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Comrades-in-arms: the Chinese Communist Party's relations with African political organisations in the Mao era, 1949–76

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolution of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) motives, objectives, and methods vis-à-vis its African counterparts during the Mao era, 1949–76. Beginning in the mid-1950s, to oppose colonialism and US imperialism, the CCP created front groups to administer its political outreach in Africa. In the 1960s and 1970s, this strategy evolved to combat Soviet hegemony. Although these policy shifts are distinguished by changes in CCP methods and objectives towards Africa, they were motivated primarily by life-or-death intraparty struggles among rival political factions in Beijing and the party's pursuit of external sources of regime legitimacy.

KEYWORDS

China; Africa; Communism;
Mao; Soviet Union

I. Introduction

This article traces the evolution of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) relations with African political organisations from the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 until the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976. The objectives are to clarify the history of China-Africa political relations during the Mao era, highlight the evolution of the CCP's approach, and elucidate changes in the institutional structure and elements of the party's approach. It identifies four distinct periods of CCP political relations in Africa (1949–58, 1959–65, 1966–70, and 1971–76) and explains key trends and themes

for each.¹ These policy shifts are distinguished by changes in CCP methods and objectives towards Africa, but were motivated primarily by life-or-death intraparty struggles among rival political factions in Beijing, and the party's pursuit of regime legitimacy. The promulgation of Mao's revolutionary ideology and a tactical victory over the Soviet or American imperialists were significant, albeit secondary, considerations.²

During the first phase, 1949–58, the CCP sought international recognition for its new regime and created various front groups and people's organisations to administer its political outreach in Africa. The CCP promoted anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism as common conceptions of Afro-Asian solidarity and developed the social networks necessary for continued political engagement. The failure of the Great Leap Forward (GLF) precipitated the Sino-Soviet split in 1958–59. Mao discredited his critics and distracted public attention from the crisis by claiming the Soviet 'revisionists' had plotted a *coup d'état* with traitors within the party. The result was the creation of a decidedly anti-Soviet policy in Africa and elsewhere. After building a stable structure for African political engagement in the early and mid 1960s, intraparty struggles during the Cultural Revolution produced a radicalised CCP approach that undermined these efforts. CCP leaders were aware of the reputational costs of this radical shift in policy towards Africa, but when faced with life-or-death political struggles at home they were willing to pay the price. When factional battles subsided in the early 1970s, however, the CCP again emphasised international recognition and expanded partnerships with African parties and organisations across the political spectrum.

2. Building the Bandung spirit, 1949–58

Between 1949 and the First Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955, political outreach to Africa was not a CCP priority. Instead, to secure its external legitimacy the CCP worked to win as many diplomatic partners as possible away from the Chinese

¹Numerous scholars have periodised the China-Africa relationship after 1949 – although none has looked exclusively at the political relationship. W.A.C. Adie identified three stages between 1949–1970. 'The Communist Powers in Africa', *Conflict Studies* 10 (December–January 1970–1971): 9–10. Bruce Larkin found seven phases covering 1955–1971. 'China and Africa: A Prospective on the 1970s', *Africa Today* 18, no. 3 (July 1971): 7. Park Sang-Seek found five stages from 1949–1979. 'African Policy of the People's Republic of China', *Sino-Soviet Affairs* 6, no. 3 (1982): 87–111. Wim Boooyse identified six stages between 1955–1988. 'The People's Republic of China's Role in Africa: 1955–1988', *Southern African Freedom Review* 1, no. 4 (1988): 20–2. Xu Jiming identified four stages between the early 1950s and 2000. 'China's National Interest and Its Relationship with Africa', *Africa Insight* 31, no. 2 (June 2001): 38–42. He Wenping grouped the 1950s to the end of the 1970s, the 1980s, and from the end of the 1980s to the present. 'Moving Forward with the Time: The Evolution of China's African Policy', paper presented at a workshop in Hong Kong, 11–2 November 2006. Sun Qiaocheng argued that there were only two stages: from 1949 to the late 1970s and from the end of the 1970s to the beginning of the twentieth century. 'Sino-African Relationship at the Turn of the Century', *International Studies* 15, no. 17 (2000): 19–34. Emma Mawdsley identified three periods: from 1949 to 1976, 1976 to 1989, and then post-1989. 'China and Africa: Emerging Challenges to the Geographies of Power', *Geography Compass* 1, no. 3 (May 2007): 408. Liu Hongwu claimed the Sino-African relationship from 1950 to 1990 had four stages. 'Zhongfei guanxi sanshi nian: qiaodong Zhongguo yu waibu shijie guanxi jiegou de zhidian' [Thirty years of Sino-African relations: a pivot in reshaping the structure of China's relations with the outside world], *World Economics and Politics* 11 (2008): 80–8. Li Anshan identified two phases between 1950 and 1995. 'Wei Zhongguo zhengming: Zhongguo de Feizhou zhanlue yu guojia xingxiang' [In defence of China: China's African strategy and state image], *World Economics and Politics* 4 (2008): 7.

²Prominent historians argue that during the Cold War ideological conflict was the primary cause of great power rivalry in the Third World. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Gregg Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World Sino-American Rivalry during the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017). Robert Ross argued that realist perceptions of the relative power among states in the international system motivated Chinese foreign-policy-making towards the US during the Mao era. Robert Ross et al., *Re-examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954–1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Centre, 2002).

Nationalist Party in Taipei. In the early 1950s, the small number of independent African countries coupled with the emergence of anti-colonial revolutionary political groups led the CCP to create a variety of political outreach organisations to engage them. The CCP was a strong and cohesive organisation, but had its hands full subduing the country's disparate regions and combating the US-led forces in Korea. Logistical barriers – long distances, few worthy vessels or aircraft, limited telephone lines, and inadequate knowledge about the continent – limited Sino-African interactions. Meanwhile, in Africa, colonial powers remained supreme and there were few well-organised anti-colonial resistance groups with the capacity to partner with the CCP.³

Throughout the 1950s, the CCP built the institutional infrastructure to facilitate political interaction with African organisations. Before Bandung, the CCP leadership – rather than diplomats or military officers – dominated Africa relations.⁴ Chinese and African delegates met while attending Soviet-financed international meetings and the CCP hosted a few African leaders in China during this period. In 1953, Walter Sisulu, Secretary General of South Africa's African National Congress (ANC), visited China, as did Félix-Roland Moumié of the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC).⁵ These early contacts with an opponent of the white-ruled government in South Africa and a Cameroonian leader opposing the French colonialists were harbingers of future CCP support for African revolutionaries.⁶

In the 1950s, the CCP created numerous front groups to expand its relations with like-minded African political organisations. Party-led groups known as 'mass organisations' (*qunzhong zuzhi*), 'united front groups' (*tongzhan tuanti*), and 'people's organisations' (*minjian tuanti*) worked to expand and enhance CCP relations with African political organisations and liberation movements.⁷ Although some CCP organisations were identified as party organs, others were ostensibly public associations quietly controlled by the party.⁸ Generally speaking, CCP mass organisations (e.g. All-China Youth Federation) appointed the personnel of united front groups (e.g. the Union of Chinese Writers) who, in turn, administered people's organisations (e.g. the Liaison Committee with the Permanent Bureau of the Afro-Asian Writers Conference).⁹ The All-China Students' Federation, for instance, was bound by its constitution 'under the leadership of the CCP to support the struggle against imperialism and colonialism.'¹⁰

³Gu Zhangyi, 'Dangdai Zhongguo yu Feizhou' [Contemporary China and Africa], *West Asia and Africa* 10 (2009): 14–5. Lu Tingen, 'Wushi niandai chuqi Zhongguo yu Feizhou de guanxi' [Sino-African relationship in 1950s], *West Asia and Africa* 1 (1997): 38–44; Y. L. Ying, 'The Chinese Communists in Africa', *Free China and Asia* (November 1964): 17.

⁴Li Liqing, 'Zhongguo yu heifeizhou zhengdang jiaoyu de lishi yu xianzhuang' [Chinese Communist Party's contacts with [Black] African political parties: a history and status quo], *West Asia and Africa* 3 (2006): 16. Bruce Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970: The Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 214.

⁵After Cameroon obtained independence in 1960 under the Cameroon National Union Party, the CCP continued to support the UPC as an opposition party. 'Feizhou gonghui daibiaotuan zuotian daoda Beijing' [African Union representatives arrived in Beijing yesterday], *People's Daily*, 4 May 1953.

⁶Gaoju minzu duli de qizhi yingyong qianjin' [Hold high the banner of national independence and advance bravely], *People's Daily* editorial, 21 February 1953; Gao Ji, 'Wei chedi cuihui zhimin zhidu, baowei shijie chijiu heping er douzheng daodi!' [Fight toward the complete destruction of colonial system and the defence of lasting world peace], *People's Daily*, 21 February 1952.

⁷Li Liqing, 'Zhongguo yu heifeizhou zhengdang jiaoyu de lishi yu xianzhuang' [Chinese Communist Party's contacts with [Black] African political parties: a history and status quo], 16. For a list of these CCP-led political organisations see Larkin, *China and Africa 1949–1970*, 219–21.

⁸Li Weihan, 'Zhongguo guochangdang yu Zhongguo renmin minzhu tongyi zhanxian' [Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese People's Democratic United Front], *People's Daily*, 25 June 1951.

⁹Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970*, 219 and 224.

¹⁰'Constitution of the All-China Students' Federation', Appendix H, adopted 10 February 1960, available in *People's Daily*, 11 February 1960.

Another front group, The China Islamic Association, managed CCP outreach to African Muslims. In 1951, Mohammed Makin, a graduate of Al-Azhar University in Cairo teaching Arabic in Beijing, addressed the Chinese People's Institute for Foreign Affairs on how to enhance political relations with Muslims.¹¹ In 1953, Makin helped establish the China Islamic Association, which was headed by a Chinese Uighur and CCP loyalist Burhan Shahidi.¹² In accordance with its mandate to 'support the CCP leadership,' the Association used Islam as an entrée to enhance collaboration with Muslim groups both inside China and internationally.¹³ After contacts with Egypt began in 1955, it became an important conduit for political outreach in North Africa, which by 1956 had an independent bloc of Muslim countries. During the 1950s and 1960s, Shahidi and other leaders led delegations to Africa and hosted visitors from Muslim countries.¹⁴

On 5 October 1954, the CCP magazine *World Culture* published an article entitled 'Foreign Relations of New China During the Past Five Years' calling for the party to adopt a more active global approach. It argued that the independence struggles of Asian, African, and Latin American states 'share a common interest in the wiping out of colonialism, and there are no basic conflicts of interest among them.'¹⁵ This clarion call for unified 'opposition to the imperialist policy of aggression and war' marked the beginning of proactive CCP outreach to African independence groups – creating political networks later used to channel material support.¹⁶

The 1955 Bandung Conference was a watershed in CCP political relations in Africa.¹⁷ Premier Zhou Enlai, who led the Chinese delegation, interacted with delegations from Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, and soon-to-be-independent Sudan and Ghana. At Bandung, the CCP supported African independence movements' fight against colonialism and imperialism. Zhou advocated the so-called 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,' introduced with India the year before, as guidelines for interaction among post-colonial African and Asian nations. After an agreement in 1955 to purchase Egyptian cotton and an exchange of

¹¹US Consulate General, Hong Kong, *Current Background* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Photo duplication Service: u.d.), 195 (25 July 1952).

¹²Shahidi was the first chairman of the Xinjiang Provincial People's Government and the Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. 'Burhan's Deep Love of Motherland,' *People's Daily*, 18 December 2000.

¹³'Zhongguo yisilan jiao xiehui zhangcheng' [Islamic Association of China Constitution], *Islamic Association of China of China website*, 25 October 2006.

¹⁴Zhou Zhouji, 'Baerhan shuai Xinjiangseng zhengfu qiye shimu' [The story of the uprising of Xinjiang provincial government led by Shahidi], *Elite Reference*, 1 September 2010, available in *Global View* 319, <http://archive.is/RzET2#selection-371.5-371.15> (accessed March 13, 2018); Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970*, 220 and 234.

¹⁵Chu Jungfu, 'Xin Zhongguo wu nian lai ti waijiao' [Foreign relations of New China during the past five years], *World Culture*, 5 October 1954.

¹⁶Zhou Enlai, 'Guanyu yafei huiyi de baogao' [Report on the Asian-African conference], *People's Daily*, 17 May 1955; Shao Zonghan, 'Bukezudang de "wanlong jingshen"' [Irresistible 'Bandung spirit'], *People's Daily*, 8 April 1956; Lu Yi, 'Yafei guojia de tuanjie he hezuo' [Solidarity and cooperation among Asian-Afro countries], *People's Daily*, 4 December 1956.

¹⁷For more recent accounts of the Bandung Conference, see Liu Xinheng, 'Guoji guanxi shishang de buxiu fengbei: jinian Wanlong huiyi zhaokai liushi zhounian' [Immortal monument in the history of international relations: commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Bandung Conference], *International Studies* 3 (2015): 88–97. Lu Ting-en, 'Yafei huiyi yu zhongfei guanxi de fazhan' [Bandung Conference and the development of Sino-African relations] in *Feizhou wenti lun ji* [African Issues] (Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2005); Xia Liping, 'Wanlong huiyi qianhou Zhongguo zhengfu dakai yu yafei guojia guanxi de nuli' [The Bandung Conference and China's efforts to establish diplomatic relations with the Asian and African countries], *Foreign Affairs Review* 81 (2005): 74–80; Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World Sino-American Rivalry during the Cold War*, 93–105.

trade offices, Egypt became the first African country to recognise the PRC. China supported Egypt during the 1956 Suez Canal crisis and provided a \$5 million credit.¹⁸

Before 1957, CCP support was almost entirely rhetorical. Afterward, Beijing began providing material support and arms to independent states including Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, and Ghana, as well as to African independence movements.¹⁹ In Algeria, for instance, the CCP provided arms to the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), trained its fighters in China, and in 1958 recognised the Algerian Provisional Government.²⁰

China's embassy in Cairo became a forward base for the CCP to spread its influence and assistance.²¹ Cairo was home to the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) and several African liberation groups.²² A CCP delegation attended the first AAPSO Conference in Cairo, which began in late 1957.²³ Before the Conference, a rally was held in Beijing to support African national liberation movements. The Chinese Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity was established to administer relations with African political organisations via the AAPSO, and served as the principal venue for Sino-African political cooperation until the Cultural Revolution began in 1966.²⁴ The CCP used it first, to make contact with African political organisations, and then to transmit material support to them.²⁵ In February 1958, a month after the first AAPSO Conference, Zhou equated its objectives with the CCP's own liberation struggle:

The conference maintains that all peoples are entitled to the sacred rights of freedom, self-determination, sovereignty and independence. These resolutions without a doubt voiced the common will of hundreds of millions of people in Asia and Africa. There is still a long struggle ahead in the national independence movements in Asia and Africa ... but the Asian and African peoples have already stood up and will never again be crushed.²⁶

The CCP helped plan the First Afro-Asian Writers Conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in October 1958, which included delegations from Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Sudan, and

¹⁸For an account of Chinese-Egyptian contacts before diplomatic recognition see Mon'im Nasser-Eddine, *Arab-Chinese Relations 1950–1971* (Beirut: Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1972), 60–104. See also Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970*, 16–20; Hu Shilong, 'Zhongguo yuanfei jihua ruhe qibu' [How did China start its aid programmes in Africa], *International Finance News*, 12 May 2014.

¹⁹Xue Lin, 'Dui gaige kaifang qian Zhongguo yuanzhu Feizhou de zhanlue fansi' [Strategic reflections on China's aids to Africa before Reform and Opening up], *Issues of Contemporary World Socialism* 1 (January 2013): 105–6; Daan S. Prinsloo, 'China and the Liberation of Portuguese Africa', *Foreign Affairs Association Study Report* 2 (Pretoria), 2 May 1976, 3.

²⁰'Our 600 Millions Back Up Algerian People', *Peking Review* 1, no. 6 (8 April 1958): 21; 'Sino-Algerian Communiqué', *Peking Review* 1, no. 43 (23 December 1958): 24; US Department of the Army, 'An Assessment of the Military Assistance Programmes of the People's Republic of China' (15 November 1974), 3.

²¹For more on Cairo as a hub for CCP outreach see Liu Linlin, 'Qianxi bianjuxia de Zhongguo yu Aiji guanxi' [On the Sino-Egyptian relationship under the Changing Situation], *Foreign Affairs Observer*, 11 December 2013; Zhu Weilie, 'Shilun Zhongguo yu Zhongdong yisilan guojia de zhanluexing guanxi' [On the strategic relationship between China and Islamic countries in the Middle East], *World Economics and Politics* 9 (2010): 7; Yitzhak Shichor, *The Middle East in China's Foreign Policy 1949–1977* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 42–51; Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970*, 24–26; Nigel Disney, 'China and the Middle East', *MERIP Reports* 63 (December 1977): 4–5; Joseph E. Khalili, 'Sino-Arab Relations', *Asian Survey* 8, no. 8 (August 1968): 681–2.

²²For a summary of the relationship between Bandung and the AAPSO see Lu Ting-en, 'Lun Wanlong huiyi jiqi yingxiang' [On the Bandung Conference on its influences], *West Asia and Africa* 3 (2005): 10–4.

²³For more on China's engagement at the AAPSO, see Li Qianyu, 'Zhongguo dui yafei renmin tuanjie dahui de zhengce 1957–1965' [China's policies on AAPSO Conference, 1957–1965], *Foreign Affairs Review* 4 (2012): 112–28.

²⁴Charles Neuhauser, *Third World Politics: China and the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation 1957–1967* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 34.

²⁵Mohamed El-Khawas, 'The Development of China's Foreign Policy Toward Africa, 1955–1972', *Current Bibliography on African Affairs* 6, no. 2 (1973): 130.

²⁶Zhou Enlai, 'Muqian guoji xingshi he woguo wajiao zhengce' [The current international situation and China's foreign policy], *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guowuyuan gongbao* [Communiqués of the State Council of the People's Republic of China], no. 6 (15 February 1958): 130.

Egypt. The Chinese representatives used the gathering to prepare for the All-African People's Conference held afterward in Accra, Ghana, and to arrange subsequent visits to China for Angolan, Ghanaian, Nigerian, Senegalese, Somali, and Ugandan delegations. In December 1958 in Accra, the CCP delegation met with various leftist African leaders including Patrice Lumumba of the Mouvement National Congolais, Félix-Roland Moumié of the UPC, and Holden Roberto then of the Angolan People's Union.²⁷

3. The Sino-Soviet split, 1959–65

Until 1959, gaining regime legitimacy via international recognition remained the primary objective of CCP outreach in Africa. That year, however, Mao's ill-fated Great Leap Forward (GLF) precipitated an intraparty factional struggle, which caused the rapid deterioration of CCP-Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) relations, thus injecting a distinctly anti-Soviet line into CCP relations with African political organisations.²⁸

As Chinese leaders prepared for the July 1959 Lushan Conference, growing tensions within the CCP undermined the Sino-Soviet alliance.²⁹ Defence Minister Peng Dehuai, who had returned from meeting with Khrushchev on 24 May, wrote to Mao on 14 July calling for an evaluation of the 'losses and achievements' of the GLF.³⁰ On 21 July, while Peng was criticising the GLF at Lushan, Khrushchev was in Poland denouncing the CPSU's own failed experiment with communes in the 1920s.³¹

After Lushan, Mao linked Peng's 14 July letter to his 24 May meeting with Khrushchev and used them to claim Peng was a Soviet agent.³² In October, during a contentious visit to Beijing, Khrushchev told Mao that Peng was innocent and pushed for the Defence Minister's reinstatement. These comments only affirmed Mao's suspicion that Peng's 'antiparty plot' was hatched in collusion with the CPSU. In December, Mao denounced Peng for his 'total negation' of the GLF and accused him of leading 'a coup attempt supported by [his Soviet] friends.'³³ The split was solidified in July 1960 when Khrushchev ordered Soviet experts to

²⁷A New Africa Is Rising, *Peking Review* 1, no. 43 (23 December 1958): 19–21.

²⁸Scholars debate the exact timing and causality of the Sino-Soviet split. John K. Fairbank contends that: 'The relationship had begun to come apart when Khrushchev became an outspoken critic of the Great Leap Forward.' John K. Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1986), 123. Luthi argues that 'cracks had appeared in the [Sino-Soviet] alliance' as early as 1957 and during the GLF 'ideological radicalism in China and the emergence of leadership conflicts within the CCP created an environment conducive for further deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations.' Lorenz Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 113–4. Mao told Henry Kissinger that the CCP's break with the CPSU began in 1958 and that the split became definitive following Khrushchev's 1959 visit to China. Declassified conversation between Mao and Kissinger, 12 November 1973, <https://botanwang.com/node/12159> (accessed March 13, 2018). Sidney Rittenberg, who was a CCP cadre at Xinhua News Agency at the time, recalls: 'On a beautiful day in 1959, he and about 20 leaders at the state-run news service received a 'top secret message' from Mao announcing the Sino-Soviet split. Sidney Rittenberg and Amanda Bennett, *The Man Who Stayed Behind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 242–4.

²⁹For more on the Lushan meeting, see Li Rui, *Lushan Huiyi Shilu* [Memoir of Lushan meeting], vol. 1, rev. ed. (Zhengzhou: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1994). For a discussion of how struggles within the CCP harmed CCP-CPSU relations see, Li Rui, 'Mao Zedong huiyi mishu shouji: Lushan huiyi pipeng shilu' [Memoir of Mao Zedong's secretary: criticising Peng in Lushan meeting], *Baokan huicui* no. 1 (2009): 49.

³⁰Peng Dehuai, 'July 14, 1959 gei Mao zhuxi de xin' (Letter to Mao on 14 July 1959), *Shuzhai*, no. 5 (2009): 90–2.

³¹*Pravda*, 21 July 1959. For an English translation of Khrushchev's comments see Robert Wesson, 'The Soviet Communes,' *Soviet Studies* 13, no. 4 (1962): 341–2. Khrushchev's comments were also carried by *Neibu cankao*. *Neibu cankao* 283 (26 July 1959): 19–20.

³²Cong Jin, *1949–1989 de Zhongguo: Quzhe fazhan de suiyue* [China in 1949–1989: the years with unsmooth development], vol. 1 (Zhengzhou: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1989).

³³Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 79–81. Also see Lorenz Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 123.

leave China and cut material and military aid.³⁴ In this way, the anti-CPSU line adopted in Africa and elsewhere was primarily intended to strengthen Mao's position vis-à-vis his rivals within the party after the GLF's failure. Chen Jian explains:

Mao used the recall of Soviet experts as a convenient excuse to make the Soviets the scapegoat for the Great Leap Forward's disastrous consequences. The chairman also found in the conflict with the Soviets a long-term weapon he badly needed to enhance the much-weakened momentum of his continuous revolution. In the early 1960s Mao repeatedly used the conflict with Moscow to claim that his struggle for true communism was also a struggle for China's national integrity. And as far as Chinese politics was concerned, the growing confrontation with Moscow made it more difficult for those of Mao's comrades who disagreed with some of the chairman's radical ideas to challenge him.³⁵

Throughout the early 1960s, the CCP used the AAPSO as a venue to both expand contacts with African political organisations and impugn Soviet 'revisionism.' At the second AAPSO conference in Conakry, Guinea, in 1960 the Chinese delegation enhanced its relations with the growing number of independent African countries and called for an international united front against imperialism. To demonstrate CCP leadership and support for the conference, Beijing held another 'mass rally' including hundreds of representatives from relevant united front groups and people's organisations. At the rally, which was organised by the Chinese Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity, CCP stalwart Liao Chengzhi called for 'the liberation of all African peoples,' and claimed that 'the fire of revolution has engulfed the whole [African] continent,' and pledged Chinese support for the 'national liberation struggles of all oppressed nations.'³⁶ China's party-controlled press proclaimed that Africa was engulfed in revolutionary zeal and reported that African parties were 'studying Mao's works and using Chinese guerrilla methods.'³⁷

In the early 1960s, as the CCP's network of African comrades grew, it expanded existing front groups and people's organisations, and created new ones to transmit its support to them. For instance, the aforementioned China Islamic Association, together with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the Asian Solidarity Committee of China, provided funds to the FLN via the AAPSO Secretariat in Cairo.³⁸ CCP-led organisations also hosted African political parties in China. For example, in 1959 and 1960, respectively, Morocco's National Union of Popular Forces and Angola's People's Movement for the Liberation of

³⁴July 16, 1960, Soviet Union called back all experts in China.' Cpc.people.com. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/4162/64165/67447/67995/4590633.html> (accessed March 13, 2018).

³⁵Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 82. This point contrasts Luthi's argument that: 'The Great Leap Forward was an ideological challenge to Soviet leadership in the socialist world.' Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 111–2. Also see, Li Danhui and Yafeng Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Split, 1959–1973: A New History* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, forthcoming in 2018).

³⁶Liao Cheng-chih, 'All Support for Afro-Asian Solidarity: Liao Cheng-chih's Speech at the Peking Rally Pledging All-out Support for the Forthcoming Second Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference,' *Peking Review* 3, no. 13 (29 March 1960): 11–3.

³⁷Wang Wei, 'Chongfang Aerialiya qianxian' [Revisited the battlefield in Algeria], *People's Daily*, 8 November 1960.

³⁸Alaba Ogunsanwo, *China's Policy in Africa 1958–1971* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 43.

Angola (MPLA) visited Beijing upon the invitation of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs.³⁹

The CCP continued to use Islam as a means to develop relations with political organisations in the Muslim world.⁴⁰ African Muslims were invited to China for Islamic festivals and to worship in Chinese mosques. The China Islamic Association paid particular attention to the hajj, the sacred pilgrimage to Mecca, and beginning in 1955 sent at least one delegation each year until 1964.⁴¹ After the hajj, Chinese Muslims might visit their African brethren to tout the religious freedoms they enjoyed under CCP rule. Pilgrimage trips regularly travelled to Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and/or Sudan, but could range as far as Guinea, Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Nigeria. But as Alaba Ogunsanwo explains: 'The long detour from Saudi Arabia to Guinea and Senegal would hardly have been justified had there been no political motivation.'⁴² The China Islamic Association worked with party-controlled publishing houses to prepare propaganda for distribution to African Muslims. Books were published in Arabic, English, and French including 'Chinese Muslims' Life,' 'Muslims in China,' 'The Holy Qur'an and Women's Rights and Status,' 'Beijing Muslims' Life,' and 'Chinese Muslims' Religious Life.'⁴³ The PRC constitution was also translated into Arabic.⁴⁴

In 1960, to manage its Africa-focused political organisations, the CCP Central Committee created the Special Committee in Charge of African Affairs and the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association (CAPFA) under the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.⁴⁵ After an African country established diplomatic relations with China, the CCP would create a friendship association to conduct political outreach. Although CCP front groups appeared as independent entities, there was substantial overlap among their personnel. Eight of CAPFA's founding members, for instance, worked with the CCP Youth League, and, as Bruce Larkin observed: 'The International Liaison Department of the China Young Communist League was headed by the same persons who led the International Liaison Office of the All-China Youth Federation; in effect, the departments were identical.'⁴⁶

Also in 1960, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) established an African section to handle diplomatic relations with the 17 African nations that gained independence that

³⁹Zhou zongli sheyan huanying moluoge keren, bingqie zhuhe Moluoge Wangguo guoqing' [Premier Zhou Hosted a banquet to welcome Moroccan guests and congratulated the Kingdom of Morocco on its National Day], *People's Daily*, 18 November 1959. The Moroccan guests included Ahmed Balafrej, former Prime Minister of Morocco and the founder of Istiqlal Party, which split into National Union of Popular Forces. 'Pushu Angela he Jineiya liang diaobiaotuan daoqing' [Two Angolan and Guinea delegations arrived in Beijing], *People's Daily*, 6 August 1960. Also see 'Youhao laiwang riye guangfan' [Friendly exchanges became increasingly widespread] in *Shanghai Waishi Zhi* [Documents of Shanghai Foreign Affairs], ed. Zhou Mingwei et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Science Publishing House, 1999).

⁴⁰Zhu, 'Shilun Zhongguo yu Zhongdong yisilan guojia de zhanluexing guanxi' [On the strategic relationship between China and Islamic countries in the Middle East], 5–10; Ma Lirong, 'Zhong-A wenming jiaowang mianlin de tiaozhan ji duice sikao' [China-Arab states civilization exchanges: challenges and countermeasures], *Arab World Studies*, no. 2 (2011): 11–3; Mohamed Bin Huwaidin, *China's Relations with Arabia and the Gulf, 1949–1999* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 215.

⁴¹Ma Lirong, 'Zhong-A minjian jiaowang moshi de xingcheng, tezheng jiqi yingxiang' [The formation, characteristics, and influence of the mode of people-to-people engagement between China and Arabs], *Journal of Hu Muslim Minority Studies* 1 (2013): 44.

⁴²Ogunsanwo, *China's Policy in Africa 1958–1971*, 33.

⁴³Mi Shoujiang and You Jia, *Zhongguo Musulinjiao* [Muslims in China] (Beijing: Wuzhou chuanbo chubanshe, 2004).

⁴⁴'The Formation of Islamic Organisations and their Activities in China,' *Islam in China*, 2–4, undated. Also see Mi and You.

⁴⁵Huwaidin, *China's Relations with Arabia and the Gulf, 1949–1999*, 215.

⁴⁶Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970*, 216. For a list of CAPFA speeches and editorials see *The Chinese People Resolutely Support the Just Struggle of the African People* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1961). Also see Alan Hutchison, *China's African Revolution* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), 35–43.

year and the half dozen more that did so in 1961.⁴⁷ While PRC diplomats competed with their rivals from Taipei to establish official ties with the growing number of independent African states, CCP-controlled front groups also cultivated relations in countries still under colonial rule. Thus, as French and English colonial rule receded in the early 1960s, the CCP increased support for revolutionary groups in countries under Portuguese control (i.e. Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé) and those under oppressive white minority governments (i.e. Rhodesia, Namibia, and South Africa).⁴⁸

Between 1958 and 1964, the CCP's political outreach in Africa achieved impressive results. Beijing sent 144 missions to African countries and received 405 African delegations. These contacts gradually expanded, culminating in 1963, when 55 CCP missions touched down in Africa and 131 African delegations visited Beijing. By 1964, political outreach and host diplomacy had paid dividends with 15 of 35 independent African countries choosing to recognise Beijing, rather than Taipei – up from only seven in 1960.⁴⁹

Chinese experts in guerrilla warfare trained rebels from Guinea-Bissau fighting the Portuguese, and instructed and equipped nationalists from Portuguese colonies in Tanzania, Ghana, and Congo-Brazzaville. Trainers arrived in Ghana in 1964 and remained until a coup in early 1966 ended the programme.⁵⁰ In Tanzania, the CCP supplied arms and trained Eduardo Mondlane's Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) and later hosted FRELIMO fighters in China. The CPC also trained Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) forces in Tanzania and assisted the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) in Zambia.⁵¹ The CCP also provided military training for African revolutionaries via the Organisation of African Unity, and in China.⁵² Sidney Rittenberg (a.k.a Li Dunbai), a CCP member and propaganda official at the time, recalled a meeting between Mao and about 20 African revolutionaries in Beijing in June 1963:

The African guests were assembled in the hall ... none from an independent state. They were all from various nationalist organizations or guerrilla movements. I knew a few of them were receiving military training in China. I recognized a cherubic young student who had once told me he was learning from the People's Liberation Army how to use small arms, hand grenades, land mines, and booby traps.

Mao Zedong told the African visitors:

On behalf of the CCP, I'd like to welcome all our friends and comrades-in-arms from Africa ... I know you are having a very difficult struggle in Africa, and you've already made big successes. Many battles remain to be fought, but Africa is coming alive. Here in China, we knew little about Africa. Then as you fought for independence and were successful, your countries came and made their presence known to us.⁵³

Most of the African revolutionary groups that the CCP supported were unsuccessful, including those in Angola, the Congo, and South Africa. One reason for these failures was the

⁴⁷Ying, 'The Chinese Communists in Africa,' 17.

⁴⁸Chinese Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity, 'Zhichi Putaoya Feizhou zhimindi renmin de douzheng' [Support people's struggle in Portugal's African colonies], *People's Daily*, 3 August 1960.

⁴⁹Ying, 'The Chinese Communists in Africa,' 17–8.

⁵⁰CIA, 'What the Chinese Communists Are Up to in Black Africa' (23 March 1971), *Foreign Relations, 1969–1976*, vol. E-5, Documents on Africa, 1969–1972; 'Jiana zhengbian dangju hanran sihui zhongjia xieding, wuli yaoqiu wo zhuanjia liji chechu Jiana' [The coup d'etat in Ghana has flagrantly defaced the Sino-Ghanaian agreement and demanded Chinese experts to leave immediately], *People's Daily*, 6 March 1966.

⁵¹'Feizhou lingdaoren de Zhongguo qingjie' [African leaders' Chinese stories], *China Daily*, 7 May 2014.

⁵²He Wenping, 'Moving Forward with the Time,' 5.

⁵³Rittenberg and Bennett, *The Man Who Stayed Behind*, 270–1.

CCP's deteriorating relationship with the CPSU.⁵⁴ When the Soviets backed South Africa's ANC, for instance, the CCP, which had begun exchanges with the ANC in 1953, switched its support to the rival Pan-Africanist Congress. Then, after the ANC prevailed, the CCP scrambled to reestablish relations and supply military equipment.⁵⁵ The story was similar in Angola, where the CCP provided arms and training to the MPLA in the early 1960s, but as the MPLA grew closer to Moscow Beijing expanded support to its rivals – the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).⁵⁶ In 1964, UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi met Mao and Zhou and received military training in China; then returned the following year and again in 1967.⁵⁷ During his exchange with a member of the aforementioned delegation of African revolutionaries, Mao linked his own domestic political struggles directly to the struggle against Soviet revisionism on the continent:

African visitor: The Soviets used to help us, and then the red star went out and they don't help us anymore. On the contrary, they sell arms to our oppressors. What I worry about is: Will the red star over Tiananmen Square in China go out? Will you abandon us and sell arms to our oppressors as well?

Mao Zedong: I understand your question. It is that the USSR has turned revisionist and has betrayed the revolution. Can I guarantee to you that China won't betray the revolution? Right now I can't give you that guarantee. We are searching very hard to find the way to keep China from becoming corrupt, bureaucratic, and revisionist. We are afraid that we will stop being a revolutionary country and will become a revisionist one. When that happens in a socialist country, they become worse than a capitalist country. A communist party can turn into a fascist party. We've seen that happen in the Soviet Union. We understand the seriousness of this problem, but we don't know how to handle it yet.⁵⁸

Mao's response conflated the international struggle against Soviet revisionism with factional rivalries within the CCP. For Mao, African independence movements were extensions of China's own revolution. By denouncing the Soviets as 'fascists' and 'revisionists', Mao was warning those inside China that if they supported proto-Soviet domestic and foreign policies they, like Peng, would be considered conspirators assisting a foreign plot to capitulate to imperialism.

Still, some CCP leaders advocated a more conciliatory line. In February 1962, with the consent of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, Wang Jiaxiang, head of the CCP's International Department, produced several reports that argued China should foster a peaceful international environment to facilitate socialist construction at home. 'It is necessary,' Wang argued, 'to carry out a foreign policy aimed at relieving tensions, not exacerbating them.'

⁵⁴'China,' in *Africa and the Communist World*, ed. Zbigniew Brzezinski (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 168–9.

⁵⁵For a discussion of Chinese military support for liberation movements in Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique, see Layi Abegunrin, 'Soviet and Chinese Military Involvement in Southern Africa,' *Current Bibliography on African Affairs* 16, no. 3 (1983–84): 195–206.

⁵⁶During an interview with the author, Paulo Jorge, MPLA Secretary of the Political Bureau for International Affairs, recalled that the MPLA had sent a delegation to China in 1962, and that he first visited in 1965. The CCP had continued to provide training and arms to the MPLA throughout the 1960s. Paulo Jorge, interview by the author in Luanda, Angola, 15 August 2007.

⁵⁷Li Xinfeng, 'Angola fanzhengfu wuzhuang shouling Sawenbi beiji' [The Angolan rebel leader Savimbi was killed], *The People's Daily*, 24 February 2002.

⁵⁸Rittenberg and Bennett, *The Man Who Stayed Behind*, 271–2.

Mao responded by accusing Wang of promoting a 'prorevisionist line' that would harm those fighting imperialism both at home and abroad.⁵⁹

After China openly opposed Soviet participation in the AAPSO in 1961 the organisation became increasingly marred by hostility.⁶⁰ Moscow's support for New Delhi during the 1962 Sino-Indian border war overshadowed the third AAPSO conference in Moshi, Tanzania, in early 1963. The dispute's corrosive effect on the organisation alarmed many African representatives, who were reluctant to take sides. Only Niger condemned Chinese aggression against India, although others spoke out elsewhere.⁶¹ Then in June 1963, in the run-up to Zhou's historic 10-country Africa tour, the CCP issued its *Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement*, which criticised the CPSU for 'denying the great international significance of the anti-imperialist revolutionary struggles of the Asian, African and Latin American peoples, catering to the needs of imperialism and the promotion of its policies of old and new colonialism.' The CCP, by contrast, called for all communists to 'study the revolutionary experience of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, firmly support their revolutionary actions and regard the cause of their liberation as a most dependable support for itself.'⁶²

Zhou's Africa tour in late 1963 and early 1964 was the most public Chinese official visit to Africa.⁶³ The premier claimed the CCP was the vanguard of communist orthodoxy, depicted the CPSU as the revisionist patsies of imperialism, and called for Asian and African peoples 'to unite in a common struggle against the enemy.' On 20 December 1963, while in Cairo, Zhou stressed that 'the differences between [the CCP] and the leaders of the CPSU involve our understandings of, and approach to, the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism.'⁶⁴ At an AAPSO Council meeting in March 1964, the Chinese representative again criticised Soviet positions on peaceful coexistence with the US, nuclear disarmament, and the resolution of territorial disputes.⁶⁵

After Khrushchev lost power in October 1964, Zhou visited Moscow to improve relations between the two communist parties. During the visit, the Soviet Defence Minister's suggestion that the CCP overthrow Mao Zedong only further soured relations.⁶⁶ Not surprisingly,

⁵⁹Wang Jiaxiang in 1962: advocated appropriate amount of foreign aid', *CPC News* <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/8641978.html> (accessed March 13, 2018).

⁶⁰Qu Xing, 'Wushi niandaimo zhi liushi niandai Zhongsu guanxi ehua de zhanlue, lilun yu liyi beijing' [The strategy, theory and interest background of the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations between the late 1950s to 1960s], *Foreign Affairs Review* 1 (2000): 15–24; Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970*, 20 and 32–6.

⁶¹Li Qianyu, 'Zhongguo dui yafei renmin tuanjie dahui', 122–4; Liu Ningyi, 'Zai shoudu gejie renmin qingzhu disanjie yafei renmin tuanjie dahui shengli de dahui shang de gongzuo baogao' [Report at the Beijing People's Convention celebrating the victory of the 3rd AAPSO], *People's Daily*, 8 March 1963; Darryl Thomas, 'The Impact of the Sino-Soviet Conflict on the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation: Afro-Asianism versus Non-Alignment, 1955–1966', *Journal of Asian and African Affairs* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 175–9, 184–5, 189; R.K. Ramazani, 'Russia, China and the Afro-Asian Countries', *Mizan Newsletter* 5, no. 3 (1963): 1–10.

⁶²'A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement' (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1963), 13–4.

⁶³For an official description of Zhou's trip see: 'A Visit for Friendship, Solidarity and Peace: Premier Chou En-lai's African Tour', *Peking Review* 6, no. 51 (December 20, 1963): 19–20, translated from *People's Daily* editorial on 14 December 1963. Also see, Julia Strauss, 'The Past in the Present: Historical and Rhetorical Lineages in China's Relations with Africa', *China Quarterly* 199 (2009): 781–2.

⁶⁴'Premier Chou En-lai on the Growing Friendship between the Chinese and African Peoples', *Peking Review* 7, no. 1 (3 January 1964): 41.

⁶⁵Guo Jian, 'Fabiao shengming tongchi Sulian daibiao zaoyao wumie zhizhao fenlie xuyi pohuai yafei tuanjie huiyi cheng-guo' [Statement denouncing the Soviet representatives for making rumours to slander and deliberately destroy the outcome of the AAPSO], *People's Daily*, 30 March 1964.

⁶⁶Wang Taiping, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo wajiaoshi. 1957–1969* [Diplomatic book of the PRC], vol. 2. ed. 1. (Beijing: shijie zhishi, 1998), 259–60.

the fourth and final AAPSO conference in 1965 in Winneba, Ghana, again demonstrated the Sino-Soviet dispute's destructive effect on Afro-Asian solidarity, and led many Africans to conclude that the split was irreconcilable.⁶⁷

4. Maoist people's diplomacy, 1966–69

The Cultural Revolution at the MFA began with a staff meeting on 17 May 1966 – the day after the Central Committee's 16 May Circular kicked off the new political movement. On 6 June, Ji Pengfei, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, told the assembled MFA staff: 'The Foreign Ministry has come to the stage of uncovering the monsters hiding among us. In all likelihood, there are some of them in each unit. It's up to us to find out who they are.' Hinting at his concerns, Ji cautioned the staff 'not to cause losses in our foreign work. Do pay attention to differences between things domestic and foreign.'⁶⁸ A month later, in a statement reminiscent of attacks on Peng, Foreign Minister Chen Yi claimed traitors in the party are conspiring with Moscow:

Khrushchev prepared a *coup d'état* as soon as Stalin died. He succeeded and changed the color of the Soviet Union. The Soviets opposed Lenin by flying the flag of Leninism and opposed the red flag by flying the red flag. They want peaceful coexistence with the American imperialists. They collaborate with the U.S., oppose China and withdraw experts from China, trying to strangle China. They exercise political pressure on China, provoking us at our borders. We suspect that, if a *coup d'état* occurs in Beijing, their troops will come in and support the coup. They want to see a counter-revolutionary *coup d'état*, so that capitalists and landlords can restore their former life; then their Judgement Day would be postponed for a few more years. Their idea is not quite defeated, there is a clique preparing a *coup d'état*. Peng Zhen and his like are against the red flag but they are flying it.⁶⁹

In June, as the MFA prepared for the month-long Urgent Conference of Afro-Asian Writers, intraparty factional conflict threatened to disrupt Africa policy. Amid threats by rebel students to interrupt the conference, Chen deployed tight security to ensure it went smoothly. Chen's attempts to repress the radicals proved short-lived, however. In August 1966, the MFA Red Guards began targeting senior diplomats and ransacking their homes looking for antiques, foreign books, and other 'proof' of their 'crimes.'⁷⁰ Then on 9 September, Chen received a letter criticising the Chinese embassy in Tanzania for holding wasteful banquets, using expensive foreign cars, and rebuking the ambassador's wife for wearing expensive clothing and jewellery. Chen forwarded the letter, and a similar one from Austria, to Mao who responded that evening by ordering him to distribute them to 'all Chinese organs stationed abroad' and instruct them to 'get revolutionised, or it will get

⁶⁷In 1964, the US State Department found that the Sino-Soviet conflict precipitated their competition in Africa. See 'An Outline Guide to Communist Activities in Africa,' declassified research memorandum, 15 May 1964, 2, Declassified Documents Reference System. Also see: CIA, 'Chinese Communist Activities in Africa,' 2, declassified research memorandum (30 April 1965), 2, Declassified Documents Reference System.

⁶⁸For Ji's statement, see Chapter 8 of his biography in Hu Hua, and the Chinese Society on the Research of the Figures in the History of the Chinese Communist Party. *Zhonggong dangshi renwuzhuan* [Figure biographies of the CCP], vol. 77. ed. 1. Shanxi renmin, 1984. See also Zou Yimin, 'Wenge zhong waijiaobu "zaofanpai" de duanzan zhengzhi shengya' [Short political life of rebels in the Foreign Ministry]. University Service Centre For China Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong. <http://mjsh.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/book.aspx?cid=4&tid=2587> (accessed March 13, 2018).

⁶⁹On 27 May 1966, Chen Yi voiced serious concerns about the Cultural Revolution. He told his secretary Du Yi: 'Who is the Khrushchev lying next to us? I myself don't know. How can I explain these things to others?' Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), 14, 97.

⁷⁰Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, 29–31.

very dangerous.’ This warning, known as the September 9 instruction, was disseminated to all MFA staff.⁷¹ Soon afterward, Mao labelled Deputy Party Chairman Liu Shaoqi as ‘China’s Khrushchev,’ replaced him with Lin Biao, and had him held in terrible conditions precipitating his death in 1969.

In early 1967, the CCP leaders recalled one-third of China’s embassy staff and all ambassadors – except Ambassador Huang Hua in Egypt – to Beijing to ‘remould their ideology.’⁷² Upon their return China’s diplomats were assigned to a dilapidated building in the old Foreign Ministry compound where each embassy was assigned an empty room. Sitting on bare floors, they studied documents, held meetings, carried out criticisms, and identified the revisionists, reactionaries, and foreign agents in their midst. This radical ‘reeducation’ programme adversely effected the CCP’s relations with African counterparts. On 12 February 1967, for instance, Chen and Ji were at the airport to greet a delegation from Mauritania and the MFA rebel supervisory team representative insisted on being introduced before Ji. Chen raged at him in front of the African guests: ‘You are a rebel, you rebel against me. What am I, a counter-revolutionary?’⁷³ Another incident occurred on 22 June 1968, when visiting Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, an admirer of Mao, inquired after Chinese Ambassador He Ying who was being reeducated and required Zhou’s permission to join the reception.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, in Africa China’s professional diplomats were replaced by less experienced, more radical, cadres who sought to promulgate Maoism in the countries they served.⁷⁵ These ‘red’ diplomats channelled CCP support toward African revolutionary forces fighting guerrilla wars – a hallmark of Maoism.⁷⁶ CCP relations with African partners changed from rhetorical support, host diplomacy, and limited arms shipments and training for mainstream revolutionary groups in the late 1950s and early 1960s, to fervent support for smaller, more revolutionary splinter groups that supported the Maoist political line in the late 1960s.⁷⁷

With the MFA weakened, the CCP-led people’s organisations including the Bureau of Afro-Asian Writers, the Afro-Asian Journalists Association, and the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organisation gained prominence in Sino-African political relations.⁷⁸ In 1966, for example, Beijing released postage stamps commemorating the Afro-Asian Writers Conference as

⁷¹Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, 73–4. The ‘September 9 Instruction’ also criticised ‘capitalist diplomatic manners’ and clothing.

⁷²Huang Hua, *Qinli yu jianwen: Huang Hua huiyilu* [Personal experiences and knowledge: Huang Hua Memoirs] (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2007), 135–8.

⁷³Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, 105–6.

⁷⁴Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, 307–8. For details of the visit, see ‘Mao Zhuxi he ta de qinmi zhanyou Lin Biao Fuzhuxi jiejian Nyerere Zongtong ji qita Tansangniya pengyou’ [Mao and Lin Biao met with President Nyerere and other Tanzanian friends], *People’s Daily*, 22 June 1968.

⁷⁵Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, 75–6.

⁷⁶Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970*, 157.

⁷⁷Steven Jackson, ‘China’s Third World Foreign Policy: The Case of Angola and Mozambique,’ *China Quarterly* 142 (June 1995): 395. Also see, Bih-jaw Lin, ‘Communist China’s Foreign Policy in Africa: A Historical Review,’ *Issues and Studies* 17, no. 2 (1982): 40.

⁷⁸For more on Chinese policy toward Africa during the Cultural Revolution, see Ogunsanwo, *China’s Policy in Africa 1958–1971*, 180–240; Hutchison, *China’s African Revolution*, 133–61; Wei Liang-Tsai, *Peking versus Taipei in Africa 1960–1978* (Taipei: Asia and World Institute, 1982), 80–103. For an analysis of North Africa, see Shichor, *The Middle East in China’s Foreign Policy 1949–1977*, 125–7, 145–8, 204–5. For more general accounts of Chinese foreign relations during the Cultural Revolution see Harold Hinton, *China’s Turbulent Quest: An Analysis of China’s Foreign Relations Since 1949* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 137–41; George Taylor, ‘Lin Piao and the Third World,’ *Virginia Quarterly Review* 42, no. 1 (Winter 1966): 1–11; Barbara Barnouin and Yu Changgen, *Chinese Foreign Policy During the Cultural Revolution* (London: Kegan Paul, 1998), 6–7, 47; Long Xiangyang, ‘1966–1969 nian Zhongguo yu feizhou guanxi chutan’ [On the Sino-African relationship from 1966 to 1969], in *Beida feizhou yanjiu congshu: Zhongguo yu feizhou* [Peking University series studies of Africa: China and Africa] (Beijing: Peking University Centre for African Studies, 2000): 72–86.

the vanguard of anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle.⁷⁹ By contrast, during the Cultural Revolution Islam-based outreach was halted. Starting in 1966 with the ‘Four Olds’ campaign many mosques were closed or destroyed along with countless holy manuscripts. Muslims who resisted were imprisoned or worse and nearly all in government were purged.⁸⁰

During this period, CCP propaganda exaggerated Maoism’s influence among African political organisations, portraying the Great Helmsman shepherding a flock of African revolutionaries. In October 1966, the CCP Central Committee ordered that the dissemination of *The Quotations of Chairman Mao* become the foremost task of all embassies.⁸¹ On 9 December 1967 the *People’s Daily* reported: ‘More and more of the oppressed African nations are recognising that Mao Zedong Thought is their strongest weapon for gaining true independence, and armed struggle is their road to gaining liberation in Congo, Mozambique, Angola and “Portuguese” Guinea.’⁸² The purpose was to demonstrate Maoism’s universal applicability, and secure the chairman’s place within the pantheon of communist leaders alongside Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. Revolutionary rhetoric cost nothing, so if an African group rebelled, the CCP could provide political support and modest arms deliveries.⁸³ By proclaiming that anti-colonial conflicts were Maoist revolutions, the CCP overstated its influence among African revolutionary groups even as the Cultural Revolution diminished its capacity to engage them effectively.⁸⁴

Ultimately, CCP support for militant revolutionaries in Kenya, Uganda, Zanzibar, Senegal, Cameroon, Niger, and the Congo failed. Radical African leaders, including Ahmed Ben Bella in Algeria, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, and Modibo Keita in Mali, were replaced by more moderate leaders, placing Beijing in the awkward position of opposing established African governments. Many African governments became distrustful of the CCP, and several even broke diplomatic relations and expelled Chinese diplomats for subversion.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the CCP leadership became disillusioned with radical African liberation movements, which it came to view as ineffectual.⁸⁶ During a meeting with Major Alfred Raoul of the National Council for Revolution for the Congo (Brazzaville) in September 1969 Zhou candidly admitted: ‘We have much less understanding with Africa than we did in 1963, 1964, and 1965.’⁸⁷

⁷⁹‘Urgent Afro-Asian Writers’ Conference,’ 1966. For stamp image see <http://www.xabusiness.com/china-stamps-1966/c119.htm> (accessed March 13, 2018).

⁸⁰Xu Zhigao ed., *Wenge shigao* [History of the Cultural Revolution], vol. 2 (n.p.: World Chinese Publishing, n.d.), 389–90.

⁸¹Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, 152–3. Wang Taiping, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiao shi. 1957–1969* [Diplomatic book of the PRC], 11.

⁸²‘Zai zhanwu busheng de Mao Zedong sixiang zhiyinixia, feizhou geming renmin fadi wuzhuang douzheng shenru fazhan’ [Under the guidance of invincible Mao Zedong thought, African revolutionary people have furthered the development of anti-imperialism armed struggle], *People’s Daily*, 9 December 1967.

⁸³Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949–1970*, 156.

⁸⁴Li Liqing, ‘Zhongguo yu heifeizhou zhengdang jiaoyu de lishi yu xianzhuang’ [Chinese Communist Party’s contacts with [Black] African political parties: a history and status quo], 16.

⁸⁵Kenya, for instance, declared China’s chargé d’affaires *persona non-grata*. For the CCP response, see ‘Kenniya zhengfu wuli yaoqiu wodaiban lijing, siyi ehua liangguo guanxi, wo waijiaobu xiang Kenniya zhengfu tichu zuiqianglie kangyi’ [The Kenyan government unreasonably demanded Chinese chargé d’affaires to leave the country, wantonly worsening relations between the two countries, Chinese Foreign Ministry lodged the strongest protest against the Government of Kenya], *People’s Daily*, 2 July 1967.

⁸⁶El-Khawas, ‘The Development of China’s Foreign Policy Toward Africa, 1955–1972’, 137. Li Anshan, ‘China and Africa: Policy and Challenges’, *China Security* 3, no. 3 (2007): 72. Piet Konings, ‘China and Africa’, *Journal of Developing Societies* 23, 3 (2007): 345; Ma, Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, 306–51.

⁸⁷Zhou Enlai *Nianpu* (Note 7), 324.

5. Return to normalcy, 1970–76

As intraparty struggles abated, the CCP's relations with African political organisations were normalised. In 1969, Mao directed four prominent CCP officials – the so-called 'Four Marshals' – to produce a report on foreign affairs. In July, they recommended that Beijing enhance its international engagement. To expand the 'international united front of anti-imperialism and anti-revisionism,' they wrote, 'we should enhance our embassies and consulates in other countries, and actively carry out diplomatic activities.'⁸⁸ The CCP initiated policy changes that 'emphasised the differentiation between domestic and foreign affairs,' and Chinese diplomats were returned to Africa to rebuild political partnerships.⁸⁹ From 1970 to 1976, China provided more money (mostly loans) to Africa than the Soviet Union – \$1.8 billion to 28 African countries compared to the Soviet Union's \$1 billion to 20 states.⁹⁰ Over the same period, more than 20 African countries established diplomatic ties with the PRC.⁹¹ Between 1971, when the PRC, with ample African support, was able to claim China's UN seat, and 1975, Beijing hosted 16 African heads of government.⁹²

The normalisation of CCP relations with African partners in the 1970s reflected its gradual transformation from a revolutionary to a ruling party; a domestic transition that reoriented its approach to Africa. The CCP no longer touted itself as the centre of world revolution, and became willing 'to grant ideological autonomy, and when African countries seemed to embark on a policy closely akin to Chinese thinking, Peking refrained from claiming that the Africans were following a Maoist path,' Eugene Lawson observed.⁹³ At the National Conference on Foreign Affairs in May 1971, Zhou criticised the 'self-glorification, use of inappropriate language, the language of exaggeration, to impose China's ideas on

⁸⁸Report by Four Chinese Marshals to the Central Committee, 11 July 1969, in CWIHPB, no. 11 (Winter 1998), 166–8. The Four Marshals – Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, Nie Rongzhen, and Xu Xiangqian – each received the title 'marshal' for military service on behalf of the CCP.

⁸⁹For a detailed description of the normalisation of Chinese foreign policy at this time see Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, 307–22.

⁹⁰After 1976, however, Chinese assistance to Africa declined precipitously. Philip Snow, 'China and Africa: Consensus and Camouflage,' in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 295–6, 306. Also see Liu Hongwu, 'Zhongfei guanxi sanshinian,' 83–4; Li Anshan, 'Lun Zhongguo dui Feizhou zhengce de tiaoshi yu zhuanbian' [On the adjustment and transformation of China's African policy], *West Asia and Africa* 8 (2006): 14–5.

⁹¹In 1969, Chinese ambassadors returned to Guinea, the Congo, Tanzania, and Mauritania; in 1970, Mali and Somalia; in 1971, Morocco and Algeria; in 1972, Ghana, Uganda, Burundi, Tunisia, and Zambia; in 1973, Zaire and Benin; in 1974, Kenya, and in 1976, the Central African Republic. In 1970, China established diplomatic relations with Equatorial Guinea and Ethiopia; in 1971, Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and Senegal; in 1972, Mauritius, Togo, Madagascar, and Chad; in 1973, Burkina Faso; in 1974 Guinea-Bissau, Gabon, Niger, and the Gambia; in 1975, Botswana, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, and the Comoros; and in 1976, Cape Verde and the Seychelles. Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, 320–2.

⁹²Examples of reports on CCP meetings with African political leaders in the early 1970s include 'Relie huanying Aisaiebiya guibin' [A warm welcome to Ethiopian guest, Emperor Haile Selassie], *People's Daily* editorial, 16 October 1971; 'Zhou zongli juxing shengda yanhui relie huanying Kawengda zongtong he furen' [Premier Zhou Enlai held a grand banquet to warmly welcome President of Zambia Kaunda and his wife], *People's Daily*, 22 February 1974; 'Relie huanying Nileier zongtong' [A warm welcome to President Nyerere of Tanzania], *People's Daily* editorial, March 24, 1974; 'Nuyila zongli li Tunisi qianlai woguo fangwen' [Primer Minister of Tunisia Nouira came to visit China], *People's Daily*, 1 April 1975; 'Relie huanying Bangge zongtong' [A warm welcome to President Bongo of Gabon], *People's Daily* editorial, 27 June 1975. For a CCP perspective on political relations in Africa in the mid-1970s, see He Wenping, 'Moving Forward with the Time,' 4. For Taipei's perspective on Beijing's approach during this period see Chang Ya-chun, *Chinese Communist Activities in Africa—Policies and Challenges* (Taipei: World Anti-Communist League, April 1981); Chang Ya-chun, 'Peiping's African Policy in the 1970s,' *Issues and Studies* 17, no. 2 (February 1981). Western studies include George T. Yu, 'Africa in Chinese Foreign Policy,' *Asian Survey* 28, no. 8 (August 1988): 855; 'On Current Chinese Communist Relations with the Third World,' *Issues and Studies* 18, no. 11 (November 1982): 71–82; John Copper, 'The PRC and the Third World: Rhetoric versus Reality,' *Issues and Studies* 22, no. 3 (March 1986): 110–3.

⁹³Eugene Lawson, 'China's Policy in Ethiopia and Angola,' in *Soviet and Chinese Aid to African Nations*, ed. Warren Weinstein and Thomas H. Henriksen (New York: Praeger, 1980), 172.

others,' and called for the CCP to begin working with organisations across the political spectrum:

China is in a new situation. Foreign affairs work should therefore be somewhat different than in the past. There should be changes. In the Cultural Revolution, China almost severed relations with many countries, and activities in many areas were suspended. Now things will go differently. Not only foreign Leftists will come, but middle-of-the-roaders will come, and some Rightists will also come. We must adapt ourselves to the new situation.⁹⁴

Zhou's speech paved the way for the CCP to build relations with several conservative African governments. In October 1971 and January 1973, for instance, Mao hosted Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie and Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, respectively.⁹⁵ The party stopped supporting revolutionary groups seeking to overthrow independent African governments – with the exception of Ethiopia – but continued to assist liberation movements fighting colonial and white-ruled governments.⁹⁶ The Sino-Soviet split remained the primary, often the only, determinate of which African organisations received Chinese largesse. In Maoist terms, the CPSU was the CCP's 'primary contradiction' and the United States, although still 'imperialist,' became a temporary partner in a united front against the 'social-imperialist' Soviet Union.⁹⁷ This political and rhetorical shift was fully implemented following the mysterious death of Lin Biao in September 1971 after yet another alleged Soviet supported coup attempt.⁹⁸

The US, for its part, helped to facilitate China's new policy. As Gregg Brazinsky has observed: 'America's new willingness to support rather than undermine Beijing's status in international affairs enabled the two countries to shift from competition to limited cooperation against the Soviets.'⁹⁹ In Angola, for instance, China cooperated with the US and South Africa's apartheid regime to aid UNITA and FNLA against the Soviet and Cuban backed MPLA. Similarly, in Sudan, a failed coup in 1971 by army officers sympathetic to the Soviet-backed Sudanese Communist Party resulted in the execution of the conspirators. Rather than support the Sudanese communists, however, Zhou praised Khartoum for 'victoriously smashing a foreign subversive plot.'¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China*, 314.

⁹⁵Weida lingxiu Mao zhuxi huijian Haier Sailaxi yishi huangdi bixia, Mao zhuxi dui Haier sailaxi yishi huangdi bixia qianlai woguo jinxing guoshi fangwen biaoshi relie huanying' [Greater Leader Chairman Mao met Haile Selassie I and expressed warm welcome for his state visit to China], *People's Daily*, 9 October 1971; 'Woguo renmin weida lingxiu Mao zhuxi huijian Mobotuo zongtong, dui Mobotuo zongtong qianlai woguo jinxing guoshi fangwen, biaoshi relie huanying' [Great Leader Chairman Mao met President Mobutu and expressed warm welcome for his state visit to China], *People's Daily*, 14 January 1973.

⁹⁶CIA, 'What the Communists are Up to in Black Africa,' He Wenping, 'Zhongguo yu feizhou guanxi lishinian' [The sixty years of Sino-African relations], in *Zhongguo duiwai guanxi: huigu yu sikao (1949–2009)* [Review and analysis of China's foreign relations (1949–2009)], ed. Zhang Yunling (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Academic Press, 2009), 69–70.

⁹⁷Shu Jianguo, 'Mao Zedong 'fandi fanxiu' fanjiao zhanlue de neihan jiqi shijian xiaoying' [The meaning and practical effects of Mao Zedong's 'anti-imperialist and anti-revisionist' diplomacy], *Journal of Nanchang University* 39, no. 3 (2008).

⁹⁸In an interview on 27 November 1972 Zhou suggested that the Lin Biao affair delayed China's foreign policy shift when he said: 'We may say that 1969 was the turning point in Sino-US relations. However, it was delayed for domestic reasons.' See Li Ping, Ma Zhisun, and Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiushi (ed.), *Zhou Enlai Nianpu 1949–76* [A Chronicle of Zhou Enlai, 1949–76], vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhonggong Wenxian Chubanshe, 1997), 564.

⁹⁹Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World Sino-American Rivalry during the Cold War*, 11.

¹⁰⁰Zhou Enlai, 'Zai huanying Sudan zhengfu gaoji daibiaotuan yanhui shangde jianghua' [Speech at the banquet in welcoming the high-level delegations of the Sudanese government], *People's Daily*, 18 December 1971.

6. Conclusion

During the Mao era, the CCP's Africa policy was held hostage to domestic political struggles among leadership factions. During times of relative party cohesion, exchanges and support from African political organisations served to affirm the regime's international legitimacy vis-à-vis its rival in Taipei and Maoism's legitimacy vis-à-vis 'revisionism' at home and abroad. During times of intense factional struggle, however, notions of the national interest were subjugated to the most primordial human instinct: self-preservation. During the Cultural Revolution, seasoned CCP foreign affairs leaders, including Zhou and Chen, understood that aggressive revolutionary diplomacy would not enhance CCP legitimacy or effectively counter the Soviets, yet they implemented it anyway. They were among thousands of CCP cadres that knowingly sacrificed China's international status and 'caused losses in foreign work' because ultimately their fate, and that of their families, was more closely tied to politics in Beijing than to the quality of CCP relations with African political organisations.

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