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North Korea's Alliances and the Unfinished Korean War

Avram Agov

This article examines the Korean Armistice from the viewpoint of North Korea's relations with the international Socialist system. The analysis focuses on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s changing relationships with the Soviet Union and China, and also includes an assessment of North Korea's diplomatic ties with Eastern Europe, a region often overlooked in studies of the DPRK's international linkages. The article explores North Korea's relationships with the Socialist alliance system between 1945 and the early 1970s in order to better comprehend long-term trends in the history of the system. The formation and evolution of the Sino-Soviet alliance and its role on the Korean peninsula was an arena for both cooperation and competition between the two Socialist powers. North Korea's alliances played a critical role in helping the regime withstand the extended crisis caused by the Korean War. At the same time, tensions, which emerged in North Korea's relations with its main allies during the Korean War, later evolved into more forceful efforts by the DPRK leadership to assert its autonomy in its bilateral and multilateral relationships with the Communist world. The article thus addresses the dynamics of the DPRK's integration into, and divergence from, the Communist world, an important dimension of the regime's foreign relations, which holds a key to understanding North Korea's ability to sustain its social and political system.

Historically, North Korea has celebrated the anniversary of the Korean Armistice as Victory Day and as its second liberation day. The regime's "victorious history in war" has passed over several generations to the new North Korean leader, Kim

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Jong Un (Kim Chŏngŭn), whom the *Nodong Sinmun* describes as “the symbol of eternal victory of the Korean people.”²¹ According to the regime’s modern polemics, the legacy of July 27, 1953, the day of the signing of the agreement, “cannot always remain in history alone. The struggle to build a thriving country is accompanied with fierce class struggle. We should always be ready to fight a do-or-die battle against the United States and the South Korean puppets. Invincible history and tradition should be continued under the ever-victorious banner of *Sŏn’gun*.”²² Behind this triumphant and combative rhetoric, however, is an acknowledgment of something unfinished. The Korean War is an open wound—a metaphor of North Korean history since 1948.

The Armistice Agreement was indeed a victory of sorts in North Korea’s battle of survival after its failed bid to forcefully unify the peninsula, but the victory was pyrrhic and the Armistice only reaffirmed the division of the Korean peninsula. The current propaganda surrounding the Armistice is fundamentally consistent with the regime’s evaluation of the agreement in 1953. One day after the signing of the Armistice, Kim Il Sung (Kim Ilŏng) made a speech proclaiming the “historical victory” of North Korea after three years of “heroic battle.”²³ The North Korean leader accused the American imperialists of attempting to colonize the country and enslave the Korean people in order to create a “strategic military base” against the Soviet Union and China. Kim paid tribute to the role of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army (CPVA), as well as assistance from the “socialist and democratic camp” during the “Fatherland Liberation War.” Kim Il Sung pointed out that the Korean People’s Army (KPA) and the CPVA had dealt “a decisive blow” to the “aggressors,” which compromised their plan to “ignite [a] Third World War” through “war fever,” and had thus secured peace for East Asia and the world.⁴ Kim Il Sung’s description of the Korean War outlined North Korea’s world vision, the contours of the emerging Socialist system, and the special role of the DPRK as the Communist world’s frontier of security and peace. Kim Il Sung blasted the “traitor” Syngman Rhee (Yi Sŏngman) for opposing the Armistice, attempting to sabotage the cease-fire by unilaterally releasing North Korean prisoners of war (POWs), and advocating a “northern strike.” Kim vowed that the DPRK would continue to strive to achieve “permanent peace.” The Armistice was the first step in reducing international tensions and represented a move toward “peaceful unification” of the peninsula.⁵ The cease-fire or temporary peace, however, has remained the crux of the Korean problem ever since the signing of the agreement.

Endogenous and exogenous forces intertwined in defining post-Liberation Korea. Cutting the Gordian knot of the Korean peninsula in late 1945 produced two states, each of which became part of a global system set on confronting each other. The evolution of the two Koreas, within these mutually antagonistic systems, laid the groundwork for their diverging historic trajectories. The decision to cut the knot into two halves did not resolve the perceived strategic or economic dilemmas on the peninsula; rather, it created more intractable problems with tragic and deadly consequences. The reunification of the peninsula has been an existential problem ever since the division of the peninsula, but after

the Korean War the superpowers refused to support any further Korean effort to unify the peninsula and the temporary solution became a lasting one.

The DPRK was born under occupation and survived the Korean War. The establishment and affirmation of the North Korean state, however, are inseparable from the country's system of alliances with the Soviet Union, China, and other Socialist countries. North Korea's alliance system is, in turn, inseparable from the civil conflict on the Korean peninsula. At the same time, the Socialist alliance system was an integral part of the Cold War's regional and global architecture: the division of the two sides and the inception of two rival states was part of an international setting as well. In short, it is virtually impossible to separate the civil and international dimensions of the Korean conflict.

The internal and international aspects of the Korean War can be viewed as a relationship between the content and form of the conflict. Similarly, the Armistice can also be considered in the context of this dual character of the Korean conflict. Without underestimating the significance of the civil conflict on the Korean peninsula as foundational to the roots of the Korean War, this article will focus on the international dimension of the conflict and, more specifically, the formation and evolution of North Korea's alliance system. In order to better evaluate the alliance system, we will examine the roots of the international Socialist system after 1945, its formation during the Korean War, and its evolution in the postwar period. We will extend our chronological framework into the 1970s to better identify trends and patterns in the development of North Korea's alliance system.

Despite its inconclusive ending, the Korean War gave birth to an international Socialist system encompassing a vast territory within Eurasia (and later beyond). North Korea was a double frontier zone of the Socialist world: first, in the global Cold War divide between capitalist and Socialist countries and second, in the competition between the Soviet Union and China in the intra-Socialist Cold War. This article examines the Korean War and its aftermath from the perspective of North Korea's unique position in the international Socialist system. The Korean War shaped North Korea's alliances and established patterns for their integration into, and divergence from, the domestic and foreign policies of the Soviet bloc and China. I argue that the DPRK was more integrated into the system than its nationalist rhetoric and isolationist image might imply. Since the DPRK's alliances are closely tied to the formation of the international Socialist system, we will start the article with the rise of the international Socialist order in the post-World War II era. This background is important in understanding the longer-term history of the Armistice and its relationship to North Korea's alliances.

THE BIRTH OF A SOCIALIST ALLIANCE SYSTEM

The division of Korea along the thirty-eighth parallel was part of a wider series of Soviet/American agreements emerging out of the Second World War, but the

subsequent breakdown in the big power negotiations over Korea made permanent what was supposed to have been a temporary division of the peninsula. The ascendance of the Cold War and the creation of the Soviet-led bloc was the first phase in establishing an international Socialist system. The Chinese Communist victory in China and the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, as well as the 1950 Sino-Soviet alliance treaty, were the next steps in the formation of the international Socialist network. The Sino-Soviet alliance furthered revolutionary momentum in Asia and that, in turn, played a critical role in both North Korea's decision to launch the unification war and in the Soviet Union's decision to support the DPRK in the conflict.

North Korea's integration into the Soviet system during the Soviet occupation of northern Korea from 1945 to 1948 was both internal—involving the creation of compatible political institutions—and external—revolving around mutual economic cooperation. The internal integration began in 1946 and was finalized by the creation of the DPRK and the adoption of a Soviet-style constitution in 1948. Bilateral Soviet–North Korean trade, which began in 1946, increased to 614 million rubles in 1949 and constituted around 90 percent of the DPRK's foreign trade.⁶ In 1948 and 1949 the Soviets pulled North Korea further into the Soviet sphere of influence through establishing diplomatic relations with East European countries. On an inter-party level the Korean and Chinese Communists cooperated closely with each other during the Chinese civil war, as thousands of Koreans filled the ranks of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. North Korea also served as an important rear base for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which helped the Chinese Communists to withstand Nationalist military pressure and begin the takeover of Manchuria, a vital component of the Chinese military campaign.⁷

The victory of the CCP in the Chinese civil war dramatically changed regional and global politics. The momentum of a world-wide Communist revolution seemed unstoppable. The Sino-Soviet alliance became the backbone of the international Socialist system and played a significant role in the formation of North Korea's alliance system. That is why the establishment of the Sino-Soviet alliance deserves special attention. Despite Stalin's initial skepticism and suspicions of Titoism in Mao's revolution, he embraced the opportunity to reshape Asia's political landscape. Mao later claimed that the Soviets did not give the Communist forces a single gun or bullet, "not even a fart"⁸ during the Chinese civil war, but this was an expression of his grudge against Moscow after the Sino-Soviet split. It is true that Stalin had urged Mao to join negotiations with Chiang Kai-shek in August 1945 as part of an effort to preserve the 1945 Soviet–Nationalist China Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, which confirmed the independence of Mongolia, Soviet influence in Xinjiang, and gave the Soviets concessions in Dalian, Lushun (Port Arthur), and Changchun. But the beginning of Soviet assistance to the Chinese Communists in the late summer of 1945 also helped the CCP and affected the outcome of the civil war,⁹ and despite his initial ambivalence toward the CCP, Stalin supported the Chinese

Communists, particularly after 1948, as the situation on the ground started to shift in favor of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Liu Shaoqi's visit to Moscow in July 1949 not only mapped out the cooperation between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) but also outlined future interstate cooperation. One important outcome of the meeting related to Korea was the division of labor between Moscow and Beijing in the Communist movement. While the USSR would remain the center of the international proletarian revolution, the PRC would be responsible for promoting revolution in Asia. Stalin even declared that the "center of revolution is moving to the East and China,"¹⁰ even though revolutionary momentum and inter-party (and ultimately inter-state) relations did not necessarily overlap. Although the North Korean revolution was tied to the Chinese revolution and part of that center, North Korea was a notable exception to the Sino-Soviet division of responsibility in the revolutionary movement. In 1949 and 1950, for instance, the CCP hosted delegations of Communist parties in Asia for political training (learning from Chinese experience), but the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) did not send representatives on either occasion.¹¹ North Korean statehood emerged and shaped under the Soviet occupation. In the early postwar era the DPRK leadership tended to favor the USSR over the CCP. It was not by chance that the North Korean leadership relied on mostly Soviet support for unification plan.

Chinese premier and foreign minister Zhou Enlai and Soviet foreign minister Andrei Vyshinsky signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance on February 14, 1950, at the end of Mao's two-month stay in Moscow. The treaty provided a lifeline for China in the form of a \$300 million loan, fifty industrial projects, and military assistance. The Sino-Soviet alliance created the backbone of the new Socialist world order, stretching across Eurasia from East Berlin to P'yŏngyang. A common ideology and perceived shared interests pushed the Soviet Union and the CCP toward each other. The Sino-Soviet alliance was anti-American, but it was possible because the US-led capitalist world was antagonistic to communism, according to Marxist ideology. The Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China had taken different paths to socialism and were at different stages of Socialist-building at the time of their alliance—the Soviet Union's urban-based bureaucratic socialism mixed uneasily with rural China's revolutionary socialism. These differences combined with diverging interests and competition for leadership in the international Communist movement in the late 1950s and led to the Sino-Soviet split.¹²

No doubt the "naked" military-political interests and stress on power politics played a role in the Sino-Soviet alliance and the Chinese decision to enter the Korean War.¹³ But we should not overlook the significance of revolutionary ideology. It was not by chance that Mao formulated the famous CCP's foreign policy line of "leaning on one side"¹⁴ toward the Soviet Union in a speech from June 1949. The chairman's main point was related to the "people's democratic

dictatorship under the leadership of the working class (through the Communist Party) and based upon the alliance of workers and peasants. This dictatorship must unite as one with the international revolutionary forces. This is our formula, our principal experience, our main program.”¹⁵ Therefore, internal integration (revolutionary transformation and building Communist institutions) and external integration (cooperation with the Soviets and their alliance system) were closely intertwined in the creation of the international Socialist order. The Sino-Soviet alliance would have been nearly impossible without the ideological bond between the CPSU and the CCP, despite their disagreements before and after the Second World War. In a study of the Chinese decision to enter the Korean War, Chen Jian recognized the importance of ideology and notes that without Mao’s leadership role, China’s response to the Korean crisis could have been different. Mao’s revolutionary ideology, though, was also “interwoven with Chinese ethnocentrism and universalism.”¹⁶

SOVIET AND CHINESE SUPPORT TO NORTH KOREA

The tense situation on the Korean peninsula after the withdrawal of Soviet and American forces, the superior North Korean military capability and revolutionary momentum, and the bellicose South Korean posture, led Kim Il Sung to believe that only armed unification was possible. In 1949, when American forces left South Korea, the North Koreans claimed that the Republic of Korea (ROK) was responsible for 1,863 incidents of military provocations across the thirty-eighth parallel.¹⁷ However, according to an account by Yu Söngch’öl, a former head of operations in the General Staff of the KPA, North Korean generals started to draft war plans against the South as early as 1947.¹⁸ Koreans from the PLA returning to North Korea in 1949 were bound to a mission to “unify the country.”¹⁹ An eyewitness from Hoeryöng in North Hamgyöng Province pointed to state efforts at war mobilization in the spring of 1950 as many soldiers moved southward. The regime’s war propaganda became more active, portraying soldiers as heroes and claiming that the people in the South were ready to rise up when given a signal.²⁰

In 1949, Stalin wanted to preserve the status quo on the Korean peninsula and avoid conflict with the United States. In the spring, the Soviet leader worried about an attack from the South once the American forces left the Korean peninsula. On April 17, 1949, he instructed the Soviet ambassador to the DPRK, Terentii Shtykov, to verify a report that the South was planning a sudden strike against the North in June.²¹ In his reply Shtykov expressed concern about the low combat readiness of the KPA and observed “systematic” violations from the southern side, along the thirty-eighth parallel, after the withdraw of the Soviet forces from North Korea. The Soviet ambassador further reported that the South Korean army had increased from 53,600 to 70,000 troops in the first quarter of

1950; the engineering, mechanical, and special forces had increased between two and four times. There was also a concentration of ROK forces near the thirty-eighth parallel, where 41,000 troops seemed poised to attack P'yŏngyang. As of June 1949, the North Korean forces were unprepared to respond to attack, according to Shtykov. The KPA had three divisions and one brigade against six ROK divisions. Only two brigades or a total of twelve North Korean battalions defended the border with the South. Nevertheless, in October Stalin warned Shtykov not to help North Korea stage active operations against the South. In another report drafted in January 1950, Shtykov referred to Seoul's preparations for a "decisive blow" against the North and the unification of the peninsula, despite insufficient American support.²² Even if the reports exaggerated the threat from the South, ROK war preparations were an important element in both North Korea's decision to attack and in Stalin's decision to agree to provide Soviet materiel and operational assistance.

The shifting international environment in late 1949 and early 1950 changed the strategic dynamics on the Korean peninsula and provided momentum for North Korea's aspirations for armed unification. The USSR became a nuclear power in 1949, thus raising Stalin's confidence about projecting Soviet influence globally. But more compelling factors for Stalin's decision to support Kim Il Sung's plan to unify Korea came from the Communist victory in China, the Sino-Soviet alliance, and the ambiguous American commitment to South Korea. Mao's support for the offensive was critical, for without it Kim could not start the war. Before the war began the Chinese sent tens of thousands of Koreans, who had served in the PLA during the Chinese civil war, to North Korea.²³

Kim Il Sung spent almost the entire month of April 1950 in Moscow and met Stalin three times. The Soviet leader referred to "the changed international situation" that made "more active actions" on Korea's reunification possible. At the same time, Stalin asked Kim Il Sung to secure Chinese support for the liberation war. He also made it clear that North Korea could not count on direct Soviet involvement. Stalin wanted to be "absolutely certain" that the Americans would not get involved in the conflict. Kim remarked that the United States would not risk going to war in the face of the Sino-Soviet alliance. The discussions between Stalin and Kim Il Sung also touched on specific issues of the war plan. Stalin proposed a three-stage operation: (1) a concentration of the KPA along the thirty-eighth parallel, (2) a DPRK initiative for peaceful reunification, and (3) the eventual rejection by Seoul of the peace initiative and the launch by the KPA of an offensive against the South. Stalin noted that it was preferable to strike first at the Ongjin peninsula, since the front could expand easily after a southern counterattack. Such an operation would also "conceal the fact" of who started war operations first. The war should be "lightning" fast, not giving the enemy a chance to gather themselves.²⁴ The Soviet Union could expand its influence in Asia through the Korean unification war at a relatively low cost, and Stalin's calculation of reduced cost and risk in 1950 played a decisive role in supporting

North Korea. This decision provided the Soviet–North Korean alliance with a new practical dimension which solidified the Soviet influence in the DPRK and increased chances of a Communist victory on the Korean peninsula.

Kim Il Sung visited Beijing in May 1950 and, according to Chinese sources, Mao promised help in the event that North Korean territory came under attack. This explains why Kim did not reveal to Mao specific offensive plans, which were worked out with the help of Soviet advisors. But in late 1949 and in the first half of 1950 Mao was preoccupied with other matters, and the Korean peninsula was not a priority. Significantly, the Chinese did not even have an embassy in the DPRK before the war. North Korean officials formally informed the Chinese leadership about the war situation on June 27, two days after the KPA launched its attack across the thirty-eighth parallel. After American involvement in the war, the Chinese leadership believed that China was the next target of the United States.²⁵ Russian sources suggest a somewhat different version of the content of the Sino–North Korean meeting in Beijing. Even though the Chinese and North Korean sides did not discuss specific military operations, Mao fully supported the three-stage war plan, which had been discussed between Kim Il Sung and Stalin in Moscow. Mao even advised the North Korean leader to avoid attacking cities in the South because such attacks would be time-consuming and to concentrate instead on annihilating enemy forces. The chairman also raised the issue of possible Japanese and even American involvement in the war, which Kim deemed unlikely.²⁶ Kim and Mao did not discuss the specific date of military operations, but the Chinese were aware of North Korea's plans.

There were tensions within the Communist triple alliance, but there was tacit consensus among Kim, Stalin, and Mao that there was a new revolutionary situation in East Asia, and that they could use this momentum to expand the revolution. Mao might have wanted different timing for the North Korean offensive, given his regime's preparations to take over Taiwan and complete China's unification, but he could not oppose a revolutionary war. Yet the USSR and the PRC were in a state of disagreement on the brink of China's entry into the war, which contributed to delays in the dispatch of Chinese troops to Korea. Much has been written, for instance, on the Sino-Soviet disagreement over the Soviet air-support during the war. Despite Stalin's lack of commitment for full air-support in order to avoid direct Soviet confrontation with the United States, Mao decided to enter the war. Obviously, Mao saw that the stakes (of Chinese involvement) were high. Still, the Soviets started to provide air cover at the rear of the CPVA a week after the Chinese troops crossed the Yalu River. The Soviet 64th Air Corps consisted of three air divisions that engaged in numerous fights with the American air force in northwestern Korea, known as the MiG Alley. The air battles between the American and Soviet planes in North Korea continued until the very end of the war. Furthermore, the Soviets helped to strengthen the Chinese and North Korean air forces by providing fighter jets and training during the course of the war.²⁷

Kim Il Sung's reluctance to accept Chinese assistance between June and October 1950 was a contentious issue among the allies. It was not until the Soviet refusal to assist North Korea during the advance north of UN forces that Kim decided to seek direct Chinese involvement in the war. In April 1950, Kim told Stalin that Mao promised to help the DPRK, including sending troops, after the civil war in China was complete. The Koreans, however, preferred to rely on their own forces and believed in their success.²⁸ Zhihua Shen points to Kim's excessive confidence in a favorable military outcome and to the long history of Chinese interventions in Korean affairs as possible reasons for Kim's reluctance to request Chinese intervention.²⁹ Stalin had opposed the dispatch of Chinese or other international troops to Korea between June and October 1950, so Kim had agreed with Stalin's stance. Stalin was concerned that Chinese entry into the war would complicate the situation in East Asia, thus he viewed Chinese involvement as a last resort.³⁰ This diplomatic and military maneuvering on the part of Stalin and Mao over Korea can be interpreted as one of the first signs of Sino-Soviet competition over the peninsula. Although Stalin wanted, as an insurance policy, the Chinese to consent to Kim's plans for launching its unification war, he probably was not initially inclined to share Soviet influence in North Korea with the Chinese. Another plausible reason for North Korea's preference for Soviet over Chinese assistance was the paramount role the Kremlin had played in establishing the DPRK and its integration into the Soviet system. Furthermore, the military capabilities of Soviet arms and tanks were an important strategic and military reason for North Korea's reliance on the Soviet Union. The Soviet delivery of T-34 tanks, for example, allowed significant KPA superiority (five to one ratio) over the ROK army in offensive capabilities, something that played a critical role in the first phase of the North Korean offensive. Also, as part of the preparation for North Korea's attack against the South, the Soviet Union delivered a large amount of weapons to the DPRK in March 1950.³¹ China's influence over the North Korean leadership increased as a result of CPVA's entry in the war.

Chinese involvement was critical in saving the North Korean regime, and because of this, the Sino-North Korean alliance was not as smooth as it might have appeared on the surface. On the contrary, North Korea's sudden and overwhelming dependency on China and historical legacy of unequal relations burdened the relations between the two allies. Despite China's military preeminence in the conflict, Chinese officials had limited political influence over North Korea, partially because Mao was reluctant to interfere in the internal affairs of the DPRK.³² The KPA was badly battered and unable to stop the northward advancement of the UN forces after their landing in Inch'ŏn on September 15, 1950, so the North Korean forces had to be integrated, to Kim Il Sung's chagrin, into the overall CPVA command in order to regroup and continue to operate after November 1950. Stalin endorsed Mao's plan for a unified command. As a result, Kim met Mao in Beijing in early December 1950 and the two sides started to work out the details for a Sino-North Korean command structure.³³

Major disagreements between the CPVA and the North Korean leadership occurred in the area of military strategy. The first major dispute between the two allies emerged over the “southward” strategy in early January in the wake of the Third Phase Offensive, which started on New Year’s Eve and led to the recapture of Seoul on January 4, 1951. Kim Il Sung advocated an immediate advance south, while Peng Dehuai, the commander of the unified CPVA-KPA command, insisted on a two-month rest for the exhausted Chinese and North Korean troops after Peng halted the offensive four days later on January 8, 1951. Mao and Stalin had to weigh in to persuade Kim to step back.³⁴ This disagreement led North Korean officials to suspect that the Chinese wanted to halt the war at the thirty-eighth parallel, instead of pursuing the complete “liberation” of the peninsula.³⁵ Kim put pressure on his main military ally, just as Rhee did in the South, for a conclusion to the war. One can speculate that the Chinese rejection of the UN proposal for a cease-fire on January 13, 1951, which the United States had reluctantly accepted, was an indication of China’s commitment to the strategic goal of driving American forces out of the peninsula. And this Chinese objective would be in harmony with the North Korean aspirations. But it seemed that the Chinese rejection was linked mainly to Taiwan, because the PRC demanded UN representation as a condition for negotiations. Thus, it is difficult to separate China’s revolutionary rationale from its strategic interests in helping North Korea and managing the war.

In a change of tactics partly influenced by a Soviet cease-fire initiative, in July 1951 China and North Korea responded positively to UN Commander Matthew Ridgeway’s cease-fire proposal and agreed to enter a stage of “talking while fighting.” The two allies decided to end the war through negotiations.³⁶ Tensions arose, however, on how to pursue this strategy. DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Hŏnyŏng told Peng Dehuai in January 1951 that “Korean people throughout the country require peace and don’t want to continue the war. If the Soviet Union and China think that continuation of the war is beneficial, the Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party (CC KWP) can overcome any difficulties and maintain the current position.”³⁷ Even though Pak did not express the official North Korean leadership’s position, his statement might have been a way to ask for more assistance. It also reflected the mood among the North Korean leadership. It appears that Kim Il Sung supported either a more aggressive campaign south, as advocated by the regime in early January 1951 and in the summer of 1952,³⁸ or a cease-fire and peace, stated more than once after July 1951. Passive defense was unacceptable due to the huge losses incurred without reaching the regime’s objective of unifying the peninsula. In the spring of 1951, when US forces started their counteroffensive, the Chinese military leadership in Korea was inclined to pursue a “positive defense” designed to regroup its forces, while Kim wanted to organize a serious counteroffensive.³⁹

The management of the northern railway system was another source of the dispute between the two allies. Chinese military officials wanted to control the railway network, giving priority to military supplies over civilian ones, while

the North Koreans opposed Chinese military control of the railway system. The negotiations to iron out a unified management of railway transportation lasted for months and resulted in the establishment of the Sino-Korean Joint Railway Transportation Command in Shenyang on August 1, 1951, and the Frontline Transportation Command in Anju in November.⁴⁰ In almost all disputes between the Chinese command in Korea and the North Korean leadership during the war, Beijing and Moscow exercised concerted pressure on the North. Stalin played the role of arbiter in the disputes but always sided with the Chinese. Although Mao had constant communication with the North Korean leadership, he controlled the Armistice negotiations and regularly consulted with Stalin. Hence, Kim played a secondary role in the negotiation process, as Mao decided to only occasionally familiarize Stalin to Kim's opinion.⁴¹

NEGOTIATING THE ARMISTICE: TALKING WHILE FIGHTING

Kim Il Sung had been the driving force behind his government's unification-by-force strategy, thus dragging both the Soviet Union and China into the war. Both neighbors had ideological and strategic interests in Korean unification, but the war exposed cleavages between them and the North Koreans. After the Armistice talks started, Kim wrote Stalin in July 1951, complaining that the negotiations did not make headway on the agenda, while the enemy was inflicting colossal material damage. Kim requested reinforcement of anti-air defenses and help to move the negotiations forward and achieve peace.⁴² In November 1951, Mao wrote to Stalin that the Chinese may "achieve a cease-fire this year." At the same time, he added, "we are making necessary preparations in case the negotiations drag on and breakdown." Mao reasoned that the negotiations would last for six more months to a year.⁴³

By the end of 1951 the adversaries reached an agreement on issues like the demarcation line as a result of a decision by the Communist side to drop their opposition against using the current front line as the demarcation line rather than the thirty-eighth parallel. After January 1952, however, disagreements between the Chinese and the UN sides on the repatriation of Communist POWs delayed the conclusion of the Armistice by almost a year and a half. Moscow backed the Chinese position at the expense of the Koreans. This was an important moment in which Socialist assistance to the DPRK during the war mixed with tensions in the alliance. Soviet ambassador in the DPRK, V. N. Razuvaev, reported in February 1952, "Kim Il Sung does not see any benefit in prolonging the negotiations because the American Air Force is causing horrendous losses to the Democratic People's Republic."⁴⁴ In the same month, the North Korean leader blatantly told Mao that he had "no desire to continue the war."⁴⁵

At the same time, Mao hardened his position somewhat in the 1952 negotiations. In July, he wrote to Kim Il Sung that it would be disadvantageous to accept

the enemy's proposal at a time when the enemy was conducting massive bombardments. The chairman further noted: "Rejecting the enemy's proposal would cause only one harm—continued losses for the Korean people and Chinese people's volunteers."⁴⁶ Mao also remarked that the Korean people "stood on the frontline of defending the peace camp in the world," and their sacrifice helped in "protecting North Korea and Northeast China." As a result of the war, China and North Korea increased their power, which "inspired peaceful peoples around the globe." While the American imperialism was "pinned down and suffers endless losses in the East," reckoned the Chinese leader, the Soviet Union—"the stronghold of world peace"—could enhance its own development and "impact the revolutionary movements all over the world." Another "positive side," according to the chairman, was that "the people of Korea and China, and particularly their armed forces, had a chance to toughen and gain experience in the fight against the American imperialism."⁴⁷ In his response, Kim Il Sung raised the issue of assistance to North Korea and the need to enforce military operations, because if it "continue[s] a passive defense the enemy would not take our forces seriously and would continue severe bombardments in order to exercise military pressure."⁴⁸ Kim apparently felt that the passive approach was only causing enormous losses and that the Communists should either end the war or conduct a more active military campaign.

While the repatriation of the POWs was not an insignificant matter, it alone was not the main reason for delaying the conclusion of the Armistice. The Chinese government's firm stance on the POW issue, which was supported by Stalin, revealed broader strategic interests at work. In his meeting with Stalin in August 1952, First Premier of the PRC, Zhou Enlai, accused the Americans of playing a "tricky game" in order to create a wedge between the North Koreans and the Chinese on the POW issue.⁴⁹ He acknowledged the existence of Sino-North Korean disagreement on the issue. The Americans proposed to return 83,000 POWs—76,600 North Koreans and 6,400 Chinese. The North Korean leadership was ready to agree to the American proposal, even though the repatriated prisoners would be 19,400 fewer than the total number (96,600) of the North Korean POWs held by the UNC. Zhou informed Stalin that the North Koreans wanted to achieve peace quickly, given the destruction of the country.⁵⁰ The Chinese premier explained to Stalin the Chinese government's firm position for the "repatriation of all 116,000 POWs, including 20,000 Chinese."⁵¹ If the Americans agreed to return less POWs the Chinese would consent only if negotiations for the rest would continue. Stalin clearly supported the Chinese position, stating that

Mao Zedong is right. This war spills American blood. The North Koreans lose nothing, except for the victims in the war. The Americans realize that this war is disadvantageous for them and must finish it, especially after it became clear that our forces will remain in China. There must be self-possession and patience. Of course, we must understand the Koreans—they suffered many losses. But we have to explain to them that this matter is larger.⁵²

Stalin praised China's "vanguard role in this war," by containing the American advance in Korea, which he claimed would block the start of a world war by fifteen to twenty years. Also, Stalin continued, "the Chinese comrades must know that if the Americans did not lose this war, the Chinese would never get Taiwan." The war undermined American power and prestige because they "cannot deal with small Korea already for two years." Zhou expressed the Chinese position to extend the negotiations in P'anmunjöm, noting that "the war could continue for two to three more years."⁵³

Li Kenong, the chief Chinese negotiator at the talks in P'anmunjöm, reasoned that without mobilizing international opinion and preparing for prolonged struggle, the Sino-North Korean side could not force the Americans to make concessions. Mao instructed Li, "You must make a firm and persevering stand. Only such a stand can win initiative for you and force the enemy to back down. To achieve such a goal, you should be prepared to maneuver with the enemy for a few more months."⁵⁴ The dispute about the repatriation of prisoners remained the main stumbling block between the adversaries in 1952.⁵⁵ The POW issue was important in the negotiations, but the firm stance of the Chinese indicated their readiness to continue to fight. Moreover, the CPVA began a military buildup in Korea in preparation for a major offensive in 1953.⁵⁶

We also need to view the Chinese participation in the war through the context of China's domestic politics. While the war was not a goal of the Chinese leadership, once the Chinese troops entered the conflict, it became a propaganda vehicle for consolidating the power of the Communist Party in China. The Great Movement to Resist America and Assist Korea was accompanied by the movement to suppress counter-revolutionaries, land reform, and the Three Anti (party purification) and Five Anti (class struggle) campaigns. Wartime mass mobilizations set the stage for key movements in the 1950s, including the anti-rightist campaign and the Great Leap Forward. In addition, the Chinese involvement in the war marked the emergence of China in the global political arena—a resurgence of the "Central Kingdom."⁵⁷ China had much to lose as well. According to Russian historian Torkunov, China was isolated and surrounded by American military bases as a result of the war; Taiwan became an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" pointed at the PRC. The PRC had to rely on the Soviet Union and accept the role of "younger brother" during the war, which contributed to the Sino-Soviet split.⁵⁸

The extended conflict worked in favor of Soviet policy objectives, as long as the Soviet Union avoided a military confrontation with the Americans. Although Stalin approved North Korea's attack on South Korea, he seemed not to have ruled out American military involvement. What is more, the Soviet leader may have even prodded the Americans into the conflict. In a cable to the Czechoslovak president Klement Gottwald on August 27, 1950, Stalin revealed that the USSR deliberately abstained from the critical United Nations vote that declared North Korea as an aggressor state. The Soviet aim was to get the Americans

“entangled in the military intervention in Korea.” If North Korea began to lose the war then China would come to the rescue. Stalin calculated that “America, as any other state, cannot cope with China having at its disposal large armed forces.”⁵⁹ Stalin believed that a prolonged war tied down American power and undermined America’s position at home and abroad. The Soviet leader wrote to Mao in June 1951, “I share your opinion that we should not rush to end the Korean War, because, first, protracted military operations will allow the Chinese forces to learn the art of the modern warfare, and, second, they will weaken Truman’s regime in America and will decrease the military prestige of the Anglo-American forces.”⁶⁰ If Stalin had not died in March 1953, it is highly possible the Armistice would not have been signed when it was, since Mao was also in no mood to compromise with the Americans during the Armistice talks.

It is telling that two weeks after Stalin’s demise, the Soviet Council of Ministers issued a statement for a quick ending of the Korean War, pointing out that it was “wrong” to “automatically” follow the previous Communist line at the Armistice talks without concessions. The declaration urged the Chinese and North Korean leaders to accept US General Mark Clark’s proposal of February 22, 1953, for the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners. The Soviet council’s decision included instructions to the Soviet delegation at the UN to revise a resolution on the issue of preventing a world war. Specifically, the Soviets dropped the demand for returning all prisoners to their homelands and urged “immediate resumption of the Armistice negotiations.”⁶¹ The new Soviet position seemed to be in sync with North Korea’s policy. On March 29, Kim Il Sung told two special Soviet envoys that “the time came for our side to take the initiative on the issue of concluding the war in Korea and achieving peace.” Kim deemed it unreasonable “to continue the discussion with the Americans on the dispute related to the numbers of prisoners to be repatriated.”⁶²

In early July the Chinese expressed their interest in successfully concluding the negotiations, but blamed the South Korean unilateral release of 27,000 North Korean prisoners and its campaign against Armistice for delaying the Armistice. To contain the South Koreans, Chinese officials advocated a strike against South Korean forces.⁶³ As a result, another Sino–North Korean dispute over military operations erupted. The Chinese insisted on striking back at South Korean positions at the front to teach them a lesson, but this was an offensive which Kim Il Sung opposed. The military operation went ahead over the objections of the North Korean leader.⁶⁴ In fact, the Chinese had been preparing an offensive for some time in 1953, as mentioned earlier. The third phase of the offensive, the Kūmsōng campaign, started on July 13, three days after the resumption of the talks in P’anmunjōm, and ended on the day of signing the Armistice Agreement.⁶⁵ On July 29, 1953, Mao wrote to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CCCPSU) that from a military viewpoint it would have been advantageous to continue to “beat the Americans for one more year, so we could occupy better positions along the Han River.”⁶⁶ There are indications,

therefore, that with Soviet support, the Chinese would have continued the war for some time.

AFTEREFFECTS OF THE WAR

The war left more than two million casualties in Korea,⁶⁷ hundreds of thousands of divided families, and it destroyed the peninsula's major cities, industries, and civilian infrastructure. North Korea suffered the greater part of human losses and material destruction in the war due to the American military's relentless bombardment campaigns. The DPRK also paid very high political costs for its adventurism and miscalculation. Military unification proved a horrific failure. Despite surviving the war, the country's economy virtually halted and became entirely dependent on Socialist fraternal aid. During the war, Socialist assistance in the form of cash and supplies reached 1.9 billion rubles (\$475 million), which constituted almost half of North Korea's wartime annual Gross National Product (GNP).⁶⁸ The scale of aid compensated for some of the drop in economic activity during the war.⁶⁹ In addition, humanitarian aid from Socialist countries poured into the DPRK. More than 2,000 railway cars carried gifts—medicine, food, clothing, and other necessities—to war-torn North Korea.⁷⁰ Socialist countries equipped hospitals and sent medical teams. East European countries accepted and educated 1,710 North Korean orphans during the war, while China received more than 22,000 orphans after the conflict.⁷¹

At the time of the conclusion of the Armistice, China had 1.35 million soldiers in North Korea, in addition to the 450,000 troops of the KPA.⁷² The DPRK survived through securing a tight integration into the Communist alliance safety net, the foundation of the emerging Socialist system. Wartime integration was tantamount to a loss of sovereignty, and efforts to regain autonomy after the war greatly impacted the DPRK's domestic and foreign policies. The humiliation of wartime military, political, and economic dependency strengthened the nationalistic bent in North Korean leaders' thinking. The war gave birth to self-reliance ideas. *Chuch'e* was not formally expressed at that time, but its foundation was laid as a result of North Korean conflicts with Communist allies during the war.

The North Korea-first approach, propagated by Kim Il Sung and his guerrilla comrades, served as a vehicle for the consolidation of the power of the partisans. The purges, in the wake of the war, strengthened Kim's grip on power. The process intensified after the failed attempt at de-Stalinization in 1956. Despite the paralysis of society, the war also accelerated the socialization of North Korea, the "purification" of the Korean Workers' Party, and the beginning of collectivization in agriculture. The wartime revolutionary mobilization in North Korea paralleled mobilization campaigns in China, which facilitated the integration process between the DPRK and the PRC.

The Korean War connected the European and Asian parts of the Socialist world by testing and strengthening the Sino-Soviet alliance. Before 1949, the DPRK was only loosely a part of the Soviet system, but with the Communist victory in China and the Korean War, North Korea became, for a brief period, an integral part of the international Socialist system. This outcome was an unintended result of the war for the North Korean regime, not something of the regime's own choosing. But integration was the only way for the DPRK to survive the war. Therefore, the enhanced Socialist integration was a largely unplanned process. It arrived more as a necessity and an adjustment in an increasingly devastating war-torn world.

Rebuilding the ruined economy was a daunting task for the North Korean government. The reconstruction continued to draw North Korea into the gravitational pull of the international Socialist orbit. The decisive role of the CPVA during the war and its continued presence in the DPRK after the conflict created political tensions between the DPRK and Chinese governments. The Soviet and other Socialist countries' aid continued to flow after the war and played a major role in North Korea's economic reconstruction. The KPA was rebuilt and strengthened through military aid, mostly from the Soviet Union and China. But East European aid to North Korea played a significant role in connecting the Western and Eastern parts of the Socialist world, a point which is often overlooked. Collectively, aid from this region constituted more than a quarter of the DPRK's total aid in the 1950s, thus constituting a significant third pillar in North Korea's international cooperation and integration.

The Three-Year Reconstruction Plan (1954–1956) in North Korea can be defined as the height of the country's economic integration into the international Socialist economy. The Five Year Plan (1957–1961) marked the gradual transition from aid to trade and loans in North Korea's economic exchanges with other Socialist countries. In the period between 1954 and 1961, economic and military aid to the DPRK reached 5.78 billion rubles (\$1.45 billion). The amount included loans, most of which were pardoned. The economic assistance helped North Korea repair or build ninety industrial sites, which constituted roughly one-fifth of all reconstructed or newly built plants and facilities in the country. North Korea's integration into the Socialist system in the 1950s helped the economy quickly recover after the war; the economy grew at annual rates between 20 and 30 percent in the second half of the 1950s. The industrial aid to North Korea was a major difference between North Korea and South Korea during the same decade. South Korea received massive American aid, but the aid was mostly in the form of supplies, rather than industrial projects which would develop the economy.

Between 1954 and 1961 North Korea's foreign trade volume virtually doubled. Technical assistance was an integral part of industrial aid. Socialist countries sent more than 5,000 specialists to the DPRK in the 1950s, and 7,837 North Korean workers and technicians traveled to fraternal countries for training (mainly in production process operations). Foreign specialists trained North Koreans at the

industrial sites in the DPRK as well. North Korea sent 4,200 students to study in the Socialist countries, and many scientists and engineers took part in academic exchange programs. In addition, the Chinese troops stationed in North Korea participated in numerous efforts toward the reconstruction of infrastructure, housing, and industry projects.⁷³

DIVERGENCE AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE ALLIANCE SYSTEM IN THE 1950s AND 1960s

North Korea's dependence on external assistance in the 1950s pushed the regime toward more nationalistic policies, helping to shape and launch its self-reliance, or *Chuch'e* ideology. Culture and ideology were the first areas for North Korea's divergence from the notion of Soviet domination. Kim Il Sung gave a speech in December 1955 entitled "About the Elimination of Formalism and Dogmatism in Ideological Work and Establishing *Chuch'e*," in which he argued:

The absence of *Chuch'e* in ideological work is a serious defect. . . . The errors of dogmatism and formalism cause damage in revolutionary work, because *Chuch'e* is not established firmly in our ideological work. . . . In order to carry out the Korean revolution we have to know our history, the specifics of our country, and the customs of our people. . . . In people's schools, portraits of Mayakovski, Pushkin, and others are hung—only foreigners—and not a single Korean. If we raise the children that way how can we nurture national pride. . . . People coming from the Soviet Union prefer the Soviet way, others coming from China prefer the Chinese way; and they fight each other over which way is good. . . . After learning from the Soviet Union and China, we have to create a method in the political work in accordance with our country's reality. . . . We should not automatically follow the Soviet forms and methods, but learn the spirit of their revolutionary experience and Marxism-Leninism. . . . Marxism-Leninism is not a dogma but creative theory. This is why when it is applied creatively, according to each country's conditions, it will become an invincible force. . . . Patriotism cannot be separated from internationalism. One who does not love his country cannot be a faithful internationalist, and one who is not a true internationalist cannot be loyal to his country and people.⁷⁴

Scholars rightly describe this speech as an attack on Soviet influence and Soviet Koreans in the KWP, as Kim Il Sung criticized the glorification of Soviet (Russian) heritage at the expense of Korean traditions.⁷⁵ But it is evident that the speech also targeted Korean cadres who returned from China. The domination of Kim's guerrilla group and the purges and repression against rival factions were intertwined with an increasingly nationalistic rhetoric. The speech was an attempt to take a more independent policy vis-à-vis the DPRK's powerful neighbors, but it would take five or six more years before the North Korean leadership articulated *Chuch'e* as North Korea's national policy.

The DPRK was still too dependent on the Soviet Union, China, and other countries for the successful implementation of an autonomous economic reconstruction program to risk a divergent course at that stage. The August Plenum of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party (CC KWP) in 1956, and its aftermath, marked an important point in shaping a more independent course for the DPRK toward its allies. Officials from the Yan'an and Soviet groups formed an opposition in the Korean Workers' Party, which gained greater prominence in the wake of the 20th Congress of the CPSU and the de-Stalinization drive in the Soviet Union. The party's internal opposition gained momentum during Kim's visit to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in June 1956. In the meantime, Kim Il Sung's mission to Moscow was an uneasy balancing act as the Soviet leadership demanded that Kim criticize the North Korean personality cult in lieu of the de-Stalinization campaign in the Soviet Union and Soviet prodding of similar activities in the East European countries. Kim agreed to "accept [his] comrades' criticism."⁷⁶ The trip to the fraternal countries was vital for the implementation of the DPRK's Five-Year Plan in terms of securing aid and other economic assistance, and Kim must have felt he had little choice but to accept the Soviet terms. It is another matter how far Kim Il Sung's promise was realized. There were some lukewarm efforts to please the Soviet ally in the North Korean media.⁷⁷ Kim Il Sung resented the deeper political implications of the DPRK's integration into the Socialist system, which became synonymous to a threat to his authority at home.

Despite speculation that the Soviet Union was behind the opposition in the KWP to Kim Il Sung, Soviet archival sources suggest that Soviet embassy officials were neutral and even disapproved of plans by North Korean officials, such as Pak Ch'angok and Kim Sünghwa, to speak against Kim Il Sung at the August Plenum. They were particularly mindful that this criticism could lead to deprecations against Soviet Koreans and have negative consequences for Soviet-DPRK relations.⁷⁸ The Soviet leadership had reasons to be even more cautious with de-Stalinization after the Hungarian uprising in October 1956. Furthermore, in spite of the 350,000 Chinese troops still in North Korea and concerted Sino-Soviet pressure to reverse the August Plenum KWP decisions and to reinstate purged cadres from the Soviet and Yan'an groups in the KWP, Kim Il Sung not only stood his ground, but also intensified the purges and repression. The question is whether the Chinese and Soviets wanted to replace him in the first place. Chinese sources suggest that even though Mao initiated the Peng Dehuai-Mikoyan intervention in the KWP in September 1956 and was unhappy with Kim, he did not intend a reshuffle of the North Korean leadership. Moreover, after an improvement of Sino-North Korean relations in 1957, the Korean cadres who escaped to China were isolated and discriminated against by the Chinese Communist Party.⁷⁹ In a conversation with Kim in Beijing in 1960, Mao blamed CPVA commander Peng Dehuai for "big power chauvinism" toward North Korea during the war.⁸⁰

The North Korean government's critique of Soviet influence and its reservations about close ties with the Soviet camp were accompanied by a deviation from Soviet-model economic institutions and patterns of Socialist construction. The North Korean *Ch'ollima* (mythological flying horse) movement, for instance, was modeled loosely after Mao's Great Leap Forward, though without the excesses of the latter movement. Like the Great Leap Forward, *Ch'ollima* represented a simultaneous development of heavy and light industries. It involved the mobilization of workers and even schoolchildren as well as thousands of students and official "volunteers" in the countryside. The movement basically expanded the scope of unpaid labor; by the end of 1958 workers and employees had to complete four to five hours of unpaid work daily.⁸¹ Simultaneously, the Taean work system represented an effort to control planning and management by the party. Kim Il Sung streamlined the factory structure and reorganized it along the lines of the party committee, with a director and staff.⁸² In 1961, Kim Il Sung stated that the managers of the factories were the factory party secretary and party committee.⁸³ The Taean work system and *Ch'ollima* movement represented the assertion of top-down party control over industry, while, at the same time, the party-state apparatus orchestrated mass mobilization campaigns using ideology and education to spur economic development.

North Korea's divergence from the Soviet camp reflected China's deviation from the Soviet model of socialism. The principle of singularity (a single idea and "truth") is intrinsic in Communist ideology. The notion postulates the establishment of a vanguard party as the political bearer of a radical program for the transformation of society. The idea of power sharing therefore seemed inconsistent with the concept of Communist society. "Democratic centralism" was inherent in the ideology of the Communist party and easily translated into the international arena in the form of a center of an international Communist movement. It is worth noting that the hierarchical structure of the Socialist alliance system is not unique, but the degree of centralization was greater than in other alliance systems. As "the first Socialist country on earth," the Soviet Union was recognized as the center of international communism. But this started to change after Stalin's death and the growth of the CCP's prestige. By the latter part of the 1950s Mao no longer wanted to accept a secondary role in the Communist movement. The ideological disagreements on Socialist-building, peaceful coexistence with capitalism, and the de-Stalinization drive in the Soviet Union turned into a power struggle between Moscow and Beijing.

The USSR and the PRC experienced an unprecedented level of economic and military cooperation in the 1950s, a honeymoon period marked by the massive amounts of technology and numbers of human resources transferred from the Soviet Union to China. From 1949 to 1960, the Soviet Union dispatched to China 12,284 civilians and approximately 10,000 military experts.⁸⁴ The Soviets provided loans worth three billion dollars to China.⁸⁵ The USSR constructed 156

factories in China and provided 24,000 sets of technical documents.⁸⁶ Eleven thousand Chinese students studied in the Soviet Union, and 10,000 Chinese specialists received training in Soviet industries.⁸⁷ But after 1957, and particularly after the launching of the Great Leap Forward in China in 1958, the Soviet and Chinese paths started to diverge, first ideologically and then politically. The divergence was also institutional. For example, the People's Commune Movement in China, which merged townships and cooperatives, was a major break from the bureaucratic Soviet model. The Chinese Communist Party claimed that the communes realized the transition from "collective" to "people's" property and thus helped to build communism. Mao differentiated Chinese policies from the Soviet model. "We should be more intelligent," he wrote, "because the pupil should be better than the teacher. Green comes from blue, but it excels blue. The late-comer should be on top. I feel our communism may arrive in advance of schedule."⁸⁸ For Mao, this meant building communism ahead of the Soviet Union and assuming the leadership mantle of world communism. Sino-Soviet competition around building socialism and communism evolved into an internecine rivalry within the Communist world. Marxism remained the common ideology, but the reading or interpretation of the scripture created a wedge between the two Socialist giants.⁸⁹

Ideology was important in Socialist countries, because it could transform the blueprint for Socialist construction. Differences in the realm of ideology were associated with disputes over the Socialist project. The CCP's accusation of CPSU revisionism had a strong propaganda element, but it revealed fundamental disagreements on how to build socialism. The Sino-Soviet ideological dispute was a fight for the "right" Socialist model and a defense of each country's national path. For the Chinese leadership, socialism was linked to China's revival, and the ideological divergence had broader implications for existential issues of state, the country's development, and its place in the world. While Soviet officials referred to the Chinese model as "barracks communism" or military communism, Chinese officials considered the Soviet Union a "threat" and referred to it as a "former" Socialist country which represented "social imperialism."⁹⁰ From the Chinese perspective, the Soviet Union became the Other and, increasingly, an adversary.

The Sino-Soviet dispute created pressure on the North Korean leadership, but the conflict also presented an opportunity for Kim Il Sung to further his nationalistic agenda and gain more independence from the DPRK's allies. North Korea was an important part of the history of Sino-Soviet competition and the strategic status of the DPRK allowed it unprecedented leverage vis-à-vis its big neighbors. China and the Soviet Union competed to provide more favorable terms of trade to the DPRK. The Chinese government, for instance, provided a large non-interest loan to North Korea in 1958, noting that other Socialist countries usually asked for 2 percent interest.⁹¹ One telling example of the high stakes of winning North Korea's friendship during the deepening Sino-Soviet conflict was the Chinese

leadership's decision to fulfill a North Korean request to supply it with 230,000 tons of grain, as aid, in 1960—a time of famine in many locations in China.⁹²

In the 1960s, North Korea first sided with China and then with the Soviet Union. The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Sino-Indian War in 1962 were contentious issues between the Soviet Union and China in which North Korea started to support the Chinese position more openly. In the spring of 1962, the *Nodong Sinmun* declared, "Let us oppose revisionism."⁹³ In another issue at the end of the same year the mouthpiece of the Korean Workers' Party stated that "one country cannot interfere in the internal affairs of another country."⁹⁴ Unofficially, North Korean officials commented that the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba and the compromise with the United States was a "retreat before imperialism."⁹⁵ Also, there was veiled criticism of the Soviet position in Kim Il Sung's speeches and articles. Kim argued that "the peace should not be begged for (from the imperialists), but must be won with struggle by the masses."⁹⁶ The North Korean media stressed that the Cuban people gained their freedom through their own efforts and would defeat the American aggressors on their own.⁹⁷

North Korea became more closely aligned to China in the early 1960s but was initially careful not to antagonize the Soviet camp. At the congresses of East European Communist parties in late 1962 and early 1963, the North Korean delegation tried to defend the Chinese Communist Party. At the 12th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in December 1962, the North Korean representative commented, "if the CPSU has truly an internationalist attitude, the same is true for the Chinese Communist Party too."⁹⁸ As a sign of changing times in international Communist politics, in January 1963 the Congress of the German United Socialist Party (SED) gave the Yugoslavian representative a warm welcome, but the North Korean representative was not permitted to deliver a speech.⁹⁹ Soviet–North Korean relations virtually froze between 1962 and 1964. A few North Korean officials tried to assume the role of mediator between China and the Soviet Union, but these were not sustained initiatives and the leadership in Moscow was frustrated with the perceived lack of "reliability" in the North Korean leadership.¹⁰⁰ The ambiguity of North Korea's position—economic assistance was good while dependency was bad—reflected Kim Il Sung's criticism of revisionists in the Soviet Union. Kim blamed them for the economic troubles in North Korea and had some harsh words to say against Socialist cooperation in a speech at the September 1963 Plenum of the Korean Workers' Party:

The situation has changed since the revisionists came to power [in the Soviet Union and other East European countries]. . . . In the past, we received help from the fraternal countries, but now the revisionists do not want to give us a penny of aid. They tell us: "give us cheap copper, ore, and concentrates," but they want to sell us machines at high prices, more expensive than the capitalists. This is not a Socialist division of labor, but *robbery* [italics added]. . . . The revisionists today, making compromises with American imperialists and crawling in front of them, are attempting to isolate us and even are exercising economic pressure. . . . In general, we do not need COMECON [Council

for Mutual Economic Assistance] and “help” for which they are talking. What kind of COMECON do we need, so we can eat rice gruel with meat and build our homes with roof tiles? For this we can produce cement on our own. If we want to eat rice gruel with meat we only need to increase the land with irrigated rice and produce pumps. That is why there is no other path but to build socialism with [our] own forces and raise the living standard of the people! . . . Now the tasks are to increase the ore mining, the output of thermo energy, and transport. We need foreign currency. How to earn it? Due to the low quality of our production we cannot produce either machines or goods for mass consumption. Now we can export color [copper, zinc, and lead] metals in big quantities. Therefore, we have to expand the mining industry.¹⁰¹

The DPRK did not want the kind of integration promoted by the Soviet Union, which North Korean officials believed meant more dependency. In other words, North Korean leadership wanted to pursue *Chuch'e* policy, while obtaining the benefits of close economic ties with other countries. The solution to this contradiction was to build a web of bilateral economic relations. Relative isolationism was not a goal, but a consequence of the pursuit of a national economy. According to North Korean reasoning, the self-reliant economy did not preclude integration in the Socialist world. On the contrary, the building of a self-sufficient economy was a prerequisite for an integration based on equality; mutual relations and mutual help would be better for the country than an unequal partnership. This was North Korea's answer to the dilemma, which existed between an independence-minded ideology and the need for participation in the Socialist world economy, which could ensure the flow of capital, technologies, and goods.

The economy of the individual socialist states which function as self-sufficient economic units in the Socialist system, develop through mutual relations and mutual help. The world socialist economic system will become stronger, when the individual units [states] which are linked with the Socialist economy get stronger. And the internal economic ties could further develop. . . . The economic cooperation can be implemented successfully only through proletarian internationalism, based on equality and mutual respect, when there is one overall self-reliant national economy. . . . Each country must produce fundamental products and those which are not much needed or those which are not enough must be supplied through international cooperation. When brotherly countries do not have the raw materials or products which they need, the other brotherly countries must make them available through the principle of mutual exchange.¹⁰²

The North Korean leadership adopted a more militant posture vis-à-vis the South and embarked on the militarization of society in the early 1960s. A leading element of the North's policy toward its Southern rival was its revolutionary line that Socialist revolution in the South would solve the reunification problem. The North Korean regime was seeking to spur a revolution in South Korea, which would secure a unified Socialist Korea. North Korea's military posture was inseparable from the unification issue and events in the South. The coup on May 16, 1961, by

Major General Park Chung Hee (Pak Chŏnghŭi) and his associates had significant consequences for the North Korean leadership's perception of the rivalry with the South and for the formation of the DPRK strategy. Although North Korean officials thought that the Park regime might pursue a "progressive policy" and even drafted a declaration in support to the coup,¹⁰³ the DPRK government quickly changed its perception of the events in the South. At a closed session of the Standing Committee of the Korean Workers' Party on May 18, 1961, officials labeled the coup "reactionary" and argued that it was "organized by the American imperialists" who feared that the people might take control of the government following the April 1960 revolution. The North Korean leadership believed that the coup officers were bent at "destroying communism," and that the KWP should concentrate on strengthening the army. The party meeting also decided to reinforce militia forces—the Worker's and Peasant's Red Guards.¹⁰⁴

The DPRK, however, needed Soviet assistance to strengthen its army. For this purpose a North Korean military delegation visited Moscow in December 1962 but failed to secure the requested military aid from the Soviet Union. Soviet officials agreed to supply military equipment, but they demanded payment, a new and unpleasant element in the bilateral relations in the eyes of the North Koreans.¹⁰⁵ The unsuccessful visit further weakened Soviet-DPRK relations and pushed the North Korean regime away from the Soviet camp. After the return of the military delegation the KWP held its Fifth Plenum in December. The first issue on the agenda was "for the further strengthening of defense capability with regard to the new situation." The Plenum stated that the United States and South Korea would not dare attack the DPRK's "strong as an iron wall" defense capabilities and that North Koreans would make their "whole land an insurmountable fortress." All party members and workers could successfully build socialism and defend cities and villages by "holding a gun in one hand and a sickle and hammer in the other."¹⁰⁶

By the mid-1960s, the ascendance of the Cultural Revolution in China and economic difficulties domestically forced the regime in P'yŏngyang to reconsider its alliance policies. Gradually, the DPRK improved its relations with the Soviet Union, marked by Premier Alexei Kosygin's visit in P'yŏngyang in February 1965 and the conclusion in the same year of a long-term agreement for trade and economic cooperation. Improved political relations with the Soviet Union were the pre-conditions for closer economic cooperation, the provision of capital, technical assistance, and expanded trade relations. Whereas Sino-North Korean relations deteriorated to the point where each side recalled its ambassadors in 1966, bilateral relations did not normalize until the end of the decade.

Volatile relations with the Socialist countries in the 1960s also forced North Korea to reach out to the developing nonaligned countries for diplomatic and trade relations and to capitalist countries for economic cooperation. Between 1960 and 1970 North Korea established diplomatic relations with twenty-four countries, consulate relations with nine countries, and trade relations with eight states. Indeed,

the North Korean media called Kim Il Sung the “Leader of the Third World” in 1968.¹⁰⁷ By the end of the 1960s, Japan became the DPRK’s third largest trading partner, after the Soviet Union and China.¹⁰⁸ It is ironic that during the time of its most pronounced self-reliance policy in the 1960s, North Korea extended its diplomatic and trade ties to non-Socialist countries. This trend was part of the North-South competition for legitimacy and international recognition. The expansion and diversification of North Korea’s diplomatic options in the international arena also suggests that *Chuch’e* was a vehicle for increased independence from the regime’s Socialist allies. Self-reliance, therefore, was not necessarily economic isolation, but a rejection of a one-sided economic relationship with allies, which, to the North Korean leadership, also meant political dependency.

The self-reliance paradigm seemed to be in sync with autarkic tendencies in Asia. Furthermore, the autarkic policy fit North Korea’s militant and nationalistic Socialist ideology. In Eastern Europe, the countries of Albania and, to a lesser extent, Romania shared this philosophy. The Chinese broke with the Soviet model partially because they wanted to pursue an independent course and thought that isolation was a secure strategy. Even Deng Xiaoping, the patriarch of the Chinese reforms and the opening of China to the world in the 1970s, was a proponent of isolationism in the 1960s. At a meeting with the Romanian leadership in 1965 Deng remarked: “As a result of your isolation you have more tomatoes and cucumbers than others, to say nothing of other things.”¹⁰⁹ The outcome of relative isolationism, however, was the opposite of what Deng believed: it brought less tomatoes and cucumbers in the countries, which pursued Socialist nationalism. North Korea’s divergence from its major Socialist allies stifled the country’s economy, which slowed in the 1960s, and the regime needed two extra years to implement the Seven-Year Plan (1961–1967). When North Korea experienced the cost of relative isolationism vis-à-vis the big Socialist powers, it decided to soften its self-reliance policy in the field of economic cooperation. Militarization also had its toll, as military spending was more than 30 percent of the budget—some East European estimates put it even close to 50 percent—and the Korean People’s Army grew to 7 percent of the population.¹¹⁰ Economic and security concerns stimulated the North Korean leadership to readjust its self-reliance policy by looking for alternatives with non-Socialist countries and trying to reintegrate into the Socialist system. Other independent-minded countries and “outcasts” from the Soviet camp tried to find alternatives for international cooperation. Yugoslavia looked to the West, Albania to China, Romania courted China and the West, and China normalized its relationship with the United States. The twin pillars of the regime’s diplomacy—the Soviet Union and China—played equally important roles in the DPRK’s ongoing integration into the Socialist world. Although Kim Il Sung’s two influential Socialist allies remained entangled in a bitter dispute, their competition for North Korea’s friendship connected them with Korea in unexpected ways. P’yŏngyang was not simply a periphery revolving around two Socialist centers, Moscow and Beijing.

Romania may have come close to being in this dual role between the two Socialist camps, as it was a Soviet ally that kept some relations with Beijing. But Romania was a Warsaw Pact and COMECON member, so in the larger Socialist divide there was no ambiguity where its allegiances ultimately stood, despite its nationalist divergence and periodic uneasy relations with Moscow. After the Sino-Soviet split, the Socialist world was divided into two diverging arches—a northern Soviet pillar and a southern Chinese pillar—both of which remained loosely connected to each other through their ties to North Korea. It is worth noting that the Soviets and the Chinese cooperated with Vietnam during the war, despite their differences. But after the war a unified Vietnam aligned with the Soviet camp. Thus North Korea was unique in the Socialist world in being simultaneously aligned with Moscow and Beijing and securing a place in the nonaligned movement. The DPRK's claim of being a frontier of socialism thus appears to have some substance, first in the global confrontation with capitalism and second as an intermediary between rival Communist camps. This peculiarity of seemingly isolationist North Korea created options which were vital in the post-Cold War era. When one of the Socialist pillars—the USSR—dissolved, the other—the PRC—remained to support the DPRK. Both Socialist “arches” supported North Korea, and P'yŏngyang used this to create political space for its nationalist policies.

The Soviet bloc is sometimes perceived as a uniform entity, almost without individual national character; furthermore, scholars pay relatively little attention to differences in bilateral relations between the DPRK and East European countries. The Soviet camp might have seemed monolithic, but a closer look reveals a more complex and uneven picture of relations between Socialist states, something we may characterize as a rug, with patches, holes, and disputes, as well as cooperative relations. An examination of North Korea's bilateral relations with East European countries shows a number of inconsistencies and deviations from the main Soviet–North Korean pattern of relations. For instance, Hungarian–North Korean relations nearly came to a standstill after the events in Hungary in 1956.¹¹¹ An acrimonious diplomatic crisis erupted between the DPRK and Bulgaria in 1962 as a result of North Korea's efforts to forcefully return to the DPRK four North Korean students who had migrated to Bulgaria. This incident led to the expulsion of the two countries' respective ambassadors. Bilateral relations began to normalize only in 1968, well after the improvement in Soviet–North Korean relations.¹¹² In contrast to Bulgaria, Romania maintained relatively close relations with the DPRK during the “cold” period of Soviet–North Korean relations in the early 1960s. In other words, the Socialist countries in Eastern Europe provided diversity and breadth for North Korea's integration into the turbulent Socialist international network.

Foreign economic cooperation in the 1960s went through additional transformations, as the Socialist countries decided to provide North Korea with loans instead of aid. From 1962 to 1972, the industrial and trade loans amounted to

1.08 billion rubles (\$1.2 billion), which helped finance more than thirty industrial projects. North Korea's self-reliance and relative isolationism affected its foreign trade, which decreased from 20 percent of the country's GNP in July 1961 to 12 percent in the period between 1964 and 1966, but it recovered to 22 percent in 1972. Bilateral political relations influenced bilateral trade, but in uneven ways: Soviet–North Korean trade seemed less affected by political considerations than Sino–North Korean economic relations.¹¹³

The North Korean pattern of integration was shaped by the country's policies of self-reliance. While the DPRK shied away from international Socialist organizations like COMECON—it did not even send an observer to its sessions from 1962 to 1972—it actively developed cooperative bilateral relations with the Socialist and “third” worlds to create trade networks and secure vital technology and loans. In this way the regime in P'yŏngyang created some maneuverability in international exchanges, something which the regime associated with greater independence.

Similarly, North Korea was not a Warsaw Pact member, but signed treaties of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union and China in 1960 guaranteeing the DPRK's security, while also effectively preventing neither China nor the USSR from intervening in the DPRK's affairs as had occurred in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.¹¹⁴

CONCLUSION

The DPRK declared victory in the Korean War, and the war was indeed a kind of victory for Kim Il Sung domestically. The war hastened the consolidation of Kim Il Sung's power and the formation of North Korea's Socialist political economy. Purges in the leadership, the collectivization of farms, and the regime's mobilization campaigns helped the state push through the process of constructing socialism as Kim defined it. Internationally, the effects of the Korean War were mixed. The war consolidated the rival camps in the Cold War divide and gave birth to the international Socialist system. Korea connected the Socialist countries by prompting international solidarity campaigns and economic and military aid. Chinese entry into the Korean War not only had a profound impact on the outcome of the conflict, but also on international communism, and helped to consolidate a new center of Communist power in Asia. At the time, these were welcome developments for the Soviet leadership, as Stalin had almost been forced to abandon Soviet influence in North Korea in October 1950 in the face of advancing UN forces. But the PRC's entry into the war also laid groundwork for tensions and cleavages between Moscow and Beijing. The Korean War brought the Socialist camp together, but over time the war and its aftermath became a key factor in driving the USSR and China apart. The Korean War exposed the limits of the Sino-Soviet alliance.

While the Korean War played a pivotal role in facilitating the emergence of an international Socialist system, the process of negotiating the Armistice Agreement highlighted internal tensions between North Korea and its allies. The DPRK's dependency on its Socialist allies during the war pushed the North Korean regime toward a more nationalist course, which first took shape in the mid-1950s and matured in the 1960s. Sino-Soviet competition increased North Korea's strategic value and its leverage in the country's alliance policy, and North Korea would maintain ties with both sides of the Sino-Soviet divide throughout the remainder of the Cold War period.

In 1950, the DPRK was a frontier zone linking the burgeoning Socialist system; after the Sino-Soviet split it served as a bridge between the two Communist sub-systems. In both cases North Korea was the node simultaneously connecting and disconnecting the two arches of the Socialist world. These swings between integration and divergence have defined North Korea's history from the Korean War to the present. Despite being perceived as an isolationist country, North Korea has always maintained external ties providing it with assistance in times of need. The North Korean system has been able to extend its life span mainly because of its alliances—or at least its alliance with China, the only one remaining. Even during the gravest of crises, including the Korean War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, North Korea could rely on outside support as a safeguard against collapse. North Korea's survival to the present day, without compromising its political system or significantly reforming its economy, is perhaps its greatest victory.

NOTES

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All abbreviations are archival sources in their original languages: English, Russian, Bulgarian, German, and Chinese.

AMVRB	Archive of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry
CFMA	Foreign Ministry Archive of the PRC
CWIHP	Cold War International History Project: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
MVTSSSR	Ministry of Foreign Trade of the USSR
PA MfAA	Political Archive of German Foreign Ministry
RGANI	Russian State Archive of Contemporary History

1. *Nodong Sinmun*, “Sūngni ūi 7.27 ūn uri choguk yōksa e yōngwōnhi pinnal kosida.”

2. Ibid.
3. Kim Ilsŏng, “Chŏngjŏn hyŏpjŏng ch’egyŏl e chŭumhayŏ,” 524.
4. Ibid., 524–25, 529.
5. Ibid., 534–35, 541.
6. Ministry of Foreign Trade of the USSR (MVTSSSR), *Vneshniaia torgovlia SSSR, 1922–1981*, 17–18.
7. The North Koreans provided important transportation and logistical links for the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in Manchuria and also released munitions and arms seized by the Japanese. Needless to say, this assistance would have been impossible without Soviet consent during the occupation of northern Korea. Zhisui Li, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 117.
8. There was a long history of mistrust between Stalin and Mao. Mao alleged that Stalin called him a “turnip”—red on the outside but white on the inside. See the reference by Mao’s personal physician of twenty years, Zhusui Li, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 116–17.
9. In 1945, the Soviet commanders in Manchuria did not allow Nationalist troops to use three ports in the Northeast—Dalian, Huludao, and Yingkou, while advising Mao to send troops to Manchuria and to quietly hand over the three ports to the Chinese Communist forces. Moscow signed commercial agreements in December 1946 and again in May 1947 with the Northeast Bureau of the CCP, which allowed the delivery of Soviet military supplies to the area. The Red Army also allowed the Chinese Communists to operate a secret munitions complex in Dalian and recruit 300,000 soldiers from the area. In 1947, the Soviets released a huge arsenal (enough to equip 600,000 servicemen), which had been captured from the Japanese Kantō Army, to the PLA. Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War*, 12, 14.
10. Jian Chen, *China’s Road to the Korean War*, 73–75.
11. Zhihua Shen, “Strained Alliance.”
12. The Chinese often complained that the Sino-Soviet alliance was an unequal partnership. For example, Mao told Andrei Gromyko in 1957 that Stalin forced the PRC to “eat two bitter fruits, which we did not want”—the joint stock companies (oil and metals) and a “Soviet sphere of influence in Manchuria and Xinjiang.” Mao accused Stalin of “superpower chauvinism.” Mao referred to an Additional Secret Agreement which stipulated that the USSR and the PRC would not allow foreign concessions and rights to third countries in the Soviet Far East, the Central Asian republics, Manchuria, and Xinjiang. The full name of the agreement is the “Additional Secret Agreement between the Government of the USSR and the Central People’s Government of the PRC at the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance between the USSR and the PRC.” See Boris T. Kulik, *Sovetsko-kitaiskii raskol*, 14–15.
13. See, for instance, the study of Sino-Soviet relations and the Korean War by Goncharov, Lewis, and Litai, in which they argue that power considerations and state interest took priority over ideology in the communications between Stalin and Mao. Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners*, 219.
14. Mao Zedong, “On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship,” 422.
15. Ibid., 422–25.
16. Jian Chen, *China’s Road to the Korean War*, 214–15.
17. Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950*, 236, 238.

18. Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 41.

19. Hŏ Ch'ŏn, a political commissar of the 45th Division of the Korean People's Army was a former fighter in the People's Liberation Army. When he returned to Chŏngjin in 1949 he told relatives that they came to "unify the country." Hŏ's cousin Mr. Ch'oe, North Korean political immigrant to Bulgaria. Interview by Avram Agov. Sofia, Bulgaria, May 2012.

20. Mr. Yi, North Korean political immigrant to Bulgaria, interview by Avram Agov. Sofia, Bulgaria, May 2012.

21. APRF, fond 3, opis 65, delo 3, Telegram from Stalin to Soviet ambassador in P'yŏngyang, April 17, 1949, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina: koreiskii konflikt 1950–1953 godov*, 13.

22. APRF, fond 3, opis 65, delo 3, 5, 6, 91, Telegram from Shtykov to Stalin, April 20, 1949; Telegram from Marshal Vasylevskii and Ambassador Shtykov to Stalin, April 20, 1949; Telegram from Shtykov to Stalin, May 2, 1949; Telegram from Shtykov to Moscow, July 13, 1949; Telegram from Stalin to Shtykov, October 26, 1949; Telegram from Shtykov to Moscow, January 6, 1950. Cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 13, 16–17, 19, 24, 26.

23. The Chinese Foreign Ministry Archive (CFMA) and the Political Department of the People's Liberation Army coordinated the return of Korean soldiers from the PLA to North Korea. A Chinese report indicates the Koreans were highly motivated. CFMA, 118-00080-01, Communication between North China Military Region and the Foreign Ministry, March 9, 1950, 1–3.

24. Cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 58–59.

25. The Chinese leadership started to pay greater attention to the war on the Korean peninsula after the United States committed itself to help South Korea, and the UN adopted a resolution to aid the South. Mao instructed the Central Military Commission (CMC) to strengthen China's northeastern defenses. Accordingly, the CMC decided to deploy four armies and three artillery divisions to the northeast by the end of July 1950. Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning on One Side*, 32, 34, 49.

26. Soviet Ambassador N. V. Roschin reported the discussions between Mao and Kim, based on conversations with Zhou Enlai and Pak Hŏnyŏng, who took part in the Sino-DPRK discussions in Beijing. APRF, fond 45, opis 1, delo 331, Telegram from Roschin to Stalin, May 15, 1950, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 69.

27. The Soviet Air Force entered the war on November 1, 1950, with one small air division which consisted of 100 planes. By the end of 1950, the numbers had climbed to 200 fighter jets stationed in bases near the Sino-North Korean border. Mao's telegram to Stalin on November 15, 1950, confirms that Soviet airplanes engaged the American air force in the first days of November, downing twenty-three enemy airplanes in twelve days. Charles Kraus, "Telegram from Mao Zedong to Stalin," November 15, 1950, in *Zhou Enlai and China's Response to the Korean War*, 18. By April 1951, the Soviet air force consisted of three air divisions. The Chinese air force entered the war two months later, in January 1951, with one air division. By the end of 1952 the Chinese Air Force in Korea numbered seven air divisions with MiG-15 fighter jets. The KPA started the war with 239 planes from the Second World War, but its air force was destroyed in just two months at the start of the conflict by the superior American force. The KPA reestablished its air force with Soviet help and assembled one air division in early 1952. By the end of

the year the KPA had three air divisions composed mostly with MiG-15s. Igor Seidov, “*Krasnye diavoly*” v nebe Korei: *sovetskia aviatsiia v voine 1950-1953 gg: khronika voz-dushnykh srazhenii*, 666, 679, 687.

28. A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 59.

29. Zhihua Shen, “Sino–North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution during the Korean War,” 11.

30. Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning on One Side*, 66.

31. The Soviet supplies in March 1950 included forty ground attack Il-10 airplanes, ten single engine Yak-9p planes, forty-two howitzers, 22,000 rifles, 19,638 machine guns, and other weapons. Alexandr Rozhin, “Koreiskaia voina. Epizody uchastia sovetskogo flota,”¹⁰.

32. Some Chinese sources indicate that internal opposition within the KWP tried to depose of Kim Il Sung with Chinese help, as the KPA was on the verge of collapse. After the Inch’ŏn landing of the US forces Pak Ilu and Pak Hŏnyŏng visited Beijing and asked Mao to send troops and replace Kim Il Sung. Mao responded negatively, stating that he did not want to interfere with the internal affairs of the North Korean leadership. Jian Chen, *China’s Road to the Korean War*, 162.

33. Zhou Enlai drafted “Sino-Korean Bilateral Agreement regarding the Establishment of Sino-Korean Joint Command.” Mao recommended Peng to be commander and political commissioner, while Kim Il Sung recommended Kim Ŭng as vice commander and Pak Ilu as vice political commissioner. Zhihua Shen, “Sino–North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution during the Korean War,” 12. Accordingly, Zhou Enlai drafted Sino–North Korean agreement on joint command. “Draft Agreement by the Party Central Committee on Establishing a Sino–North Korea Joint Headquarters, December 8, 1950.”

34. The Fourth Phase Offensive started in mid-February 1951 after more than a month pause in military operations.

35. In a meeting with Peng Dehuai on January 10, 1951, Kim Il Sung wanted three armies to continue southward advancement, while the remaining troops rested for a month. Peng showed Kim Stalin’s telegram in which Stalin suggested the CPVA remain north of the thirty-eighth parallel to avoid international blame, thereby allowing KPA advancement. Kim continued to press his case with the help of Pak Hŏnyŏng. Peng’s response was firm, too, saying, “The CPVA needs two months to rest and re-group—not a day less. They even may need three months. Without considerable preparations, not a single division is going to the south. Your underestimation of the enemy is a serious mistake and I will not tolerate it. If you think I am not doing my job, you can fire me, court-marshal me, or even kill me.” Cited in Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning on One Side*, 70–80.

36. Zhihua Shen, *Mao, Stalin, and the Korean War*, 199, 201.

37. APRF, fond 45, opis 1, delo 342, Encryption No. 16239, February 8, 1952; 251, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 251.

38. During a meeting in Moscow on August 20, 1952, Zhou informed Stalin that the North Koreans wanted a new offensive but that the Chinese command did not feel they could launch such an attack. Stalin agreed and said that during the Armistice negotiations there should neither be a strategic nor a tactical offensive. Zhou also conveyed a request from the North Korean leadership to bomb South Korea, but he himself was not sure

that this would be the right thing to do. Stalin opposed bombing the South, arguing that aviation was a state asset and that “the Chinese volunteers could not use state aviation.” Presidential Archive of the Russian Federation (APRF), fond 3, opis 1, delo 329, Minutes of Conversation between J. Stalin and Zhou Enlai, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 261.

39. Jian Chen, “Limits of the ‘Lips and Teeth’ Alliance,” 12.

40. The Sino–North Korean dispute over the management of railway transportation led to later accusations against Peng Dehuai of conducting heavy-handed war management when he was criticized in China in 1959. Peng had a compelling reason to insist on military management of railways during the war, but, as Zhihua Shen observes, “the way the Chinese, backed by the Soviets, forced the North Koreans to accept their views, left a shadow on the heart of Kim Il Sung.” Zhihua Shen, “Sino–North Korean Conflict,” 18–19.

41. A.V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 186.

42. The initial problem of the Armistice negotiations agenda was the inclusion of the issue of withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea, on which the Sino–North Korean delegation insisted, while the UN side opposed it. The Communist side dropped the issue from the agenda for the time being after exchanges between Mao and Stalin July 20–21. The next major disagreement between the adversaries was the demarcation line: the Communist side insisted on the thirty-eighth parallel, while the UN side was for the use of the current front line. A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 205–6, 214.

43. APRF, fond 45, opis 1, delo 342, Encryption No. 25902, November 14, 1951, GU GSh SA, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 247.

44. ARPF, fond 01020, opis 8, delo 35, papka 10, Ruzavaev’s work report for the first season of 1952, 157–58, cited in Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning on One Side*, 91.

45. Cited in Zhihua Shen, “Sino–North Korean Conflict,” 18.

46. APRF, fond 45, opis 1, delo 343, Encryption No. 21646, July 18, 1952, GU GSh SA, cited in A.V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 254.

47. *Ibid.*, 254–55.

48. *Ibid.*, 256.

49. APRF, fond 3, opis 1, delo 329, Minutes of Conversation between J. Stalin and Zhou Enlai, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 258.

50. *Ibid.*, 262.

51. APRF, fond 3, opis 1, delo 329, Minutes of Conversation between J. Stalin and Zhou Enlai, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 258.

52. *Ibid.*, 259.

53. The Sino–North Korean side held 12,000 POWs of whom 7,400 were South Koreans. Stalin suggested that if the Americans did not release a certain percent of POWs, then the Chinese and North Koreans could hold the same percentage of South Korean and American POWs until a final solution of the POW issue was found. Zhou agreed to propose this solution as a first option. The Communists would then propose mediation by third countries as a second option and sign an Armistice while continuing to negotiate the issue of the POWs as a third option. APRF, fond 3, opis 1, delo 329, Minutes of Conversation between J. Stalin and Zhou Enlai, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 260–62.

54. Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning on One Side*, 91.

55. While the People's Republic of China agreed to obey the Geneva conventions on the treatment and repatriation of POWs, it insisted on their release to representatives of neutral countries. The repatriations would be supervised by four neutral countries. If a Chinese POW did not want to be sent to the PRC, the Chinese wanted to negotiate this issue with the neutral countries. CFMA, 105-00235-09, The Eight Suggestions on the Redeployment of Korean War Prisoners. 4 November 1952, 56–59.

56. Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning on One Side*, 112.

57. Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 220–21.

58. A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 292.

59. Cited in Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 80–81. At the conference in January 1951, Stalin instructed East European leaders to significantly increase their armies to reach three million soldiers, including 1.2 million soldiers in combat-ready condition. The Soviet Union doubled its armed forces from 2.8 million soldiers in 1948 (down from 12 million at the end of World War II) to 5.6 million soldiers by Stalin's death in March 1953. Mark Kramer, "Stalin, Soviet Policy, and the Consolidation of a Communist Bloc," 92–93, 95, 99.

60. APRF, fond 45, opis 1, delo 339, Encryption No. 3410, July 5, 1951, GU GSh SA, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 238–39.

61. APRF, fond 3, opis 65, delo 830, Statement of the Council of Ministers of the USSR on March 19, 1953, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 273, 279.

62. APRF, fond 3, opis 65, delo 830, Telegram 8265, March 29, 1953, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 280.

63. APRF, fond 3, opis 65, delo 830, Statement of the Council of Ministers of the USSR on March 19, 1953, cited in A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 280, 282.

64. Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning on One Side*, 81–89.

65. The Kūmsōng campaign marked a Chinese victory against ROK forces. It was the largest offensive operation by the CPVA in two years the first in which they had superior firepower against enemy forces. Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning on One Side*, 112.

66. A. V. Torkunov, *Zagadochnaia voina*, 288.

67. The casualties among North Korean troops were 237,686; together with wounded, missing, and captured the total was over 1.15 million. The unofficial South Korean casualties numbered 373,599. The American casualties were reported at 33,629 and other UN soldiers 3,143. The PRC and the DPRK reported combined loss of 628,000, but a UN report put that number at 1.42 million. The latter was closer to the real losses of China and North Korea. The North Korean population in 1949 was 9.26 million, and in December 1953—at 8.49 million—it was 1.13 million less, a decrease of 12 percent. If we consider the possible natural growth of 1.4 million for four years, the net loss would be 2.73 million or 28.4 percent of the 1949 population level. Wada Haruk'i, *Puk-Chosōn: yugyōktae kukka esō chōn'gyugun kukka ro*, 111.

68. During the war, the Chinese provided assistance worth 1.08 billion rubles, the Soviet aid is estimated at 610 million rubles, and the aid from East European countries—212 million rubles. The figures are based on multi-archival research. See Avram Agov, "North Korea in the Socialist World: Integration and Divergence, 1945–1970," 116, 129.

69. Overall economic output in 1951 dropped to 49 percent of the 1950 level. The economy slowly began to recover in 1952, reaching 56 percent of the 1950 level in 1952 and 68 percent in 1953. *Mirovaia ekonimika i mezhdunarodnie otnoshenia*, 115–19.

70. According to Soviet sources, in 1951 North Korea's Committee for Help received 793 train cars of presents from all of the Socialist countries, in 1952 it received 704 cars, and in the first half of 1953 another several hundred. V. Vanin lu, ed., *SSSR i Koreia*, 218.

71. East Germany accepted 610 orphans, Romania, 500, while Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland each accepted 200 children. Archive of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry (AMVRB), Opis 5, papka 31, 502, Report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Sofia, 1953; PA MfAA, A7077, Report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the GDR, Development of Relations between the GDR and the DPRK, 1950–1954: 240, 244.

72. As of April 1951, on the Korean peninsula there were sixteen Chinese field armies with 147 divisions (combat and reserve), seven artillery divisions, four anti-aircraft divisions, four tank brigades, nine air squadrons, and a total of 950,000 soldiers. Yi Chongsök, *Pukhan-Chungguk kwan'gye, 1945–2000*, 177, 191.

73. During this period Soviet economic and military aid is estimated at 2.56 billion rubles (\$640 million), while aid from China was 1.808 billion rubles (\$452 million). East European countries provided 1.41 billion rubles (\$353 million) in assistance. North Korea's foreign trade volume was near 600 million rubles (\$150 million) in 1954 and exceeded 1.1 billion rubles (\$275 million) in 1961. Avram Agov, "North Korea in the Socialist World," 255–57.

74. Kim Ilsöng, "Sasang saöþ eso kyojojuüi wa hyöngsikchuüi chech'i hago chuch'e rül hwangniphal tte tachayö," 467–68, 472, 478–80.

75. Andrei Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956*, 40–42.

76. Sö Tongman, *Puk-Chosön sahoejuüi ch'eje söngnipsa, 1945–1961*, 555.

77. An editorial of the *Nodong Sinmun* (August 1, 1956) was the North Korean answer to the decision of the CPSU for "overcoming the consequences of the personality cult." Furthermore, in an interview with an Indian journalist, Kim Il Sung referred to the "denouncement of personality cult" and remarked that the struggle of the CPSU with the consequences of the cult was proper. In a similar fashion, at the Eighth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in September, all references to "Mao Zedong thought" disappeared, *Nodong Sinmun*, editorial, August 1, 1956, cited in Sö Tongman, *Puk-Chosön sahoejuüi ch'eje söngnipsa, 1945–1961*, 560, 565–66.

78. In a report of the conversation with Nam Il, Soviet Korean minister of foreign affairs of the DPRK, the Soviet charge d'affairs A. M. Petrov stated that "the position taken by Pak Ch'angok on that issue [criticism of Kim Il Sung] was clearly incorrect, that the initiative for severe criticism might be interpreted incorrectly and it might cause an undesired reaction both inside the country and on the international arena. I said that he [Kim Il Sung] should in some way influence Pak Ch'angok, Kim Sünghwa, and other Soviet Koreans so that they rejected the initiative to speak out against Kim Il Sung." Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Fond 5, Delo 28, Delo 410, Memorandum of Conversation with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DRPK Nam Il, 24 July 1956; from the Diary of Charge d'affairs of the USSR in the DPRK A. M. Petrov, 301–3. Cold War International History Project (CWIHP), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

79. Mao told Mikoyan in Beijing: “Kim Il Sung has issues with us and does not listen to us. It has to be you [to work with him] this time.” Mao warned Kim before the outbreak of the Korean War not to start a war. Later he warned him that the American troops might land in Inch’ŏn or another place in the rear. Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning on One Side*, 210–12.

80. Zhihua Shen, “China and the Post-War Reconstruction of North Korea,” 16.

81. Balazs Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era*, 121, 123.

82. Taean was the name of an electricity company where the management system was first introduced. In industry, the Taean work system placed the factory party secretary as the top manager while the director of the factory was placed second in command. The director was mostly in charge of supplies. The party committee (including the director of the factory) managed virtually everything, including human resources. The director became vice chairman of the party committee while the chief engineer and the assistant managers became committee members. Under the chief engineer there was a staff structure that encompassed planning, production, engineering, and repair departments. Hence the director, chief engineer, and assistant managers managed the factory through the party committee. AMVRB, Opis 19p, delo 39, 726, Memo from the Bulgarian embassy in the DPRK, Visit of Taean Plant, P’yŏngyang, February 4, 1966: 6–7.

83. PA MfAA, C316/78, Report from the embassy of the GDR in the DPRK, Socio-economic analysis of the DPRK, P’yŏngyang, March 1972: 36–37.

84. Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning on One Side*, 118.

85. Zhihua Shen, *Mao, Stalin, and the Korean War*, 191.

86. Boris T. Kulik, *Sovetsko-kitaiskii raskol*, 95, 299.

87. G.G. Semenov, *Tri goda v Pekine: zapiski voennogo sovetnika*, 293.

88. Mao Zedong, “Second Speech at the Second Session of the Eighth Party Congress.”

89. Different interpretations of the Bible, coupled with a power struggle that divided the Christian world, first through the schism between the Catholic Rome and the Eastern Orthodox, and then between Catholics and Protestants during the Reformation. The history of division of the Christian world evolved also in hostile confrontations and wars.

90. Boris T. Kulik, *Sovetsko-kitaiskii raskol*, 281, 375, 366–76.

91. CFMA, 204-00614-02, Documents on the Assistance to North Korea, Construction of Three Factories, May 5, 1958 to August 8, 1958, p. 37. The special conditions of the loans were irrelevant, though, because both China and the Soviet Union cancelled almost all loans given to North Korea in the 1950s.

92. Zhihua Shen, “China and the Post-War Reconstruction of North Korea,” 28.

93. Cited in Yi Chongsŏk, *Pukhan-Chungguk kwan’gye*, 223.

94. *Ibid.*, 223–24.

95. AMVRB, Report from the Bulgarian embassy in the DPRK: Political, cultural, and economic life and foreign relations of the DPRK in 1962, Ambassador Ljuben Stoichkov, P’yŏngyang, January 29, 1963, 13.

96. *Ibid.*, 14

97. *Ibid.*

98. Yi Chongsŏk, *Pukhan-Chungguk kwan’gye*, 225.

99. Hŏ Tam, the head of the North Korean delegation at the Congress, expressed his disappointment at SED’s position toward the North Koreans and that they were not

allowed to speak. Hō acknowledged the existence of different positions and different approaches in solving internal problems of the two countries due to different locations and conditions. He still hoped for East German support of North Korea's position for withdrawal of American troops from South Korea. PA MfAA, A7126, Annual Report From the Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK, Relations between the GDR and the DPRK in 1963, Ambassador Becker, P'yōngyang, January 15, 1964: 37.

100. Soviet ambassador in the DPRK Vasily Moskovsky described the North Korean attitude at the ambassadors New Year's dinner at the end of 1962 hosted by North Korea foreign minister Park Sōngch'ol:

After the first toast, permeated by insincere babbling about unity, the minister, his deputies, and the Chinese charge d'affaires, who was sitting right in front of me, pronounced [an]other four–five toasts for unity. With this, the Korean comrades tried to play [the role of] a kind of mediator between countries that did not have unity between themselves. The minister started explaining to me again that it is necessary to strengthen the cohesion of all countries of the Socialist camp and strive towards full isolation and contempt [*sic*] of the imperialists.

AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 19, papka 97, delo 4, Record of Conversation between Soviet Ambassador to North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and North Korean Foreign Minister Park Sōngch'ol, P'yōngyang, January 3, 1963: 8–12, CWIHP.

101. AMVRB, Opis 20a, delo 72, 1124, Report from the Bulgarian Embassy in the DPRK: Economic Development of the DPRK in 1963, Charge d'affaires Luben Stoichkov, P'yōngyang, February 20, 1964: 66; Report from the Bulgarian Embassy in the DPRK: Political Development of the DPRK in 1963, Charge d'affaires Krasimir Chakurov, P'yōngyang, February 5, 1964: 8.

102. “Charyōk kaengsaeng kwa charip inmin kyōngje kōnsōl esō sōngjang,” 2–10.

103. Kim Il Sung confided with the Chinese ambassador in P'yōngyang on May 16, 1961—the first day of the coup in South Korea. CFMA, 106-00581-03, Report from the Chinese Embassy in the DPRK, Minutes of Conversation between Kim Il [Sung] and Qiao Xiaoguang, Re: The Military Rebellion in South Korea, May 16, 1961: 19–20.

104. CFMA 106-00581-06, Memorandum from the Chinese Embassy in the DPRK, Meeting of Central Standing Committee of Korean Workers' Party on May 18, 1961, May 21, 1961: 32–33.

105. Alexandr Rozhin, “Sovetskii flot i VMS Severnoi Korei: sozdanie flota KNDR.”

106. AMVRB, Opis 19p, delo 39, 726, Report from the Bulgarian Embassy in the DPRK: Political, Cultural, and Economic Life and Foreign Relations of the DPRK in 1962, First Secretary Ljuben Stoichkov, P'yōngyang, January 29, 1963: 9–11.

107. Chōng Kyusōp, *Pukhan ūi oegyo ōje wa onŭl*, 55, 100–101.

108. After a humble beginning, North Korea–Japan trade in 1961 of 8 million dollars rose to 31.4 million dollars in 1965 and 57.8 million in 1970. The amount of trade remained the same in the following year but increased sharply in 1972 to 132 million dollars. Chin O. Chung, *P'yōngyang between Peking and Moscow*, 96.

109. When discussing the issue of Yugoslavia and its economic difficulties, Deng noted that Yugoslavia received aid in both dollars and rubles (referring to aid from both the Soviet Union and the West). The new secretary of the Romanian Communist Party,

Nicolae Ceausescu, replied: "You can do nothing just with handouts. Actually, you must first rely on your own forces. This is the soundest kind of development." ANIC, RCPCC, Chancellery, Folder 105/1965, Stenographic Transcript of Discussions Held with Chinese Communist Party Delegation to the 9th Congress of Romanian Communist Party, July 26, 1965: 2–15, CWIHP.

110. The partisan generals formulated the regime's military policy at the December Plenum in 1962: to arm the entire population, fortify the country, every soldier to become cadre, and to modernize weaponry. The Second Party Conference in October 1966 confirmed and articulated the military policy, which began with arming the entire population. The Worker-Peasant Red Guards numbered 1.5 million and the Red Young Guards had 700,000 members. Therefore, the KPA had nearly 1 million regular troops plus as many reservists. Over 2 million Red Guards were enlisted as a potential militia force. AMVRB, Opis 23, delo 77, 1565, Report from the Bulgarian Embassy in the DPRK: Visit of Hungarian Military Delegation to North Korea, May 24–June 4, 1967, Charge d'affaires Ljuben Pavlov, P'yöngyang, June 12, 1967: 30; PA MfAA, C65/77, Report from the Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK, Economic Development of the DPRK in 1965, P'yöngyang, May 2, 1966: 20; and Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader*, 213–15, 217.

111. The Hungarian Uprising was against the pro-Soviet government from October 23 to November 10, 1956. The revolt challenged Hungary's affiliation with the Socialist world and promoted Soviet military intervention on November 4. See Erwin A. Schmidl and László Ritter, *The Hungarian Revolution, 1956*.

112. AMVRB, Opis 18, delo 32, 560, Notes from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Incident with the Four Students, Sofia, September 5, 1962, pp. 1–5; Opis 20p, delo 17, 290, Annual Report from the Bulgarian Embassy in the DPRK in 1968, P'yöngyang, January 28, 1969: 6.

113. Avram Agov, "North Korea in the Socialist World," 468.

114. The Soviet military intervened during the Hungarian uprising in 1956, as mentioned earlier. In 1968, Soviet-led Warsaw pact forces intervened during the Prague Spring. The intervention was in accordance with the Brezhnev Doctrine which demanded subordination of the national interests of individual Socialist countries to the interests of the unity of the Soviet-dominated Eastern bloc. See Günter Nischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, eds., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*.

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