

Cold War in Asia: China's Involvement in the Korean and Vietnam War

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Abstract

As essential components of the Cold War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War have played significant roles in global policy among the Western forces under the leadership of the United States and the Eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union in the 20th century. Communist China, founded in 1949, was also part of the countries behind the Iron Curtain and provided substantial support to North Korea and North Vietnam in their fight against their ideological enemies.

Despite the extensive research by scholars on the Korean War and the Vietnam War, as well as China's role in both of these wars, it is interesting to know whether China's role and attitude had changed from one war to the other. This thesis examines and compares China's military interference in the Korean War in the beginning of the 1950s with its involvement more than ten years later in the Vietnam War through the investigation of China's motives to enter the wars and their ways of support in connection with the development of foreign relations. While contrasting China's role and involvement in Korea and Vietnam, similarities, but also major differences become distinguishable. This thesis argues that these major differences indicate a Chinese rethinking about a possible involvement in Vietnam because of China's domestic problems and its foreign policy developments at that time.

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1. Introduction

The Korean War and the Vietnam War - both “proxy wars” between the communist and capitalist camps and therefore significant parts of the Cold War - are among the fiercest military conflicts of the last century. The People’s Republic of China involved itself in both wars on behalf of its communist sister states, although the nature of Chinese involvement in the two wars differed. Chinese soldiers actively fought on Korean territory and China officially participated in the war as one of the war parties, whereas China’s involvement in Vietnam was more reserved and limited to the deployment of defensive and engineering troops.

Both the Korean and Vietnam Wars resulted from tensions created by post-colonial political solutions to the decolonization process. Vietnam was occupied by France in the middle of the 19th century and became a French colony. Similar to Vietnam, Korea was also colonized and annexed by the Japanese in the beginning of the 20th century. As a consequence of World War II and the surrender of Japan, Korea was divided at the 38th parallel into North and South Korea. North Korea became a communist state, whereas a pro- Western government was established in the South. The Korean War started in 1950 when the Korean People’s Army crossed the border to South Korea and began their attacks on American airbases with the aim of occupying the South and reuniting the whole country under a communist leadership. The Vietnam War began with the fight of the Vietnamese for independence against the French occupying power and ended with the communist occupation of Saigon and the founding of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1976. Similar to Korea, Vietnam was divided into North Vietnam (communist) and South Vietnam (pro- American) at the 17th parallel due to the Geneva Accords of 1954 with the expectation that it be reunited under free elections in 1956. These

elections, however, never took place and in 1964 the war started with the Gulf of Tonkin incident when a sea battle between North Vietnamese and US Navy ships arose.

Both of these confrontations, however, were not simply national conflicts between North and South, but turned into international conflicts through the interference of the United States, the Soviet Union and also China. The role of China was especially important in both wars, as the Chinese government was willing to provide significant military and economic support to their North Korean and North Vietnamese allies. In both cases, China was concerned with the potential impact of US imperialism on its borders and its own domestic politics, but for various reasons the role that China carved out for itself in each case was different.

This thesis argues that the Chinese involvement in Korea differed from its actions in Vietnam because of the internal problems China had to face at that time, such as the outcomes of the Great Leap Forward and the events of the Cultural Revolution, and the readjustment of China's foreign policy focus in the 1960s and 1970s. It describes, compares and analyzes China's role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars in order to determine how and why China's support and attitude changed from one war to the next. Chapter one begins with an investigation of Chinese involvement in the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 and China's possible motives that resulted in becoming an ally of North Korea and a war party against the United States. After that, the question about the Chinese participation in the planning of the war, which is still highly discussed among scholars today, will be examined, followed by a survey of China's supportive measures and commitment in the course of the war in order to clarify their important role as a North Korean ally. The first chapter will conclude with an illustration of the outcomes and the consequences of the war for China. Chapter two focuses on the significance of China's role in Vietnam. It begins with the events of the Geneva Conference in 1954 and mainly focuses on the

Second Indochina War, starting with the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in 1964 and ending with the defeat of South Vietnam in 1975. This investigation also concentrates on China's motives for supporting the war, their methods of support, and the consequences of the war with the aim of illustrating prominent differences and similarities with China's involvement in the Korean War. Chapter three evaluates these differences and similarities in motives, support, the attitude towards negotiations, and the role of the Soviet Union in order to describe and analyze changes in China's approach to dealing with what it saw as US imperialism on its borders.

The study makes use of several important primary sources such as military speeches, commands and other statements of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai concerning the Korean and the Vietnam War. In addition, unlike existing studies, this thesis draws upon the experiences and memoirs of retired People's Liberation Army generals who played a significant role in the Korean War, such as for example Peng Dehuai and Nie Rongzhen. These recollections were compiled and translated into English by Xiaobing Li, Allan Millet and Bin Yu and offer individual perspectives and experiences of people who were actively involved in the war. Although these generals were politically indoctrinated, their memoirs provide a personal insight into China's involvement, from the decision to enter the war to the armistice negotiations.

Multiple studies have been conducted regarding China's involvement in the Korean and the Vietnam Wars. Many historians have dealt with this subject by using newly accessible archival material and investigating topics such as China's motives to enter the wars, its form of support and Chinese foreign policy during these wars. One of the more influential historians who conducted a comprehensive study about China's decision to enter the Korean War was Allen Whiting, whose work has formed a foundation upon which later scholars have built. He came to the conclusion that Chinese motives were characterized by a xenophobic attitude, expansionist

tendencies, concerns about China's national security and the influence of its communist ideology.¹ His conclusions about these motives are still highly accepted in the west and form the basis for later research. Numerous scholars, such as Thomas Christensen, Zhihai Zhai, Zhihua Shen, Yufan Hao, Wanli Hu, Chae-Jin Lee, Chao Guo and Rongrong Ren also argue that the main reason for China to intervene in Korea was their security concerns and that US aggression in Asia and the crossing of the 38th parallel by US troops triggered China's involvement because a Korean peninsula fully controlled by the United States would pose a great threat for China.² Jian Chen, on the other hand, mainly considers Chinese motives as having been characterized by a wish to develop the new state's foreign policy and to gain international recognition. Chen draws on Whiting's earlier conclusions by arguing that China's intention to maintain revolutionary momentum within Asia led to their willingness to help their North Korean comrades.³ Sergei Goncharov and John Lewis also argue in their book *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War* that China was animated by their sense of responsibility to defend communist interests in Asia. They argue, however, that this sense of responsibility was incited by Stalin in order to transfer the main burden of support for the war to China.⁴

Patrick Roe, who served in the Seventh Marine Regiment during the war in Korea, also deals with China's motives and its final decision to intervene. In addition, he further analyzes

¹ Allen Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: the Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 2.

² Thomas Christensen, "Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace: The Lessons of Mao's Korean War Telegrams," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No.1 (1992): 135; Yufan Hao and Zhihai Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited," *The China Quarterly* 121 (1990): 103; Zhihua Shen, "China Sends Troops to Korea: Beijing's Policy-Making Process," In *China and the United States: A New Cold War History*, edited by Xiaobing Li and Hongshan Li (New York: Univ. Press of America, 1998), 37; Wanli Hu, "Mao's America Strategy and the Korean War," In *China and the United States: A New Cold War History*, edited by Xiaobing Li and Hongshan Li (New York: Univ. Press of America, 1998), 317; Chae-Jin Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1996), 11-13; Chao Guo and Rongrong Ren, "Learning and Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: China's Decision to enter the Korean War Revisited," *Public Administration Quarterly* 27 (Fall, 2003- Winter 2004): 303.

³ Jian Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 213-214.

⁴ Sergei Goncharov and John Wilson Lewis, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 203-205.

this decision, examines its impact on the war and concludes that China's intervention in Korea had led to an increased risk of another global war.⁵ The Chinese involvement in Korea is also one of the main focuses of the studies of Jun Yasuda, who describes China's participation from the first three military campaigns until the commencement of the armistice talks. Unlike other studies that exclusively focus on the analysis of China's motives to enter the war, Yasuda answers the questions of how the war was executed and how China sought to end the war after the decision to intervene was made.⁶ Shu Guang Zhang also deals with China's war in Korea, but his approach is to focus on the military history of the Korean War through Chinese eyes from the decision-making process to the armistice negotiations.⁷

While dealing with China's role in Korea, many scholars also focus on the trilateral relations between China, North Korea and the Soviet Union during the war. Hak-joon Kim, B.C. Koh and Chae –Jin Lee all argue that North Korea took advantage of the growing differences between China and the Soviet Union in order to receive as much support as possible. In addition, Lee examines the question of whether China knew about the war plans of Kim Il Sung and states that Mao Zedong was fully aware of the planning and encouraged Kim Il Sung's intentions.⁸

Similar to studies about China's involvement in the Korean War, many scholars also focus specifically on China's role in the Second Indochina War. One of the most comprehensive works about China in the Vietnam War was written by Qiang Zhai, who describes China's involvement, its motives and the impact of its relationship with North Vietnam and the Soviet Union on the war. Zhai invokes ideological and geopolitical motives as possible reasons for

⁵ Patrick Roe, *The Dragon Strikes: China and the Korean War, June-December 1950* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 2000), 191.

⁶ Jun Yasuda, "A Survey: China and the Korean War," *Social Science Japan Journal* 1 (1998): 81.

⁷ Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 1.

⁸ B.C. Koh, "North Korea and the Sino-Soviet Schism," *The Western Political Quarterly* Vol. 22, No.4 (1969): 962; Hak-Joon Kim, *The Sino-North Korean Relations, 1945-1984* (Seoul: Korean Research Center, 1985), 107-109; Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations*, 21-22.

China to get involved in Vietnam. According to him, China regarded the support it provided to North Vietnam as its obligation as the vanguard of communist movements all over the world, and the Chinese government was concerned about China's national security in case of an American invasion in North Vietnam. Furthermore, he argues that the Sino- Soviet split influenced China's policy toward Indochina and many other scholars, such as Shu Guang Zhang, Xiaoming Zhang, Jian Chen and Kuisong Yang agree with these arguments.⁹ In addition, Jian Chen and Kuisong Yang mention that the crisis in Vietnam suited Mao as he could use the heated sentiments against US imperialism among the Chinese population to mobilize the masses for the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰

The trilateral relations between China, the Soviet Union and North Vietnam and their development during the Vietnam War are also the focus of numerous studies. One scholar who deals with the topic of Sino- Vietnamese relations in the beginning of the Second Indochina War is Cheng Guan Ang. He reveals that North Vietnam was independent in its decision-making, although its government was greatly reliant on China's support.¹¹ Other studies, such as Anne Gilks' work *The Breakdown of the Sino- Vietnamese Alliance, 1970-1979* concentrate on the development of these trilateral relations. In her book, Gilks analyses the factors that caused Sino- Vietnamese relations to deteriorate and concludes that the differences between China and North

⁹ Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 140-147; Shu Guang Zhang, "Beijing's Aid to Hanoi and the United States: China Confrontations, 1964-1968," In *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the World beyond Asia*, edited by Priscilla Roberts (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), 262; Xiaoming Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided: China, the Soviet Union, and the Vietnam Wars," In *International Perspectives on Vietnam*, edited by Lloyd C. Gardner and Ted Gittinger (College Station, Tex.: Texas A & M University Press, 2000), 81; Jian Chen, "China's involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," *The China Quarterly*, No. 142 (1995): 361; Kuisong Yang, "Mao Zedong and the Indochina Wars," In *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the World beyond Asia*, edited by Priscilla Roberts (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006) 56.

¹⁰ Chen, "China's involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 361; Yang, "Mao Zedong and the Indochina Wars," 78.

¹¹ Cheng Guan Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1997) 233.

Vietnam are the result of various misunderstandings of both actions and decisions.¹² Kosal Path also investigates the evolution of Sino- Vietnamese relations, but he argues that the deterioration in relation can be ascribed to Chinese chauvinistic behavior during the Cultural Revolution that caused North Vietnam to distance itself from China because of its fear of Chinese expansionism.¹³ Qiang Zhai, however, argues that Chinese insensitivity to the needs of North Vietnam and Mao's sense of superiority were the reasons for the decline of Sino- Vietnamese relations.¹⁴ Another scholar who focuses on these relationships is Xiaoming Zhang who examines the Sino- Soviet split and its impact on the Vietnam War. He concludes that the rivalry over communist leadership affected China's overall involvement in Vietnam and thus, it is necessary to regard the Vietnam War not only as part of the confrontation between China and the United States, but also as an element in the Sino- Soviet dispute.¹⁵

Although, as we have seen, there is a body of historical literature that examines Chinese involvement in Korea, on the one hand, and in Vietnam, on the other hand, no studies have been made that examine China's involvement in these two conflicts comparatively. One article "Resist America': China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars" by Baijia Zhang, investigates China's role in Korea and in Vietnam, but it focuses on the background of these wars and looks in particular at China's crisis management.¹⁶ The article does not, however, contrast China's direct involvement in the wars or the support it provided during the war years.

¹² Anne Gilks, *The Breakdown of the Sino- Vietnamese Alliance, 1970-1979* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1992), 19-21.

¹³ Kosal Path, "Ha Noi's Responses to Beijing's Renewed Enthusiasm to Aid North Vietnam, 1970- 1972," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, Vol. 6, No.3 (2011):131.

¹⁴ Qiang Zhai, "An Uneasy Relationship: China and the DRV during the Vietnam War," In *International Perspectives on Vietnam*, edited by Lloyd C. Gardner and Ted Gittinger (College Station, Tex.: Texas A & M University Press, 2000), 137-138.

¹⁵ Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided," 96-97

¹⁶ Baijia Zhang, "Resist America': China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," In *Managing Sino-American Crises: Case Studies and Analysis*, edited by Michael D. Swaine (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), 179-180.

Such a comparison is valuable, however, in order to understand the development of the People's Republic of China as a diplomatic actor. The PRC was founded in 1949 and confronted with its first international conflict just one year later. The Korean War was an important opportunity for the newly-established nation to prove itself on the international stage and to gain a position among the other countries in the world. By the time of the Vietnam War, however, China had matured as a state and its concerns had changed. A comparison of China's involvement in Korea and Vietnam shows that China had experienced a rapid development in its national identity and become a strong nation that was better equipped to face international crisis. Such a comparison can also show us the lessons that China drew from its involvement in Korea and what impact the outcomes of the Korean War had on the Chinese decision-making process in the early stages of the Vietnam War.

2. China's role in the Korean War

In this initial section, Chinese military involvement in Korea will be investigated by illuminating China's reasons to enter the war and its obstacles, followed by the question whether China took part in the planning of North Korea's attack and knew about the idea of Kim Il Sung to reunite the country by force. Moreover, this chapter elaborates China's way of support from the outbreak in 1950 to the signing of the armistice agreement in 1953 and ends with the aftermath of the war for China.

The Korean War began on June 25, 1950 and resulted in a permanent division of the Korean peninsula in North and South. This division had already been decided after World War II and the victory over Japan. At the Yalta Conference in 1945, the three victorious powers (United Kingdom, United States and the Soviet Union) determined the preliminary separation of Korea, which had been a former Japanese colony, into two occupation zones at the 38th parallel. Thus, the northern part of Korea was occupied by Soviet forces, whereas the southern part was controlled by American forces with the intent to reunite Korea by conducting free elections at a later time. These elections, however, had never been conducted. As a result of the deteriorating conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Republic of Korea under the pro-American government of Syngman Rhee was proclaimed on August 13, 1948 in the South and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea under the communist government of Kim Il Sung was founded on September 9, 1948 in the North. In order to occupy the South and to unify the country by force, troops of the Korean People's Army crossed the border on June 25, 1950 and triggered the Korean War, as the UN Security Council thereupon adopted a resolution to solve the conflict. As a consequence of this resolution, UN troops who consisted mainly of American troops were sent to Korea to prevent a North Korean occupation of the South. On September 15,

1950, the UN troops started their counteroffensive, but their advance was halted by the Chinese troops who entered the war on behalf of North Korea in October. The UN troops were driven back by the Chinese forces and had to retreat. These alternate victories and defeats of both sides characterized the battles until the war had changed into a trench war in June 1951, resulting in two-year armistice negotiations. The battles in Korea ended on July 27, 1953 with the signing of the final armistice agreement in Panmunjom.

China's intervention in the war events was essential for the outcome of the war because the Chinese support meant a shift in the power structures. Although China and North Korea were incapable of achieving their objectives and to expel the US forces from the South, they could successfully resist the attacks and were able to prevent an entire US invasion in the North.

2.1 China's motives to enter the war

China's reasons to intervene during the Korean War were numerous. Patrick Roe states that they wanted to protect the Sino- Korean border from any military conflicts between Chinese and American troops to maintain the industrial security of Manchuria, as China considered the attack on North Korea to be an attack on China. Especially Manchuria was the most important heavy industrial center of China at that time and Chinese leaders worried about China's peaceful environment for its domestic reconstruction,¹ as Zhou Enlai expressed in a report on October 24, 1950 the following:

China and Korea are neighboring countries as closely related as lips and teeth. If the lips are gone, the teeth are exposed to the cold. If the D.P.R.K is subjugated by U.S. imperialism, there will be no security for northeast China. Half of our heavy industry is in the Northeast, and half of the heavy industry in the Northeast is in its southern parts, within range of enemy bombers.²

¹ Roe, *The Dragon Strikes*, 68.

² Zhou Enlai, *Selected Works of Zhou Enlai* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1989), 60.

Marshal Nie Rongzhen also expressed his concerns:

It could be disadvantageous to all if we did not send our troops. First, when the enemy reached the bank of the Yalu River, the international and domestic reactionary bluster would surely grow louder. This would not only be disadvantageous to our country, but it would also pose an even bigger threat to Northeast China. The entire Northeastern Border Defense Army would be tied down there, and the electric power plan in South Manchuria would be subject to the enemy's threat. After all, we believed that we should enter the war and that we must participate in it. Our entering the war could be most rewarding; failing to do so would cause great harm.³

Allen Whiting has described China historically as a nation with “xenophobic attitudes with expansionist tendencies.”⁴ This xenophobia was caused and increased in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century when China's territorial sovereignty was shattered by foreign nations and ideologically penetrated by Western missionary groups. The Chinese empire which regarded itself as the “Middle Kingdom” was degraded to a semi-colony by other foreign powers and its national dignity and pride was humiliated.⁵ Zhou Enlai reminded the Chinese of this shameful past and compared it with the policy of the United States, as he stated in his report on October 24, 1950:

The U.S. imperialists are pursuing the policy of MacArthur in the East, using Japan as their base, inheriting the mantle of Japanese militarism and taking their cue from history since the Sino- Japanese War of 1894. They are following the old maxim that anyone wanting to annex China must first occupy its Northeast and that to occupy the Northeast he must first seize Korea. While the Japanese imperialists spent 40 years inching their way towards that goal, the U.S. imperialists want to accomplish it in four or five years.⁶

In addition, Korea was formally a Chinese tributary state and therefore the loss of Korea would mean a great problem of China's territorial security and position of power in Asia, as the Chinese borderlands were of strategic importance. Whiting also describes North Korea as an essential

³ Xiaobing Li, Allan Millet, and Bin Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 43.

⁴ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

⁶ Zhou, *Selected Works of Zhou Enlai*, 62.

buffer state between China and the American troops in South Korea.⁷ Zhou Enlai expressed the worries and fears of the CCP leadership when he said at a meeting on September 30, 1950:

Moreover, timer after time, it (United States) has sent its air force in Korea to enter the airspace over the Chinese province of Liaodong to strafe and bomb the residents there and has ordered its naval forces off Korea to bombard Chinese merchant ships in international waters. These violent acts have revealed the U.S. government to be the most dangerous foe of the People's Republic of China. U.S. forces have invaded China's borders and may at any time expand their invasion.⁸

After the outbreak of the Korean War the US government decided to “neutralize” the Taiwan Strait by sending the 7th Fleet between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. Shu Guang Zhang states that China believed that the US military policies towards the aggression of North Korea were actually aimed at preventing China from the reunification with Taiwan. Thus, the Chinese regarded the US military presence in South Korea as a threat to their national security and decided to support North Korea.⁹ At that time the military leader Marshal Nie Rongzhen said: “The United States occupied Taiwan as well, a territory of our country [...] Thus, the American imperialists forced a war on the Chinese people.”¹⁰

Furthermore, Whiting believes that a US victory in North Korea could encourage Chiang Kai-shek and the GMD to launch new attacks on the Chinese mainland and Mao's greatest concern was the security of his newly established regime, as he assumed that North Korea will be attacked first by the American troops and then they will continue their offensives towards China itself.¹¹ Chinese leaders also worried that the presence of US troops in Korea could endanger the communist control of China and that is why Thomas Christensen stated that Mao's primary aim was to destroy all foreign forces on the Korean peninsula, especially after the

⁷ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 3; Hu, “Mao's America Strategy and the Korean War,” 315.

⁸ Zhou, *Selected Works of Zhou Enlai*, 46.

⁹ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 56.

¹⁰ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 39.

¹¹ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 159; Hao and Zhai, “China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisted,” 103.

Incheon landing which deteriorated the situation in Korea and further jeopardized China's security because it meant a fast shift of the combat zone to the North.¹²

Another reason for China to intervene in the Korean War, which is mentioned by Whiting, is the ideological linkage between China and the North Korean leadership under Kim Il Sung as sister states and the ultimate ambition of communist ideology. At the time of the Japanese colonial rule in Korea and China's war of resistance against Japan in the late 1930s, Korea and China backed each other in the fight against the Japanese invaders. During the war of resistance against Japan in China, Kim Il- Sung actively supported China by leading a division of allied forces against Japanese troops.¹³ In addition, more than 100,000 Koreans fought side by side with the Communists against Chiang Kai- shek and his Guomindang in the Chinese Civil War and this caused a reciprocal claim for China's aid during the time of the Korean War.¹⁴ Thus, Bruce Cummings stated that China's entry into the war was not a defensive measure to protect itself, but an obligation to provide assistance because of Korea's sacrifices in the Chinese Civil War and the war of resistance against Japan.¹⁵ Furthermore, as the goal of the communist ideology was World Communism, the destruction of the capitalist elites and the assumption of an omnipresent conflict, Mao also regarded the spread of communism throughout the world as one of his missions.¹⁶ Mao had already revealed this attitude in his article "Revolutionary Forces of the World Rally to Combat Imperialist Aggression" two years earlier in November 1948 by stating the following:

¹² Roe, *The Dragon Strikes*, 68; Christensen, "Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace," 128; Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 159.

¹³ Zhang, "'Resist America': China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," 181.

¹⁴ Bruce Cummings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 238; Cummings, *The Origins of the Korean War Vol.2: The Roaring of the Cataract 1947-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 350; 364.

¹⁵ Cummings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 284.

¹⁶ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 6.

After the victory in World War II, U.S. imperialism, which has taken the place of fascist Germany, Italy and Japan, together with its stooges in various countries, is frantically preparing for a new world war and is menacing the whole world. This reflects the extreme decay of the capitalist world and its fear of impending doom. This enemy still has strength. Therefore, all the revolutionary forces within each country and the revolutionary forces of all countries must be united. An anti-imperialist united front headed by the Soviet Union must be formed and a correct policy pursued, otherwise victory cannot be achieved. The foundation of this enemy is weak. It is collapsing internally, is divorced from the people and is confronted with an inextricable economic crisis. Therefore, it can be defeated. It would be a very big mistake to overestimate the strength of the enemy and to underestimate the strength of revolution.¹⁷

The Chinese leadership also proclaimed to be one of the vanguards of the communist “national liberation” movements in Asia and underlined its revolutionary role until June 1950.¹⁸ Thus, it was impossible for Mao to reject North Korea’s wish for national unification and independence as a socialist brother state.¹⁹ In addition, the Korean War meant an opportunity to spread the influence of the Chinese revolution in Asia for the Chinese leadership and a successful and victorious end of the war could promote prestige on the international stage.²⁰ In Mao’s eyes the world situation was divided between the nations of the “intermediate zone” and the “two camps”. The “two camps” consisted of the anti-imperialist camp headed by the Soviet Union and the imperialist camp headed by the United States. These camps were separated by the “intermediate zone” including capitalist, colonial and semi-colonial nations in Africa, Asia and Europe.

However, major contradictions existed between the countries of the “intermediate zone” and the imperialist camp which had to be resolved in Mao’s opinion. Therefore, the Korean War offered the possibility to resolve these contradictions and to defeat capitalism, as the crisis could be used as a test case for the Chinese Communists to prove their ability and their legitimization

¹⁷ Peng Dehuai, *Message of Peng Teh-huai, Minister of National Defence, to Compatriots in Taiwan. Order of the Ministry of National Defence of the People’s Republic of China [1 A.m., October 13, 1958]. Order of the Ministry of National Defence of the People’s Republic of China* (China Reconstructs. Supplement ed. [S.l. : S.n.], 1958), 12.

¹⁸ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 30-32.

¹⁹ Hu, “Mao’s America Strategy and the Korean War,” 315.

²⁰ Chen, *China’s Road to the Korean War*, 130.

to rule and to protect China's reputation and its national interests.²¹ This was also emphasized in the following statement of Peng Dehuai: "Our forces out to be dispatched also in order to encourage the peoples of colonial and semicolonial countries to carry on their nationalist and democratic revolutions against imperialists and invasions. Our forces ought to be dispatched in order to extend the influence of the Socialist camp."²²

Roe believes that Mao was also influenced in his decision to participate in the war by his concern over the continuing threat of Chiang Kai-shek and the Guomindang. As early as 1937, the US government actively supported Chiang Kai-shek and his fight against the Communists and Mao strongly believed that the United States intervened in the Chinese Civil War in order to rescue the Nationalists.²³ Thus, the Chinese leadership feared that a victory or even the success of UN forces in Korea could encourage the Guomindang to attack the Chinese mainland again.²⁴ However, in Mao's eyes a direct confrontation with the United States was inevitable. For him, Korea was one of three possible fronts (with Vietnam and Taiwan) where he expected US attacks and also other leaders of the CCP were convinced that revolutionary China had to take up the challenge and to face a military confrontation with the United States.²⁵ Hao and Zhai claim that the timing of the Korean War offered a possible chance for China to win the war, as the strategic focus of the United States was situated in Europe after the Second World War and the CCP leaders assumed that it was impossible to deploy all the US forces in Asia.²⁶

²¹ Guo and Ren, "Learning and Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision-Making," 292; Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 128.

²² Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 32.

²³ Roe, *The Dragon Strikes*, 14; Zhihai Zhai, "China's Decision to enter the Korean War: History Revisited," In *Korea and the Cold War: Division, Destruction, and Disarmament*, edited by Kim Chull Baum and James Matray (Claremont, Calif.: Regina Books, 1993),149.

²⁴ Goncharov and Lewis, *Uncertain Partners*, 181.

²⁵ Hao and Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War," 106; Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 93.

²⁶ Zhang, "'Resist America': China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," 187.

In addition, Zhai states that the CCP leaders Liu Shaoqi, Mao and Zhou Enlai had intensive nationalistic tendencies and all were determined to save China's dignity and restore its power.²⁷ Therefore, the security of China's place in the world was another reason for China to support North Korea in its struggle with the United States. The Korean War started right after the Chinese Civil War and the establishment of the People's Republic of China. As a developing country which had just been established, China strongly needed diplomatic, political and economic support and North Korea's attack on South Korea endangered this young nation.²⁸ In order to restore China's security, the CCP leaders had to take active measures in the war.

Another factor which is mentioned by Whiting and could lead to the Chinese intervention in the Korean War was the improving relationship between the United States and Japan. Japan had been a serious enemy of China for a long time and the Chinese government feared that the rapprochement between Japan and the United States could result in an anti-communist coalition in Asia. The communist control of Korea, however, could be a way of averting Japan from regaining power in Asia and also stop the influence of the United States on Japan.²⁹ Thus, in the eyes of the Chinese leadership a total UN victory in Korea, which could facilitate the alignment between the United States, Japan and Korea, had to be prevented.³⁰

2.2 China's obstacles in the decision-making progress

Although many factors suggest that the Chinese entry into the Korean War was favorable for China, Zhang Baijia and other scholars assert that a lot of Chinese leaders, including Mao were doubtful. The People's Republic of China had only been established one year earlier and its

²⁷ Zhai, "China's Decision to enter the Korean War: History Revisited," 142.

²⁸ Shen, "China Sends Troops to Korea," 36; Goncharov and Lewis, *Uncertain Partners*, 154.

²⁹ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 34-35.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 156.

security situation was therefore tense and unstable after several years of civil war.³¹ Thus, Mao's greatest concerns were the recovery of China's economy, the establishment of CCP legitimacy and political consolidation.³² At that time, China had serious domestic problems, as the economy stagnated, inflation and unemployment was rising and many modern transportation facilities were destroyed and had to be rebuilt.³³

Furthermore, the land reform which began between 1942 and 1946 resulted in great distribution problems and production breakdowns.³⁴ Additionally, the Chinese people had to fight against widespread flooding in 1949 which substantially hindered the reconstruction of the country.³⁵ Thus, an unsuccessful deployment in the Korean War could jeopardize the recently established nation and enhance its domestic problems. Furthermore, for Mao it was obvious that China could not win the war with such economic difficulties and without the support of the Soviet Union.

Whiting points out that another concern for the Chinese leadership was the issue of Taiwan and the relationship between the United States and the Nationalists, because Mao and his comrades were convinced that the United States would renew their economic, political and military support for the Guomindang after China would enter the war and send troops to Korea. The fear of another growing threat by the Guomindang on Taiwan and a possible fight on two fronts caused some of China's leaders to be more reluctant towards a deployment in Korea.³⁶ Moreover, Korea and the dispute between North and South did not belong to China's primary interests at that time, because the Chinese leadership regarded Taiwan and its annexation as their

³¹ Zhang, "Resist America": China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," 181.

³² Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 93.

³³ Zhihua Shen, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War: Trilateral Communist Relations in the 1950s* (London, New York: Routledge, 2012), 155.

³⁴ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 14.

³⁵ Shen, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War*, 155.

³⁶ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 49.

only major responsibility. That is why, the main focus of China's military lay on Taiwan, as well as Tibet, which was also not yet occupied by the CCP.³⁷ Mao's plans envisioned the conquest of Taiwan through negotiations; however, China's entry into the war and the military confrontation with the United States could endanger these negotiations and reinforce China's dependence on Stalin and the Soviet Union.³⁸

Furthermore, the insufficient military situation and the outstanding pacification of South China were reasons for Mao to reconsider a military intervention in Korea. In South China there were still over 400 000 Nationalist guerillas still fighting against the troops of the CCP and the economic situation required a reduction of military expenditures.³⁹ These areas still had to be liberated and to undergo agrarian reform.⁴⁰ After the Civil War the troops of the People's Liberation Army were also not ready for another military confrontation because of their combat fatigue and inadequate training.⁴¹ Thus, Mao had to admit that the military power of the PLA could not keep up with the superior US military in the Korean War, as the troops only had backward arms and were poorly equipped compared to US troops, especially significant was the lack of naval and air weaponry.⁴²

For Whiting, the UN also played an important role in terms of Chinese obstacles, as China's intervention in the Korean War could endanger its efforts and aspirations to enter the UN.⁴³ By openly expressing loyalty and support for North Korea in its fight against South Korea and the US troops, China could risk the possibility for admission to the UN.

³⁷ Ibid, 57.

³⁸ Goncharov and Lewis, *Uncertain Partners*, 175.

³⁹ Roe, *The Dragon Strikes*, 68.

⁴⁰ Shen, "China Sends Troops to Korea," 28.

⁴¹ Hao and Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War," 105.

⁴² Shen, "China Sends Troops to Korea," 28-29.

⁴³ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 59.

All these reason for and against the deployment of Chinese troops to Korea resulted in extensive discussions between the CCP's leaders.

2.3 China's possible participation in planning the war

Did Mao know about the plans of Kim Il Sung to attack South Korea on June 25, 1950? Did the Chinese leaders actively participate in the organization of the assault? To this day, it is not certain whether Mao Zedong and China's leadership were informed of Kim Il Sung's war plans and many scholars are still discussing this issue. Whiting mentioned that an increased military presence in Northeast China in mid-1950 could be evidence that the Chinese leadership participated in the war preparations of North Korea.⁴⁴ Jun Yasuda also argued that China prepared itself for entering into the war long before North Korea crossed the border and that the leadership was strongly determined to fight a counteroffensive against the United States. In Yasuda's view, for Mao, the victory over "American imperialism" was an essential prerequisite to complete the Chinese communist Revolution and the numerous activities to increase China's military capabilities before the Korean War could also be used as evidences for China's involvement. Nevertheless, Yasuda also stated that the Soviet Union was probably very well informed about the North Korea's invasion plans, whereas Mao only knew the vague planning.⁴⁵

Another indicator of China's active planning involvement, mentioned by Qiang Zhai, was the return of all ethnic Korean soldiers to North Korea. In May 1949 and January 1950, Kim Il Sung asked Mao to discharge these soldiers who had joined the army of the CCP during the Civil War and send them back to North Korea.⁴⁶ This event was confirmed by Nie Rongzhen:

⁴⁴ Ibid, 23.

⁴⁵ Yasuda, "A Survey: China and the Korean War," 74-75.

⁴⁶ Hu, "Mao's America Strategy and the Korean War," 316.

In January 1950 Comrade Kim Il Sung sent Kim Kwang Hyop and other comrades to China. They asked to transfer into North Korea 14,000 PRC soldiers of Korean origin currently serving in the PLA. Most of these soldiers had joined our army in Northeast China during the Anti-Japanese War and the Chinese civil war. The, within the PLA's Fourth Field Army (the former Northeastern Field Army), they had fought in many parts of China.⁴⁷

Therefore, approx. 12,000 Korean troops were transferred during 1949 and 1950.⁴⁸ Sergei Goncharov and John Wilson Lewis also claimed that Mao was aware of Kim Il Sung's war preparations because of the troop transfer in the month before the war, but was also not fully informed of the details and the timing of North Korea's attack.⁴⁹

General Sir Anthony Farrar- Hockley also indicated that China knew about war preparations and that the entering of the war was planned for at least several months, as North Korea's military forces were poorly equipped and insufficiently armed to fight against the US troops. Thus, great amounts of military supply provided by the Soviet Union were moved through Northeast China by railroad before the outbreak of the war. It is very unlikely that these deliveries were not noticed by the Chinese government. That is why General Farrar- Hockley stated that the Chinese leadership was aware of North Korea's mobilization, but it does not prove the deployment of Chinese troops in Korea.⁵⁰

The most important event which could indicate that Mao knew about the forthcoming war is Mao's visit to Moscow and the following conference with Stalin from the end of 1949 to February 1950. Hak-Joon Kim declared that many outstanding authorities who deal with the

⁴⁷ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 47-48.

⁴⁸ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 44.

⁴⁹ Goncharov and Lewis, *Uncertain Partners*, 153.

⁵⁰ Anthony Farrar- Hockley, "The China Factor in the Korean War," In *The Korean War in History*, edited by James Cotton (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989), 4-6.

relations between the Soviet Union and China are convinced that Stalin used this conference to inform Mao about his intentions and Kim Il Sung's plans in North Korea.⁵¹

However, many factors also speak against the theory that China was actively involved in the planning of the Korean War. Whiting, for example, states that the military situation of re-equipment, political indoctrination and the non-existent training of the Chinese troops suggest that a military deployment had not been determined by CCP leaders before the war started. No evidence of intensive training or any maneuvers in order to intensify China's readiness for war prior to June 1950 can be found and the majority of the troops intensively worked on the economic reconstruction rather than on war mobilization. Furthermore, there is hardly any evidence of Soviet deliveries to China, which would have been necessary for successfully supporting North Korea prior to China's entry into the war in October.⁵² Moreover, Hao and Zhai mention that the only army that was available at that time was the 42nd Army of Fourth Field Corps which was stationed along the Yalu river border areas not for defending the Chinese border against US troops, but for overseeing crop-production in this part of the country. All other troops were intended to be used to resolve the issues of Taiwan and Tibet in the beginning of 1950. Another indicator that the Chinese leadership was not informed was the large demobilization of the PLA in early 1950 when the CCP decided to reduce the troop strength in order to decrease their expenses, which was necessary after many years of civil war in order to rebuild the country.⁵³ Thus, the CCP cut the PLA's ground force size from 5.4 million to 4 million in spring 1950.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Hak-Joon Kim, "China's Non-Involvement in the Origins of the Korean War: A Critical Reassessment of the Traditionalist and Revisionist Literature," *In The Korean War in History*, edited by James Cotton (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989), 27.

⁵² Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 124.

⁵³ Hao and Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War," 99-100.

⁵⁴ Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 94.

Furthermore, as mentioned before, the timing of the Korean War was not favorable for China. In the beginning of 1950 Tibet had not been conquered yet and in the border area between Yunnan and Burma there were still combat troops of the Guomindang fighting against the Communists and the industrial base of the country was destroyed because of the war against Japan and the Nationalists.⁵⁵ Thus, it was hardly possible for Mao and the CCP leadership to participate in Kim Il Sung's war preparations, as the political situation had to be stabilized again, the production and the daily life of the Chinese had to be restored and the whole country needed to heal its wounds from the previous confrontations.⁵⁶ It is therefore not surprising that the CCP leadership made no public promise to Kim Il Sung of assisting him in his fight for the "liberation" of South Korea and it seems as if the People's Republic of China did not play an essential role in the planning of the Korean War because of their own domestic issues.⁵⁷

In addition, Kim and Cho claim that China was not very well informed about the situation of North Korea at that time, as the main interest of its leaders did not lie on the Korean Peninsula. During the years 1945-1948, the relations between the Communist Party of China and North Korea were characterized by their close cooperation in the Chinese Civil War, but official diplomatic relations of North Korea were limited to the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ After the foundation of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, China and North Korea initiated the establishment of diplomatic ties at the ambassadorial level and in late August of 1950, the first Chinese ambassador Ni Zhiliang moved to North Korea.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Kay Möller, *Die Außenpolitik der Volksrepublik China 1949 - 2004: Eine Einführung* [Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China 1949-2004: An Introduction], (Wiesbaden: Verl. Für Sozialwiss., 2005), 48.

⁵⁶ Shen, "China Sends Troops to Korea," 21.

⁵⁷ Kim, "China's Non-Involvement in the Origins of the Korean War," 28-29.

⁵⁸ Kim, *The Sino- North Korean Relations, 1945-1984*, 47; M.Y. Cho, *Die Entwicklung der Beziehungen zwischen Peking und P'Yongyang 1949-1967: Analyse und Dokumente: Eine Studie über die Auswirkungen des sowjetisch-chinesischen Konfliktes* [The Development of the Relations between Peking and Pyongyang 1949-1967: Analysis and Documents: A Study about the Impact of the Sino- Soviet Conflict], (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967), 21.

⁵⁹ Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations*, 99; Hao and Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War," 99.

Another important fact that could play a role while answering the question, whether China was involved in the war preparations or not was Mao's attitude towards a war in Korea. Roe argues that Mao did not agree with Kim to reunify Korea by force and he did not intend to be involved in the conflict between North and South Korea.⁶⁰ For Mao, an immediate reunification of Korea imposed by military means was not an acceptable solution.⁶¹ Thus, it is difficult to imagine that China was actively involved in the planning of the attack on South Korea. The Chinese leadership knew about the North Korean wish to reunify Korea by force, but they were not informed about the planning of the war in detail before its outbreak in June 1950, in contrast to Stalin. That is why the North Vietnamese launch of the Korean War was completely surprising for Mao and his CCP leaders.

2.4 China's intervention

While planning the military takeover of South Korea, Kim Il Sung realized that North Korea was not able to face the South Korean troops all by itself. Thus, he paid Stalin a visit in Moscow in March 1949 in order to discuss the possibility of a military solution to the problem of Korea's unification.⁶² After the war broke out in June, China also knew that the support of the Soviet Union was essential for a successful deployment in Korea and the CCP leadership considered this support as the main requirement for China's entry into the war. In February 1950, Beijing and Moscow formed an alliance and made the agreement that the Soviet Union would offer military assistance to the Chinese in case of an attack by "imperialist powers". When Kim Il Sung's troops started their attacks on the South, CCP leaders, however, could not be assured of

⁶⁰ Roe, *The Dragon Strikes*, 49; Shen, "China Sends Troops to Korea," 14.

⁶¹ Shen, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War*, 127.

⁶² Bernd Stöver, *Geschichte des Koreakriegs: Schlachtfeld der Supermächte und ungelöster Konflikt* [History of the Korean War: Battlefield of Superpowers and Unsolved Conflict], (München: Beck, 2013), 55.

the Soviet Union's support in the case of Korea, because the agreement only referred to a direct attack on the Chinese mainland.⁶³ Mao also adopted a more reluctant attitude towards North Korea's war plans and he set two conditions for providing military assistance to Korea. The first one was that China would send troops to North Korea's defense when it would be attacked, but not actively start attacks on South Korea and the second condition referred to China's reunification with Taiwan. Thus, he advised North Korea to improve its military strength and the economic situation of the country first, before the leadership should think about a reunification.⁶⁴

However, Mao's opinion and his arguments did not restrain Kim Il Sung from launching the war on June 25, 1950. When the North Korean troops crossed the frontier, no news about the attack was reported by Chinese newspapers or radios. The first official Chinese statement about the beginning of the war was made by the Chinese on June 28 when Mao gave a speech at the Eight Meeting of the Central People's Government Council in which he condemned the US policy of invading China's territory Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula by saying:

Truman stated on January 5 this year that the United States would not interfere in Taiwan. Now he has proved his own statement to be false, and has torn to shreds all the international agreements regarding non-interference by the United States in the internal affairs of China. (...) There is no reason at all for US intervention in the internal affairs of Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam or other countries. The sympathy of the people throughout China, as well as of the broad mass of the people everywhere in the world, is on the side of the victims of aggression, the most decidedly not on the side of US imperialism. The people will neither be bought by imperialism nor cowed by it. Imperialism is outwardly strong but feeble within, because it has no support among the people. People throughout China and the world! Unite and prepare fully to defeat any provocation by US imperialism.⁶⁵

The Chinese government, however, restrained itself, apparently because they wanted to avoid any assurance of help to North Korea in the initial period of the Korean War.⁶⁶ Mao Zedong, however, promised Kim Il Sung that China would send military forces in order to support North

⁶³ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 2.

⁶⁴ Shen, "China Sends Troops to Korea," 16-18.

⁶⁵ Kim, *The Sino-North Korean Relations, 1945-1984*, 68-69; Peng, *Message of Peng Teh-huai, Minister of National Defence, to Compatriots in Taiwan. Order of the Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China [1 A.m., October 13, 1958]. Order of the Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China*, 15.

⁶⁶ Kim, *The Sino-North Korean Relations, 1945-1984*, 72.

Korea if the United States intervened in the military conflict. At the same time he was careful and avoided any provocative statements on the Korean War itself.⁶⁷ On June 30, 1950 the Chinese leadership sent a team of military experts to North Korea in order to assess the situation and to prepare for a possible deployment as China was extremely concerned about the protection of the Yalu River Bridge which was the fundamental basis for transportation and communication and the boundary to the Chinese mainland. A crossing of this river by US troops would mean a direct attack on China and had to be prevented.⁶⁸ Thus, a national security meeting was held on July 7 and China's leaders agreed that the border defense between China and North Korea had to be reinforced. As a consequence, troops of the Fourth Field Army, which was the most experienced combat force of the CCP, as they had fought successfully in both the anti- Japanese war and the civil war, were sent to the Sino- Korean border.⁶⁹ On July 18, 1950, Mao stated that the Military Commission of the Communist Party Central Committee approved the dispatch of observation teams to North Korea:

The Military Commission of the Communist Party Central Committee generally agrees with you to organize observation groups to the frontline of North Korea to conduct on-the-spot investigations. However, we have to wait until the ministry of foreign affairs negotiates with the North Korea's ambassador. Furthermore, we have to consider the time and avoid revealing our objectives in an over-hasty way. The right time will be determined by the Military Commission of the Communist Party Central Committee.⁷⁰

Furthermore, the CCP's leadership took additional measures to strengthen China's defense, such as the fortifying its air force and coastal protection. When the Korean War broke out, the first Chinese pilots were also trained under Soviet advisers and in addition, they took precautionary measures to increase the safety of the border between China and Vietnam, because at that time

⁶⁷ Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations*, 11-13.

⁶⁸ Stöver, *Geschichte des Koreakriegs*, 80; Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 48.

⁶⁹ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 58.

⁷⁰ Mao, Zedong 毛泽东, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao* 建国以来毛泽东军事文稿 [Military manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the foundation of the PRC], Vol. 1 (Beijing: Jun Shi Ke Xue Chu Ban She ; Zhong Yang Wen Xian, 2010), 166. (Unless otherwise noted, all translations to English are my own.)

Ho Chi Minh and his troops were fighting for independence against France and planned an offensive campaign in this area.⁷¹ On August 5, the Central Military Commission sent an urgent cable and ordered the Northeastern Frontier Defense Army (NFDA) to become combat ready and on August 13, a commanders meeting was held by the Northeast Military Region in Shenyang.⁷² Thus, the NFDA was reorganized in order to meet any emergencies in Korea and the People's Liberation Army was ordered to keep intensive surveillance over China's coast.⁷³ These measures were not hidden in front of American authorities, as they thought that China intended to prepare 250,000 soldiers for Korea in a meeting of Chinese high-level authorities on August 14.⁷⁴ On August 27, the CCP's leadership suddenly accused the United States of sending planes over the Chinese mainland. Washington immediately offered compensation and admitted a possible "mistake", but this incident further increased the tensions between China and the United States. As a consequence, domestic protests and a wave of mass rallies characterized by anti-American propaganda which was further inflamed by the Chinese communist press in order to mobilize against the United States and to build support among the population for the war arose throughout the country.⁷⁵ However, China addressed this challenge to its borders through diplomacy, such as the demand on the UN Security Council and UN secretary general by Zhou Enlai in late August to condemn the US military action in Korea, as China promoted peaceful meditation of this conflict and the withdrawal of all foreign troops.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, these efforts failed and in the beginning of late September, the number of Chinese aggressive statements towards the United States increased.⁷⁷ In a statement which was released on September 5, the

⁷¹ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 66-69.

⁷² Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 62.

⁷³ Zhai, "China's Decision to enter the Korean War: History Revisited," 150.

⁷⁴ Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 267.

⁷⁵ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 97-99.

⁷⁶ Zhang, "'Resist America': China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," 185.

⁷⁷ Roe, *The Dragon Strikes*, 87.

determination to fight against the US troops was expressed by the words: “We, Chinese people are used to hold the weapon; our wish is not to fight, but you surely want to fight. Then we have to let you fight.”⁷⁸ Zhou Enlai also expressed this determination at a meeting on September 30, 1950: “the Chinese people profoundly love peace, but they never have been, and never will be, afraid to fight back against aggression in order to defend peace. They will not tolerate aggression against themselves or their neighbours.”⁷⁹ Zhihua Shen argues that the Chinese leadership assumed that the US troops would land in Inchon, which was occupied by North Korean troops. Thus, they decided that three measures should be taken before this landing. First, it was necessary to increase the war preparations made by the Northeast China Border Defense Army and to get combat-ready at any time. Second, they informed the North Korean leadership that the Korean People’s Army needed to be prepared for the worst possible case when the US troops would land in Inchon and lastly, the Chinese leadership ordered the Headquarters of General Staff and Foreign Ministry to closely observe the developments in the war.⁸⁰

Although China’s leadership did expect the United States to land in Inchon, Roe claims that historical evidence suggests that the timing of the landing was surprising for them.⁸¹ On September 15, the US troops landed and occupied Inchon, whereupon North Korea called for help, as its troops were attacked both front and rear by the US troops after the successful recapture of Inchon.⁸² The resulting atmosphere among the Chinese comrades at that time was described by Lieutenant General Du Ping: “The next day, as soon as I walked into the headquarters’ office, I heard my comrades’ loud discussion, with everybody eager to put in a word: ‘The American forces have landed at Inchon. What are we going to do?’ I did not answer

⁷⁸ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.1, 201.

⁷⁹ Zhou, *Selected Works of Zhou Enlai*, 47.

⁸⁰ Shen, “China Sends Troops to Korea,” 24.

⁸¹ Roe, *The Dragon Strikes*, 85.

⁸² Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 114.

their question but said to myself that we were not too far away from the day we would enter the war.”⁸³ As a consequence, two days later, on September 17, China sent a team of military advisors and five additional military attachés to North Korea.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the Chinese government started to send warning signals to the United States. In July, 1950, the Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai had already declared that the Chinese would enter the war if US troops crossed the 38th parallel.⁸⁵ When the Third Division of the South Korean army crossed the 38th parallel on September 30, 1950, Zhou Enlai released another public warning and one day later, Kim Il Sung asked Mao for support because of North Korea’s critical situation.⁸⁶ The Chinese entry into the Korean War was a highly discussed topic among the CCP leaders right before the final decision was made by Mao. This discussion among the Chinese leadership was described by Marshal Nie Rongzhen:

As we publicly criticized the American imperialists' invasion, some of our comrades were scared. They believed that it would be disastrous if we fought a war against the United States, the strongest imperialist nation in the world. [...] At the same time, some dissenting opinions emerged among our leading party members. They mainly argued that, having fought wars for so many years, we had an urgent need to recuperate and rebuild. Our new republic had just been founded in the previous year and was facing many difficulties and challenges. It would be better not to fight this war as long as it was not absolutely necessary.⁸⁷

Jian Chen, however, mentions that Mao did believe that the Korean War would not be a long war for China to be involved in, as Kim Il Sung tried to convince Stalin and Mao that the war would be short in order to receive the badly needed support.⁸⁸ On October 2, Mao was convinced that China had to enter the war and he decided to send troops to North Korea after General

⁸³ Ibid, 65.

⁸⁴ Stöver, *Geschichte des Koreakriegs*, 80.

⁸⁵ Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations*, 11-13.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 16-18.

⁸⁷ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 41.

⁸⁸ Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 178.

MacArthur declared one day earlier that all North Korean forces should surrender.⁸⁹ In an official statement, Mao declared:

We decided to send volunteers under the name of the first military troops to the North Korean interior in order to fight against the United States as well as their stooge Syngman Rhee and to help the North Korean comrades. We think these actions are necessary, because if we allow the United States to occupy the entire North Korean territory and the strength of the Korean revolution suffer a fundamental failure, then the American aggressors will be rampant and the entire East will be harmed.⁹⁰

In a conversation with the Indian ambassador Kavalam Madhava Panikkar on the same day, Zhou Enlai said:

The US army is trying to cross the 38th parallel and to expand the war. If the US troops really do as I said, we cannot sit still and watch, we have to care. (...) We advocate a peaceful solution; we treat the Korean issue as a localized event. We still advocate this until now. I also explained the attitude of our government in the report of October, 1st. We want peace and build up our country in peace. (...) The Korean War has to stop immediately and the foreign troops have to retreat in order to benefit the peace in the East. The idea of the Korean issue as a localized event caused the aggression of the US troops to extend and to become a global issue.⁹¹

Thomas Christensen argues that the crossing of the 38th parallel by US forces on October 7 was the final catalyst which determined China's interference in the events of the war.⁹² However, the question of support from the Soviet Union was still unanswered. Thus, Zhou Enlai took an emergency trip to Moscow from October 8- October 18, 1950 in order to talk about possible assistance. During this visit, Stalin promised to provide China military supply and aid, such as several regiments of anti-aircraft artillery in order to defend Manchuria, a number of interceptors, a ground-based air intercept radar system and the use of Russian air space above the Yalu River, but Stalin was not willing to provide air cover for the Chinese troops in Korea, as he did not want to be actively involved in the war so as to prevent a direct military confrontation between the

⁸⁹ Christensen, "Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace," 136.

⁹⁰ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.1, 226.

⁹¹ Zhou Enlai 周恩来, *Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan* 周恩来外交文选 [A Selection of Zhou Enlai's Writings on Diplomacy], (Beijing: Zhong yang wen xian chu ban she: Xin hua shu dian fa xing, 1990), 25-27.

⁹² Christensen, "Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace," 136.

United States and the Soviet Union.⁹³ This decision, however, launched the debate about China's entry into the war in Beijing again, as top political leaders and also several military leaders disapproved of an intervention without sufficient air cover. They were aware that the Chinese military was inferior to the strong firepower of the US troops and they feared that a war against the United States in Korea might spread to China and destroy its industrial base and therefore prevent it from modernization,⁹⁴ as Nie Rongzhen states that "some of the comrades, however, worried about whether we could achieve a victory in a war with the US Army. The enemy had modern weapons and technology, many times more artillery pieces than we did, and they enjoyed air and naval superiority. They also possessed nuclear bombs."⁹⁵ Thus, the majority of the top leaders opposed an intervention in Korea except for the military leaders Nie Rongzhen and Peng Dehuai as well as Mao himself. Peng Dehuai emphasized his opinion by saying:

I kept thinking and thinking about the war situation in Korea. America occupied Korea across the [Yalu] River, threatening Northeast China. It also controlled Taiwan, threatening Shanghai and East China. It could launch a war to invade China with any excuse anytime it wanted. The tiger always eats people, and the time when it wants to eat depends on its appetite. It is impossible to make any concessions to a tiger. Since America came to invade us, we had to resist its invasion. It would be very difficult for us to build up our Socialist country without challenging the American imperialists.⁹⁶

Mao was concerned about the historical and geopolitical factors, but he also did not intend to let the scale of the war to get out of hand.⁹⁷ Mao had already announced the weaknesses of the American troops in the beginning of September 1950. In his opinion, their battlefront from Germany to Korea was clearly too long and the transport routes, which included the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean, were too far to effectively fight a war. Furthermore, Mao was convinced that the

⁹³ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 4.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 11.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 63.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 31.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 12.

combat effectiveness of the US troops was too weak. All these points could make the US troops vulnerable and could be used by the Chinese for their own advantage in the fight.⁹⁸

Although the Chinese government issued several warnings, General MacArthur did not take these warnings seriously and he was convinced that the UN air forces could prevent the Chinese troops from crossing the Yalu River.⁹⁹ This, however, was a wrong assumption, as Mao made his final decision to intervene on October 13, 1950.¹⁰⁰ Mao decided to send Chinese troops under the name of Chinese People's Volunteers, whose formation he had already proclaimed on October, 8, to Korea.¹⁰¹ The term "Volunteers" was chosen with mindful consideration by Mao in order to avoid a formal declaration of war.¹⁰² Although Stalin had indicated that he would not adhere to an agreement to support a Chinese ground war with Soviet air power, Mao decided to send the Chinese People's Volunteers to Korea even without air support from the Soviet Union because he was convinced that the US troops also had essential weaknesses, such as their lack of political motivation.¹⁰³ Stalin's refusal to send his air force became a major problem for China's government, as expressed in a telegram of Mao to Zhou Enlai:

The first important questions are: 1. is the Soviet Union really able to send the desired air force to the front and the air force which should cover each big city at the home front within two months. 2. Does the Soviet Union permit the help of our planes, tanks, artillery pieces as well as their military equipment and are we allowed to lease all this to not exceed our budget?¹⁰⁴

Although the Chinese People's Volunteers had been established prior to China's entry into the conflict, the question of who would command China's war in Korea had not been answered and needed to be clarified urgently. Lin Biao had originally been selected for the position by Mao,

⁹⁸ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.1, 201.

⁹⁹ Farrar- Hockley, "The China Factor in the Korean War," 8.

¹⁰⁰ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 14.

¹⁰¹ Christensen, "Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace," 136.

¹⁰² Goncharov and Lewis, *Uncertain Partners*, 175.

¹⁰³ Zhai, "China's Decision to enter the Korean War: History Revisited," 162.

¹⁰⁴ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.1, 257.

but Lin Biao “opposed sending our troops to Korea. At first, Mao had chosen Lin to command the CPVF in Korea, but Lin was so fearful of this task that he gave the excuse of illness and obstinately refused to go to Korea.”¹⁰⁵ Therefore, Mao offered Peng Dehuai the position as commander for Korea. Touched by the strong willingness of China to face the superior American troops, Stalin changed his mind and approved the provision of 16 air regiments of fighter planes for China on October 14 and thereupon, the Chinese People’s Volunteers crossed the Yalu unannounced and undetected between October 14 and October 16, 1950, marking the Chinese entry into the Korean War and immediately changed the power balance on the battlefield because it increased the risk for an escalation of the war into a worldwide war.¹⁰⁶ In another telegram to Zhou Enlai, Mao expressed his tactical plans to enter North Korea:

Now the US army remains at the 38th parallel. In order to attack Pyongyang they will need some time and when they pass through Pyongyang and attack Dezhou, they also need time. If the US troops do not attack Dezhou, the puppet army of Wonsan will estimate that it is also hard to attack alone. This gives our troops the time to enter and organize a defense. It is decided that our troops will start moving on October, 19. The vanguard has to march 200 kilometer to Dezhou in seven days, and then they can rest for one to two days and arrive in Dezhou on October, 28 and they can start with construction works on the route from Ningyuan to the Southern regions. The entire army of 260,000 men will need ten days for crossing the Yalu River. Even if they arrive on October, 28, they can still completely cross the river (...) During the time when our troops start half of the construction works, the Korean People’s Army will still continue to resist and as far as possible delaying the beneficial advance of both the US army and the puppet army.¹⁰⁷

Goncharov and Lewis argue that the Korean War was considered to be a revolutionary war by Mao, in which the communist parties of China and North Korea were fighting together for liberation against the American imperialists.¹⁰⁸ Thus, the slogan of the Chinese war in Korea was: “resist U.S. aggression, aid Korea, and protect our homeland”¹⁰⁹ and the troops were told that they were fighting an anti-aggressive war for internationalism. Such slogans dominated the Chinese propaganda during wartime and the people were called to intensively support the

¹⁰⁵ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 42.

¹⁰⁶ Goncharov and Lewis, *Uncertain Partners*, 195; Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 211.

¹⁰⁷ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.1, 258-259.

¹⁰⁸ Goncharov and Lewis, *Uncertain Partners*, 159.

¹⁰⁹ Zhang, “‘Resist America’: China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars,” 193.

troops.¹¹⁰ However, in the beginning China's intervention was cautious, defensive and characterized by concealed military movements of the troops in order to avoid a counterattack by the United States because the Chinese leadership was more concerned about China's physical security.¹¹¹ Peng Dehuai described his first days and the secret entry as following: "At dusk on October 18, 1950, I crossed the Yalu River with the first group of the advance troops of the Chinese People's Volunteers Force. The next morning we reached the power station at Raekosao, and on October 19 we arrived at a small valley northwest of Puckchin."¹¹² This secrecy was further expressed in an order of Mao to the Chinese People's Volunteer Army on October 18, 1950:

Two armies as well as three artillery regiments decide to enter the North Korean War according to predetermined plans and will obviously start to cross the Yalu River between Andong and Ji'an in 19 days. In order to maintain strict secrecy, all troops will start crossing the river every day by dusk until dawn and stop at 4 o'clock. Before 5 o'clock they have to be concealed completely and have to conscientiously examine. In order to gain experience, it is intended that two to three troops will cross the river on the first day (the 19th). On the second day the number of troops will either be further increased or reduced and the situation will be deliberated once again, if the remaining troops will pass through Gaogang.¹¹³

Furthermore, Mao adopted the tactic of surprise, as he was aware that the United States did not expect a Chinese intervention into the war.¹¹⁴ The Chinese People's Volunteers were not only combat forces, but were also responsible for logistical supply and they supported North Korea in manpower transportation, railroad and highway construction, as well as in warehouse keeping.¹¹⁵ China's air force had to observe and secure the transportation corridors and restoration work on the airfields.¹¹⁶ Mao's initial idea was to establish a defensive line between Wonsan and North Korea's capital Pyongyang; however, in the first month of the war he decided to change his plan

¹¹⁰ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 115.

¹¹¹ Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 117.

¹¹² Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 32.

¹¹³ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.1, 266.

¹¹⁴ Hao and Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War," 113.

¹¹⁵ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 6.

¹¹⁶ Shen, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War*, 161.

and to order his troops to undertake more offensive actions.¹¹⁷ The battles of the Chinese troops were divided into 5 major campaigns. The first campaign took place from October 25 to November 5. The second campaign was conducted between November 24 and December 24. In the beginning of the New Year from December 31 to January 8, the third campaign was launched. Between January 25 and April 21 the troops implement the fourth campaign and the last campaign began on April 22 and ended on June 10.¹¹⁸ In the second campaign, China's troops began an efficient counteroffensive which led to a retreat of the UN forces. Their combat tactics consisted of pretending "that we were weak so as to let the enemy advance, make them overconfident, and lure them in deep"¹¹⁹ and by following Mao's advice to adopt surprise as "the combat tactic that guaranteed our victory in the Second Campaign. There was no better way to win it,"¹²⁰ as explained by Peng Dehuai. This initial success after the invasion of Chinese troops caused Mao to believe that he had overestimated the force of the US military and that the United States were not even as strong as the Nationalists during the Civil War. Stalin was also very impressed by China's initial success and called on the Chinese People's Volunteers to launch another operation as long as the UN forces were still forced back in order to expel them from Korea. Thus, the commanders of the Chinese People's Volunteers were pressured by China, North Korea and Russia to quickly and successfully win this war.¹²¹

In their second campaign, the Chinese troops could celebrate a great victory, as they occupied Pyongyang on December 6 and within two weeks the offensive conducted by the Sino-North Korean troops liberated North Korea from the UN troops. They continued their advance and by the end of December, the combined communist troops of China and North Korea were

¹¹⁷ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 118.

¹¹⁸ Goncharov and Lewis, *Uncertain Partners*, 199.

¹¹⁹ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 33.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 34.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 19-20.

about to occupy Seoul.¹²² With the start of the third campaign on December 31, 1950, the fall of Seoul could not be prevented and the troops entered the city on January 4, 1951,¹²³ which was summarized by Peng Dehuai: “On New Year’s Eve 1951 (the evening of December 31, 1950), we broke the [enemy] defense line along the Thirty- eighth Parallel, took over Seoul, crossed the Han River, and recovered Inchon Harbor, thus pushing the enemy back to the thirty-seventh parallel.”¹²⁴ The seizure of Seoul and the crossing of the 38th parallel by the Chinese army evoked a feeling of invincibility among the Chinese leaders and Mao no longer insisted on negotiations in order to solve the conflict peacefully, but imagined a total victory because of the successful advance.¹²⁵ In order to realize this victory, China desperately needed further Soviet support. Thus, Mao sent Chinese delegates to Moscow to submit a wish list to Stalin which included a request for additional arms supplies and construction plans for arsenals in which China could produce weapons. As part of the request, Mao explicitly asked for nuclear weapons, which showed his interest in the atomic bomb.¹²⁶

The following two offensives from the beginning of the year to May 1951 the Chinese troops suffered major and unexpected setbacks, even though the troops had rich combat experience and were flexible and mobile.¹²⁷ In order to further strengthen the troops’ motivation and determination, Mao declared:

The comrades of China and North Korea are closely united like brothers. They share weal and woe, and stick together in life and death in order to defeat the enemy together and fight to the end. The Chinese comrades have to regard the North Korean situation as their own situation, teach the commanders and the fighters to cherish every hill, every blade of grass, every river and every tree in North Korea and don’t take any property from the North Korean people in the same way as we see and treat our country. That is the successful political foundation. As long as we behave in this way, victory can finally be reached.¹²⁸

¹²² Roe, *The Dragon Strikes*, 396; Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 287.

¹²³ Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 212.

¹²⁴ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 34.

¹²⁵ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 132; Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 212.

¹²⁶ Stöver, *Geschichte des Koreakriegs*, 151.

¹²⁷ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 153; Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 115.

¹²⁸ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.1, 449.

Their problem, however, was that they had not sufficient knowledge about the strategies, the structure and the equipment of the US troops and therefore they suffered a military disadvantage.¹²⁹ Two other issues, which are mentioned by Roe, were that the Chinese army had never fought outside of China. Thus, they were not experienced in battling in a foreign country and were also not prepared for the large-scale confrontations they encountered in Korea, as the military leadership had planned for a quick military deployment.¹³⁰ The People's Volunteers were not well supplied and poorly equipped, as the troops dealt with a shortage of supplies.¹³¹ Furthermore, the Chinese soldiers were not trained in using Soviet weapons, although they were told to use these weapons which were promised and provided by the Soviet Union earlier.¹³² Their precarious situation at that time was clearly stated in the explanations of Peng Dehuai:

It was in the middle of the cold winter. We did not have any air support and lacked the protection of anti-aircraft artillery. Enemy airplanes raided us every day, and their long-range guns shelled us day and night. We could not move at all during the daytime. Our troops did not have even a one-day break. You can imagine how tired they were. As our transportation lines were getting longer and longer, it became extremely difficult to get supplies to the front. By that time, our troops had lost almost half their men because of combat or noncombat losses. They badly needed a rest and to resupply in order to be ready for the next battle [...] The problems were that our army's technology and equipment were so backward and that enemy air and mechanized forces tried so hard to save their troops.¹³³

As a consequence of these problems Mao sent the Chief of General Staff Xu Xianqian to Moscow to purchase weapons and urgently needed material again on May 25, 1951.¹³⁴

Because of the major setbacks in the beginning of 1951, Mao and the military leaders decided to change their offensive plans into a "piecemeal" warfare in order to avoid further defeats.¹³⁵ Therefore, "Chairman Mao sent a telegram instructing us that our mouths should not open too wide when fighting the American forces. We must adopt the tactic of 'eating sticky

¹²⁹ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 13.

¹³⁰ Roe, *The Dragon Strikes*, 76; Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 118.

¹³¹ Stöver, *Geschichte des Koreakriegs*, 151.

¹³² Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 124.

¹³³ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 34-36.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 136.

¹³⁵ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 154.

candy' - bite by bite."¹³⁶ By adopting a trench warfare in the summer and fall of 1951, "we began to carry out the chairman's tactic of 'biting sticky candy,' that is, concentrating available manpower and firepower, constructing covert offense launching positions, and then attacking and eliminating one small unit of the enemy forces [each time], generally a battalion unit."¹³⁷ In the first half of 1952, the battles in the Korean War came to a standstill, as China and North Korea had taken a defensive position and also the UN forces transformed their military planning to a defensive posture.¹³⁸ This standstill gradually led to willingness to negotiate on both sides.

This willingness to negotiate was already discussed and in 1951 and mentioned by Nie Rongzhen:

After our Fifth Campaign, the CCP Central Committee held a meeting in Beijing to discuss our next step. Most of the committee members considered it proper that our army should stop at the Thirty-eighth Parallel. They agreed that we should begin truce talks while continuing to fight so as to work toward a negotiated settlement. I concurred with the others on this idea. I believed that we had already achieved our political goal, i.e., that the enemy should be driven out of northern Korea.¹³⁹

Therefore, Mao and the Chinese government consented to solve the Korea question peacefully by announcing on February 14, 1952:

From last year July on the opposing sides hold armistice negotiations in Kaesong and Panmunjeom. The representatives of the People's Army of North Korea and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army give their best to make sure that the armistice negotiations will be successful. If the American side does not intentionally delay the negotiations, they should lead to an early success. From now on, the success of these negotiations is still subject to the sincerity of the US government to solve the Korea question peacefully. When the US government has the same sincerity as we have to solve the question peacefully concerning Korea, then the armistice negotiations can be successful.¹⁴⁰

The support and the intervention of China were essential for the progress of the war. The majority of the soldiers who were fighting on the North Korean side came from China and belonged to the People's Volunteers. Between October 19 and November 5, 1950, Beijing sent six divisions to North Korea and after April 1952, China had provided additional material on a

¹³⁶ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 36.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 36.

¹³⁸ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 216.

¹³⁹ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 46.

¹⁴⁰ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.2, 11.

large scale including 42 infantry divisions, four armored regiments and eight air force divisions.¹⁴¹ Mao's ground forces doubled almost weekly and reached the strength of 530,000 men in mid-1950. This number still continued to increase and one year later, the North Korean army was supported by 590,000 Chinese soldiers.¹⁴²

In the end, a total of 2.3 million fighting troops was sent to Korea and all in all the CCP's leadership provided 15 engineering regiments, ten railway engineering divisions, two public security divisions, three tank divisions, 12 air force divisions, 70 artillery divisions and 25 field corps.¹⁴³ However, Shu Guang Zhang states that the Soviet Union played the most essential role in assisting North Korea and consequently also in the Korean War, because they equipped not only North Korean soldiers, but also the Chinese People's Volunteers without actively intervening in the events of the war.¹⁴⁴ Bruce Cumings, however, claims that China's influence was superior in North Korea to the influence of the Soviet Union and that the North Korean army combined Chinese communist warfare and Soviet tactics, whereas Shen argues that it was impossible for China to fight a modern war entirely on its own. Therefore, the Chinese leadership relied on the Soviet assistance for both weaponry and military equipment.¹⁴⁵

Chinese and North Korean representatives, and US and UN delegates met at Keasong on July 10, 1951 in order to talk about a possible armistice and its conditions.¹⁴⁶ For Mao and Stalin, however, an armistice was totally unacceptable. After Stalin's death, the new Soviet leadership with Nikita Chruschtschow was willing to talk about a truce, whereas Mao maintained his reluctant attitude toward peace negotiations. This disagreement also contributed to the

¹⁴¹ Stöver, *Geschichte des Koreakriegs*, 75.

¹⁴² Ibid, 92.

¹⁴³ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 5; Zhai, "China's Decision to enter the Korean War: History Revisited," 165.

¹⁴⁴ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 45.

¹⁴⁵ Shen, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War*, 185; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War Vol.2*, 350.

¹⁴⁶ Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 213.

subsequent alienation between China and the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁷ The battles in Korea ended with the agreement on July 27, 1953 in which it was stated that:

A Military Demarcation Line shall be fixed and both sides shall withdraw two (2) kilometers from this line so as to establish a Demilitarized Zone between the opposing forces. A Demilitarized Zone shall be established as a buffer zone to prevent the occurrence of incidents which might lead to a resumption of hostilities. (...) Neither side shall execute any hostile act within, from, or against the Demilitarized Zone. (...) and civil administration and relief in that part of the Demilitarized Zone which is north of the Military Demarcation Line shall be the joint responsibility of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and the Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers.¹⁴⁸

The Chinese People's Volunteers, however, still stayed until 1958 in North Korea in order to provide reconstruction assistance in the post-war era.¹⁴⁹

2.5 Outcomes of the war

The Chinese intervention had essentially influenced the course of the Korea War, as it prevented the UN troops from fulfilling their objectives of unifying Korea. B.C. Koh and other scholars claim that the military conflict between North and South Korea was also the beginning of a deep Chinese-North Korean friendship based on shared ideological ties, because the North Korean leadership was very impressed by the Chinese military assistance during the Korean War and regarded China as their rescuer who guaranteed North Korea's survival.¹⁵⁰ China greatly contributed to the victories against the US troops and to the protection of North Korea as the Chinese government had sent several hundred thousand soldiers to Korea between mid-October 1950 and mid-January 1951. This huge concentration of military personnel in such a short time is remarkable and could also be used as evidence that the deployment in the war had already been planned and prepared over many months, even before the war began.¹⁵¹ Although China lost

¹⁴⁷ Stöver, *Geschichte des Koreakriegs*, 124.

¹⁴⁸ United Nations Command, *Armistice Agreement*, Vol. 1 (1953), 2-3.

¹⁴⁹ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 247.

¹⁵⁰ Koh, "North Korea and the Sino-Soviet Schism," 941.

¹⁵¹ Farrar-Hockley, "The China Factor in the Korean War," 4.

many soldiers, Mao considered the war to be a success and victory for the nation. In his opinion, the interference strengthened China's security and defense.¹⁵² The Korean War was officially celebrated by Mao and the CCP leadership as a great success and a victory over the threat of US imperialism. The delight of this victory was emphasized in a telegram of the Central Committee and the Military Commission on October 24, 1952:

Our volunteer troops cooperated with the People's Army since September, 18th and started a tactical counterattack on all fronts. Within one month, they destroyed and wounded more than 30,000 enemy soldiers and gained important victories. The Central Committee and the Military Commission express warm congratulations to you as well as to all commanders and soldiers.¹⁵³

Peng Dehuai was also strongly convinced that the outcome of the Korean War was very successful for China, as he said: "Our success reflected the integrity of our revolutionary army's superior political and military qualities and created favorable conditions for our protracted positional warfare in Korea."¹⁵⁴ In a speech of Mao Zedong on the 24th conference of the Central People's Government Committee in 1953, Mao explained the reasons of the successful outcome of the war for China. In his opinion, the mindset of the soldiers played an essential role in defeating the US troops. In contrast to American soldiers, the Chinese soldiers were quick-witted, brave, with a lot of devotion and were not afraid to die for their country in the battlefield, whereas American soldiers were rigid and not solid. As a result of this attitude, China's military could establish an impenetrable defense and by gaining experience during the battles, every soldier was able to grow stronger and develop himself further. Mao also quoted political and economic factors as reasons for the successful outcome of the war. The hostile parties had to deal with great contradictions between each other which hindered them from effectively fighting

¹⁵² Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 248.

¹⁵³ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.2, 75.

¹⁵⁴ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 37.

together and their expenses in the beginning months of the war were too high. In Mao's eyes, all these reasons allowed China to celebrate a great victory in the end.¹⁵⁵

Furthermore, China proved that it could assert its position among other Asian nations. The successful deployment in Korea also influenced the events in Vietnam, as Ho Chi Minh felt strengthened by China's victory and reinforced his movement against the French occupation in Indochina. He was supported by Chinese military advisors who were sent to Vietnam between fall of 1953 and spring of 1954.¹⁵⁶

However, the war also claimed its victims. China's entry into the war took place without sufficient air cover which should have been provided by the Soviet Union. As a consequence, American air strikes caused devastating losses among China's troops until the end of November 1950, when the promised Soviet air cover was approved by Stalin.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the Chinese People's Volunteers lost a total of 390,000 soldiers. These include 148,400 dead, 21,000 captured and 4,000 missing soldiers. Furthermore, the People's Republic of China had spent more than 6.2 billion Renminbi for its war in Korea.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.1, 173-174.

¹⁵⁶ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 249.

¹⁵⁷ Goncharov and Lewis, *Uncertain Partners*, 199.

¹⁵⁸ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 247.

3. China's involvement in the Vietnam War

In the following section, China's role during the Vietnam War will be illustrated by briefly elaborating its significance for the Vietnamese in the First Indochina War and its attitude towards Vietnamese reunification as a participant at the Geneva Conference. After that the thesis will continue with the examination of China's possible motivations to become involved in a conflict between North Vietnam and the United States and will end with Chinese supportive measures during 1964-1975.

The early origin of the Vietnam War can be traced back to the 19th century when the French occupied Indochina and imposed their colonial rule on Vietnam. As a consequence national resistance to this colonial rule and its masters was formed. During World War II, however, Vietnam was occupied by Japan and became a Japanese colony between 1941 and 1945. Under these circumstances, the national resistance movement remained and was now not only directed against French colonialism, but also against Japanese imperialism. In 1941, the "League for the Independence of Vietnam", also known as the Viet Minh, was founded by Ho Chi Minh in order to fight for an independent Vietnam.

After World War II and the defeat of Japan, France was determined to reclaim Vietnam as its colony and this wish eventually resulted in the outbreak of the First Indochina War between France and the Viet Minh. China had already played an essential role in the First Indochina War, as it provided military advisors and weapons to Ho Chi Minh and his troops. In 1950, Mao and Liu Shaoqi agreed that Vietnam needed China's support in its fight of independence against France. By sharing experiences, advisors and sending military and economic assistance, the Chinese leadership provided essential aid during the First Indochina

War.¹ After the Korean War, however, the situation changed and Zhou Enlai had to refuse further assistance to Ho Chi Minh because of China's high losses in the war. At that time, China had to face numerous domestic problems, such as economic reconstruction and the recovery from the Korean War. Therefore, the government was not in a position to support Vietnam in their fight for independence.²

In 1954, the First Indochina War ended with the defeat of the French troops and marked also the end of French colonial rule in Indochina. The subsequent Geneva Conference confirmed the independence of Vietnam, but also resulted in the division of the country, whereupon the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under the communist government of Ho Chi Minh was established in the North and the Republic of Vietnam under the Western-oriented leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem was set up in the South.

The Vietnam War, or Second Indochina War, started in 1964 with the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, when soldiers of the North Vietnamese navy ostensibly opened fire on American warships. As a consequence, US president Johnson immediately ordered military intervention to support South Vietnam. The American intervention in Vietnam, however, also prompted China to participate in this war as an ally of North Vietnam. Although the United States fought a systematic air war against North Vietnam and deployed a large amount of ground forces in the South, the US government realized that the war could not be won. Without a prospect of a successful outcome of the war, the United States was willing to negotiate. In 1969, peace negotiations in Paris began and the final armistice agreement was signed four years later in 1973 which, however, did not mean the end of the conflict between North and South Vietnam, but the withdrawal of all American forces. The war in Vietnam continued after the Paris Peace Accords

¹ Zhang, "'Resist America': China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," 196.

² Chen, "China's involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 357.

and in 1975, Saigon was successfully seized by the North Vietnamese troops. South Vietnam had to unconditionally surrender and Vietnam was reunited one year later as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Similar to the Korean War, China's assistance was also extremely crucial in the case of Vietnam. Another communist ally in Asia asked China for help in its fight against US troops more than ten years after Korea and the Chinese government was willing to provide substantial aid. In Vietnam, however, China's intervention and its nature of support differed from their military deployment in Korea, which will be illustrated in the following.

3.1 China at the Geneva Conference in 1954

The Geneva Conference, which began on April 26, 1954, marked an important point in the Vietnamese independence movement and was initiated by the Soviet Union in order to bring an end to the military confrontations between France and the Viet Minh and to reduce international tensions after the Korean War.³ The purpose of this conference was the negotiation of the armistice between France and its former colony Vietnam; however, the participants not only included France and its former colonies Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, but also Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and China.⁴ As a result of the resolutions passed during this conference, Vietnam was divided at the 17th parallel and the participants also determined the retreat of the Viet Minh to North Vietnam and the withdrawal of the French troops until July 1956. Furthermore, general elections, which would reunite the nation under one government again, were to be held in the same month. In addition, France had to declare the

³ Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided," 80.

⁴ Marc Frey, *Geschichte des Vietnamkriegs- Die Tragödie in Asien und das Ende des amerikanischen Traums* [The History of the Vietnam War: A Tragedy in Asia and the End of the American Dream], (München: C.H. Beck, 2010), 36.

independence of Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.⁵ As the Geneva Accords determined the division of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese party leadership were reluctant to sign the agreement. Zhou Enlai, however, finally convinced them to sign the Final Declaration of the conference in order to ensure a peaceful environment for China's reconstruction in Asia, although the CCP's leadership did not believe in a possible reunification by elections.⁶ China needed this restored peace in Southeast, as it had to deal with domestic problems such as the introduction of the first Five- Year Plan and the liberation of Taiwan. Therefore, the participation in the Geneva Conference was very essential for China.⁷ The Chinese delegation of the newly founded People's Republic could also use the conference for representing its influential status as a power among other nations and to increase its reputation after the Korean War.⁸ Although North Vietnam supported the idea of a reunification with the South, the Chinese leadership was afraid that the United States would intervene in Indochina after the conquest of South Vietnam.⁹ Thus, Mao and other leaders suggested that North Vietnam should rather concern itself with the Socialist revolution and the reconstruction of the North, instead of focusing on reunification.¹⁰ China believed that the Vietnamese Communists should make sure that the revolutionary achievements they had reached in North Vietnam would be consolidated by combining the military struggle with political struggle.¹¹ This attitude of China, however, changed in the early 1960s, because the Chinese leaders had to admit that they rather favored a reunited Vietnam than

⁵ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 62.

⁶ Yang, "Mao Zedong and the Indochina Wars," 62.

⁷ Jian Chen, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," In *Mao's China and the Cold War*, edited by Jian Chen (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 206.

⁸ Charles McGregor, *The Sino- Vietnamese Relationship and the Soviet Union* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1988), 7.

⁹ McGregor, *The Sino- Vietnamese Relationship and the Soviet Union*, 9.

¹⁰ Chen, "China's involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 358.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 206.

a South Vietnam with a strong military presence of the United States.¹² The Chinese government wanted to prevent increasing influence of the United States in Southeast Asia, as they still remembered the military confrontations of the Korean War and their consequences.¹³ Therefore, China adopted a policy of peaceful coexistence in hopes of undermining the connection between the USA and the non- communist countries of Southeast Asia.¹⁴

After the Geneva Accords, North Vietnam became primarily concerned with national reunification and the enforcement of a communist domination in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the leadership of the Vietnamese Communists consulted China in order to discuss which strategy should be applied to unify Vietnam.¹⁵ China, however, wanted to avoid any further intervention of the United States in Asia and recommended that the North Vietnamese wait for some time, collect strength and take advantage of the right opportunity to fight for a reunited Vietnam.¹⁶

After the Geneva Conference the Chinese government assured Ho Chi Minh of providing assistance in implementing the agreement in the following telegram on July 23, 1954:

(...) At the Geneva Conference the delegation from the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam represented the hopes for peace of the Vietnamese people who had struggled heroically for national independence and freedom and had already attained glorious victories, and worked hard for the restoration of the peace of Indochina, and finally achieved an agreement. This is yet another great victory for the Vietnamese people. This victory is helpful in promoting collective peace and security in Asia and is beneficial to furthering the relaxation of the tension in the international situation. All the people of China will strive together with the people of Viet Nam to assure and attain the thorough implementation of the Agreement and to preserve and consolidate the peace and security of Asia and the world.¹⁷

¹² McGregor, *The Sino- Vietnamese Relationship and the Soviet Union*, 9.

¹³ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 53-54.

¹⁴ Gilks, *The Breakdown of the Sino- Vietnamese Alliance, 1970-1979*, 19.

¹⁵ Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, 13.

¹⁶ Gilks, *The Breakdown of the Sino- Vietnamese Alliance, 1970-1979*, 17; Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, 13.

¹⁷ Mao, Zedong, *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976*, Vol. 1 (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 463.

3.2 China's reasons to enter the war

The consequences of the Korean War such as the high number of losses restrained China from actively participating in the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, they did not restrain them from providing service teams and supplying weapons to North Vietnam. What were China's reasons and motives for supporting yet another country that was at war with the United States?

After the First Indochina War, China had already supported North Vietnam with economic aid, as Vietnam was in a very desolate condition after the military confrontations with France. In particular, the economy had to be restored, because North Vietnam seriously suffered from the French attacks. Numerous streets were impassable and many channels and dikes were destroyed and had to be rebuilt.¹⁸ Thus, North Vietnam was dependent on China's help in the country's reconstruction. Immediately after the Geneva Conference in 1954, China began to provide economic assistance and supply everyday goods in order to stabilize the markets in the cities and to prevent a widespread famine. Furthermore, China assisted North Vietnam to revitalize light industries and the production of handicrafts. As the North Vietnamese infrastructure was strongly damaged after the First Indochina War, China sent numerous laborers and technicians to North Vietnam who helped in the restoration of roads, highways, essential bridges and ports. In addition, Chinese advisory groups were sent to North Vietnam in order to train Vietnamese technicians and laborers.¹⁹

These supporting measures were approved by Mao in order to prevent an American invasion in China, as North Vietnam functioned as a buffer state between China and South Vietnam as CCP leaders still considered the United States to be a threat to China's national security. In 1964, however, the American military presence in South Vietnam increased and

¹⁸ Frey, *Geschichte des Vietnamkriegs*, 41.

¹⁹ Zhang, "Beijing's Aid to Hanoi and the United States," 265.

further alarmed the CCP leadership. Zhai states that Mao believed the United States intended to occupy Taiwan and to make South Vietnam and South Korea into its colonies by expanding their military presence.²⁰ Thus, Mao decided to take further precautionary measures against this threat by preparing the Chinese people for war and supporting North Vietnam in their military struggle, as he regarded military aid as the only way of opposing the containment of China by the United States.²¹

Another crucial argument mentioned by Zhai was Mao's commitment to national liberation movements all around the world. In Mao's eyes, all 3rd World countries which fought for their national liberation were potential allies in his fight against imperialism. Furthermore he regarded China as the leader of all these 3rd World countries in their struggle for independence, as China had already experienced a successful revolution and therefore, functioned as a model for all liberation movements in Asia, Latin America and Africa.²² As early as mid-1949, Mao determined that Chinese foreign policy would be characterized by the fight against imperialism and the cooperation with the Soviet Union.²³ These guidelines were emphasized in a statement by Foreign Minister Chen Yi issued in Beijing on September 20, 1958:

Should the U.S. aggressors, despite the repeated warnings of the Chinese people and the firm opposition of the people of the world, dare to impose war on us, our 600 million people, united as one, will certainly spare no sacrifice and will, under the sacred banner of defending our great motherland, fight against aggression, fight for the preservation of our sovereignty and territorial integrity, and fight for the safe-guarding of peace in the Far East and the world! Ours is a just struggle. With the help of the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union and with the sympathy and support of all the peace-loving countries and people of Asia, Africa and the rest of the world, we will certainly win complete victory.²⁴

²⁰ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 141.

²¹ Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided: China, the Soviet Union, and the Vietnam Wars," 84; Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 140.

²² Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 146-147.

²³ Yang, "Mao Zedong and the Indochina Wars," 63.

²⁴ Peng, *Message of Peng Teh-huai, Minister of National Defence, to Compatriots in Taiwan. Order of the Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China [1 A.m., October 13, 1958]. Order of the Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China*, 3.

Therefore, the Chinese government openly promoted the provision of aid to all Southeast Asian people who were struggling against US imperialism and viewed their support of North Vietnam as a duty in order to carry out an Asia-wide socialist revolution that would be followed by the worldwide socialist revolution.²⁵ Thus, Mao said in 1963:

In their just patriotic struggle against U.S. imperialism and the Diem clique the people of southern Vietnam have won major victories both politically and militarily. We the Chinese people firmly support their just struggle. I am convinced that through struggle they will attain the goal of liberating the southern part of Vietnam and contribute to the peaceful reunification of their fatherland. It is my hope that the working class, the revolutionary people and progressives throughout the world will all stand by the people of southern Vietnam and, in response to President Ho Chi Minh's call, support the just struggle of the heroic people of southern Vietnam and oppose aggression and oppression by the counter-revolutionary U.S.-Diem clique, and thus help the people there save themselves from slaughter and achieve complete liberation.²⁶

Zhai and many other scholars argue that another reason for China to assist North Vietnam in the war was the increasing Chinese criticism of Soviet revisionism. In the years following the foundation of the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union under the leadership of Stalin supported China in the construction of centrally planned economy. After the death of Stalin, however, the ties between China and Soviet Union suffered from the change of leadership and the struggle between Nikita Chruschtschow, Stalin's successor and Mao Zedong for the leadership claim of the communist movement led to a split between the parties.²⁷ China's leaders developed their own idea about the way to Socialism and began to dissociate themselves from the Soviet Union. Xiaoming Zhang claims that this increasing competition for the leadership of the communist movement also played a part in contributing to China's reasons to intervene in the Vietnam War, as each rival party needed supporters in this ideological dispute and tried to win

²⁵ Zhang, "Resist America": China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," 198; Xiaoming Zhang, "The Vietnam War, 1964- 1969: A Chinese Perspective," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 60, No.4 (1996):735.

²⁶ Mao, Zedong, "Statement opposing aggression against Southern- Vietnam and slaughter of its people by the US- Ngo Dinh Diem Clique," *In People of the World , Unite and Defeat the U.S. Aggressors* (Peking: Foreign Language Press), 6.

²⁷ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 148.

the fellowship of North Vietnam.²⁸ As a result, Chinese foreign policy regarding North Vietnam and the war was of great strategic significance.²⁹ Supporting North Vietnam in their war would allow China to gain more influence within the communist bloc, to separate itself from the Soviet Union and to restrict the growing Soviet influence in Vietnam.³⁰

In addition, Zhai mentions that Mao was concerned with the development of the Chinese revolution and the question of a potential successor in the first half of the 1960s. He believed that China could fall into the hands of revisionists who follow the leadership given by the Soviet Union after his death. However, Mao realized that he could take advantage of the US aggression in Vietnam in order to prevent a takeover by Soviet-like revisionists by reinforcing anti-imperialist feelings and mobilizing the population against revisionists within China, which also served as the preparation for the Cultural Revolution.³¹ This was another reason which prompted Mao to provide military aid to North Vietnam during the war.

3.3 China's support during the Second Indochina War

In the summer of 1955, the Chinese government decided to send their military advisors in North Vietnam back to China. However, in order to further support North Vietnam in their modernization process, military specialists were ordered to replace the former advisors.³² In 1956, China and North Vietnam signed an agreement which stated that China would also assist North Vietnam in recovering the economy by sending additional specialists which were trained in miscellaneous fields.³³ However, the Chinese government did not encourage Ho Chi Minh to use

²⁸ Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided: China, the Soviet Union, and the Vietnam Wars," 81- 83.

²⁹ Zhang, "Beijing's Aid to Hanoi and the United States," 268.

³⁰ Ibid, 262.

³¹ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 151-152.

³² Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, 13.

³³ Ibid, 22.

violence to reunite Vietnam. On September 25, 1956, China's vice premier Chen Yi reinforced this attitude against military confrontations in his report on foreign policy in which he stated that China would reject all kinds of conflicts, as it needed a peaceful environment in its efforts to become a socialist, flourishing and industrialized nation. This international peace would be ensured through the solidarity and cooperation amongst the nations of the socialist camp.³⁴ This attitude of China had already been reinforced by Mao in a talk with representatives of Britain's Labor Party two years earlier on August 24, 1954:

In the past we had problems with the Japanese, now we have problems with the Americans. Between us and the United States there is an ocean, called the Pacific Ocean, but the Pacific Ocean is not pacific at all. (...) China is an agricultural country. We will need several decades to change into an industrialized country and we also need assistance to do so in every field. At first, we need a peaceful environment. To constantly fight wars is not a good method and to train many soldiers can impede the economic development. If everyone here agrees with my words, then we all should continue to create a peaceful international environment. (...) This also includes the United States, as I hope that the United States will also adopt a peaceful policy of co-existence. If such a big country as the United States does not want peace, we must not stay calm; everyone should also not stay calm.³⁵

China agreed to establish and maintain diplomatic relations with any government in the world, as long as they adhere to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.³⁶ These Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were determined in 1954 between China and India and consisted of: “mutual respect of each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence.”³⁷ As Mao and other CCP leaders opposed a military unification with South Vietnam, they tried to further convince North Vietnam to call for a dialogue between the two parts.³⁸ In 1958, Ho Chi Minh visited China and met with Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping in order to talk about prospective measures and the way China could help North Vietnam in their

³⁴ Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, 38-39.

³⁵ Mao, *Jian guo yi lai Mao Zedong jun shi wen gao*, Vol.2, 230.

³⁶ Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, 38-39.

³⁷ United Nations, *Agreement between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India* (signed on 29 April 1954) No. 4307, Vol. 299, 70.

³⁸ Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, 77.

fight against the United States and a possible unification with South Vietnam. China's position and its reluctant attitude towards the conquest of the South, however, did not change, as they still considered the realization and implementation of the socialist revolution in North Vietnam as the most fundamental task.³⁹ Nevertheless, China was willing to train and equip North Vietnamese soldiers after these meetings in 1958. In addition, the Chinese government provided 50 000 Soviet-designed AK-47 assault rifles in order to strengthen North Vietnam's defense in case of an American attack.⁴⁰ One year later, China's attitude towards a Vietnamese reunification changed. In August 1959, Ho Chi Minh was assured that the Chinese government would provide further military aid for the communist struggle in South Vietnam, as Mao decided that the fight against imperialism would be more effective than peaceful negotiations.⁴¹ As a consequence, the CCP leaders promised Ho Chi Minh after his request to send a sufficient amount of weapons to equip 230 battalions when he visited China again in 1962 and in summer of the same year the Chinese supply of 90,000 guns of all types arrived in North Vietnam.⁴² In late 1962 and early 1963, the Chinese policy toward Vietnam became more radical.⁴³ The Vietnamese Communists also began to be concerned about a possible US invasion in North Vietnam, as the United States intensified their military intervention and their involvement between 1963 and 1964.⁴⁴ In order to face this American threat, a meeting between Zhou Enlai and leaders of the Vietnam Workers Party, the Lao People's Party and the Indonesian Communist Party was convened in 1963. At this meeting, Zhou Enlai emphasized the idea of a mutual anti-feudalist, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist revolution in Southeast Asia. In order to realize this revolution, he proposed the

³⁹ Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, 86.

⁴⁰ Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided: China, the Soviet Union, and the Vietnam Wars," 83.

⁴¹ Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, 130.

⁴² Zhang, "'Resist America': China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," 197; Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, 229.

⁴³ Chen, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 206.

⁴⁴ Zhang, "'Resist America': China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," 198.

implementation of four necessary steps. In the beginning, the mobilization of the masses and the expansion of the united communist front were essential, followed by the armed struggle in the countryside and the establishment of base areas. The third step consisted of the strengthening of the Communist Party leadership. After all these measures were taken in each country, it would be important to increase contact with other communist parties and assist each of these parties in their struggle against imperialism and capitalism. As the fear of a US attack increased, the Chinese government agreed in December 1963 to send combat troops to North Vietnam if US troops crossed the 17th parallel.⁴⁵ This agreement was approved again in July 1964, when the most important meeting before the escalation of the Vietnam War was held. At this meeting, communist representatives of China, Vietnam and Laos came together in Hanoi and declared their absolute loyalty to North Vietnam in the fight against US aggression by promising to send troops.⁴⁶

When North Vietnamese patrol boats started attacking a US destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin in the afternoon of August 2, 1964, the White House decided to take military action against North Vietnam. As a consequence, President Johnson ordered air strikes against North Vietnamese naval bases. The Gulf of Tonkin incident also contributed to closer consultations between the Chinese and North Vietnamese Communists about a possible military cooperation against the US forces. Furthermore, Mao knew how to benefit from the escalation of the Vietnam War by using the anti-imperialist propaganda to further radicalize China's politics and its social life. As a result, numerous mass demonstrations and rallies against the US aggression in Vietnam

⁴⁵ Qiang Zhai, "Reassessing China's Role in the Vietnam War: Some Mysteries Explored," In *China and the United States: A New Cold War History*, edited by Xiaobing Li and Hongshan Li (New York: Univ. Press of America, 1998) 102.

⁴⁶ Zhang, "'Resist America': China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," 198.

were organized all over China.⁴⁷ In addition, the Chinese government decided to increase the military preparations in South China and the military assistance to North Vietnam. The Central Military Committee instructed the military regions, air force and naval units in Kunming and Guangzhou to prepare for combat readiness.⁴⁸ In mid-August 1964, four air divisions and one anti-aircraft division were dispatched near the Sino-Vietnamese border. The Chinese strategy was based on three fundamental principles. China and North Vietnam agreed on sending Chinese military aid if American ground forces invaded North Vietnamese territory.

Furthermore, China repeatedly signaled its combat readiness towards the United States in order to prevent the expansion of the war to Chinese territory, as China's leadership planned to avoid a direct military confrontation with the United States for as long as possible. Thus, China focused on providing logistical support and assistance in strengthening the North Vietnamese defense.⁴⁹ Further measures were taken in August 1964 when China sent approximately 15 MIG-15 and MIG-17 jets to North Vietnam and declared itself to be willing to train North Vietnamese pilots. In order to strengthen China's defense, two additional military airfields were built in Guangxi and an inspection team was ordered to investigate the conditions in North Vietnam in case of a possible deployment of support troops. As Mao and other CCP leaders were extremely concerned about a direct attack on China, they suggested the construction of defensive works along the coastal regions to the North Vietnamese leadership and Mao even ordered the formation of three defensive lines around the Chinese capital Beijing and the port city Tianjin.⁵⁰

In the end of 1964, China and North Vietnam signed a military agreement for the deployment of 300,000 Chinese troops to North Vietnam. This agreement meant the beginning

⁴⁷ Chen, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 212-214.

⁴⁸ Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided: China, the Soviet Union, and the Vietnam Wars," 87.

⁴⁹ Chen, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 364-366.

⁵⁰ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 132-133; Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided: China, the Soviet Union, and the Vietnam Wars," 85.

of China's direct involvement in the Vietnam War.⁵¹ In February 1965, the number of American air strikes against North Vietnam increased and the war escalated with the operation "Rolling Thunder" which was the first large air offensive against the North. As a Chinese reaction, Zhou Enlai asked the Pakistani president during a visit on April 2, 1965 to transmit a 4-point- message to the American president Johnson. The Pakistani president, however, never delivered Zhou Enlai's message to the US government.⁵² In this message, the Chinese government made clear that China would not provoke a war with the United States. Furthermore, China would honor its international commitment of supporting national liberation movements, but was also prepared for any military confrontation. Thus, China would be determined to fight a war in case of an American attack on the Chinese mainland. In this conversation Zhou Enlai also stated:

If the United States imposes a war on the Chinese people, they will resist to the end. There is no other way out. (...) Generally speaking, these three sentences are: First, China won't take the initiative to provoke a war against the United States. Second, the Chinese people keep to their words. Third, China has already prepared.⁵³

Due to these devastating air strikes, Hanoi had to turn to Beijing again and ask for help. Thus, Le Duan and Vo Nguyen Giap visited China in early April to request the provision of Chinese troops.⁵⁴ At a meeting with Liu Shaoqi on April 8, 1965, Le Duan expressed the North Vietnamese hope for China's willingness to send voluntary pilots, engineers and military troops to North Vietnam so that the own troops could fight in the South.⁵⁵ In response, the Chinese government signed several agreements in which they approved sending support troops to North Vietnam. Zhou Enlai, however, made it clear that these Chinese support troops should only be responsible for road repair and road construction. In order to organize the support to North Vietnam, the "Central Committee- State Council Aid Vietnam Work Team" was established and

⁵¹ Yang, "Mao Zedong and the Indochina Wars," 78.

⁵² Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 138.

⁵³ Zhou, *Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan*, 443.

⁵⁴ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 133.

⁵⁵ Path, "Ha Noi's Responses to Beijing's Renewed Enthusiasm to Aid North Vietnam, 1970- 1972," 101.

China agreed with North Vietnam that they would only actively intervene with the use of ground forces if the United States sent their own ground forces to directly attack the North. In the current situation, however, China declared that North Vietnam had to fight the war by itself.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the Chinese support troops would be under the command of the Vietnam People's Army and receive orders only from North Vietnam.⁵⁷ Thus, the CCP Central Committee issued a directive to the party's county and military regimental organizations on April 14, 1965 to increase their combat readiness in order to be prepared for a joint fight against the US imperialists with the Vietnamese people.⁵⁸ On May 30, 1965 China signed another formal agreement in which they promised to send engineering troops to reconstruct North Vietnamese roads and connect them to the Chinese road system in order to improve transportation routes.⁵⁹ Beginning in June 1965, the Chinese government supplied North Vietnam with additional ground-to-air missiles and antiaircraft artillery. Furthermore, supplementary support troops consisting of railroad, engineering, mine sweeping and logistic units, crossed the border.⁶⁰ The antiaircraft artillery was ordered to be responsible for the air defense of strategically important targets north of the 21st parallel and the remaining troops had to build up defense works in the delta regions of the Red River and along the Northeast coast. In addition, their task was to keep two rail supply lines between China and the North Vietnamese capital Hanoi running.⁶¹ The first Chinese unit that was sent to North Vietnam was named "Corps of the Chinese Rear Services" and was divided into three special divisions.⁶² The coordination of these units and the

⁵⁶ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 134-135.

⁵⁷ Zhang, "'Resist America': China's Role in the Korean and Vietnam Wars," 204.

⁵⁸ Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided: China, the Soviet Union, and the Vietnam Wars," 87.

⁵⁹ Chen, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 223.

⁶⁰ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 135.

⁶¹ Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided: China, the Soviet Union, and the Vietnam Wars," 87.

⁶² Zhang, "The Vietnam War, 1964- 1969: A Chinese Perspective," 748.

transportation of materials to North Vietnam were conducted by a special leadership group headed by Luo Ruiqing.⁶³

Furthermore, the establishment of two authorities, which were exclusively responsible for the policies concerning Vietnam, was commanded in order to effectively use the delivered materials to North Vietnam. The first authority was the “Leading Group on Vietnamese Affairs” which should define the central strategy of the Chinese leadership, make decisions and suggestions about the actions in Vietnam and to investigate and decide as to whether and to what degree the support to North Vietnam was necessary. The second authority was named “Group in Charge of Supporting Vietnam under the Central Committee and the State Council” and its task was the coordination of the party decisions and state council concerning Vietnam.⁶⁴ Mao gave military aid to North Vietnam the highest priority⁶⁵ and Ho Chi Minh also placed great hopes in Beijing’s support.⁶⁶ In the end of 1965, Zhou Enlai expressed China’s attitude in a conversation with the Secretary-General of the French Foreign Ministry Jean Chauvel:

We know that our Vietnamese friends think that it is not a good time to negotiate right now. Especially, they think that the American fraud of their so-called peace talks has to be exposed. Our attitude is clear and will also be the same in the future: we will support the Vietnamese position. (...) If the United States decides to expand the war to China, we will not hesitate to resolutely resist at all costs. If we don’t have this kind of determination, how could we support Vietnam, how could we oppose the American aggression and their war policy, and how could we shatter their global war strategy? (...) The United States let the Vietnam War escalate. Thus, the responsibility lies with the United States and not with other people. We are a socialist and also a neighboring country. We not only mentally support the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, but we also offer materialist help which is totally necessary.⁶⁷

The deployment of service troops were of great importance for the Chinese government, as their task was to serve as role models for the Vietnamese soldiers and to represent China as an example of proletarian internationalism. The Chinese soldiers were also ordered to assist in the

⁶³ Zhai, “An Uneasy Relationship,” 114.

⁶⁴ Chen, “China’s Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969,” 370.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 377.

⁶⁶ Zhang, “The Vietnam War, 1964- 1969: A Chinese Perspective,” 736.

⁶⁷ Zhou, *Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan*, 449-457.

training of North Vietnamese soldiers in order to prepare them to fight a war against the United States.⁶⁸

Beijing supplied large quantities of small weapons, ammunition and combat aircraft. In addition, North Vietnamese pilots were trained by Chinese pilots in conducting air strikes. China's government also approved the usage of Chinese landing fields by the North Vietnamese air force. These landing fields, however, were not used as bases for attacking US aircraft.⁶⁹ Apart from the military and logistical support, China also provided a large amount of everyday objects which were needed by the common population and the North Vietnamese army, such as uniforms, shoes, cigarettes, table tennis balls, hygiene products or groceries.⁷⁰ In order to ensure the supply of all this material even to South Vietnam, a secret coastal transportation line was established by constructing a concealed harbor on Hainan Island, as a significant amount of China's materials were directly supplied to the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam. Mao also ordered that all aid packages which were sent to South Vietnam "must be easy to use, carry, disguise, and transport", because most of it was hand-carried by women.⁷¹ Another measure to improve the required deliveries to North Vietnam was the formation of partner relationships between China's southern provinces Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan and Hunan and the North Vietnamese provinces along the Sino- Vietnamese border. These partner relationships should ensure the adequate supply of goods for daily use, but also be a part of the production control and planning.⁷²

In terms of military tactics, Mao and other CCP leaders drew a lesson from their experiences in the Korean War, as a rotation strategy for anti-aircraft artillery troops was

⁶⁸ Chen, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 380.

⁶⁹ Gilks, *The Breakdown of the Sino- Vietnamese Alliance, 1970-1979*, 26-27.

⁷⁰ Chen, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 378.

⁷¹ Zhai, "An Uneasy Relationship," 114; Zhang, "Beijing's Aid to Hanoi and the United States," 269.

⁷² Zhang, "Beijing's Aid to Hanoi and the United States," 272.

invented which proposes the deployment of one unit for six months and a following replacement of this unit. These units were not all sent to Vietnam at the same time, but entered in eight separate stages and consisted of two antiaircraft artillery divisions and one regiment in order to defend two essential railroad lines between Hanoi, Youyiguan and Lao Cai and to provide cover for the engineering troops.⁷³ Between June 1965 and March 1968, over 320,000 Chinese troops were situated in North Vietnam.⁷⁴ The Chinese support and the supply of military equipment strongly declined in 1968, however, as the relations between China and North Vietnam deteriorated.⁷⁵ The majority of Chinese troops left North Vietnam in 1969. In the same year, Beijing decided to reduce its economic and military aid to the lowest level and in July 1970, all Chinese troops were withdrawn from North Vietnam.⁷⁶

The tensions between Beijing and Hanoi had already emerged in the beginning of the Chinese intervention in the Vietnam War.⁷⁷ The Chinese leadership and the North Vietnamese leadership often disagreed on important war decisions, such as the conduct of war and these disputes negatively affected Sino- Vietnamese relations.⁷⁸ The North Vietnamese leadership also tried to reduce the Chinese influence by restraining the contact between the Chinese troops and the local population. At the time when the first service troops were sent, the North Vietnamese people mainly expressed distrust. Qiang Zhai sees the memory of the past when Vietnam was repeatedly subject to the domination of Imperial China as the cause for this distrust. These

⁷³ Chen, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 225-226.

⁷⁴ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 135.

⁷⁵ Zhai, "An Uneasy Relationship," 124.

⁷⁶ Path, "Ha Noi's Responses to Beijing's Renewed Enthusiasm to Aid North Vietnam, 1970- 1972," 103; Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 179.

⁷⁷ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 152.

⁷⁸ Chen, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 380.

memories evoked feelings of skepticism and suspicion within the North Vietnamese population toward the Chinese aid workers.⁷⁹

Chen argues that another problem for Beijing was Hanoi's rejection of the Chinese claim to leadership in the region and the ideological example of Mao Zedong. Furthermore, the CCP leadership did not approve of Hanoi taking independent decisions without informing the Chinese government. In addition, the ameliorated relations between North Vietnam and the Soviet Union, which started developing in the mid- 1960s, contributed to a further alienation between Beijing and Hanoi.⁸⁰ This alienation further increased through two important events, the Cultural Revolution, which started in 1966, and the Prague Spring, which led to the invasion of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia and the suppression of the revolt. This suppression of the Prague Spring was regarded by North Vietnam with favor, whereas China condemned the Soviet intervention and these different opinions resulted in a stronger North Vietnamese orientation towards the Soviet Union.⁸¹ The Cultural Revolution, whose influence had also spread from China to parts of North Vietnam, strained the Sino- North Vietnamese relations as well. The North Vietnamese population feared the radical behavior of the Chinese cadres and was reminded of China's conquests of the past.⁸²

Another disagreement which affected the relationship between China and North Vietnam was the attitude towards negotiations to end the war. Hanoi had already shown interest in negotiations with the United States early in the war. Mao and his CCP leaders, however, strongly opposed any form of peace negotiations at that time, as Mao still believed in the national liberation movement. If he approved peace talks in this early stage of the war, he could not

⁷⁹ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 152.

⁸⁰ Chen, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," 380-382.

⁸¹ McGregor, *The Sino- Vietnamese Relationship and the Soviet Union*, 11.

⁸² Path, "Ha Noi's Responses to Beijing's Renewed Enthusiasm to Aid North Vietnam, 1970- 1972," 120.

uphold China's international position as the worldwide leader of these movements. Furthermore, Mao wanted to restrict the Soviet impact in Southeast Asia. He assumed that peace talks on Vietnam could be dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union and he wanted to avoid China's isolation at these conferences and a decreasing influence in Southeast Asia. Thus, it is not surprising that Mao and other Chinese leaders used every opportunity to oppose the idea of peace talks between the United States and the Soviet Union in the years 1966 and 1967.⁸³ In addition, the Chinese government tried to force North Vietnam to protract the war against the US troops by declaring that imperialism and revisionism had to be defeated.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the North Vietnamese government was not easily convinced and opened peace talks with the United States in 1968.

Shortly before these peace talks began, the North Vietnamese government ordered the launching of the "Tet Offensive" in January 1968. The goal of this offensive was to completely repulse the American troops and to establish a coalition government of a united Vietnam under the command of the Vietcong.⁸⁵ Zhai also sees in the Tet Offensive an expression of the different disagreements between Beijing and Hanoi, because it opposed Mao's concept of a protracted people's war. In Mao's opinion, a people's war consisted of three stages in which a strategic defense was developed in order to face the strategic offensive of the reactionary forces, followed by a strategic equilibrium in order to prepare for the counteroffensive and these steps would ultimately result in a successful attack against the hostile reactionary forces. All these struggles took place in the countryside and could be brought into the cities after the strategic offensive against the enemy. The Tet Offensive, however, did not follow the people's war model of Mao, as the offensive had already focused on the urban areas long before they reached the last stage.

⁸³ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 157;166-167.

⁸⁴ Yang, "Mao Zedong and the Indochina Wars," 83.

⁸⁵ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 175-176.

Thus, the way of the Tet Offensive challenged the idea of the revolutionary forces as the mass base of the struggle against imperialism, and thereby undermined Mao's idea of a protracted people's war.⁸⁶ Furthermore, it also demonstrated China's low influence on North Vietnamese decision-making concerning war strategies. As a consequence of the inefficient Tet Offensive, the Paris peace talks were opened in November 1968, resulting in the complete withdrawal of Chinese anti-aircraft artillery units in March 1969, as Beijing could not accept Hanoi's willingness to negotiate.⁸⁷

During the war, the relations between China and the United States, however, further improved. This rapprochement had already been perceptible in 1969, as China changed its attitude and viewed the Soviet Union as the major threat.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the negotiations about the ending of the war between China and the United States were not resumed before June 1970, when the US government would completely withdraw its forces from Cambodia. In response, China was willing to find a common solution and agreement with the United States in the second half of 1970. The North Vietnamese leadership, however, did not favor the rapprochement between China and the United States. In order to appease them, Zhou Enlai made a visit to the DRV between March 5 and 8, 1970, where he expressed China's willingness to provide them with further support in their Vietnamese struggle. In doing so, he attempted to restrict the growing influence of the Soviet Union on North Vietnam. During this meeting, Le Duan suggested the formation of an international communist front under Chinese leadership in order to disapprove the Nixon Doctrine from 1969 and the coalition between Japan and the United States.⁸⁹ The US government, however, sent Henry Kissinger on a secret visit to Beijing in July,

⁸⁶ Ibid, 177.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 179.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 182.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 193-194.

1971 in order to convince China to exert pressure on the North Vietnamese to open negotiations, but the Chinese leaders refused Henry Kissinger's request to pressure North Vietnam to alter their attitude towards the Paris peace talks.⁹⁰ Henry Kissinger's visit to China and another one of President Nixon in 1972 were regarded as betrayal by Hanoi who felt deceived by the Chinese.⁹¹ Although China promised to provide further aid to Hanoi, the North Vietnamese government concluded that China was more focused on improving its relationship with the United States than on the revolutionary unity with North Vietnam.⁹² They believed that the Chinese center of attention had shifted from the international communist struggle to the safeguarding of their own national interests.⁹³ Thus, the Sino- American rapprochement further increased the tensions between China and North Vietnam. In 1971, Mao decided that it was time to end the war and therefore promoted the idea of postponing the liberation of South Vietnam and prompted North Vietnam to open serious negotiations with the United States as the Chinese attitude toward peaceful negotiations had changed during the years 1969 and 1971. Now, China was concerned about the growing influence of Soviet Union in Southeast Asia and feared that it could lose its position in the region. Zhai argues that the American presence and its strength were seen by China's leadership as a counterbalance against the Soviet Union and that is why Mao came to the decision to preserve American power in the region to face the new threat of the Soviet Union.⁹⁴ North Vietnam, however, monitored these developments with great concern, as the Soviet-American relations were also improving. In order to prevent the loss of its major allies, Hanoi's leaders had to find a solution. Thus, they decided that it was time for a showdown in the war and launched the Spring Offensive against the South in late March 1972. 120,000 North Vietnamese

⁹⁰ Frey, *Geschichte des Vietnamkriegs*, 204-205; Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 196.

⁹¹ McGregor, *The Sino- Vietnamese Relationship and the Soviet Union*, 11.

⁹² Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 196.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 201.

⁹⁴ Zhai, "An Uneasy Relationship," 135; Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 198.

soldiers attacked the Central Highlands, the demilitarized zone and the border region of Cambodia northwest of Saigon. As a consequence, the US government authorized large-scale bombing of military targets in North Vietnam and the mining of North Vietnamese harbors. The US bombing, however, had significantly damaged the territory of the DRV. On May 9, 1972 the North Vietnamese ambassador met with Zhou Enlai in order to ask for China's help in mine-clearing of the North Vietnamese harbors. Zhou Enlai affirmed the request and on May 12, the Chinese government announced in a statement that China condemned the US reaction of mining North Vietnamese ports and would further assist North Vietnam. In order to put the Chinese word into action, the first Chinese Mine Investigation Team was sent to Haiphong in late May which was responsible for acquainting themselves with the types and characters of the US mines and two month later, the first Chinese minesweeping vessels were sent to North Vietnam. The total number of minesweepers amounted to twelve between July 1972 and August 1973 with four additional support vessels. After North Vietnam had to close its ports because of mine-clearing, the resulting lack of petroleum became a serious problem. Thus, China helped to establish a pipeline system from south China to North Vietnam in order to solve the North Vietnamese petroleum issue.⁹⁵

On January 8, 1973, the peace negotiations in Paris between North Vietnam and the United States were resumed and the final treaty which ended the Vietnam War was signed on January 23. In this treaty, the warring factions agreed on that:

The United States will stop all its military activities against the territory of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam by ground, air and naval forces, wherever they may be based, and end the mining of the territorial waters, ports, harbors, and waterways of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. [...] Within sixty days of the signing of this Agreement, there will be a total withdrawal from South Viet Nam of troops, military advisors, and military personnel associated with the pacification program, armaments, munitions, and war material of the United States. [...] The reunification of Viet Nam shall be carried out step by step through peaceful means on the basis of

⁹⁵ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 202-203.

discussions and agreements between North and South Viet Nam, without coercion or annexation by either party, and without foreign interference.⁹⁶

The Chinese leadership approved this arrangement of the Paris Peace Agreement and the withdrawal of the American troops. Although China's government saw them as a counterbalance against the Soviet Union between 1969 and 1971, they now favored their disengagement from Vietnam, as the Chinese leaders assumed that the communist troops would win a victory over Saigon. Therefore, they encouraged Hanoi in their plan to unify the south. Beijing, however, believed that the reunification with South Vietnam should not immediately be implemented, but was a process of several years.⁹⁷ This renewed disagreement caused Sino- North Vietnamese relations to worsen further.

In the last years of the war, contentions over territorial borders between China and North Vietnam also frequently appeared. These disputes especially focused on the issue of ownership over the Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. Furthermore, military confrontations occurred along the Sino- Vietnamese border from 1973. These incidents further deteriorated the Sino- North Vietnamese relations which also could not be recovered after 1975.⁹⁸

The Vietnam War was not only a war between North and South, but also a dispute between world powers in the cold war. For the communist forces, Vietnam was an important symbol for the international communist movement; however, the dissensions between China and the Soviet Union significantly affected China's involvement in the war especially in terms of strategy and policy. The rivalry between the two major communist nations for the dominant

⁹⁶ "Agreement on ending the war and restoring peace in Viet Nam signed between the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the Government of the United States of America and the protocols of this Agreement," in *The Paris Agreement on Vietnam: fundamental juridical problems* (Hanoi: Institute of Juridical Sciences, Committee of Social Sciences of the DRVN, 1973) 298-304.

⁹⁷ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 206-207.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 209-210.

position and the leadership among other communist nations impeded Chinese warfare.⁹⁹

Therefore, the Vietnam War can also be regarded as an essential element in the Sino- Soviet dispute of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. The relationship between China and North Vietnam, however, also suffered from the war and reached its nadir with the outbreak of the Sino- Vietnamese War in 1979.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, China's support played an essential role for North Vietnam, as it prevented a further US expansion into the North and contributed to numerous victories over the American troops. The significant assistance was provided by many Chinese engineers and workers who were sent to North Vietnam in order to keep up the infrastructure. These workers did astonishing work by building a total of 1215 km of roads.¹⁰¹ This support, however, also caused its victims, as 1100 Chinese died and 4300 were wounded during their deployment in Vietnam.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Zhang, "Communist Powers Divided: China, the Soviet Union, and the Vietnam Wars," 77; 92.

¹⁰⁰ Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, 214.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 175; Path, "Ha Noi's Responses to Beijing's Renewed Enthusiasm to Aid North Vietnam, 1970- 1972," 102.

¹⁰² Zhang, "The Vietnam War, 1964- 1969: A Chinese Perspective," 735.

4. Comparison between China's actions in Korea and Vietnam

The Korean War and the Vietnam War were both significant for China's history and development in the 20th century. China was involved in both wars and their intervention in Vietnam had certain similarities with their military actions in Korea, but also differed in many aspects. Some of these similarities have already become obvious by considering the reasons for China to get involved in each conflict. After the Korean War broke out in 1950, it was the highest priority for Mao and the Chinese government to preserve China's national security and to ensure the inviolability of its borders. This fear of being attacked and occupied by foreign powers originated from past experiences and reminded the Chinese of their history as a semi-colony. Thus, the US presence and its aggression in Korea were regarded as a threat to China's national security and became a problem which had to be actively faced by the CCP at that time. North Korea served as a buffer state and shielded the Chinese borders from the events happening in South Korea, but when the war broke out and the American troops further advanced north, the concerns that China could be attacked in the future increased among China's leadership. In order to prevent and to forestall such an attack of their own territory, the Chinese government decided to approve China's entry into the war.

Similar to the Korean War, the question of the national security also played an essential role at the time of the Vietnam War. Mao and his comrades feared that the war events in Vietnam might be expanded to Chinese territory after North Vietnam fell into the hands of the United States. Furthermore, they assumed that the United States would regard the invasion of North Vietnam as only the first step in order to occupy China. Therefore, Vietnam, like Korea, was considered to be a buffer state between the US military presence in South Vietnam and the

Chinese mainland and the fall of this buffer state would mean a direct and serious threat to China's borders and consequently to the security of its people.

Another similar reason to enter both wars was Mao's feeling of obligation to help and support other national liberation movements of oppressed countries in the world and China's brotherly relationship to other communist nations. As Mao regarded the Communist Party of China as the vanguard of these communist liberation movements in Korea and in Vietnam, assistance in both wars was inevitable in order to express China's commitment in the fight against imperialism and capitalism. Furthermore, both Korea and Vietnam offered the possibility to further spread the communist influence in Asia and to expand the ties between China and the worldwide communist community. In contrast to Korea, however, the reasons to enter the Vietnam War were also influenced by disagreements and problems between China and the Soviet Union. Due to a re-orientation of the Soviet Union by Chruschtschow in the 1950s after Stalin's death, China began to doubt the communist attitude of its former sister state. China's doubts and its criticism of the new revisionist Soviet policies resulted in a rift and a rivalry between both countries. This rivalry also affected China's determination to participate in the Vietnam War in order to show its superiority over the Soviet Union as the only vanguard of communist liberation movements. If China had refused to help North Vietnam in its war against the United States, Ho Chih Minh and his comrades would have turned to the Soviet Union for support and China would have lost all its influence and status among the other nations in the communist community. In order to avoid such a loss of power and loss of face, it was necessary for Mao to participate, whereas the Korean War was not characterized by a growing rivalry between China and the Soviet Union or a similar need for China to build a paternalistic relationship with its neighbors.

Furthermore, Korea and Vietnam have shared a historical background with China. In the past both were closely tied to Imperial China as tributary states and were highly influenced by Chinese culture. Thus, the Chinese people have felt connected to Korea and Vietnam, and the aggression of the United States against both countries evoked a feeling of solidarity. In addition, China had already supported Vietnam in its fight for independence against the French some years earlier. Therefore, a military intervention against Korea or Vietnam was considered to be an attack on the Chinese mainland itself and this was not acceptable for Mao and the Chinese people. Mao expressed that it was the obligation to help both countries in their fight against imperialism in order to save not only China's borders, but also its reputation as a strong nation in Asia and its people (including the Korean and Vietnamese people).

In contrast to the reasons to enter the Vietnam War, however, the Chinese reasons to participate in the Korean War were not only characterized by the threat of the United States, but also by the threat of the Guomindang on Taiwan as well as of a newly emerging alliance between the United States and Japan. In the early 1950s, China still had to deal with the Nationalists who had to flee to Taiwan after the Communists declared the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. At the time when the Korean War started in 1950, the nationalists were not yet defeated and could be encouraged to reorganize in order to attack the Chinese mainland. In order to eliminate all these possibilities and to avoid all threats for the newly established People's Republic of China, Mao had to take suitable measures.

While comparing and contrasting the motives which induced China's participation in the Korean and the Vietnam War, it becomes clear that a military intervention was not easily decided. In both cases, a lot of points militated for, but also against a Chinese interference. Concerning the Korean War, however, it is evident that the age of the People's Republic of China played a

significant role in the decision-making process. The Chinese government seemed rather precarious in this process which was illustrated by the heated debate and the disagreements among the leadership of the CCP. The People's Republic of China was founded one year earlier and its troops had never fought outside of China. The only combat experiences were gained during the civil war against the troops of the Guomindang, but the Korean War meant a conflict of much larger dimensions for the Chinese. These concerns were emphasized by Nie Rongzhen: "After the founding of the People's Republic of China, we badly needed a lasting international peace to heal the wounds of the civil war and to develop our national economy."¹ The CCP leadership was also driven by the fear of a war against the United States on Chinese territory which would shake the foundations of the newly established nation and weaken the legitimization of the CCP. Thus, the decision-making process and the Chinese reasons were strongly influenced by concerns about China's national security because of China's inexperience and its immaturity as a nation. At the time of the Vietnam War, the Chinese leadership also worried about China's national security, but they could fall back on experiences from the events in Korea. Based on these experiences, the government knew what kind of impact such a war had on the Chinese people and that this impact would negatively influence and jeopardize the economic development of China. The Great Leap Forward had already led to a great famine in 1960 and the Chinese economy and people still suffered from its consequences. A military intervention in Vietnam would be another burden for the whole country. Therefore, China tried to convince North Vietnam to postpone the unification with the South and promoted a peaceful environment and co-existence between the Asian nations. Uncertainly about whether or not China should fight another war against the United States so soon after their confrontations in Korea also influenced the Chinese decision-making process.

¹ Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 39.

In terms of the Chinese support that was provided during the Korean War and the Vietnam War, it becomes clear that both North Korea and North Vietnam were reliant on China's assistance in order to resist the US troops, as Mao's China was one of most essential allies for both Kim Il Sung and Ho Chi Minh, apart from the Soviet Union. In both wars, China was also extremely restrained and cautious in the beginning. During the Korean War, the Chinese government approved the deployment of troops, but only in order to help defend Korea and not for the purpose of actively attacking enemy troops, as the CCP leadership did not approve the war and Mao wanted to avoid a direct military confrontation with the United States in the beginning. This attitude of not confronting a strong world power who had already successfully fought in World War II could also result from the insecurity of the newly-established People's Republic of China. More than ten years later, at the beginning of the Vietnam War, the Chinese government officially advocated for a peaceful solution to the conflict. They opposed an immediate and forced unification of North and South and recommended that North Vietnam concentrate on domestic problems first. Thus, the Chinese attitude and behavior were similarly cautious in both cases. Mao also promised Ho Chi Minh to send troops, but only if American ground forces were deployed. Again, China wanted to prevent a direct military confrontation between American and Chinese soldiers.

Another similarity can be found when we examine Chinese statements made shortly before their troops were sent to Korea and Vietnam. The Chinese government indicated again and again that China did not advocate a war and was looking for peace among the Asian nations. Furthermore, they sent several warnings to the US government in which it was stated that a crossing of the 38th (Korea) or 17th parallel (Vietnam) would result in China's intervention. If the troops of the United States disregarded these conditions and started attacking the territory of

China's communist sister states (Korea and Vietnam), China would not hesitate to fulfill its obligations and to come to the assistance of the affected countries. Moreover, an anti-America attitude characterized China's propaganda shortly before its entry into the Korean and the Vietnam War was decided. Many mass demonstrations broke out among the Chinese throughout the whole country which opposed the war policy of the United States and its aggression in Korea and Vietnam. In addition to the growing hatred of the United States within China's population, the tone of the Chinese foreign policy with respect to the US in speeches of Mao and other CCP leaders was also further sharpened. They no longer spoke of a peaceful co-existence among the countries of the world, but emphasized the fight against the American troops and condemned US imperialism.

As the Chinese government was concerned that the war events in Korea and Vietnam could be expanded to Chinese territory, their first measures in both cases were to strengthen the national defense of China within the border areas. In terms of the Korean War, the CCP leaders worried about the security of the areas around the Yalu River and therefore sent troops to these border areas to further reinforce their defense. Similarly to Korea, the military presence was increased near the Sino- Vietnamese border and Chinese defensive forces were deployed in its southern provinces in the case of Vietnam.

An important difference between China's involvement in the Korean War and in the Vietnam War, however, is the nature of the troops that were sent into the war zones. In order to support North Korea, the Chinese People's Volunteers were formed who were named "volunteers" in order to avoid a formal Chinese war declaration and who crossed the Yalu River unannounced and undetected between October 14 and October 16, 1950. These troops were ordered to actively intervene in the battles and to aid the Korean People's Army. Apart from

fighting, these Chinese troops also took care of construction work, logistics and the maintenance of transportation routes. In contrast, the Chinese government decided to send only support units to North Vietnam which mainly consisted of engineering groups and were responsible for road repair and construction works during the Vietnam War. These support troops were not combat units and did not actively attack US soldiers, but assisted North Vietnam by providing manpower and material to keep the infrastructure intact.

Another substantial difference concerning China's troops involved in Korea and Vietnam is the total number of soldiers who were deployed in both wars. A total of 2.3 million soldiers fought in Korea against US troops, whereas the number of people belonging to support troops in Vietnam only amounted to over 320,000 people between June 1965 and March 1968. These numbers demonstrate that the Chinese involvement in Korea was much greater in terms of people's deployment than in Vietnam.

By examining China's behavior and the support they provided during the wars, a shift of approach between the Korean War and the Vietnam War becomes apparent. Although both Korea and Vietnam were strongly dependent on the Chinese assistance, China was more reserved during the Vietnam War. The Chinese government provided financial aid and military aid in the form of weapons to the Vietnamese troops, helped to train pilots and allowed the People's Army of Vietnam to use some of their military basis in the South, but they did not send infantry units who directly fought against US troops, unlike in Korea. This reluctance also becomes evident if we take into consideration the number of troops which were in use in Korea and Vietnam. The number of soldiers deployed in Korea dramatically exceeds the number of troops in Vietnam.

What, however, could be the reason for China's changing attitude and their decision to only send support troops to Vietnam instead of providing the same form of military aid they had

sent to Korea more than ten years earlier? One reason could be the memory of the Korean War and its consequences for China. Although Mao and the CCP leadership officially celebrated the Korean War as a great success and victory for China, it was also clear to them that the war had claimed numerous Chinese victims and involved high costs for such a young nation. Therefore, the Chinese government did not approve of the Vietnam War at the beginning and decided to reduce its support by only sending engineering and defensive troops in form of anti-aircraft artillery units. At the same time they were reminded of the outcomes of the Korean War in which they also had to defend and assert their position as a newly-established country within the international community, but by the time of the Vietnam War, the Chinese circumstances had changed. China had already gained experience during their military confrontations in Korea and its strength and power were better reorganized by the international community. In addition, it was necessary for China, as a fully established communist state which newly emerged on the international stage and was competing with the Soviet Union for the leadership of the communist movement in the world, to think about possible political consequences of supporting military confrontations outside of China. China's leaders promoted a peaceful environment among the nations in Asia after the Geneva Conference and by sending attacking units, the Chinese government could endanger China's credibility, its international image and a potential rapprochement with other nations.

Other reasons for their changing view could be the immense domestic problems China had to face some years before the outbreak of the Vietnam War. The Great Leap Forward, the campaign which was initiated in 1958 in order to increase the industrial production and to supersede the Western nations in terms of economy within five years, had proved counterproductive and resulted in a great famine and an economic collapse. Furthermore,

revisionism within the CCP in response to the failures of the Great Leap Forward worried Mao and triggered the Cultural Revolution. Under these circumstances, it was not an easy decision whether China was able to provide sufficient support and to fight another war against the United States. All these reasons could prompt the Chinese government to be more reserved in the case of Vietnam and to send supporting troops instead of numerous military units.

In terms of willingness to negotiate, China's attitude during the Korean War did not feature many difference to their attitude towards negotiation in the Vietnam War. When the war in Korea broke out, Mao was not willing to discuss any armistice before 1952. After two years of war, heavy losses on both sides and a military standstill between the troops, Mao and other CCP leaders changed their opinions about peace talks in order to solve the Korea question peacefully. Thus, the armistice agreement, which marked the end of the war, was signed by Peng Dehuai on July 27, 1953 in Panmunjom. China's change in attitude concerning peace talks in Korea is almost identical to their reaction in Vietnam. In the beginning of the war between 1966 and 1967, China rigorously opposed any form of negotiations with the United States, but in 1971 China's willingness to support peace talks changed. As a result of improved relations between China and the United States, the US government was able to convince the Chinese leadership to reconsider their attitude towards an armistice by promoting negotiations. Thus, pressure could be exerted on North Vietnam, whereupon the Paris peace accords could be signed on January 27, 1973 which ended the military involvement of the United States in Vietnam. Although China's attitude towards peace negotiations in Korea had changed because of the seriously deteriorating military situation on the battlefield in the first half of 1952, whereas the changing opinion in Vietnam can be attributed to the increased contact and improved exchange between the United States and

China, it is evident that the Chinese government realized the necessity of rethinking their view of negotiations with their former enemies in both the Korean and the Vietnam War.

When comparing the Korean War and the Vietnam War, it is also essential to examine the role of the Soviet Union in connection with China's involvement in the wars. During the conflict in Korea, China was also dependent on Soviet support, which was illustrated by the issue of the promised air cover. The Chinese government regarded this Soviet air cover as one of the most crucial prerequisites, whereupon they authorized the deployment of Chinese troops in Korea. Although the Soviet Union tried to avoid a direct military involvement in Korea, they provided not only North Korea but also China with numerous weapons and other military equipment. Furthermore, they were willing to train Chinese pilots and prepare them for their operations in Korea. Thus, it becomes clear that the Soviet Union occupied the central position as the major provider of military aid during the Korean War, because they not only supplied North Korea with necessary material, but also China. In Vietnam, however, these circumstances had changed. The Soviet Union still played the role of one of the two most important allies of North Vietnam, but China had assumed the earlier role of the Soviet Union in terms of support because of the rivalry between the two nations. Thus, China assisted in the training of pilots and sent a large amount of weapons and other everyday items to North Vietnam in order to prove its position as a loyal communist sister state. What, however, led to this change of roles between China and the Soviet Union? At the time of the Korean War, the Chinese nation was still very young and the threat of the Nationalists on Taiwan still existed. China was therefore not autonomously in the position to provide large-scale support to North Korea. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, had enough time to recover from World War II and was able to supply its ally with a large amount of also more sophisticated military equipment, as described by Nie Rongzhen: "The NKPA had been

equipped with Soviet- manufactured weapons, which were more advanced than what the Chinese army had at that time.”² Furthermore, the relationship between the Soviet Union and China was not yet negatively affected, whereas the Vietnam War was highly influenced by the Sino- Soviet power struggle and the worsening relations of the two communist countries. In order to show its North Vietnamese ally and also the rest of the world which nation would be the better leader for the worldwide communist movement, China had to compete with the Soviet Union by demonstrating its willingness, determination and ability to support the North Vietnamese people in their struggle. In addition, China was already experienced in fighting a war against the United States which enabled the Chinese government to be very well informed about the support which was necessary to be successful in such a military conflict. Thus, China took more and more the key role in supporting North Vietnam, whereas the Soviet Union played the major role as main provider in Korea.

By examining the consequences and the outcomes of the wars, it becomes evident that China’s support was truly essential in Korea as well as in Vietnam, as the Chinese troops contributed to numerous successful defeats of the United States. Without the Chinese assistance, both wars might have a totally different outcome for all warring parties. North Korea and North Vietnam were reliant on their two main allies the Soviet Union and China, because they were not able to fight against the United States all by themselves without any outside support. In terms of the consequences for the Chinese people, the Korean and the Vietnam War, however, greatly differ in the number of soldiers who lost their lives in the battles. In Korea, 148,400 soldiers died, whereas in Vietnam only 1,100 Chinese did not survive the war. This relatively low death toll in Vietnam could be ascribed to the character of the Chinese deployment in general. As mentioned earlier, the Chinese deployment in Korea differed from their commitment in Vietnam, in terms of

² Li, Millet, and Yu, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, 47.

the extent of provided support, as the number of Chinese people fighting in Korea was considerably higher than the amount of Chinese in the Vietnam War. As a result of China's further restraint concerning the deployment of people, the number of Chinese casualties in Vietnam did not reach the death toll of 1953 in Korea.

Furthermore, China was not a young and inexperienced nation anymore in the 1960s, but became a strong and independent nation which was interested in further extending its foreign relations. At the time of the Korean War, China's foreign relations were mainly limited to communist states of the Soviet bloc and China had to find its place among other nations. More than ten years later, however, China had gained its recognition as a nation and was therefore no longer interested in proving itself by sending attacking units to Vietnam, as its troops had already fought in Korea and showed that China was able to resist other powerful states.

The Korean War and the Vietnam War also differ in the development of the relationships between China and its communist sister states Korea and Vietnam in the end of the war and afterwards. Concerning Korea, the war became the foundation of the Sino- North Korean alliance and contributed to a friendly and brotherly relationship which still exists today. The Chinese People's Volunteers stayed in the country after the Korean War came to an end and supported North Korea's reconstruction in the post-war years until 1958. The Sino- Vietnamese relationship, however, suffered from the disagreements which appeared among North Vietnamese and Chinese leaders during the Vietnam War. The Chinese support troops did not even stay until the end of the war, but were completely withdrawn by 1970 because of the worsening bilateral relationship. These disagreements and the following territorial conflicts finally resulted in the Sino- Vietnamese War in early 1979. In comparison, it becomes clear that the Korean War helped to further strengthen the bonds between the two allies, North Korea and

China, whereas the Vietnam War was the trigger for China and Vietnam to drift apart and did not contribute to the development of a brotherly alliance between the two communist countries. This separation of China and Vietnam during and after the war might also be influenced by the growing rivalry of China and the Soviet Union and their competing for the leadership claim of the communist world.

5. Conclusion

The Korean War and the Vietnam War were both significant events in Cold War history in which the People's Republic of China was involved. This analysis of Chinese involvement in Korea and in Vietnam shows both similarities and also striking differences between the two interventions. Both times, China participated in a war against the United States, the epitome of imperialism and capitalism, and consequently China's ideological nemesis. Both times, they supported the opposing party in order to prevent the extension of US influence in Asia.

The comparison in the previous chapter demonstrates that China and its leadership drew lessons from the experiences of the Korean War that kept them from militarily interfering in the war events in Vietnam. China also did not actively take part in the Paris Peace Accords in 1973 and did not sign the armistice agreement in contrast to their earlier behavior in Korea where the People's Republic of China participated in the peace negotiations and Peng Dehuai signed the final agreement in 1953. The signing of this agreement by the commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers shows that China officially belonged to the warring parties in the Korean conflict, whereas in Vietnam they played a different role as only a supportive communist sister state, not officially fighting against the United States. The comparison also demonstrates China's development as a nation and diplomatic actor. At the time of the Korean War, the People's Republic of China was a very young nation that had to face many problems. The country was shattered by the Chinese Civil War for years and suffered from the military conflicts between Nationalists and Communists. Therefore, the economic and social order had to be rebuilt and China had to step out of its isolation and start developing foreign policy relationships. When the war in Korea broke out, the Soviet Union and North Korea were one of China's closest allies. Thus, it was necessary for China to support them in the war in order to increase these friendly

ties and to gain recognition as a new powerful nation on the international stage. By the time of the conflicts in Vietnam, however, China's circumstances had changed, because China had fought an international conflict against the United States ten years earlier. After the Korean War, China realized that it was able to resist a superpower such as the United States. The young state had grown into a mature and confident nation that could defend its place in the world. Furthermore, it was no longer dependent on the Soviet Union and was able to expand its international contacts, even with the United States, which had a great impact on China's involvement in Vietnam.

What led to this change in Chinese thinking and acting? I argue that two main reasons likely caused this rethinking; internal problems and foreign-policy issues. The internal problems were related to the outcomes of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, whereas the foreign-policy issues can be connected to the deteriorating relationship between China, the Soviet Union and North Vietnam, as well as the improving Chinese relations with the United States during the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, China supported North Korea and North Vietnam by all available means in order to encourage national liberation movements and the worldwide communist revolution. Thus, it is necessary to consider China's role when dealing with the Korean and the Vietnam War, as North Korea and North Vietnam were not able to fight such wars and to successfully resist the United States without the aid and backup of the Chinese nation.

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