofold policy, in late April 1975, Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua told British journalists that China would continue its support for revolution abroad. Evidence also suggested that China was continuing to train the CPT insurgents.¹⁸⁶

The CPT's strength further expanded, resulting from the acquisition of better weapons, better training, and more experience.¹⁸⁷ The CPT insurgency in northern Thailand had consolidated. The insurgent force had increased from 250 to more than 3,000 armed regulars and part-time guerrillas in five years. Quality of the insurgents' equipment increased; most of their weapons and equipment were of Chinese origin. Quantity of their equipment and other materials increased as well, from eight tons in 1968 to 100 tons in 1972. Nonetheless, this was still a small amount. On the other hand, the Thai government had not seriously challenged the insurgents.¹⁸⁸ Second, though insurgents in the northeastern region still relied mainly on arms of U.S. origin, the number of communist-bloc weapons were increasing and a small but consistent amount of Chinese-manufactured weapons flowed in from southern Laos.¹⁸⁹

Correspondingly, the CPT increased its insurgent activities and conducted several major attacks, as indicated in Table 5.6. In 1968, Thai insurgents raided the air base at Udorn. The United States assessed that this raid suggested that the communists had turned to a "type of action we have known for a longtime they were perfectly capable of mounting... The eventual result would be, even if not a request for withdrawal of U.S.

¹⁸⁶ National Security Council (NSC), "Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger: Hanoi, Peking and Moscow Views of Southeast Asia," September 8, 1975, 40, in Library of Congress, document no. LOC-HAK-539-7-2-4.

¹⁸⁷ CIA, *Intelligence Memorandum: Insurgency in Thailand*, 3.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

forces from airbases in Thailand, at least seriously damaging to the Thai government and posing the gravest jeopardy to the kind of cooperative relations we and Thailand have enjoyed. In this way the communist would have accomplished much: to frighten US into actions which would achieve their prime aim—division between the US and the Thai government and people.”¹⁹⁰ In the end of 1969, the *VOPT* announced that the TPLAF had “liberated” Meng Bao, a village in Nan Province, which was a strategic point that connected Pak Beng, a Laotian town and the terminus of a route from China’s Yunnan province.¹⁹¹ Therefore, this victory could reinforce the CPT’s capability of receiving logistic support from China.

Table 5.6. *Communist Insurgent Incidents, 1969-1975*

	1969 ^a	1970 ^a	1971 ^a	1972 ^b	1973 ^b	1974 ^b	1975 ^b
Personnel	1,981	2,556	3,500	737	517	441	305

Sources: a: CIA, *Intelligence Memorandum: Insurgency in Thailand*, March 28, 1972, 4.
b: Saiyud, *The Struggle for Thailand*, 186.

In addition, the CPT intensified its propaganda. In its first communique, the TPLAF emphasized that one of its critical tasks was to do propaganda work among the masses and organize them.¹⁹² Subsequently, the CPT issued a ten-point statement on its current policy. It stressed that the important task for the CPT was to “resolutely carry out the people’s war, drive U.S. imperialism out of Thailand, and overthrow the fascist, traitorous and dictatorial government of the Thanom clique.”¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ “Telegram for Bundy from Brown and Steadman,” July 31, 1968, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VIII.

¹⁹¹ *Renmin Ribao*, August 10, 1971.

¹⁹² “People’s Liberation Armed Forces Set Up,” *VOPT*, January 1, 1969, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-69-001, J1-J3.

¹⁹³ “Resolutely Carry Out People’s War to Oust U.S. Imperialism and Overthrow the Traitorous Clique,” *Peking Review* no. 3 (January 17, 1969): 18-20.

5.2.3 China's Accommodation as its Complementary Strategy

While China relied on coercive wedging as its primary strategy, it also used accommodation as its complementary strategy. As the United States started to adjust its policy in Indochina, Chinese leaders expected this would create tension between Washington and Bangkok. When discussing with Pham Van Dong on the prospect of withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, Mao remarked that Thailand would worry, as they “really want U.S. troops to stay.”¹⁹⁴ Meanwhile, Bangkok also adjusted its China policy, changing from hostility to seeking some form of détente with Beijing. This new orientation in Thai foreign policy gave China an opportunity to accommodate Thailand.

In August 1972, Bangkok accepted Beijing's invitation and sent a ping-pong team to China. The advisor to this team was Prasit Kanchanawat, a close confidant of Praphat.¹⁹⁵ Arriving in Beijing, Prasit had discussion with several high-ranking Chinese officials and eventually with Zhou Enlai in September. When Prasit asked Zhou about China's attitude toward overseas Chinese and the CPT insurgency, Zhou assured his Thai guest that China did not support double-nationality and wanted overseas Chinese to take the nationality of the state where they lived. On the insurgency issue, Zhou's response was more ambiguous. On the one hand, Zhou denied China's support for the CPT insurgents and implied that China would not interfere in internal issues of Thailand. On the other, Zhou asserted that China would continue to support “freedom fighters.” After

¹⁹⁴ “Discussion between Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong,” November 17, 1968, in *77 Conversations*, 138-52.

¹⁹⁵ CIA, *Memorandum: Bangkok and Peking: Thailand Enters the Ping-Pong Sweepstakes*, September 14, 1972, 4, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP79R00967A000500020002-6.

Prasit noted that “there was no case for liberation in Thailand,” they quickly dropped this subject.¹⁹⁶ It seemed that both of them chose to shelve this issue.

In 1973, another opportunity showed up for Beijing. The oil crisis starting in the Middle East struck Thailand as well.¹⁹⁷ To handle this shock, Defense Minister Dawee Chullasapya and Deputy Foreign Minister Chatichai Choonhavan visited China. The Chinese leadership decided to take this opportunity and develop another source of leverage. The two governments agreed a sale of 50,000 tons of diesel oil to Thailand at a “friendship price.” In January 1975, China and Thailand agreed on another sale of 75,000 tons of Chinese high-speed diesel oil.¹⁹⁸

In addition, despite its resolute support for the CPT as described in the previous section, Beijing signaled to the United States and Thailand about its intention to reduce its assistance to the CPT. Marshall Green accompanied President Nixon during the latter’s 1972 visit to China. In discussions with the Chinese, Green tried to gather information on Beijing’s support for the CPT insurgency. According to him, Chinese leaders indicated, “the flow of weaponry and training would cease, but that propaganda broadcasts would continue.”¹⁹⁹ After this visit, Zhou received U.S. Congress leaders Hale Boggs and Gerald Ford in June. When Ford implied that the United States would withdraw from Vietnam, but not from Southeast Asia, Zhou replied, “Southeast Asian

¹⁹⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation: Thai Contact with the PRC,” October 2, 1972, in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, vol. XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972, Document 180, 385-86; *Zhou Enlai Waijiaohuodong Dashiji*, 375; Chulacheeb Chinwanno, “Rising China and Thailand’s Policy of Strategic Engagement,” in *The Rise of China: Responses from Southeast Asia and Japan* ed. Jun Tsunekawa (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2009), 86.

¹⁹⁷ Robert F. Ichord, “Southeast Asia and the World Oil Crisis: 1973,” *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1974): 27-56.

¹⁹⁸ Tsui, *China and the Communist Armed Struggle in Thailand*, 59.

¹⁹⁹ William N. Stokes, “The Maoist Insurgency in Thailand,” in *War and Peace with China*, ed. Marshall Green, John H. Holdridge, and William N. Stokes (Maryland: DACOR press, 1994), 79.

states, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, want to become neutral states. If they want to keep neutral, we would support it.”²⁰⁰ This change resulted from China’s assessment of its external security environment. With the Vietnam War approaching to an end and the U.S.-China rapprochement, China’s concern about the Soviet-Vietnam alignment replaced its concern about the U.S.-Thailand alliance.

After visiting China in February 1974, Defense Minister Dawee Chullasapya claimed that Zhou Enlai told him Chinese support for the CPT insurgency was “now a thing of the past.”²⁰¹ Similarly, in 1975 Beijing hinted that it would not go beyond “low-level support” for the CPT insurgency in the near future.²⁰² When the new Thai Prime Minister Khukrit Pramroj visited China in 1975, he claimed that during the visit, he received security assurances from both Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping in a scenario of Vietnamese attack.²⁰³

5.2.4 China’s Wedge Strategy as a Success

While it was hard to attribute Thailand’s changed policy toward China solely to China’s wedge strategy, China’s strategy certainly played an important role in the change of the Thai foreign policy. As the CIA estimated in the end of 1968, more and more senior Thai army officers leaned toward the idea of decreasing Thailand’s dependence on the United States. They were worried that the United States would withdraw from Southeast Asia and Thailand could not rely on the SEATO. Consequently, some senior civilian officials

²⁰⁰ Zhou Enlai *Waijiaohuodong Dashiji*, 370.

²⁰¹ Tsui, *China and the Communist Armed Struggle in Thailand*, 59.

²⁰² NSC, “Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger,” 41, 44.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3.

did not oppose to a détente between Thailand and China, expecting to lessen the threat of future Chinese aggression.²⁰⁴

After learning Johnson would not seek re-election, Thanat asserted that Thailand “should not be blamed if we were to seek an accommodation with Communist China.” In February 1969, at a press conference Thanat announced that Bangkok was “prepared to sit down and talk—and have meaningful discussion—with Beijing to establish peaceful coexistence...Thailand is earnestly seeking an accommodation with its huge and hostile neighbor to the north.” A few days later, he reasserted that he was willing to meet Chinese representatives to “help draw China out of her isolation so that she could become a member of the Asian family.”²⁰⁵

On February 27, 1969, Thanat announced that after the Vietnam War ended, his government would ask the United States to withdraw its military forces from Thai bases. Regarding the communist insurgency, Thanat claimed, “We will ask for outside help only if guerilla activities expand into large scale conflict.” He also indicated his government was willing to negotiate with China.²⁰⁶ In September, Nixon and Thanom announced the withdrawal plan of approximately 6,000 U.S. military personnel from Thailand.²⁰⁷ In February 1970, Thanat said Southeast Asian states could no longer rely on the U.S.

²⁰⁴ Intelligence Information Cable, “Comment on Possible Change in the Attitude of the Thais toward Communist Countries,” December 4, 1968, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, Asia and the Pacific, Box 284, vol. VIII, Memos.

²⁰⁵ “Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman’s Statement at A Press Conference in Tokyo,” February 26, 1969, and “Thanat Khoman’s Statement in a Television Interview,” March 2, 1969, in Jain ed., *China and Thailand, 1949-1983*, 155.

²⁰⁶ “Thanat: We will ask U.S. to pull out,” *The Strait Times*, February 27, 1969.

<http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19690227-1.2.11.3>

²⁰⁷ “Statement on United States-Thai Security Relations presented by Ambassador Leonard Unger,” in *The Symington Hearings*, 619.

Instead, he called for the revival of the Bandung formula.²⁰⁸ *Bangkok Post* in February 1971 carried an article titled “The State of Thai-U.S. Relations.” It cited Thanat’s assertion that Thailand had firmly believe that foreign troops should “not become embroiled in another nation’s internal wars.”²⁰⁹

After the coup in November 1971 that removed Thanom, General Praphat directed to tone down Thai statements against China, and make secret contacts with the Chinese. In August 1972, as mentioned in the previous section, a Thai ping-pong team visited China.²¹⁰ The assignment Praphat gave Prasit, the political advisor to this team, was to “seize this opportunity to establish relations with Chinese leaders.”²¹¹ In 1974, Thailand announced to abolish Revolutionary Decree No. 53.²¹² One year later, Thailand broke diplomatic relations with Taiwan and instead established diplomatic relations with mainland China. China and Thailand agreed to abide by the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, and Thailand acknowledged Taiwan as part of China.²¹³

With the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Thailand, the role of the CPT in China’s Thailand policy gradually decreased. Therefore, China began to reduce its support for the CPT. Eventually, when Deng Xiaoping visited Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia in November 1978, Deng elaborated on China’s policy toward Southeast Asia. He asserted, “We always hold that the relationship between parties

²⁰⁸ “Khoman: Calls for Revival of the Bandung Formula,” *Straits Times*, Feb 26, 1970, 11.

<http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Page/straitstimes19700226-1.1.11>

²⁰⁹ Randolph, *The United States and Thailand: Alliance Dynamics, 1950-1985*, 138.

²¹⁰ CIA, *Bangkok and Peking: Thailand Enters the Ping-Pong Sweepstakes*, 4.

²¹¹ Zhu Zhengming, “Bashi Ganzanayue yu Zhongtai guanxi,” [Prasit Kanchanawat and Chinese-Thai Relations], *Dongnanya [Southeast Asia]*, no. 2 (1999): 52.

²¹² Chulacheeb Chinwanno, “Rising China and Thailand’s Policy of Strategic Engagement,” 87.

²¹³ “Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the Kingdom of Thailand and the People’s Republic of China,” July 1, 1975, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zjzg_663340/yzs_663350/gjlb_663354/2787_663568/2788_663570/t16219.shtml

should be separated from that between states so that it does not hinder the development of our friendly relations with other countries.”²¹⁴

Echoing this statement, in January 1981 when Premier Zhao Ziyang visited Thailand, he declared that China’s support of communist parties in Southeast Asia was only “political and moral.” Subsequently, Zhao further assured Thai leaders that China would not interfere with the policies and activities of other communist parties, nor use these communist parties as instruments for overthrowing their legitimate governments. Similarly, Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian responded to questions on Chinese-CPT relations in Bangkok: “China is stick to principles of independence, equality, mutual respect, and non-interference.”²¹⁵ Corresponding to these signals, in 1979 China drastically decreased financial support and deliveries of weapons and other supplies to the CPT.²¹⁶ On July 1979, the VOPT went off the air.²¹⁷ After August 1981, Beijing started to persuade the CPT members who took refuge in China to return to Thailand.²¹⁸

5.3 Alternative Explanations

The most powerful alternative explanation is that China used coercive wedge strategies because it lacked the leverage to offer sufficient concessions that could support an accommodative strategy. This explanation thus argues that in this case China did not really have an option. It is true that China’s capability to accommodate Thailand was

²¹⁴ William R. Heaton, “China and Southeast Asian Communist Movements: The Decline of Dual Track Diplomacy,” *Asian Survey* 22, no. 8 (1982): 781.

²¹⁵ *Renmin Ribao*, August 2, 1983, 1.

²¹⁶ CIA, *Intelligence Assessment: Insurgencies in Thailand: A Declining Threat*, October 1982, 3.

²¹⁷ Yuangrat Wedel, *The Thai Radicals and the Communist Party: Interaction of Ideology and Nationalism in the Forest, 1975-1980* (Singapore: Maruzen Asia, 1983), 21.

²¹⁸ Jie Chen, “Shaking Off an Historical Burden,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 27, no. 4 (1994): 453.

seriously limited. Nonetheless, China still had strategic options more than coercive wedge strategies toward Thailand. China could have chosen wait-and-see, as it did between 1960 and 1962. Following a coup in 1960, crisis and fight in Laos resumed. During the crisis, Thailand urged the United States and the SEATO to directly intervene in Laos. Additionally, Thailand had been ready, both diplomatically and militarily, to intervene.²¹⁹ Paying close attention to this development, China criticized the Thai-U.S. military coordination and their intervention.²²⁰ However, China did not use coercive wedging toward Thailand. Beijing provided only verbal support for the CPT. For instance, in March 1962 China helped the CPT set up the VOPT radio station in Yunnan.²²¹ Additionally, *Renmin Ribao* bluntly criticized the Rusk-Thanat communique and warned Bangkok that the “communique runs directly counter the interest of the people of Thailand and is arousing growing dissatisfaction and resistance. The actions of the Thai reactionaries will boomerang *sooner or later* (emphasis added).”²²² Nonetheless, China did not provide any material assistance to the CPT. Moreover, after the CPT started its guerrilla warfare against Bangkok, China did not change its policy of wait-and-see. In that case, Bangkok could perceive this posture as China’s accommodation, because Beijing was holding back negative sanctions against Bangkok. In sum, China’s options were limited, but coercive wedging was not the only available option.

²¹⁹ Brown and Zasloff, *Apprentice Revolutionaries: The Communist Movement in Laos, 1930–1985*, 74-86. Charles A. Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere: American Policy toward Laos since 1954* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 136-48.

²²⁰ For instance, see, “Thailand Warned against Intervention in Laos,” *Peking Review*, no. 35 (August 30, 1960), 25.

²²¹ Heaton, “China and Southeast Asian Communist Movements: The Decline of Dual Track Diplomacy,” 781.

²²² *Renmin Ribao*, April 10, 1962. This was the first time *Renmin Ribao* clearly suggested a domestic uprising in Thailand. See, Jay Taylor, *China and Southeast Asia: Peking's Relations with Revolutionary Movements* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976), 289.

The second alternative explanation is that China chose coercive wedge strategies because Thailand's involvement in Vietnam did not add much to the U.S. threat to China. As Crawford argues, the less the adversaries' organized power endangers the divider's goals, the less the divider will worry about the risk of blowback, and thus the more likely the divider is to use coercive wedge strategies.²²³ In the Thailand case, this explanation would argue that from China's perspective, the United States was the major threat in Indochina and Thailand's contribution to this threat was limited. As a result, China did not worry that its coercive wedge strategies would backfire.

However, this explanation contains two issues. First, although Thailand itself did not pose a threat to China's security, it contributed to the U.S. threat and Chinese leaders could not easily forgo such contribution. Indeed, a *Renmin Ribao* editorial expressed China's concern that the United States planned to break down boundaries between Vietnam, Laos and Thailand, and thus expand the Vietnam War into a war that was not "limited to Indochina."²²⁴ Similarly, a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement claimed that the United States was expanding its "war of aggression" in Indochina and directing it "against China." It also accused the Thai government of being U.S. "hatchet men" in this war.²²⁵ Based on this assessment, another *Renmin Ribao* editorial warned the Thai government not to aid the United States in the Vietnam War.²²⁶ If Thailand's involvement in Vietnam was minimal, China could have chosen wait-and-see, instead of coercive wedge strategies.

²²³ Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," 162-63.

²²⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, July 30, 1965.

²²⁵ "Statement Denounces Thais as U.S. Accomplice," *Peking NCNA International Service*, January 19, 1967, in FBIS Daily Report FBIS-FRB-67-014, BBB1-BBB2.

²²⁶ *Renmin Ribao*, July 8, 1965.

Second, as this chapter has shown, Thailand's involvement in the Vietnam War began to decline after 1968. As Thailand's contribution to the combined U.S.-Thai threat before 1968 was limited, such contribution certainly further decreased after 1968. If this gravity of the combined threat explanation holds, China would have enhanced its coercive wedge strategies. Instead, China maintained the level of its coercive wedging efforts, and accommodated Bangkok in the meantime. As such, when China chose its wedge strategies toward Thailand, factors other than the gravity of the combined threats prompted China to choose coercive wedge strategies.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, during the Vietnam War Thailand contributed to the U.S. war efforts by sending troops to Vietnam and providing air bases for the USAF. As China's leverage over Thailand was weak, China opted for coercive wedge strategies. It provided material assistance to the CPT insurgency, sent advisors, and trained the CPT cadres. By doing so, Beijing was able to put pressure on Bangkok, in order to alter the latter's policy of supporting the U.S. in the Vietnam War. Meanwhile, being incapable of accommodating Thailand, China chose coercive wedge strategies as its pure strategy. After the Tet offensive, although Bangkok continued supporting the U.S. war in Vietnam, China's leverage remained weak. As a result, China continued to use coercive wedge strategies as its primary strategy. As the United States gradually changed its Vietnam policy, Thailand began to signal its willingness to improve its relations with China. This opened some avenue for China to accommodate Thailand. Consequently, China used accommodative wedge strategies as its complementary strategy.

China's choices of wedge strategies toward Thailand supports my theory. Additionally, the Thailand case provides limited evidence for alternative explanations. The argument that China's coercive wedge strategy was its last resort cannot explain why China did not choose wait-and-see. Meanwhile, if China chose coercive wedge strategies because Thailand contributed only limited to the U.S. threat to China, after the Tet Offensive China should have stepped up its coercion because in this period Thailand's contribution to the U.S. threat was lower than the previous period. However, China did not enhance its coercive wedge strategies. Instead, China maintained its coercive pressure and provided reward to Thailand.

Chapter 6 China's Mixed Wedges against the U.S.-South Korean Alliance, 2012-2018

South Korea (Republic of Korea, or ROK) is a U.S. ally. The United States not only keeps a large military presence on the Korean Peninsula, but also put South Korea under its nuclear umbrella. Additionally, based on understandings between Washington and Seoul in 2009, the U.S. Forces in Korea (USFK) assumes the role of responding to contingencies outside the Korean Peninsula.¹ Since 2012, the United States and South Korea have agreed to further expand the alliance, upgrade their joint military exercises, and improve their ballistic missile defense capabilities.²

China paid close attention to those developments. China perceived the strategic flexibility of the USFK as an extension of the U.S. policy to contain China.³ Beijing is also highly sensitive to U.S.-South Korean joint exercises in the Yellow Sea and China's coastal waters. For instance, commenting on the U.S.-South Korean naval exercises following the *Cheonan* and the Yeonpyeong incidents, the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated that China "firmly opposed" this exercise as it would "undermine China's security interests."⁴

¹ Hyon Joo Yoo, "The Korea-U.S. Alliance as a Source of Creeping Tension: A Korean Perspective," *Asian Perspective* 36, no. 2 (2012): 338.

² Mark E. Manyin et al., *U.S.-South Korea Relations*, CRS Report No. R41481 (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2017), 19-21.

³ Yoo, "The Korea-U.S. Alliance as a Source of Creeping Tension: A Korean Perspective," 339.

⁴ The Chinese Foreign Ministry (MFA) Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, July 8, 2010, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/fyrth/t715219.htm>

Viewing the enhanced U.S.-South Korea alliance as a challenge to its security, Beijing used wedge strategies to reduce Seoul's dependence on the United States. This chapter focuses on China's wedge strategies toward South Korea between November 2012 and May 2018. The analysis starts with November 2012 because this is when Xi Jinping took power. This allows this chapter to control for the Chinese leadership. Throughout this period, China had strong leverage over South Korea, resulting from China's increased military capabilities, its ability to maintain stability on the Korean Peninsula, and South Korea's economic dependency on China. My theory thus expects that concerns for balancing blowback would prompt China to rely on accommodative wedge strategies.

Indeed, China chose accommodation as its primary wedge strategy prior to 2016. Beijing not only greatly enhanced its economic and political relations with Seoul, but also reassured Seoul by reasserting Beijing's commitment to denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. Meanwhile, China used coercive wedging as its complementary strategy. In this period Beijing explicitly warned Seoul against deploying the THAAD system.

China's mixed strategy failed, however. In 2016 South Korea began to negotiate with the United States and eventually agreed to deploy the THAAD system. Responding to this development, Beijing adjusted its wedge strategies. On the one hand, Beijing put pressure on Seoul by imposing economic sanctions and raising tension in the Yellow Sea. On the other hand, Beijing attempted to limit the cost it inflicted on South Korea. Additionally, Beijing supported new sanctions against North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK).

China's strategy between 2016 and 2018 partly fits my theory's predictions because China applied accommodative wedges to South Korea. Nonetheless, we do observe that, compared to the period of 2013-2015, China devoted more resources to coercive wedge strategies after 2016. This deviates from my theory that predicts China, with strong leverage over South Korea, would choose accommodative wedging as its primary strategy. Therefore, this chapter will treat the period of 2016-2018 as a deviant case and propose two additional variables to explain this deviance.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. In the first section, I analyze China's wedge strategies between November 2012 and 2015. During this period, strong leverage led China to choose accommodation as its primary wedging strategy and coercive wedging as its complementary strategy. In the second section, I evaluate China's wedge strategies between 2016 and May 2018. I begin with a discussion on enhanced South Korea-U.S. security cooperation. Next, I evaluate China's leverage and evaluate to what extent China's strategic choices fit and deviate from my theory's prediction. I then propose two variables that can complement my theory. I conclude with evaluating the explanatory power of alternative arguments.

6.1 China-South Korea Enhanced Strategic Cooperative Partnership, November 2012-2015

6.1.1. Xi's Foreign Policy and the U.S.-South Korea Alliance

After Xi Jinping became the general secretary of the CCP and then ascended to the presidency, he laid out his foreign policy, especially concerning China's neighborhood, at several conferences. Xi not only emphasized the need to deepen China's relations with its

neighbors, but also pointed out China's dissatisfaction with the U.S. alliance system around China. On the China's neighborhood diplomacy conference in November 2013, Xi Jinping stressed that China's neighborhood was vital to the state; the important objectives of China's neighborhood diplomacy were to deepen beneficial cooperation, and maintain peace and stability in the neighborhood.⁵ Second, at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs in 2014, Xi Jinping elaborated on the objectives of China's foreign policy. He stressed that China "should develop a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting its role of a major country." While reiterating Deng Xiaoping's low-profile diplomatic principles, Xi added that China would "never...allow China's core interests to be undermined." He further underscored the importance of building a "new model of major-country relations" and turning China's neighborhood into a "community of common destiny."⁶

China's objective of restraining the U.S. presence in the neighborhood was more explicit at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). Prior to the summit, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi remarked that for Asian states, the "most important thing" about the summit was to tell the world that "Asian states should play the leading role in handling Asian affairs...By enhancing cooperation, Asian states should and could guarantee security in Asia."⁷ Subsequently, the Chinese Foreign Ministry reiterated this statement on different

⁵ "Xi Jinping zai zhoubianwaijiao huiyi zuotanhui shang fabiao zhongyao jianghua" ["Xi Jinping's Important Speech on the neighborhood diplomacy conference"], *Xinhua*, October 25, 2013, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-10/25/c_117878897.htm

⁶ "The Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs was Held in Beijing," PRC MFA, November 29, 2014, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1215680.shtml

⁷ MFA Regular Press Conference, PRC Government Network, April 16, 2014, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2014-04/16/content_2660795.htm

occasions.⁸ At the summit Xi Jinping delivered a speech, in which he called for a new security concept and a “new regional security cooperation architecture.” When elaborating on this topic, he specified that “to beef up and entrench a military alliance targeted at a third party is not conducive to maintaining common security.” To conclude, Xi stressed, “It is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia. The people of Asia have the capability and wisdom to achieve peace and stability in the region through enhanced cooperation”⁹ Although not naming the United States, Xi clearly was referring to U.S. alliances in Asia when he mentioned “military alliance.” A South Korean newspaper reported that at the summit China proposed to issue an anti-alliance statement but Park Geun-hye rejected it.¹⁰ It is difficult to verify this report. If true, this would be an explicit illustration that China wanted to undermine the U.S.-South Korea alliance.

The United States was enhancing its alliance with South Korea. Washington has been working to broaden the objective of the U.S.-ROK Alliance from defending against North Korea to a regional partnership.¹¹ Simultaneously, the Obama administration boosted the size and frequency of U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises. For instance, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) sent B-52 and two B-2 bombers to U.S.-

⁸ PRC MFA Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, April 29, 2014, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/t1151172.shtml. “Chen Guoping: Shanghai Yaxin fenghui shishang guimo zuida” [“Chen Guoping: CICA in Shanghai is the largest one in its history”], *Renmin Ribao*, May 8, 2014, <http://world.people.com.cn/n/2014/0508/c1002-24992957.html>

⁹ “New Asian Security Concept for New Progress in Security Cooperation,” PRC MFA, May 21, 2014, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1159951.shtml

¹⁰ Michael Green, “Korea in the middle,” *Joongang Ilbo*, June 11, 2014, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2990401>

¹¹ Manyin et al., *U.S.-South Korea Relations*, 19.

South Korean joint exercises in 2013.¹² To add, the two governments increased the number and pace of their high-level defense meetings.¹³

Another key element of U.S. effort to enhance its alliance with South Korea was missile defense system. Washington was trying to put the THAAD system in South Korea and integrate both South Korea and Japan into a regional missile defense system. In early 2014, the United States had conducted a site survey for the potential deployment of the THAAD system in South Korea.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the United States reiterated the importance of establishing a regional missile defense system. A senior U.S. defense official commented on a potential U.S.-South Korean-Japanese missile defense system, “It would be really useful if those nations could set aside their long standing differences...There is enormous utility to having a regionally-knitted together approach to missile defense.”¹⁵ Similarly, the vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral James Winnefeld also stressed, “Going forward, we will continue to emphasize the importance of developing regional ballistic missile defense systems.” At a subsequent press conference, the South Korean vice Defense Minister Baek Seung-joo admitted that South Korea had completed the review of the effectiveness of THAAD, but refused to specify the results.¹⁶

¹² Robert S. Ross and Mingjiang Li, “Xi Jinping and the Challenges to Chinese Security,” in *China in the Era of Xi Jinping: Domestic and Foreign Policy Challenges*, ed. Robert S. Ross and Jo Inge Bekkevold (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2016), 235. Jay Solomon, Julian Barnes, and Alastair Gale, “North Korea Warned: U.S. Flies Stealth Bombers over Peninsula in Show of Might,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2013,

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323501004578389162106323642>

¹³ Manyin et al., *U.S.-South Korea Relations*, 19.

¹⁴ “USFK commander says deployment of THAAD is in initial review,” *Hankyoreh*, June 4, 2014, http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/640706.html

¹⁵ Julian E. Barnes, “Washington Considers Missile-Defense System in South Korea,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 27, 2014, https://www.wsj.com/articles/washington-considers-missile-defense-system-in-south-korea-1401233131?mod=article_inline

¹⁶ Alastair Gale, “Seoul, U.S. Split on North Korea Nuclear Threat,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 13, 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/seoul-u-s-split-on-north-korea-nuclear-threat-1428913567>

Beijing clearly treated the THAAD deployment as a strategic move against China. As the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Qin Gang stated, “Deploying an anti-missile system would do harm to regional stability and strategic balance...[China] hopes the United States to fully consider concerns of states in this region.”¹⁷ The deployment of the THAAD system, if turning into reality, challenged China in two ways. First, China worried the THAAD system, especially its X-band radar, could detect and track China’s ballistic missiles and thus undermine China’s nuclear deterrent capabilities.¹⁸ Second, the United States attempted to establish a regional missile defense system that included South Korea and Japan. If Seoul decided to deploy THAAD, then China would face an enhanced and broader U.S. alliance system on its periphery. It is a difficult objective for Washington to achieve, given the strained relations between Seoul and Tokyo. Nonetheless, Chinese leaders could not easily forgo this potential challenge.

6.1.2 China’s Strong Leverage over South Korea

Beijing’s leverage over Seoul comes from four sources: China’s rapidly increased military capabilities, China’s influence in North Korea and on the inter-Korean relations, South Korea’s high economic dependence on China, and disputes over two states’ exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and a submerged islet. Although South Korea is a U.S. ally, a rising China is able to challenge South Korean vital interests. As such, in this period China enjoyed strong leverage over South Korea.

¹⁷ Chinese Foreign Ministry Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, May 28, 2014, <http://www.chinamission.be/chn/xwfb/wjbfyrth/t1160383.htm>

¹⁸ Wu Riqiang, “China’s Anxiety About U.S. Missile Defence: A Solution,” *Survival* 55, no. 5 (2013): 29-52. It remains debatable whether THAAD and its X-band radar will pose a threat to China’s nuclear deterrence. For instance, see, Jaganath Sankaran and Bryan L Fearey, “Missile Defense and Strategic Stability: Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) in South Korea,” *Contemporary security policy* 38, no. 3 (2017): 321-44.

The first source of China's leverage is its military capabilities. The rise of Chinese military power, particularly the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and Navy (PLAN), transformed South Korea's strategic environment. Since 2010, the PLAAF has been steadily replacing its old aircraft with new fighters as well as improving its early warning systems. By 2014 the PLAAF has been the largest air force in Asia with more than 2,800 aircraft, out of which about 600 were "modern" fourth generation aircraft. This was the third largest fleet of fourth-generation fighters in the world.¹⁹ In addition, the rapid increase of Chinese naval capabilities presents a great challenge to South Korea in the Yellow Sea. The PLAN had the largest number of vessels in Asia, and had been receiving a large number of new equipment. In 2012, the PLAN launched the first improved Shang-class nuclear attack submarine, and started to produce the new Jiangdao-class corvette. This new class is "equipped to patrol China's claimed EEZ and assert Beijing's interests in the...East China Seas. It is ideally-suited for general medium-endurance patrols, counterpiracy missions, and other littoral duties in regional waters."²⁰ By 2014 25 Jiangdao-class corvettes had entered service. The PLAN also had 60 Houbei-class wave-piercing catamaran guided-missile patrol boats built for operations in its near seas.²¹ In sum, China's naval and air force capabilities dwarfed the capabilities of the South Korean air force and navy.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2015*, Office of the Secretary of Defense, April 7, 2015, 11. David Shlapak, "Chinese Air Superiority in the near Seas," in *China's near Seas Combat Capabilities*, ed. Peter Dutton, Andrew S Erickson, and Ryan Martinson (Newport: U.S. Naval War College, 2014), 63-65. The National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), *China Security Report 2016: The Expanding Scope of PLA Activities and the PLA Strategy*, March 2016, 28-30.

²⁰ Office of Naval Intelligence, *The PLA Navy, New Capabilities and Missions for the 21st Century*, undated but released in April 2015, 17.

²¹ Office of Naval Intelligence, *The PLA Navy, New Capabilities and Missions for the 21st Century*, 18-19. DoD, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2016*, Office of the Secretary of Defense, April 26, 2016, 27.

The PLA's Anti Access/Area Denial (AA/AD) capabilities in the Yellow Sea also undermined the value of the U.S.-South Korean Alliance to balancing China's rise. The PLAN has equipped its submarines and surface combatants with advanced anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs).²² Simultaneously, by 2014 the Second Artillery Force (SAF) had deployed in eastern China at least one operational brigade with new type conventional theater ballistic missiles, capable of targeting naval ships within or beyond the First Island Chain. The SAF was also equipping its units in eastern China with medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) capable of attacking land targets, including airfields.²³ The SAF's short range ballistic missiles could reach U.S. military bases in South Korea, while its DF-21C MRBMs and DH-10 land attack cruise missiles could attack U.S. bases in Japan.²⁴

Second, China was able to derive leverage from its influence in North Korea. This influence was twofold. First, China played a critical role in the North Korean nuclear issue. While the China-DPRK relationship faced challenges and could be contentious, it remained in China's interest to prevent the regime in Pyongyang from collapsing.²⁵ Meanwhile, as Table 6.1 illustrates, China was North Korea's most important trade partner.

²² William S. Murray, "Underwater TELs and China's Antisubmarine Warfare: Evolving Strength and a Calculated Weakness," in *China's near Seas Combat Capabilities*, ed. Peter Dutton, Andrew S Erickson, and Ryan Martinson (Newport: U.S. Naval War College, 2014), 19-20.

²³ Ron Christman, "China's Second Artillery Force: Capabilities and Missions for the near Seas," *ibid.*, 33-35.

²⁴ Eric Heginbotham, *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996-2017* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2015), 50.

²⁵ Yu Tiejun, "The Significance of the Korean Peninsula in Xi Jinping's Global Strategy," in Tiejun Yu, Yuanzhe Ren, and Junsheng Wang, "Chinese Perspectives Towards the Korean Peninsula," (Washington D.C.: Stimson Center, June 2016), 18-19.

Table 6.1. North Korea's Exports Trends

	Value of exports to China (million \$)	% of total exports to China
2012	2,270	82
2013	2,720	83
2014	2,670	86
2015	2,340	83
2016	2,300	87
2017	1,580	91

Source: Research and Expertise on the World Economy, “BACI: International Trade Database at the Product-Level,” HS12, The 2012-2017 Version, http://www.cepii.fr/CEPII/en/bdd_modele/download.asp?id=37

Moreover, to prevent the North Korean regime from collapsing, China keeps supplying essential energy and food to North Korea to prevent it from collapsing.²⁶ According to a U.S. report, between July 2007 and March 2009, China provided 200,000 metric tons of heavy fuel oil to North Korea. Meanwhile, since 2009 China has been the largest supplier of food aid to North Korea.²⁷ To add, through the border trade, China provided North Korea with consumer goods such as cellphones, televisions, and refrigerators. By doing so, Beijing was able to keep engaged with the North Korean economy and had influence on North Korea's economic reforms.²⁸

Meanwhile, due to North Korea's security and economic dependence on China, China was able to retain flexibility so that it can put more pressure on North Korea by decreasing aid while avoiding the regime's collapse.²⁹ China's willingness to impose sanctions against North Korea illustrates this point. For instance, when China announced

²⁶ Jaewoo Choo, “Mirroring North Korea's Growing Economic Dependence on China: Political Ramifications,” *Asian Survey* 48, no. 2 (2008): 349-55.

²⁷ Mark E. Manyin and Mary Beth D. Nikitin, “Foreign Assistance to North Korea,” no. CRS- R40095, Congressional Research Service, April 2, 2014, 6-7, 11.

²⁸ James Reilly, “China's Market Influence in North Korea,” *Asian Survey* 54, no. 5 (2014): 894-917.

²⁹ Tat Yan Kong, “China's Engagement-Oriented Strategy Towards North Korea: Achievements and Limitations,” *The Pacific Review* 31, no. 1 (2018): 90.

a ten-month suspension of coal imports in 2017, a Chinese specialist on China-North Korea relations observed, “While pressing North Korea to give up nuclear weapons, the Chinese government has managed to maintain the survival of North Korea and never stopped diplomatic mediation.”³⁰

In addition to the nuclear issue, China was also key to Korean reunification in the future. Although Beijing publicly supported peaceful Korean reunification, it is in Beijing’s geopolitical interest to maintain the status quo on the Korean Peninsula as well as stability in North Korea.³¹ As such, Seoul must try to win over Beijing’s support in order to unify the peninsula.

Seoul understood China’s importance in both denuclearization and reunification issues. In her inauguration speech, President Park Geun-hye identified North Korea’s growing nuclear threat as a major challenge to her administration; she also claimed one of her policy objectives was to lay the foundation for national reunification.³² To handle those issues, Park Geun-hye needed China’s support. In June, Park visited China. During her discussion with Xi Jinping, Park explained “in detail why a peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula will be of help to each country” as well as asked China to be a “good partner in the course of realizing the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and a peaceful unification.”³³ Similarly, Park Byeong-seug, deputy chief of South Korea’s

³⁰ Zhao Lixin, “Six-Party Talks a guarantee of regional peace,” *Global Times*, February 21, 2017, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1034134.shtml>

³¹ “Xi Jinping zai Hanguo Guoli Shou’er Daxue fabiao zhongyao yanjiang,” [Xi Jinping delivers important speech at Seoul National University], *Xinhua*, July 4, 2014, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-07/04/c_1111463835.htm. Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2011), 191. Ross and Li, “Xi Jinping and the Challenges to Chinese Security,” 236.

³² “Full text of Park’s inauguration speech,” *Yonhap*, February 25, 2013, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20130225001500315>

³³ “Park asks China to be ‘good partner’ in Korean unification,” *Yonhap*, June 28, 2013, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20130628002853315?section=search>

National Assembly, remarked that South Korea needed closer cooperation with China for the reunification of two Koreas.³⁴ A few weeks later, the South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Hong-won publicly asked the international community, including China, to support the reunification of two Koreas. Chung further asked China to play a greater role in deterring North Korea from further provocations.³⁵ In addition, the South Korean Foreign Ministry conducted a survey in 2014; the poll showed that about half of South Koreans believed that Chinese cooperation was the “most important in accomplishing the goal of reunification of the two Koreas.”³⁶ With the tension building up on the peninsula in 2015, Seoul repeatedly expressed that it expected China to ease the tension by communicating with North Korea and “play a constructive role” in inducing North Korea to stop its nuclear program.³⁷

The third source of China’s leverage comes from South Korea’s economic dependence on China. As Albert Hirschman argued, when a weak state depends on its trade with a strong state, the latter is able to derive political power from this trade asymmetry. First, trade dependence gives the strong state “power to interrupt commercial or financial relations” with the weak one.³⁸ Second, trade dependence affects the weak

³⁴ “Korea urges closer cooperation with China in unification effort,” *Yonhap*, March 25, 2014, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20140325006700315?section=search>

³⁵ “Korean PM seeks int’l support for unification,” *Yonhap*, April 10, 2014, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20140410004151315?section=search>

³⁶ “Half of S. Koreans pick China as key help in Korean unification: poll,” *Yonhap*, February 5, 2014, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20140205007200315?section=search>

³⁷ For instance, see, “S. Korea hopes top Chinese official’s visit to N.K. will help ease tension,” *Yonhap*, October 5, 2015, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20151005002500315?section=search>. “Park, Li agree to boost strategic dialogue on N. Korea’s nuclear program,” *Yonhap*, October 31, 2015, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20151031001255315?section=search>

³⁸ Albert O. Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 16. Stephen D. Krasner, “State Power and the Structure of International Trade,” *World Politics* 28, no. 3 (1976).

state's domestic interest groups and therefore shape its foreign policy.³⁹ The strong state that obtains economic leverage from such trade dependence is able to influence the weak state's behavior, either through deterrence or coercion.⁴⁰

With China's economic rise, South Korean economy has increasingly relied on the Chinese market. As Table 6.2 shows, exports to China played a significant role in South Korea's economy. More than 30% of South Korean exports flew to China annually. Between 2012 and 2018, on average about 12% of South Korean Gross Domestic Product (GDP) derived on its exports to China, more than twice the percentage of its GDP that came from exports to its second largest export market, the United States. This high dependence made South Korea vulnerable to Chinese economic influence.

Table 6.2. *South Korea's Exports Trends*

	% of total exports to China ^a	% of total exports to the U.S.	Exports to China as % of GDP (Major export markets rank)	Exports to the U.S. as % of GDP (Major export markets rank)
2012	30.47	10.68	13.06 (1)	4.58 (2)
2013	31.03	11.09	12.67 (1)	4.53 (2)
2014	30.13	12.27	11.63 (1)	4.73 (2)
2015	31.81	13.26	11.43 (1)	4.78 (2)
2016	31.73	13.42	10.48 (1)	4.43 (2)
2017	31.59	11.96	11.16 (1)	4.23 (2)
2018	34.41	12.02	12.09 (1)	4.23 (2)

Note: a: the statistics on exports to China combine exports directly to China with those to Hong Kong. As Robert Ross argues, Beijing is able to deny South Korea access to the Hong Kong economy so that "China and Hong Kong are a single market." See, Ross, "On the Fungibility of Economic Power: China's Economic Rise and the East Asian Security Order," 311.

Source: Korean Statistical Information Service,
http://kosis.kr/eng/statisticsList/statisticsListIndex.do?menuId=M_01_01&vwcd=MT_ETITLE&parmTabId=M_01_01

³⁹ Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade*, 26-29. Rawi Abdelal and Jonathan Kirshner, "Strategy, Economic Relations, and the Definition of National Interests," *Security Studies* 9, no. 1-2 (1999): 120-21.

⁴⁰ Robert S. Ross, "On the Fungibility of Economic Power: China's Economic Rise and the East Asian Security Order," *European Journal of International Relations* 25, no. 1 (2018): 307-08.

The last source of China's leverage is its disputes with South Korea over their EEZs and a submerged islet. The two governments have overlapped EEZ claims in the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea. Disputed waters led to tensions concerning fishing vessels. According to the South Korean Coastal Guard, between 2008 and 2012 they captured more than 2,100 Chinese fishing boats and 540 Chinese fishermen.⁴¹ Simultaneously, China's civilian maritime force was also able to challenge South Korea's fishing interests.⁴² Related to the EEZ dispute is a disputed islet, Suyan/Ieodo islet, a submerged rock in the northwest of the East China Sea. This islet has been a source of frictions between the two governments for many years.⁴³ China can use these disputes to exert influence on South Korea, either by accommodation or coercion.

6.1.3 China Accommodated South Korea

With strong leverage, China used accommodative wedge strategies to induce South Korea to stand closer with China than with the United States. After Park Geun-hye won the presidential election in 2013, China was the first state to send a congratulatory special envoy to South Korea. Subsequently, Xi Jinping visited Seoul as the new Chinese leader in July 2014. This trip broke the tradition that new Chinese leaders visiting Pyongyang first.⁴⁴ In his meeting with Park Geun-hye in September 2015, Xi Jinping stressed that China-South Korea relations were important in China's overall foreign relations. He

⁴¹ Lisa Collins, "Between a Rock and a Grey Zone: China-ROK Illegal Fishing Disputes," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, July 6, 2016, <https://amti.csis.org/rock-grey-zone-china-rok-illegal-fishing-disputes/>

⁴² Ross, "On the Fungibility of Economic Power: China's Economic Rise and the East Asian Security Order," 314.

⁴³ Senan Fox, *China, South Korea, and the Socotra Rock Dispute: A Submerged Rock and Its Destabilizing Potential* (Singapore: Springer, 2019), 1-2.

⁴⁴ Yuanzhe Ren, "China's Perspective on the China-ROK Strategic Partnership: Developments, Debates, and Difficulties," in Tiejun Yu, Yuanzhe Ren, and Junsheng Wang, *Chinese Perspectives Towards the Korean Peninsula*, Stimson Center, June 2016, 32-33.

further identified four goals of China-South Korea relations: achievement of common development, commitment to regional peace, revitalization of Asia hand-in-hand, and promotion of world prosperity.⁴⁵

First, Beijing enhanced its economic cooperation with Seoul. In June 2013, Park Geun-hye visited China. The two governments announced a plan to “enrich China-South Korea strategic cooperative partnership.” China and South Korea pledged to promote bilateral diplomatic, security, and strategic communication. Regarding economic and trade cooperation, China proposed to set up an RMB clearance service in South Korea and speed up free trade negotiations.⁴⁶ When Xi Jinping visited Seoul in 2014, the two governments agreed to finalize a free trade deal before the end of the year. In the subsequent joint communique, the two governments announced to work on direct RMB-Won transaction. South Korea agreed to set up RMB clearance while China granted South Korea 80 billion RMB Qualified Foreign Institutional Investor (RQFII) quota.⁴⁷ An authoritative editorial in *Renmin Ribao* described China-South Korea relations were “at their best period in history.” The editorial also declared that China and South Korea shared common development goals and had been important partners in all areas.⁴⁸ The Chinese-South Korean FTA negotiation was more than merely an economic bargaining.

⁴⁵ “Xi Jinping Meets with President Park Geun-hye of the Republic of Korea,” PRC MFA, September 2, 2015, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/yzs_663350/gjlb_663354/2767_663538/2769_663542/t1294782.shtml

⁴⁶ “Full Text of the Plan to Enrich China-South Korea strategic cooperative partnership,” PRC Government Network, June 28, 2014, http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2013-06/28/content_2435863.htm

⁴⁷ One year later, China agreed to raise the RQFII quota to 120 billion yuan. “Joint Communique between China and South Korea,” *Xinhua*, July 3, 2014, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2014-07/03/c_1111449615.htm. “REFILE-China raises RQFII quota for South Korea by 50 pct,” *Reuters*, November 1, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/southkorea-china-economy/refile-china-raises-rqfii-quota-for-south-korea-by-50-pct-idUSS6N0ZH02M20151102>

⁴⁸ Zhong Shen, “Zhongguomeng yu Hanguomeng xieshou bingjin” [“China Dream and South Korea Dream Advance Hand in Hand”], *Renmin Ribao*, July 3, 2014, 3.

From China's perspective, signing the FTA with South Korea was a countermove against the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which China viewed as a U.S. attempt to restrain China's influence in the region. Reportedly, during their FTA negotiations Chinese negotiators asked South Korea not to join the TPP.⁴⁹

China also endorsed South Korea's proposals for regional multilateral institutions. The most salient case was the Trilateral Summit Meeting (TSM) between China, South Korea, and Japan. TSM originated from the financial crisis in 2008 and provided a platform for regional cooperation until 2012, when Beijing opposed to continue holding the TSM. On the contrary, South Korea did not oppose holding the TSM and played an active role in proposing to resume it.⁵⁰ Eventually, in 2015 South Korea gained China's consent to resume the TSM.⁵¹ The Chinese Premier Li Keqiang attended the TSM in Seoul and proposed that China and South Korea combine their national development strategies to create new highlights of cooperation.⁵²

Second, China kept silent on its disputes with South Korea in the Yellow Sea. China's persistent stance on the dispute over the Suyan/Ieodo islet is that China and South Korea have consensus that there is no territorial dispute over the islet.⁵³ Amid the

⁴⁹ Yul Sohn, "South Korea under the United States-China Rivalry: Dynamics of the Economic-Security Nexus in Trade Policymaking," *The Pacific Review* 32, no. 6 (2019): 1028.

⁵⁰ Zhang Muhui, "Growing Activism as Cooperation Facilitator: China-Japan-Korea Trilateralism and Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy," *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 14, no. 2 (2016): 309-37. In-Soo Nam, "China Asks to Postpone Japan, Korea Summit," *Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 2013, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324493704578430201541017478>

⁵¹ Scott A. Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 181.

⁵² "Li Keqiang Holds Talks with President Park Geun-hye of ROK, Stressing to Adhere to One General Orientation of China-ROK Relations, Promote Docking of Four National Strategies and Build Two Cooperation Platforms," PRC MFA, November 3, 2015, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zjzg_663340/yzs_663350/gjlb_663354/2767_663538/2769_663542/t1311439.shtml

⁵³ See, for instance, MFA Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, March 12, 2012, <http://kh.china-embassy.org/chn/fyrth/t913202.htm>

Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute in 2013, a Chinese State Oceanic Administration (SOC) official remarked that the SOC would enhance its drone surveillance efforts to cover all Chinese territorial waters, including the Suyan/Ieodo islet.⁵⁴ This announcement caused South Korea's anxiety. To reassure Seoul, Beijing quickly denied this plan. According to the South Korean Foreign Ministry, Beijing explained that it had no intention to lay claim to the islet.⁵⁵ A few months later, tension arose again. In November China declared to designate its Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) that covered Suyan/Ieodo islet. Dissatisfied with China's action, Seoul challenged it by sending a military airplane into the new Chinese ADIZ without warning. Moreover, a spokesperson for the South Korean Defense Ministry remarked that South Korean navy and coast guards conducted routine surveillance around Suyan/Ieodo islet once or twice a week.⁵⁶ Subsequently, South Korea expanded its own ADIZ to cover the disputed area.⁵⁷

Beijing restrained its responses to those South Korean challenges. Although a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson expressed "regret over the South Korea's decision of expanding its ADIZ," he stressed that "China will stay in communication with South Korea, based on the principle of equality and mutual respect." Meanwhile, he reiterated that the Suyan/Ieodo islet was not a territory, and China and South Korea had consensus that there was no territorial dispute over it. He added that ADIZ was not sovereign airspace, and it was irrelevant to jurisdiction over airspace or sea. Finally, he

⁵⁴ "SOC drone surveillance pilot test," PRC Government Network, September 23, 2012, http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2012-09/23/content_2231308.htm

⁵⁵ "China Denies Plan to Send Drones to Ieo Island," *Chosun*, October 4, 2012, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/10/04/2012100400604.html?related_all

⁵⁶ Alastair Gale, Jeyup S. Kwaak, "Seoul Sees Territory Threat in China Defense Zone," *Wall Street Journal*, November 29, 2013, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/seoul-sees-territory-threat-in-china-defense-zone-1385715413>

⁵⁷ Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korea Announces Expansion of Its Air Defense Zone," *New York Times*, December 8, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/09/world/asia/east-china-sea-air-defense-zone.html>

claimed, “China will stay in communication with South Korea, based on the principle of equality and mutual respect. We hope that the ROK will meet China halfway.”⁵⁸

Neither did China raise tension over disputes over fishing issues. Those disputes were a consistent source of frictions between Beijing and Seoul, and sometimes could become deadly. For instance, when the South Korean Coast Guard tried to capture a Chinese fishing ship in 2014, they fired shots and killed the Chinese captain.⁵⁹ In 2012 South Korea had seized 467 Chinese fishing boats in its waters.⁶⁰ South Korea captured more than 600 Chinese ships for “illegal fishing” in 2015 and its naval vessels had joined the maritime police and coast to patrol.⁶¹ Responding to those frictions, China issued complaints to South Korea, but was very careful about words it used. After the death of that Chinese captain, the Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed China’s “strong dissatisfaction with the incident” and asked South Korea to “conduct thorough investigation...and notify China its investigation.”⁶² When the South Korean navy warned Chinese fishing boats to stop operating in a clash in 2015, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that it “had been communicating with South Korea over this issue and verified the facts...and had asked South Korea to clarify its statement.”⁶³ Nonetheless, overall the Chinese government was cooperative in settling fishing disputes.

⁵⁸ MFA Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, December 9, 2013, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/t1106950.shtml; October 10, 2014, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cgrj/chn/fyrth/t1199309.htm>

⁵⁹ Choe Sang-Hun, “Fisherman from China Dies in Clash Off S. Korea,” *New York Times*, October 14, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/11/world/asia/chinese-fishing-captain-killed-in-clash-with-south-korean-coast-guard.html?_r=0

⁶⁰ Hongzhou Zhang and S. A. M. Bateman, “Fishing Militia, the Securitization of Fishery and the South China Sea Dispute,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 39, no. 2 (2017): 293.

⁶¹ “South Korea Cracks Down on Illegal Chinese Fishing,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 10, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/south-korea-cracks-down-on-illegal-chinese-fishing-1465550310>

⁶² MFA Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, October 10, 2014, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cggt/chn/fyrth/t1199309.htm>

⁶³ *Xinhua*, December 9, 2015, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-12/09/c_128514737.htm

In 2015 China and South Korea began joint inspection of fishing boats in the Yellow Sea. Seoul announced that the purpose of the operation was to “reduce the number of Chinese ships fishing illegally” in South Korean exclusive waters.⁶⁴

Moreover, Beijing and Seoul began their negotiations on maritime delimitation. In December 2015, China and South Korea resumed their negotiation on maritime delimitation after a seven-year hiatus. In this new round, the two governments upgraded the negotiation to the deputy-minister level. Chinese vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin described the meeting as “historically meaningful.” His South Korean counterpart agreed: “it is the most meaningful that the negotiation process has commenced with today’s talks.”⁶⁵

Third, China eased Seoul’s concern about North Korean provocations. Chinese measures were twofold. First, China reasserted its commitment to the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and enhanced its communication with Seoul on this issue. The day after the pass of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2087, the South Korean special envoy Kim Mu-song traveled to Beijing and received China’s reassurance: “China highly values its relations with South Korea...The strategic cooperative partnership will definitely make further progress.”⁶⁶ In the subsequently meeting, Xi Jinping reassured his South Korean guest that China supported the denuclearization on the peninsula and expected the six-party summit to resume as soon as

⁶⁴ “S. Korea, China to hold joint inspection on illegal fishing in Yellow Sea,” *Korea Times*, April 5, 2015, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/11/656_176526.html

⁶⁵ “First Round of Talks on Maritime Demarcation between China and the ROK Successfully Held,” PRC MFA, December 12, 2015, http://www3.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjb_673085/zzjg_673183/bjhysws_674671/xgwx_674673/t1326878.shtml. *Xinhua*, December 23, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-12/23/c_128557835.htm. “S. Korea, China hold first talks on EEZs in 7 years,” *Yonhap*, December 22, 2015, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20151222002053315>.

⁶⁶ *Renmin Ribao*, January 22, 2013, 3.

possible.⁶⁷ In May, the ruling Saenuri Party sent a delegation to China and met with Wang Jiarui, director of the CCP International Liaison Department. Reportedly, in the discussion Wang described Beijing-Pyongyang ties as merely “normal relations between states.”⁶⁸ Amid tensions on the peninsula, Park Geun-hye traveled to Beijing. Xi assured her that the “concerns of all sides should be treated in a balanced way, and a synchronized and equivalent method should be sought to bring the nuclear issue on Korean Peninsula into a sustainable, irreversible and effective settlement process.” Xi also endorsed a plan of “Korean Peninsula trust-building process” that Park proposed.⁶⁹ In the meeting with Park Geun-hye in 2015, Xi reasserted that China adhered to the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and stressed the role of dialogue and consultation in solving the North Korean nuclear issue.⁷⁰ Subsequently, Premier Li Keqiang and Park Geun-hye agreed to enhance “strategic communication” concerning Pyongyang’s nuclear program.⁷¹ Additionally, Chinese Defense Minister Chang Wanquan visited Seoul and met with his South Korean counterpart. In the discussion, Chang confirmed China’s “zero-tolerance policy toward North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.” The two governments also agreed to resolve this issue via “dialogue and close cooperation.”⁷²

⁶⁷ *Renmin Ribao*, January 23, 2013, 1.

⁶⁸ “Top Chinese Official ‘Sees No Special Relationship with N.Korea’,” *Chosun Ibo*, May 28, 2013, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/05/28/2013052800911.html

⁶⁹ “Spotlight: Enriched China-S. Korea ties to benefit both sides, region and world,” *Xinhua*, July 4, 2014, <http://en.people.cn/n/2014/0704/c90883-8750592.html>

⁷⁰ “Xi Jinping Meets with President Park Geun-hye of the Republic of Korea,” PRC MFA, September 2, 2015, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zjzg_663340/yzs_663350/gjlb_663354/2767_663538/2769_663542/t1294782.shtml

⁷¹ “Park, Li agree to boost strategic dialogue on N. Korea's nuclear program,” *Yonhap*, October 31, 2015, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20151031001255315?section=search>

⁷² “China voices concern over U.S. THAAD on Korean soil,” *Yonhap*, February 4, 2015, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20150204009900315>

Second, China put pressure on Pyongyang. North Korea launched an Unha-3 rocket in November 2012 and conducted its third nuclear test three months later. China responded to those moves with harsh criticism. Right after the rocket launch, the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated that although North Korea had “right to develop a peaceful space program,” but such right was “subject to limitations” by the UNSC resolutions.⁷³ In January 2013, the United States and China cooperated to pass the resolution 2087, which condemned the North Korean rocket launch and imposed additional economic sanctions against North Korea.⁷⁴

China’s support for the resolution suggested a noticeable change in its attitude toward Pyongyang, since Beijing explicitly opposed sanctions just a few months ago.⁷⁵ As tension continued to mount on the Korean Peninsula, China leveled its harsh criticism and publicly warned North Korea against its nuclear weapons program. In April, Xi Jinping remarked at the annual Bo’ao Forum: “No one should be allowed to throw a region and even a whole world into chaos for selfish gains.”⁷⁶ This was the beginning of a series of China’s warnings. In the same month, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry traveled to Beijing and held talks with various Chinese leaders. During the discussion between Kerry and Li Keqiang, Li stressed that China opposed “troublemaking” on the

⁷³ The Chinese Foreign Ministry regular press conference, People’s Republic of China Government Network, December 12, 2012, http://www.gov.cn/xwfb/2012-12/12/content_2289013.htm

⁷⁴ “Security Council Condemns Use of Ballistic Missile Technology in Launch by Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, in Resolution 2087 (2013),” United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Release, January 22, 2013, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc10891.doc.htm>. Rick Gladstone, “U.N. Resolution to Aim at North Korean Banks and Diplomats,” *New York Times*, March 5, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/06/world/asia/china-said-to-back-new-sanctions-against-north-korea.html>

⁷⁵ Lee Ki-Hyun, “North Korea’s Third Nuclear Test and the Possibility of Change in China’s Policy towards North Korea,” Korea Institute for National Unification, 2013, 2.

⁷⁶ Jane Perlez and Choe Sang-hun, “China Hints at Limits to North Korea Actions,” *New York Times*, April 7, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/08/world/asia/from-china-a-call-to-avoid-chaos-for-selfish-gain.html>

peninsula and warned against North Korea's provocative actions: "Provocations on the Korean Peninsula will harm the interests of all sides and it is the same as picking up a rock to drop it on one's feet."⁷⁷ A few days later, Fang Fenghui, Chief of the General Staff of the PLA, bluntly criticized Pyongyang: "We are thoroughly opposed to the nuclear test conducted by the [North Korean government]...We support the U.N. Security Council in appropriate and reasonable sanctions against North Korea."⁷⁸

The Chinese leaders also criticized North Korea privately. In May, Xi Jinping met with Choe Ryong Hae, Kim Jong-un's special envoy. During the meeting, Xi repeatedly underscored the importance of the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. China expected that, as Xi explained, "all parties...bear in mind the big picture of maintaining peace and stability on the Peninsula to calmly deal with the current situation."⁷⁹

Meanwhile, China took unusual moves to isolate North Korea's financial system. In December 2012, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China had suspended all deposits and transfers of foreign currencies in and out of North Korean accounts in the Chinese border city of Dandong. After North Korea launched another missile in February, another bank in northeastern China took similar action.⁸⁰ There were also reports that China Construction Bank and Agricultural Bank of China, two biggest banks in China also

⁷⁷ Teddy Ng and Raymond Li, "Premier Li Keqiang warns North Korea: Halt 'provocations'," *South China Morning Post*, April 14, 2013, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1214146/premier-li-keqiang-warns-north-korea-halt-provocations>

⁷⁸ Karen Parrish, "Dempsey Urges More Strategic Dialogue Between China, U.S.," April 22, 2014, Joint Chiefs of Staff, <https://www.jcs.mil/Media/News/News-Display/Article/571609/dempsey-urges-more-strategic-dialogue-between-china-us/>

⁷⁹ "President Xi Jinping Meets with Choe Ryong Hae, Special Envoy of Kim Jong Un," PRC MFA, May 24, 2013, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cech/chn/ssyw/t1043542.htm>

⁸⁰ "Chinese banks freeze North Korean accounts: South Korean media report," *Reuters*, February 21, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-satellite-china-banks/chinese-banks-freeze-north-korean-accounts-south-korean-media-report-idUSKCN0VV09S>

suspended all transactions with North Korea.⁸¹ In May, Bank of China, the state's primary institution for foreign exchange transactions, closed the North Korean Foreign Trade Bank's account and halted its transactions.⁸² By taking those moves, China sent a clearly warning to North Korea.

Finally, Chinese leaders responded positively to South Korea's proposals on reunification. In April 2014, Park Geun-hye delivered a speech in Germany, in which she laid out her road map for two Koreas to move toward reunification. Commenting on this speech, the Chinese Foreign Ministry remarked, "China always supports the ROK and the DPRK in improving their relations through dialogue, promoting reconciliation and finally realizing an independent unity."⁸³ South Korean leaders also received private reassurance from their Chinese counterparts. Returning from her visit to Beijing in 2015, Park Geun-hye told reporters, "Peaceful unification is the fundamental and the quickest way to resolve nuclear and other issues." She continued to remark that South Korea and China "could quickly begin various discussions on how to achieve a peaceful unification between South and North Korea."⁸⁴ In a subsequent interview, Park remarked, "My visit to China last September served as an opportunity to strengthen communication and cooperation in regard to issues involving the Korean Peninsula."⁸⁵ While it was hard to

⁸¹ Simon Rabinovitch, "China banks rein in support for North Korea," *Financial Times*, May 13, 2013, <https://www.ft.com/content/9bb568b0-bba0-11e2-82df-00144feab7de>

⁸² "Bank of China closes account of key North Korean bank," *Reuters*, May 7, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-korea-north-china-bank/bank-of-china-closes-account-of-key-north-korean-bank-idUSBRE9460CX20130507>. Lingling Wei and Jay Solomon, "China Publicly Cuts Off North Korean Bank," *Wall Street Journal*, May 8, 2013, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323372504578468403543236068>

⁸³ "China voices support for Park's proposal on unification with N. Korea," *Yonhap*, April 3, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20140403007400315?section=search>

⁸⁴ "Park: S. Korea to begin discussions with China on Korea's unification," *Yonhap*, September 4, 2015, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20150904010900315>

⁸⁵ "Full text of Park's interview with Yonhap News Agency," *Yonhap*, November 13, 2015, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20151113003100315?section=search>

tell if Park was exaggerating the results of her visit, this optimistic statement suggested that Beijing accommodated Seoul on Korean Peninsula issues so that her confidence boosted.

6.1.4 China Drew a Red Line: U.S. Missile Defense in South Korea

China also used coercive wedging as its complementary strategy. While accommodating Seoul on several issues, Beijing explicitly drew a red line for South Korea: do not agree to deploy the THAAD system in South Korea. As discussed above, deploying the THAAD system not only meant an enhanced U.S.-South Korean alliance, but also hinted potential integration of a U.S.-South Korean-Japanese missile defense system. Therefore, Chinese leaders reiterated their warnings against the THAAD deployment to their South Korean counterparts.

Reports that the United States and South Korea were discussing the deployment of the THAAD system raised China's concerns. On May 28, 2014, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Qin Gang issued a subtle warning. Commenting on the U.S. consideration on deploying the THAAD system in South Korea, he urged related sides not to increase tension on the Korean Peninsula.⁸⁶ A commentary in Xinhua contained a more explicit warning to Seoul. It wrote, "South Korea will sacrifice its fast-developing relations with China if it would be seduced into the THAAD defense network, ignoring the protests of the largest economy in Asia."⁸⁷ In October, Chinese Ambassador to South Korea Qiu Guohong raised this issue again. He remarked that the THAAD deployment was "not to deter North Korean aggression." Clearly, Qiu was suggesting that China

⁸⁶ Chinese Foreign Ministry Regular Press Conference, MFA, May 28, 2014, <http://www.chinamission.be/chn/xwfb/wjbfyrth/t1160383.htm>

⁸⁷ "South Korea's Message to Xi Jinping," *Wall Street Journal*, July 13, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/south-koreas-message-to-xi-jinping-1468448100>

would be the target of THAAD. Moreover, he warned that deploying the THAAD system would damage South Korea's ties with China.⁸⁸

When Defense Minister Chang Wanquan traveled to Seoul in February 2015, he voiced China's concern over the possible THAAD deployment to his counterpart Han Min-koo. In response, Han reassured Chang that "Washington has not made any decision on the matter and has not asked South Korea (for any consultation). No agreement between Seoul and Washington exists on the issue."⁸⁹ Additionally, Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Jianchao also urged South Korea to "think about Beijing's attention to and concerns over the deployment of THAAD to the peninsula."⁹⁰

According to a diplomatic source, during the Xi-Park summit in July, Xi told his South Korean counterpart, "It needs to tread carefully over the issue of the THAAD deployment (to South Korea)."⁹¹ A senior South Korean defense source quoted Xi as urging Park to turn down U.S. proposal to deploy THAAD: "If the United States attempts to deploy THAAD in the South Korean territory... South Korea, as a sovereign country, should exercise its right to express its opposition and the THAAD issue will not be a problem between South Korea and China."⁹²

⁸⁸ "The THAAD conundrum," *JoongAng Ilbo*, October 22, 2014, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2996347>

⁸⁹ "China voices concern over U.S. THAAD on Korean soil," *Yonhap*, February 4, 2015, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20150204009900315>

⁹⁰ Song Sang-ho, "Seoul fires back at China's opposition to THAAD," *Korea Herald*, March 17, 2016, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150317001093>

⁹¹ "China's Xi asked Park to 'tread carefully' over U.S. missile-defense system," *Yonhap*, August 26, 2014, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20140826002100315>

⁹² "Xi pressed Park on THAAD system," *JoongAng Ilbo*, February 6, 2015, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3000595>

6.1.5 A Period of Success

During this period, China's wedge strategies were successful as Seoul tilted toward Beijing. Economically, China and South Korea enhanced their cooperation by signing the FTA. In November 2014, China and South Korea announced they had concluded FTA negotiations.⁹³ The two governments signed the bilateral FTA in the next year. This was a comprehensive agreement that included goods, services, investment, and intellectual property rights.⁹⁴

Meanwhile, despite U.S. strong opposition, South Korea joined the Asian Infrastructural Investment Bank (AIIB), a financial institution that many observers view as a challenge to the U.S.-led international financial order.⁹⁵ After proposing to establish the AIIB in 2013, Xi Jinping requested South Korea to join the bank when he traveled to Seoul.⁹⁶ On the other hand, the United States bluntly called for its allies not to join the AIIB. In an interview with *Yonhap*, Sydney Seiler, director for Korea at the National Security Council, voiced strong skepticism about the AIIB: "We do have the World Bank, the Asia Development Bank (ADB)...it is not really clear at this point ... how the AIIB would implement these practices, or particularly how the AIIB would either work

⁹³ "China and South Korea have concluded FTA negotiations," *Xinhua*, November 13, 2014, <http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/ae/ai/201411/20141100790249.shtml>

⁹⁴ "Free Trade Agreement Between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Korea," http://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/korea/korea_agreementText.shtml. Cheong Inkyo, "Analysis of the FTA Negotiation between China and Korea," *Asian Economic Papers* 15, no. 3 (2016): 175.

⁹⁵ See, for instance, Amitai Etzioni, "The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: A Case Study of Multifaceted Containment," *Asian Perspective* 40, no. 2 (2016): 173-96. Masahiro Kawai, "Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in the Evolving International Financial Order," in *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: China as Responsible Stakeholder*, ed. Daniel Bob, et al. (Washington D.C.: Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 2015), 5-26. Hong Yu, "Motivation Behind China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiatives and Establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank," *Journal of Contemporary China* 26, no. 105 (2017): 353-68.

⁹⁶ "AIIB and Korea: Seoul has much to do in new regional bank," *Korea Herald*, March 29, 2015, <http://news.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150329000066>

with or add value to these multilateral development institutions that have existed for so many years.” When answering the question about whether the United States would ask Seoul to be cautious about joining the AIIB, Seiler implicitly answered yes: “all countries who have been involved in contributing to and working with the ADB and the World Bank have similar questions.”⁹⁷ Nonetheless, Seoul decided to defy its ally and join the AIIB in 2015.

Additionally, China prevented South Korea from deploying the THAAD system. In October 2013, then South Korean Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin denied the plan of purchasing THAAD. He clarified that South Korea would not be “part of the U.S. regional missile defense system.”⁹⁸ In March 2015, a Presidential spokesperson stressed that Seoul had not received request from the United States to deploy the THADD system in South Korea. He stated, “As there was no request, there were no consultations [between the two countries] and no decision has been made.”⁹⁹

One month later, during a Pentagon press briefing William Gortney, head of the U.S. Northern Command, remarked that North Korea was capable of mounting a nuclear warhead on an intercontinental ballistic missile. South Koreans, on the contrary, publicly claimed that they disagreed with this assessment. Following Gortney’s statement, at a news conference in Seoul Vice Defense Minister Baek Seung-joo commented that

⁹⁷ Chang Jae-soon, “U.S. official expresses strong skepticism about China’s push for new development bank,” *Yonhap*, July 18, 2014, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20140708000351315>

⁹⁸ Lee Chi-dong, “S. Korea requests Pentagon’s information on THAAD missile defense system: source,” *Yonhap*, October 18, 2013, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20131018000300315?section=search>

⁹⁹ “S. Korea keeps strategic ambiguity over THAAD missile defense system,” *Yonhap*, March 11, 2015, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20150311002500315?section=search>

Gortney did not make those remarks “with a thorough assessment of North Korea’s capabilities.”¹⁰⁰

On May 29, South Korea further denied the introduction of THAAD. Its Defense Ministry spokesperson remarked, “As of now, the South Korean defense ministry is unaware of whether the U.S. is reviewing a plan to send the THAAD battery here.” He further explained that South Korea did not “consider (the introduction) of the THAAD system, which is for the upper-tier defense system, different from our own lower-tier one.”¹⁰¹

6.2 Accommodation Failed: The Good, the Bad, the THAAD, 2016-2018

Despite these positive results in the previous period, China’s wedge strategies took a hard hit in 2016. As Beijing failed to respond efficiently to North Korea’s fourth nuclear test in January, Seoul started to negotiate with the United States about the deployment of THAAD and agreed to the deployment in July. South Korea tilted back toward the United States. How should China respond to failed accommodation? My theory predicts that China will continue to use accommodative wedge strategies as its primary strategy while using coercive ones as its complementary strategy. This is because when China maintained strong leverage over South Korea, the concern for balancing blowback would lead China to continue relying on accommodative wedge strategies. Nonetheless, China’s actual choice deviates from this expectation. Rather than enhancing its accommodation, China chose coercive wedging as its primary strategy.

¹⁰⁰ Alastair Gale, “Seoul, U.S. Split on North Korea Nuclear Threat,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 13, 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/seoul-u-s-split-on-north-korea-nuclear-threat-1428913567>

¹⁰¹ “Seoul unaware of U.S. plan to deploy MD system in S. Korea,” *Yonhap*, May 29, 2014, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20140529004000315?section=search>

But China's choice did not rely solely on coercion; it used mixed strategies. Beijing put pressure on Pyongyang by cooling down their bilateral relations as well as supporting additional UN sanctions on North Korea. Simultaneously, Beijing restrained its coercive wedging against Seoul, so that it signaled Seoul that China could become more coercive if South Korea did not compromise.

6.2.1 South Korea Went for THAAD

Tension further mounted on the Korean Peninsula in the beginning of 2016. On January 6, North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear test and announced it had detonated a hydrogen bomb.¹⁰² Shocked by this nuclear test, Seoul attempted to communicate with Beijing. Immediately after the test, Park Geun-hye made a phone call to Xi Jinping. Nonetheless, Xi did not answer it. Meanwhile, the communication channel between two states' defense ministries did not work either. As the South Korean Defense Ministry stated, it had not received any response from their Chinese counterpart: "(We are) negotiating with China to have a phone conversation. At the moment, China's Defense Ministry is not talking with any other country. We have made a request and are still waiting for a reply."¹⁰³ Based on public reports, Chinese and South Korean presidents did not have direct discussion until February.¹⁰⁴

Facing renewed tension on the peninsula and dissatisfied with Beijing's response to North Korea's provocations, Seoul decided to enhance its security cooperation with the United States by beginning the negotiation on the THAAD deployment and increasing

¹⁰² David E. Sanger and Choe Sang-Hun, "North Korea Says It Has Detonated Its First Hydrogen Bomb," *New York Times*, January 6, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/06/world/asia/north-korea-hydrogen-bomb-test.html>

¹⁰³ Jeong Yong-soo, "The hotline off the hook," *JoongAng Ilbo*, January 14, 2016, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3013907>

¹⁰⁴ "Xi Jinping Holds Telephone Talks with President Park Geun-hye of the ROK," PRC MFA, February 5, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1340371.shtml

defense cooperation with Japan. First, Seoul changed its ambiguous attitude toward the THAAD system. After North Korea's nuclear test, Park Geun-hye announced that her government would review the possibility of deploying the THAAD system.¹⁰⁵

Immediately after North Korea's satellite test on February 7, South Korea began talks with the United States on the THAAD deployment.¹⁰⁶

South Korean domestic politics played an important role in this decision. Park Geun-hye became unpopular due to a series of political scandals. Her approval rating was 31.5% in April 2016 and hit a rock bottom of 4% in November.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, South Koreans' support for THAAD increased to 73.9% in February. Even when public mistrust of the Park administration reached its peak, approval rate of the THAAD deployment was still slightly higher than the disapproval rate.¹⁰⁸ More important for Park Geun-hye, her supporters also supported the deployment of THAAD.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, a majority of South Koreans held a negative view of China. In their annual poll, the Seoul National University's Institute for Peace and Unification Studies found that in 2016 only 30% of respondents thought China was a cooperative partner and this number declined to

¹⁰⁵ "Park says government will review possibility of deploying THAAD in South Korea," *Hankyoreh*, January 14, 2016, http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/726204.html

¹⁰⁶ Anna Fifield, "South Korea, U.S. to Start Talks on Anti-Missile System," *Washington Post*, February 7, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/south-korea-united-states-to-start-talks-on-thaad-anti-missile-system/2016/02/07/1eaf2df8-9dc4-45e3-8ff1-d76a25673dbe_story.html

¹⁰⁷ Kang Seung-woo, "Park and Saenuri's approval ratings dip to new lows," *Korean Times*, April 18, 2016, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/04/116_202869.html. Jenna Gibson, "For South Koreans, THAAD isn't about the United States, China, or even North Korea...it's about Park Geun-hye," *PacNet* no. 53, Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 24, 2017, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/pacnet-53-south-koreans-thaad-isnt-about-united-states-china-or-even-north-korea>

¹⁰⁸ Kim Jiyeon, John J. Lee, and Kang Chungku, "Changing Tides: THAAD and Shifting Korean Public Opinion toward the United States and China," (Asan Institute for Policy Studies, 2017), 8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

26.6% in 2017.¹¹⁰ Pew Research Center's 2017 Global Attitudes Survey supported this view by showing that 61% of South Korean respondents held an unfavorable view of China.¹¹¹ Also, South Koreans who supported THAAD and those who held a negative view of China largely overlapped. According to Asan Institute for Policy Studies' poll in 2017, 63.2% of THAAD supporters viewed South Korea-China relations as competitive.¹¹² This domestic favorability of THAAD, combined with U.S. pressure and dissatisfaction with China's response to North Korea's fourth nuclear test, prompted the Park administration to defy China and agree the deployment of THAAD.¹¹³ In other words, South Korea's decision to deploy THAAD resulted more than its strategic calculation.

In March 2016, South Korea and the United States launched a joint working group to discuss details on the deployment of THAAD. Seoul sent conflicting signals regarding this decision. On the one hand, a high-ranking Defense Ministry official claimed this was not a bargaining chip for Chinese cooperation on sanctions against Pyongyang. On the other hand, a ranking official from Cheong Wa Dae (South Korea's presidential complex) remarked, "Seeing as China has kept mentioning THAAD, it can be said that THAAD is somewhat related to China making a strategic decision at the

¹¹⁰ Jung Dong-Joon et al., "Unification Perception Survey 2018," Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Seoul National University, March 11, 2019, 147. <https://ipus.snu.ac.kr/eng/wp-content/uploads/files/attach/binaries/15162/910/098/853de1d69ca8ac1e558a473d1769d58a>

¹¹¹ Richard Wike, "Global Attitudes Toward China and the U.S.," Pew Research Center, September 21, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2017/09/21/global-attitudes-toward-china-and-the-u-s/>

¹¹² Jiyoung, Lee, and Chungku, "Changing Tides: THAAD and Shifting Korean Public Opinion toward the United States and China," 11-12.

¹¹³ For instances of U.S. pressure, see, John Kerry, "Remarks at the U.S.-Republic of Korea 2+2 Ministerial Meeting," Washington, DC, October 19, 2016, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/10/263341.htm>. Ankit Panda, "US Defense Secretary on THAAD in South Korea: 'It's Going to Happen'," *The Diplomat*, April 9, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/04/us-defense-secretary-on-thaad-in-south-korea-its-going-to-happen/>

United Nations.” Moreover, Seoul made this announcement just hours before China and the United States held a meeting on sanctions against North Korea.¹¹⁴ As such, Seoul was likely to use this announcement to add pressure on China to facilitate an agreement on sanctions. In July South Korea and the United States announced to deploy the THAAD system in Seongju.¹¹⁵ Subsequently, in February 2017 the South Korean Defense Ministry signed a land swap deal with Lotte Group for the THAAD installation. One week later the United States delivered the first of five major components of the THAAD system.¹¹⁶ Eventually, in September South Korea announced that the THAAD deployment has been completed in a tentative step.¹¹⁷

China viewed those developments as part of U.S. strategies to contain China. An authoritative source wrote a four-part series on the THAAD deployment in *Renmin Ribao* between July and August. The author accused THAAD’s X-band radar system of aiming at “the heartland of Asia” and conducting surveillance on the Chinese military. He also argued that the THAAD deployment was part of U.S. pivot to Asia and intended to enhance the U.S. global anti-missile system. It was another step in the U.S. efforts to contain China’s nuclear power.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Yoon Min-sik, “Korea, U.S. launch formal THAAD talks,” *Korea Herald*, March 4, 2016, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160304000689>

¹¹⁵ Choe Sang-Hun, “South Korea and U.S. Agree to Deploy Missile Defense System,” *New York Times*, July 7, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/08/world/asia/south-korea-and-us-agree-to-deploy-missile-defense-system.html?_r=0

¹¹⁶ Gerry Mullany and Michael R. Gordon, “U.S. Starts Deploying THAAD Antimissile System in South Korea, After North’s Tests,” *New York Times*, March 6, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/06/world/asia/north-korea-thaad-missile-defense-us-china.html>

¹¹⁷ “THAAD system deployment completed: S. Korea,” *Yonhap*, September 7, 2017, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20170907000355320z>

¹¹⁸ Zhong Sheng, “Zhida jingti de weixianzhiju: bushu Sade weixie de shi Dongbeiya heping” [“Dangerous move that warrants alarm: deployment of THAAD threatens peace in northeast Asia”]; “Hanguo xuyao jiben de qingxing he xianshiguan” [“South Korea needs composure and sense of reality”]; “Zhongguo anquanliyi burong xuyi sunhai” [“China’s security interests should not be deliberately damaged”]; “Meihan xu linghui Zhong E yanzhengjinggao de shengyi” [“The U.S. and South Korea must understand the deep meaning behind China and Russia’s warnings”], *Renmin Ribao*, July 29, August 1, 3, and 4, 2016. There

Additionally, trilateral defense cooperation among the United States, South Korea, and Japan upgraded. Facing North Korea's new provocations, the three governments began to coordinate their responses more closely. In June 2016, the United States, South Korea, and Japan conducted the third biennial military exercise Pacific Dragon (PD). Different from previous two PD exercises, the 2016 exercise was the first joint ballistic missile defense exercise among the three states.¹¹⁹ Moreover, South Korea and Japan signed a General Security of Military Information Agreement in the end of this year. Washington welcomed this treaty as it could institutionalize trilateral defense cooperation.¹²⁰

U.S. was playing an active role in facilitating South Korea-Japanese security cooperation. For instance, a U.S. Congress representative introduced a resolution titled "Recognizing the importance of the United States-Republic of Korea-Japan trilateral relationship." The bill stressed the need to support joint military exercises and other efforts to "oppose regional threats" like North Korea. It also encouraged the "deployment and coordination of regional advanced ballistic missile defense systems."¹²¹

Subsequently, before a House hearing entitled "The U.S.-Republic of Korea-Japan

are two ways to interpret the author's name, "Zhong Sheng." It can mean "voice of China" or "sounding the alarm bell." It represents a writing team that officially voice *Renmin Ribao's* commentary stance on foreign affairs. See, David Gitter and Leah Fang, "The Chinese Communist Party's Use of Homophonous Pen Names: An Open-Source Open Secret," *Asia Policy* 13, no. 1 (2018): 86-89.

¹¹⁹ Wyatt Olson, "US, Japan, S. Korea conducting first joint ballistic missile defense drill," *Stars and Stripes*, June 27, 2016, <https://www.stripes.com/news/us-japan-s-korea-conducting-first-joint-ballistic-missile-defense-drill-1.416554>

¹²⁰ Sangbo Park, "Implications of the General Security of Military Information Agreement for South Korea," *Stimson*, December 16, 2016, <https://www.stimson.org/content/implications-general-security-military-information-agreement-south-korea>

¹²¹ H.Res. 634, "Recognizing the importance of the United States-Republic of Korea-Japan trilateral relationship to counter North Korean threats and nuclear proliferation, and to ensure regional security and human rights," September 7, 2016 (114th Congress, 2nd Session), <https://www.gop.gov/bill/h-res-634-recognizing-importance-united-states-republic-korea-japan-trilateral-relationship-counter-north-korean-threats-nuclear-proliferation-ensure-regional-security/>

Trilateral Relationship: Promoting Mutual Interests in Asia,” a member of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific stated that the United States needed trilateral cooperation among itself, Japan and South Korea to increase “economic and diplomatic pressure on China, because without a change in China’s behavior,” there would be no change in North Korea’s behavior.¹²²

6.2.2 China’s Leverage Remained Strong

In this period, China’s leverage over South Korea remained strong. First, the rise of China’s military capabilities continued. The PLAN and the PLAAF had been steadily expanding their fleets as well as developing new equipment. The PLAN continued to augment its littoral warfare capabilities. By the end of 2017 more than 35 of the Jiangdao-class corvettes has entered service.¹²³ Between 2017 and 2018, the PLAN also launched its first four Renhai-class guided-missile cruisers, which was capable of carrying a large loadout of anti-ship cruise missiles and anti-submarine weapons.¹²⁴ The PLAAF continued to field fourth generation fighters. It was also developing a new long-range bomber that would exceed the range and capabilities of the H-6K, the latest variant of bombers the PLAAF had fielded to date.¹²⁵ Meanwhile, China fielded two new types of MRBMs, DF-16G and DF-26, in 2016 and 2017 respectively. The DF-16G featured

¹²² United States Congress, “The U.S.-Republic of Korea-Japan Trilateral Relationship: Promoting Mutual Interests in Asia,” Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, September 27, 2016, Serial No. 114-233, 5.

¹²³ DoD, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2018*, Office of the Secretary of Defense, May 16, 2018, 29.

¹²⁴ DoD, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2019*, Office of the Secretary of Defense, May 2, 2019, 36.

¹²⁵ Defense Intelligence Agency, *China Military Power, Modernizing A Force to Fight and Win*, November 2018, 33. DoD, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2018*, 29.

high accuracy as well as an improved maneuverable terminal stage; the DF-26G was capable of conducting precision strikes against naval targets in the Western Pacific.¹²⁶

Second, as Table 6.2 shows, between 2016 and 2018 China remained South Korea's largest exporting destination. Economically, South Korea was still vulnerable to China's influence. South Korean leaders were well aware of this. For instance, in 2017 Kim Hee-sang, deputy director of the South Korean Foreign Ministry Bilateral Economic Affairs Bureau, complained to a U.S. Congress delegation, "We are finding our economy is too reliant on China."¹²⁷ Third, disputes at the Yellow Sea remained unsolved. Clashes between Chinese fishing boats and the KCG vessels continued. Meanwhile, Beijing and Seoul kept their disputed claims over the Suyan/Ieodo islet.

Finally, while Beijing refused to communicate with Seoul immediately after North Korea's fourth nuclear test, China did not change its policy on North Korean nuclear proliferation. As Wang Yi elaborated, "Firstly, under no circumstances could the Korean Peninsula be nuclearized, whether the DPRK or the ROK, self-produced or introduced and deployed. Secondly, there is no military solution to the issue. If there is war or turbulence on the peninsula, it is not acceptable for China. Thirdly, China's legitimate national security interests must be effectively maintained and safeguarded."¹²⁸

More importantly, Seoul understood that it remained critical to acquire Beijing's cooperation on the North Korean nuclear issue. On January 13, Park Geun-hye delivered

¹²⁶ DoD, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China* 2018, 36.

¹²⁷ *2017 Report to Congress of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Publishing Office, November 2017), 345.

¹²⁸ "Wang Yi Talks about Principles China Upholds in Dealing with the Korean Peninsula Nuclear Issue," PRC MFA, February 13, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1340527.shtml

a speech, in which she urged China to carry out its commitment to a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. She stated,

The role of China is critical in this process...China has claimed its willingness to not allow North Korea's nuclear armament several times. If China's strong commitment is not translated into concrete and necessary measures, it may be impossible to prevent North Korea from conducting the fifth and sixth nuclear tests down the road. I think China is also well aware of the fact that the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula cannot be guaranteed without such measures...The best partner is the one who would lend a hand in difficult times. I believe that China, as a permanent member of the UNSC, will play a necessary role... Since we have been closely working with China over the North Korean nuclear issue, I think the Chinese government will not allow the current tension in the Korean peninsula to exacerbate.¹²⁹

Two days later, South Korea's top nuclear envoy Hwang Joon-kook rushed to Beijing. He told reporters that he planned to "emphasize to the Chinese side the gravity of the situation and a need for a strong response from the international community," and to "discuss a detailed plan for cooperation between our two countries."¹³⁰ Park Geun-hye also stated that China would play an essential role in imposing new sanctions against North Korea: "I expect China to take an effective measure that can make North Korea realize development of nuclear weapons is futile and come into the international community like Iran."¹³¹

¹²⁹ "대국민 담화 전문" [Park Geun-hye: Public Address], ROK Blue House, January 13, 2016, http://18president.pa.go.kr/news/speech.php?srh%5Bpage%5D=9&srh%5Bview_mode%5D=detail&srh%5Bseq%5D=14260. The original text reads as follows: "이 과정에서 중국의 역할이 중요합니다... 중국은 그동안 누차에 걸쳐 북핵불용의지를 공언해왔습니다. 그런 강력한 의지가 실제 필요한 조치로 연결되지 않는다면, 앞으로 5 번째, 6 번째 추가 핵실험도 막을수 없고, 한반도의 진정한 평화와 안정도 담보될 수 없다는 점을 중국도 잘 알고 있을 것으로 봅니다... 어렵고 힘들때 손을 잡아주는 것이 최상의 파트너입니다. 앞으로 중국이 안보리상임이사국으로서 필요한 역할을 해줄것으로 믿습니다... 그동안 북핵문제와 관련해 긴밀히 소통해온만큼 중국정부가 한반도의 긴장상황을 더욱 악화되도록 하지는 않을 것이라 생각합니다." I thank Oh Inhwan's assistance for this translation.

¹³⁰ Sarah Kim, "Diplomats scramble to ask China to get tough," *Joongang Ilbo*, January 15, 2016, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3013936>

¹³¹ "South Korea's Park seeks 5-party talks on North's nuclear program," *Reuters*, January 21, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-nuclear-park-idUSKCN0V009D>

As those speeches and actions illustrated, Beijing's influence on the North Korea nuclear issue remained valuable to Seoul. Surely, China did not respond to North Korea's provocations efficiently. Seoul was also disappointed to see China was unable to prevent North Korea from conducting its fourth nuclear test and the subsequent satellite test.¹³² However, as long as South Korea perceived China's cooperation as necessary, Beijing maintained its leverage over Seoul.

6.2.3 China's Restrained Coercive Wedge Strategies

Seoul's moves regarding THAAD suggested not only a more cohesive U.S-South Korean alliance, but also a potentially more integrated trilateral defense cooperation among the United States, South Korea, and Japan. As such, those moves would enable the United States to enhance its military presence in East Asia and changed the balance of power between Washington and Beijing, an outlook Beijing would not like. In response, Beijing chose coercive wedging as its primary strategy as China gradually increased pressure on South Korea. Meanwhile, China used its coercive wedging with restraint.

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui briefed journalists after attending the seventh China-South Korean high-level strategic dialogue in Seoul. He voiced China's concerns over the potential THAAD deployment in South Korea. He urged "relevant parties," an apparent reference to Seoul and Washington, to "show respect for China's interests and act with prudence." The THAAD deployment would not only be unhelpful

¹³² North Korea announced that it planned to conduct a satellite test on the exact day when Chinese special envoy, Wu Dawei, arrived in Pyongyang. North Korea also conducted the test as planned. Ju-min Park, David Brunnstrom, "North Korea tells U.N. agencies it plans satellite launch," *Reuters*, February 2, 2016, <https://in.reuters.com/article/northkorea-satellite-idINKCN0VB2BY>

to ease tension on the Korean Peninsula, Zhang explained, but also “impair China’s strategic security interest.”¹³³

Following South Korea’s announcement to discuss the THAAD deployment, China vehemently issued its opposition and warnings. Wang Yi told the South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se that China had “grave concerns” about the deployment, as it would “undermine the strategic security interests of China.”¹³⁴ In an interview with *Reuters* on the next day, Wang explained that the coverage of the THAAD system, particularly its X-band radar, would “directly damage China’s strategic security interests.” He stated that China firmly opposed “any country to utilize the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula to jeopardize China’s legitimate rights and interests.”¹³⁵ Simultaneously, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei bluntly asked South Korea to stop the process: China “firmly opposed” the THAAD deployment and “hoped that the relevant side can drop this plan.”¹³⁶

A few days later, Wang Yi delivered a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. On the Korean Peninsula situation, after reiterating China’s support for denuclearization, Wang stressed, “There can be no war or turbulence on the Korean Peninsula, otherwise there will be horrible consequences.” Related to this point, Wang voiced explicit opposition against the THAAD deployment. He remarked that when dealing with the North Korean nuclear weapons, “China’s...national interests

¹³³ “China voices opposition to S. Korea’s THAAD deployment plan,” *Xinhua*, February 17, 2016, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/TopNews/2016-02/17/content_4641958.htm

¹³⁴ “Wang Yi Meets with Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se of ROK,” PRC MFA, February 12, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1340531.shtml

¹³⁵ “Wang Yi Talks about US’s Plan to Deploy THAAD Missile Defense System in ROK,” PRC MFA, February 13, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1340525.shtml

¹³⁶ PRC Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, February 18, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1341459.shtml

must be upheld;” if the United States would deploy THAAD in South Korea, “China’s...national security interests may be jeopardized or threatened.” Wang concluded, “A convincing explanation must be provided to China. I don’t think it’s too much to ask.”¹³⁷ Meanwhile, the Chinese Foreign Ministry also issued a blunt warning: “No country should impair others’ security interests when pursuing its own... We believe that the deployment of the THAAD system will directly compromise China’s national security interests.”¹³⁸ In March, Wang Yi met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. After the meeting, Wang told journalists, “Deployment of THAAD goes far beyond the defense need of the Korean Peninsula and directly undermines strategic interests of China and Russia. It will undermine the regional strategic balance and cause arms race.” He further stated, “China neither understands nor accepts such deployment that goes beyond those defense needs.”¹³⁹

Nonetheless, South Korea spurned China’s demand. A spokesperson for Park Geun-hye remarked that South Korea’s decision to discuss the THAAD was “a matter we will decide upon according to our own security and national interests...The Chinese had better recognize this point.” To add, an anonymous senior official in the South Korean Foreign Ministry commented that China needed to “look into the root of the problem if it really wants to raise an issue with it.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Wang Yi speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2016, <https://www.csis.org/events/statesmens-forum-wang-yi-minister-foreign-affairs-prc>

¹³⁸ “THAAD deployment in ROK to “directly” impair China’s security interests: FM,” *Xinhua*, February 25, 2016, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/0225/c90883-9021005.html>

¹³⁹ “Wang Yi: bushu Sade chaochu shiji fangyu xuyao” [“Wang Yi: Deploying THAAD goes beyond the actual defense need”], PRC MFA, March 11, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679110/xgxw_679116/t1347212.shtml

¹⁴⁰ Choe Sang-hun, “South Korea Bluntly Tells China Not to Meddle in Its Missile-Defense Talks with U.S.,” *New York Times*, February 25, 2016, A6.

After South Korea's announcement to deploy THAAD, China stepped up its warning. On July 8, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement that "strongly urged the United States and South Korea to stop the deployment of THAAD, not to take actions that will complicate the regional situation, and not to undermine China's strategic security interests."¹⁴¹ In a subsequent interview, Wang Yi adopted a more threatening tone. He reasserted that deploying THAAD went "far beyond the defense need of the Korean Peninsula" and China had "every reason and right to question the real scheme behind this deployment." He asked the United States "not to pursue its security by jeopardizing other states' security." Wang continued to warn South Korea: "China hopes our South Korean friends to think calmly: whether deploying THAAD is genuinely good to South Korean security." Wang Yi further warned, "Related sides must take actions carefully to avoid making grave mistakes."¹⁴² Wang Yi then told South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se, "The recent move by the South Korean side has harmed the foundation of mutual trust between the two countries."¹⁴³

Simultaneously, a series of commentaries in *Renmin Ribao* echoed Wang's speeches. A commentary on August 1 called on South Korea for "composure and sense of reality." It further reminded Seoul, "Recently, China-South Korea relations are rapidly developing...Such development, however, requires care from both governments"¹⁴⁴ Two

¹⁴¹ Chinese Foreign Ministry Statement, PRC MFA, July 8, 2016, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1378537.shtml>

¹⁴² "Wang Yi tan Meiguo zhunbei zai Han bushu Sade xitong" ["Wang Yi comments on the U.S. plan to deploy THAAD System in ROK"], PRC MFA, July 9, 2016, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1378901.shtml>

¹⁴³ "China says South Korea's THAAD anti-missile decision harms foundation of trust," *Reuters*, July 25, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-thaad-china-defence/china-says-south-koreas-thaad-anti-missile-decision-harms-foundation-of-trust-idUSKCN1050Y7>

¹⁴⁴ Zhong Sheng, "Hanguo xuyao jiben de qingxing he xianshiguan: bushu Sade weixie de shi Dongbeiya heping" ["South Korea needs composure and sense of reality: deployment of THAAD threatens peace in northeast Asia"], *Renmin Ribao*, August 1, 2016, 3.

days later, the tone turned harsher: “Decision makers in Seoul are binding South Korea’s national security and THAAD together and willing to damage security interests of major powers on its periphery. The question is: can South Korea afford the upcoming chain reaction?” “Deploying THAAD may drag South Korea into the military standoff between the United States and China and Russia. Once conflict breaks out, South Korea, with no doubt, will be the first to be hit.”¹⁴⁵

Subsequently, Beijing began to explicitly warn that China would take action against South Korea. In the end of September, China warned to “take necessary measures to safeguard China’s strategic security and regional strategic balance. What needs to be emphasized is that we the Chinese mean what we say.”¹⁴⁶ Meanwhile, in a commentary *Renmin Ribao* wrote, “The United States and South Korea need sense of reality...They undermine strategic interests of the region including China, then they will pay the price and receive a proper counter attack.”¹⁴⁷

China coupled its warnings with deeds. First, China imposed informal economic sanctions against South Korea. In August, Beijing began to tighten tourist visa rules for South Koreans who wanted to enter China.¹⁴⁸ Beijing then advised against Chinese tourists going to South Korea. In March 2017, Chinese National Tourism Administration (CNTA) issued an instruction, suggesting Chinese not to travel to South Korea.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Zhong Sheng, “Zhongguo anquanliyi burong xuyi sunhai: bushu Sade weixiede shi Dongbeiya heping” [“China’s security interests should not be deliberately damaged: deployment of THAAD threatens peace in northeast Asia”], *Renmin Ribao*, August 3, 2016, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Defense Ministry’s regular press conference, Chinese Ministry of National Defense, September 29, 2016, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/HomePicture/2016-09/29/content_4740054.htm

¹⁴⁷ Zhong Sheng, “Meihan buyao zai Bandao wenti shang shiqu xianshigan” [“The United States and South Korea: should not lose sense of reality on the Korean Peninsula issue”], *Renmin Ribao*, October 1, 2016, 3.

¹⁴⁸ “China tightens tourist visa rules for S. Koreans amid THAAD row,” *Korea Herald*, August 12, 2016, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160812000959&mod=skb>

¹⁴⁹ *Renmin Ribao* (overseas edition), March 11, 2017, p.9.

According to the South Korean newspaper *Joongang Ilbo*, the specific objective of this instruction was to reduce the number of Chinese tourists by 20 percent.¹⁵⁰ Reportedly, CNTA also asked Chinese travel agencies to cancel all group tours to South Korea after March 15.¹⁵¹

The negative impact on South Korean economy was immediate. According to the Korea Tourism Organization, the number of Chinese tourists dropped 40 percent year-on-year in March. In total the number of Chinese tourists to South Korea decreased by 48.3 percent in 2017. With the decline of Chinese tourists, the amount of their spending in South Korea was down.¹⁵² Estimates on the economic costs of the reduction of Chinese tourists varied from \$4.7 billion to \$15.6 billion.¹⁵³

The second target of China's economic sanctions was Lotte Group, South Korea's fifth largest conglomerate. After news in November 2016 that Lotte would provide land for the THAAD deployment, China suddenly began a series of tax, fire, and safety investigations into Lotte's operations in various Chinese cities.¹⁵⁴ Reportedly, Chinese Foreign Ministry officials bypassed the usual official channels and directly warned Lotte

¹⁵⁰ Michael D. Swaine, "Chinese Views on South Korea's Deployment of THAAD," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 52 (2017): 2.

¹⁵¹ "China bans tour groups to South Korea as defence spat worsens," *Financial Times*, March 3, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/9fc4b1b4-ffb1-11e6-96f8-3700c5664d30>

¹⁵² Data available at the Korea Tourism Organization, <http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/eng/tourismStatics/keyFacts/KoreaMonthlyStatistics/eng/inout/inout.kto>. See also, "S. Korea still smarting from China's THAAD retribution," *Yonhap*, March 14, 2017, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20180314002700320>

¹⁵³ "Losses from drop in Chinese tourists amount to W81.6tr," *Korea Herald*, September 17, 2017, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170917000106>. "S. Korea still smarting from China's THAAD retribution," *Yonhap*, March 14, 2017.

¹⁵⁴ Bryan Harris and Charles Clover, "China takes aim at South Korea's Lotte after missile move," *Financial Times*, December 8, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/67198e52-bdb2-11e6-8b45-b8b81dd5d080>

over the THAAD issue.¹⁵⁵ In February, Xinhua ran an opinion article, calling Lotte as an accomplice to undermine China's interests. After claiming that the Chinese market was significant to Lotte, the article called for Chinese customers to "say no to Lotte out of consideration of national security."¹⁵⁶ Chinese authorities shut down 23 Lotte Mart stores in March, mostly for "fire safety violations."¹⁵⁷ By August, China had shut down 74 of the 112 Lotte Mart stores for similar reasons. Estimated loss was around \$1.06 billion.¹⁵⁸

Other South Korean companies and industries suffered from China's sanctions as well. Beijing put various restrictions on South Korean cultural exports to China, including movies, TV shows, and music.¹⁵⁹ In January 2017, China banned the sale of some South Korean products of Samsung and LG Electronics, South Korea's two biggest consumer tech companies.¹⁶⁰ In addition, Hyundai Motor also suffered from supply disruption and had suspended production at one of its factories in China.¹⁶¹

In addition to economic sanctions, China suspended various strategic communications with South Korea. In November, Beijing cancelled its high-level defense

¹⁵⁵ Bonnie S. Glaser, Daniel G. Sofio, and David A. Parker, "The Good, the THAAD, and the Ugly," *Foreign Affairs*, February 15, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-02-15/good-thaad-and-ugly>

¹⁵⁶ Hao Yalin, "Zhongguo buhuanying zheyangde Letian" ["China does not welcome Lotte"], *Xinhua*, February 27, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-02/27/c_1120539249.htm

¹⁵⁷ Joyce Lee and Adam Jourdan, "South Korea's Lotte reports store closures in China amid political stand-off," *Reuters*, March 5, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-china-lotte/south-koreas-lotte-reports-store-closures-in-china-amid-political-stand-off-idUSKBN16D03U>

¹⁵⁸ "Lotte Mart to exit the Chinese market," *China Daily*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201810/18/WS5bc7f9bfa310eff303283238.html>. Troy Stangarone, "The Consequences of China's Informal Sanctions on South Korea Over THAAD," *The Diplomat* 48, November 2018, <https://magazine.thediplomat.com/#/issues/-LPijvmK9luTMwL7uBOT/preview/-LPijyCDox476h1LudiN>

¹⁵⁹ Lee Kil-seong, "Korean Movies in China Signal Thaw," *Chosun Ilbo*, April 2, 2018, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2018/04/02/2018040201264.html

¹⁶⁰ Park Hyong-ki, "China ups THAAD retaliation against Korean products," *Korean Times*, January 20, 2017, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2017/01/488_222465.html

¹⁶¹ Hyunjoon Jin, "Hyundai hit again by supply disruption in China, one plant halted," *Reuters*, September 4, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hyundai-motor-china/hyundai-hit-again-by-supply-disruption-in-china-one-plant-halted-idUSKCN1BG052>

dialogue with South Korea and postponed the visit of the South Korean defense minister.¹⁶² China also suspended the bilateral economic committee meeting in 2017.¹⁶³

China also increased its pressure on South Korea over their EEZ dispute in the Yellow Sea. Although compared to 2014 and 2015, the number of Chinese illegal fishing ships that South Korea captured did not increase in 2016. However, China criticized South Korea more sharply for those incidents.¹⁶⁴ In September, the KCG killed three Chinese fishermen in a boarding operation in the South Korean claimed EEZ. Responding to this incident, the Chinese Foreign Ministry lodged a protest, urging Seoul to conduct a “comprehensive and objective” investigation.¹⁶⁵ In October a Chinese fishing boat rammed and sunk a KCG vessel. Subsequently, when a group of some 30 Chinese fishing boats attempted to ram KCG vessels, a KCG vessel fired warning shots. In contrast to Chinese restraint over similar incidents in the past, China now responded by increasing the tension. Chinese Foreign Ministry stated that China was “strongly dissatisfied” with South Korea’s action and urged Seoul to “avoid using any excessive or extreme tools in their law enforcement activities.”¹⁶⁶ With the tensions escalated, Beijing and Seoul suspended joint patrols on illegal fishing activities in September 2016.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Swaine, “Chinese Views on South Korea’s Deployment of THAAD,” 2.

¹⁶³ “S. Korea, China hold economic cooperation meeting after 2-year hiatus,” *Yonhap*, April 20, 2018, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20180420005851315?section=search>.

¹⁶⁴ Hyun Jung Kim, “South Korea’s Use of Force against Chinese Illegal Fishing in the Course of Law Enforcement in the Yellow Sea,” *Marine Policy* 99 (2019): 149.

¹⁶⁵ “Three Chinese fishermen killed in confrontation with South Korea coastguard,” *Reuters*, September 29, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-china-fishermen/three-chinese-fishermen-killed-in-confrontation-with-south-korea-coastguard-idUSKCN1200DQ>

¹⁶⁶ “South Korea Vows Armed Crackdown against Chinese Fishing Boats after Sinking of Coast Guard Ship,” *South China Morning Post*, October 11, 2016, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2027042/seoul-summons-chinese-envoy-over-sinking-coast-guard>. Agence France-Presse, “Beijing ‘strongly dissatisfied’ after South Korean coastguard fires machine guns at Chinese trawlers,” *South China Morning Post*, November 2, 2016, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/2042303/south-korean-coastguard-fires-machine-guns-chinese-trawlers>

¹⁶⁷ “S. Korea, China Agree to Resume Joint Patrols on Illegal Fishing,” *KBS News*, November 9, 2018, http://world.kbs.co.kr/service/news_view.htm?lang=e&Seq_Code=140685

Moreover, China challenged South Korea by sending military aircraft into the latter's ADIZ in East China Sea. In a short episode in February 2016, two PLAAF planes entered South Korea's ADIZ and left after South Korea sent a warning message.¹⁶⁸ In 2017 Beijing stepped up its pressure on South Korea. In January, a group of eight PLAAF airplanes, including six bombers, flew into South Korea's ADIZ, near the Suyan/Ieodo islet "several times," and then over the Korea Strait.¹⁶⁹ According to the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, this incident was "unusual" as it had been the first time a large group of PLAAF airplanes entered South Korea's ADIZ since Seoul expanded it.¹⁷⁰ In December, five PLAAF warplanes, including two H-6 bombers, two J-11 fighters, and one TU-154 reconnaissance plane, entered South Korea's ADIZ and flew over the Suyan/Ieodo islet.¹⁷¹ Those moves were a show of Chinese force, and an implicit warning that China could seriously challenge South Korea's security if the latter did not comply with China's demands.

Nonetheless, China used its coercive wedge strategies with restraint. First, in contrast to the use of force literature, which suggests that states tend to send costly signals to make their threats more credible when using coercion or deterrence, China chose "cheap" signals instead.¹⁷² While imposing economic sanctions against South

¹⁶⁸ "Two Chinese military jets intruded into Korea's air defense," *Korea Herald*, February 2, 2016, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160202000940&ACE_SEARCH=1

¹⁶⁹ Kristin Huang, "Japan, South Korea scramble fighter jets after eight Chinese warplanes fly over Korea Strait," *South China Morning Post*, January 10, 2017, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2060823/japan-and-south-korea-scramble-fighter-jets-8-chinese>

¹⁷⁰ "THAAD tension brews after China sends planes to Korea's air zone," *Korea Herald*, January 10, 2017, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170110000763&ACE_SEARCH=1. See also, *Xinhua*, January 10, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-01/10/c_129439722.htm

¹⁷¹ "Chinese warplanes infringe on KADIZ: military," *Yonhap*, December 18, 2017 <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20171218006500315?section=search>

¹⁷² James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577-92. "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs," 68-90. For more recent studies on this topic, see, Kai Quek, "Are Costly Signals More Credible? Evidence of Sender-Receiver Gaps," *The Journal of Politics* 78, no. 3 (2016): 925-

Korea in 2016 and 2017, China never admitted that it was doing so. For instance, when asked about the ban on South Korean performing arts activities, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang denied the existence of such a ban. However, he hinted, “bilateral cultural exchange was based on public opinion. Chinese people have voiced their displeasure with the THAAD deployment...I believe relevant parties have been aware of this displeasure.”¹⁷³ Similarly, a Chinese Ministry of Commerce spokesperson denied the reports that the Chinese government was disrupting operations of some South Korean companies.¹⁷⁴

Moreover, in a WTO meeting in 2017, the South Korean representative complained that Beijing had forbidden group tours to South Korea. He also raised concerns that a South Korean distribution company with heavy investments in China was facing difficulties in its normal business activities. The Chinese representative denied all those accusations. He remarked that, although the situation on the Korean Peninsula had “triggered strong feelings” in the Chinese general public, the Chinese government had “always had a positive attitude towards economic and trade exchanges with South Korea.”¹⁷⁵

Second, China’s economic sanctions were selective. Lotte took the hardest hit; South Korean tourist and cultural industries suffered as well. Nonetheless, China’s economic punishment did not hurt the bilateral trade as a whole. As Table 6.2 shows,

40. Joshua D. Kertzer, Brian C. Rathbun, and Nina Srinivasan Rathbun, “The Price of Peace: Motivated Reasoning and Costly Signaling in International Relations,” *International Organization* 74, no. 1 (2020): 95-118.

¹⁷³ PRC Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, November 21, 2016, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/t1417148.shtml

¹⁷⁴ Chinese Ministry of Commerce Regular Press Conference, March 23, 2017, <http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/fbhf/fbh2017/201703/20170302539524.shtml>

¹⁷⁵ “Report of the Meeting Held on 16 and 17 March 2017,” World Trade Organization (WTO), Council for Trade in Service, no. 17-2988, June 6, 2017, 50.

compared to the data in 2014 and 2015, South Korean exports to China between 2016 and 2018 maintained at the same level. Third, PLAAF operations in South Korea's ADIZ received extensive attention from South Korean and U.S. media. However, Chinese media kept a low profile when reporting those operations.

Concerns about the risk of blowback prompted China to restrain its coercive wedging toward South Korea. On the one hand, China used coercive wedging to raise costs for Seoul to deploy THAAD. On the other hand, there remained room for Seoul to further enhance its security cooperation with the United States by joining a defense network with the United States and Japan. Although the strained relations between South Korea and Japan in 2017 and 2018 made such integration difficult, it remained a possibility and the United States worked hard to settle differences between its two allies.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, if China put too much pressure on South Korea, Seoul might perceive increased threats from China and thus decide to join a U.S.-led trilateral defense network. China certainly would not like such a network on its periphery. As a result, gradually increasing pressure allowed China to signal to South Korea that pressure would increase if it did not comply with China's demands but would decrease if it did comply.

6.2.4 China Accommodated Seoul with Decreased Support for Pyongyang

Restraining its coercive wedge strategies was one tool to prevent China's wedges from backfiring. The other tool was to accommodate Seoul by cooling down China-North Korea relations and underscoring China's commitment to denuclearization. By doing so, China was able to ease Seoul's security concerns and signal its cooperative intention to Seoul. Moreover, if exerting pressure on North Korea could restrain its provocations,

¹⁷⁶ Manyin et al., *U.S.-South Korea Relations*, 8-9.

China's accommodative wedge strategy was also able to decrease benefits Seoul could receive from its security cooperation with the United States.

After North Korea's fourth nuclear test, the United States pushed for new sanctions. China's initial response was cautious. Beijing tried to show its even-handedness by summoning South Korean Ambassador Kim Jang-soo and North Korean Ambassador Ji Jae-ryong on the same day. China protested the U.S.-South Korea negotiations over the THAAD deployment and criticized North Korea's nuclear test.¹⁷⁷

Prior to the direct conversation between Xi Jinping and Park Geun-hye on February 5, Wu Dawei, China's envoy for the North Korean nuclear problem, paid a three-day visit to Pyongyang. Reportedly, Wu met with three North Korean influential figures and "delivered a message to give up nuclear weapons in a decisive tone." However, North Korea let his message "go through one ear and out the other ear."¹⁷⁸ After Wu returned from North Korea, Xi held a telephone conversation with Park Geun-hye. Xi reasserted that China firmly devoted itself to "realizing the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula under any circumstance." Meanwhile, he stressed that the peninsula could have neither nuclear weapons nor wars and chaos.¹⁷⁹ Park urged her Chinese counterpart to take a firm stance and supported the UN to impose strong sanctions against North Korea. According to *Yonhap*, a diplomatic source in Beijing described this

¹⁷⁷ Jane Perlez, "North Korea's Rocket Launch Frays Ties Between South Korea and China," *New York Times*, February 10, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/11/world/asia/china-southkorea-thaad.html?_r=0.

¹⁷⁸ Jack Kim, "China's nuclear envoy in North Korea amid sanctions push: KCNA," *Reuters*, February 2, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-nuclear-china-idUSKCN0VB0TU>. "Wu Dawei says 'N. Korea signed its own death warrant,'" *Maekyung Media Group*, March 3, 2016, <https://pulsenews.co.kr/view.php?sc=30800018&year=2016&no=168073>

¹⁷⁹ "Xi Jinping Holds Telephone Talks with President Park Geun-hye of the ROK," PRC MFA, February 5, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1340371.shtml

conversation as a “message of pressure” on North Korea as Wu Dawei’s visit to Pyongyang was fruitless.¹⁸⁰

Subsequently, China’s attitude toward Pyongyang turned harsher. As Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui reasserted, China was “firmly committed to the denuclearization” on the Korean Peninsula. Zhang also stated that China supported the UNSC in passing a “new and effective resolution.”¹⁸¹ Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Ministry stressed in a statement that China “believed that the North Korea’s capability to develop nuclear and missile program shall be curbed,” and “supported the UNSC in passing new resolutions to achieve that goal.”¹⁸²

In March, with China’s support, the UNSC passed resolution 2270, one with the most stringent measures yet against North Korea’s nuclear program.¹⁸³ The Chinese Foreign Ministry stated that the “definite target” of this resolution was to “prevent North Korea from advancing its nuclear and missile programs...realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and safeguard the international nuclear nonproliferation regime.”¹⁸⁴ When Xi Jinping attended the fourth Nuclear Security Summit, he met with Park Geun-hye and proposed that all parties carry out relevant UNSC resolutions in a

¹⁸⁰ “Xi Jinping yu Piao Jinhui tongdianhua” [“Xi Jinping and Park Geun-hye Telephone Talks”], PRC MFA, February 5, 2016, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1338926.shtml>. “Park-Xi phone talks send message to N. Korea,” *Yonhap*, February 6, 2016, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20160206002100315?section=search>. “Xi-Park call shows China still unprepared to act differently with N.K.: U.S. expert,” *Yonhap*, February 6, 2016, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20160206001000315?section=search>

¹⁸¹ “China voices opposition to S. Korea’s THAAD deployment plan,” *Xinhua*, February 17, 2016, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/TopNews/2016-02/17/content_4641958.htm

¹⁸² PRC Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, February 18, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1341459.shtml

¹⁸³ Somini Sengupta and Choe Sang-Hun, “U.N. Toughens Sanctions on North Korea in Response to Its Nuclear Program,” *New York Times*, March 2, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/03/world/asia/north-korea-un-sanctions.html>

¹⁸⁴ PRC Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, March 3, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanhai/eng/fyrbt_1/t1344999.htm

“comprehensive and overall manner.” Meanwhile, he emphasized that all parties should avoid words or deeds that might aggravate tension on the Korean Peninsula. At the same time, Xi emphasized the importance of China-South Korea cooperation. He suggested that China and South Korea “maintain the momentum of high-level exchanges, utilize a series of strategic communication mechanisms to maintain close coordination, accommodate each other’s major concerns, and respect each other’s sovereignty, security, and development interests.”¹⁸⁵

Subsequently, China announced a long embargo list. North Korean imports on the list, for a total of 25, included coal, steel, steel ore, gold, and titanium. China also claimed to stop exporting various types of oil to North Korea.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, China sharply limited access of North Korean ships to ports in northeastern China.¹⁸⁷ In February 2017, China announced to ban all coal imports from North Korea. This was a serious attack as coal accounted for 34 percent to 40 percent of North Korean exports and most of its coal went to China.¹⁸⁸ A few months later, China implemented a new package of UN sanctions, banning imports of iron ore, iron, lead, and coal from North Korea.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, Beijing instructed local authorities to stop importing North Korean seafood, one the few remaining easy sources of revenue for Pyongyang.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ “Xi Jinping Meets with President Park Geun-hye of ROK,” PRC MFA, April 1, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdjkjxgsfwbfmgcxdshjqfh/t1353045.shtml

¹⁸⁶ “Ministry of Commerce and General Administration Notification, No.11, 2016,” Chinese Ministry of Commerce, April 5, 2016, <http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/b/c/201604/20160401289770.shtml>.

¹⁸⁷ Jonathan D. Pollack, “China and North Korea: The long goodbye?” *Brookings*, March 28, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/03/28/china-and-north-korea-the-long-goodbye/>

¹⁸⁸ Choe Sang-Hun, “China Suspends All Coal Imports From North Korea,” *New York Times*, February 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/18/world/asia/north-korea-china-coal-imports-suspended.html/>

¹⁸⁹ Simon Denyer, “China bans North Korean iron, lead, coal imports as part of U.N. sanctions,” *Washington Post*, August 14, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/china-bans-north-korea-iron-lead-coal-imports-as-part-of-un-sanctions/2017/08/14/a0ce4cb0-80ca-11e7-82a4-920da1aeb507_story.html

¹⁹⁰ Jane Perlez, “China’s Crackdown on North Korea Over U.N. Sanctions Starts to Pinch,” *New York Times*, August 16, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/16/world/asia/china-north-korea-seafood-exports.html>

As a result, China-North Korea relations in 2017 declined. In the end of the year, a Japanese party delegation visited China and met with Chinese vice Premier Wang Yang. Reportedly, Wang Yang told his guests that the China-North Korea relationship “used to be one cemented with blood, but we are now opposed to each other because of the (North Korean) nuclear issue.”¹⁹¹

To be sure, China imposed sanctions with limitations. As Zhang Yesui underscored, “sanctions are not an end in themselves.”¹⁹² China repeatedly emphasized that sanctions should not affect North Korean residents’ livelihood and humanitarian needs.¹⁹³ Meanwhile, there were reports suggesting that loopholes in China’s bans enabled North Korea to evade sanctions.¹⁹⁴ Nonetheless, in general China upheld sanctions against North Korea. More importantly, China’s sanctions served as a costly signal to Seoul that China intended to help Seoul deal with threats from the north. As such, sanctions against Pyongyang reduced Seoul’s incentives to enhance its missile defense cooperation with the United States and Japan.

6.2.5 Moon Repositioned Seoul Closer to Beijing

China’s wedge strategies produced some positive results. After winning election, Moon Jae-in sent his envoy Lee Hae-chan to Beijing. When meeting with Xi Jinping, Lee said South Korea “fully understood China’s major concerns” and was willing to “coordinate

¹⁹¹ “Komeito Chief Natsuo Yamaguchi Invites Xi to Visit Japan Next Year,” *Japan Times*, December 2, 2017, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/12/02/national/politics-diplomacy/komeito-leader-invites-xi-visit-japan-next-year/#.XhjkmcKjBU>

¹⁹² “China voices opposition to S. Korea’s THAAD deployment plan,” *Xinhua*, February 17, 2016, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/TopNews/2016-02/17/content_4641958.htm

¹⁹³ For instance, see, MFA Regular Conference, PRC MFA, March 3, 2016, http://fimprc.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/t1344941.shtml

¹⁹⁴ For instance, North Korea reportedly earned additional \$1.1 billion by selling coals to China in 2016. See, Jane Perlez, Yufan Huang and Paul Mozur, “How North Korea Managed to Defy Years of Sanctions,” *New York Times*, May 12, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/12/world/asia/north-korea-sanctions-loopholes-china-united-states-garment-industry.html>

with China to settle issues that hinder bilateral relations.”¹⁹⁵ In the subsequent discussion, State Councilor Yang Jiechi told Lee that China hoped South Korea to “respect China’s interests and properly solve the THAAD issue.”¹⁹⁶

Subsequently, South Korea began low-profile bargaining with China. In July Xi Jinping met with Moon Jae-in in Berlin. Xi remarked that the two governments should “steer China-ROK relations back on the right track...and respect each other’s core interests and major concerns.” Xi also suggested that the responsibility of improving the bilateral relations fell on South Korea, as he expected Seoul to “pay attention to China’s legitimate concerns, properly handle relevant issues and strive to pave the way for improving and developing China-ROK relations.”¹⁹⁷ Meanwhile, Nam Gwan-pyo, deputy director of national security of Cheong Wa Dae, and Kong Xuanyou, Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister, held several high-level talks in the second half of 2017.¹⁹⁸

Eventually, Seoul decided to comply with China’s demands regarding THAAD. On October 30, new South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha told the Parliament that South Korea was “not considering any additional THAAD deployment.” She further stated that the state would not participate in a U.S.-led regional missile defense system.¹⁹⁹ One day later, Seoul and Beijing announced that they had reached an

¹⁹⁵ “Xi Jinping huijian Hanguo teshi Li Haizhan” [“Xi Jinping meets South Korean envoy Lee Hae-chan”], *Xinhua*, May 19, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-05/19/c_1121001823.htm

¹⁹⁶ “Yang Jiechi huijian Hanguo teshi Li Haizhan” [“Yang Jiechi meets South Korean envoy Lee Hae-chan”], PRC Government Network, May 19, 2017, http://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2017-05/19/content_5195251.htm

¹⁹⁷ “Xi Jinping Meets with President Moon Jae-in of the ROK,” PRC MFA, July 7, 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1476741.shtml

¹⁹⁸ Christine Kim and Ben Blanchard, “China, South Korea agree to mend ties after THAAD standoff,” *Reuters*, October 30, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles/china-south-korea-agree-to-mend-ties-after-thaad-standoff-idUSKBN1D003G>

¹⁹⁹ “S. Korea not mulling any more THAAD deployments: foreign minister,” *Yonhap*, October 30, 2017, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20171030008752315?section=search>

agreement to reset the bilateral relations. The statement the South Korean Foreign Ministry released reasserted Seoul's commitment to "three no's": (1) no additional THAAD deployment, (2) not to join a U.S.-led region-wide missile defense network, and (3) no establishment of a trilateral alliance among South Korea, the United States, and Japan. The statement also announced that the two governments would continue discussing the THAAD issue through a channel of dialogue between their militaries and "quickly normalize their exchanges and cooperation in all areas."²⁰⁰ Simultaneously, the Chinese Foreign Ministry declared that South Korea "acknowledges China's stance and concerns on the deployment of the THAAD missile system...and makes it clear that the deployment of THAAD in the ROK will not target any third country, and will not harm China's strategic security and interests."²⁰¹ This agreement addressed China's major concerns about the THAAD issue.

After receiving Seoul's commitments, Beijing's wedge strategies returned to a mix such that accommodative wedging became the primary strategy and coercive wedging was the complementary strategy. China kept low-intensity coercion against South Korea. In November, Wang Yi met with Kang Kyung-wha. Wang reminded his counterpart that there was a Chinese saying that "promise must be kept and action must be resolute." He stated that China expected South Korea to "continuously properly handle the (THAAD) issue."²⁰² In the next month, Moon Jae-in met Xi Jinping in Beijing. Commenting on tensions between the two states, Xi said both states should develop

²⁰⁰ "S. Korea, China move to put year-long THAAD feud behind them," *Yonhap*, October 31, 2017, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20171031008200315?section=search#none>

²⁰¹ "China, ROK agree to bring cooperation back to normal 'as soon as possible'," *Xinhua*, October 31, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/31/c_136717229.htm

²⁰² "Wang Yi: China Hopes ROK Will Continue Properly Handling THAAD Issue," PRC MFA, November 22, 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1513645.shtml

positive ties based on mutual respect for each other's core interests. He further urged South Korea to "appropriately" deal with the THAAD deployment issue.²⁰³

Simultaneously, in February and April 2018, PLAAF aircraft flew into KADIZ and over Suyan/Ieodo islet for several times.²⁰⁴ However, the number of aircraft involved in each incident was small.

More importantly, China lifted its sanctions against South Korea and resumed its cooperation with South Korea in 2018. In April, the two governments resumed their economic committee meeting as well as consultations on fisheries cooperation.²⁰⁵ One month later, bilateral working-level defense talks resumed. The Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism also lifted suspension of group tours to South Korea.²⁰⁶

6.2.6 Cost of Chinese Coercion or South Korean Domestic Politics?

As shown above, my theory explains why China used mixed strategies and why China was cautious when using coercive wedge strategies. Nonetheless, it does not explain why coercive wedging was China's primary strategy between 2016 and 2018. In this section, I propose two variables that can complement my theory.

The first variable is Chinese military capabilities. The rise of China's military capabilities prompted it to choose coercive wedge strategies against South Korea. While

²⁰³ Chun Han Wong, Andrew Jeong, "China, South Korea Leaders Reset Bilateral Ties," *Wall Street Journal*, December 14, 2017, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-south-korea-leaders-reset-bilateral-ties-1513267202?mod=article_inline

²⁰⁴ "Chinese warplane enters S. Korea's air defense identification zone," *Yonhap*, July 23, 2018, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20180727006051315>

²⁰⁵ "S. Korea, China hold economic cooperation meeting after 2-year hiatus," *Yonhap*, April 20, 2018, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20180420005851315?section=search>. "S. Korea, China resume consultations on fisheries cooperation," *Yonhap*, April 24, 2018, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20180424009900315?section=search>

²⁰⁶ "S. Korea, China resume defense policy talks," *Yonhap*, May 7, 2018, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20180507002751315?section=search>. "Chinese city lifts suspension of group tours to S. Korea," *Yonhap*, May 3, 2018, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20180503010100315?section=search>

military power is one source of leverage, it is different from other sources. Military power, as Robert Art argues, “undergirds the other instruments of statecraft” because “fear about the consequences of failure...combined with the knowledge that force can be used if agreement is not reached, helped produce agreement.”²⁰⁷ Given this gravitational effect of military power, it is more fundamental and overarching than other sources of leverage.

Chinese military capabilities draw more attention in the South Korea case than in others. It is because, compared to the cases in two previous chapters in which China was economically and militarily weaker than its adversary, in this case China is more of a peer to its adversary, the United States in East Asia. Moreover, as argued above, China’s AA/AD capabilities restrained U.S. capabilities to intervene in a potential crisis on the Korean Peninsula. The rise of Chinese military capabilities thus undermined the value of the U.S.-South Korean alliance to South Korea’s security.

Given this distribution of capabilities surrounding the Korean Peninsula, the Chinese leaders would judge that their coercive wedge strategy was likely to be effective because China was capable of challenging South Korea’s security. Moreover, they made sure their South Korean counterparts received this judgement. As a *Renmin Ribao* commentary reminded Seoul: “Neither THAAD nor the United States could really protect South Korea. South Korea should keep in mind what an irreplaceable role China plays when the situation on the Korean Peninsula becomes precarious.”²⁰⁸ Compared to

²⁰⁷ Robert J. Art, “American Foreign Policy and the Fungibility of Force,” *Security Studies* 5, no. 4 (1996): 10.

²⁰⁸ Zhong Sheng, “Hanguo xuyao jiben de qingxing he xianshiguan” [“South Korea needs composure and sense of reality”], *Renmin Ribao*, August 1, 2016, 3.

promises, when threat is likely to be effective, it tends to cost less.²⁰⁹ This calculation would lead China to opt for coercive wedge strategies.

This is only part of the explanation. South Korea faced a similar distribution of capabilities between 2012 and 2015, but China opted for accommodation as its primary wedge strategy. Therefore, to make this argument work, it requires a necessary condition: South Korea had crossed China's red line that was not to deploy the THAAD system. As analyzed above, since 2014 China had been articulating this red line to South Korea because China perceived THAAD as a direct U.S. threat to China's security. Moreover, with the likelihood of deploying THAAD increasing, China stepped up its warning to South Korea. Despite China's opposition, Seoul agreed to deploy THAAD and thus crossed the red line. As illustrated in the previous sections, China had explicitly threatened South Korea not to deploy THAAD. Yet, South Korea did not comply. Forgiving South Korea's red line crossing would hurt the credibility of China's threat. Consequently, China decided to punish South Korea to prove that China meant what it said. Combined those two factors together, China chose coercive wedging as its primary strategy in this period.

The second variable is South Korea's domestic politics. The argument is that China used coercive wedge strategies because China observed division in South Korea's domestic politics over the THAAD deployment. This explanation argues that an important audience of China's coercive wedge strategies was the South Korean public. By putting coercive pressure on South Korea, China raised the costs of deploying the THAAD system for South Korea. As increasing costs of THAAD could lend support to

²⁰⁹ Baldwin, "The Power of Positive Sanctions," 28-29.

politicians who opposed the THAAD deployment, China expected that its coercive wedge strategies could tilt the balance of domestic power to favor South Korean opposition politicians that China preferred.

The variable of domestic politics in this case plays a more important role than in other cases. Division in domestic politics exists in other cases and it is very rare that all political forces within the target state unanimously support one particular policy. However, the South Korea case between 2016 and 2018 is different from other cases in the sense that the division in South Korea's domestic politics over the THAAD issue was deep and highly visible. The more salient such division was, the more likely China observed it. This makes it possible for China to attempt to use coercive wedge strategies to influence South Korea's domestic politics.

South Korea's public opinion on the THAAD deployment fluctuated. According to a series of surveys that the Asan Institute for Policy Studies conducted, the approving rate for THAAD declined from 73.9% in February 2016 to 46.3% in November. Meanwhile, the disapproval rate in November rose to 45.7%.²¹⁰ Moreover, since Park Geun-hye announced to deploy THAAD, South Koreans who lived in the potential THAAD deployment site had been holding protests. Protests then broke out in Seoul as well.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Kim Jiyeon, John J. Lee, and Kang Chungku, "A New Beginning for ROK-U.S. Relations: South Koreans' View of the United States and Its Implications," (ASAN Institute for Policy Studies, 2017), 14-15.

²¹¹ "South Koreans protesting over U.S. missile defense plan block PM's bus," *Reuters*, July 15, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-thaad-idUSKCN0ZV0ZG>. Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korean Villagers Protest Plans for U.S. Missile Defense System," *New York Times*, July 13, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/world/asia/south-korea-thaad-us.html>. Minwoo Park, "Angry and THAAD: South Koreans shave heads to protest U.S. missile defense system," *Reuters*, August 15, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-thaad-protest-idUSKCN10Q0U0>

In August, Choo Mi-ae became the new chairman of the Minjoo Party of Korea (Democratic Party of Korea, or Minjoo), South Korea's main opposition party. Different from her precedent who maintained a neutral position on the THAAD deployment, Choo Mi-ae announced that she would "make opposition to the THAAD battery the party's official position."²¹²

Observing those divided opinions, China intentionally communicated with South Korea's opposition parties. After Seoul began the negotiation on the THAAD deployment. On February 23, 2016, Chinese Ambassador Qiu Guohong met with Kim Jong-in, then chairman of the Minjoo Party. Qiu remarked, "The two nations have worked a lot to develop bilateral ties as they are today, but these efforts could be destroyed in an instant because of this one problem, and it would be difficult to restore the relations." He specifically asked to make his comments public.²¹³

China also paid attention to various protests in South Korea. When asked to comment on the statement that "many congressmen, opposition parties, civil groups, and people...have voiced their concern and opposition to the deployment," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang remarked, "By getting on board with the U.S., the ROK has involved itself in tipping the scale of regional strategic balance...I think that it is completely understandable that people in the ROK are deeply concerned about the greater

²¹² "South Korea's Main Opposition Party 'Takes Stand Against THAAD'," *Times*, August 29, 2016, <https://time.com/4470154/south-north-korea-thaad-missiles-minjoo-party/>

²¹³ Choe Sang-hun, "South Korea Bluntly Tells China Not to Meddle in Its Missile-Defense Talks with U.S.," *New York Times*, February 25, 2016, A6.

underlying security risks this decision may bring.”²¹⁴ Moreover, *Renmin Ribao* closely followed anti-THAAD protests in South Korea.²¹⁵

Park Geun-hye’s political scandals and the subsequent impeachment opened more avenues for China’s influence attempt. In December the South Korean Parliament voted for Park’s impeachment and the Constitutional Court suspended her power.²¹⁶ This set in motion a new round of competition for the presidency, and the THAAD deployment became a critical debate issue for presidential candidates.

Moon Jae-in, then the presidential front-runner and the former leader of the Minjoo Party, had been a critic of the THAAD deployment, even before he became a presidential candidate. After the announcement to deploy the THAAD system in July, Moon issued a statement, saying that THAAD would “do more harm than good to our national interest.” He also called on the Park administration to submit the deployment decision for parliamentary approval.²¹⁷ In an interview in December, Moon remarked that “the issue of whether or not to deploy THAAD should be pushed to the next government... We have to discuss (THAAD) with Washington and Beijing and reach a rational agreement.”²¹⁸ Moon stepped up his criticism against the THAAD deployment in

²¹⁴ PRC Regular Press Conference, PRC MFA, July 11, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1379216.shtml

²¹⁵ Between February 2016 and September 2017, *Renmin Ribao* published 36 articles on South Korean protests against THAAD.

²¹⁶ Choe Sang-Hun, “South Korea Enters Period of Uncertainty With President’s Impeachment,” *New York Times*, December 9, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/09/world/asia/south-korea-president-park-geun-hye-impeached.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article®ion=Footer>

²¹⁷ Choe Sang-Hun, “South Korean Villagers Protest Plans for U.S. Missile Defense System,” *New York Times*, July 13, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/world/asia/south-korea-thaad-us.html>

²¹⁸ “South Korean leadership contender Moon Jae-in suggests THAAD deployment should be decided by the next government,” *South China Morning Post*, December 15, 2016, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/2054913/south-korean-leadership-contender-moon-jae-suggests-thaad>. JH Ahn, “Leading ROK presidential candidate to visit N. Korea if elected,” *NK News*, December 16, 2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/12/leading-rok-presidential-hopeful-wants-to-visit-n-korea-if-elected/>

March 2017. He stated that Park's decision to allow the deployment of THAAD had dragged South Korea into a dangerous competition between China and the United States.²¹⁹ Moon also called for a review over the Park administration's decision to deploy THAAD. Commenting on U.S. deploying elements of the THAAD system in South Korea in April, Moon's spokesperson called this move "strongly regrettable."²²⁰

In June, newly-elected President Moon Jae-in received a U.S. delegation. During their discussion, Moon told Senator Richard Durbin, head of the delegation, that he had no intention to reverse the THAAD deployment. Nonetheless, Moon raised his concerns about whether the United States would pressure his government to pay for THAAD. Moon also mentioned a strong demand among South Korean people for a thorough environmental assessment. After this meeting, Durbin in an interview remarked, "There is real uncertainty now about the future of the THAAD missile deployment."²²¹ He was correct. Four days later Moon ordered the Ministry of Defense to carry out a full-blown environment assessment. A senior South Korean official further declared that equipment of the THAAD system that had yet to be deployed would have to wait. He stated, "(North Korea's) nuclear tests have been going on for a long time, and so whether we must urgently install (THAAD) by ignoring our legal procedures is a question."²²²

²¹⁹ Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korea Removes President Park Geun-hye," *New York Times*, March 9, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/09/world/asia/park-geun-hye-impeached-south-korea.html>

²²⁰ "South Korea presidential frontrunner Moon regrets move to deploy THAAD: spokesman," *Reuters*, April 25, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa-thaad-moon/south-korea-presidential-frontrunner-moon-regrets-move-to-deploy-thaad-spokesman-idUSKBN17S01L>

²²¹ Jonathan Cheng, "South Korean Leader Raises Concerns Over U.S. Military Alliance," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 1, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/south-korean-leader-raises-concerns-over-u-s-military-alliance-1496291232>. "Full deployment of THAAD to take more time in case of environmental impact study: top S. Korean official," *Yonhap*, June 2, 2017, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20170602000651315?section=search>

²²² "THAAD deployment faces delay due to new environment assessment," *Yonhap*, June 6, 2017, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20170606001600315?section=search>. "Cheong Wa Dae says deployment of THAAD should be suspended for now," *Yonhap*, June 7, 2017, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20170607005753315?section=search>.

Moon Jae-in's reluctance to deploying THAAD certainly drew Beijing's attention. One day after Moon's interview in December, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang stated that he had "noticed relevant reports" about Moon's statement on the THAAD issue.²²³ Subsequently, on January 3, 2017, Moon led a Minjoo Party delegation to Beijing and held talks with Wang Yi on the THAAD deployment.²²⁴

If the domestic politics explanation holds, we should expect China to enhance its coercive wedge strategies when the division in South Korea's domestic politics became deeper. Particularly, China should step up its coercive pressure after the impeachment. This is because, as a presidential election was upcoming, China's coercive wedge strategies were more likely to tip the balance of South Korea's domestic politics.

Indeed, China's behavior fits this prediction. As analyzed above, China stepped up its coercive pressure on South Korea in the first few months of 2017. China adopted a harsher tone to warn Seoul. For instance, on January 6 the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated, "We urge relevant parties to stop the deployment process, and not to walk further and further on the wrong path."²²⁵ China also banned group tours to South Korea in March. Particularly, it is notable that the PLAAF's "unusual" operation of flying eight warplanes into South Korea's ADIZ occurred one month after the South Korean Parliament voted for the impeachment. It is likely that China took advantage of the uncertainty in South Korea domestic politics and used coercive wedge strategies to exert its influence.

²²³ *Renmin Ribao*, December 16, 2016, 3.

²²⁴ "Saenuri urges opposition lawmakers visiting China to return home," *Yonhap*, January 6, 2017, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20170106004200315?section=search>

²²⁵ *Renmin Ribao*, January 6, 3.

It is difficult to compare explanatory powers of these two variables, because in this period the rise of Chinese military capabilities coincides with the division in South Korea's domestic politics. As such, China's strategic choice between 2016 and 2018 is an overdetermined outcome. However, we can evaluate whether those two variables are necessary or sufficient conditions for China's choice of coercive wedging in this period. First, the rise of Chinese military capabilities is not a sufficient condition. As we have seen in the period of 2012-2015, China's military power was rising but China did not use coercive wedging. It is either impossible to determine whether the rise of China's military power is a necessary condition because in this case, we do not observe a period during which there is no rise of China's military power. Second, the division in South Korea's domestic politics is not a necessary condition for China's use of coercive wedge strategies. To make it necessary, the following proposition should be true: if there is no division in South Korea's domestic politics, then China does not use coercive wedging. However, China started to use coercive wedging after February 2016, when Park Geun-hye's power remained solid. Similarly, it is not possible to determine whether the division in South Korea's domestic politics is a sufficient condition. When China did not use coercive wedge strategies in the period of 2012-2015, there was no salient division in South Korea's domestic politics over the THAAD issue.

6.3 Alternative Explanations

Crawford's theory of wedge strategies provides a powerful alternative explanation for China's behavior between 2012 and 2015. The U.S.-South Korean alliance posed a challenge to China's security, particularly after the United States adopted the pivot

strategy in East Asia. Meanwhile, China had ability to use inducements to counteract the challenge. Consequently, China would prefer selective accommodation strategies, and China's behavior fits this prediction.

Nonetheless, China did more than just accommodating South Korea. Simultaneously, China also opted for coercive wedging as it consistently warned South Korea against deploying THAAD. In other words, China used mixed strategies, rather than a pure strategy, to drive a wedge into the U.S.-South Korean alliance.

China turned to rely more on coercive wedge strategies in 2016. Compared to the previous period, as the United States and South Korea enhanced their cooperation after 2016, their unity seemed to increase and pose a more serious challenge to China. Crawford's theory thus would argue that China changed its wedge strategies because as South Korea had agreed to deploy THAAD, the situation could not become worse. In other words, China chose coercive wedge strategies as it had no other choice. However, the situation could have become worse. Beijing started to emphasize more on coercive wedge strategies after Seoul announced to start negotiating with Washington on the THAAD deployment. Subsequently, Beijing gradually increased pressure on Seoul with the negotiation on THAAD proceeding. Meanwhile, it took almost six months for Seoul to agree deploying THAAD, and another eight months for the first two THAAD launcher trucks to arrive in South Korea.²²⁶ In other words, the THAAD issue had been escalating over about one year, during which South Korea and the United States were taking steps and making the situation worse for China. Moreover, deploying THAAD was one

²²⁶ Gerry Mullany, "U.S. Starts Deploying Thaad Antimissile System in South Korea, After North's Tests," *New York Times*, March 6, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/06/world/asia/north-korea-thaad-missile-defense-us-china.html>

measure the United States took to enhance its alliance with South Korea. The United States also tried to integrate both South Korea and Japan into a regional missile defense system. If established, this missile defense system would seriously challenge China's second-strike capabilities. In sum, China turned to coercive wedge strategies when the situation on the Korean Peninsula could become worse. Therefore, it is likely that factors other than the "last resort" rationale drive China's choice.

The second alternative explanation I evaluate here is Izumikawa's theory. As he argues, when the divider has a reward power advantage over its adversary, the divider is likely to use accommodative wedge strategy.²²⁷ According to his definition of reward power, the South Korea case is the easiest case for his argument. Compared to the cases in chapters 4 and 5, in this case the distribution of reward power between China and the United States is the most balanced one. Therefore, China would prefer accommodative wedging throughout the period of 2012-2018. However, China turned to coercive wedge strategies after 2016.

To explain China's coercive wedging, one might argue that in this case China's reward power was actually inferior to U.S. reward power. The United States maintained a large military presence on the Peninsula and extended its nuclear umbrella to South Korea. Consequently, compared to China, the United States had more power resources to protect South Korea against threats from the north. The problem with this argument is that China was rising so that the gap between China's and U.S. reward power, if existing, would be narrower in the period of 2016-2018 than that in the period of 2012-2015. If this reward power inferiority led China to choose coercive wedge strategies in the second

²²⁷ Izumikawa, "To Coerce or Reward? Theorizing Wedge Strategies in Alliance Politics," 507-08.

period, then in the first period China was more likely to use coercive wedge strategies. Therefore, it is likely that the distribution of reward power between the United States and China was not the driving force behind China's choice of wedge strategies.

6.4 Conclusion

The first period of the South Korea case, between the end of 2012 and 2015, supports my theory's expectations. Four factors, including China's rising military capabilities and its influence on the Korean Peninsula, South Korea's economic dependence on China, and disputes over two states EEZs and the Suyan/Ideo islet, gave China strong leverage over South Korea. As such, China opted for accommodative wedge strategies. Meanwhile, China used coercive wedging as its complementary strategy. China attempted to prevent South Korea from joining a regional missile defense system by warning South Korea against deploying THAAD.

The second period of this case, between 2016 and 2018, provides mixed result for my theory. While my theory expects China to stick to its accommodative wedge strategies, China's actual strategies were not completely consistent with this expectation. On the one hand, China continued to use mixed strategies toward South Korea. On the other hand, China emphasized more on its coercive wedge strategies. To deal with this deviant case, I propose two additional variables. First, the rise of Chinese military capabilities led China to believe its coercive wedging was likely to be effective and thus opted for coercive wedge strategies. Making this explanation work, however, requires one necessary condition: South Korea crossed China's red line. Second, the divergence in South Korean domestic politics over the THAAD issue opened an avenue

for China to exert influence. China believed that by using coercive wedge strategies, it could raise the costs of deploy THAAD and helped South Korean politicians who opposed THAAD win the presidential election. Nonetheless, this case is overdetermined as these two additional variables coincide with each other.

Chapter 7 China's Mixed Binding Strategies to Fight for Hanoi's Allegiance, 1964-1973

As a *de facto* ally of Hanoi, Beijing started to provide Hanoi with equipment, materials, and personnel after 1962. In 1963 China and the DRV (the government of North Vietnam) had discussed how to coordinate military plans; China also agreed to pay for the costs of organizing a 500,000-man North Vietnamese army.¹ On the contrary, the Soviet Union paid only lip service to Hanoi. The North Vietnamese complained about the lack of financial support from the Soviet Union.² In addition, the Soviet Union also rejected the request from the National Liberation Front (NLF) to open a permanent mission in Moscow.³ As a result, China had gained a strong influence in Hanoi's policymaking and war efforts. Yuri Andropov, a Soviet Politburo member, acknowledged, "They (China) exert a very large influence on the DRV (both within the party as well as in the army, where there are their [Chinese] commissars.)"⁴

However, China's influence began to erode after the Tonkin Gulf Incident, when the Soviet Union changed its "standing by" policy. Moscow started to supply a large amount of aid to North Vietnam and sought more influence in Hanoi. Moreover, the

¹ "Secret Telegram from Maneli (Saigon) to Spasowski (Warsaw) [Ciphergram No. 7353]," May 31, 1963, in Margaret K Gnoinska, *Poland and Vietnam, 1963: New Evidence on Secret Communist Diplomacy and the "Maneli Affair"*, CWIHP Working Paper no. 45 (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005), 59-60. "Minutes of the meeting between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's delegate Tran Dinh Thu with an Albanian official Shpresa Fuga on June 6, 1964," June 06, 1964, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AMPJSh, V. 1964, D 256, 10. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110202>

² Ibid., 10.

³ Ilya V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R Dee, Publisher, 1996), 10-11.

⁴ "Soviet Memorandum on the Polish Peace Initiative on Vietnam, n.d.," early February 1963, in Gnoinska, *Poland and Vietnam*, 38-42.

greater Soviet influence in North Vietnam became more consequential to China when China-USSR relations deteriorated. As a result, China felt pressure from the Soviet Union and decided to compete with it. The puzzle is how China chose its binding strategies during the Vietnam War.

This chapter argues that two variables, China's leverage over North Vietnam and China's fear of abandonment, determined China's choice. Between 1964 and 1969 China enjoyed strong leverage over North Vietnam because of Soviet disengagement, so that China chose coercive binding strategies. North Vietnam was dependent on Chinese assistance for its security and its war efforts. Therefore, China was concerned less about the blowback risk of coercive binding strategies, i.e., pushing North Vietnam to the Soviet Union. Consequently, China chose coercive binding strategies. Meanwhile, China employed accommodative binding strategies as a complement. In contrast, after 1969 China's leverage became weaker so that coercing North Vietnam would risk pushing it away. Meanwhile, China's risk of abandonment was high. As the Soviet Union became an ever-increasing threat to China, North Vietnam drifting from China toward the Soviet Union would pose a two-front threat to China. As a result, accommodative binding strategies became China's choice.

The U.S. policies made China's task more complicated. By fighting the Vietnam War, the United States posed a serious threat to China's security. To counter this threat, China must deter the United States from crossing the seventeenth parallel or directly attacking the Chinese territory. It required China to provide both material assistance and security commitments to North Vietnam. Consequently, the U.S. factor makes this North Vietnam case a hard one to test my theory. Take the U.S. policies into consideration, the

Chinese leadership had strong incentives to support Hanoi's war efforts. Under this circumstance coercion against North Vietnam could be risky for China as it might undermine Hanoi's capability and resolve to fight the United States. Both considerations would have driven China to adopt accommodative binding strategies. Nevertheless, between 1964 and 1969 coercive binding was China's primary strategy.

The rest of this chapter will be divided into four sections. The first section discusses dynamics among Soviet wedge strategies, Chinese binding strategies, and North Vietnam's responses between 1964 and 1969. The second section will explore how two independent variables led to changed Chinese binding strategies between 1970 and 1973. The third section discusses alternative explanations and I conclude with an overview of this chapter.

7.1 Coerce Hanoi to Stand with China, August 1964-1969

7.1.1 The Soviet Wedge Strategy after the Gulf of Tonkin Incident

After the Tonkin Gulf Incident, Soviet leaders modified their Vietnam policy. Right after the incident, the Soviet Ambassador to North Vietnam, Ilya Shcherbakov, sent a memorandum to Moscow: "It is believed here that socialist countries, especially China, will provide all-out support to the DRV. The USSR also will not be able to hold itself aloof and will receive requests for assistance which will be regarded, as always, as very important."⁵ Moreover, the Soviet leadership decided to constrain the expansion of Chinese influence in Indochina. In June 1965, a high-ranking Soviet official told U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Foy D. Kohler that the Soviet Union and the United

⁵ Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 18.

States shared the same objective in Southeast Asia: preventing Chinese domination in this region.⁶

Consequently, the Soviet Union decided to increase its military aid to North Vietnam. In October 1964, Moscow agreed to provide the DRV with military assistance worth 32 million rubles. Two months later, they decided to supply North Vietnam with SA-75 anti-aircraft missiles at no cost. They also agreed to send Soviet military specialists to assemble these weapons and train the Vietnamese personnel.⁷ The Soviet Union also changed its attitude toward the NLF. They invited the NLF to open a permanent mission in Moscow in December.⁸ In March 1965, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko wrote a letter to his DRV counterpart, stating that the Soviet support to North Vietnam would take “necessary measures to insure the security and strengthen the defense capacity of...the DRV government, the Soviet Union declares its full solidarity with the struggle of the Vietnamese people against the armed piracy of American imperialism.”⁹

Meanwhile, at the DRV’s request, the Soviet Union proposed to send an anti-aircraft brigade and a squadron of interceptors of the type MiG-21, in order to cover the region of Hanoi and Haiphong with Soviet troops against aerial attacks. Around four thousand men of the Soviet armed forces were scheduled to come to the DRV for the

⁶ CIA Special Memorandum No. 18-65, “Soviet Tactics Concerning Vietnam,” July 15, 1965, 4-5, in the Vietnam Collection, document no. 0001166520.

⁷ “Unofficial Translation of a Letter of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee to the Socialist Unity Party Central Committee,” July 1965, in Christian F. Ostermann ed., “Inside China’s Cold War,” *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16 (Fall 2007/Winter 2008), 382.

⁸ Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 20.

⁹ “Text of Gromyko 24 March Letter to Xuan Thuy,” *Moscow PRAVDA*, March 25, 1965, FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-65-062, BB9.

handling of these modern aerial defense systems.¹⁰ From then on, the Soviet assistance increased steadily during this period, as indicated in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1. *Soviet Economic and Military Aid to North Vietnam (million rubles)*

	1955- 1964	1964 Oct	1964 Dec	1965 March	1965 April	1966 -1967	1968
Economic aid	317 ^a	—	—	—	— ^b	—	167
Military aid	200 ^c	32 ^d	— ^e	150	147.5 ^f	500	357

Notes: a: including 95.4 million rubles at no cost and the rest as long-term credits.
b: for railroad construction, the Soviet Union provided 120 km of tracks, special scaffolds for the repair of bridges, necessary equipment for the repair of automated and semi-automated railroad equipment, tracklaying machines, lifts, 300 cars, 40 movable power plants, etc.
c: including aircraft, helicopters, small arms, anti-aircraft guns, field weapons, ammunition, tanks, armored personnel carriers, small anti-submarine vessels, torpedo boats, communication equipment, engineering and other military equipment.
d: small weapons and artillery.
e: SA-75 anti-aircraft missiles.
f: including 2.5 million rubles sent to the NLF.
Sources: data in the first five columns come from “Unofficial Translation of a Letter of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee to the Socialist Unity Party Central Committee,” 381-83. Data in the last two columns come from “Political Reports of the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi” for 1967 and 1968, SCCD, f. 5, op.59, d.332, p.26 and *ibid.*, op.60, d.375, p.48, cited in Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 58-59.

What the Soviet Union offered was more than military and economic aid. During this period Moscow used two more tools to draw North Vietnam away from China. The first one was sending volunteers. On March 24, 1965, Brezhnev delivered a speech on the Red Square, in which he mentioned the possibility of sending volunteers to North Vietnam.¹¹ Following this statement, the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with Asia and Africa, who was responsible for dealing with the NLF, announced that if necessary, it would send volunteers to Vietnam to participate in the struggle.¹² Meanwhile, Moscow

¹⁰ “Unofficial Translation of a Letter of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee to the Socialist Unity Party Central Committee,” 382.

¹¹ Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 37.

¹² “Cable from the Chinese Embassy in the Soviet Union, ‘Recent Responses from the Soviet Revisionists to the Situation in Vietnam’,” April 10, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 109-03654-02, 9-12. Translated by David Cowhig.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118725>

broadcast the message of sending Soviet volunteers worldwide.¹³ Second, Soviet leaders employed the transit problem to swing Hanoi away from China. For geographic reasons, Soviet shipments to North Vietnam needed to transit in China. In a report to Moscow, the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi suggested that Moscow constantly emphasize to the North Vietnamese the danger of imperiling shipments through China.¹⁴

In addition to accommodation, on a few occasions Moscow also tried to exert pressure on Hanoi to undermine Beijing's influence. For instance, in the end of 1963, the State Planning Committee reported that the Soviet Union and several Eastern European states were exerting pressure on North Vietnam by reducing or cutting off the supply of food, cotton, steel and petroleum.¹⁵ Moreover, in August 1965, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) sent the VWP a thirty-page long letter and made various accusations against Hanoi, including: making difficulties for the Soviet embassy in the DRV, taking the anti-Soviet position, abusing Soviet experts and students, and only selling Chinese "anti-Soviet" books. In addition, in the letter the CPSU demanded the VWP to revise its Ninth Plenum resolution, which followed China's guidelines of guerilla warfare.¹⁶ Nonetheless, throughout this period the Soviet coercion against North Vietnam was scarce.

¹³ "Soviet Volunteers," *Moscow*, April 2, 1965, FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-65-063, BB7.

¹⁴ Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 367. Endnote 43.

¹⁵ The State Planning Committee, "Report on the foreign trade plan in 1964", Z14-614-5, November 8, 1963, in Chinese Academy of Social Science and CCP Central Archives, eds., *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jingjidan Ziliao xuanbian: Duiwai Maoyi Juan, 1958-1965* [*Selected Documents and Materials on the Economic Affairs of the People's Republic of China: Foreign Trade, 1958-1965*] (Beijing: Zhongguo caizheng chubanshe, 2011), 156.

¹⁶ "Discussion between Han Nianlong, vice Foreign Minister, and Chen Ziping, the DRV Ambassador to China," August 20, 1964, Foreign Ministry Achieves (hereafter cited as FMA), document no. 117-01700-01, 17-20. At the Ninth Plenum in late 1963, the VWP issued the resolution, which basically followed China's model of people's war. It not only stressed the overall strategic guideline for the war in South Vietnam was to carry out protracted combats, but also analyzed how to coordinate military and political struggles in various areas. See "The Central Committee's 9th Plenum Resolution Discussing the Situation

The Soviet wedging threatened China's security. The Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s made the Soviet Union a threat on China's northern border. In July 1964, Mao directed the PLA to pay attention not only to the eastern coast but also to the northern border.¹⁷ Later, Mao praised the PLA War Department's report on China's preparations for enemy attack.¹⁸ At a CCP Central Committee meeting in October 1966, Ye Jianying also remarked, "Why do we start the Cultural Revolution? The first objective is anti-revisionism; the second is war preparation. War may break out around 1968."¹⁹

Consequently, North Vietnam drifting toward the Soviet Union entailed the risk of an encirclement against China. At a news conference on September 29, 1965, Chen Yi claimed, "If the U.S. imperialists are determined to launch a war of aggression against us, they are welcome to come sooner... Let the modern revisionists act in coordination with them from the north! We will still win in the end."²⁰ In February 1966, receiving a Japanese Communist Party delegation, Peng Zhen, a member of the CCP Politburo, expressed China's concern about the encirclement: "The USSR and the U.S have not only joined in a chorus against China throughout the world, but are carrying out military encirclement."²¹ On November 13, Ye delivered a speech when receiving Red Guards

in South Vietnam," December 1963, seized by U.S. forces in Kompang Cham Province, Cambodia, on May 13, 1970.

¹⁷ CCP Central Archives and Manuscripts Division ed. *Zhou Enlai Nianpu* [*The Chronicle of Zhou Enlai*], vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1997), 654; CCP Central Archives and Manuscripts Division, ed. *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao* [*Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Founding of the People's Republic of China*], vol. 11 (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1990), 103-04.

¹⁸ "Guanyu Guojia Jinji Jianshe Ruhe Fangbei Diren Turanxijiwenti De Baogao [Report on How to Prepare National Economic Construction for Enemy's Sudden Attack]," *Dang de Wenxian* [*Literature of Chinese Communist Party*], no. 3 (1996): 33.

¹⁹ Xu Dashen ed., *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Shilu* [*A Record of the People's Republic of China*] (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1994), vol.3, 167.

²⁰ *Renmin Riabo*, September 29, 1965. *Peking Review*, no. 41 (October 8, 1965), 14.

²¹ Masaru Kojima, *The Record of the Talks between the Japanese Communist Party and the Communist Party of China: How Mao Zedong Scrapped the Joint Communiqué* (Central Committee of the Japanese Communist Party, 1980), 52.

from military academies. He remarked, “The Soviet revisionists are helping the U.S. imperialists... trying to sell out Vietnamese people and control Vietnam. They want large-scale fights, conventional fights to eliminate Vietnamese people... When North Vietnam cannot sustain the fight, the Soviets can turn it into their sphere of influence.”²²

6.1.2 China’s Leverage over North Vietnam

Responding to the Soviet wedge strategies, China considered its leverage first. Because China enjoyed strong leverage over North Vietnam, the latter relied on China. Given this dependence, China needed to worry less about the possibility of pushing Hanoi to Moscow. Therefore, China was able to choose coercive binding as its primary strategy to counter the Soviet wedge strategies.

China’s leverage came from four sources. First, China was providing its own territory as a rear area for North Vietnam, a leverage that resulted from geographic proximity so that the Soviet Union was unable to offer. In the context of the Vietnam War, a rear area played three roles. First, China and North Vietnam could use Chinese territory as a sanctuary for Vietnamese supplies and a base for military deployment and war plans. For instance, when meeting with Le Duan on April 13, 1964, Mao proposed to construct one or two airfields in Mengzi, Yunnan province, as backup airfields. Mao also tell Le Duan that China would deploy one PLA air force division to Nanning, half a division to Kunming and Simao, and two antiaircraft divisions to Nanning and Kunming.²³

²² “Ye Jianying’s Speech at the reception of Red Guards from Several Military Academies,” November 13, 1966, Beijing, *Wuchan jieji Wenhua Dageming Cankao ziliao* [Reference Materials of the Proletariat Cultural Revolution] (Beijing: beijingqiche fengongsi wengedazibao bangongshi, 1966), 333.

²³ Discussion between Mao Zedong and Le Duan, August 13, 1964, Yunnan Provincial Archives, 2-1-5790, 9, in Xiao Zuhou, and Li Danhui, eds., *Yunnan yu Yuanyue Kangmei (Dangan Wenxian)* [Yunnan with Assisting Vietnam and Resisting the U.S. (Archives and Documents)] (Beijing: Zhongyangwenxian chubanshe, 2004), 3.

Second, a rear area played a strategic role, a necessary condition for revolution success. In Mao Zedong's formulation of strategy in revolutionary wars, when adversaries were more powerful than revolutionary forces, it is important for the latter to favor fluid battle lines and mobile warfare and to maintain rear areas.²⁴ As Mao repeatedly told several foreign communist party delegations, "If you cannot win, then run away," and a rear area provided space to hide from adversaries. With this maneuver space, Mao noted, revolutionary forces could gradually annihilate their adversaries.²⁵ In their conversations, Chinese leaders pledged to their North Vietnamese counterparts to provide a rear area in the war.²⁶

Third, as China bordered North Vietnam, it had a powerful deterrent to U.S. escalation in the Vietnam War. Indeed, the Chinese leaders stressed this point to their North Vietnamese comrades. For instance, Mao told North Vietnamese Ambassador Chen Ziping, "If the United States bombs or lands in North Vietnam, China will fight... With just one step we will get there (North Vietnam)."²⁷ Additionally, in his conversation with Le Duan in 1964, Mao emphasized that the deployment of Chinese air force divisions in Yunnan must "go public."²⁸

²⁴ Mao Zedong, *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1968), 29-30, 88-94.

²⁵ "Geming Dangao Junshi Buxing" ["Revolution cannot exclusively focus on Military"], May 25, 1964, in CCP Central Archives and Manuscripts Division ed., *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong Junshi Wengao* [Mao Zedong's Manuscripts regarding Military Issues since the Founding of the People's Republic of China] (Beijing: Junshi Kexue chubanshe & Zhongyang Wenxian chubanshe, 2010), vol. 3, 224 (hereafter cited as *Mao Junshi Wengao*).

²⁶ Ibid., 236. Zhou Nianpu, vol. 2, 655.

²⁷ Li Danhui, "Zhongsu Guanxi yu Zhongguo de Kangmei Yuanyue" ["Sino-Soviet Relations and Chinese Assisting Vietnam and Resisting the U.S."], *Dangdai Zhongguoshi yanjiu* [Contemporary China History Studies], no. 3 (1998), 112.

²⁸ Ibid, 112.

It is worth noting, however, that the value of China being a rear area is a function of North Vietnam's strategy and Soviet military assistance. When Hanoi adhered to the strategy of people's warfare between 1964 and 1968, the value of a rear area was high. In contrast, if Hanoi changed its strategy to seek decisive victories in battlefield, as it did after 1968, the value of China's territory as a rear area declined. Under this circumstance, large amount of Soviet assistance of advanced military equipment would further undermine the value of a rear area.

Second, the Soviet Union and other states needed to transport their aid materials to the DRV either through Chinese territory or by sea. The second option, however, was risky because it was possible that the United States attacked Soviet Ships. The reliance on the Chinese railway system enabled China to hold other states' aid supplies, thus gave China leverage to press Hanoi. However, there is a caveat. Two other factors may cause disruption of the transit of aid materials as well: China's domestic turmoil during the Cultural Revolution and the rift between China and the Soviet Union. For instance, Zhou directed Wei Guoqing, first secretary of Guangxi province, to put away faction struggles and protect the transport of aid materials to North Vietnam in 1968.²⁹ Moreover, Chinese leaders knew that the Soviet Union utilized the transport issue to attack China and realized such attack had negative impacts on China-North Vietnam relations. For instance, a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement 1967 noted that "the Soviet revisionist

²⁹ Jiao Hongguang, "Wenge zhong Zhou Enlai Chuli Guangxiwenti deng Youguanqingkuang" [Facts about Zhou Enlai's handling issues in Guangxi during the Cultural Revolution], *Dang de Wenxian* [Literature of Chinese Communist Party], no. 3 (1996), 73-76.

leading clique... has concocted anti-Chinese rumors on the question of “the transit of aid supplies to Vietnam” and sowed discord in the relations between China and Vietnam.”³⁰

Nonetheless, China had no intention to change its course of action because of this Soviet propaganda. One month after China issued that statement, Pham Van Dong informed Zhou Enlai of Moscow’s new proposals: “1) China increases the quota for shipments of Soviet aid to [Vietnam] via China from 10 to 30 thousand tons a month. If necessary, the Soviet Union will send some of its locomotives to China; 2) China sets aside 2 or 3 of its ports in the South for handling Soviet aid to Vietnam. If more equipment is needed in those ports, the Soviets will cover all costs.”³¹ Zhou rejected the first Soviet proposal. He explained that it required a full analysis before China could take any action. As to the second proposal, Zhou stated that it was unnecessary to use Chinese ports as Haiphong had not been blockade to date. Furthermore, Zhou expressed his suspicion that the Soviet Union had ulterior motives to request access to Chinese ports.³²

Third, China was providing more food to North Vietnam than the Soviet Union did during this period. North Vietnam had been suffering from shortage of food and labor since the U.S. bombing began. On average, North Vietnamese food production was 5.66 million tons per year between 1965 and 1968.³³ In a report in January 1967, the VWP Central Committee Secretariat admitted that “agricultural production in general increases slowly, production and output of a number of crops are at a standstill... the supply of

³⁰ “CPR Statement Supporting Vietnamese Struggle,” *Peking NCNA International Service*, March 5, 1967, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-67-044, BBB1-BBB3.

³¹ “Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong,” April 7, 1967, in *77 Conversations*, 97.

³² “Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong,” April 10, 1967, in *ibid.*, 99.

³³ Guo Ming et al., *Yuenan Jingji [Economy in Vietnam]* (Guangxi: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1986), 31.

agriculture with implements and materials is not satisfactorily carried out.”³⁴ Table 7.2 shows food China and the Soviet Union provided to North Vietnam.

Table 7.2. *Soviet and Chinese export of food to North Vietnam*

	1965	1966	1967	1968
China	–	200,000 ^a	500,000 ^b	300,000 ^c
Soviet Union^c	1,500	10,700	39,100 ^d	241,700 ^e

Notes and sources: a. Jon M. Van Dyke, *North Vietnam's Strategy for Survival* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1972), 221.

b. it included 300,000 tons of hulled rice and 500,000 tons of unprocessed rice; see “Note on a Talk with the Soviet Ambassador, Comrade [Ilya] Shcherbakov, on 28 October 1966 in the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi,” November 10, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PAAA-MfAA, VS-Hauptstelle, Microfiche G-A 355, 11. Translated from German by Lorenz Lüthi. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117732>

c. Fforde, *The Agrarian Question in North Vietnam, 1974-1979* (Armonk: M.E.Sharpe, Inc., 1989), 214.

d. it included 1,975 tons of wheat and 225,000 tons of wheat flour.

e. it included 4,128 tons of wheat and 426,100 tons of wheat flour.

Fourth, China attempted to enhance its influence on the NLF. The relations between Hanoi and the NLF was full of tension. As a civilian provincial leader said, “The Winter [Southern] cadres often despise the Autumn [regroupee] cadres because they [the former] have fought for over ten years in the South in hardships and now the Autumn cadres who had lived in peace for a long time in the North come to be their leaders. The Autumn cadres are confident in the education, training and knowledge they’d obtained so they encroached upon the Winter cadres.”³⁵ Similarly, an NVA cadre stated, “The Northerners consider themselves better trained than the Southerners in politics, military affairs, and experience on the battlefield. There are always arguments between the

³⁴ “DRV Agricultural Shortcomings Pointed Out,” *Hanoi Domestic Service*, January 5, 1967, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-67-003, JJJ11-JJJ12.

³⁵ “Regroupees” referred to ethnic South Vietnamese who went north for training and indoctrination. Melvin Gurtov, *Viet Cong Cadres and the Cadre System: A Study of the Main and Local Forces* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1967), 25-26.

Northerners and the Southerners.”³⁶ More importantly, leaders in the north and in the south had various disagreements over strategies.³⁷ For instance, according to a CIA report, in December 1967, Nguyen Van Tien, Chief of the NLF, remarked that the NLF had three major policy differences with Hanoi, including religious, economic, and foreign policies. CIA judged that Tien made these remarks based on careful calculation to promote the NLF objectives.³⁸

Squabbles between the NLF and Hanoi provided China with a tool to press Hanoi. More Chinese support to the NLF could weaken Hanoi’s control over it. This is not what leaders in Hanoi liked to see. As a result, China could take advantage of its relations with the NLF to influence Hanoi. In order to do so, China needed to make the NLF depend on Chinese aid. First, China tried to deliver its assistance materials directly to the NLF, independent of Hanoi’s influence. In 1966, China established a secret shipping lane to Sihanoukville. Via this lane, China was able to transport its aid to the NLF forces.³⁹ Before 1967, China had delivered weapons that could equipped 50,000 soldiers. About 90 percent of these weapons equipped the NLF forces.⁴⁰ Moreover, China encouraged the NLF to request aid directly from Beijing. Meeting with Le Duc Tho in July 1965, Deng Xiaoping stressed that China expected its aid to have the best possible effect on the

³⁶ The Simulmatics Corporations, *Improving Effectiveness of the Chieu Hoi Program, Vol. II, the Viet Cong-Organizational, Political and Psychological Strengths and Weaknesses* (New York: the Simulmatics Corporation, September 1967), 196-99.

³⁷ Thomas K. Latimer, “Hanoi’s Leaders and Their South Vietnam Policies: 1954-1968” (Ph.D Dissertation, Georgetown University, 1972), 237-74.

³⁸ CIA Intelligence Information Cable, “Policy Differences between Hanoi and National Liberation Front,” December 19, 1967, 2, in Tet Declassified, document no. 00982217.

³⁹ Wang Xianggen, *Zhongguo Mimidafabin: Kangmei Yuanyue Shilu* [*China Secretly Dispatches its Military Personnel: A Record of Assistance to Vietnam against the United States*] (Jinan: Jinan chubanshe, 1992), 130.

⁴⁰ Anne Gilks and Gerald Segal, *China and the Arms Trade* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 50.

frontline.⁴¹ In the same year, Mao instructed the State Council that “whatever materials the South requests, so long as we are capable of supplying, should be provided by us unconditionally.”⁴² As a result, between 1965 and 1967, the NLF forces relied much more on Chinese equipment than on Soviet equipment. Table 7.3 shows different origins of the NLF’s weapons.

In addition to sending aid from mainland, China also tried to provide aid to the NLF locally. According to a Soviet intelligence report, the Chinese embassy in Phnom Penh kept frequent contacts with the NLF middle-level leaders; staff at the embassy also purchased rice in Cambodia and delivered it to the NLF. The Soviets also reported that Chinese residents in Cambodia joined the NLF forces.⁴³ Moreover, China also offered the NLF hard currency. According to a Soviet source, China provided \$20 million currency in 1966 and \$10 million in 1967 to the NLF.⁴⁴ A Chinese account also briefly stated that China provided the NLF with “currency of millions in U.S. dollars for external activities and military buildup.”⁴⁵ In an instruction in the end of 1965, the State Council directed that all cash and materials that the Chinese people donated but failed to specify the recipient would be handled to the NLF.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 219.

⁴² “Mao’s Instruction to the State Council,” November 15, 1967, cited in *ibid.*, 219-20.

⁴³ “Conversation between G.A. Sverev, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in the DRV, and First Secretary of the Polish Embassy in the DRV,” January 23, 1969, in Shen Zhihua et al. eds., *Sulian Lishidangan Xuanbian* [*Selected Collection of Soviet Historical Archives*] (Beijing: Shehuikexuanwenxian chubanshe, 2002), vol. 31, 392-94.

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Shcherbakov-Nguyen Van Vinh, June 13, 1967. SCCD, f. 5, op.58, d.331, p.109, cited in Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 20.

⁴⁵ Huang Guoan et al., *Zhongyue Guanxishi Jianbian* [*A Brief History of Chinese-Vietnamese Relations*] (Nanning: Guangxi Renmin Chubanshe, 1986), 229.

⁴⁶ “Direction on how to deal with the donation to Vietnam,” in Xiao and Li, *Yunnan yu Yuanyue Kangmei*, 89-90.

Table 7.3. *Composition of NLF Weapons (main force and irregular; in percentage)*

	Chinese	Soviet	U.S.	French	Homemade/Other
1965	21	3	35	26	15
1966	29	4	30	22	15
Mid-1967	35	6	26	18	15

Source: The U.S. State Department, *Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Vietnam*, Table V, 39.

7.1.3 Coercive Binding as China's Primary Strategy

Relying on its strong leverage, China coerced North Vietnam to counter the Soviet wedge strategies. First, by rejecting Soviet proposals of Soviet-Chinese-North Vietnamese conferences, China signaled its irreconcilable differences with the Soviet Union to North Vietnam. As Hanoi had showed its willingness to attend such conferences, essentially Beijing's rejection was exerting pressure on Hanoi and forcing it to pick a side.

In February 1965, en route to Hanoi, Alexei Kosygin visited Beijing. In the meeting with Mao, the Soviet premier asked China to accept Moscow's position on North Vietnam issues; Mao rejected this REQUEST.⁴⁷ Leaving Beijing, Kosygin visited Hanoi and promised military assistance to North Vietnam.⁴⁸ On his way back to Moscow, Kosygin stopped in Beijing again. He proposed a three-party conference, consisting of the Soviet Union, China, and North Vietnam. Mao rejected this proposal too.⁴⁹ In the official reply to this proposal, Liu Xiao, Chinese ambassador to the Soviet Union, stated,

⁴⁷ Xie Yixian, *Zhongguo Waijiaoshi [A Diplomatic History of China]* (Zhengzhou: Henan remin chubanshe, 1988), 344.

⁴⁸ Ralph B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: The Making of a Limited War, 1965-66*, vol. 3 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 438.

⁴⁹ *Peking Review*, no. 12 (March 1965), 5.

“It is said that the Soviet government already has taken steps in favor of convening such a conference; what concerns us [is] how much these talks conform the reality.”⁵⁰

On April 4, again, Brezhnev and Kosygin sent a letter to Mao and Zhou by diplomatic channel, told the Chinese leaders: “the United States will escalate its bombing in North Vietnam, including Hanoi and Haiphong; it will bomb not only military facilities, but also industrial and transportation centers.” The letter thus proposed a trilateral meeting, which could be held in any location, among the Soviet Union, China, and North Vietnam. Chinese leaders sent an urgent telegram in the next day, inviting North Vietnamese leaders to come to Wuhan or Nanning to discuss this issue.⁵¹

North Vietnamese leaders positively responded to this proposal. They informed their Chinese comrades that they agreed to hold such a meeting.⁵² In the same month, Le Duan, Vo Nguyen Giap, and the DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Thinh visited Moscow. The communiqué of this visit announced a new Soviet-Vietnamese military assistance agreement.⁵³ A *Nhan Dan* editorial hailed the importance of Soviet-Vietnamese friendship and cooperation.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ “Oral Statement of the PRC Government, Transmitted by PRC Vice Foreign Minister Liu Xiao to the Chargé d’Affaires of the USSR in the PRC, Cde. F. V. Mochulski,” February 27, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Arkhiv Veshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation; AVP RF), Moscow, Russia, fond 0100, opis 58, delo 1, papka 516, 1-2. Translated from Russian by Lorenz Lüthi. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117712>

⁵¹ “Biography of Peng Zhen” Editing Group ed., *Peng Zhen Nianpu* [*The Chronicle of Peng Zhen*] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian chubanshe, 2012), vol. 4, 412-13.

⁵² Cable from Zhu Qiwen, “The Vietnamese Side passing on the Soviet Communist Party’s Proposal regarding the Holding of a Three-Party Summit among the Soviet Party, and the Vietnamese Party, and the Chinese Part,” April 05, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 109-03978-06, 41-42. Obtained by Taomo Zhou and translated by Fan Chao. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118179>

⁵³ “Text of Communiqué,” *Moscow TASS International Service*, April 17, 1965, FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-65-074, BB1-BB4.

⁵⁴ “Nhan Dan Article Hails DRV-USSR Statement,” *Hanoi VNA International Service*, April 20, 1965, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-65-075, JJJ3-JJJ7.

Despite North Vietnam's willingness, China rejected the Soviet proposal again and putting pressure on Hanoi.⁵⁵ After finishing the visit in Moscow, Le Duan stopped in Beijing. During their meeting, the Chinese leadership accused him of "joining hands with modern revisionism too much." Furthermore, they rejected Le Duan's proposal that the Soviet Union and China coordinate their aid supplies.⁵⁶ On the other hand, when the Soviet Union accused China of refusing to "participate in united action to aid Vietnam,"⁵⁷ the CCP Central Committee sent a public reply, which Mao highly praised, condemning the Soviet Union: "On the Vietnam problem, you [the Soviet Union] are appeasing the United States and selling out North Vietnam. You have adopted chauvinistic policy toward socialist states and attempted to control these states. Your April 3's proposal of a trilateral conference is important part of this policy... Your so-called united action is merely asking other brother parties to obey you, to become tools of your policy of U.S.-Soviet domination."⁵⁸ Moreover, in a secret reply dated July 14, Chinese leaders adopted a more severe tone. It attacked the Soviet policy toward negotiation: "You [Soviet Union] officially informed many fraternal parties that you stood for negotiations... your idea is closely coordinated with the war blackmail of the U.S. aggressors... You are still pursuing the line of Soviet-U.S. collaboration for the domination of the world." Regarding the Soviet requests, the reply remarked bluntly: "Frankly speaking, we do not trust you. We and other fraternal parties have learned bitter lessons in the past from

⁵⁵ *The Truth About Vietnam-China Relations*, 46.

⁵⁶ Note by the East German Embassy in Hanoi on a Conversation of Comrade Jarck with the Attache of the Czechoslovak Embassy, Comrade Freybort, on 2 June 1965, from 10:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., in the East German Embassy [Excerpts], June 3, 1965, in *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16, 379-80.

⁵⁷ It is said that a British journalist acquired this document and China's secret reply cited below from an Eastern European state. Edward Crankshaw, "Chinese Force New Rift with Russians: China Reveals Vietnam Clash," *The Observer*, November 14, 1965, 1, 5.

⁵⁸ *Mao Wengao*, vol. 11, 394-95. This record also verifies the existence of the CPSU letter of April 17.

Khrushchev's evil practice of control under cover of aid.... China is not one of your provinces. We cannot accept your control. Nor will we help you control others.”⁵⁹

Second, China coerced North Vietnam against accepting the Soviet assistance. On March 1, 1965, Zhou Enlai explicitly told Ho Chi Minh about his opposition: “We oppose [the Soviet] military activities that include the sending of missile battalions and 2 MiG-21 aircraft as well as the proposal to establish an airlift for weapon transportation. We also have to be wary of the military instructors. Soviet experts have withdrawn, so what are their purposes [when they] wish to come back? We have had experience in the past when there were subversive activities in China, Korea, and Cuba.” Zhou then warned Ho that accepting Moscow's aid would be at the cost of China-North Vietnam relations: “We, therefore, should keep an eye on their activities, namely their transportation of weapons and military training. Otherwise, the relations between our two countries [China and the DRV] may turn from good to bad, thus affecting cooperation between our two countries.”⁶⁰

A more subtle way in which China put pressure on North Vietnam was emphasizing the principles of people's warfare and self-reliance. The principle of people's warfare rendered advanced Soviet equipment less relevant in the war. In other words, self-reliance required Hanoi to decrease its dependence on Soviet supplies. Thus, this was a means to undermine the Soviet influence in Hanoi. To publicly signal China's commitment to people's warfare, an editorial in *Jiefangjun Bao* [*PLA Daily*] declared, “When imperialism imposes war on us, we will always rely on the masses to wage a

⁵⁹ Crankshaw, “Chinese Force New Rift with Russians: China Reveals Vietnam Clash,” 5.

⁶⁰ “Zhou Enlai Talking to Ho Chi Minh,” March 1, 1965, in *77 Conversations*, 56.

people's war.... It will remain this way forever.”⁶¹ On September 3, *Renmin Ribao* carried the famous article written by Lin Biao, “Long Live the Victory of People's War.” Note that Zhou and other standing politburo members read this article before its publication. In other words, this article is approved by the Chinese leadership as a whole.⁶² Analyzing the CCP experience in the anti-Japanese war and the civil war, Lin stressed the importance of relying on the peasantry and establishing rural base areas as the rear. Moreover, he wrote, to defeat a formidable enemy, “guerrilla warfare is the only way to mobilize and apply the whole strength of the people against the enemy,” “you [the enemy] rely on modern weapons and we rely on highly conscious revolutionary people.” In the last section, Lin stressed, during the anti-Japanese war the CCP not only relied mainly on its own strength but also “firmly oppose the exclusive reliance on foreign aid.”⁶³ As illustrated in subsequent sections, in the context of the Vietnam War, this statement implied that Hanoi should not rely on Soviet aids.

Chinese leaders also privately conveyed their commitment to people's warfare and self-reliance to North Vietnamese leaders. In January 1965 when Zhou received a North Vietnamese military delegation, he encouraged his Vietnamese comrades, “As far as the war in Vietnam is concerned, we should continuously eliminate the main forces of the enemy when they come out to conduct mopping-up operations, so that the combat capacity of the enemy forces will be weakened while that of our troops will be strengthened.... It is possible that victory would come even sooner than our original

⁶¹ *Jiefangjun Bao*, August 1, 1965.

⁶² Xu Yan, *Junshijia Mao Zedong [Military Strategist Mao Zedong]* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1995), 149.

⁶³ *Renmin Ribao*, September 3, 1965.

expectation.”⁶⁴ On October 5, Mao received Pham Van Dong and Le Duan in Beijing. Mao told his Vietnamese comrades, “You must not engage your main force in a head-to-head confrontation with them and must well maintain your main force. My opinion is that so long as the green mountain is there, how can you ever lack firewood?”⁶⁵ Additionally, in an interview by a French correspondent, Chen Yi stressed the principle of self-reliance: “I think the Vietnamese people are perfectly capable, by relying on their own forces, to drive the American aggressors out of their territory.”⁶⁶ In terms of the conflict in South Vietnam, Zhou explained, “The strategy has been defined: conducting a protracted war in the South, preventing the war from expanding to the North and to China...My fundamental idea is that we should be patient. Patience means victory.”⁶⁷

In addition, China pressed North Vietnam to refuse Soviet volunteers.⁶⁸ Zhou conveyed to Dong his disapproval in October, “I do not support the idea of Soviet volunteers going to Vietnam, nor [do I support] Soviet aid to Vietnam. I think it will be better without it.” Zhou further expressed his distrust of Moscow: “We never think of selling out Vietnam. But we are always afraid of the revisionists standing between us.”⁶⁹ The prospect of Soviet volunteers may also compel China to adopt more cautious policy of sending its own troops to the DRV. Allegedly, a secret military agreement required

⁶⁴ “Discussion between Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong,” October 05, 1964, in *ibid.*, 73.

⁶⁵ *Mao Waijiao Wenxuan*, 570-73.

⁶⁶ “Vice-Premier Chen Yi Answers Questions of French Correspondent,” *Peking Review* no.23 (June 4, 1965), 14.

⁶⁷ “Discussion between Zhou Enlai, Pham Van Dong and Hoang Tung,” August 23, 1966, in 77 *Conversations*, 96-97.

⁶⁸ For China’s reasserted commitment to North Vietnam, see *Renmin Ribao*, March 25, 1. Also, On March 29, Zhou delivered a speech in Tirana, Albania. He reaffirmed, “the Chinese people will give the South Vietnamese people all necessary material assistance and... are also prepared to send our personnel to fight alongside with the South Vietnamese people whenever they deem it necessary.” See “Chou En-lai’s Speech of Tirana Mass Meeting,” *Peking Review* no. 14 (April 2, 1965), 6-7.

⁶⁹ “Conversation between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong,” October 9, 1965, in 77 *Conversations*, 87-88.

China to send pilots to North Vietnam in June 1965. However, in July the General Staff of the PLA notified their Vietnamese counterparts that they could not send pilots to Vietnam because the “time was not appropriate.”⁷⁰ Behind this decision could be two concerns. First, sending Chinese pilots might cause the United States to attack China. When explaining this decision to the North Vietnamese, Chinese leaders stated that “by doing so we could not prevent the enemy from intensifying their air raids.”⁷¹ Second, maybe more importantly, Chinese leaders may be worried that sending Chinese pilots would give the Soviets an excuse to send their volunteer troops to North Vietnam. This logic appeared in conversations with Chinese and Vietnamese leaders. In a meeting with Pham Van Dong and Hoang Tung in August 1966, Zhou claimed that all Chinese forces in North Vietnam were logistic ones so that China was able to “refuse requests by some countries to send their volunteer troops to Vietnam.”⁷²

Later, North Vietnamese leaders raised the issue of the Soviet volunteers again to the Chinese. In mid-November 1965, Ho paid a secret visit to China. Discussing with Mao, Ho suggested that the new government that the NLF established in South Vietnam appeal to all foreign governments to send aid in the form of equipment and volunteers. Not surprisingly, Mao opposed this suggestion. He told the Vietnamese leader that the DRV had not unleashed its full strength, and its sacrifices in the war were still low. Therefore, Mao told Ho that it was too early to demand volunteers. Mao continued to explain that although China as always would provide volunteers, they would never fight alongside volunteers from the Soviet Union or from other revisionist states. Reportedly,

⁷⁰ *The Truth About Vietnam-China Relations*, 46.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁷² “Discussion between Zhou Enlai, Pham Van Dong and Hoang Tung,” August 23, 1966, in 77 *Conversations*, 96-97.

Ho was left with much disappointment and pain after the discussion.⁷³ Zhou reasserted China's position to Le Duan as well. When talking of the North Vietnamese request for volunteer pilots, Zhou stressed, "You will be in trouble. The Soviets may disclose secrets to the enemy. We therefore think that joint actions between the volunteers will be impossible. Moreover, even though these volunteers should be subject to your command, the Soviets will always have conflicting opinions. The gains you obtain from the Soviet pilots cannot compensate for the losses caused by them."⁷⁴

The third target of China's pressure was peace talks between the United States and North Vietnam, a crucial issue over which Beijing, Hanoi, and Moscow fought. Chinese leaders not only perceived negotiation proposals from Washington as "sowing dissension between China and the DRV," but also believed the Soviet Union was collaborating with the United States on this issue.⁷⁵ For instance, Soviet Politburo member Alexander Shelepin visited North Vietnam and discussed the issue of peace talks in January 1966. Alarmed by this visit, China referred to it as a "close coordination with the U.S. peace talk plots."⁷⁶ Moreover, Kosygin and U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk met in New Delhi afterwards. An article in *Hong Qi* [Red Flag] condemned this meeting as new evidence for Soviet betrayal. The article further claimed the Soviet Union endorsed the peace talks in order to help the Johnson Administration turn Indochina into a "sector of the joint U.S.-Soviet effort to contain China."⁷⁷

⁷³ "Report by the Adviser to the Bulgarian Embassy in Beijing, Ivan Dimitrov, to the Bulgarian Ambassador, Khr. Stoichev," December 14, 1965, in *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16, 386.

⁷⁴ "Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Le Duan," March 23, 1966, in *77 Conversations*, 91.

⁷⁵ Chinese Foreign Ministry circular, "On 'Peace Talk' Activities over Vietnam," August 19, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Jiangsu Provincial Archives, Q 3124, D, J 123. Translated for CWIHP by Qiang Zhai. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114469>

⁷⁶ *Peking Review*, no. 8 (February 18, 1966), 10.

⁷⁷ *Hong Qi*, no. 2 (1966), 7. *Peking Review*, no. 6 (1966), 12.

Consequently, China viewed proposed peace talks as an attempt to encircle China and thus kept North Vietnam from entering peace talks. The Chinese Foreign Ministry directed its staff to “expose the Soviet revisionist collaboration with the United States, and express our determination to support the Vietnamese struggle through to the end.”⁷⁸ In a discussion with the DRV delegation in October 1965, Mao expressed his disapproval of negotiations: “I have not noticed what topics you are negotiating with the United States. I only pay attention to how you fight Americans.... You can negotiate at certain times...but you need to raise your tones. Be prepared that the enemy may deceive you.”⁷⁹

Moreover, China attached the condition of continuing the war to its assistance to North Vietnam. Before the VWP’s Twelfth Plenum, Ho Chi Minh visited China and requested more aid. Mao told his Vietnamese counterpart, “China is ready to render economic and weapons aid, [but] the largest [part of the] aid should be rendered to Southeast Asia (Laos, Thailand, Cambodia) with the demand to carry out active military actions against the United States.” Meanwhile, probably responding to Ho’s request, Mao encouraged him to request Soviet aid, not only military aid, but also economic aid for “construction after the withdrawal of the Americans. If the Vietnamese at the moment cannot store this equipment, China is ready to take that task unto itself.”⁸⁰

Not surprisingly, Ho was disappointed at his visit. Returning to Hanoi, Ho told his comrades at the Twelfth Plenum that he was unable to reach any agreement with Chinese leaders on their attitudes toward the Soviet Union. He further claimed that “those forces, with which the DRV shared many common views, at the time would render less support

⁷⁸ Chinese Foreign Ministry circular, “On ‘Peace Talk’ Activities over Vietnam.”

⁷⁹ *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan*, 572.

⁸⁰ “Note by East German Ambassador Kohrt on the Current Policy of the Chinese Leadership,” December 11, 1965, in *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16, 385.

to the DRV than they could, given their possibilities.”⁸¹ Nonetheless, the Twelfth Plenum issued Resolution 12 that adopted Le Duan’s policy of increasing military action in the south while preparing to negotiate with the United States. After the meeting, the DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh visited China and probably informed Chinese leaders of the VWP’s resolution. Chen Yi reminded Trinh, “Our two parties agree that the US shows no sign of wanting to have peace. They just want to open the talks to deceive public opinion.”⁸² Two days later, Zhou further criticized Hanoi’s condition of cessation of bombing North Vietnam: “If they [the United States] do [accept the condition], we will be in a passive position, and this will have a negative impact on our struggle and on our solidarity. Because your conditions are not tough, they may accept them.” He also warned that Hanoi may fall into the trap set by the United States and the “modern revisionists.”⁸³

In addition, Beijing threatened Hanoi with cutting off the Chinese construction assistance. China’s second detachment of engineering corps had been constructing permanent fortifications on fifteen islands along the DRV’s northeastern coast. When it had almost finished its assignment in mid-1966, Hanoi requested that the second detachment start the defense construction in the Red River Delta. To Hanoi’s surprise, Beijing replied that the detachment would return to China immediately after the completion of its assignment.⁸⁴ Moreover, the Chinese leaders used this issue to press their Vietnamese comrades. Meeting with Le Duan in April, Deng raised this issue and

⁸¹ “Note by East German Ambassador Kohrt on the Current Policy of the Chinese Leadership,” December 11, 1965, in *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16, 385.

⁸² “Discussion between Chen Yin and Nguyen Duy Trinh,” December 17, 1965, in *77 Conversations*, 89.

⁸³ “Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Nguyen Duy Trinh,” December 19, 1965, in *ibid.*, 90.

⁸⁴ Wang, *Zhongguo Mimidafabin*, 236.

asked Le Duan bluntly, “Do you need our military men to do it or not?” Deng continued to remark in an alarming tone: “We don’t know whether it is good for the relations between two parties and two countries or not when we sent 100,000 people to Vietnam. Personally, I think it’s better for our military men to come back home right after they finish their work. In this matter, we don’t have any ill intention, but the results are not what we both want.” Le Duan responded to Deng’s statements very cautiously. He praised that “Chinese assistance is the most direct and extensive” while stating that the Vietnamese did not think the Soviet Union was selling out Vietnam.⁸⁵ In another meeting, Zhou also pressed Le Duan: “It is ok that you praise the Soviets [for giving] great aid. But that you mention it together with Chinese aid is an insult to us.” Deng added, “So, from now on, you should not mention Chinese aid at the same time as Soviet aid.”⁸⁶

One month later, Ho received pressure again when he visited China. Chinese leaders not only rejected a political solution of the Vietnam War, but encouraged the North Vietnamese to advance more actively into South Vietnam while China would strengthen their military presence in the north. It is also said that China had already prepared for the next four years of the war.⁸⁷ After this meeting, when Hanoi requested Beijing to increase its anti-aircraft assistance to protect its railway and road systems, Beijing rejected it.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ “Discussion between Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Kang Sheng and Le Duan, Nguyen Duy Trinh,” April 13, 1966, in *77 Conversations*, 91-96.

⁸⁶ Footnote 145, “Discussion between Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Kang Sheng and Le Duan, Nguyen Duy Trinh,” April 13, 1966, in *77 Conversations*, 94.

⁸⁷ “Telegram from East German Deputy Foreign Minister Hegen to Ulbricht, Stoph, Honecker, and Axen,” July 8, 1966, *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16, 392.

⁸⁸ Li Danhui, “Zhongguo Guanxi yu Zhongguo de Kangmei Yuanyue,” 123.

China also used the NLF to exert pressure on Hanoi. On December 19, 1967, Tran Van Thanh, the NLF's official representative in Beijing, prepared an hour-long broadcast on Radio Peking. In the broadcast Thanh condemned "the revisionist policies of those who help the imperialists through their naive talk of peaceful coexistence."⁸⁹ Furthermore, Zhou Enlai sent a message to Nguyen Huu Tho, the chairman of the NLF, urging him to "fight the war to the end."⁹⁰

Amidst the tension between China, North Vietnam, and the Soviet Union over peace talks, another sign that alarmed Beijing was Hanoi's decision to attend the CPSU 23rd Congress. In January 1966 the CPSU invited the CCP to attend its 23rd Congress. Meanwhile, Chinese leaders had learnt that the VWP would accept the CPSU invitation. In the next two months, the CCP top leaders held several meetings, deciding that the CCP would not accept the CPSU invitation. On the March 18 meeting, Mao commented that "we must not go," but the "VWP would go because they relied on the Soviet aid."⁹¹

Le Duan and Nguyen Duy Trinh headed to Moscow to attend the CPSU Congress.⁹² Though understanding the VWP's motive, Beijing was far away from being happy about the VWP's decision. On the contrary, Beijing decided to punish Hanoi's deviance. According to a conversation between the First Secretary of the Soviet embassy and Eastern German diplomats, during the CPSU 23rd Congress China reduced its aid to the DRV and supplied only food. The North Vietnamese allegedly believed this reduction

⁸⁹ Robert K. Brigham, *Guerrilla Diplomacy: The NLF's Foreign Relations and the Viet Nam War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 62.

⁹⁰ Brigham's Interview with Tung Le, former NLF official, Ho Chi Minh City, March 1996, in *ibid.*, 66.

⁹¹ Wu Lengxi, *Shinian Lunzhan: Zhongsu Guanxi Huiyilu, 1956-1966 [A Debate Lasting Ten Years: A Memoir on the Sino-Soviet Relations, 1956-1966]* (Beijing: Zhongyangwenxian chubanshe, 1999), 933-38.

⁹² Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: The Making of a Limited War, 1965-66*, 3, 298.

was “reprisal for their political flirtation with the Soviet Union.”⁹³ Moreover, Chinese leaders exerted pressure on the Vietnamese in person. Returning from Moscow, Le Duan stopped over in Beijing. According to the Polish ambassador to North Vietnam, Zhou presented Le Duan with a record listing all dates and places where Le Duan made statements against Chinese leaders.⁹⁴ China’s message to North Vietnam was thus clear: the Chinese had been watching the North Vietnamese and they were not satisfied with North Vietnam’s close relations with the Soviet Union.

Fourth, Chinese coercive binding targeted at Hanoi’s military strategy. In the mid-1967 North Vietnam seemed determined to launch a large-scale offensive, which deviated from China’s principles of the protracted warfare to a Soviet-favored conventional military strategy. Despite China’s insistence on the protracted warfare, as early as April 1967 leaders in Hanoi had made their mind to launch a large-scale offensive in the dry season in 1968. The VWP’s Resolution 13 called for a “spontaneous uprising [in the South] in order to win a decisive victory in the shortest possible time.”⁹⁵ This prospect made China worry. In response, Beijing used its relations with the NLF to coerce Hanoi. In July 1967, the NLF sent several delegates to Beijing, publicly speaking in favor of a military victory through the strategy of people’s warfare and denouncing revisionism.⁹⁶ On July 14, Peking Radio broadcast that a small but powerful group of NLF military and political leaders believed that the NLF could develop an independent

⁹³ “Note on a Conversation with the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, Comrade Sverev, on 8 July 1966 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:40 p.m. at the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi,” July 9, 1966, in *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16, 393-94.

⁹⁴ “Note of Comrade Bergold, East German Ambassador, with the Polish Ambassador in North Vietnam, Comrade Siedliecky,” November 10, 1966, in *ibid.*, 398.

⁹⁵ Cecil Currey, “Giap and the Tet Mau Than 1968: The Year of the Monkey,” in *The Tet Offensive*, ed. Marc Jason Gilbert and William Head (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 82.

⁹⁶ Robert Brigham, “The NLF and the Tet Offensive,” *ibid.*, 67.

battlefield policy with China's aid.⁹⁷ A few months later, Nguyen Huu Tho, chairman of the NLF, assured the Chinese leaders that the NLF's new political program followed Mao's revolutionary path and flatly rejected the Soviet revisionism.⁹⁸

However, none of Chinese efforts worked; in January 1968 North Vietnam launched the Tet Offensive. Consequently, Beijing decided to increase pressure on Hanoi. First, Beijing tried to increase its presence in South Vietnam. A Soviet report in 1968 mentioned that Beijing had attempted to organize regiments of the local Chinese population in South Vietnam for the guerilla warfare.⁹⁹ It is unclear if this is merely bluff or a serious attempt. Nonetheless, if existing, this move was more exerting pressure on Hanoi than a warfighting effort. Second, as Table 7.4 shows, China's military aid to North Vietnam sharply declined after the Tet Offensive.

⁹⁷ Radio Peking, July 14, 1600 GMT. Cited in *ibid.*, 66.

⁹⁸ Brigham's Interview with Tung Le, former NLF official, Ho Chi Minh City, March 1996, in Brigham, *Guerrilla Diplomacy: The NLF's Foreign Relations and the Viet Nam War*, 66. Broadcast in English from Peking, Sept 29, *Xinhua*, in *ibid.*, 166.

⁹⁹ Memorandum of the CPSU CC Department on Relations with Communist parties of Socialist Countries, "On New Elements of the Foreign Policy and International Positions of the PRC," June 10, 1968. SCCD, f.5, op.60, d.365, 103, cited in Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 169.

Table 7.4. China's Military Assistance to North Vietnam

Items	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Artillery	4,439	3,362	3,984	7,087	3,906	2,212	7,898	9,238	9,912
Artillery shell^a	1.8	1.066	1.363	2.082	1.357	.397	1.899	2.21	2.21
Gun	220,767	141,531	146,600	219,899	139,900	101,800	143,100	189,000	233,500
Bullet^a	114	178.12	147	247.92	119.17	29.01	57.19	40	40
Tank	—	—	26	18	—	—	80	220	120
Aircraft	2	—	70	—	—	—	4	14	36
Truck	114	96	435	454	162	—	4011	8578	1210
Uniform^b	—	400	800	1,000	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,400	1,400
Wire transmitter	9,502	2,235	2,289	3,313	3,313	1,600	4,424	5,909	6,447
Radio transmitter	2,799	1,568	2,464	1,854	2,210	950	2,464	4,370	4,335

Notes: ^ain million. ^bthousand sets.

Source: Li and Hao, *Wenhuadageming zhong de Renminjifangjun*, 416.

In this period, China also decreased its economic aid to North Vietnam. According to a U.S. report, in 1968 North Vietnam imported about 790,000 tons of food and 605,000 tons of general and miscellaneous cargo. The report noted, imports of general and miscellaneous cargo increased from all communist states except China. On the contrary, the kinds of imports from China dropped by 11 percent. A particular steep decline of these imports appeared in the second half of 1968.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, China decreased its food supplies as well.

¹⁰⁰ Office of Chief of Naval Operations, "Duck Hook," July 20, 1969, 11, in U.S. Declassified Documents Online, document no. CK2349664572.

According to a Chinese source, in early 1968 North Vietnamese requested economic and military aid, totaling 65 projects and worth 192.5 million RMB. Nonetheless, China rejected these requests. Furthermore, in a conversation in mid-April, Zhou told his Vietnamese counterpart that North Vietnam should focus on defeating the United States, rather than on economic construction. Zhou also stressed that Chinese economic aid should be prioritized to assist “the most urgent and safest projects.”¹⁰¹ In October, North Vietnam requested to send a delegation to China to discuss material aid. Zhou rejected it: “Chinese leaders need to deal with so many domestic issues in October that it is impossible to receive the Vietnamese delegation.” “We can adjust the aid agreement for 1969 to temporarily meet your needs.”¹⁰²

After the CCP Ninth National Congress in April 1969, Le Duan, Pham Van Dong, and Truong Chinh had three meetings with Mao and Lin Biao. According to the Soviet intelligence, these meetings largely disappointed North Vietnamese leaders. Chinese leaders accused their Vietnamese comrades of supporting Soviet revisionist policies; they rejected North Vietnamese various requests for additional aid; Chinese leaders also suggested North Vietnamese ships leave Chinese ports. According to this source, in the first six months of 1969, China only delivered 31.4% of aid it agreed to provide in 1969.¹⁰³

China also threatened to withdraw from North Vietnam all assistance it had provided. In July 1968, Mao demanded return of all supplies.¹⁰⁴ In a subsequent meeting

¹⁰¹ Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 236.

¹⁰² Zhou Nianpu, vol.3, 262.

¹⁰³ Brief Report on International Situations, the Main Directorate of the General Staff to the CPSU Central Committee, August 15, 1969, in Shen et al. eds., *Sulian Lishidangan Xuanbian*, vol. 31, 401-05.

¹⁰⁴ CIA Intelligence Report, “The Sino-Soviet dispute on Aid to North Vietnam (1965-1968),” ESAU-XXXIX, September 30, 1968, 11, in The CAESAR, POLO, and ESAU Papers, document no. 5077054e993247d4d82b6a9a.

in November, Mao told Dong, “As to the remaining people sent by China to your country who are no longer needed, we can withdraw them...Please discuss this issue to see which Chinese units you want to keep and which units you do not want to keep. Keep the units that are useful to you. We will withdraw the units that are of no use to you. We will send them to you if they are needed in the future.”¹⁰⁵ Following this declaration, China withdrew its anti-aircraft artillery units in March 1969, and had pulled back all the rest of its support troops by July 1970.¹⁰⁶

The unsuccessful military strategy also led the North Vietnamese to return to negotiating tables, which China opposed. When the Tet Offensive failed to bring victory to North Vietnam, Hanoi attempted another offensive in the spring of 1969 to maintain the strategic initiative. This offensive also failed.¹⁰⁷ By July, Hanoi had adopted a more cautious strategy and downgraded its military actions in the south. Meanwhile, the NLF resumed its low-profile posture.

Having failed to secure a military victory, Le Duan decided to attend the Paris peace talks. But he did not consult with his Chinese comrades, nor did he report to Ho Chi Minh, who was receiving medical treatment in Beijing.¹⁰⁸ China responded by reaffirming its opposition to negotiations with the United States. For instance, in several meetings with Pham Van Dong, Xuan Thuy, and Secretary of the Central Office for

¹⁰⁵ *Mao waijiao wenxuan*, 580-583.

¹⁰⁶ Li and Hao, *Wenhua dageming zhong de Renmin Jiefangjun*, 426.

¹⁰⁷ Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 130.

¹⁰⁸ Hoang Van Hoan, *Canghaiyisu: Huang Wenxuan Geming Huiyilu* [A Drop in the Ocean: Hoang Van Hoan's Revolutionary Reminiscences] (Beijing: Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 1987), 308.

South Vietnam (COSVN) Pham Hung, Zhou Enlai explicitly expressed his opposition to negotiations.¹⁰⁹

On his way back from Paris, Le Duc Tho stopped in Beijing and had a tense discussion with Chen Yi. Chen told Tho that Paris negotiations would cause more losses for the South Vietnamese people. He further accused Tho of “accepting the compromising and capitulationist proposals put forward by the Soviet revisionists.” Finally, Chen warned, “So...there is nothing more to talk about... We will therefore consider the changes of the situation in November and will have more comments.”¹¹⁰

In April 1969 Dong led a delegation to China and held several meetings with the Chinese leaders. In their first meeting, Zhou warned his North Vietnamese counterpart: “it is impossible to think that you can deceive the US and the revisionist Soviets with your tactics. We are somewhat concerned that you will be deceived by them instead.” Zhou also listed several scenarios in which the Soviets might press the North Vietnamese during the negotiation. In the second meeting, Kang Shen, a member of the CCP Politburo asked the North Vietnamese, “At present, there are about 6,000 Vietnamese students and trainees in China. Will it be better if these people can be organized into 10 combat units and be sent to the battlefield?... At the same time, China has some problems. We would like you to consider this matter with a view to better and more reasonably using your human resources.”¹¹¹ It appeared that Kang was suggesting the North Vietnamese to withdraw their trainees in China.

¹⁰⁹ *The Diplomatic History Research Office of the PRC Foreign Ministry, Zhou waijiao huodong dashiji [A Chronicle of Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Activities, 1949-1975] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1993), 307, 524. COSVN was the VWP's office in South Vietnam.*

¹¹⁰ “Discussion between Chen Yi and Le Duc Tho,” October 17, 1968, in *77 Conversations*, 136-37.

¹¹¹ “Discussion between Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, Pham Van Dong, Hoang Van Thai and Pham Hung address the COSVN delegation,” April 20, 1969, in *ibid.*, 156-57.

7.1.4 Accommodation as the Complement to China's Coercive Binding Strategy

While coercion was China's primary binding strategy, accommodation played a role as well. China used accommodative binding strategies for two reasons. First, simply exerting pressure on Hanoi could not guarantee the success of China's binding strategies. Assurance is indispensable as well. China needed to not only threaten North Vietnam, but also promise no punishment or even reward should North Vietnam complied with China's requests.

Under China's pressure, in 1966 North Vietnam promised that they would not negotiate with United States. China rewarded this with aid and reasserted security commitment. After receiving Ho's guarantee, China provided aid worth 700 million RMB, including 100 million as military aid and 600 million as food.¹¹² Meanwhile, echoing Ho's appeal of July 17, a Chinese statement praised Ho's appeal as a "heavy strike not only to U.S. imperialists, but also to whoever colluded with U.S. imperialists." The statement continued to assert, "U.S. invasion into Vietnam is an invasion into China. 700 million Chinese people are the backing for Vietnamese people; Chinese territory is the reliable rear area to Vietnamese people."¹¹³ Meanwhile, China dispatched the seventh detachment in December, to replace the second detachment and started the defense construction in the Red River delta.¹¹⁴

On January 28, 1967, Trinh gave an interview with an Australian journalist. After claiming the DRV's determination to fight, he suggested that "after the unconditional

¹¹² "Note on a Talk with the Soviet Ambassador, Comrade [Ilya] Shcherbakov, on 28 October 1966 in the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi," November 10, 1966, *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16, 392-93.

¹¹³ *Renmin Ribao*, July 23, 1966.

¹¹⁴ Han Huaizhi et al., *Dangdai Zhongguo Jundui de Junshigongzuo* [Contemporary Military Work of the PLA] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 1989), vol.1, 550.

cessation of U.S. bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV that there could be talks between the DRV and the United States.”¹¹⁵ Subsequently, Le Duan notified Chinese leaders that Hanoi had decided to enter negotiation with the United States.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, only after two weeks this round of negotiation failed, as the Vietnamese rejected U.S. offers. Immediately after this unsuccessful talk was ten-day negotiation in Beijing, which unblocked the Soviet shipment via Chinese territory and led to renewal of the 1965 transportation agreement between China and the Soviet Union.¹¹⁷

To illustrate their resolve of assisting Hanoi, Chinese leaders also stressed to their Vietnamese comrades how costly Chinese delivery of aid supplies was. For instance, when meeting with Dong in November 1968, Mao mentioned that to supply food to North Vietnamese forces in the South, China paid Cambodia for rice and road-fees exceeding \$20 million. Mao continued to remark, “It is worth spending for this.”¹¹⁸

Second, accommodative binding strategies helped China reinforce its leverage over North Vietnam. To achieve this goal, China invested a large amount of resources in North Vietnam’s rear area and stressed its role in North Vietnam’s war effort. China invested much resources in DRV’s northern provinces, especially those bordering China; the Chinese suggested their Vietnamese comrades to treat those regions as rear areas for the war in the south.¹¹⁹ On July 1, 1964, Zhou receiving a DRV delegation headed by Nguyen Con, vice chairman of the DRV State Planning Committee. Zhou suggested to

¹¹⁵ “Foreign Minister’s Interview with Burchett,” *Hanoi VNA International Service*, January 28, 1967, FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-67-020, JJJ1-JJJ2.

¹¹⁶ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet dispute on Aid to North Vietnam (1965-1968),” 7.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹⁸ “Discussion between Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong,” November 17, 1968, in *77 Conversations*, 137-52.

¹¹⁹ “Report of Discussion with Delegates from three Vietnamese provinces,” June 5, 1965, in Xiao and Li, eds. *Yunnan yu Yuanyue Kangmei (Dangan Wenxian)*, 47-51.

Con, “Regarding the distribution of industries, from the perspective of war, [you should] consider three fronts. Industries should be located in plain areas as well as in hills and rear areas...When making plans, you should prioritize agricultural projects, to feed your people.”¹²⁰

As for practice, between October 1965 and May 1966, four provinces (Guangdong, Hunan, Guangxi, Yunnan) had sent 146 specialists to the DRV’s northern provinces, helping construct water conservancy projects, build hydroelectric plants, and promote agricultural technology.¹²¹ Meanwhile, in 1966 the Yunnan provincial government dispatched three task groups to Lao Cai and Ha Giang provinces, assisting them to discover coal mines and design hydroelectric plants.¹²² Moreover, throughout this period, the Chinese repeatedly suggested their Vietnamese colleagues to focus their agricultural programs on increasing rice output.¹²³ For instance, in the discussion with a delegation from Lao Cai province, the Yunnan provincial government suggested their Vietnamese comrades to focus the agricultural program on increasing output of rice.¹²⁴

7.1.5 Mixed Results of China’s Binding strategies

In this period, China’s binding strategies achieved short-term success. However, these efforts could not prevent North Vietnam’s tendency to drift toward the Soviet Union. In the beginning of this period, the North Vietnamese leadership recognized China’s leverage clearly. In a conversation with Pham Van Dong in 1965, Shcherbakov complained that lack of coordination between Moscow and Beijing had caused

¹²⁰ Zhou Nianpu, vol.2, 654

¹²¹ “Briefing on Experts’ Work,” in Xiao and Li, *Yunnan yu Yuannan Kangmei*, 127-131.

¹²² “Report on Foreign Affairs,” April 6, 1966, in *ibid.*, 109-11

¹²³ “Our Opinions on Proposals from Delegates of Three Vietnamese provinces,” “Report on assisting Lao Cai, Ha Giang, and Lai Chau,” in *ibid.*, 218-21.

¹²⁴ “Report on assisting Lào Cai, Hà Giang, and Lai Châu,” in *ibid.*, 218-21.

difficulties for the Vietnamese people. The DRV premier replied, “To resolve this issue, one had to convince the Chinese and have patience. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union was far away.” Dong ended his remark with a rhetorical question: “What shall we do?”¹²⁵

Consequently, China’s coercive binding strategies against North Vietnam was effective. In August 1964, the DRV ambassador to China informed the Chinese Foreign Ministry that the DRV military had stopped inviting Soviet experts. In November, the Vietnamese general staff told the Soviet military attaché that there was no longer any need for Soviet military experts in Vietnam and they should leave. No replacements would be requested.¹²⁶

Moreover, China successfully kept North Vietnam from employing Soviet military hardware in the war. In July 1965, a representative of the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee complained that North Vietnamese had not used modern Soviet weapons, including missiles, anti-aircraft guns, and jet fighters, because Chinese advisors subverted the use of Soviet weapons. He continued to explain, “Under China’s pressure, the Vietnamese government does not allow Soviet pilots, missile specialists, and other specialists necessary for the use of modern military technology to enter the country.” He also accused the Chinese of preventing North Vietnamese forces in the south from using Soviet weapons, especially heavy weapons.¹²⁷

In addition, China’s binding strategies prevented the arrival of Soviet volunteers. Receiving pressure from Beijing, North Vietnamese leaders turned down the Soviet offer.

¹²⁵ “Note by the GDR Embassy in Hanoi on a Conversation with Ambassadors of the Other Socialist States in the Soviet Embassy on 2 April 1965,” April 25, 1965, in *CWIHP Bulletin* No. 16, 376-78.

¹²⁶ Top secret letter of the Soviet embassy in Hanoi to Moscow, “On the Political Situation in South Vietnam and the Position of the DRV,” Nov. 19, 1964, cited in Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 17.

¹²⁷ “Note on a Conversation with an Unnamed Representative of the International Department of the CPSU CC on the Situation in Vietnam [Excerpts],” July 9, 1965, in *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16, 384.

On March 26, the DRV Deputy Foreign Minister Hoang Van Loi told Shcherbakov that the NLF appreciated the Soviet support but did not yet need volunteers. Soviet volunteers would be requested when necessary.¹²⁸ On August 13, Le Duan visited China and told Mao that the “support from China is indispensable, it is indeed related to the fate of our motherland...The Soviet revisionists want to make us a bargaining chip; this has been very clear.”¹²⁹ Hanoi’s position was also confirmed by the Soviets. In September Polish delegates visited the Soviet embassy in Hanoi. Soviet diplomats told their Polish comrades, “Friendly relations between the DRV and China are currently almost absolute, mainly as a result of pressure from China.”¹³⁰

Moreover, China’s binding strategies made Hanoi flinch from negotiations. In the summer of 1966, Ho promised the Chinese leaders that Hanoi “would not have any talks with the Americans without consultation of the Chinese, and that they would not request volunteers from socialist countries without consultation.” Shcherbakov believed this resulted from China’s threat. He reported that otherwise, “[the Chinese] would withdraw their construction troops.”¹³¹ Soon after his visit to Beijing, Ho issued an appeal in which he claimed that the war could last ten, twenty years or longer. This appeal suggested a prolonged conflict, which was consistent with China’s stance.¹³² Meanwhile, on July 12

¹²⁸ Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 38.

¹²⁹ “Discussion between Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong,” October 05, 1964, in 77 Conversations, 28-29.

¹³⁰ “Note on a Conversation by Tarka, Jurgas and Milc at the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi [Excerpts],” September 10, 1964, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych (Archive of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs; AMSZ), Warsaw, Poland, zespól 24/71, wiazka 2,teczka D. II Wietnam 2421, 2-4. Translated from Polish by Lorenz Lüthi.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117707>

¹³¹ “Note on a Talk with the Soviet Ambassador, Comrade [Ilya] Shcherbakov, on 28 October 1966 in the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi,” November 10, 1966, in *CWHP Bulletin* no. 16, 392-93.

¹³² “Ho Chi Minh’s Appeal to the Vietnamese Nation to Fight Against the Americans,” July 17, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, The Vietnamese Foreign Ministry Archives, “Basic

Liberation Radio broadcast the communiqué of the NLF Central Committee presidium. It denounced the “U.S. deceitful trick of seeking peace in order to conceal its act of stepping up the aggressive war.” It also hailed the great achievements of the guerrilla warfare. In conclusion, the communiqué called to “step up the armed struggle” and “launch an extensive people’s warfare.”¹³³ In addition, Le Duan paid a visit to Beijing in the end of 1966. In the discussion, Zhou urged Hanoi to continue the war, at least until 1968. While Le Duan did not make any promise, he told Zhou that Hanoi was determined to end the war with “maximal advantages for itself.”¹³⁴ A few months later, Dong and Giap led a delegation to Beijing. Giap introduced the military situation in Vietnam and Hanoi’s military strategy to Zhou who stressed the importance of sticking to war. Dong and Giap also told Zhou that the “next dry season would be crucial.”¹³⁵ It is unclear how Zhou responded to this judgement. Nonetheless, both North Vietnamese leaders made a promise to continue the war.¹³⁶ This promise probably satisfied Zhou.

The relations with the NLF contributed to China’s success as well. According to a report of Jerzy Michalowski, the General Director of the Polish Foreign Ministry, the NLF leaders were “under great influence of the Chinese,” and leaders in Hanoi worried that if they negotiated with the United States, the “NLF could perceive this as a concession from the side of their northern allies.” Michalowski also mentioned that a

documents on diplomatic struggle from April 1965 to July 1980,” pages 7-10.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114434>

¹³³ “Communique of Conference of NLFSV Presidium,” *Liberation Radio* (Clandestine), July 12, 1966, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-66-135, KKK1-KKK5.

¹³⁴ Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 109.

¹³⁵ *Zhou Waijiao Dashiji*, 509-10.

¹³⁶ Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 109.

great part of armaments of the NLF were Chinese-produced as Soviet armaments remained in the DRV.¹³⁷

However, China's binding strategies were unable to eliminate North Vietnam's centrifugal tendency. Since 1967 the Soviet influence in Hanoi clearly started to surpass China's. For instance, China's harsh criticism against Le Duan did not prevent him from tilting toward the Soviet Union. In the end of 1966 Le Duan made several statements in which he talked approvingly about the Soviet relations Mongolia, India, and Japan. This suggests his swinging toward the Soviet Union, as Beijing perceived the Soviet policy toward those three states as an encirclement of China. Le Duan then downplayed China's aid by emphasizing on the Soviet aid: "The Soviet Union helps us from its heart and provides us with more than we can use, and China helps as well."¹³⁸ To add, North Vietnam entered the peace talk with the United States in early 1967, a move the Soviet Union favored but China were against.

In 1968, two major events suggested that North Vietnam was leaving China's orbit. First, despite China's opposition, in January the Tet Offensive started. According to a CIA estimate, the NLF forces and half of Hanoi's regular forces were committed to attack urban areas and U.S. military installations in South Vietnam.¹³⁹ In other words, it was a large-scale offensive attacking enemy's strongholds and abandoning countryside.

¹³⁷ "Reception by Soviet Vice Foreign Minister V. V. Kuznetsov for the General Director of the Polish Foreign Ministry, Cde. Jerzy Michalowski," January 24, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, fond 0100, opis 59, delo 5, papka 525, 1-6. Translated from Russian by Lorenz Lüthi. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117722>

¹³⁸ "Note of Comrade Bergold, East German Ambassador, with the Polish Ambassador in North Vietnam, Comrade Siedliecky," November 10, 1966, in *CWIHP Bulletin* no. 16, 393-94.

¹³⁹ CIA Intelligence Memorandum, "The Communist Tet Offensive," January 31, 1968, in Tet Declassified, document no. 00095175; "Communist Units Participating in Attacks During the Tet Offensive, 30 January through 13 February 1968," February 1968, in General CIA Records, document no. CIA-RDP78T02095R000500140001-8.

Moreover, it is not surprising that the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) used larger-caliber rockets, artillery, and PT-76 tanks all of which came from the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁰ Second, Hanoi's reaction to the Soviet invasion into Czechoslovakia disappointed Beijing. On August 23, Zhou delivered a speech at Romania's National Day reception. He denounced the Soviet leadership as "a gang of social-imperialists and social-fascists" and called the invasion the equivalent to Nazi Germany's aggression against Czechoslovakia.¹⁴¹ In contrast, *Nhan Dan* and *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* reproduced the full text of the Soviet statement on the invasion. Moreover, the DRV newspapers praised the action of the Soviet Union and other socialist states as the one to "defend the socialist regime and the state of Czechoslovakia."¹⁴²

After the Tet Offensive China began to realize that it was inevitable that North Vietnam broke away from China. For instance, when Chen Yi criticized Tho in October 1968, different from their discussions in previous years, this time Tho stroke back: "We will wait and see... We have gained experience over the past 15 years. Let reality justify." Moreover, when Chen admitted that signing the Geneva Accords was a mistake and used this example to dissuade his Vietnamese comrade from negotiation, Tho responded, the Vietnamese leaders made mistake in Geneva "because we listened to your advice."¹⁴³

On military strategies, Chinese leaders softened their insistence on the protracted warfare. Meeting with Ho in February 1968, Zhou suggested, "Consider organizing one and two or three field corps, each including thirty to forty thousand troops. Try to

¹⁴⁰ Michael Lee Lanning and Dan Cragg, *Inside the Vc and the Vna: The Real Story of North Vietnam's Armed Forces* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 121.

¹⁴¹ "Premier Chou En-lai's Important Speech at Rumania's National Day Reception," *Peking Review*, Supplement to no. 34 (August 23, 1968), III.

¹⁴² "Papers Run TASS Statement on Czechoslovakia," *Hanoi VNA International Service*, August 22, 1968, in FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-68-165, K1.

¹⁴³ "Discussion between Chen Yi and Le Duc Tho," October 17, 1968, in 77 *Conversations*, 136-37.

eliminate in each battle the enemy's complete unit of four to five thousand soldiers. These corps should be able to operate far from the home base and to fight from this theater to another one. In order to engage isolate enemy units, they can adopt the methods of digging trenches to get close to the enemy and conducting nighttime and close-range combat so as to render ineffective the firepower of the enemy's aircraft and artillery. Construct trenches in three to four directions at the same time.”¹⁴⁴ Without the context, it is hard to tell whether Zhou meant what he said, or he just behaved diplomatically. However, it is possible that when observing Hanoi’s irrevocable decision of using large units, Zhou decided not to irritate Ho.

7.2 From Coercion to Accommodation, 1970-1973

7.2.1 Soviet Wedge Strategies

During this period, the Soviet Union continued its large-scale military and economic aid to North Vietnam. According to a Soviet embassy report, the PAVN was equipped most by the Soviet Union. Between 1969 and 1971 the Soviet Union and North Vietnam concluded seven agreements on aid and economic cooperation. In 1971 Moscow and Hanoi signed two agreements on supplemental aid “to strengthen the DRV defense.”¹⁴⁵ In addition, at the DRV’s request, in 1971 Kosygin promised to assist its construction plan. Moreover, the Soviet premier agreed to send specialists to help make national economic plans and participate the construction.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Zhou Nianpu, vol.3, 217.

¹⁴⁵ “Basic Agreements between the USSR and the DRV,” cited in Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 215, 31.

¹⁴⁶ Political letter from Shcherbakov on “the DRV’s Indochina policy and the Soviet task based on the resolution of the 24th CPSU Congress,” May 21, 1971, in Shen et al. eds., *Sulian Lishidangan Xuanbian*, vol. 31, 456

Table 7.5. *Soviet Aid to North Vietnam, 1970 to 1973 (million U.S. Dollars)*

	1970	1971	1972	1973
Military	100	190	480	210
Economic	100	120	265	115

Source: CIA Intelligence Memorandum, “Communist Military and Economic Aid to North Vietnam, 1970-1974” January 3, 1975, 4, in The Vietnam Collection, document no. 0001166499.

Table 7.5 illustrates the increase in both Soviet military and economic assistance between 1970 and 1972. Those two numbers dropped in 1973 when the Vietnam War ended. Accompanying with aid were Soviet commitments. The Soviet Union signaled its support of North Vietnam’s war efforts. For instance, responding to U.S. bombings in the beginning of 1970, Kosygin announced that the “Soviet Union will draw the appropriate conclusions in connection with the barbaric American air raids on North Vietnam and...will give every possible support to the peoples of Indochina in repulsing the armed imperialist intervention.”¹⁴⁷ Moscow also endorsed Hanoi’s proposals for the Paris talks. On July 1, 1971, Nguyen Thi Binh, Foreign Minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of the Republic of South Vietnam (North Vietnam created the PRG as a diplomatic disguise for the NLF), announced a seven-point proposal in Paris. It included a deadline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and North Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam, and unification of Vietnam.¹⁴⁸ At the same day Shcherbakov met Pham Van Cuong, deputy Foreign Minister of the DRV, guaranteed his North

¹⁴⁷ “Kosygin on Problems in Indochina,” *Moscow TASS International Service*, January 2, 1970, FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-71-001, A11.

¹⁴⁸ “RGRSV Delegate Announces New Peace Initiatives at Paris Session,” July 1, 1971, FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-71-128, K1-K3.

Vietnamese comrade that Hanoi's new proposal had "full support" of the Soviet Union. He also notified Cuong that Moscow had informed Pham Van Dong of the Soviet decision to provide additional aid to the DRV.¹⁴⁹

7.2.2 China's Leverage was Diminishing

A combination of increasing Soviet assistance, Hanoi's changed military strategy and getting upper hand in the war, and decreasing U.S. threat to North Vietnam undermined China's leverage over North Vietnam. The tide of war has turned to North Vietnam's advantage in 1970. First, Hanoi's position in Cambodia was strengthened. Before the March coup, the Lon Nol/Sirik Matak government attempted to constrain the PLAN/NLF presence on Cambodia soil.¹⁵⁰ However, the coup changed the situation. Sihanouk, now in exile, had to rely on the support of both China and North Vietnam. In April China convened a summit meeting of the Indochinese people near Guangzhou. While China pledged to provide a rear area for struggle against the United States, Sihanouk issued a declaration, formally permitting the PAVN and the NLF forces to use Cambodia territory.¹⁵¹

Second, North Vietnam was getting upper hand in Laos and central and southern Vietnam. The PAVN and the Pathet Lao launched an offensive in February 1970 to drive the Laotian government forces out of the Plain of Jar. Two months later, the PAVN pushed westward and seized Attapeu and Saravane, two provincial capitals that were critical locations to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. As a result, North Vietnam successfully

¹⁴⁹ "Conversation between Shcherbakov and Pham Van Cuong, deputy Foreign Minister of the DRV," on July 1, 1971, in Shen et al. eds., *Sulian Lishidangan Xuanbian*, vol. 31, 471-74.

¹⁵⁰ "Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," March 17, 1970, Document 202, in *FRUS, 1969-1976, vol. VI, Vietnam, January 1969-July 1970*, 683-86.

¹⁵¹ Xie, *Zhongguo Waijiaoshi*, 356-57. Truong Nhu Tang, *Journal of a Vietcong* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), 147.

increased its capability to deliver supplies to the south and protect this logistical system from U.S. air interdiction.¹⁵² The PAVN further pushed into southern Laos in 1971.¹⁵³ Trying to stop this trend, the South Vietnamese troops, with U.S. air support, invaded southern Laos in February. Nonetheless, the PAVN soldiers, equipped with heavy artillery and tanks, outnumbered the South Vietnamese troops. This operation became a quick failure as the South Vietnamese forces retreated hastily by the end of the month.¹⁵⁴ Subsequently, the PAVN redoubled its military efforts.¹⁵⁵ In March 1972, Hanoi launched the Spring Offensive, attacking the Central Highlands and Nam Bo lowlands and crossing the Cambodia border northwest of Saigon. According to a Vietnamese document, during the Spring Offensive South Vietnam lost about 200,000 soldiers and a vast territory.¹⁵⁶

On the other hand, the United States had signaled its intention to withdraw from Indochina. On June 7, 1969, President Nixon announced withdraw of 25,000 U.S. troops beginning in thirty days.¹⁵⁷ Between June and December the United States had withdrawn more than 60,000 soldiers. Subsequently, on December 15, Nixon announced an additional reduction of 50,000 soldiers which would have been completed by April 1970.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Soutchay Vongsavanh, *RLG Military Operations and Activities in the Laotian Panhandle* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), 54-57, 62.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

¹⁵⁴ Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam*, 203.

¹⁵⁵ Vongsavanh, *RLG Military Operations and Activities in the Laotian Panhandle*, 61-62. George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 1996), 265.

¹⁵⁶ "Vietnam: The Anti-U.S. Resistance War for National Salvation 1954-1975: Military Events," FBIS, JPRS 80968, June 3, 1982, 146-48.

¹⁵⁷ *New York Times*, June 20, 1969.

¹⁵⁸ *New York Times*, December 15 and 16, 1969.

As a result, China's assessment on the prospect of the war began to change in the end of 1968. When meeting with Dong on November 17, 1968, Mao conveyed a relatively optimistic estimate on the prospect of the war in Vietnam. He summarized, "The U.S. cannot prolong the war. On average every war they have fought last about four years. Vietnamese people can take advantage of their domestic contradictions... A U.S. journalist wrote an article which argued the U.S. have fallen into a trap in Vietnam and the current problem is how to climb out of the trap. Therefore, your struggle is promising." While still emphasizing the necessity of fighting, Mao showed his approval of negotiations: "I agree with your strategy of negotiating and fighting. Some comrades worry that the US will deceive you. I do not think so. Our Comrade Zhou said: If Nixon cannot solve the Vietnam problem in the next two years, he will be in trouble."¹⁵⁹ In 1969, while still insisting that Hanoi cannot gain the victory at the negotiating table, the Chinese began to realize that Hanoi's victory was inevitable. On April 29, Li Xiannian met with Le Duc Tho in Beijing. Li stated, "The problem in the war in South Vietnam is not that of a big or a small victory but of the final [victory]."¹⁶⁰

Subsequently, China viewed the war in Indochina as less threatening. In February 1970, Zhou sent a message to Nixon through Pakistani leaders: "The possibility of expansion of the Vietnam War is seen as having lessened."¹⁶¹ When the United States invaded Cambodia in May 1970, Mao issued a statement at a mass rally on Tiananmen Square. While declaring China's support for Cambodia, Mao's statement did not include

¹⁵⁹ *Mao Junshi Wengao*, vol.3, 345-47. "Discussion between Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong," November 17, 1968, in *77 Conversations*, 143-44.

¹⁶⁰ "Discussion between Li Xiannian and Le Duc Tho," April 29, 1969, in *77 Conversations*, 157.

¹⁶¹ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 689.

any specific security commitment.¹⁶² As Kissinger analyzed, this statement offered “only “warm support” to the three peoples of Indo-China, without even the usual phrases about China being a “rear area” for the struggle...It makes no threats, offers no commitments.”¹⁶³ Subsequently, responding to the U.S. bombing of Laos in 1971, vice Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua told Norwegian Ambassador to China Ole Aalgard that Beijing was aware of a new trend in the U.S. policy and sooner or later the Chinese and Americans would sit down and talk. Qiao requested Aalgard to convey this conversation to U.S. leaders.¹⁶⁴ China’s assessment contrasted sharply with its estimate on the prospect of the war in Vietnam in the previous period. For instance, when meeting with Dong in April 1967, Zhou explained to his Vietnamese counterpart, “We indeed should consider two or three scenarios. First, the war may continue and may even further expand... When we assess the prospect of the war, we should prepare for its continuation and further expansion. Another possibility is that the enemy may blockade the coastline.... The third scenario... to defeat the enemy, forcing him to recognize his defeat and to withdraw from Vietnam... This is *impossible*.”¹⁶⁵

Perceiving Hanoi’s final victory as inevitable, Beijing realized its leverage had diminished. First, as the United States withdrew its ground troops, it was less threatening to Hanoi. Consequently, the rear area that China provided to North Vietnam became less important. Once the war ended, North Vietnam would no longer need to depend on China. Second, China had lost food supply as its leverage to coerce North Vietnam.

¹⁶² “People of the World, Unite and Defeat the U.S. Aggressors and All Their Running Dogs,” *Peking Review*, Special Issue (May 23, 1970).

¹⁶³ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 695.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 706.

¹⁶⁵ “Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong,” April 10, 1967, in *77 Conversations*, 101.

According to a CIA estimate, as early as in the first half of 1968, Hanoi had had at least a three-week reserve of rice and wheat. Furthermore, it believed that the Soviet Union could deliver food to North Vietnam by sea.¹⁶⁶ Lack of statistics on China's food supply to North Vietnam after 1969 makes it difficult to compare food aid from China and the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, it seems that the Soviet Union drastically increased its food exports after 1968, as illustrated in Table 7.6. Therefore, it was quite probable that North Vietnam less relied on food imports from China.

Table 7.6. *Soviet Food Exports to North Vietnam (tons)*

	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Food exports	241,700	226,975 ^a	430,228 ^b	301,300	30,700 ^c	304,174 ^d

Source: Fforde, *The Agrarian Question in North Vietnam, 1974-1979*, 214.

Notes: a: it included 1,975 tons of wheat and 225,000 tons of wheat flour;

b: it included 4,128 tons of wheat and 426,100 tons of wheat flour;

c: it included 1,300 tons of wheat flour and 29,400 tons of rice;

d: it included 251,265 tons of wheat flour and 52,809 tons of rice.

Third, the Soviet Union adjusted its economic aid policy, emphasizing more on supporting North Vietnam's infrastructural and manufactural construction. This undermined the role of Chinese economic aid in constructing infrastructural facilities in North Vietnam's rear areas. For instance, in a meeting between Shcherbakov and Pham Van Dong in March 1971, the Soviet ambassador suggested to Dong that previous economic aid agreements between two states were too ambiguous: "Those agreements neither set deadlines for construction and equipment supplies, nor delineate responsibilities of Moscow and Hanoi. We should specify these issues in the future." Dong agreed to this proposal.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ CIA Intelligence Information Cable, "The Views of North Vietnamese Leaders on Peace Negotiations," May 1, 1968, LBJL, NSF, Country File, Vietnam, Talks with Hanoi, box 96.

¹⁶⁷ Political letter from Shcherbakov on "the DRV's Indochina policy and the Soviet task based on the resolution of the 24th CPSU Congress," 456.

Therefore, during this period China adjusted its objective in North Vietnam, from extending its influence to preventing the deterioration of the bilateral relations. For instance, General Alexander Haig, Deputy Assistant to the President for national security affairs, led the U.S. advance team to Beijing in 1972; Zhou met Haig on January 4. During the conversation, Zhou told Haig that China's aid to North Vietnam was the minimum required to avoid a deterioration of China-Vietnam relations.¹⁶⁸

7.2.3 China's Fear of Abandonment

While China had certainly felt the Soviet threat in the previous period, since 1969 this threat became more imminent. In February, Zhenbao Island clash broke out. Immediately after the border clash, the Soviet Union hinted threats of both conventional and nuclear attacks against China. On March 15, Moscow Radio Peace and Progress broadcast, "The destruction range of these rockets is practically unlimited. They are capable of carry nuclear warheads many times stronger than all the explosives...The Soviet Army...can maneuver with lightning speed and [word indistinct] the enemy's rear." It continued to discredit Chinese nuclear weapons: "Does he (Mao Zedong) have at his disposal rockets capable of carry[ing] nuclear warheads? As we know, the Chinese Armed Forces have no such weapon."¹⁶⁹ Subsequently, a series of border clashes occurred in July and August; the most serious one probably was the Soviet retaliatory attack at Lake Zhalanashkol.¹⁷⁰ In the middle of August, Moscow informed its Eastern European allies that the Soviet Union was prepared to deliver a nuclear strike against Chinese nuclear facilities; The

¹⁶⁸ Robert Ross interview with Alexander Haig, in Robert S. Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969-1989* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 49.

¹⁶⁹ "'Fear of China' Disclaimed," *Moscow Radio Peace and Progress*, March 15, 1969, FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-69-052, A6.

¹⁷⁰ Nicholas Khoo, *Collateral Damage: Sino-Soviet Rivalry and the Termination of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 57.

Soviets then deliberately leaked this information to foreign intelligence. The Soviet Union also placed its Strategic Air Force units in the Far East on combat ready alert.¹⁷¹ On August 28 *Pravda* editorial warned, “The Peking leaders’ recklessness, however, and the atmosphere of war hysteria which they foster complicate the entire international situation.... War, should it break out in present conditions and with present-day devices, because of the lethal weapons and the present means of their delivery would not leave a single continent unaffected.”¹⁷²

Responding to the Soviet threats, China increased its war preparation. On the Ninth CCP Congress, Lin Biao reported, “U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism are always trying to isolate China; this is China’s honor.... We must make full preparations, preparations against their launching a conventional war and... a large-scale nuclear war.”¹⁷³ A few days later, Mao announced that “we are prepared for war.”¹⁷⁴ In October Lin Biao issued the “Urgent Directive,” placing the PLA on full alert, preparing for a Soviet attack.¹⁷⁵

Against this backdrop, in June 1969 Brezhnev proposed, “We believe the course of events is also placing on the agenda the task of creating a system of collective security in Asia.”¹⁷⁶ Shortly before this proposal, Mikhail Kapitsa, chief of the Southeast Asian desk in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, started an “unusual” trip to Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, and Burma. During the visit Kapitsa probably tested these states’ reactions to

¹⁷¹ Viktor M. Gobarev, “Soviet Policy toward China: Developing Nuclear Weapons 1949–1969,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 12, no. 4 (1999): 46.

¹⁷² “The Adventurist Course of Peking,” *Pravda*, August 28, 1969, FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-FRB-69-167, A7.

¹⁷³ “Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China,” *Peking Review*, no. 18 (1969), 16-34.

¹⁷⁴ Mao wengao, vol. 13, 38-41.

¹⁷⁵ *Zhou Nianpu*, vol. 2, 329.

¹⁷⁶ *Pravda*, June 9, 1969.

the collective security idea.¹⁷⁷ This proposal, as an attempt to enable the Soviet Union to engage in Asian affairs more actively, further alerted China. Although the Soviet Union avoided inviting North Vietnam publicly to this new security initiative, Hanoi certainly played an important role in the Soviet Southeast Asia policy. As a Soviet document wrote, “We cannot exclude the possibility that Indochina becomes a key for our access to entire Southeast Asia. Not to mention that besides Vietnam, we have no one else to rely on.”¹⁷⁸

Chinese leaders saw this danger. In a conversation with Zhou Enlai, Haig explained, “The continuation of war in Southeast Asia will enable the Soviet Union to increase its influence in Hanoi and thus to encircle China.” Zhou replied that the “Soviet intervention in Indochina was an inevitable outcome of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement.... I have discussed this issue with Dr. Kissinger before. We are prepared to bear the consequences of the rapprochement. It is no surprise to us.”¹⁷⁹ As it suggested, the Chinese understood that the U.S-China rapprochement would result in the greater Soviet intervention in Indochina.

Under this circumstance, the threat that North Vietnam dissenting China imposed to China’s security heightened, and China was worried about this threat. Responding to this, when meeting with North Vietnamese leaders in March 1971, Zhou Enlai tried to persuade them from coordinating Hanoi’s foreign policy with the Soviet one. After listing

¹⁷⁷ Arnold L. Horelick, “The Soviet Union’s “Asian Collective Security” Proposal: A Club in Search of Members,” March 1974, Rand Paper Series, P-5195, 4, footnote 4.

¹⁷⁸ Political letter from Shcherbakov on “the DRV’s Indochina policy and the Soviet task based on the resolution of the 24th CPSU Congress,” 455-70.

¹⁷⁹ Wei Shiyan, “Heige Shuai Xianqianzu wei Nikesong Fanghuaanpai de Jingguo” [What Happened when Haig Led the U.S. advance team to arrange Nixon’s visit of China], in The Diplomatic History Research Office of the PRC Foreign Ministry, *XinZhongguo Waijiao Fengyun* [*Diplomatic Turbulence of the PRC*] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1994), vol. 3, 73-75.

the Soviet policies toward East Germany, Cuba, the Middle East, and Japan, and the Soviet responses when U.S. spy ships and aircraft intruded North Korea, Zhou reasoned with the North Vietnamese, “United actions with the Soviet Union will not work... We do not support the idea that subordinating other countries’ problems to one’s own foreign policy.”¹⁸⁰ As a result, accommodative binding strategies became China’s choice.

7.2.4 China Accommodated North Vietnam

China mainly relied on accommodation to resist the expansion of the Soviet influence in North Vietnam. First, China enhanced its efforts to provide aid to North Vietnam. In November 1970, Mao ordered to increase aid supplies to North Vietnam from 2 million RMB to 5 billion.¹⁸¹ Subsequently, the Ministry of Foreign Trade issued a notice to all import and export companies, instructing them to clear up all the outstanding orders of aid supplies to North Vietnam accumulated since 1967.¹⁸²

Subsequently, when Le Thanh Nghi and his aide Le Ban requested more economic aid for postwar reconstruction in 1971, China accepted eight of their requests and postpone other four projects to 1972 because the whole package of projects would cost about 150 million RMB.¹⁸³ The agreement signed after Nghi’s trip increased both military and economic aid.¹⁸⁴ Between May 18 and 25, 1972, a national conference in Beijing, including chiefs of twenty-six provinces and 224 state-owned enterprises, discussed how to better meet Hanoi’s aid demands. They agreed to add 93 aid projects to

¹⁸⁰ Zhou waijiao huodong dashiji, 580.

¹⁸¹ Li, “The Sino-Soviet Dispute over Assistance for Vietnam’s Anti-American War, 1965-1972,” 305.

¹⁸² Ministry of Foreign Trade, Instruction, “On Free Aid to Vietnam in 1971,” November 14, 1970, Office of Foreign Aid Files, 1.1, 23, Ministry of Railways Archives, 1-3, cited in Zhang, *Beijing’s Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 236.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 237.

¹⁸⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, February 15, 1.

North Vietnam, making the total number of aid projects up to 191.¹⁸⁵ Throughout 1972, China and North Vietnam had signed three agreements, providing military, economic, and technological aid free of charge.¹⁸⁶ In May, China started to construct five four-inch-wide pipelines from Pingxiang and Fangchengang to North Vietnam. In total, these pipelines delivered 1.3 million tons of petroleum to meet North Vietnam's needs.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, in November Nghi asked China to lend and transport heavy weapons which the Soviet Union promised but yet shipped. A few days later, China informed Le Ban that Beijing would deliver heavy weapons and munitions the NLF needed.¹⁸⁸ In total, according to a Chinese source, between 1971 and 1973, China had provided the greatest quantity of aid compared to any previous period. In total, China had signed aid agreements worth 9 billion RMB during this period.¹⁸⁹

In addition, China stepped up its commitment to North Vietnam. In March 1971 Zhou led a delegation to visit Hanoi. Prior to the departure, Zhou held a CCP Central Committee meeting to discuss the text of the statement this delegation would issue in Hanoi. Zhou suggested to add one line: "The Chinese people will make the maximal sacrifice to fully support Vietnam's struggle against the United States." When reporting to Mao, Zhou wrote that adding this line would signal China's resolve of strengthening its assistance to North Vietnam. Mao agreed to this suggestion.¹⁹⁰ During the visit, Zhou reassured North Vietnamese leaders that China viewed the U.S. threats to the DRV as

¹⁸⁵ State Planning Commission to Zhou Enlai, Ye Jianying, and Li Xiannian, Report, May 25, 1972, Jisheng Files, 1972, 122, State Planning Commission Archives, 1-8, cited in Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 238.

¹⁸⁶ *Renmin Ribao*, January 23, June 29, and November 27, 1972

¹⁸⁷ Li and Hao, *Wenhua dageming zhong de Renmin Jiefangjun*, 426.

¹⁸⁸ Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 239.

¹⁸⁹ Xue Mouhong and Pei Jianzhang eds., *Dangdai Zhongguo Waijiao [Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy]* (Beijing: Shehuikexue chubanshe, 1988), 162.

¹⁹⁰ *Zhou Nianpu*, vol.3, 441.

threats to China, and Chinese people would provide necessary aid to Indochinese people. Moreover, Zhou announced that China would provide additional aid to the DRV in 1971.¹⁹¹ In August, when returning from Paris to Hanoi, Le Duc Tho stopped in Beijing. Meeting with Zhou, Tho received the Chinese leader's reassurance that China had no intention of selling out its comrades and would not interfere in how North Vietnamese "run their house." In the conversation, Zhou also expressed China's solid support of the VWP and the PRG's seven points of the Paris talk.¹⁹² After Kissinger's secret visit to China, Zhou flew to Hanoi, reassured his Vietnamese comrades that China prioritized the settlement of the Vietnamese problem: "Indochina is the crucial issue, while the Taiwan issue will be resolved sooner or later."¹⁹³ In March 1972, immediately after the Chinese-U.S. summit, Zhou again visited Hanoi, reaffirming the priority of the Indochina issue: "Normalization of the Sino-U.S. relationship cannot be achieved without the settlement of the Vietnamese problem." Zhou further apologized for not endorsing Hanoi's decision to begin peace negotiations in 1968.¹⁹⁴

Responding to the escalation of U.S. bombing in 1972, Zhou Enlai reasserted China's commitment to Nguyen Tien, the DRV Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing: "Wherever the United States invaded, it will be hit hard. China firmly supported North Vietnam...to carry the war to the end."¹⁹⁵ In May, Hanoi requested Beijing's assistance to clear mines the United States laid in North Vietnam's harbors. On the same day Zhou Enlai summoned the PLAN commanders to prepare for this task. Meanwhile, the Chinese

¹⁹¹ "Minute of the Discussion between Valerian A. Zorin and Vo Van Sung," March 17, 1971, in Shen et al. eds., *Sulian Lishidangan Xuanbian*, vol. 31, 452.

¹⁹² Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam*, 217.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁹⁴ Yun Shui, *Chushi Qiguo Jishi: Jiangjun Dashi Wang Youping* [Record of Diplomatic Missions to Seven Countries: General Ambassador Wang Youping] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1996), 138.

¹⁹⁵ *Zhou Waijiao Dashiji*, 627.

government issued a statement condemning the U.S. mining and promising Chinese support of North Vietnam. In late May, a Chinese Mine Investigation Team arrived in Haiphong and Chinese vessels started to clear mines since July.¹⁹⁶

Moreover, China lifted some restriction on the transport of aid supplies from the Soviet Union and other Eastern European states. In a conversation with Soviet ambassador to France Valerian A. Zorin, the DRV delegate-general in France Vo Van Sung confirmed that Zhou Enlai had fully pledged to make sure the Soviet aid would be transported uninterruptedly through Chinese territory.¹⁹⁷ In January, March, and April 1972, China signed three agreements governing the transportation of military aid from the Soviet Union and other socialist states to North Vietnam. Subsequently, Zhou suggested his Vietnamese colleagues to urge the Soviet Union and other states to expedite these shipments.¹⁹⁸ In October and November, at the DRV's request, China replied that it would "reprioritize" the transport of Soviet weapons to South Vietnam first and suspend the transport of other aid materials.¹⁹⁹

In addition to increasing aid, China finally dropped its objection to negotiations between Hanoi and Washington. On September 17, 1970 when the PRG presented its new eight-point peace plan in the Paris Peace Talks, Zhou and Pham Van Dong had a meeting. After Dong introduced Hanoi's position on negotiation, Zhou stressed that relations between China and North Vietnam were ones between rear and front. He then assured that as China had satisfied all North Vietnam's requests, China would try its best

¹⁹⁶ History of the Navy Editing Committee, *Haijun Shi [History of the Navy]* (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1989), 178-82. Yun, *Chushi Qiguo Jishi*, 142-49.

¹⁹⁷ "Minute of the Discussion between Valerian A. Zorin and Vo Van Sung," March 17, 1971, in Shen et al. eds., *Sulian Lishidangan Xuanbian*, vol. 31, 451.

¹⁹⁸ Li, "The Sino-Soviet Dispute over Assistance for Vietnam's Anti-American War, 1965-1972," 306.

¹⁹⁹ Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 238-39.

to help in the future. Subsequently, Zhou request that China send not only “high-level officials, but also representatives of the armed forces, revolutionaries, and workers to Vietnam as important steps to prepare for war.” He reasoned that there was an encirclement against China and Indochina was the only place where the fighting was undergoing so that the Chinese need to “look to the front in Vietnam.”²⁰⁰

A week later, North Vietnamese leaders received China’s full approval of negotiations. When discussing the Pairs negotiations, Mao told Dong, “I see that you can conduct the diplomatic struggle and you do it well. Negotiations have been going on for two years. At first, we were a little worried that you were trapped. We are no longer worried.” He further emphasized China’s support for North Vietnam: “We have held the provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan, [and] Guangzhou responsible for helping you as well as the rest of the Southeast Asian region. The entire production by these provinces is for you.... We must give you what you want.” To add, Mao also mentioned that China would send some personnel to North Vietnam to prepare for a U.S. attack on China.²⁰¹

During the discussion, Mao tried to amend China-North Vietnam relations by blaming former Chinese Ambassador Zhu Qiwen whose tenure was from April 1962 to May 1969: “Zhu Qiwen turned out to be a Guomindang agent. He caused troubles during the time he served in Vietnam. He is not a good person... I heard that some Chinese

²⁰⁰ “Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong,” September 17, 1970, in *77 Conversations*, 171-73.

²⁰¹ “Discussion between Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong,” September 23, 1970, in *77 Conversations*, 174-76.

living in Vietnam committed wrongdoings... Yet, the Chinese embassy was protecting them and the Embassy listened to them. Maybe there is corruption in the embassy.”²⁰²

Besides all these policies of accommodation, China still exerted pressure on North Vietnam occasionally, complementing its accommodative binding strategies. For instance, China turned down several Soviet and North Vietnamese requests of transporting aid supplies, as a reminder that China still controlled the transit of aid supplies over its territory. In early May 1972, the North Vietnamese notified China of the Soviet request of unloading its aid at Chinese ports and using Chinese railways to transport it to North Vietnam. However, China rejected the request. Moreover, on May 20 Zhou emphasized to Le Ban that China still refused to accept Soviet ships. Only after Hanoi’s repeated request did Beijing allowed Soviet ships to enter Chinese ports.²⁰³ In June, when Hanoi requested that China permit to increase the agreed cross-border transport by 33 percent, China rejected it and claimed China would prioritize shipping its own aid to North Vietnam.²⁰⁴

7.2.5 Results of China’s Binding Strategies

Beijing’s efforts did not prevent North Vietnam from tilting toward the Soviet Union. At its eighteenth plenum in 1970, for the first time the VWP placed diplomatic and political struggle at the same level with the military struggle. The VWP leadership also emphasized the role of the Paris talks in the war. According to the General Staff to the

²⁰² Ibid., 175.

²⁰³ Li, “The Sino-Soviet Dispute over Assistance for Vietnam’s War,” 309.

²⁰⁴ Minutes of meetings between Li Qiang and Le Ban, July 6, 1972, Office Files, 1972, Ministry of Railways Archives, cited in Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 238.

CPSU Central Committee, this changed position of the VWP was a result of Soviet policies.²⁰⁵

Furthermore, in a letter to the CPSU Central Committee, Shcherbakov wrote, “the DRV’s policies (though slowly) were becoming advantageous to us [the Soviet Union] ... Under this circumstance, we are more likely to establish our policy in Indochina.” On the China-Vietnam relations, he explained, “Decline of prestige in Indochina and the world compelled Beijing to make its Indochina policy more flexible.” He also mentioned that the North Vietnamese viewed the Sino-U.S. rapprochement as Beijing exerting pressure on the Indochina affairs. To summarize, Shcherbakov wrote, “The strategy of our Vietnamese friends is, when dealing with important issues, especially the coordination of Vietnamese and Indochinese affairs, they will not make any concession [to Chinese], and defend their independent position on these issues.”²⁰⁶

In addition, North Vietnamese leaders began to criticize their Chinese comrades in private conversations. For instance, in the autumn of 1971, Le Duc Tho told Ieng Sary, a Cambodian leader, “We will always remember the experience in 1954. Comrade Zhou Enlai admitted his mistakes in the Geneva Conference of 1954. Two or three years ago, Comrade Mao did so... We have proposed that the Chinese comrades admit their mistakes and now I am telling you, the Cambodian comrades, about this problem of history.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 216.

²⁰⁶ Political letter from Shcherbakov on “the DRV’s Indochina policy and the Soviet task based on the resolution of the 24th CPSU Congress,” 455-70.

²⁰⁷ Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam*, 224.

7.3 Alternative Explanations

The first alternative explanation I evaluate here is Izumikawa's theory of binding strategies. As Izumikawa argues, when the dividing state uses a reward wedging strategy, the binder state is likely to use reward binding rather than coercive binding because the latter can antagonize the target state and thus defeat the purpose of a binding strategy. When the binder does not have sufficient ability to reward its ally, it then has to use coercive binding.²⁰⁸ According to his definition, China's reward power was inferior to the Soviet one. The Soviet Union was able to provide North Vietnam with advanced military equipment that China was unable to supply. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union could outbid China's economic assistance to North Vietnam. Consequently, Izumikawa's theory would predict that China had to choose coercive binding strategies between 1965 and 1973.

However, China's behavior deviated from this prediction. Indeed, China used accommodative binding strategies (Izumikawa terms as reward binding) after the Tet Offensive. More importantly, China changed its binding strategies during the Vietnam War. Before the Tet Offensive, China chose coercive binding strategies but turned to accommodative ones after the Tet. Izumikawa's theory fails to explain this change, because the value of his independent variable did not change. On the contrary, after the Tet Offensive Hanoi stressed more on large-scale battles so that Soviet advanced equipment became more important. This further undermined China's reward power. As such, according to Izumikawa's theory, if China chose coercive binding strategies before

²⁰⁸ Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-U.S. Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s," 110-11.

the Tet, it would have even stronger incentives to use coercive binding after the Tet. However, China did not do so. This suggests that factors other than relative reward power drove China's choices.

Second, Zhang Shuguang provides a domestic politics explanation for China's choices of strategies. Zhang argued that after Ho Chi Minh's death in 1969, the pro-Soviet faction in Hanoi became in charge and China worried that this change would lead Hanoi to tilt toward the Soviet Union. To offset enhanced Soviet influence, China thus increased its aid to Hanoi.²⁰⁹

This argument contains two flaws. First, Ho's death did not mark the shift in the domestic balance of power between pro-China and pro-Soviet factions. Actually, since the VWP's Ninth Plenum in 1964, Le Duan had marginalized Ho Chi Minh in the party leadership.²¹⁰ Meanwhile, although treading carefully, Le Duan showed his pro-Soviet tendency after 1965. If Hanoi's internal power struggle was a major factor that shaped China's strategy toward North Vietnam, Chinese leaders would have adjusted their strategies in 1964 and 1965. Second, even if the balance between pro-China and pro-Soviet factions had fundamentally changed in 1969, this argument cannot explain China's coercive binding strategies before 1969. China's pressure on North Vietnam would heighten the latter's threat perception of China and thus lend the pro-Soviet faction justifications for tilting toward the Soviet Union. Consequently, China's coercive binding strategies could have backfired. The domestic politics argument does not provide an explanation for why Chinese leaders would take such risk.

²⁰⁹ Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949-1991*, 236-38.

²¹⁰ Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam*, 66-78.

7.4 Conclusion

In sum, the North Vietnam case supports my theory. After Brezhnev took office, the Soviet Union attempted to drive a wedge between China and North Vietnam. In response, China used binding strategies to counter the Soviet attempt. Its strong leverage over Hanoi prompted China to choose coercive binding strategies. China's geographic proximity and economic assistance meant that Hanoi had to rely on China in the Vietnam War. As a result, China worried less about the possibility that Hanoi will defect and thus preferred coercive binding. Meanwhile, China did not completely cut off its economic and food assistance to North Vietnam. Nonetheless, China's leverage began to weaken after the Tet Offensive. As North Vietnam were gradually gaining the upper hand on the battlefield, the importance of China as a rear region declined. Meanwhile, the Soviet economic aid surpassed the Chinese. Consequently, China adjusted its primary binding strategies from coercive to accommodative.

Moreover, this case serves as a hard case for my theory. The Vietnam War posed a serious threat to China's southern border so that it is critical for China to support Hanoi's war. In the meantime, prior to the Tet Offensive, the result of the Vietnam War remained unclear and Hanoi was desperate for support from both China and the Soviet Union. These two considerations would lead China to accommodate Hanoi. Instead, China chose to employ coercive binding strategies that might undermine Hanoi's war efforts. Chinese leaders threatened Hanoi that if it did not comply, they would withdraw Chinese troops from North Vietnam. They also refused to construct defense facilities in the Red River Delta. As a result, the North Vietnam case lends strong support for my theory.

Chapter 8 China's Mixed Binding Strategies to Keep North Korea, 1965-1970

North Korea became an ally of both the Soviet Union and China in 1961.¹ However, at the early stage of Sino-Soviet split, North Korea stood closer with China. According to *Rodong Sinmun* [Workers' Newspaper], official newspaper of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), Pyongyang's relations with Beijing were "close" while its relations with Moscow were "bad" prior to 1965.² Since the CPSU 22rd Party Congress, North Korea had followed China's positions on "all basic questions." For instance, North Korea published about twelve articles criticizing modern revisionists in 1962.³ A *Rodong Sinmun* editorial, titled "They Defended the Socialist Camp," supported China and directly criticized Soviet policies.⁴ According to an East German report, North Korea reduced its

¹ North Korea and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on July 6, 1961. North Korea and China signed the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on July 11. For the North Korean-Soviet treaty, see, United Nations Treaty Collection, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20420/volume-420-I-6045-English.pdf>. For the North Korean-Chinese treaty, see *Peking Review*, no. 28 (July 14, 1961), 5. The most salient feature of the Chinese-North Korean treaty was the "emphasis on the nature of the military alliance." See, PRC FMA 114-00206-01, cited in Shen Zhihua, *Zuihou de Tianchao: Mao Zedong, Jin Richeng yu Zhongchao guanxi, 1945-1976* [The Last Celestial Empire: Mao Zedong, Kim Il-sung, and Chinese-North Korean Relations, 1945-1976] (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2017), 483.

² U.S. Department of State, "Text of a French Foreign Office evaluation of North Korea's position toward the ideological conflict between the Soviet Union and China," U.S. Declassified Documents Online, October 14, 1968, document no. CK2349578812.

³ "Information on the Korean Workers' Party," October, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AQPPSH, MPP Korese, D 10, V. 1966. Translated by Enkel Daljani <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114405>

⁴ "First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korean Reports on Sino-Korean Relations in 1966," December 02, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, f. 0102, op. 22, p. 109, d. 22, pp. 38-49. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114591>

political relations with the Soviet Union and East European states, and such reduction culminated in 1963 and 1964.⁵ In the end of this year, North Korean economic planning chief Chong Chun-taek announced to adjust the objectives of economic development from expanding heavy industry to production of consumer goods and supporting agriculture and export industries.⁶ This indicated Pyongyang's decision to depend less on the Soviet Union, as the latter was North Korea's major source of heavy industry equipment.

Nonetheless, this dynamic began to change when Khrushchev left the Kremlin. The new Soviet leadership adjusted their North Korea policy, increased both economic and military assistance to North Korea, and competed with China over influence in Pyongyang. Positively responding to Soviet wedges, North Korea moved closer to the Soviet Union. Pyongyang not only started to decrease its criticism against "revisionism," but also cooled down its relations with Beijing.

In order to prevent this trend, the Chinese employed coercive binding strategies toward North Korea. China not only reduced its trade and economic aid to North Korea, but also raised tension along the Chinese-North Korean border. This chapter argues that China chose coercive binding strategies because China had strong leverage over North Korea. As Chinese leaders knew North Korea's security largely depended on its geographic proximity with China, they worried less about the risk of balancing blowback. In other words, Chinese coercive binding strategies would be less likely to push North

⁵ "Changes in the Leadership of the Korean Workers Party and the Government of North Korea," July 12, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, SAPMO-BA, Berlin, DY 30. Translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111822>

⁶ CIA, "Economic Retrenchment for North Korea in 1964," General CIA Records, October 21, 1963, document no.: CIA-RDP79T01003A001800040007-1.

Korea to the Soviet Union. On the contrary, such binding strategies could raise North Korea's costs of leaning toward the Soviet Union. Moreover, given North Korea's high security dependence on China, coercive binding strategies had high likelihood of success and therefore could be cheap, as China did not need to carry out its threats. Meanwhile, China used coercive binding strategies with restraint for two reasons. First, China needed North Korea as a buffer zone against both the Soviet Union and the United States. It required China to help maintain North Korea's defensive capabilities. Second, North Korea's realignment with the Soviet Union was limited. Therefore, during this period China kept providing military aid to North Korea and maintained its security commitments.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. The first section describes the Soviet wedge strategies and North Korea's response. The second section discusses China's leverage over North Korea. The third section examines China's binding strategies. The analysis will control for the effects of the Cultural Revolution on China's strategies. The Cultural Revolution started in 1966 and overlapped with the period that I analyze. More importantly, the Red Guards carried out ideological attacks against the North Korean leadership. In the analysis, I will distinguish between Beijing's strategic moves and Red Guard spontaneous attacks. The fourth section briefly explains the result of China's binding strategies. I then discuss alternative explanations. Particularly, I will analyze the impact of the Cultural Revolution on China's North Korea policy. I argue that Chinese leaders carefully distanced themselves from Red Guards frenetic accusations against North Korea. As such, it is important to differentiate Beijing's coercive binding strategies

from the propagandistic attacks that were more spontaneous. I conclude this chapter with an overview of the case.

8.1 Soviet Wedge Efforts and North Korea's Drift away from China

8.1.1 Soviet Inducements to North Korea

The turning point in USSR-North Korea relations occurred in February 1965. After his visit to North Vietnam and China, Soviet Premier Kosygin headed to Pyongyang and held talks with Kim Il-sung.⁷ In their meetings, Kim Il-sung asked the Soviet Union to help strengthen North Korean air force and requested S-75 surface-to-air missiles.⁸ Kosygin granted this request and proposed to send technical personnel. In addition, Kosygin agreed to resume Soviet economic aid and the delivery of advanced weapons to North Korea, which Khrushchev had halted in December 1962.⁹

Following this visit, North Korea sent a military delegation to the Soviet Union and secured the Soviet aid to strengthen North Korean defense capabilities. On March 5, Moscow and Pyongyang issued a joint communique, announcing that the two governments had reached an agreement on “cooperation for further increasing the defense potential of the DPRK.”¹⁰ The Soviet Union agreed to provide 50 MiG-21

⁷ “Record of Conversation between the Chinese Ambassador to the Soviet Union Pan Zili and the Korean Ambassador to the Soviet Union Ambassador Kim Byeong-jik,” February 10, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-00827-02, 70-79. Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116550>

⁸ Discussion between Kosygin and Kim Il-sung, February 16, 1965, AUV KSC, 02/1-96-101. 1.103-128.

⁹ CIA, “Intelligence Report: The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev's Fall,” ESAU XXXIV, part 1, September 1967, 38, in DNSA collection: U.S. intelligence and China: collection, analysis, and covert action. See also, “Excerpts from the Report of the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang, ‘Some New Aspects of Korean-Chinese Relations in the First Half of 1965’,” June 04, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 21, papka 106, delo 20, listy 14-27. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Sergey Radchenko. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110503>.

¹⁰ CIA, “Kim Il-Sung's New Military Adventurism,” the CAESAR, POLO, and ESAU Papers, document no. *ESAU XLI*, November 26, 1968, 19.

fighters, 500 K-13A missiles, 192 B-750 missiles, 50 T-55 tanks, and other military materials between 1965 and 1968.¹¹ In addition, Moscow also promised to support North Korea's U.S. policy. In June, Brezhnev and Kosygin sent a letter to Kim Il-sung, praising the North Korean foreign policy and assured Kim that the Soviet Union supported the "expulsion of the United States from South Korea."¹²

USSR-North Korea relations continued to improve in 1966 and 1967. In early 1966, the Soviet Union delivered additional MiG-19 fighters, two coastal-defense cruise-missile complexes, and two surface-to-air missile sites.¹³ In late May, Kim Il-sung secretly met Brezhnev in Vladivostok. U.S. reports speculated that two leaders discussed to expand Soviet military and economic aid to North Korea. Soon after this meeting, a North Korean economic delegation visited Moscow and signed a new economic aid agreement. Meanwhile, North Korean Defense Minister Kim Chang-bong, accompanied by the Soviet Defense Minister Rodion Malinovsky, took a "vacation" in Moscow.¹⁴ It is likely that the two defense ministers discussed potential military assistance. In June, Moscow and Pyongyang reached a three-year trade agreement, in which the Soviets agreed to help North Korea construct a petrol refinery with a capacity of 2 million tons of petrol.¹⁵

¹¹ Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 567.

¹² "Introductory Visit of the Soviet Ambassador to North Korea, Comrade Gorchakov, on 10 June 1965," June 11, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, SAPMO. Translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111820>

¹³ CIA, "China's Growing Isolation in the Communist Movement," U.S. Declassified Documents Online, August 5, 1966.

¹⁴ CIA, "The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev's Fall," part 2, 107-08.

¹⁵ "Information on the Korean Workers' Party," October, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AQPPSH, MPP Korese, D 10, V. 1966. Translated by Enkel Daljani <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114405>

On the CPSU Central Committee Plenum in the end of 1966, Brezhnev stated that the Soviet Union had taken three general measures to improve its relations with North Korea. First, politically the Soviet Union would support North Korean struggle against the United States and Japanese militarism. Second, the Soviet Union would provide military aid that North Korea needed. Third, the Soviet Union would provide economic assistance.¹⁶

In February 1967, North Korean First Vice Premier Kim Il led a delegation to Moscow, while a top Defense Ministry official talked with Malinovsky, likely to negotiate military assistance.¹⁷ A month later, North Korea and the Soviet Union signed a major economic assistance agreement and a military assistance agreement.¹⁸ In June, North Korea requested additional economic and military aid. Pyongyang asked for aid with construction and expansion of its factories, especially an oil refinery and coal mining industry. In addition, they requested a shipment of “special equipment” to improve North Korean defensive capabilities. The Soviets satisfied most of North Korean requests. Moreover, at North Korea’s insistence, the joint communique included the content that the Soviet Union promised to supply aid to improve North Korean defensive capabilities.¹⁹

¹⁶ “Report of Brezhnev on the CPSU Central Committee Plenum,” December 12, 1966, Российский государственный архив новейшей истории [Russian State Archive of Contemporary History] (hereafter cited as РГАНИ), ф.2, оп.3, д.49, л.3-18, Cold War International History Studies Center, East China Normal University (hereafter ECNU).

¹⁷ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 2, 114.

¹⁸ Bernd Schäfer, “Weathering the Sino-Soviet Conflict: The GDR and North Korea, 1949-1989,” in *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 14/15 (Winter 2003/Spring 2004), 31.

¹⁹ “On Some Issues of Soviet-Korean Relations,” June 02, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, State Central Archive (Prague), File A, Novotny, foreign affairs, KPDR. Sign., 82 b. 8, pp. 6. Translated for NKIDP by Adolf Kotlik. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113974>

To fulfill two military assistance agreements, between late 1966 and early 1967, new MiG-21s had arrived in North Korean air defense inventory, mostly Fishbed F types.²⁰ Moreover, the Soviet Union had provided military aid worth of “tens of millions of rubles” by 1968. To add, in 1968 there were 486 Soviet military specialists in North Korea.²¹

Moscow only reduced its military assistance to North Korea in 1969 and 1970. This was partly a response to improved China-North Korea relations after 1969.²² This reduction also resulted from the Soviet attempt to avoid emboldening North Korea to take aggressive moves toward South Korea and the United States.²³ Between 1965 and 1969, the Soviet Union had provided about \$200 million worth of military equipment to North Korea. In 1968, this number was between \$60 million and \$70 million while in 1969 it dropped to less than \$5 million.²⁴ In April 1969, Kim Il-sung urged the Soviet Union to carry out its promises on the supply of weaponry. He told the Soviet Ambassador N.G. Sudarikov that the Soviet Union failed to supply some kinds of shells with the excuse of underproduction. Therefore, North Korea had to produce those shells itself. However, the Soviet Union had raised the price of gunpowder, which made it difficult for North Korea to produce bullets and shells.²⁵ Similarly, in a meeting with Romanian Vice President Emil Bodnăraș in June 1970, Pak Seong-cheol stated that the Soviet Union had stopped

²⁰ CIA, “Kim Il-Sung’s New Military Adventurism,” 19.

²¹ “Sudarikov: Meeting with North Korean Minister of People’s Armed Force Choe Hyon,” January 4, 1969, РГАНИ, ф.5, оп.61, д.463, л.21-23, ECNU.

²² Hai-Su Youn, “The Politics of Maneuverability: Chinese-Soviet Conflict and North Korea” (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1989), 58-59.

²³ Arnold L. Horelick, “Soviet Policy Dilemmas in Asia,” *Asian Survey* 17, no. 6 (1977): 508; Donald Zagoria, “Soviet Policy and Prospects in East Asia,” *International Security* 5, no. 2 (1980): 75-76.

²⁴ CIA, “Recent Trends in North Korea’s Foreign Trade,” 9-10.

²⁵ “Discussion between N.G. Sudarikov and Kim Il-sung: on mediating border conflicts between the Soviet Union and China,” April 14, 1969, РГАНИ, ф.5, оп.61, д.462, л.95-101, ECNU.

supplying surface-to-air missiles to North Korea out of concerns that North Korea might use those missiles for offense. To add, the Soviet Union stopped supplying spare parts for MiG-15s, MiG-17s, and MiG-19s.²⁶

8.1.2 North Korea's Positive Response to Soviet Wedges

Responding to increased Soviet economic and military assistance, Pyongyang began to stand closer to Moscow. North Korean leaders not only showed more support for Soviet foreign policy, but also started to criticize China more. Nonetheless, Pyongyang did not completely dissent Beijing; it tried to tread carefully when criticizing China.

On difference occasions, North Korean leaders pledged to their Soviet comrades that North Korea would improve its relations with the Soviet Union while distancing itself from China. When meeting with Kosygin in February, Kim Il-sung and the Soviet premier agreed to stop public attacks on each other. Kim also promised not to criticize the forthcoming 26-party meeting that Moscow sponsored.²⁷ Similarly, during their Vladivostok meeting, Kim Il-sung assured Brezhnev that North Korea would stop publishing “any materials” that attacked Soviet policies. To add, Kim told Brezhnev that he had not met the Chinese leadership in the past two years.²⁸

²⁶ “Memorandum, Conversation between Emil Bodnăraș and Pak Seong-cheol: the Soviet Union stops supplying weaponry and equipment to North Korea,” June 6, 1970, Arhivele de Naționale Istorice Centrale [Romanian National Central Historical Archives], (hereafter cited as ANIC), fond CC al PCR- Secția Relații Externe, dosar nr.92/1970, f.38-39, ECNU.

²⁷ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 1, 38. See also, “Excerpts from the Report of the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang, ‘Some New Aspects of Korean-Chinese Relations in the First Half of 1965’,” June 04, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 21, papka 106, delo 20, listy 14-27. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Sergey Radchenko. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110503>.

²⁸ “Excerpts from Leonid Brezhnev’s May 1966 Speech on Talks with Kim Il Sung,” May 27, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 2, opis 3, delo 18, pp. 82-88. Translated for NKIDP by Sergey Radchenko. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114535>

The North Koreans kept their promise. Kim Il-sung began to illustrate the pro-Soviet position in his speeches both publicly and privately. When visiting Indonesia in April 1965, he delivered a speech in which he criticized both revisionism and dogmatism. Meanwhile, Kim repeatedly stressed the principle of self-reliance.²⁹ Given North Korea's heavy reliance on China in the 1961-65 period, this emphasis on self-reliance suggested less dependence on China. One month later, in a conversation with the Soviet ambassador, Kim Il-sung remarked, "We do not share the point of view of some people who are continuing open polemics at the present time."³⁰ Kim Il-sung delivered a report to a KWP conference in October 1966, in which he displayed a "process of liberating the Korean leadership from some... pro-Chinese views," and criticized "many anti-Marxist attitudes of the Chinese leaders." In his report, Kim also voiced his disagreement with China's North Vietnam policy. Commenting on the escalating Vietnam War, Kim complained that the Chinese leaders "just talk about being against American imperialism but in fact do not take any specific steps to curb aggression." As the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang concluded, this report had an "anti-Chinese orientation on the whole."³¹ After this conference, Pyongyang issued two statements, both of which underscored its disapproval of Chinese way to treat intellectuals. These statements stressed that North Korea would reject "subjective rashness of all hues" and "eternal opposition to

²⁹ "Jin Richeng zai Yajiada yishehuikexueyuan baogao Chao jianshe he Nanchaoxian geming," ["Kim Il-sung reports regarding construction in North Korea and revolution in South Korea at the Social Science Academy in Jakarta"], *Xiongdiguojia he xiongdidang baokanailiao*, April 19, 1965, 18-26.

³⁰ "Excerpts from the Report of the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang, 'Some New Aspects of Korean-Chinese Relations in the First Half of 1965'," June 04, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 21, papka 106, delo 20, listy 14-27. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Sergey Radchenko. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110503>.

³¹ "First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korean Reports on Sino-Korean Relations in 1966," December 02, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, f. 0102, op. 22, p. 109, d. 22, pp. 38-49. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114591>

flunkeyism,” a term Pyongyang used to describe China.³² Similarly, according to the Cuban ambassador in Pyongyang, some North Koreans criticized the Mao leadership as a “military dictatorship” that pursued a “policy that was much more disastrous for the worldwide communist movement than Khrushchev’s had been.”³³

Pyongyang also began to adjust its policy. After Kosygin’s visit, Han Tok-su, the chairman of the Chosen Soren—the Korean communist organization in Japan that the KWP directly controlled, called for “renewed solidarity” between North Korea and the Soviet Union.³⁴ According to an East German report in 1966, the KWP had circulated a “new line...that the DPRK would not bow to pressure to follow the Chinese course.”³⁵ In May, the KWP sent a directive to the Chosen Soren. The directive stressed on the unity of the communist bloc and accused the CCP of “obstructing the unity.” It criticized the CCP interference in other communist parties’ policies, such as the VWP and Communist Party of Indonesia. Meanwhile, the directive stressed that the Soviet Union had been “correcting its revisionist errors” so that the KWP would observe the Soviet Union to do so gradually.³⁶ In this directive, the KWP also criticized Beijing for calling Cuba a revisionist state.³⁷ Given the close relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union, criticizing the Chinese propaganda toward Cuba illustrated a pro-Soviet position. Two months later, the KWP issued another directive to the Chosen Soren. On the one hand,

³² CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 2, 112.

³³ Schaefer, “North Korean “Adventurism” and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972,” 7.

³⁴ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 1, 39.

³⁵ Bernd Schaefer, “North Korean “Adventurism” and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972,” 5.

³⁶ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 2, 107.

³⁷ CIA, “Special Report: China’s Growing Isolation in the Communist Movement,” August 5, 1966, U.S. Declassified Documents Online, document no.: CK2349374938.

the directive criticized Moscow as having not yet “completely overcome” its revisionist tendencies. On the other hand, it heavily criticized Beijing’s foreign policy. China, the directive stated, was not only “treading a very dangerous path today” and turning to “extreme leftist adventurism,” but also “attempting to impose their line of thinking on Communist parties of other countries.”³⁸

North Korea also took two public deviations from China’s Soviet policy. First, despite Chinese pressure, North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Seong-cheol led a KWP delegation to attend the CPSU 23rd Congress.³⁹ As the CCP refused to attend this meeting, Pyongyang sending a delegation was publicly choosing a side between China and the Soviet Union. Second, China refused to attend the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) Council session in 1967 as the Soviet Union tried to move the scheduled AAPSO Conference site away from Beijing. Despite China’s public rejection, North Korea attended the session and assisted the Soviet Union to undermine China’s influence in AAPSO.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, North Korean propaganda began to put revisionism and dogmatism in the same category while sometimes stressing more on dogmatism, of which communist parties tended to criticize the CCP. On September 20, 1965, a *Rodong Sinmun* editorial titled “The Korean Revolution and the Idea of the Antecedence of Our Party” and a cover

³⁸ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 2, 109.

³⁹ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 3, 25-26.

⁴⁰ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 2, 113.

article in the KWP party magazine *Kulloja* [*Worker*] denounced dogmatism while treating revisionism lightly.⁴¹

Criticism against China in the North Korean press upgraded in 1966. In March, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) representative in Algiers claimed publicly that China was attacking the “independent policy of our party.” A few days later, a *Kulloja* article wrote, the “big-power chauvinists, using the flunkeyists, cause splits in another country, meddle in its internal affairs, and try to realize their own egoistic ambition.”⁴² Both the terms of “chauvinists” and “flunkeyists” in the article referred to China. In this year, a Japanese Communist Party (JCP) delegation visited China, North Vietnam, and North Korea to seek a coordinated policy assisting Hanoi. When the delegation arrived in Pyongyang, the JCP Chairman Kenji Miyamoto informed Kim Il-sung that China insisted that Hanoi stop accepting Soviet assistance.⁴³ After Miyamoto left North Korea, a *Nodong Sinmun* editorial warned against both revisionism and dogmatism. It further criticized attempts to “force a unilateral will upon fraternal parties...to meddle in their internal affairs...or to bring pressure upon them.”⁴⁴ Similarly, *Nodong Sinmun* also called for all communist parties to stop “worshiping everything concerning the great powers” and assert their independence. Although the editorial criticized both the CPSU and the CCP, the latter received more criticism than the former.⁴⁵ Similarly, another *Nodong Sinmun* editorial, titled “Protecting Our

⁴¹ “Information on the Korean Workers’ Party,” October, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AQPPSH, MPP Korese, D 10, V. 1966. Translated by Enkel Daljani <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114405>

⁴² CIA, “Kim Il-Sung’s New Military Adventurism,” 18.

⁴³ Kojima, *The Record of the Talks between the Japanese Communist Party and the Communist Party of China: How Mao Zedong Scrapped the Joint Communiqué*, 52.

⁴⁴ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 2, 107.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

Independence,” discussed the intervention of great powers in North Korean internal affairs and openly allured to China. Similarly, another article in *Nodong Sinmun* openly opposed the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁶

In May, THE Chinese ambassador in Pyongyang told his Albanian counterpart that North Korea-USSR relations were “widening rapidly.” The Chinese also said that the Soviet Union was delivering military equipment to North Korea not through China, but by a different route.⁴⁷ Similarly, as the Hungarian Embassy in Moscow observed, the Soviet leaders were satisfied with their North Korean comrades’ “repeated emphasis...on their independence from China,” their evaluation on the Soviet support for the DRV, and their “rejection of several Chinese attacks and accusations” against the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ Moreover, in the end of 1966, Brezhnev concluded that North Korea’s divergence with China had been a “fact.”⁴⁹

China-North Korea relations continued to deteriorate in 1967. For instance, the North Korean vice Secretary of State Heo Seok-tae lodged a harsh protest to Wang Peng, Chinese Charge d’Affairs in Pyongyang, against Chinese attacks on North Korean policies and Kim Il-sung personally. As an East German source observed, North Korea’s relations with China had “hit rock bottom” at the end of this year.⁵⁰ Symbolically,

⁴⁶ “Information on the Korean Workers’ Party,” October, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AQPPSH, MPP Korese, D 10, V. 1966. Translated by Enkel Daljani <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114405>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ “Report, Embassy of Hungary in the Soviet Union to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” October 20, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1966, 74. doboz, IV-250, 005007/1966. Translated for NKIDP by Balázs Szalontai. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116646>

⁴⁹ “Report of Brezhnev on the CPSU Central Committee Plenum,” December 12, 1966, РГАНИ, ф.2, оп.3, д.49, л.3-18, ECNU.

⁵⁰ “Letter from GDR Embassy in the DPRK to State Secretary Hegen,” December 22, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PoA AA, MfAA, G-A 360. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Bernd Shaefer. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113367>

Pyongyang celebrated both the seventh anniversary of the Mutual Assistance Treaty between North Korea and China quietly. In contrast, when celebrating the seventh anniversary of the Mutual Assistance Treaty between North Korea and the Soviet Union, North Korean high-ranking officials attended the festivities.⁵¹

North Korea kept this stance in 1968. In January, North Korean patrol boats detained the *Pueblo*, a U.S. intelligence ship operating off the North Korean coast. According to a CIA memorandum, during this incident Beijing had “far less influence in Pyongyang” than Moscow did. The memorandum therefore “ruled out any serious collaboration” between China and North Korea.⁵² Moreover, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, North Korea took the similar stance as the Soviet one. A *Nodong Sinmun* editorial, titled “The Heroic Lessons of the Czechoslovak Situation,” stated, “In Czechoslovakia today the machinations of counter-revolutionary forces pose a very serious threat to the great socialist tasks of the people...The revisionist policy followed by Czechoslovakia has manifested itself in the form of abandoning the class struggle and rejecting the dictatorship of the Proletariat.”⁵³ To add, North Korean leaders continued to underscore the importance of self-reliance. Receiving an East German Politburo delegation in April, Kim Il-sung stressed the principle of self-reliance when he referred to China: “We cannot follow one country and make a cultural revolution. So the emphasis on self-reliance is an action of self-reliance.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ U.S. Department of State, “Text of a French Foreign Office evaluation of North Korea’s position toward the ideological conflict between the Soviet Union and China,” U.S. Declassified Documents Online, October 14, 1968.

⁵² CIA, “Confrontation in Korea,” General CIA Records, January 24, 1968, document no. CIA-RDP79B01737A000100040012-4.

⁵³ *Nodong Sinmun*, August 23, 1968, in B. C. Koh, “North Korea and the Sino-Soviet Schism,” *Western Political Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1969): 960.

⁵⁴ Schaefer, “North Korean “Adventurism” and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972,” 14.

Nonetheless, North Korean leaders attempted to maintain balance between their relations with the Soviet Union and China. Pyongyang restrained its criticism against China. As the Soviet Embassy in North Korea reported, the KWP refrained from open criticism of Chinese policies. Furthermore, they did not permit the Soviet Embassy to use propaganda to denounce Mao Zedong and other Chinese leaders.⁵⁵ When receiving a Chinese delegation in 1965, Kim Il-sung mildly criticized the Soviet Union. He explained that if the CPSU was “under the influence of Asia’s revolution, then there would not be modern revisionism. However, they received influence only from the European social democratic parties, giving rise to modern revisionism.”⁵⁶ In his report in October 1966, Kim Il-sung also treaded carefully between the Soviet Union and China. On the one hand, he criticized Soviet “weakness against imperialism” and a “somewhat passive approach” to revolutionary struggle. On the other hand, Kim implicitly condemned the Chinese leaders for rejecting joint action for North Vietnam and for urging “extremist action under super-revolutionary slogans.”⁵⁷

To add, North Korean leaders avoided publicly challenging China too much. When discussing international conferences that Moscow sponsored, Kim Il-sung told Hager that North Korea had “drawn the conclusion to participate only in a conference where everybody participates, but if one country won’t be there, we won’t either. We

⁵⁵ “Excerpts from a 30 December 1966 Memo of the Soviet Embassy to the DPRK (A. Borunkov) about Embassy Measures against Chinese Anti-Soviet Propaganda in the DPRK,” December 30, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, f. 0102, op. 22, p. 109, d. 22, pp. 50-56. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116692>

⁵⁶ “Record of Conversation between Kim Il Sung and the Chinese Delegation,” October 29, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01479-08, 85-88. Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116553>

⁵⁷ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 2, 112.

have to wait to see how the situation in China is developing.”⁵⁸ After 1965, the Soviet Union repeatedly offered to send planning experts to North Korea and help solve difficulties in the North Korean seven-year plan. However, North Korean leaders rejected those offers.⁵⁹ This attitude suggested that North Korea was cautious and trying to avoid enraging China.

8.2 China’s Leverage over North Korea

China’s leverage over North Korea largely came from the geographic proximity between two states. At the frontline with South Korea and the United States, North Korea relied on both China and the Soviet Union for its security. While the Soviet Union was able to outbid China by supplying North Korea more advanced weapons and military equipment, China enjoyed the geographic advantage. The Chinese-North Korean border is much longer than the Soviet-North Korean one. Therefore, China was able to provide the rear area for North Korea.

The value of Chinese territory as a rear area to North Korea was similar to that in the North Vietnam case. First, Chinese territory could be a potential sanctuary for North Korean troops and logistics in a future war on the Korean Peninsula. As Mao Zedong told a North Korean delegation, “The whole Northeast is your rear base...In the future, if a

⁵⁸ “Memorandum On the Visit of the Party and Government Delegation of the GDR, led by Comrade Prof. Dr. Kurt Hager, with the General Secretary of the KWP and Prime Minister of the DPRK, Comrade Kim Il Sung, on 16 April 1968, 5:00p.m. until 6:50 p.m.,” April 23, 1968, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MfAA, C 159/75. Translated by Karen Riechert.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116731>.

⁵⁹ “Report, Embassy of Hungary in the Soviet Union to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” October 20, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1966, 74. doboz, IV-250, 005007/1966. Translated for NKIDP by Balázs Szalontai.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116646>

world war were to break out, you should use this area.”⁶⁰ Kim Il-sung clearly welcomed this statement. When meeting with a Chinese delegation in 1964, he commented, “Northeast China is our rear base. If something happens, we need to rely on it. In the last war, almost all North Koreans went to Northeast China...In a future war, Northeast China will play the same role.”⁶¹ Second, China bordering North Korea served as a deterrent against the United States and South Korea. China’s ability to provide the rear area to North Korea was rather unique as the Soviet Union, with geographic restraints, was less able to do so. In addition, a longer border meant that, compared to the Soviet Union, it was convenient for China to pose greater threat to North Korea, should China-North Korea relations deteriorate. As the Soviet embassy noted, the “geographic...proximity of China” was “one of the most important factors influencing the position of the KWP...in the international arena.”⁶² As such, geographic proximity gave China superior leverage relative to the Soviet Union.

The role of China as a rear area for North Korea was a reiterated topic in discussions between Chinese and North Korean leaders. In October 1964, Choe Yong-gon, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly of North Korea, led a delegation to visit China and met with Mao Zedong. In the conversation, the two leaders discussed the U.S. threat. Mao briefly introduced Chinese military forces in the northeast and reminded Choe Yong-gon that both China and North Korea needed to get prepared for U.S. aggression. Mao assured Choe, “We are going to provide the northeast as your

⁶⁰ Discussion between Mao Zedong and the visiting *Nodong Sinmun* delegation, April 26, 1963, cited in Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 552.

⁶¹ “The last war” here refers to the Korean War. See, PRC FMA 106-00767-01, cited in *ibid.*, 555.

⁶² “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in the Second Half of 1968’,” January 06, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 1-14. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134218>

rear area... Not only northeastern China, [you can use] any place in China [as your rear base].”⁶³

Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai attended the seventeenth National Day reception at the North Korean Embassy in Beijing held in September 1965. In their discussion, Liu reminded Charge d’Affaires Jeong Bong-gyu that the Vietnam War was “closely connected to you and to us” because the war could drag both China and North Korea into it. Liu further asked rhetorically, “Has not South Korea already been drawn into it?” In reply, Jeong remarked that North Korean security relied on China: “with China present, we have no fear; our confidence is great. China has now grown even stronger, and the enemy is afraid.”⁶⁴ His reply clearly showed the value of the Chinese deterrent to North Korea’s security policy.

One month later, when receiving a Chinese delegation, Kim Il-sung again raised Mao’s remark on China as the rear base for North Korea. Kim stated, “Comrade Mao Zedong once said that China’s northeast is our [North Korea’s] rear area and that, furthermore, all of China is our rear area. We firmly believe in this point.” Kim Il-sung stressed the security threat from the south. As he stressed, North Korea “must prepare for war... When the fighting starts, there will of course be destruction, but we are determined and are prepared for this.” He further underscored that North Korea was a “small country,

⁶³ “Discussion between Mao Zedong and the North Korean Political Delegation” [Mao Zedong zhuxi huijian Chaoxian dangzhengdaibiaotuan tanhua jilu], October 7, 1964, in Song ed., *Jimidangan Zhong Xinfaxian de Mao Zedong Jianghua*, 116-23.

⁶⁴ “Conversation between Chairman Liu Shaoqi and Premier Zhou Enlai and Charge d’Affaires Jeong Bong-gyu at the 17th National Day Reception held at the North Korean Embassy,” September 09, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01479-07, 58-62. Translated by Stephen Mercado. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118793>

and it is impossible [for us] to produce atomic weapons. We can only rely on digging tunnels.”⁶⁵

North Korean leaders also highlighted the geographic consideration when they talked to the Soviets. As Kim Il-sung explained to Sudarikov, “We have a small border with the USSR, but a long one with China. Every day the Chinese might try provocations. This is a serious question for us. In the south there is one enemy, the Americans, in the north, another—the Chinese. Anything is possible. We are forced to swallow the bitter pills which the Chinese throw us.”⁶⁶ Similarly, as a Soviet intelligence report showed, when commenting on their relations with China, North Korean leaders stressed that the “geographical position of the DPRK and the current international situation does not allow the KWP to undertake vigorous steps to finally distance itself from China.”⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the strength of China’s leverage over North Korea was a function of U.S. threat to North Korean security. The more threatening the United States and its allies were to North Korea, the more important China’s role as a rear area was, and the stronger China’s leverage was. During this period, the North Koreans repeatedly stressed to their Chinese comrades that they were in a “direct confrontation with the American imperialists,” and the importance of China to North Korean security.⁶⁸ As North Korean

⁶⁵ “Record of Conversation between Kim Il Sung and the Chinese Delegation.” “Record of Conversation between Kim Il Sung and the Chinese Delegation,” October 29, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01479-08, 85-88. Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116553>

⁶⁶ “Record of Conversation between N.G. Sudarikov and Kim Il Sung, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea,” March 17, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 463, listy 120-129. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134225>

⁶⁷ “Deputy Chief of the 1st Main Directorate of the Committee for State Security, ‘Concerning Korean-Chinese Relations’,” April 25, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 96-99. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134238>

⁶⁸ “Record of Conversation between Qiao Guanhua and the DPRK Ambassador to China Pak Se-chang,” March 05, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-00827-01, 66-69.

Ambassador to the Soviet Union Kim Byeong-jik told his Chinese counterpart Pan Zili, “Imperialism is exploiting the disunity among socialist countries to misbehave...and stepping up provocative actions against us near the Korean Military Demarcation Line.” Kim Byeong-jik continued to stress, “The unity of the socialist camp is the most important and fundamental [objective]... [and] must have the following principle: actively oppose U.S. imperialism.”⁶⁹

Similarly, when Kim Il-sung received a Chinese delegation in August 1965, he discussed U.S.-South Korean military activities. Kim Il-sung remarked that South Korea practiced “hypothetical attacks... with the United States” at the same time of North Korean military exercises, and they recently did three landing exercises. Kim then described in detail a U-2 plane reconnaissance operation within North Korea. After the Chinese delegation stated that China, North Vietnam, and North Korea “must stand together at the front,” Kim responded, “We’ll go through life and death and thick and thin together.”⁷⁰ The expansion of the Vietnam War heightened Pyongyang’s insecurity perception. From the North Korean perspective, escalation in Vietnam suggested the expanding U.S. aggression, which in turn might increase the possibility of serious conflicts at the 38th parallel.⁷¹

Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116551>

⁶⁹ “Record of Conversation between the Chinese Ambassador to the Soviet Union Pan Zili and the Korean Ambassador to the Soviet Union Ambassador Kim Byeong-jik,” February 10, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-00827-02, 70-79. Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116550>

⁷⁰ “Record of Conversation between Premier Kim and the Chinese Friendship Delegation,” August 20, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01479-05, 46-51. Translated by Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118795>

⁷¹ “Excerpts from the Report of the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang, ‘Some New Aspects of Korean-Chinese Relations in the First Half of 1965’,” June 04, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 21, papka 106, delo 20, listy 14-27. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Sergey Radchenko. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110503>.

Another factor that contributed to the insecurity of Pyongyang was the Normalization Treaty between South Korea and Japan. Highlighting concerns for regional security, the United States pressed Seoul and Tokyo to conclude this treaty in June 1965.⁷² This treaty suggested a more cohesive U.S.-led security system in East Asia, and North Korean leaders were highly concerned with this treaty. As Kim Il-sung explained at a press conference in Jakarta, the United States facilitated negotiations between South Korea and Japan to establish a “Northeast Asian Military Alliance” and use Japanese militarism to invade Asia.⁷³

As a result, the North Koreans reiterated the threat of this treaty to their Chinese comrades and sought Chinese security guarantees. In a discussion with Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi, Vice Premier Ri Ju-yeon raised a few security concerns under the instruction of Kim Il-sung. First, Ri explained that with the U.S. orchestrating, Japan would sign the treaty with South Korea soon and were preparing to “encroach on North Korea and Asia.” Ri expressed grave concerns about future cooperation between the United States and Japan: “In the long term, Japan is our enemy. We have been tested by America, and it seems we will soon be tested by Japan as well. That is to say, we will soon be faced with the power of an American-Japanese union.” Second, Ri elaborated on North Korea’s sense of insecurity: “We are being faced with unsettling events on all sides. We fought the American imperialists for three years, leaving our country in ruins. After the war, we engaged in ten years of reconstruction, returning to a semblance of our prior selves.

⁷² Victor D. Cha, “Bridging the Gap: The Strategic Context of the 1965 Korea—Japan Normalization Treaty,” *Korean Studies* 20 (1996).

⁷³ “Jin Richeng jiu Chaoxian tongyiweni da Riben jizhewen,” [“Kim Il-sung answers Japanese journalists’ questions on unification of Korea”], *Xiongdiguojia he xiongdidang baokanailiao* [*Brother States and Brother Parties’ Newspapers and Magazines*] (April 21, 1965), 28-30.

Presently, we are preparing to be returned to ruin... We are currently training and expanding the people's militia. At the same time, we are digging bunkers all over the country." Third, Ri explained geographic limitations North Korea faced: "North Korea does not have much land and is surrounded on three sides by water. In case of war, we do not have any room to maneuver." Finally, Ri asked Zhou whether China would be prepared to provide North Korea with assistance in the case "problems arrive."⁷⁴

To reassure their North Korean guests, Zhou Enlai reconfirmed China's commitment should a U.S.-led war break out in East Asia. He explained that when the United States started a war in East Asia, North Korea would be "part of it and Taiwan will be part of it." Therefore, when a war broke out, North Korea and China would "not be two fronts but... be a single battlefield." Zhou continued to praise North Korea's war preparation and provided a detailed account on Chinese war preparation. Mentioning potential Chinese nuclear deterrence, Zhou told Ri that China was developing a hydrogen bomb and a delivery system. To add, Zhou promised to send the North Koreans a diagram of U.S. global strategic deployments.⁷⁵

One month later, North Korean Vice Premier Kim Il held a meeting with Chinese Ambassador Jiao Ruoyu. Kim mentioned the Normalization Treaty between South Korea and Japan. He stated that under the treaty Japan was "plotting for South Korea to become a bridgehead, used [first] to invade us [North Korea] and then to invade China. Their aggressive ambitions will not die." Therefore, Kim called for a "concerted effort to

⁷⁴ "Memorandum of the First Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice Premier Ri Ju-yeon," November 10, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01476-05, 41-69. Translated by Jake Tompkins. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118694>

⁷⁵ "Record of the Third Conversation between Zhou Enlai and North Korean Vice Prime Minister Ri Ju-yeon," November 11, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01476-04, 118-139. Translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115344>

struggle against Japan... and increasing war preparations.” Meanwhile, Kim underscored consultation between North Korea and China: “There is no diplomacy between us. We are brothers. We should be open with each other and have discussions often and exchange views.”⁷⁶

In the subsequent years, the threat from the United States and its allies remained at the same level, if not increased. In a discussion with the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Nikolai Podgorny, North Korean Ambassador to the Soviet Union Kim Chun-bong stated that the situation on the 38th parallel was “always tense” as the United States and South Korea had “not stopped provocations.” He further explained this was why North Korea “maintained the condition of complete battle-readiness.”⁷⁷

Two crises that broke out in 1968 and 1969 respectively increased U.S. military pressure on North Korea. On January 23, 1968, North Korea captured the USS *Pueblo*. In response, as a show of force, the United States deployed the Task Force 71, which comprised four aircraft carrier combat groups, near the Korean Peninsula. To add, the U.S. Air Force dispatched two fighter-bomber squadrons to South Korea.⁷⁸ A year later, another crisis broke out. North Korea shot down an EC-121 reconnaissance plane, killing

⁷⁶ “Cable from Chinese Ambassador in North Korea Jiao Ruoyu, ‘On the Situation of Calling on Vice Premier Kim Il’,” December 15, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01480-05, 46-49. Translated by Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118686>

⁷⁷ “Record of Conversation between N.V. Podgorny and Ambassador of the DPRK in the USSR Kim Chunbong,” January 20, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 23, papka 110, delo 3, pp. 10-12. Translated for NKIDP by Sergey Radchenko. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111189>

⁷⁸ Donald Zagoria and Janet Zagoria, “Crises on the Korean Peninsula,” in Stephen S. Kaplan, ed. *Diplomacy of Power: Soviet Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1981), 359-60.

the whole crew of 31 Americans. Responding to this provocation, the United States again deployed the Task Force 71 to the Sea of Japan.⁷⁹

Arguably, there can be multiple factors that contributed to North Korea's provocations.⁸⁰ Despite those factors, these two crises raised U.S. military pressure on North Korea. This, in turn, increased North Korean security reliance on China and strengthened China's leverage over North Korea. As Kim Il-sung explained to his East German visitors in 1968: "More than one million hostile troops are facing us directly. Therefore, we don't want to end the alliance with China since it would mean we would have enemies at our back as well." He stressed, North Korea must preserve its relations with China "because that is important for securing peace."⁸¹

8.3 China's Mixed Binding strategies, 1965-May 1969

As North Korea leaned toward the Soviet Union, China employed binding strategies to compete with the Soviet Union over their influence in Pyongyang. Strong leverage over North Korea prompted China to choose coercive binding as its primary tool. Even during two crises in 1968 and 1969 when the United States increased military pressure on North Korea, China did not change its strategy. On the other hand, China complemented its coercive binding strategies with accommodative ones.

⁷⁹ Daniel P. Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War: Low-Intensity Conflict in Korea, 1966-1969* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), 99-106.

⁸⁰ For a detailed discussion on sources of North Korean decisions, see, Mitchell Lerner, "Mostly Propaganda in Nature: Kim Il Sung, the Juche Ideology, and the Second Korean War," North Korea International Documentation Project (NKIDP) Working Paper no.3 (December 2010): 25-48.

⁸¹ "Memorandum On the Visit of the Party and Government Delegation of the GDR, led by Comrade Prof. Dr. Kurt Hager, with the General Secretary of the KWP and Prime Minister of the DPRK, Comrade Kim Il Sung, on 16 April 1968, 5:00p.m. until 6:50 p.m.," April 23, 1968, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MfAA, C 159/75. Translated by Karen Riechert.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116731>

8.3.1 China's Coercive Binding Strategies as its Primary Strategy

To put pressure on Pyongyang, Beijing employed four tools. First, on different occasions the Chinese explicitly or implicitly warned North Korean leaders against leaning toward the Soviet Union. Second, China reduced its trade with North Korea. Chinese trade with North Korea was more a political activity than an economic one. As Zhou Enlai once told a North Korean delegation, imbalance in the Chinese-North Korean trade was not a problem, and Beijing actually listed its loans to North Korea in the expenditure budget. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade summarized that the first principle of Chinese foreign trade was “economy must submit to politics.”⁸² As such, trade with Pyongyang was a political instrument of Beijing. Third, China raised tension along the Chinese-North Korean border. By doing so, China directly used its leverage to coerce North Korea. Finally, Beijing took symbolic measures to signal its displeasure with Pyongyang.

As the Soviet embassy in North Korea observed, the rapprochement between Pyongyang and Moscow had “provoked dissatisfaction on the part of Peking. Attempts were made by the Chinese leaders to pressure the [North] Korean leadership.”⁸³ Chinese leaders explicitly warned their North Korean comrades against standing close with Moscow. In early September 1966, Chen Yi delivered a speech at the North Korean Embassy reception of the North Korean national day. Chen reminded his hosts, “true revolutionaries must draw a line of demarcation between themselves and the revisionists, must expose them as scabs, and on no account take united action with them.”⁸⁴ One

⁸² Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 558.

⁸³ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korean Reports on Sino-Korean Relations in 1966,” December 02, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, f. 0102, op. 22, p. 109, d. 22, pp. 38-49. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114591>

⁸⁴ *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily], September 10, 1966; CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev's Fall,” part 2, 111.

month later, Kim Il-sung mentioned that the Chinese accused the KWP of “fence sitting.”⁸⁵ It was unclear the specific time or context of this accusation. However, as Kim Il-sung referred to it in his October report, this accusation was likely to have occurred before October.

Beijing also signaled its displeasure with Pyongyang by downgrading their bilateral diplomatic relations. On October 26, 1966, Beijing recalled its ambassador in North Korea and dispatched no replacement. After this order, China downgraded its level of diplomatic representation in North Korea to that of *charges d'affaires*.⁸⁶ By May 1969, two thirds of diplomats in the Chinese embassy had returned to China.⁸⁷

The North Koreans told their Soviet comrades that their relations with China “continue to worsen” in 1967.⁸⁸ In April 1967, North Korean *Chargé d’Affaires* in Beijing Kim Jae-seok held a meeting with the Hungarian counsellor. On China-North Korea relations, Kim Jae-seok complained, “The Chinese viewed the relationship between the two countries in a way similar to the [human relations] that had existed under feudalism, when a weak man, if slapped by a strong one, was required to turn the

⁸⁵ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korean Reports on Sino-Korean Relations in 1966,” December 02, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF, f. 0102, op. 22, p. 109, d. 22, pp. 38-49. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114591>

⁸⁶ “Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, No.76.171, TOP SECRET, May 20, 1967,” May 20, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Obtained and translated by Eliza Gheorghe. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116709>

⁸⁷ Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 608.

⁸⁸ “The DPRK Attitude Toward the So-called ‘Cultural Revolution’ in China,” March 07, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF f. 0102, op. 23, p. 112, d. 24, pp. 13-23. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114570>

other cheek so as to get a second slap.”⁸⁹ Clearly, Kim Jae-seok was implying that the Chinese were putting pressure on North Korea who could only accept such pressure.

In a conversation with Romanian diplomats in 1967, the Chinese counselor in Pyongyang slammed North Korea’s China policy. He accused North Korea of “working hard at worsening relations with China and at persuading public opinion to follow suit,” and “doing their best to cultivate hostile sentiments toward China among the North Korean population.” He further criticized North Korea’s policy toward South Korea: “Having bad relations with China and excellent relations with the USSR represents a disincentive for taking action in the direction of reunifying the country or expelling the Americans from South Korea.”⁹⁰

Coupling with its warnings, Beijing began to reduce its trade with North Korea. This policy hurt North Korea as China was North Korea’s second largest trade partner, next to the Soviet Union. To raise costs of North Korea’s increasingly cordial relations with the Soviet Union, China reduced its imports to North Korea. Most important imports North Korea received from China were coking coal, minerals, ferrous metals, steel products, rubber, chemicals, cotton, and sugar.⁹¹ Of those imports, high-quality coking coal was vital to North Korean economy, particularly to its industrial requirements.⁹² In addition, as discussed above, Chinese trade with North Korea was rather a political

⁸⁹ “Report, Embassy of Hungary in China to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” April 11, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j China, 1967, 59. doboz, 1, 001136/6/1967. Translated by Balázs Szalontai. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116652>

⁹⁰ “Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, No.14.213, TOP SECRET, April 7, 1967,” April 07, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Eliza Gheorghe. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116696>

⁹¹ CIA, “North Korea’s Foreign Trade,” 3, General CIA Records, January 26, 1968, document no.: CIA-RDP70B00338R000200010052-8.

⁹² CIA, “Intelligence Memorandum: Recent Trends in North Korea’s Foreign Trade,” 7-8, General CIA Records, March 1, 1970, document no.: CIA-RDP85T00875R001600030035-0.

activity. Both imports and exports implied Beijing's policy objectives. For instance, in December 1965, North Korea requested to sell rice to China in order to purchase British pounds, and China agreed.⁹³ In other words, to some extent importing from North Korea was also a form of Chinese economic assistance. Therefore, it was necessary to examine Chinese exports as well as imports.

Table 8.1 shows the pattern of trade between China and North Korea, based on U.S. sources. The statistics suggests that both Chinese exports to and imports from North Korea had been declining since 1965; the number only bounced back in 1970.

Table 8.1. *North Korean Trade with China (million U.S. dollars)*

	1964 ^a	1965 ^a	1966 ^b	1967 ^c	1968 ^c	1969 ^c	1970 ^c
North Korean Exports	66	70	60	50	45	45	50
North Korean Imports	75	70	60	50	45	45	50

Sources: a: CIA, "North Korea's Foreign Trade," 4, General CIA Records, January 26, 1968, document no.: CIA-RDP70B00338R000200010052-8.

b: CIA, "Intelligence Memorandum: Recent Trends in North Korea's Foreign Trade," 5, General CIA Records, March 1, 1970, document no.: CIA-RDP85T00875R001600030035-0;

c: CIA, "North Korea: Foreign Trade as a Force for Industrialization," 4, General CIA Records, July 1, 1971, document no.: CIA-RDP85T00875R001700010071-1.

The Soviet and Chinese data were only available between 1965 and 1969. As illustrated in Table 8.2, they showed the same pattern. Moreover, although China and North Korea signed three trade protocols on exchange of goods annually during this period, lists of goods those protocols included became increasingly shorter.⁹⁴

Table 8.2. *Trade Volume between North Korean and China (million rubles)*

	1965 ^a	1966 ^b	1967 ^b	1968 ^b	1969 ^c
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⁹³ "Cable from Li Qiang to Premier Zhou Enlai," December 20, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01477-02, 11-12. Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116557>

⁹⁴ China and North Korea signed three trade protocols, on December 3, 1966, March 5, 1968, and January 24, 1969 respectively. See *Renmin Ribao*, December 4, 1966, 5; March 6, 1968, 4; and January 25, 1969.

Trade Volume	160 ^A	150 ^B	125 ^B	135	100
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Notes: A: of 160 million rubles, Chinese exports to North Korea were worth 90 million rubles and imports 70 million rubles. Notably, these figures were planned exports and imports, not actual ones.

A: according to an East German source, in 1966 Chinese exports to North Korea were worth 76 million rubles, and imports from North Korea were worth 75 million rubles. In 1967, these two figures were 65 and 65 million rubles, respectively. See “On Current Relations between the DPRK and the PRC,” March 03, 1968, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PolA AA, MfAA, G-A 344. Translated by Karen Riechert. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116655>

Sources: a: *Zhonghuarenmingongheguo jingji danganziliao xuanbian: duiwai maoyi*, 358.
b: “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in the Second Half of 1968’,” January 06, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 1-14. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134218>

c: “Report: North Korean-Chinese relations and similarities and differences in their ideology and foreign policies,” May 20, 1969, Архив на Министерство на външните работи [Archive of Bulgarian Foreign Ministry] (hereafter cited AMVRB), Opis 20p, delo 17, 289, 1-25, ECNU.

Since 1966, China had failed to meet North Korea’s requirements of coking coal.⁹⁵ Soon after Beijing recalled its ambassador from Pyongyang, individual traffic and on-the-border commerce between two states suspended.⁹⁶ After the Soviet-North Korean economic agreement, China began to complain more frequently on the poor quality of North Korean products, asked North Korea to provide goods in short supply, and refused to provide several products vital to North Korea. In 1966, China drastically decreased its supply of vegetable oil and soybeans. Beginning in January 1967, China decreased its supply of sulfur and several kinds of industrial raw materials. To add, China forbade North Korean fishermen from catching fish along the Chinese coast.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ CIA, “Intelligence Memorandum: Recent Trends in North Korea’s Foreign Trade,” 7-8, General CIA Records, March 1, 1970, document no.: CIA-RDP85T00875R001600030035-0.

⁹⁶ “Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, No.76.171, TOP SECRET, May 20, 1967,” May 20, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Obtained and translated by Eliza Gheorghe. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116709>

⁹⁷ “7 March 1967 DVO [Far East Department] Memorandum about Sino-Korean Relations,” March 7, 1967, AVPRF, f. 0102, op. 23, p. 112, d. 24, pp. 5-12. Obtained for NKIDP by Sergey Radchenko and translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg, in James Person ed., “Limits of the ‘Lips and Teeth’ Alliance: New Evidence on Sino-DPRK Relations, 1955-1984,” *NKIDP Document Reader* no.2, (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, April 2009), 30-33.

Chinese-North Korean trade continued to deteriorate in 1967. China reduced its economic contacts with North Korea. After fulfilling the agreement on long-term loans in this year, China and North Korea failed to sign a new agreement on long-term loans.⁹⁸ To add, China reduced or stopped the supply of several kinds of materials that were vital to North Korean economy, such as coking coal, sulfur, and several types of industrial raw materials.⁹⁹

Various diplomatic sources reflected reduction of Chinese supply of vital materials to North Korea. As North Korean Chargé d’Affaires Kim Jae-seok reported, trade relations between China and North Korea had stagnated, as there were increasingly frequent problems in the “deadlines of Chinese shipments.” Moreover, cultural, scientific, and technological cooperation essentially stood still.¹⁰⁰ According to a Romanian source, when Kim Il-sung and Kim Il visited Moscow in April, they asked the Soviet Union to increase supplies of petroleum products, wheat, cooking oil, and coke coal because China refused to deliver these products and therefore created gaps.¹⁰¹ Reportedly, in 1967 China had stopped its supply of coke, gas coal, and oil and oil products to North Korea. In contrast, in previous years, China supplied 2.5 million tons of coke and gas coal, and

⁹⁸ Shen Juren, *Dangdai Zhongguo duiwai maoyi* [*Contemporary Chinese Foreign Trade*] (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo chubanshe, 1992), vol. 2, 371.

⁹⁹ “Report, Embassy of Hungary in the Soviet Union to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” November 25, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1967, 61. doboz, 5, 002126/3/1967. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Balázs Szalontai <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110624>. “7 March 1967 DVO [Far East Department] Memorandum about Sino-Korean Relations,” March 7, 1967, AVPRF, f. 0102, op. 23, p. 112, d. 24, pp. 5-12. Obtained for NKIDP by Sergey Radchenko and translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg, in Person ed., “Limits of the “Lips and Teeth” Alliance,” 30-33.

¹⁰⁰ “Report, Embassy of Hungary in China to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” April 11, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j China, 1967, 59. doboz, 1, 001136/6/1967. Translated by Balázs Szalontai. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116652>

¹⁰¹ “Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, No.14.213, TOP SECRET, April 7, 1967,” April 07, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Eliza Gheorghe. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116696>

250,000 tons of oil and oil products annually.¹⁰² When visiting the Soviet Union in June, the North Korean delegation complained to their Soviet hosts that China was “exerting political and economic pressure on the DPRK.” The North Koreans also mentioned that China was limiting deliveries of raw materials and products that were critical for North Korea, including coking coal and sulfur.¹⁰³ Similarly, when visiting Moscow in September, the North Korean Vice Premier Ri Ju-yeon told his Soviet colleagues that Chinese supply of coal decreased dramatically, which made difficulties for North Korean metallurgical industry. Ri stated that import of salt from China was not “normal” either. He concluded that North Korean relations with China had negative impact on their bilateral trade.¹⁰⁴

According to the 1967 trade protocol, Chinese obligations were to deliver in 1968 1.9 million tons of coking coal, 200,000 tons of petroleum products, 10,000 tons of cotton, 1,000 tons of yarn, 20,000 tons of sugar, 200,000 tons of salt, among other materials. Nonetheless, China did not fulfill its obligations, especially with the delivery of coal. North Korean leaders told their Soviet comrades, by doing so China was “grabbing [North] Korea by the throat.” Correspondingly, the Chinese share in North Korean overall trade turnover decreased from 30% in 1967 to 25% in 1968. However, the Soviet report admitted the North Koreans were “evidently” exaggerating the degree of the

¹⁰² “Note on a Conversation with the Acting Ambassador of the People’s Republic of Poland, Comrade Pudisz, on 9 October 1967 between 1000 and 1130 hours in the Polish Embassy,” October 20, 1967, PolA AA, MfAA, C 149/75. Obtained and Translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer, in Person ed., “Limits of the “Lips and Teeth” Alliance,” 43-44.

¹⁰³ “On Some Issues of Soviet-Korean Relations,” June 02, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, State Central Archive (Prague), File A, Novotny, foreign affairs, KPDR. Sign., 82 b. 8, pp. 6. Translated for NKIDP by Adolf Kotlik. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113974>

¹⁰⁴ “Meeting minute between B.H. Novikov and Ri Ju-yeon: Chinese supplies to North Korea drastically reduce,” September 25, 1967, Архив Внешней Политики Российской Федерации [Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation] (hereafter cited as АВПРФ), ф.0102, оп.27, п.53, д.2, л.75-91, ECNU.

reduction of Chinese supply.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, the Soviet share in North Korean overall foreign trade slightly increased in the same period, from 43.5% in 1967 to 45% in 1968.¹⁰⁶

Around the same time, the Chinese Foreign Economic Commission blamed North Korea for delaying sending its trainees to China, which had caused “a lot of hardship and losses to our side’s preparatory work.” Therefore, the Commission decided to suspend its preparatory work. Accordingly, the Chinese First Machine Building Ministry “suspended all preparatory work in connection with the reception of trainees for training [in connection with] aid to [North] Korea under already signed and still unsigned contracts for all projects sets.”¹⁰⁷ Moreover, North Korea have repeatedly proposed for a joint repair of the Sup’ung Hydroelectric Station for two years. Nonetheless, China consistently rejected their proposals.¹⁰⁸

In 1968, China failed to deliver 800,000 tons of coking coal and 100,000 tons of petroleum.¹⁰⁹ In May, Kim Il-sung received Zvetkov, the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea. In the conversation, Kim Il-sung remarked that North Korea-China relations were a “complete standstill” while their bilateral trade was “going badly.”

¹⁰⁵ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in the Second Half of 1968’,” January 06, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 1-14. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134218>

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ “Notice from the First Machine Building Ministry Concerning Suspension of the Preparatory Work for Receiving North Korean Trainees,” May 31, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Shanghai Municipal Archives, B112-5-132, p. 24. Obtained by Liang Zhi and translated by Neil Silver. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115925>

¹⁰⁸ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in 1969’,” December 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 187-197. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134267>

¹⁰⁹ “Report: North Korean-Chinese relations and similarities and differences in their ideology and foreign policies,” May 20, 1969, AMVRB, Opis 20p, delo 17, 289, 1-25.

Although North Korea and China signed a trade protocol in 1968, Kim claimed that his country had not received what China promised to deliver, especially materials vital to North Korea. He stated that China only delivered half the amount of coke and coal that Beijing promised to supply. In addition, Kim Il-sung remarked, “There would be no contacts and exchanges of delegations” between North Korea and China. Kim Il-sung also asked the Soviet Union to permit an air route directly from North Korea to the Soviet Union. In this way, Kim explained, when North Korean leaders took those flights, they could avoid “any contact with Chinese territory,” which might cause problems.¹¹⁰

In addition to reducing supplies of materials, China also put pressure on North Korea by increasing tensions along the Chinese-North Korean border. The core of the territorial dispute between China and North Korea was Changbai/Paektu Mountain, especially Tianchi, the lake at the top of Changbai/Paektu Mountain. Actually, Beijing and Pyongyang had reached agreement on their border before 1965. In October 1962, the two governments signed the Chinese-North Korean Border Treaty, and they subsequently fixed the border and signed the Protocol on the Chinese-North Korean Border in 1964. Based on these agreements, North Korea acquired 54.5 percent of Tianchi while China retained 45.5 percent.¹¹¹ In a discussion with Mao Zedong, Choe Yong-gon expressed North Korea’s satisfaction with the border delimitation.¹¹²

Nonetheless, those agreements were unable prevent tension from arising. In 1967, a South Korean book addressed the history of the Korean-Chinese border. The Soviets

¹¹⁰ “A Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK, Comrade Zvetkov, and Comrade Jarck,” July 29, 1968, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MfAA, G-A 320; translated by Karen Riechert. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113698>

¹¹¹ Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 539-46.

¹¹² Discussion between Mao Zedong and the North Korean political delegation, October 7, 1964, in *Jimidangan Zhong Xinfaxian de Mao Zedong Jianghua*, ed. Song, 122-23.

obtained a copy of this book and informed the East German Embassy in Pyongyang that the “troubling history...was about to be repeated.”¹¹³ The Soviets were correct. Border agreements between China and North Korea did not specify the centerline of border rivers. When China became displeased with the new orientation in North Korean foreign policy, Chinese leaders began to create tension along the border, implying to North Korea the high costs of tilting toward Moscow. In a conversation with Matvei Zakharov, the Soviet Chief of the General Staff, Kim Il-sung remarked that the North Korean-Chinese border was longer than the 38th parallel; “there was a time” when North Korea had more problems along the border than on the demarcation line.¹¹⁴ Between 1967 and 1969, the Chinese and the North Koreans got involved in conflicts consistently in Heilong and Tumen Rivers, including intercepting fishing ships and transport ships, and detaining fishermen.¹¹⁵

According to the Hungarian embassy in Beijing, China had concentrated troops on the Chinese-North Korean Border in the beginning of 1967.¹¹⁶ The specific objective of this maneuver remained unclear. Nonetheless, it could be viewed as pressure Beijing put on Pyongyang. By the end of this year, tension along the border had heightened North Korean leaders’ perception of Chinese threat. Kim Il-sung refused the Soviet invitation to lead a North Korean delegation for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution. Kim explained to the Soviet ambassador that China-North Korea relations

¹¹³ Schaefer, “North Korean “Adventurism” and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972,” 10.

¹¹⁴ “Col. Mieczysław Białek, ‘Record of Conversation of the Marshall of the Soviet Union Com. Zakharov with Com. Kim Il Sung during Com. Zakharov’s Visit in the DPRK’,” June 10, 1970, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AIPN, 2602/8901. Obtained by Marek Hańderek and translated by Jerzy Giebułtowski. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/208551>

¹¹⁵ Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 609.

¹¹⁶ “Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” January 22, 1967, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1967, 61. doboz, 1, 001200/1967, in Person ed., “Limits of the “Lips and Teeth” Alliance,” 28-30.

were “tense and a source of concern for the Korean comrades,” and China tried to “exert pressure on the DPRK.” Kim also stated, “The DPRK has a long border with China and everything conceivable can happen.”¹¹⁷

The apex of tension along the Chinese-North Korean border occurred in early 1969. According to the Soviet embassy in Pyongyang, China have periodically provoked incidents along the border on the Yalu and Tumen Rivers.¹¹⁸ Since February 1969, China had strengthened its defense along the Chinese-North Korean border. According to the CIA intelligence, China strengthened its military posture at three areas: Dandong, Chian, and opposite Hoeryong-up, North Korea. Reportedly, China had constructed personnel trenches with firing positions and increased the number of vehicle revetments.¹¹⁹ Those were very likely defense preparation for attack from the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, such preparation was also a warning to North Korea: do not let the Soviets use North Korean territory to attack China. After the Chinese-Soviet border clash on March 2, 1969, China increased its propaganda demonstrations along the Chinese-North Korean border, including slogans such as “Down with Kim Il Sung!” and “Down with the Korean revisionists!”¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ “50th Anniversary of the October Revolution in the DPRK,” November 13, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PolA AA, MfAA, C 146/75. Translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116659>

¹¹⁸ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in 1969,’” December 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 187-197. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134267>

¹¹⁹ National Photographic Interpretation Center, “Chinese Defensive Activity along the China-North Korea Border,” NGA Records (Formerly NIMA), May 1, 1970, document no.: CIA-RDP78T05162A000100010090-1.

¹²⁰ “Record of Conversation between N.G. Sudarikov and Kim Il Sung, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea,” March 17, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 463, listy 120-129. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134225>

A direct conflict between China and North Korea broke out after the Chinese-Soviet clash. Kim Il-sung told Soviet leaders that on March 15, about 50 Chinese in civilian clothing crossed the Tumen River and moved to a North Korean village. Before Korean border guards tried to detain those Chinese, they left and seized several bulls and carts. Neither the Chinese nor the North Koreans used weapons.¹²¹

Several diplomatic sources reported this border clash between China and North Korea as well. A Soviet diplomat told his East German counterpart that North Koreans hinted at border problems between North Korea and China. Acting Soviet Ambassador to China also informed his colleagues, during a bi-weekly meeting of Soviet-leaning socialist ambassadors, of an “incident on the Chinese-Korean border.” Meanwhile, a Vietnamese diplomat in Pyongyang also confirmed “some minor border incidents” between China and North Korea.¹²²

There are some disputes regarding the essence of this border conflict. Chinese historian Shen Zhihua argued there might be no military conflicts along the Chinese-North Korean border. Based on his interviews, Shen argued that a large amount of *Zhiqing* [educated youth] from Shanghai lived in the border area. As those *Zhiqing* all wore yellow cotton-padded clothing and caps, it is possible that the North Koreans mistook them as Chinese troops.¹²³ Despite the identities of those Chinese that crossed the border, it seemed that such skirmish did happen and Pyongyang felt pressure from

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Schaefer, “North Korean “Adventurism” and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972,” 16.

¹²³ Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 610.

China. Meeting the Soviet ambassador in April, Kim Il-sung stated that he would “have to find a mediator to settle questions of border incidents with the Chinese.”¹²⁴

According to a Bulgarian report in May 1969, China raised again territorial issues to North Korea. China claimed a narrow strip, about 15-kilometer long, around Paektu Mountain. Reportedly, some North Koreans who were familiar with the border issues had confirmed this information.¹²⁵ Although there were no other sources to support this report, as the next section will address, two months later China and North Korea held a secret meeting to discuss their border issues. That meeting could lend some credibility to this report.

The last coercive binding tool Beijing used were more of symbolic, such as absent from celebration activities of North Korean important anniversaries and reducing the number of news reports that covered North Korean issues. Those actions were less costly, to both China and North Korea. However, they were not meaningless. First, those symbolic actions signaled China’s displeasure to North Korean leaders. Second, given North Korea’s security dependence on China, Chinese symbolic actions signaled the discord between Beijing and Pyongyang to other states, especially the United States and South Korea, and would in turn put pressure on Pyongyang. As Kim Il-sung once explained, North Korea did not publicize its discord with China because the United States and South Korea would take advantage of such discord and attack North Korea.

¹²⁴ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in 1969’,” December 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 187-197. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134267>

¹²⁵ “Report: North Korean-Chinese relations and similarities and differences in their ideology and foreign policies,” May 20, 1969, AMVRB, Opis 20p, delo 17, 289, 1-25.

Since 1966 Beijing had treated the KWP coolly in the press, on important anniversaries, and on those few receptions of KWP delegations.¹²⁶ North Korea-related events gradually disappeared in *Renmin Ribao*. In 1965 there were more than 300 articles on North Korea. However, this number sharply decreased to 96 in 1966 and 12 in 1967. In 1968, *Renmin Ribao* published 22 articles related to North Korea, most of which were about the *Pueblo* Incident.¹²⁷ To add, The CCP Ninth Party Congress, convening in April 1969, still put North Korea in the intermediate category of “anti-imperialist” but “non-socialist” and “semi-revisionist,” along with Cuba, Romania, and Vietnam.¹²⁸

There remained no political contacts between China and North Korea in the second half of 1968. In this year, Beijing also took a rather symbolic move to put pressure on Pyongyang. China refused to send a delegation for the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the DPRK National Day. Chinese leaders explained this decision with two reasons. First, the Chinese disagreed with their North Korean comrades’ request to refrain from issuing anti-Soviet statements at the celebration. Second, the Chinese stated that they took a “too different” approach toward the events in Czechoslovakia from that of North Korea. Subsequently, Kim Il-sung complained to S. Polyansky, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, that the “Chinese deeply insulted us” with this rejection.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ CIA, “The International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party,” August 4, 1972, 14, in General CIA Records, document no.: CIA-RDP79T00975A022500020001-9.

¹²⁷ This result comes from a search in the *Renmin Ribao* online database, see, <http://data.people.com.cn/rmrb/20191130/1?code=2>

¹²⁸ Schaefer, “North Korean “Adventurism” and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972,” 28.

¹²⁹ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in the Second Half of 1968’,” January 06, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 1-14. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134218>

However, during this period China used coercive binding with restraint. For instance, when negotiating a trade protocol in the end of 1965, China agreed to provide North Korea with a loan of three million U.S. dollars with a five-year return.¹³⁰ Moreover, when China-North Korea relations hit the bottom, China maintained its assistance to North Korea in the construction of industrial facilities, including vacuum tube plant, a textile equipment plant, and a textile mill.¹³¹ Two considerations led to such restraints. First, North Korea did not completely switch its position between Moscow and Beijing. Therefore, China responded to limited realignment with restrained coercive binding strategies. Second, China needed North Korea as a buffer zone against the United States. As Kim Il-sung once remarked, Chinese leaders “still say they will fight together with us against U.S. imperialism if that proves necessary. They say our deep differences are of tactical and not of strategic nature.”¹³²

Such restraint was salient as Chinese leaders attempted to rein in Red Guards’ frenetic attacks against North Korean leaders. In January 1967, Red Guards in Beijing put up some posters claiming a coup in Pyongyang had deposed Kim Il-sung. These posters also alleged that the North Korean authority had arrested its Vice Premier Kim Kwang-hyop.¹³³ Both allegations were false. Nonetheless, Red Guards poster attacks did not

¹³⁰ “Cable from the Foreign Ministry to Ambassador Jiao Ruoyu, ‘On Vice Premier Li Xiannian’s Visit to North Korea’,” December 23, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01477-03, 15-16. Translated by Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118685>

¹³¹ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in the Second Half of 1968’,” January 06, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 1-14. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134218>

¹³² “Memorandum On the Visit of the Party and Government Delegation of the GDR, led by Comrade Prof. Dr. Kurt Hager, with the General Secretary of the KWP and Prime Minister of the DPRK, Comrade Kim Il Sung, on 16 April 1968, 5:00p.m. until 6:50 p.m.,” April 23, 1968, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MfAA, C 159/75. Translated by Karen Riechert.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116731>

¹³³ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 2, 114.

cease.¹³⁴ In October, an article in a Red Guards newspaper called North Korean leaders “revisionists” and accused Kim Il-sung of “cooperating with the United States and the revisionists, and pursuing an anti-Chinese policy.”¹³⁵

There is little evidence suggesting that whether Chinese leaders instructed Red Guards to make up those posters or Red Guards took action spontaneously. However, Pyongyang was furious at these posters. On January 26, *KCNA* issued an “authorized statement” denouncing Chinese “false propaganda” regarding the coup and warning “such false propaganda should not be repeated.”¹³⁶ In late February, North Korea accused that the Chinese leadership authorized these Red Guard lies because they did not like Pyongyang’s independent policies. North Korea also asserted that they would stick to those policies and “never yield to external pressure.”¹³⁷

In response, Zhou Enlai attempted to amend China-North Korea relations. In October Zhou Enlai asked President of Mauritania Moktar Ould Daddah to convey a message to Kim Il-sung, in which Zhou assured Kim that despite imperialists’ slanders, China’s North Korea policy did not change and China supported North Korea’s anti-imperialism struggle. In response, Kim Il-sung promised that North Korea’s China policy did not and would not change. He admitted that there were some disagreements between North Korea and China. However, Kim stated, the two governments could settle those

¹³⁴ Ibid., 115.

¹³⁵ “Report, Embassy of Hungary in China to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 20 November 1967,” November 20, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j China, 1967, 59. doboz, 1, 001187/62/1967. Translated by Balázs Szalontai. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116664>

¹³⁶ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 2, 115.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 115-16.

disagreements through talks. Finally, Kim stressed that he believed if North Korea was under attack, China would come to help North Korea as it had done in the past.¹³⁸

Meanwhile, Chinese local authorities also took cautious attitude toward Red Guard activities in the Chinese-North Korean border area. In a guidance in September 1966, the Shenyang Military District instructed the Yanbian Military District Party Committee to persuade Red Guards not to go to the countryside on the border and to send militia units to maintain order on the border.¹³⁹

8.3.2 China Used Accommodation as Complementary Strategies

Coercive binding was not the only tool China used to keep North Korea from drifting away. China also accommodated North Korea for two purposes. First, as North Korea continued to play the role of a buffer zone against the United States, China was cautious about cutting off all of its assistance to North Korea. Second, as Jervis argued, in deterrence a state needs to signal not only credible threats to its adversary, but also an assurance that if its adversary complies, it will not carry out its threats. This logic applies to China's binding strategies against North Korea. While using coercive binding as the primary strategy, Beijing also provided reward to Pyongyang as a signal that if North Korea adjust its position between Moscow and Beijing, China would stop coercion and fully resume supplies of rewards to North Korea.

During this period, China tried not to undermine North Korean defensive capabilities. In the end of 1965, China and North Korea started to negotiate a trade

¹³⁸ Ma, *Waijiaobu Wenge jishi*, 218.

¹³⁹ "Cable from the Yanbian Military District Party Committee, 'Implementing the Shenyang Military District's Opinion "Guidance on the Activities of Red Guards in the Border Area"', September 08, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Jilin Provincial Archives, 77-12-3, 10-13. Translated by David Cowhig. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/198179>

protocol. To prepare for the negotiation, Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Trade Li Qiang visited North Korea. In a discussion, North Korean vice Premier Ri Ju-yeon requested supply of 500,000 tons of wheat over three years and 300,000 tons of oil reserved for “war preparation.” Clearly, North Korea was desperate to receive Chinese delivery of wheat. Ri told Li Qiang that he preferred “delivering more [wheat] during the first year.” He urged that China deliver 100,000 tons of wheat in the first half of 1966. Li assured his North Korean comrade that China could deliver 200,000 tons in the first year.¹⁴⁰

Subsequently, Chinese Vice Premier Li Xiannian visited Pyongyang. When discussing North Korean war preparations with Li Xiannian, Kim Il-sung mentioned shortages of explosives, copper, and other military materials and equipment. He then told Li that the North Korean military in the future “wanted to have detailed consultations with the Chinese military about artillery shells.”¹⁴¹

China also maintained its military cooperation with North Korea. As the Soviet embassy reported, in 1967 a Chinese military delegation visited North Korea. North Korea “supposedly” supplied uranium ore to China in exchange for weapons and spare parts of them. Nonetheless, the report stated that this was “unverified data.” Nonetheless, the report concluded, it would be “incorrect to deny the possibility of Korean-Chinese

¹⁴⁰ “Cable, Ruo Jiaoyu and Li Qiang to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, ‘Vice Premier Ri Ju-yeon’s Discussion of War Materials’,” December 15, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01477-01, 9-10. Translated by Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118687>. “Several Questions Raised by Vice Premier Ri Ju-yeon to Deputy Minister Li Qiang prior to the Signing of the Protocol,” December 14, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01230-01, 3-4. Translated by Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118690>

¹⁴¹ “Cable from the Chinese Embassy in North Korea to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Trade,” December 26, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01477-04, 21-25. Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116558>

military cooperation.”¹⁴² In mid-1967, Chinese experts were working on military and civilian telecommunications and electronics in North Korea. Meanwhile, China continued to supply military materials to North Korea, mainly in the form of gasoline and fuel for North Korean jet planes.¹⁴³

Reportedly, Beijing had promised to provide military assistance to North Korea if the United States used force to get USS *Pueblo* back. In March, a Chinese delegation of about 50 military officers arrived in Pyongyang to discuss military aid to North Korea.¹⁴⁴ China also helped North Korea, at no cost, repair military equipment and military factories that the Chinese built in the past.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, according to a Czechoslovak source, China continued to supply tanks, large caliber cannons, and MiG-19s to North Korea.¹⁴⁶

According to a CIA report, during 1965 and 1969 Chinese supplies of military equipment had amounted to some \$15 million.¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately, no specific data were available to allow us to compare statistics annually. A Soviet report assessed that military cooperation between China and North Korea maintained at a reduced level.¹⁴⁸ However, this report also did not provide specific statistics.

¹⁴² “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in the Second Half of 1968’,” January 06, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 1-14. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134218>

¹⁴³ “Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, No. 76.208, TOP SECRET, June 15, 1967,” June 15, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Eliza Gheorghe.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116708>

¹⁴⁴ CIA, “Intelligence Information Cable: Relations between North Korea and China,” April 19, 1968.

¹⁴⁵ “Report: North Korean-Chinese relations and similarities and differences in their ideology and foreign policies,” May 20, 1969, AMVRB, Opis 20p, delo 17, 289, 1-25.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 1-25.

¹⁴⁷ CIA, “Recent Trends in North Korea’s Foreign Trade,” 9-10.

¹⁴⁸ “Soviet Ambassador to North Korea, ‘The Main Directions of the Domestic and Foreign Policy of the KWP CC and DPRK Government and the Situation in Korea’,” November 18, 1969, History and Public

In addition to military cooperation, China also reconfirmed its security commitment to North Korea during the *Pueblo* incident. Chinese Acting Ambassador Wang Feng informed North Koreans of China's support during the Pueblo Incident.¹⁴⁹ The Chinese military attaché also stated, "in the event of a conflict China will offer the DPRK all kinds of help."¹⁵⁰

8.3.3 Success of China's Binding Strategies, June 1969-1970

China-North Korea relations improved after the summer of 1969. North Korea showed a lukewarm attitude toward the Soviet Union and reconciled with China. While multiple factors affect this policy change, China's coercive binding strategies made a large contribution. Observing North Korea's return to China's orbit, Beijing rewarded this behavior by resuming and increasing its economic assistance.

Publicly, Pyongyang kept silent on the North Korean-Chinese border incident of March 15. Reviewing China-North Korea relations in 1969 with the East German leader Erich Honecker, Kim Il-sung told his East German counterpart that when Kim received reports that Chinese were crossing the Tumen River, he ordered "not to shoot, but to let them come ahead so that we could take them on our territory, if necessary. We sent a group of soldiers there. Then the Chinese withdrew." Kim continued to explain, "The Chinese have castigated the Soviet Union and even us as revisionists. It lasted about 5

Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 462, listy 246-264. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134264>

¹⁴⁹ Bernd Schaefer, "North Korean "Adventurism" and China's Long Shadow, 1966-1972," 13.

¹⁵⁰ "Lt. Col. J. Załuska, 'Record of a Conversation with SRR Military Attaché Lt. Cmdr Voicu during a Reception with the USSR Military Attaché and Subsequent Ones'," February 01, 1968, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AIPN, 2602/7974. Obtained by Marek Hańderek and translated by Jerzy Giebułtowski. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/208545>

years in our case, and we had to keep our peace because of our situation. We had to be patient.”¹⁵¹

Indeed, Pyongyang decided to deescalate the situation along the border. On April 11, Sudarikov met with Kim Il-sung and delivered him a letter from Brezhnev. In the letter, Brezhnev asked Kim Il-sung to exert some influence in Beijing to ease the tension between the Soviet Union and China. Meanwhile, the Soviet Ambassador tried to convince Kim Il-sung to publish Soviet statements in North Korean newspapers. Kim refused to do so. Instead, he stated that publishing those statements would be “inappropriate” and “difficult to do.” The KWP Central Committee would discuss Brezhnev’s letter, Kim Il-sung added, while taking into consideration of the “complicated North Korean-Chinese relations.” Kim stressed to Sudarikov, “Border conflicts break out not only between the Soviet Union and China, but also between North Korea and China. Under this circumstance, [North Korea] must take cautious measures and not worsen the situation.” Kim continued to caution, “The DPRK is in a difficult situation. We are confronting U.S. imperialists. Our relations with China are seriously problematic. South Korea knows that our relations with China are deteriorating. South Korea is conducting a mass propaganda, alleging that we have lost Chinese support and been isolated... We cannot publish in press incidents along the Chinese-Soviet and Chinese-North Korean borders. We decide not to publicize any relevant information.”¹⁵² Moreover, Kim Il-sung

¹⁵¹ “Memorandum of Conversation between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung,” May 31, 1984, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, SAPMO-BA, DY 30, 2460. Translated by Grace Leonard. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113198>.

¹⁵² “Discussion between N.G. Sudarikov and Kim Il-sung: on mediating border conflicts between the Soviet Union and China,” April 14, 1969, РГАНИ, ф.5, оп.61, д.462, л.95-101.

stated with a “certain measure of sincerity” that he would “would have to find a mediator to settle questions of border incidents with the Chinese.”¹⁵³

This conversation clearly showed that North Korean leaders had decided to yield to Chinese pressure. Kim Il-sung reiterated this logic during his conversations with foreign leaders. In mid-October 1969, Kim Il-sung explained to a Mongolian parliamentary delegation that given threat from South Korea, North Korea was “ready to fight at any time.” Therefore, he stated, North Korea had to “avoid having an additional enemy at its back... under all circumstances” and take “certain steps to warm up relations with China.”¹⁵⁴

Indeed, they took action in the summer. According to the staff of the Soviet military attaché, China and North Korea held meetings on the question of a border settlement in June and July. Two sides reached an agreement regarding the passage of the Chinese-North Korean border for “almost its entire length.” Meanwhile, it seemed that two sides reached this agreement on Chinese terms. First, the result was unsatisfying to North Korean leaders, who wanted the entire mountain. Second, the agreement left several sectors of the border unsettled. Therefore, there remained room for China to exert pressure on North Korea in the future.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in 1969’,” December 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 187-197. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134267>

¹⁵⁴ “Note on a Club Meeting of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors from the GDR, USSR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Mongolia and Bulgaria on 24 October 1969 in the USSR Embassy,” October 30, 1969, PolA AA, MfAA, C 1366/74. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer, in Person ed., “Limits of the “Lips and Teeth” Alliance,” 52-53.

¹⁵⁵ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in 1969’,” December 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 187-197. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134267>

Subsequently, the North Koreans took an initiative to reconcile with China. In August, Foreign Minister Pak Seong-cheol told the Soviet ambassador that North Korea had made a proposal to China about the normalization of North Korea-China relations. A month later, Choe Yong-geon, North Korea's second in command, stopped in Beijing after attending Ho Chi Minh's funeral in Hanoi. Choe held two meetings with Zhou Enlai. Chinese sources stated that Choe conveyed Kim Il-sung's willingness to improve North Korea-China relations.¹⁵⁶ Choe also promised Zhou Enlai that North Korea did not support the Asian collective security system the Soviet Union created.¹⁵⁷ To add, according to a Soviet source, in the meeting Chinese leaders agreed to invite a North Korean delegation to attend the Chinese National Day.¹⁵⁸

This meeting boosted North Korea's optimistic evaluation on North Korea-China relations. North Korean Deputy Foreign Minister informed the Soviet chargé that "now conditions can be created which allow an improvement of relations in the future," and North Korea and China had "reached agreement to restore contacts, communications, and consultations." Moreover, North Korean diplomats abroad disseminated information that "China completely supported the DPRK policy with respect to South Korea and even promised to give aid in the event of a conflict on the Korean peninsula as it was in the period of the Korean War."¹⁵⁹ Moreover, despite the Soviet insistence, the KWP refused to attend the Conference of Communist and Workers Parties in June 1969 in Moscow. As

¹⁵⁶ *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, vol. 2, 320-321.

¹⁵⁷ Wang Taiping, *Zhonghuarenmingongheguo waijiaoshi* [*Diplomatic History of the People's Republic of China*] (Beijing: Shijiezhishi chubanshe, 1999), vol. 3, 36.

¹⁵⁸ "First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, 'Korean-Chinese Relations in 1969'," December 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 187-197. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134267>

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Kim Il-sung explained to B.H. Ponomarev, the CPSU Central Committee Secretary, if the KWP attended the conference, it would show to the world, including South Korea, that China was no longer North Korea's ally.¹⁶⁰

Choe Yong-geon did not deceive Zhou Enlai about North Korea's no support the Asian collective security system. When the Soviet Ambassador Sudarikov raised the issue of collective security, North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Seong-cheol insisted that this idea was "not completely clear." Sudarikov also reported that he felt "the position of the Chinese constrains them [North Koreans]." ¹⁶¹

With the improved bilateral relations, Pyongyang began to cover more China-related news. For instance, excerpts from articles of *Renmin Ribao* and *Xinhua* began to appear in North Korean press. Moreover, since the end of 1969 articles about China in *Nodong Sinmun* had been increasing.¹⁶² To compare, no single article in North Korean newspapers covered the Ninth CCP Congress. Moreover, no report about China appeared between February and June.¹⁶³ To add, both North Korea and China upgraded their celebrations for the anniversary of the treaty of friendship, cooperation, and mutual aid.

¹⁶⁰ "Soviet Embassy in North Korea, 'Concerning Changes in the Views of the Korean Leadership on Questions of the Unity of the Socialist Camp and the International Communist Movement'," June 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 462, listy 79-94. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134242>.

¹⁶¹ "Record of Conversation between N. G. Sudarikov and Pak Seong-cheol, a Member of the Political Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea," November 07, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 463, listy 298-304. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134263>

¹⁶² Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 619.

¹⁶³ "First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, 'Korean-Chinese Relations in 1969'," December 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 187-197. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134267>

To add, high-level North Korean leaders attended the 42nd anniversary of the creation of the PLA celebration in Pyongyang.¹⁶⁴

Chinese leaders were satisfied with North Korea's renewed friendly attitude toward China. In the meeting with Kadri Hazbiu, a candidate-member of the Politburo of the Party of Labor of Albania, Zhou Enlai remarked that after the United States and the Soviet Union had "taught a number of lessons" to North Koreans, now North Korean leaders called China as their friend.¹⁶⁵ As a result, China rewarded North Korea for its compliance.

First, North Korea received strengthened Chinese commitments. Choe Yong-geon's two visits were fruitful. According to a Polish source, during the meetings with Zhou Enlai in September, Choe listed two conditions to improve the bilateral relations. First, China would not interfere in North Korea's internal affairs, including the dismantling of the speakers along the border. Second, China would not interfere North Korea's relations with the Soviet Union. Zhou accepted both.¹⁶⁶ On October 1, Choe Yong-geon had a conversation with Mao Zedong. Mao stated that the Chinese-North Korean relations were "special" and two states had "identical objectives." "We should improve our relations." Mao also reassured Choe, "During the war against the Americans, we also fought side by side with the Korean comrades. In the future, it is

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ "Brief Summary of Conversation between Comrades Zhou Enlai and Kang Sheng on 16 June 1970 with Myself [Kadri Hazbiu] and Comrade Xhoxhi Robo," June 16, 1970, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AQSH, F. 14/AP, M-PKK, V. 1970, Dos. 5, Fl. 1-10. Translated by Elidor Mëhilli. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117305>

¹⁶⁶ "On the Visit of a PRP Party and Parliamentary Delegation to the DPRK," July 16, 1973, PolA AA, MfAA. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer, in Person ed., "Limits of the "Lips and Teeth" Alliance," 55-56.

possible that we will do the same thing again.”¹⁶⁷ When Choe explained North Korea’s Soviet policy, Mao told Choe that their policy was “understandable.”¹⁶⁸

In June 1970, Mao Zedong received a North Korean delegation. When the North Korean visitors stressed the need to “strengthen solidarity and defeat U.S. imperialism,” Mao added, “and its lackey, such as Park Chung-hee, Eisaku Sato, and Jiang Jieshi.”¹⁶⁹ By listing the South Korean and Japanese prime ministers and the leader of Taiwan, Mao was implying that China and North Korea shared common adversaries.

Second, China increased its economic and military cooperation with North Korea. China started to send more experts to provide North Korea with technical assistance. By the end of 1969, the number of Chinese experts reportedly had reached 400, which was considerably more than Soviet specialists.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, for the “first time since the early 1960s,” China provided “substantial project assistance” to North Korea.¹⁷¹

In April 1970, Zhou Enlai visited North Korea. Before leaving Beijing, Zhou elaborated on the purpose of his visit in a letter to Mao Zedong and Lin Biao. Zhou wrote, “The important purposes of this visit are to support North Korea’s opposition to U.S.-Japan-South Korea joint actions, to encourage North Korea to seek independence from the Soviet Union, to gain North Korean support for Indochinese states’ struggle

¹⁶⁷ Xu Dashen, *Zhonghuarenmingongheguo shilu* [Records of the People’s Republic of China] (Changchun: Jilinrenmin chubanshe, 1994), vol. 3, 522.

¹⁶⁸ Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 618.

¹⁶⁹ Discussion between Mao Zedong and the DPRK Delegation, June 27, 1970, in Song ed., *Jimidangan zhong xinfaxian de Mao Zedong jianghua*, 414.

¹⁷⁰ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in 1969’,” December 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 187-197. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134267>

¹⁷¹ CIA, “Intelligence Memorandum: North Korea: Imports of Whole Industrial Plants for the Six-Year Plan,” 4, General CIA Records, April, 1972, document no.: CIA-RDP85T00875R001700030062-8.

against the United States and its lackey, in order to establish a struggle against the United States, its lackey and accomplice in the Far East, and to isolate the Soviet revisionists.”¹⁷²

During his visit, Zhou and North Korean leaders discussed multiple issues, including the joint utilization of the border rivers, the necessity of signing a new, long-term trade agreement, and the issue of the citizenship of Korean and Chinese ethnic minorities.¹⁷³ In the joint communique, China and North Korea emphasized to strengthen their bilateral relations. To add, the two governments condemned the United States as the primary aggressor and Japan as an advance base for a “new war of aggression in Asia.”¹⁷⁴ Since Zhou Enlai’s visit in April 1970, Beijing had given North Korea more press coverage, expanded the “social” activities of its embassy in Beijing, and sent more high-level treatment.¹⁷⁵ Briefing his talk with Zhou Enlai to the Soviet leaders, Kim Il-sung explained that North Korea-China relations had improved and he would make further efforts to improve the bilateral relations.¹⁷⁶

Zhou’s visit led to additional Chinese economic assistance. In October, Beijing and Pyongyang signed a trade agreement, based on which China would extend its economic aid to North Korea’s six-year plan.¹⁷⁷ China agreed to help construct sixteen

¹⁷² Gao Wenqian, *Wannian Zhouenlai [Zhou Enlai in his old age]* (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 2003), 285.

¹⁷³ “Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” May 05, 1970, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1970, 54. doboz, 81, 00843/7/1970. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Balázs Szalontai. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116578>

¹⁷⁴ “Letter, UNCURK Principal Secretary Kuzbari to UN Chef de Cabinet Narasimhan, Joint Communique between DPRK and PRC,” April 24, 1970, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, “International incidents and disputes - Korea - correspondence (603.1),” Executive Office of the Secretary-General, S-0196-0003-05, United Nations Archives and Records Management Section (UN ARMS), New York, NY. Obtained for NKIDP by Charles Kraus. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117434>

¹⁷⁵ CIA, “The International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party,” 16.

¹⁷⁶ “Col. Mieczysław Białek, ‘Record of Conversation of the Marshall of the Soviet Union Com. Zakharov with Com. Kim Il Sung during Com. Zakharov’s Visit in the DPRK’.”

¹⁷⁷ CIA, “Intelligence Memorandum: North Korea: Imports of Whole Industrial Plants for the Six-Year Plan,” 4, General CIA Records, April, 1972, document no.: CIA-RDP85T00875R001700030062-8.

new projects, including one underground railway in Pyongyang, two electric power stations that could generate more than 200,000 kilowatts, and various factories. China would provide a loan of 714 million RMB, with no interest, to finance those projects.¹⁷⁸

In addition to economic cooperation, China also increased its military assistance to North Korea. In 1969, China continued to supply North Korea with military equipment, such as tanks, aircraft, and spare parts of them, artillery, small arms, and ammunition. To add, various members of the diplomatic corps, during their trips to Beijing, had noticed trains going from China to North Korea with military equipment.¹⁷⁹

In July 1970, Deputy Minister of Defense O Jin-u led a military delegation to China. After O Jin-u made requests for military equipment to Zhou Enlai, Mao told O Jin-u, North Koreans were “at the frontline...bleeding, and fighting. We have one principle: do not sell arms.” “You will get what you request...at no cost.”¹⁸⁰ One month later, China and North Korea signed a military aid agreement. According to the agreement, China would provide 600 million RMBs military aid, free of charge.¹⁸¹

China also eased North Korean leaders’s concerns by coolly treating KWP cadres who fled to China. At the end of 1969, Beijing instructed to disperse those North Korean cadres into countryside, and supervise and restrain their activities. In January 1970, the CCP International Liaison Department (ILD) instructed, “Those North Koreans are neither guests nor revolutionary leftists.” It further instructed to “enhance supervision”

¹⁷⁸ Shi Lin ed., *Dangdai Zhongguo de duiwai jingjihezuo* [Contemporary Chinese International Economic Cooperation] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 1989), 52.

¹⁷⁹ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in 1969’,” December 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 187-197. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134267>

¹⁸⁰ Discussion between Mao Zedong and the DPRK Military Delegation, June 29, 1970, in Song ed., *Jimidangan zhong xinfaxian de Mao Zedong jianghua*, 433.

¹⁸¹ Xu, *Zhonghuarenmingongheguo shilu*, 640.

and “constrain the range of their activities.” A few months later, the ILD instructed to identify those North Korean cadres as Stateless Diasporas and they should receive stipends from the Committee of Red Cross.¹⁸²

To add, China eased tension along the Chinese-North Korean border. When Choe Yong-geon visited Beijing in September 1969, he proposed to discuss border conflicts along the North Korean-Chinese border and ease the tension in the border area. Choe also proposed that the two governments resume contacts and exchange ambassadors.¹⁸³ According to the Soviet intelligence, in the rest of 1969 no new border incidents broke out along the North Korean-Chinese border.¹⁸⁴ In May 1970, China and North Korea established a commission to study the disputed border demarcation between the Yalu and Tumen Rivers. The commission was also responsible for tasks such as constructing electric power plants, increasing bilateral trade, and improving the situation of ethnic minorities on each side.¹⁸⁵

To conclude, Chinese binding strategies toward North Korea were effective. Despite some troubles, in the 1970s North Korea had leaned back toward China. As a North Korean diplomat in Beijing reported in the end of 1969, China-North Korea relations had moved back “into their old positive track.”¹⁸⁶ Moreover, Moscow believed that 1970 witnessed “active political and ideological rapprochement” between China and

¹⁸² Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 619.

¹⁸³ “Meeting between N. M. Shubnikov and Kim Il-sung on September 19, 1969,” September 22, 1969, РГАНИ, ф.5, оп.61, д.434, л.35-37

¹⁸⁴ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in 1969’,” December 09, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 187-197. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134267>

¹⁸⁵ Schaefer, “North Korean “Adventurism” and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972,” 30.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

North Korea in both “domestic and foreign policy.”¹⁸⁷ In February 1972, the assistant Military Attaché at the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang Major Bulanov summarized that the Chinese-North Korean relations had “even surpassed those between the DPRK and the USSR.”¹⁸⁸

8.4 Alternative Explanations

Izumikawa’s theory of binding strategies provides a powerful alternative explanation for this North Korean case. Using his theory, one would argue that as China’s reward power was weaker than the Soviet one, Chinese leaders had to rely on coercive binding strategies to prevent North Korea from tilting toward the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁹ Surely, the Soviet Union was able to outbid China by providing North Korea with advanced military equipment and larger economic aid packages.

Nonetheless, this argument contains two drawbacks. First, it cannot explain why China used coercive and accommodative binding strategies simultaneously. If reward power disadvantage compelled China to use coercive binding, China should not waste its limited reward power to accommodate North Korea. Second, the distribution of reward power between China and the Soviet Union in this case was similar to that in the North Vietnam case of 1969-1973. However, China chose distinct binding strategies in two cases. In the North Korea case, China chose coercive binding as its primary binding strategies. In contrast, between 1969 and 1973 China chose accommodative binding

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 32.

¹⁸⁸ “Information on Talks with the Soviet Military Attaché in the DPRK,” February 04, 1972, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Diplomatic Archive, Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sofia. Obtained by the Bulgarian Cold War Research Group. Record 28, File 1705, pgs 14-16. Obtained and translated by Sveta Milusheva. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110155>

¹⁸⁹ Izumikawa, “Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics,” 110-11.

strategies toward North Vietnam. This suggests that factors other than reward power drove China's strategic choices.

Differently, Shen Zhihua offers an ideological explanation for China's North Korea policy. He argued that after 1965 China's foreign policy became more radical as Mao Zedong decided to support revolutionary armed struggles in other states and believed that China had been the center of world revolution. However, Pyongyang attempted to keep neutral between Beijing and Moscow and underscored the principle of independence. China could not tolerate Pyongyang's such tendency. Consequently, China-North Korea relations started to deteriorate. Additionally, Shen argued that Mao Zedong did not want China-North Korea relations to break up because North Korea could serve as the buffer zone against the United States.¹⁹⁰ Shen is correct that Chinese leaders were not satisfied with their North Korean comrades' ambivalent attitude toward revisionism. Nonetheless, as argued above, such dissatisfaction resulted from Chinese leaders' concern about potential Soviet encirclement, not ideological differences. In addition, Shen's ideology argument cannot explain why two states repaired the bilateral relations in 1969-70 because the Sino-Soviet split continued and exacerbated in those two years.

Another plausible ideological argument is that Chinese foreign policy became radicalized during the Cultural Revolution and thus China-North Korea relations deteriorated. Indeed, Red Guards verbally attacked North Korean leaders. For instance, some Red Guard posters in Beijing falsely claimed that the North Korean army had

¹⁹⁰ Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 596-607.

deposed Kim Il-sung and arrested Vice Premier Kim Kwang-hyop.¹⁹¹ Additionally, in 1968 the Chinese Embassy in Pyongyang distributed propaganda leaflets through Chinese residents in North Korea.¹⁹² Moreover, a “loudspeakers’ war” along the Chinese-North Korean border started in the summer, as Beijing and Pyongyang set up loudspeakers directed at the opposite bank to broadcast political polemics ten to twelve hours a day.¹⁹³

However, this explanation contains a few drawbacks. First, there is little evidence that Beijing directed these attacks on North Korean leaders to achieve particular strategic objectives. On the contrary, they attempted to constrain these Red Guards activities. Referring to posters about the “coup” in North Korea, Zhou Enlai told a group of Zhejiang Red Guards that people in South Korea fabricated this rumor.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, in 1971 Zhou Enlai pointed out that the loudspeakers’ war on the border put China “in a very unfavorable position.”¹⁹⁵ Meanwhile, Chinese leaders tried to dissociate Beijing from Red Guard activities. As Kim Il-sung told an Eastern German delegation, “When the Red Guards insult us, the Chinese tell us that the party and government are not responsible. Only if e.g. *Renmin Ribao* attacks us would they be responsible.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ CIA, “The Sino-Soviet Struggle in the World Communist Movement since Khrushchev’s Fall,” part 2, 114.

¹⁹² “Deputy Chief of the 1st Main Directorate of the Committee for State Security, ‘Concerning Korean-Chinese Relations’,” April 25, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 96-99. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134238>

¹⁹³ “First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in North Korea, ‘Korean-Chinese Relations in the Second Half of 1968’,” January 06, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI, fond 5, opis 61, delo 466, listy 1-14. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134218>

¹⁹⁴ CIA, “Kim Il-Sung’s New Military Adventurism,” 17.

¹⁹⁵ Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 609.

¹⁹⁶ Schaefer, “North Korean “Adventurism” and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972,” 67.

Second, the Cultural Revolution started in 1966 and spread to the Chinese Foreign Ministry in the same year. Subsequently, radical Red Guard organizations gained most control of the Foreign Ministry.¹⁹⁷ Since then, the Cultural Revolution had affected Beijing's centralized control over diplomacy. However, China's coercive binding against North Korea began in 1965, shortly after Brezhnev took power. This argument cannot explain China's strategies prior to the Cultural Revolution.

Third, patterns in China's exports and imports could hardly justify the argument that the Cultural Revolution caused the decline of the China-North Korean bilateral trade. As Table 8.3. illustrates, the trend in China's trade with the communist bloc was similar with that in China's trade with North Korea. That is, China's trade began to decline in 1965 and bounced back in 1970. However, China's trade with the non-communist states showed a different trend. These trade volumes increased in 1965 and 1966, decreased in the next two years, and then increased in 1969 again. Moreover, despite fluctuations, China's trade volumes with these states after 1966 were always higher than that in 1965. As such, if one argues that turmoil in the Cultural Revolution interrupted the China-North Korean trade, it is hard to explain why China's trade with non-communist states reached a higher level between 1966 and 1970.

Table 8.3. *China's Foreign Trade (million U.S. dollars)*

		1964 ^a	1965 ^b	1966 ^b	1967 ^b	1968 ^b	1969 ^b	1970 ^b
With the Communist Bloc	Exports	710	650	585	485	500	490	480
	Imports	390	515	505	345	340	295	380
With non-Communist States	Exports	1,015	1,385	1,625	1,460	1,445	1,540	1,570

¹⁹⁷ Lin Qing, ““Wenhua dageming” qijian Wo zai Waijiaobu de Jingli” [“My Experience in the Foreign Ministry during the Cultural Revolution”], *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* [CCP History Material], no.1 (2009), 77-82; Melvin Gurtov, *The Foreign Ministry and Foreign Affairs in China's "Cultural Revolution"* (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 1969), 15-61.

	Imports	1,080	1,330	1,530	1,605	1,480	1,535	1,860
Total	Exports	1,725	2,035	2,210	1,945	1,945	2,030	2,050
	Imports	1,470	1,845	2,035	1,950	1,820	1,830	2,240

Sources: a: CIA, "Economic Intelligence Statistical Handbook: 1967," 4, General CIA Records, July, 1967, document no.: CIA-RDP79S01091A000100020006-3.

b: CIA, "Economic Intelligence Statistical Handbook: 1974," 56, General CIA Records, July, 1974, document no.: CIA-RDP79S01091A000300060001-2.

In sum, North Korean leaders were concerned about the impact of the Cultural Revolution on their domestic policies.¹⁹⁸ Nonetheless, it was not a strategic tool that the Chinese leadership deliberately used to shape China-North Korea relations. Moreover, both Beijing and Pyongyang tried to downplay the importance of Red Guard activities. Like their Chinese comrades, the North Koreans did not publish any Red Guard assertions.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, the Cultural Revolution was not a key factor responsible for deteriorated China-North Korea relations in the late 1960s, nor did it affect China's calculation of binding strategies.

8.5 Conclusion

In sum, China employed coercive binding strategies to prevent North Korea from tilting toward the Soviet Union. China enjoyed strong leverage over North Korea due to two states' geographic proximity and China's security commitment to Pyongyang. As a result, North Korea's security highly depended on China. Consequently, China worried

¹⁹⁸ "The DPRK Attitude Toward the So-called 'Cultural Revolution' in China," March 07, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF f. 0102, op. 23, p. 112, d. 24, pp. 13-23. Obtained by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114570>

¹⁹⁹ Shen, *Zuihou de Tianchao*, 611. "Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, No.76.171, TOP SECRET, May 20, 1967," May 20, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Obtained and translated by Eliza Gheorghe.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116709>

less about the risk of abandonment and thus chose coercive binding strategies.

Meanwhile, China used accommodative binding strategies as its complementary strategy.

Beijing did not completely cut off its exports of important materials to North Korea, and restrained Chinese radicals' action against North Korea.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

The central puzzle this dissertation answers is: how do states choose their alliance balancing strategies? In order to address this puzzle, I investigated one research question: under what conditions does China choose accommodation or coercion as its alliance balancing strategy? In this chapter, I first summarize my theory and empirical findings. Second, I discuss contributions and policy implications of my theory. Finally, I conclude with a discussion on avenues for future research.

9.1 Summary

States form alliances to aggregate material capabilities in order to balance against their adversaries.¹ As such, alliance balancing strategies can take two forms: wedging and binding. Wedge strategies aim to divide or prevent an adversarial alignment while binding strategies aim to maintain or consolidate one's own alignment. I argued that these two strategies serve the same objective: to prevent a state's adversary from gaining advantage in the balance of aggregated capabilities. Wedge strategies are preventing one's adversaries from increasing their aggregated capabilities, while binding strategies are preventing one's adversaries from decreasing the capabilities of its own alignment.

I argued that three key variables shape the initiator's strategic choices. In wedge strategies, the initiator's leverage over the target state is the first factor it considers when

¹ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 43-52.

choosing wedge strategies. The initiator needs to consider whether its strategies will heighten the target's threat perception and thus push the target to stand closer with the adversary. To avoid this risk of balancing blowback, the initiator with strong leverage will opt for accommodative wedge strategies. Meanwhile, the target state may try to maximize reward it receives by dragging both the initiator and the adversary into a bidding war. To avoid this, the initiator chooses coercive wedge strategies as its complementary strategy.

When the initiator only has weak leverage, it considers the degree of security cooperation between the target and the adversary. A high degree of such cooperation suggests a serious threat to the initiator so that it must respond. Coercive wedging then becomes its primary strategy. When such cooperation is at a low level, the initiator would opt for wait-and-see. As the degree of security cooperation between the target state and the adversary is low, the initiator can wait.

Similarly, when the initiator chooses its binding strategies, leverage is also the first factor it considers. In contrast to wedge strategies, the initiator's leverage over the target will lead to different choices of binding strategies. Having strong leverage suggests that the target's security greatly depends on the initiator so that the likelihood that coercion will alienate the target state is low. Meanwhile, as the initiator and the target have been in an alignment, the initiator's leverage has contributed to the target's security, as "reward," so that coercive binding strategies mean depriving the target state of this reward. Given this, coercive binding strategies are likely to be effective because, as prospect theory argues, rational actors are loss-averse. Consequently, these two considerations will prompt the initiator to choose coercive binding strategies. Meanwhile,

the initiator would opt for accommodation as its complementary strategy. As the risk that coercive binding strategies may blowback still exists, using accommodation as a complementary strategy can signal that the initiator's coercive binding is restrained and help decrease the risk of blowback.

If the initiator's leverage over the target state is weak, the target's expected benefits of aligning with the initiator is low so that coercive binding strategies are likely to further incentivize the target state to abandon the alignment. Consequently, the initiator needs to evaluate its fear of abandonment. If it is highly likely that the target state will abandon the initiator and such abandonment threatens the initiator's security, the initiator will choose accommodative binding strategies in order to maintain its alignment. If it is not, the initiator can afford waiting and choose wait-and-see. Similar to wedge strategies, wait-and-see as binding strategies is also the last resort. Additionally, when the initiator chooses accommodative binding strategies, it will use coercion as its complementary strategy, which can signal to the target state that the initiator's accommodation is restrained and it will not enter a bidding war over the target state's allegiance.

I test the theory with case studies of China's choices of alliance balancing strategies. All three cases of wedge strategies, except for the second period of the South Korea case, support my theory. China's leverage over the target state is the first factor it considers. Despite varied levels of security cooperation between the target state and China's adversary, strong leverage prompts China to choose accommodative wedging as its primary strategy. Meanwhile, in these cases China opts for coercive wedge strategies as its complementary strategy. When China's leverage is weak and security cooperation between the target state and China's adversary is high, China chooses coercive wedge

strategies as its primary strategy and accommodative strategies and its complementary strategy. Only in the first period of the Thailand case in which China was incapable of accommodating Bangkok, China chose coercive wedge strategies as pure strategy.

Additionally, in the second period of the South Korea case between 2016 and 2018, China's behavior does not completely support my theory. On the one hand, China chose mixed strategies toward South Korea, which fits my theory. On the other hand, China relied more on coercive wedge strategies, while my theory expects China to choose accommodation as its primary strategy. I proposed two additional variables to account for this deviant case: the rise of Chinese military capabilities and divergence in South Korean domestic politics over the THAAD issue. Nonetheless, this deviant case is overdetermined as these two alternative explanations coincide with each other.

As for two cases of binding strategies, both of them support my theory. When China has strong leverage, it chooses coercive binding strategies toward the target state, despite China's fear of abandonment. Meanwhile, in both cases China uses accommodative binding strategies as its complementary strategy. When China's leverage is weak and its fear of abandonment is high, China chooses accommodative binding strategies as its primary strategy and coercive ones as its complementary strategy.

9.2 Theoretical and Policy Implications

The findings of this dissertation entail four theoretical implications. First, I have proposed a unified framework to explain choices of both wedge and binding strategies. This is feasible as these strategies are two opposite forms of alliance balancing strategies while sharing the same objective, which is to balance against adversaries. As such, the logic

underlying the choice of wedge strategies can be flipped to explain the choice of binding strategies. At first, the initiator considers its leverage over the target, no matter whether it employs wedge or binding strategies. The difference is that strong leverage leads to opposite choices in wedge and binding strategies. When leverage is weak, the cooperation level between the target and the adversary determines the initiator's wedge strategy while the cohesiveness between the target and the initiator determines the initiator's binding strategies.

Integrating wedge and binding strategies in a unified framework is also helpful because the initiator and its adversary's wedge and binding strategies interact with each other. In an alliance balancing dynamic, either the initiator uses wedge strategies first and its adversary responds with binding strategies, or its adversary uses wedge strategies and the initiator responds with binding strategies. As such, the initiator and its adversary will consider each other's strategies when they choose their own. Meanwhile, as the Vietnam and North Korea cases have showed, wedge and binding strategies of the adversary can undermine the initiator's leverage and thus affect its strategic choices. In sum, by establishing a unified framework, I proposed a parsimonious explanation for both wedge and binding strategies.

Second, the findings of this dissertation stress the role and effects of mixed strategies in wedge and binding strategies. Existing studies on wedge and binding strategies focus on pure strategies.² However, states can choose mixed strategies when using wedge or binding strategies. My dissertation extends the deterrence and coercive

² Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," 155-89. Yasuhiro Izumikawa, "Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet-Japanese-US Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s," *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2018): 108-20. Yoo, "China's Friendly Offensive toward Japan in the 1950s: The Theory of Wedge Strategies and International Relations," 1-26.

diplomacy literature's discussion on assurance to alliance balancing strategies. Accommodation and coercion are not mutually exclusive. When the initiator uses coercive wedge or binding strategies, it often employs accommodation as its complementary strategy. It is because such accommodation is a type of commitment that no more damage if the target will comply with the initiator's demands. Meanwhile, when the initiator uses accommodative wedge or binding strategies, a coercive complementary strategy is an illustrative use of threat, suggesting more damage if the target does not comply. Additionally, a coercive complementary strategy suggests that the initiator's accommodation is not something the target should ordinarily expect to receive, and thus increases the value of the initiator's accommodation. In sum, compared to pure strategies, mixed strategies have a higher possibility of success.

The literature on crisis bargaining has recognized the importance of mixing accommodation and coercion. Yet, scholars have not fully explored conditions under which states find a particular blending of accommodation and coercion.³ My dissertation contributes to this literature by examining how a state decides a particular mixture of accommodation and coercion in wedge and binding strategies. Essentially, wedge and binding strategies are two special cases of crisis bargaining, which involve three actors that bargain over the target state's alignment position. By viewing wedging and binding as three-actor bargaining, my dissertation complicates states' calculation when choosing their strategies. When explaining a state's strategy, the crisis bargaining literature emphasizes the impact of its adversary's strategy. Some scholars argue for the strategy of

³ For most recent development on this topic, see, Colin Tucker, "Perceptions of Adversary Preferences for Accommodation and Coercion and Their Effect on International Conflict" (Ph.D Dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2020); Frank C. Zagare, "The Carrot and Stick Approach to Coercive Diplomacy," *International Journal of Development and Conflict* 10, no. 1 (2020): 105-10.

reciprocity while others argue that a state's adversary choosing accommodation would lead it to use coercion.⁴ Different from these arguments, my findings show that adversaries' strategies are insufficient to explain one state's strategic choice. As my case studies illustrate, China's strategies do not always reciprocate its adversaries' strategies or the target state's alignment position shifting. Instead, these strategies result from China's leverage over the target state and cooperation levels between China, the target, and the adversary prior to their bargaining.

Additionally, my dissertation provides evidence against the optimism about the effectiveness of mixed strategies in crisis bargaining. Many studies note that adding accommodation/reassurance element to coercive or deterrent threats can increase the likelihood of success.⁵ As my case studies show, China often applies both accommodation and coercion to the target state. Yet, in most of my cases China's wedge or binding strategies do not achieve their objectives. It suggests that a mixture of accommodation and coercion is not sufficient for success of wedge or binding strategies. The impact of mixed strategies on wedging and binding effectiveness is conditional on other factors, such as balance of economic and military capabilities between the initiator and its adversary, attempted alignment change, and alliance constraints.⁶ For example, in the North Vietnam case, China was both economically and militarily weaker than the Soviet Union so that the Soviet Union was able to outbid China's promises or ward off its

⁴ Russell J. Leng, "When Will They Ever Learn? Coercive Bargaining in Recurrent Crises," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27, no. 3 (1983): 179-94; "Reciprocating Influence Strategies in Interstate Crisis Bargaining," 3-41; Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises*, 248.

⁵ George, *Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War*, 68; Zagare, "The Carrot and Stick Approach to Coercive Diplomacy," 114-15.

⁶ Timothy W. Crawford, *The Power to Divide: Wedge Strategies in Great Power Competition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021), 15-20.

threats. Given this, China might achieve its objectives temporarily by mixing accommodation and coercion. Nonetheless, this was not a stable equilibrium. When the Soviet Union adjusted its policy toward North Vietnam, China's strategy turned ineffective. In sum, use of mixed strategies may increase the likelihood of wedge/binding success, but there is no guarantee of success.

Third, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of balance of power theory. Waltz argues that anarchy and states' pursuit of survival would automatically yield recurring balances of power.⁷ In contrast, many critics contend that these two conditions are often insufficient and a "balancer" is required.⁸ Particularly, scholars have pointed out that the use of wedge strategies can facilitate or disrupt the balancing process.⁹ This dissertation provides further evidence for the critics. As I have shown, states make alignment decisions not simply relying on the distribution of capabilities, threats, or interests.¹⁰ Instead, their choices respond to others' wedge or binding strategies. For instance, in the 1960s North Korea shifted its position between the Soviet Union and China. This is not because the balance of capabilities or threats between the Soviet Union and China changed so frequently in this period. Rather, North Korea's

⁷ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 121-23.

⁸ Schroeder, "Historical Reality Vs. Neo-Realist Theory," 108-48. Nicholas J Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York: Routledge, 2017). Nexon, "The Balance of Power in the Balance," 348-53. Stuart J Kaufman, Richard Little, and William Curti Wohlforth, eds., *The Balance of Power in World History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁹ Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," 118-19; *The Power to Divide: Wedge Strategies in Great Power Competition*, 4.

¹⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 102-28. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 17-49. Randall L. Schweller, "New Realist Research on Alliances: Refining, Not Refuting, Waltz's Balancing Proposition," *The American Political Science Review* 91, no. 4 (1997): 927-30. "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 72-107. Robert Powell, *In the Shadow of Power: States and Strategies in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

shifting position resulted from the interaction between the Soviet wedging and China's binding strategies.

Fourth, I provide a parsimonious framework to explain China's strategic choices when dealing with Soviet or U.S. involvement in China's periphery. China is concerned about the Soviet Union or the United States enhancing their security relations with China's neighbors. Consequently, China adjusts its policies toward its neighbors throughout the Cold War and in the contemporary era. Nonetheless, the literature on China's security policies toward neighboring states analyzes these policies on a case-by-case basis or provides systemic explanations for certain aspects of these policies.¹¹ Instead, I analyze these policies from a wedge/binding perspective and provide a more comprehensive and generalizable framework. It helps us further understand the logic underlying China's security policy-making.

In addition to theoretical implications, this dissertation also has policy implications. With its rise, China becomes increasingly dissatisfied with the U.S. alliance system in East Asia and thus drives wedges between the United States and its allies. In addition to using accommodative wedge strategies toward South Korea, China also

¹¹ This literature is vast. For some most recent studies, see Du Zheyuan, "'Yidaiyilu' Jianshe yu Zhongguo Zhoubian Sanhuan Waijiaotixi de Goujian" ["The Belt and Road" and the Construction of China's Peripheral Tri-ring Diplomacy System"], *Dongnanya Yanjiu* [Southeast Asian Studies], no. 1 (2018): 48-64; William A. Callahan, "China's 'Asia Dream': The Belt Road Initiative and the New Regional Order," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 1, no. 3 (2016): 226-43; Le Thu Huong, "China's Dual Strategy of Coercion and Inducement Towards ASEAN," *The Pacific Review* 32, no. 1 (2019): 20-36; Heejin Han, "China, an Upstream Hegemon: A Destabilizer for the Governance of the Mekong River?," *Pacific Focus* 32, no. 1 (2017): 30-55; Chenyang Li and Xiangzhang Yang, "China's Cooperation with Neighboring Developing Countries: Achievements and Challenges Ahead," *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2019): 33-48; Jaebeom Kwon, "Taming Neighbors: Exploring China's Economic Statecraft to Change Neighboring Countries' Policies and Their Effects," *Asian Perspective* 44, no. 1 (2020): 103-38. Zhou Fangyin, "Shijie Dabianju xia de Zhongguo Zhoubianwaijiao" ["China's Diplomacy with Neighbouring Countries under New Circumstances"], *Dangdai Shijie* [Contemporary World], no. 9 (2019): 11-16.

accommodated the Philippines after 2016.¹² The Belt and Road Initiative also helped China induce smaller states to be disinterested in coalitions with the United States to balance against itself.¹³ Meanwhile, China is not the only state that purses wedge strategies. Russia is also applying wedge strategies in Europe. In the wake of the Crimean crisis in 2014, Russia used its energy policies to keep the European Union (EU) divided. Moscow also attempted to use its gas policies, especially the Nord Stream II pipeline, to undermine Germany's leadership in the EU.¹⁴ In addition, Russia employed various wedging tools to prevent potential Nordic security cooperation.¹⁵

The use of binding strategies is also prevalent in the contemporary world. For instance, to prevent South Korea from entering China's orbit, the United States pressed South Korea to install THAAD. Washington also tried to solidify its alliance relations with the Philippines by reasserting its security commitment. In March 2019, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo traveled to the Philippines and endorsed its claims in the South China Sea. After singling out China as a threat to the Philippines, Pompeo publicly declared that "any armed attack on Philippine forces, aircraft or public vessels in the South China Sea will trigger mutual defense obligations."¹⁶ Different from previous administrations'

¹² Ben Blanchard, "Duterte aligns Philippines with China, says U.S. has lost," *Reuters*, October 20, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-philippines/duterte-aligns-philippines-with-china-says-u-s-has-lost-idUSKCN12K0AS>

¹³ T.V. Paul, "Why Balancing Towards China is not Effective: Understanding BRI's Strategic Role," *RSIS Commentary*, no. 49 (March 2019): 1-3.

¹⁴ Antto Vihma and Mikael Wigell, "Unclear and Present Danger: Russia's Geoeconomics and the Nord Stream II Pipeline," *Global Affairs* 2, no. 4 (2016): 377-88. Mikael Wigell and Antto Vihma, "Geopolitics Versus Geoeconomics: The Case of Russia's Geostrategy and Its Effects on the EU," *International Affairs* 92, no. 3 (2016): 605-27.

¹⁵ Hans Mouritzen, "The Nordic Region: Can Russia 'Divide and Rule'? Four Russo-Nordic Relations after Crimea and Trump," *Journal of Regional Security* 14, no. 2 (2019): 101-28.

¹⁶ Karen Lema and Neil Jerome Morales, "Pompeo assures Philippines of U.S. protection in event of sea conflict," *Reuters*, March 1, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-usa/pompeo-assures-philippines-of-us-protection-in-event-of-sea-conflict-idUSKCN1QI3NM>

vague statements, Pompeo suggested that the mutual defense treaty would cover Manila's conflicts with Beijing in the South China Sea.¹⁷

The findings of this dissertation help identify the options states consider when they choose alliance balancing strategies. Coercion needs not to be a substitute to accommodation. Rather, states often use both coercion and accommodation as complementary tools. Additionally, the findings of this dissertation help clarify the conditions under which states choose a particular alliance balancing strategy. As wedge and binding strategies are two integral part of one alliance balancing dynamic, it is essential to understand what forms of wedge and binding strategies their adversaries will employ when states choose their own strategies.

9.3 Future Avenues

This dissertation suggests several avenues for future research. First, future research could go up the ladder of generalization.¹⁸ While accepting assumptions of neorealism that states are unitary and like units, I only test my theory against empirical cases of China's strategies. Future research could conduct cases studies to examine strategic choices of other states, such as the United States and the Soviet Union. By including cases of other states, future research will be able to control for additional variables that are theoretically important, such as balance of capabilities, regime type, and economic interdependence. By doing so, further research could derive more generalizable propositions.

¹⁷ Prashanth Parameswaran, "Managing the US-Philippines Alliance: The Limits of Commitment Clarity," *The Diplomat*, March 13, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/managing-the-us-philippines-alliance-the-limits-of-commitment-clarity/>

¹⁸ Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," *American political science review* 64, no. 4 (1970): 1040-46.

Second, future research could examine more complete dynamics of a state's wedge strategies and another's binding ones. In the empirical testing of this dissertation, I only focus on China's strategic choices, while treating its adversary's strategies as given. Examining strategic choices of both sides will shed more light on how two sides' strategies interact with each other. Additionally, by studying strategic interactions between two sides at different phases. Future research could examine how states, through these interactions, update their evaluations of external environment and adjust their strategies.

Third, further research could extend this dissertation by analyzing conditions under which a particular alliance balancing strategy is effective. Understanding the logic of choices is the first step and the second step is to explain outcomes of these choices. While scholars begin to pay attention to this question, it remains understudied.¹⁹ Particularly, further research could examine how one state's wedge strategies affect the effectiveness of its adversary's binding strategies, and vice versa.

¹⁹ Crawford, "The Alliance Politics of Concerted Accommodation: Entente Bargaining and Italian and Ottoman Interventions in the First World War," 113-47; *The Power to Divide: Wedge Strategies in Great Power Competition*. Liu Feng, "Fenhua duishou lianmeng: zhanlue, jizhi yu anli" ["Dividing Adversarial Alliance: Strategy, Mechanism, and Cases"], *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* [*World Economics and Politics*], no. 1 (2014): 48-65.

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