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## **How did Chinese Foreign Policy Vis-à-Vis Other Communist States Evolve between the 1954 Geneva Conference and the 1957 Moscow Conference?**

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### **Abstract**

The period from 1954 to 1957, known as the "Honeymoon" of Sino-Soviet relations, witnessed robust collaboration between China and the Soviet Union within the communist bloc, despite emerging disagreements. Diplomatic historians Shen and Xia contend that by the 1957 Moscow Conference, China was already contemplating challenging Soviet leadership in the global communist movement. This study scrutinizes their assertion by examining whether Chinese foreign policy towards other communist states became more assertive between the 1954 Geneva Conference and the 1957 Moscow Conference. The chosen conferences serve as crucial reference points: China's attendance at the 1954 Geneva Conference at the Soviet's request suggests that China was a subservient partner in the relationship at the time, whereas the country's proposal of the 1957 Moscow Conference signifies a more equitable partnership. Utilizing Chen and Pu's classification of assertiveness in 21st-century Chinese foreign policy, the research investigates instances of offensive, defensive, and constructive assertiveness, focusing on interactions with North Korea and North Vietnam. The analysis indicates a progression from primarily constructive assertiveness in 1954 to defensive and even offensive assertiveness by 1957. By assessing the level of assertiveness within interactions with other communist states, this paper contributes to our understanding how China's rising power reshaped the dynamics within the communist bloc during this pivotal period.

## Introduction

With some dispute around dates, the period between 1954 and 1957 is often referred to as a “Honeymoon” of Sino-Soviet relations. During this time period, China strongly supported the Soviet Union’s role as leader of the communist bloc, but the differences of opinion that eventually led to the Sino-Soviet split had already begun to materialize. Although there is a lack of consensus among scholars about when the strongest period of the Sino-Soviet alliance began and ended.<sup>①</sup> Scholars generally agree that the period 1954-1957 was a time of very strong Sino-Soviet cooperation, hence the moniker “Honeymoon” period.

Much attention has been paid to the evolution of Sino-Soviet relations during this “Honeymoon”, with scholars analyzing the comparative differences in ideology and vision that the two countries had for the direction of the communist bloc. Diplomatic historians Shen and Xia argue that the Chinese government was already contemplating contending with the Soviets as alternative leaders of the global communist movement by the time the 1957 Moscow Conference was held.<sup>②</sup> They point to Mao’s growing resentment of Khrushchev’s leadership, the success of China’s early economic policies, and the loss of confidence in the Soviet policy that occurred in the wake of the Polish and Hungarian crises as factors that gave China impetus to consider itself a potential alternative leader of the Communist bloc.<sup>③</sup> If they are correct, it should be possible to detect a change in Chinese foreign policy towards other communist nations during this time, with China attempting to display more assertiveness and leadership in its interactions with other states.

This paper will investigate Shen and Xia’s claim to see if it is corroborated by the historical record. This will be done by exploring whether or not Chinese foreign policy vis-à-vis other communist states evolved to become more assertive between the 1954 Geneva Conference and the 1957 Moscow Conference. These two conferences have been selected as appropriate reference points because China attended the 1954 Geneva Conference at the request of the Soviet Union, and, in that sense, can be considered a subservient partner in the relationship at that time.<sup>④</sup> Meanwhile, the 1957 Moscow Conference was convened at Beijing’s suggestion, indicating that a change in the relationship had already taken place, with China now acting as a more equal partner.<sup>⑤</sup> By mapping China’s interactions with other communist states at the conferences and during the intermediate period, it might be possible to distinguish whether or not China did indeed begin to take a more assertive stance towards other communist nations, which would support Shen and Xia’s argument that China had already begun to contend with the Soviets for leadership supremacy. As such, the paper poses the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis:** *Chinese foreign policy vis-à-vis other communist states became more assertive between the 1954 Geneva Conference and the 1957 Moscow Conference.*

Due to the assumption that China was a rising power within the communist bloc at this time, this paper will borrow its framework for assessing the assertiveness of Chinese foreign policy from modern scholarship on Chinese assertiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – where China is also a rising power, but this time on the global stage and contending with the US for supremacy. Namely, this

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<sup>①</sup> For instance, Urbansky (2012) considers the period 1950-1960 to be one of continuous Sino-Soviet alliance; Zhang (2010) favors 1954-1962; Shen and Xia (2009) argue that the friendliest stage was from October 1954 to late 1957; while Ringger (2023) argues that the Sino-Soviet split began in 1956 and escalated in 1960.

<sup>②</sup> Shen and Xia, “*Hidden Currents*”, p116-117

<sup>③</sup> *Ibid*, p114-115

<sup>④</sup> Qiang, “*China and the Geneva Conference*”, p107

<sup>⑤</sup> Shen and Xia, “*Hidden Currents*”, p78

paper will use Chen and Pu's categorization of Chinese assertiveness in early 21st-century foreign policy to identify instances of 1.) Offensive assertiveness, 2.) Defensive assertiveness, and 3.) Constructive assertiveness.<sup>①</sup> Using this categorization, the paper will use case studies to evaluate the validity of the central hypothesis, focusing on North Korea and North Vietnam, as these countries were prominently involved in both conferences. By mapping China's interactions with communist states other than the USSR, this paper hopes to enhance our understanding of the dynamics changed within the communist bloc as China increased its standing during this so-called "honeymoon" period. The paper finds that China mostly displayed Constructive assertiveness in 1954, which intensified and also extended to include defensive and even offensive assertiveness in 1957.

### Literature Review

Shen and Xia base their argument on an examination of the 1957 Moscow Conference, using declassified archival records and memoirs to show how China was already displaying leadership and contending with the Soviets to guide the agenda in the lead-up to and during the conference.<sup>②</sup> Following the dissolution of the Coniform in 1956, communist parties around the world agreed on the importance of continued cooperation and international solidarity.<sup>③</sup> For the purpose of strengthening solidarity and increasing unity, Mao suggested the convening of a conference to sort through differences.<sup>④</sup> Shen and Xia argue that China's initial suggestion of the conference and later consultation with foreign communist parties to draft a pre-agreed declaration are evidence of China's capability and willingness to take on a leadership role within the international Communist bloc.<sup>⑤</sup>

At that time, China benefited from the confidence accrued from economic growth, having successfully realized rapid industrialization during the first five-year plan (1953-57).<sup>⑥</sup> Moreover, due to the crises in Poland and Hungary, the Soviet Anti-Party Group's attempt to challenge Khrushchev's authority, and the process of de-Stalinisation, Shen and Xia claim that many foreign communist parties no longer trusted Soviet leadership and were open to China assuming greater responsibility.<sup>⑦</sup> Lüthi corroborates this assertion, noting how de-Stalinization policies and the condemnation of Stalin's personality cult magnified the USSR's emerging policy differences with China, especially since China had just completed the Hundred Flowers campaign and was preparing for the launch of the Great Leap Forward.<sup>⑧</sup> Lüthi notes how from 1958 onwards, each country attempted to demonstrate to the rest of the Communist bloc that its policies represented "real Marxism-Leninism", desiring to persuade foreign communist parties to adhere to their vision and understanding.<sup>⑨</sup>

During the 1957 conference, although China supported the USSR's role as the leader of the Communist bloc, there was already clear disagreement on some key policy areas.<sup>⑩</sup> For example, the Soviets desired to insist on a "peaceful transition" to communism, which the Chinese

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① Chen and Pu, "Debating Chinese Assertiveness", p177

② Shen and Xia, "Hidden Currents", p74

③ Shen and Xia, "Hidden Currents", p79

④ Shen and Xia, "Hidden Currents", p80

⑤ Shen and Xia, "Hidden Currents", p83

⑥ Hsia, "China's Industrial Growth", p71

⑦ Shen and Xia, "Hidden Currents", p84

⑧ Lüthi, "Visible Cracks", p155

⑨ Lüthi, "Visible Cracks", p156

⑩ Shen and Xia, "Hidden Currents", p96

reworded to “peaceful road” in the final draft with the caveat that “the road to socialism in each individual country depends on the actual historical circumstances.”<sup>①</sup> Additionally, Shen and Xia also cite primary sources that show sentiment among Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members increasingly favored a Chinese-led socialist bloc, with statements like “The development of Marxism in the Soviet Union is behind that in China. Why does China still say ‘the Soviet Union as the leader?’”<sup>②</sup> So, although China supported Soviet leadership in principle, through Chinese interactions with other communist parties at the conference, particularly with parties attempting to promote socialism in capitalist countries, it is possible to sense that China was sometimes pushing the Chinese vision for the socialist movement over the Soviet one.<sup>③</sup>

In contrast to the ideological splits seen at the 1957 Moscow Conference, scholars have argued that China’s policy towards other communist states was in line with Soviet foreign policy during the 1954 Geneva Conference. First of all, as Weathersby argues, the Chinese still looked to the Soviets to resolve issues on the international stage.<sup>④</sup> While Qiang, in his study of China’s relations with Indo-China, also notes how it was Russian Foreign Minister Molotov who proposed that a conference be held to restore peace in Korea and Indochina, with China announcing its support for the Soviet plan.<sup>⑤</sup> Qiang records how the Chinese government had close consultations with the Soviets ahead of the conference so that they could coordinate Chinese-Soviet-North Vietnamese policies and align on their diplomatic goals.<sup>⑥</sup> The Chinese delegation even travelled to Geneva via Moscow in order to rehearse with the Soviets.<sup>⑦</sup> Therefore, it can be assumed that the Chinese approach to the conference was pre-approved by the USSR, if not designed by the Soviets themselves. As such, one would expect China’s relations with other communist parties involved at Geneva to be deferential to Soviet foreign policy designs and not overly assertive of Chinese interests.

According to Chen and Pu, assertiveness in modern Chinese foreign policy can be divided into three types: 1.) Offensive assertiveness, which involves the use of coercion to expand China’s own interests, 2.) Defensive assertiveness, which is the willingness to defend existing interests, and 3.) Constructive assertiveness, which is the assumption of an international leadership role to solve global problems.<sup>⑧</sup> These three types of assertiveness should be distinguished from aggression – with the exception of offensive assertiveness, which can, at times, be considered aggressive – and may be used simultaneously or separately depending on China’s foreign policy objectives.<sup>⑨</sup> Chen and Pu used this framework to analyze the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, as well as issues arising from China’s peaceful rise on the world stage. They conclude that China, despite being a rising power, mostly displayed defensive and constructive assertiveness in its interactions with other states during the 2000’s.<sup>⑩</sup> Given that China was also a rising power in the period 1954-1957, albeit one whose growing influence was largely constrained within the socialist bloc, the same modern categorizations of assertiveness could be applied to China’s interactions with other communist states during the “honeymoon” period of Sino-Soviet relations,

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① Shen and Xia, “*Hidden Currents*”, p92

② Shen and Xia, “*Hidden Currents*”, p100

③ Shen and Xia, “*Hidden Currents*”, p91

④ Weathersby, “*The Soviet Role*”, p445

⑤ Qiang, “*China and the Geneva Conference*”, p107

⑥ Qiang, “*China and the Geneva Conference*”, p108

⑦ Qiang, “*China and the Geneva Conference*”, p109

⑧ Chen and Pu, “*Debating Chinese Assertiveness*”, p177

⑨ Chen and Pu, “*Debating Chinese Assertiveness*”, p177

⑩ Chen and Pu, “*Debating Chinese Assertiveness*”, p180

revealing how Chinese foreign policy changed in response to its rising influence as a leading communist country.

Chen and Pu proposed their three-part categorization of China's assertiveness in response to Johnston's 2013 article, which contends that assertiveness is not a new trope in Chinese diplomacy. At the time, commentators like "Swaine (2010) and Twining (2012)" had begun to describe Chinese foreign policy actions as "newly or increasingly assertive", in part due to a conscious reaction to the 2008 financial crisis.<sup>①</sup> Dismissing these claims about a "newly assertive" form of Chinese diplomacy, Johnston argues that an increase in assertive rhetoric and use of offensive policy could only be found in China's interactions over maritime disputes.<sup>②</sup> Johnston contends that in the early 2000s, China displayed a similar degree of assertiveness regarding sovereignty and territory issues as it did after the 2008 financial crisis, indicating that the assertiveness observed in foreign policy was a continuation rather than a change.<sup>③</sup> Chen and Pu agree with Johnston that Chinese assertiveness is not a new phenomenon, but object to the narrowness of his definition and his decision not to classify China's involvement in international forums, such as the 2009 Copenhagen Summit, as a type of assertive behavior.<sup>④</sup> Chen and Pu find that in addition to the "defensive assertiveness" China displayed in maritime and territorial disputes, the country also frequently engaged in "constructive assertiveness" by demonstrating leadership, such as during humanitarian crises and international conferences.<sup>⑤</sup> Their three-part categorization of Chinese assertiveness reflects China's multi-faceted approach to protecting its national interests and ensuring its voice is heard on the world stage.

### 1954 Geneva Conference

The 1954 Geneva Conference took place against the backdrop of the Korean War (1950-1953) and the First Indochina War (1946-1954) with the aim of finding long-term solutions for both conflicts. The conference did not result in any meaningful decisions on Korea, but constructive efforts were made to address the ongoing conflict in Vietnam, marking a pivotal moment in the decolonization of Southeast Asia.<sup>⑥</sup> To analyze the assertiveness of China's interactions with other communist nations during the 1954 Geneva Conference, it is first necessary to establish what China's interests were. Aside from the goal of achieving an acceptable settlement of the Korean and Indochina wars, China wanted to establish itself as a legitimate player on the world stage and a reliable ally for other communist nations – the 1954 conference was the first major international conference the PRC had ever attended, so it was China's first opportunity to demonstrate these qualities in a conference setting.<sup>⑦</sup>

As mentioned previously, China was invited to the conference at the behest of the Soviets – at the time, the US did not recognise the PRC, the DPRK, or the CPV of North Vietnam. In this way, the Soviets practiced "defensive assertiveness" on behalf of China to ensure that they maintained a comparatively equal seat at the table, with China mostly deferring to the USSR to perform this function.<sup>⑧</sup> Vyacheslav Molotov, one of the three individuals eventually selected to chair, acted as the primary spokesperson for communicating the communist position when it came

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<sup>①</sup> Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?", p7

<sup>②</sup> Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?", p45

<sup>③</sup> Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?", p9

<sup>④</sup> Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?", p14

<sup>⑤</sup> Chen and Pu, "Debating Chinese Assertiveness", p178

<sup>⑥</sup> Asselin, Pierre, "Choosing Peace: Hanoi and the Geneva Agreement", p98

<sup>⑦</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, "Document Number 121144"

<sup>⑧</sup> Tokola, "The 1954 Geneva Conference on Korea"

to the question of Korea.<sup>①</sup>As such, China was not a principal negotiator during the sessions on Korea but assumed a supportive role, with the Soviets and the DPRK leading the discussion. In an April 26<sup>th</sup> telegram to Chairman Mao, Liu Shaoqi and the Central Committee, Zhou Enlai states that “we have agreed with the Soviet comrades that we should let the Korean delegation speak first” to present the plans for a ceasefire and peaceful reunification of Korea and then, one day later, China would “express their support for the Korean delegation's positions”.<sup>②</sup> By stepping back to grant the floor to the North Koreans, China is displaying supportive rather than assertive policy towards the smaller communist nation within the framework of the USSR’s plan for their coordination at the conference. There is no evidence of Chinese attempts to undermine the Soviet position by criticizing the USSR, attempting to coerce the North Koreans, or abandoning the plan by speaking out of turn. Rather, Zhou Enlai repeatedly consulted with the Soviet delegation to confirm China’s stance, even for minor periphery meetings, such as a last-minute morning meeting with Anthony Eden arranged the night before.<sup>③</sup>As a result, scholars have observed that the level of coordination of the communist side during these sessions was far superior to that displayed by the 16 other countries at the conference, leaving little room for China to display defensive or offensive assertiveness in its interactions with North Korea.<sup>④</sup>

Nevertheless, it is still possible to observe “constructive assertiveness” in China’s interactions with the North Korean delegation. Much of the North Korean position was pre-agreed by the Chinese and Soviets, involving lengthy meetings that China helped coordinate. This administrative role continued during and after the Korean sessions had concluded. For example, according to a June 21<sup>st</sup> telegram to Mao Zedong, China hosted the farewell party for North Korean Foreign Minister Nam Il before he returned home following the conclusion of the sessions on Korea, inviting the “four delegations from our side” to the get-together who then discussed the “two proposals presented by the delegations from Laos and Cambodia”.<sup>⑤</sup> Here, China is taking the initiative to show itself as a facilitator within the communist bloc, not only supporting but also caring for its allies, which would, in turn, elevate China’s status among fellow communist nations.

When it came to the Indochina negotiations, China’s goal was the same as with Korea. Although the Soviets still had a considerable influence during these negotiations, the Chinese did not defer to the Soviets on all matters, often taking the lead when discussing matters with the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). Prior to the conference, the Soviets relied on the Chinese to communicate with the CPV, requesting that they pass on the invitation to attend.<sup>⑥</sup> Zhou Enlai telegraphed Ho Chi Minh to express his opinions about where a demarcation line could be drawn and to request that he “come to Beijing at the end of March or in early April, and then go to Moscow to exchange opinions with the Soviet Party Central Committee”.<sup>⑦</sup> Such travel arrangements make sense logistically, but they also show that the Chinese wanted the CPV to reach an agreement with them first before presenting ideas to the Soviets, which would be an example of “defensive” assertiveness. Mid-conference, the Chinese also effectively ordered “Comrades Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh, and Vo Nguyen Giap to rush to Nanning, Guangxi, by 28<sup>th</sup> June to wait for Comrade Zhou Enlai” to have discussions ahead of the resumption of negotiations in July.<sup>⑧</sup> In

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<sup>①</sup> Tokola, “*The 1954 Geneva Conference on Korea*”

<sup>②</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 110601*”

<sup>③</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 110615*”

<sup>④</sup> Tokola, “*The 1954 Geneva Conference on Korea*”

<sup>⑤</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 111861*”

<sup>⑥</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 111961*”

<sup>⑦</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 121142*”

<sup>⑧</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 110860*”

these interactions, it is clearly China and not the Soviet Union that is taking the lead in coordinating with the CPV, demonstrating “constructive assertiveness” via this leadership role. Though, as with Korea, Zhou Enlai travelled to Moscow ahead of landing in Geneva for the July sessions.<sup>①</sup>

The opening session on Indochina was conducted in the same way as the first session on Korea. The CPV presented a five-point proposal, and Molotov spoke to rebut US criticism and request that all participants acknowledge that “resolving the political issue should restore each country's [Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia] unification under the condition of holding general elections.”<sup>②</sup> China did not play a prominent role in the session, once again sitting back so that the CPV and the USSR could take the lead. However, during the private meetings between the USSR, China, and North Vietnam delegations, the Chinese applied pressure to get the CPV to change their positions, often with Soviet support. In a June 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, the three sides agreed upon the maximum (a line along Route 19), medium (the 15<sup>th</sup> parallel), and minimum goals (the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel) when negotiating the dividing line in Vietnam, but disagreed on the division line for Laos.<sup>③</sup> During this conversation, Novikov of the USSR weighed in to say rather bluntly that Pham Van Dong “has no clear ideas on the plan for the division of zones”, agreeing with Premier Zhou's opinion that the “bottom line is to adhere to maintaining a part of upper Laos, neighboring on Vietnam and China”, implying that the CPV should come around to supporting China's recommendation.<sup>④</sup> China was also critical of settlements proposed by the CPV, with Zhou remarking in a telegram to the Central Committee that CPV's proposed settlement “failed to hit the important points” while their unwillingness to make concessions was making it “difficult for the negotiation to continue”.<sup>⑤</sup> However, instead of trying to force the CPV to change their position in an act of “offensive” assertiveness, Zhou proposes that China instead “take the initiative to make concessions” in order to “ask for more gains in Vietnam as compensations to us”, displaying “constructive” assertiveness in China's treatment of their Vietnamese counterparts.

Finally, as with Korea, China also assumed an administrative role, arranging meetings between the communist delegations, introducing the Laos, Cambodian, and North Vietnamese representatives over a banquet, and hosting the celebratory dinner for the Soviet Union, Vietnam and China after the conclusion of negotiations on July 22<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>⑥</sup> Though often overlooked, the act of bringing people together in an informal setting away from the negotiation table is an important part of diplomacy, enabling people to build person-to-person connections that ease the negotiation process.<sup>⑦</sup> Here, we see Zhou Enlai executing this aspect of “constructive” assertiveness with finesse, cementing China's place in the upper echelons of the communist bloc.

### 1957 Moscow Conference

The 1957 conference signaled the continued commitment of communist parties to collaboration and coordination in the face of global political challenges, namely the deepening Cold War with the US, and it reflected the ongoing efforts to maintain unity within the broader communist movement despite ideological divergences and geopolitical complexities. As mentioned before, China, the proposer of the conference, arguably wanted to not only strengthen its position within the communist bloc, but also to position itself as an alternative voice of authority

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<sup>①</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “Document Number 112964”

<sup>②</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “Document Number 111495”

<sup>③</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “Document Number 110145”

<sup>④</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “Document Number 110145”

<sup>⑤</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “Document Number 121156”

<sup>⑥</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “Document Number 121156” and “Document Number 121168”

<sup>⑦</sup> Morgan, “Diplomatic Gastronomy”, p146

to the Soviets.<sup>①</sup> During his speech to the assembled representatives, Mao referenced both the Korean and Vietnamese wars to argue that the East is not being dominated by the West, and declared that in “15 years, within our camp, the Soviet Union will have overtaken the United States and China will have overtaken Great Britain.”<sup>②</sup> Although it is clear that Mao still considered the Soviets the leading communist country, he wanted China to be perceived as a close second.

China’s relations with the DPRK had deepened in intensity since the 1954 Geneva Conference. Kim Il Sung had visited the PRC twice since the Korean War, and Chairman Mao took the opportunity at the 1957 Conference to be constructively assertive and propose that China return the favor.<sup>③</sup> As a result, Kim Il Sung formally invited Mao and confirmed his plans to send another delegation to China in 1958.<sup>④</sup> Mao then raised the issue of withdrawing the Chinese People’s Volunteers from the DPRK to force the US to withdraw troops from South Korea.<sup>⑤</sup> This suggestion came from China, rather than the Soviets, and show China trying to coerce North Korea into agreeing with their defence strategy, arguably an example of offensive assertiveness. Kim Il Sung agreed only to study the matter, but later, during a Presidium meeting on December 4th, stated that it would be “advisable to make wide use of Mao Zedong’s suggestion,” saying:

*“If the Chinese friends agree, we ought to address letters to the Chairman of the PRC about the withdrawal of the people’s volunteers from the DPRK and to the UN about the withdrawal of American troops from South Korea.”<sup>⑥</sup>*

The DPRK defers to China without asking the Soviets for their opinion, representing a change from the 1954 Conference. By the time the 1957 Conference took place, China had already begun advising the DPRK on their first five-year plan – a North Korean delegation was present in Beijing from 13<sup>th</sup> September to 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1957 to discuss the five-year plan and trade issues.<sup>⑦</sup> During these talks, the Chinese agreed to supply specific quantities of goods to the DPRK, including coal, soybeans, and cotton. On the matter of cotton, due to shortages, China only agreed to deliver 8,000 tonnes rather than the 12,000 tonnes the North Koreans desired.<sup>⑧</sup> During the DPRK’s visit to Moscow for the Conference, the first request they made of the Soviet government was for 5-6,000 tonnes of cotton to compensate for the shortfall from China.<sup>⑨</sup> This highlights the success of Chinese constructive assertiveness, with the DPRK prioritizing seeking assistance from China first, turning to the Soviets only when Chinese support was unavailable. However, on matters of defence, the Soviets still played a dominant role. Hence, the DPRK’s second request was for military supplies.<sup>⑩</sup>

Meanwhile, the Chinese insistence that the Soviets allow for nonpeaceful transitions to socialism within the final draft of the 1957 Conference Declaration was also a successful example of defensive assertiveness, winning the praise of the North Vietnamese.<sup>11</sup> When Mao arrived in

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<sup>①</sup> Shen and Xia, “*Hidden Currents*”, p91

<sup>②</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 121559*”

<sup>③</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 115932*”

<sup>④</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 115932*”

<sup>⑤</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 115932*”

<sup>⑥</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 115953*”

<sup>⑦</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 115944*”

<sup>⑧</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 115944*”

<sup>⑨</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 115932*”

<sup>⑩</sup> Wilson Center Digital Archive, “*Document Number 115932*”

<sup>11</sup> Shen and Xia, “*Hidden Currents*”, p92; and Ang, “*Vietnamese Communists’ Relations with China*”, p68



Moscow, Ho Chi Minh was there to greet him at the airport, where Mao “embraced Ho... and told Khrushchev that he and Ho were relatives, implying they were very close.”<sup>①</sup> Following the conference, Ho Chi Minh spent a month in Beijing before finally returning to Vietnam on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December.<sup>②</sup> The Chinese alternative to the Soviet “peaceful” route to socialism was wholeheartedly embraced by the Vietnamese. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, Le Duan, who had also attended the conference, announced to 1500 Vietnamese party officials that the Moscow Declaration had “not only... created the conditions for North Vietnam to advance towards socialism, they had also shown the path of struggle for the liberation of the South.”<sup>③</sup> Once again demonstrating constructive assertiveness, China also began to pay greater attention to Vietnamese affairs, sending its first ambassador, Luo Guibo, to North Vietnam two weeks after the conference ended.<sup>④</sup> Chinese relations with Vietnam strengthened, with North Vietnam sending trade delegations to Beijing and China committing to fund 18 industrial projects between 1958-1960.<sup>⑤</sup> In April 1958, the two sides even reached an agreement regarding the Sino-Vietnam boundary.<sup>⑥</sup>

### Conclusion

Following the Moscow conference, both North Korea and North Vietnam grew closer to China, allowing Chinese influence to permeate their domestic policy to a greater extent. There was an increased frequency and intensity of diplomatic relations, with delegations from the DPRK and CPV regularly traveling to Beijing and vice-versa. Moreover, Chinese leaders were directly suggesting alternatives to Soviet policies, such as the DPRK’s five-year plan and non-peaceful routes to socialism. China also stepped-up aid and the delivery of trade goods with North Korea and Vietnam, often exceeding the USSR in this regard. Whereas during the 1954 conference interactions were mostly supportive and characteristic of “constructive” assertiveness, with China relying on the Soviets when it came to their “defensive” assertiveness, following the 1957 conference there are clear examples of China practicing defensive assertiveness and even offensive assertiveness. This supports the argument that Chinese foreign policy vis-à-vis other communist states had become more assertive by the end of the “honeymoon period” of Sino-Soviet relations as witnessed by the changes in behavior towards North Korea and North Vietnam between the 1954 and 1957 conferences.

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<sup>①</sup> Ang, “*Vietnamese Communists’ Relations with China*”, p99

<sup>②</sup> Ang, “*Vietnamese Communists’ Relations with China*”, p69

<sup>③</sup> Ang, “*Vietnamese Communists’ Relations with China*”, p104

<sup>④</sup> Ang, “*Vietnamese Communists’ Relations with China*”, p104

<sup>⑤</sup> Ang, “*Vietnamese Communists’ Relations with China*”, p110

<sup>⑥</sup> Ang, “*Vietnamese Communists’ Relations with China*”, p111

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