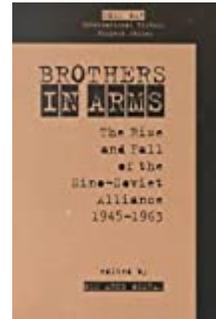




Odd Arne Westad, ed. *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963.* Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998. xxii + 404 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8047-3485-1.



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Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963.

A major impediment to a better understanding of Cold War history has been the almost total reliance on Western sources in its writing; Gaddis Smith's characterization of this dilemma as the equivalent of "one hand clapping" is apt. *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963*, the first title in the Cold War International History Project Book Series, is a significant contribution to the vital mission of redressing the balance. Taken together, the book's eight chapters, contributed by a diverse group of scholars using newly available evidence from the former Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, shed new light on important facets of the Sino-Soviet relationship. The evidence presented caused this reviewer to wonder less about the factors that ultimately effected a split, and more about how the supposedly "unbreakable" and "eternal" friendship between the Soviets and Chinese lasted as long as it did.

Overall, *Brothers in Arms* is a monumental contribution to the history of Sino-Soviet relations. Odd Arne Westad's introduction serves as an excellent overview of current historiography and major events, and almost one hundred pages of translated documents in the appendix provide a sense of the nature the relationship, and in-

sights into some of its the key moments. Although each chapter stands well enough on its own, an effort to synthesize some of the main themes and sharpen the issues in a concluding chapter would have been a helpful addition. The following review outlines the main findings of the contributors and attempts to highlight some of the more important themes.

Niu Jun outlines the origins of the alliance in the first chapter. The early years of the CCP-Soviet relationship were characterized by Soviet disinterest and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) mistrust. Stalin's fear of direct confrontation with the United States prevented him from offering any real assistance to the beleaguered CCP, and in fact he consistently proved willing to sacrifice CCP interests in order to preserve prior arrangements with the Chinese Nationalists (GMD). Mao, although unwilling to continue acting as a pawn in Moscow's East Asian diplomacy, remained ideologically bound to Moscow and pinned his hopes for future aid on the Soviets. Niu does a thorough job of portraying the tenuous genesis of the alliance. However, given Stalin's dogged resistance to making alterations in the earlier Soviet-GMD treaty, the chapter fails to adequately account for Stalin's change of heart that led to the concessions in the 14 February 1950 Sino-Soviet treaty, the formal foundation of the alliance.

Although the Sino-Soviet relationship was born in an

atmosphere of distrust, the last two years of the stalemated Korean War helped cement it, as Kathryn Weathersby demonstrates in the second chapter, by pushing Beijing into deeper dependence on the Soviet Union for military and economic aid. The war allowed Mao to achieve a number of goals before the signing of the July 1953 armistice. Reversing the tide of the United Nations advance on the peninsula helped atone for earlier Chinese humiliations at the hands of Western forces, and the conflict enhanced CCP control over Chinese society in the early years of the Republic. Even so, Weathersby demonstrates that Mao had had enough by late 1952, as the increased tempo of American bombing inflicted tremendous casualties. Stalin, it seems, had the most to gain by prolonging the conflict; in addition to deepening Chinese dependence on Moscow, the war tied down American forces in Asia, provided an opportunity to acquire the latest American military technology, and made the Truman administration unpopular at home. Premier Zhou Enlai's delicate attempts to convince Stalin to seek an armistice agreement were rebuffed; only the Marshal's death in March 1953 allowed leaders in Moscow and Beijing to seek an end to hostilities.

Deborah Kaple provides a fascinating first glimpse into the Soviet Advisor's Program in China, the largest foreign aid effort in Soviet history. Given the importance to which Western observers attached to the program, it is surprising what little real attention Moscow devoted to it. Within the CPSU Central Committee apparatus, responsibility for Chinese policy was divided among a number of departments and sub-departments. Only in 1957, as the Sino-Soviet relationship showed signs of deterioration, did China receive its own department alongside other people's democracies.

Frustrated with the dearth of information in Russian archives, Kaple turned to interviews with a number of Soviet participants, including the former director of the advisory mission, who questioned whether the program should even be considered an aspect of Sino-Soviet relations. This glaring doubt underscores the overall futility of an effort burdened by heavily centralized bureaucracy, an obsession with secrecy and security, and an inability to overcome cultural obstacles. In choosing its advisors, Moscow privileged political background over actual expertise; in the words of one participant, "it wasn't important whether or not a person had a head on his shoulders, the important thing was, do you have a Party card?" (p. 125). Advisors found themselves in China ill-prepared and without clear direction. Chinese hosts felt that their Soviet colleagues looked down on them. Although many

advisors felt their quality of life in China was a vast improvement over conditions at home, Kaple suggests that the atmosphere of mistrust that characterized the Sino-Soviet relationship apparently filtered down to the person to person level.

Although military experts suffered from the same lack of direction from Moscow as other advisors, Sergei Goncharenko demonstrates that Soviet military assistance after Stalin's death represented one of the alliance's rare success stories. Although plagued by the same problems as the advisory program, in most cases the Chinese received state-of-the-art Soviet military technology. Only in the field of missile technology did Moscow delineate clear limits. Although it was the most sensitive part of the Sino-Soviet military relationship, the evidence suggests that Khrushchev's decision to share nuclear weapons technology was made rather impulsively out of the "enthusiasm for socialist construction and technological achievement in Moscow during the mid-1950s" (p. 159). Khrushchev's initial desire to make amends for Stalin's earlier snubs, however, led quickly to second thoughts. Clearly, Goncharenko's estimate that the military enterprises underway in China soaked up approximately seven percent of the Soviet Union's annual national income raises important questions as to whether the Soviets believed the benefits of the program were matched by its exorbitant cost.

For Odd Arne Westad, the key to understanding the creation and eventual dissolution of the relationship lies in Chinese and Soviet perceptions of the American threat. The American response in Korea cemented the image of America as an enemy firmly in the minds of both leaders. Furthermore, to Stalin, the Chinese proved to be a worthy ally. Although disappointed with the Soviet military "aid" in the Korean War, Mao became even more convinced of the need to cultivate the Soviet military assistance in the future. Increasing Chinese dependence on the Soviet Union may have aggravated a split, but did not create it. The ultimate disintegration of the alliance in the late 1950s had its source in the widening divergence of the perceptions of the threat the United States posed to Chinese and Soviet interests.

According to Westad, both Moscow and Beijing shared the view that Washington's international position was on the decline by 1959; however, this common view inspired two separate courses of action. To Khrushchev, the moment was right for efforts toward peaceful coexistence, but to Mao, the momentum of the "high tide of socialism" could be used to directly confront American

imperialism. The impasse over the proper response to the American threat dissolved the glue that held the alliance together. Interestingly, the author suggests that the omnipresent threat the United States posed mattered more than Washington's "wedge strategy" which had no effect on Mao. To Westad, "the United States was not able to transmit to Beijing its projected image of increasing aggressiveness and determination" (p. 181). On the contrary, Beijing interpreted American posturing as evidence that American power was on the wane in the latter half of the 1950s.

In the spirit of Kaple's and Goncharenko's analyses of Sino-Soviet cooperation, Zhang Shuguang sets aside prior scholarship which focused on more easily quantifiable aspects of the economic relationship, and instead explores the ways economics shaped mutual perceptions. Prior to 1950, the Chinese looked to Moscow to break the traditional pattern of czarist imperialism and were bitterly disappointed when Stalin demonstrated little hesitation in taking advantage of China's dependency. While Chinese leaders refused to complain, this "lesson" was not forgotten. Khrushchev's attempts to emphasize the importance of the relationship did not go far enough for Mao.

According to Zhang, "the most persistent dynamics driving the escalation of the Sino-Soviet conflict was the CCP's aspiration to assert not only national autonomy but an equal-partner status" (p. 203). Like other contributors who look at the relationship primarily from the Chinese point of view, Zhang places the burden of blame on Mao for ultimately jettisoning the relationship. Mao interpreted Khrushchev's "economic blackmail" as an expression of the traditional Russian desire to "control China." However, Mao did not seek to force a split and was shocked by Khrushchev's 16 July 1960 recall of Soviet advisors.

For Zhang, earlier Western scholarship on the split, which emphasizes either dissatisfaction over the economic relationship (which benefited both sides), or China's bid for "superpower status" (which Mao did not want), falls short. Ultimately, Mao's more moderate goal to have China viewed as an equal partner in the relationship led to the schism. Mao could not abide by Soviet criticisms of his economic policies in the late 1950s, nor was he convinced that Soviet aid, while important, was vital to China's development. According to Zhang, Mao saw a clear point at which further submission to Soviet ideological leadership presented a greater danger than continued dependence on Soviet aid. Interestingly, Mao

feared over-reliance on any source of foreign aid, and apparently welcomed the Western embargo, at least in the early years of alliance, because it helped the CCP further a number of revolutionary goals.

Constantine Pleshakov's analysis of Nikita Khrushchev's approach to the People's Republic utilizes a symbiotic "geoideology" which identifies the break at a point at which geopolitical and ideological policy goals for both nations diverged. Stated more clearly, "the real trouble in the Sino-Soviet relationship began when Khrushchev wanted Mao to move in his direction on foreign affairs and defense issues just as Mao's skepticism about Soviet internal developments peaked" (p. 232). Khrushchev's decision to share nuclear technology with the Chinese was part of an overall strategy to make up for Stalin's manipulations. According to Pleshakov, Khrushchev hoped "to build a nuclear relationship with the People's Republic comparable to that which the United States had with Britain" (p. 231). Although initially sensitive to the ways Stalin had sacrificed the relationship, Khrushchev decided to push for a jointly commanded submarine fleet and radio station, which would redress Soviet strategic weaknesses in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Mao found such proposals, which came as the overly ambitious Great Leap Forward campaign began to falter, exceedingly paternalistic and irksome.

For Pleshakov, the Khrushchev-Mao relationship could not overcome the "fatal interaction of geopolitical and ideological factors" (p. 238). Essentially, the dispute was over the pace and methods of promoting the socialist cause. For Khrushchev, the Soviet Union had achieved a relative level of stability and security in which Moscow could simultaneously seek "peaceful co-existence" and "push rivalry with the West in the huge zone of national liberation movements that he saw booming in Asia, Africa, and Latin America" (p. 238). For his part, Mao's Great Leap Forward campaign was a response to the rightist deviation he saw going on in the Soviet Union. Mao interpreted Moscow's policies as abandonment of the revolution, and pursued an alternative strategy to achieve communism, which, he believed, would bypass Soviet mistakes.

In the last chapter, Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong argue that China's "lean to one side" approach toward the Soviet Union was integral to Mao's thesis of "continuous revolution" had local and global implications—it would transform New China into a "land of universal justice and equality" (p. 248) as well as establish a model for the

developing world. From the start, however, Stalin's recalcitrance disappointed and frustrated Mao. Mao's willingness to intervene in Korea, while Stalin continued to vacillate, pointed to Soviet weakness; this vital first test of the alliance proved to be the beginning of its ultimate undoing. Stalin's decision to require the Chinese to pay for the Soviet military aid they received to fight the war "made the Soviets seem more like arms merchants than genuine Communist internationalists" (p. 257). The process of de-Stalinization ended the alliance's brief "golden years," in 1954-55, as Mao sought to elevate his role above that of the humiliating "younger brother" position Stalin forced him to endure, and assume what he saw as his rightful place as the leader of the communist movement.

This coincided with related efforts at home to focus blame on those who opposed "adventurism" in economic development. On the eve of the ill-fated Great Leap Forward campaign, Mao addressed Soviet ambassador Pavel Iudin as if Iudin were "the head of a foreign (or 'barbarian') tribute mission who was receiving the teachings of the Chinese 'son of heaven,'" (p. 269) in Mao's flat rejection of the Soviet proposals for jointly-managed submarine bases and a long-range radio station in China. Ultimately, the authors place the burden of blame on Mao's efforts to define and redefine the "continuous revolution."

Taken as a whole, several important themes stand out in *Brothers in Arms*. For the Soviets, geopolitical considerations seem to have predominated over ideology in their approach to the Chinese. Soviet policy sought to enhance China's military power in order to protect the USSR's Asian flank from the United States and its Asian allies. At the same time, Moscow sought to continue Chinese dependency in other areas in order to maintain the upper hand in the relationship. The Chinese, on the contrary, privileged ideology, in the hope that a shared set of values and goals would allow them to achieve equal partner status despite their obvious weaknesses. Leaders in Beijing only grudgingly accepted "younger brother" status, and papered over their resentment until it became apparent that Moscow intended to sacrifice "socialist mo-

mentum" for limited accommodation with the West.

Another fascinating theme is the rather imprecise mission of Soviet aid. The contributions of Kaple, Goncharev, and Zhang are particularly important, because they offer some fresh insights into the alliance's actual working relationship. Revelations about Moscow's decisions to share nuclear technology with the Chinese raise important questions about the depth of Khrushchev's vision for a nuclear partnership, as well as the Soviet Union's overall strategy in committing such a large share of its resources to China's military development.

The failure to properly appreciate negative traditional images impeded the creation of a secure alliance. The Soviets in particular lacked sensitivity to the ways their actions might be viewed through a lens ground and polished by the Russian imperial past. Moscow seemed to have rather blithely assumed that they would maintain a dominant role, while the Chinese expected that their "younger brother" status would be only temporary. This underscores a fundamental truth that each side saw the relationship as exploitative rather than a real partnership. The inability to overcome a legacy of mutual suspicion and mistrust, regardless of the bond of common ideologies or shared threats, presaged the ultimate dissolution of the relationship.

This of course raises important questions about the role the United States played in precipitating a split. In many ways, American resistance seems to have strengthened the alliance rather than split it apart. The American response in Korea cemented the Sino-Soviet relationship in ways neither side originally envisioned. Although a real understanding of the perceptions held of the United States in the Kremlin and Zhongnanhai is in some ways beginning, at this early point in the literature, Washington's wedge strategy did not seem to have much (if any) impact on the actual split. As a whole, contributors suggest that beyond assuming a threatening posture, American strategies had little effect on the relationship. Ultimately, the Sino-Soviet alliance fell apart of its own accord.

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