CHINA AFTER THE SINO-SOVET SPLIT: MAOIST POLITICS, GLOBAL NARRATIVES, AND THE IMAGINATION OF THE WORLD

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By

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the global dimensions of politics and culture in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) from 1962 to 1972. Beginning in 1962, the PRC articulated a socialist modernity that positioned Chinese politics as a model for revolutionary struggle around the world. The CCP used global symbols and global events to shape this new socialist modernity and to inform everyday politics. Global symbols were conveyed through rhetoric, propaganda, political speeches, mass meetings rallies, and Chinese and student newspapers. The Chinese Communist Party furthermore assiduously recorded every anecdote, testimonial, or story that supposedly demonstrated China’s importance around the world. These stories were then archived and used as irrefutable evidence of the PRC’s global significance. Global symbols also became political currency during this period, and were used to exert power and claim legitimacy. This is especially true during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Chinese students, who formed into Red Guard units, claimed that global radicalism flowed from the Cultural Revolution. African liberation movements, the French student movement, and the war in Vietnam were all positioned as offshoots of the Cultural Revolution. Mass campaigns like the Cultural Revolution were therefore imbued with international significance, which raised the stakes for their success and contributed to their chaos.
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parents instilled in me the true and utter joy of learning. I thank them for their example and I share this dissertation with them.

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Introduction

The World in the People’s Republic of China

China’s Communist Revolution did not occur in a vacuum nor was it sealed by the borders of the Chinese state. Like any revolution of its size it was a global event. The repercussions of the Chinese revolution reverberated around the world, threw American foreign policy into disarray, and largely changed the direction of the Cold War. Global events also informed and shaped the Chinese revolution. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Mao Zedong used global events, symbols, and narratives to mold their ideology. Central to this ideology was the way in which the CCP used global machinations – particularly Western and Japanese imperialist aggression in China – to shape its identity and to convey the meaning of communism to the Chinese people. Global symbols became inexorably entangled with Chinese politics and culture, and the history of the PRC was defined by China’s understanding of the world and its place in that world.

And yet, there are moments in modern Chinese history when the People’s Republic of China (PRC) appeared insular and detached from the outside world. One of those moments came in the 1960s, especially during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution was the most devastating campaign of the Maoist era. The movement tore individual families, schools, villages, town, and cities apart, and brought the country to the brink of civil war. Children turned against their parents, students against their teachers, all the while viciously attacking Chinese culture. The Cultural Revolution was so massive that the impact of the campaign continues to reverberate into the present. In China today the shadow of the Cultural
Revolution looms large and the memory of the movement continues to dictate how scholars and the Chinese people understand the Maoist period. The Cultural Revolution has also become an important tool for legitimizing the current policies of the CCP. ¹ It has also become synonymous with China’s isolation. The economic reforms launched by Deng Xiaoping in 1979 were predicated on the idea that China was finally opening up to the world. Since then, most officials have intimated that abandoning Deng’s reforms would plunge China back into the days of the Cultural Revolution when China was supposedly isolated and torn asunder by factional strife. Such ideas were reinforced by the Party’s 1981 “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of our Party Since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China,” which praised many of Mao Zedong’s accomplishments, but condemned the madness of the Cultural Revolution.² Even now, the CCP’s propaganda stands in stark and deliberate contrast to the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution. Today, the Party promotes “harmony” (和) and “civility” (文明), as opposed to Mao’s “chaos” (乱) and the Red Guards’ proclivity to “criticize” (批评) and “smash” (打破) their enemies.

The way that the Cultural Revolution is viewed in Chinese society today has entombed the movement. The Cultural Revolution is trapped in the past but not actually a part of China’s history.³ In many ways, to interrogate this period of China’s history is to challenge the legitimacy of the party. For this reason, the Cultural Revolution has become ossified in China, and the way that this movement is remembered has conformed to the contours of the state. Namely, the state has promoted a rigid dichotomy between a period when China was “open,” modern, and capitalist, and a period when China was “closed,” isolated, and extreme. This is a

² According to the text, the Cultural Revolution was a “grave blunder” that hindered the development of the PRC.
dialectical relationship. By associating Deng Xiaoping’s reforms with “opening up,” the Party depends on the perception that China was secluded in the 1960s, especially during the Cultural Revolution.4

It seems common sense to say that no country can simply disappear from the face of the earth, and China is no exception. This dissertation expressly interrogates the notion that the Chinese state or the Chinese people somehow quarantined themselves from the world in the 1960s. I argue that while China may not have been a part of the world, the world was a part of China. This is a dissertation about culture and politics, and about how the world was manipulated and imbued with meaning to serve the ideological demands of mass movements in the PRC. It specifically focuses on the period between the Sino-Soviet split and American rapprochement (1962-1972), which is usually considered to be China’s period of greatest isolation.5 Bridging the cleavage between isolation and China’s global discourses requires a paradigm shift. This dissertation contends that questions of “openness” and “closed” stem from a bygone Cold War era and need to be discarded in favor of a more nuanced approach. Instead of accepting Chinese isolation, I argue that global symbols and images became integral to Chinese politics during this period, and were used as a means to claim legitimacy by the CCP and the Red Guards, to assert power over disparate groups, to criticize supposedly reactionary and revisionist elements in Chinese society, and to elevate Mao Zedong and his cult of personality to a global level.

Furthermore, these global symbols and images were amalgamated with familiar Maoist codes to

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4 Today, Deng Xiaoping’s reforms are referred as the period of gaige kaifang (改革开放) – literally “reform and open-up.” This has also become a short-hand for the transition of Chinese society following the death of Mao Zedong. Although Deng’s reforms were mostly economic rather than political, gaige kaifang has also taken on social and cultural meanings.

5 So obvious was China’s isolation that in 1962, during the 7,000 cadres conference, Mao was forced to finally recognize the elephant in the world. In a speech to the assembled group of young comrades, Mao stated “I myself don’t feel isolated. In this room there are over 7,000 people (all members of the CCP); how can one be isolated with over 7,000 people?” Quoted in Roderick MacFarquhar: The Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961-1966 (New York, Columbia University Press, 1997), 134.
form a combination that was simultaneously global and Chinese. This internationalized Chinese politics during the 1960s raised the stakes of mass campaigns to a global level and played into the chaos that engulfed Chinese society, especially during the Cultural Revolution.

Of course this was not the first time in which global symbols were deployed to assert political power in the PRC. From Tiananmen Square’s Monument to the People’s Heroes\(^6\) to the Korean War\(^7\) and the Bandung Conference,\(^8\) the CCP has always depended on China’s global identity to shape and mold political discourses in the PRC. Indeed, the sinews of the PRC were sown in China’s “century of humiliation,” a period between the 1840s and the 1940s in which the West (and later Japan) essentially created a semi-colonial system in China. As Chi-kwan Mark points out,

Another irony [of China’s nation identity] was that, while repudiating the legacies of the ‘century of humiliation,’ the CCP was keen to use the past to serve the present. During the Maoist era, the memory of ‘national humiliation’ was

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\(^6\) Tiananmen Square’s Monument to the People’s Heroes, which depicts the eight pivotal events that led to the rise of the Chinese Communist Party, begins with the Opium War, an international event that represented China’s first major conflict with the European powers. The panels that followed depict a similar theme. Both the May 4th and May 30th movements received their own treatment; both were noted for their anti-imperialist militancy. The final event depicted in the monument is the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in the Civil War. The monument itself provides two solid bookmarks in modern Chinese history. China’s crisis began with imperialist encroachment, and ended with the rise of the CCP and the birth of the PRC. Since then, the monument has acted as a “state-sponsored repository of the national memory.” Within this national memory is a lingering question about China’s place in the world and its international relationships. Globality thus became inscribed in the national memory, and the national myth of the People’s Republic of China. See For a discussion of the Monument to the People’s Heroes, see: Hung Chang-tai, Mao’s New World: Political Culture in the Early People’s Republic (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2011), 245; 253.

\(^7\) China’s participation in the Korean War set the stage for the CCP’s new cosmology. It also provided an opportunity to use international events for domestic purposes, The Korean War fundamentally reoriented not just China’s understanding of the world, but also its domestic politics. By entering the Korean War, Mao had “built revolutionary momentum,” and consolidated the party’s rule over the Chinese population. Victory in the war “laid the basis for China’s long-term transformation.” Because of the war, discourses of militancy and vigilance against foreign adversaries became commonplace in the PRC. See Chen, Jian, China’s Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation, U.S. and Pacific Asia--studies in Social, Economic, and Political Interaction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 129.

promoted to indoctrinate and mobilize the Chinese people against foreign enemies, notably the United States.\(^9\)

China’s understanding of the world changed over time. During the Maoist period, the world became a malleable cultural symbol that was especially effective in conducting politics. While this dissertation recognizes the historical continuation of global discourses developed before the founding of the PRC – especially anti-imperialist tropes – I also argue that the nature of global symbols changed in the 1960s. This was largely due to the crisis engendered by the Great Leap Forward and by the Sino-Soviet split. The latter was especially important. Since its founding, the PRC had always depicted the Soviet Union in halcyon terms. While the actual relationship between the PRC and the Soviet Union varied, and while Soviet influence in China is sometimes overstated, Chinese propaganda nonetheless treated the Soviet Union as a model. Propaganda in the 1950s specifically declared that the Soviet Union’s today would be China’s tomorrow. That tomorrow was presented in the brightest language, and propaganda suggested that if China followed the Soviet path the country and its people would eventually realize an idyllic communist society. In a sense, this created a linear modernity in the PRC that depended on the Soviet Union for its own sustainability. When relations between the two countries soured in 1956 and turned hostile in the early 1960s, that conceptualization of modernity was no longer viable.

The Sino-Soviet split produced a new worldview in which China was seen as a model for communist development. In order to cultivate this new worldview and to convey the meaning of global symbols to the Chinese people, the CCP relied on a complicated mix of codes, images, propaganda, rhetorical cues, newspapers, and a host of other cultural tactics.\(^10\) The sum total of

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\(^10\) Elizabeth Perry emphasizes the importance of “cultural positioning” in getting the Chinese people to “embrace revolutionary authority.” Indeed, using culture had been a key strategy of the CCP since the party’s founding in
these cultural symbols and codes produced what I call global narratives. Throughout this dissertation I will use the term global narratives to refer to the various ways in which the CCP and the Red Guards packaged and disseminated global symbols. When taken together, these global narratives articulated a Sinocentric socialist modernity that was intended for both domestic and global consumption. Global narratives gave meaning to the world by framing global events in a familiar Maoist context. The CCP, however, maintained control over global narratives. Rather than letting international events affect the PRC without regard for their impact, the CCP repackaged the globe into a tightly controlled discourse. This was accomplished by “Sinifying” the outside world, and using familiar Chinese codes and symbols to contextualize global events. Global narratives thus became more accessible and more easily incorporated into Chinese society.

Global narratives were varied and took on multiple forms during the 1960s. Moreover, these narratives often changed over time, and were especially subject to the vicissitudes of Chinese politics. As I will discuss, the global narratives used in the early 1960s were deployed to different ends during the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, we may identify certain characteristics of these global narratives that remained relatively constant throughout the decade. First, global narratives were Sinocentric. The CCP vested the hope for global revolutionary change in Chinese politics, and positioned the PRC as the model for radicalism around the world. This created the notion that any revolutionary action or mass campaign in Chinese society had global repercussions. Likewise, global radicalism was viewed as the continuation of Chinese politics abroad. Second, these narratives were specifically Maoist in nature. Global narratives

1921. In the 1960s, however, the CCP used global narratives as another cultural signified that conveyed the new reality of the post-Soviet world. Culture proved a powerful weapon in disseminating ideas in Chinese society. Elizabeth J. Perry Anyuan: Mining China’s Revolutionary Tradition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 4-5.
promoted Mao Zedong not just as a Chinese leader, but as a global icon of monumental importance. Third, global narratives were both anti-revisionist and anti-imperialist in nature. They drew not only on China’s historical experiences with imperialist aggression, but also on the ramifications of the Sino-Soviet split. Global narratives in the 1960s were especially animated by anti-revisionism. Lastly, global narratives were shaped by the events of the 1960s. The world in the 1960s proved itself to be commensurate with the direction of Chinese politics. This is because the greatest upsurge of leftist political movements since the end of World War II occurred in the 1960s. What motivated many radical students during this period was a desire to find an alternative to Soviet communism, the horrors of which became apparent after the end of the Stalinist period. Students who rejected the Soviet Union became known as the New Left, and spent much of the decade debating an alternative to Stalinism. Many settled on Mao Zedong and the politics of the People’s Republic of China. Moreover, Mao Zedong himself became a global hero for many leftists groups in the 1960s. These activists were particularly interested in Mao’s theories on guerrilla warfare and constructing a mass society. Moreover, events like the Vietnam War, Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe, and the obstinacy of entrenched white power in the United States provided fodder for China’s global radicalism. In short, the events of the 1960s made China’s worldview more plausible and easier to sustain. It also allowed the CCP to

claim that only by following China’s example could oppressed people free themselves from imperialism, revisionism, colonialism, and white racism.

For a historian, global narratives can be overwhelming. These narratives are unyielding, grandiose, and hyperbolic, and they grossly overstate the importance of the PRC around the world. Rather than taking global narratives at face value, I deconstruct my sources and reveal embedded meanings within many of these discourses. I am especially interested in how global narratives were constructed and the place they occupied in everyday politics. My goal is to understand how the various groups, including the Red Guards and the CCP, used global narratives to claim legitimacy and assert power. At no point do I take global narratives at face value, and I am wary about falling victim to their claims. Instead, I treat global narratives as a discourse that was created with a specific agenda in mind.

And yet, global narratives were not a complete figment of the CCP’s imagination. Despite the ostensible isolation of the Chinese state during the 1960s, a number of foreigners still visited the PRC, and some Chinese people had ample opportunities to read foreigner literature, so long as it did not conflict with Mao Zedong Thought. Many of the foreigners who visited China during the 1960s proclaimed an admiration for Chinese society and for the CCP. Reports of these visits populated both the official and the Red Guard press, and were used as evidence to show that Mao Zedong and the CCP enjoyed broad support in the world. However, many of these claims were manipulated and extrapolated. The CCP and the Red Guards tended to essentialize and homogenize foreigners into ethnic, racial, and geographical categories. When

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12 For example, many Chinese students read Sartre in the 1960s. During the Cultural Revolution, two of the most popular foreign books were Jack Kerouac’s On the Road and J.D. Salinger’s Catcher in the Rye. See Paul Clark, The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History. (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2008), 228.

13 Most notable was the steady flow of African American activists who came to China in the 1960s. This began with W.E.B. Dubois, and continued with Robert F. Williams (who lived in China during the Cultural Revolution), Eldridge Cleaver, and Huey Newton. A number of other people, including from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe, also visited the PRC. Their experiences are the subject of a future chapter.
African leftists, for example, claimed ideological inspiration from Mao Zedong the CCP used this as evidence that all African people supported the PRC. The Red Guards followed suit, infusing their rhetoric with hyperbole and grandiosity that made it appear as if the Cultural Revolution was the catalyst for leftist protest movements around the world. Throughout this dissertation, I therefore treat global narratives with caution, and acknowledge that while these narratives were based in some truth, they were also exaggerated, manipulated, or even imagined.

While this dissertation focuses a great deal on the characteristics of global narratives and the means by which these narratives were constructed, I am also interested in the ways by which these global narratives were communicated to the Chinese people. On the surface, it appears that global narratives were intended for the outside world. However, based on a variety of Chinese sources, it is clear that these global narratives were also meant for domestic consumption. The ways in which these narratives were constructed and distributed offers important insight into how power was exercised in the PRC during the 1960s, about the role that discourse played in establishing and maintaining this power, and in the implicit ways in which the CCP used culture to convey certain ideas to the public. For the purposes of this introduction, I have identified four primary means by which global narratives were communicated to the Chinese public. These methods include: using text and political speeches; by establishing rigid categories used to define foreigners; reinforcing these categories through political protests and mass meetings; and finally, by assiduously recording and archiving any instance of support among foreign leftists.

For many Chinese people, the world appeared only in the form of text during the 1960s. This text was highly controlled by the CCP, and often conveyed a pre-approved political message. This means that textual sources from the PRC exuded a specific ideology that was to be transmitted to the Chinese people. I attempt to uncover the embedded meanings within these
texts so as to better understand how global symbols became a vehicle for specific political campaigns and for certain group’s claims of legitimacy. Indeed, text was a political weapon, and news about foreign events contained various codes that were intended to help the reader understand China’s importance around the world. The messages in these textual sources were greatly aided by various taxonomies and categories that were generated specifically to describe foreigners. Faced with the cataclysm of the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, the CCP developed a host of new categories for foreigners so that the Chinese people could easily distinguish between friend and foe.\textsuperscript{14} Foreign visitors, dignitaries, and entire countries were therefore filed into neat categories that were then placed into a rigid hierarchy. This hierarchy largely depended on how close one was to the Soviet Union, and how supportive a person or country was of the PRC. Through these categories, the CCP was able not only to map and order the world along Chinese political lines, but they were also able to construct accessible groupings that were easy to understand and that helped Chinese people correctly interpret the outside world.

These categories were emphasized at various political rallies and mass gatherings that punctuated daily life in the PRC in the 1960s. People were constantly pressed into attending ceremonies and rallies through their work unit, especially in cities like Beijing. By and large, these rallies were not spontaneous. Nevertheless, they reinforced many of the categories that were laid out by the CCP following the Sino-Soviet split. For those who attended these rallies also offered a primer of the world, and were a quick shot way of communicating which countries were friendly toward the PRC, and which harbored revisionist or imperialist designs. They also brought specific issues to the fore of Chinese society. Following the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in 1964, for example, several rallies were held in Beijing condemning American imperialism in

\textsuperscript{14} The CCP used a similar tactic in the early years of the PRC, especially as applied to its own people. Officials thought that the easiest way to help the Chinese people grasp the basics of Communism was to establish a rigid set of categories in order to divide up society into “red” and “black” classes. White (1986).
Southeast Asia. At other times, the CCP organized rallies to recognize important anniversaries or to celebrate communist holidays like the October Revolution. These rallies also conveyed a rigid global hierarchy that implicitly promoted foreign friends, while heavily criticizing the Soviet Union and its allies. Rallies therefore became another means to assert global categories and to reinforce the idea that China was the most advanced socialist country in the world.

Perhaps the most potent of the tactics used to convey global narratives was a sustained archival project. The goal of this project was to record, preserve, and report every anecdote, story, or piece of news that detailed the PRC’s importance among leftists and other revolutionaries around the world. Both the CCP and the Red Guards transformed a portion of their newspapers into repositories for global narratives. Entire sections of these newspapers were dedicated solely to stories about the various ways in which Mao Zedong or the PRC had enlightened foreigners or inspired them to action. The CCP also printed pamphlets and other volumes that quoted foreigners at length about how much they respected and admired Mao Zedong. Several Red Guard groups took to reprinting letters from foreigners that praised the Cultural Revolution and Mao Zedong himself. This archival project, however, went beyond newspapers. The CCP spent a good deal of energy writing reports on foreign visitors who came to the PRC in the 1960s. Officials filled these documents with stories about how impressed foreigners were with the PRC’s development, and about how inspired these foreigners were by the resolve of the Chinese people, their class consciousness, and their commitment to the Chinese revolution. These reports were often held up as incontrovertible evidence that the PRC had eclipsed the Soviet Union as the most powerful socialist state in the world. More significantly, during events like the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards used foreign anecdotes and stories to spur their comrades to action, suggesting that failure in the Cultural Revolution would be a global disaster. Through these
reports the Red Guards internationalized the Cultural Revolution and imbued their actions with a universal significance.

Having defined global narratives, the means through which they were constructed, and how they were communicated to the general public, I now turn to the question of why. Why did global symbols and narratives become so important in Chinese society during the 1960s? The fact is that a series of internal disasters and external developments meant that the 1960s was a perilous time for the CCP, perhaps the most dangerous in the party’s history. The Great Leap Forward wreaked havoc on the country and in some ways delegitimized the Party and Mao Zedong himself. Furthermore, the Sino-Soviet split profoundly impacted Chinese mentalities, Chinese nationalism, and Chinese concepts of modernity. The Soviet Union had always been championed as China’s tomorrow; the fact that the country had supposedly abandoned revolution voided this claim. It unhinged China from the Soviet world, and forced the CCP to reassess the basic ways in which the Chinese state understood and interacted with the world, and how the state positioned itself among leftists during the 1960s. In this period of crisis, global symbols were a means by which China could stake out its claim in the world, and move past the influence of the Soviet Union. Global narratives therefore became an important vehicle by which the CCP articulated a purely Sinocentric communist vision. As Roderick MacFarquhar notes, “Mao

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15 The blow to Mao’s power was best represented at the 7,000 cadres conference, which was held soon after the Great Leap Forward ended. At this conference Mao was forced to make his own self-criticism in which he admitted some of the mistakes he made during the Leap. He also urged his colleagues not to be afraid of criticism from the masses, and generally set a tone that was more humble. Following the conference he also relinquished some of the day-to-day decision making of the state to his comrade Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. For more, see MacFarquhar (1997), 169.

16 The actual relationship between the Soviet Union and the PRC varied from year to year, and the two countries were never as close as propaganda suggested. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union was an important tool in articulating the meaning of communism. The impact of the Soviets on Chinese policy may have been similiarly exaggerated; nevertheless, the Soviet Union was a mainstay of Chinese culture. In the city of Guangdong, for example, the Sino-Soviet friendship alliance claimed that it held 3,000 discussion sessions and screened 700 Soviet films in the year 1949 alone. For more, see Christian A. Hess, “Big Brother is Watching: Local Sino-Soviet Relations and the Building of New Dalian, 1945-55,” in Jeremy Brown and Paul G. Pickowicz Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People’s Republic of China (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 178.
regarded the break with the Russians as a ‘second liberation’ of China, leaving the CCP free to chart its own ideological course.\textsuperscript{17} This transformed these global narratives into a weapon that was used both by the CCP and the Red Guards to claim and maintain political legitimacy. This also made global narratives all the more powerful in Chinese society, and sustained the internationalism that characterized this decade. In the end, these narratives fit perfectly with the Cultural Revolution and with Chinese politics during the 1960s, and came to shape who the Red Guards were and what they thought they were doing.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{The International Situation and the Making of the Sixties}

Although global narratives were controlled by the CCP, they were not created in a vacuum. Several international events, including the Sino-Soviet split and the Cold War, precipitated and impacted how global narratives operated in Chinese society. Understanding these global narratives requires an analysis of the world in the 1960s. As I have mentioned, the Sino-Soviet split had a major impact on how global narratives were deployed in Chinese society. In his study of the Sino-Soviet split, Li Mingjiang notes the need for further research that explores how “domestic politics impacted the Sino-Soviet rift, and makes more explicit the causal mechanisms between factors on the domestic and international level.”\textsuperscript{19} Li’s goal is to determine how Chinese politics impinged on the Sino-Soviet relationship. My goal is the opposite; I intend to discuss how the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet split altered the Chinese worldview and thereby affected domestic politics throughout the 1960s. Rather than seeing the creation of a new worldview as a matter of foreign policy, I have chosen not to separate domestic politics and the development of new global narratives. The interaction between domestic and

\textsuperscript{17} MarFarquhar (1997), 21.
\textsuperscript{18} Lynn Hunt uses this same phrase to shape the questions that she asked about the French Revolution and those who participated in this revolution. Lynn Hunt Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
foreign policy is perhaps best embodied in the Sino-Soviet split and the CCP’s campaign against revisionism. These two phenomena were inseparable from one another, and revisionism and the Soviet Union became codewords for those who had abandoned Mao Zedong Thought.\(^{20}\)

Although I begin with the Sino-Soviet split as it reached a point of rupture in 1962, relations between the two countries had been in steady decline since 1956. Indeed, numerous scholars have tracked the fissure between China and the Soviet Union to Khrushchev’s scathing criticism of Joseph Stalin, which surprised and offended many in the CCP.\(^{21}\) Of course a rupture of this magnitude did not stem from one speech, no matter how much it angered Chinese officials. Scholars have identified a number of other factors that led to the Sino-Soviet split, some of which stretch back to the Chinese Civil War and Stalin’s refusal to support the CCP until victory was all but assured.\(^{22}\) Others have pointed to Mao’s refusal or unwillingness to subordinate China to the Soviet Union, which often treated China like its little brother.\(^{23}\) Ideological differences, both in theory and in practical approach, were also a major cause for disagreement between the two counties. For example, Mao fundamentally rejected the Soviet Union’s gradual approach to Third World liberation, which he saw as the antithesis of his concept of continuous revolution.\(^{24}\) It also seems clear that Mao and his allies could not tolerate Khrushchev’s assertion that the communist and capitalist worlds could peacefully coexist. Mao did not necessarily want war with the West, but the constant threat of war fostered vigilance and

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\(^{20}\) In 1963 alone, for example, Mao personally oversaw the publication of nine separate polemics that castigated the Soviet Union. These polemics were faithfully reprinted in China’s newspapers. See: Lieberthal (2012), 140.

\(^{21}\) Mao himself was particularly stunned by this news. Although he did not attend the conference at which Khrushchev delivered this speech, he heard a full report on its content from Zhu De and Deng Xiaoping. Mao was also embarrassed. Rather than attend the conference he sent a letter which was read to the attendees soon after the conference began. In it, Mao praised Stalin and his contribution to the communist movement. See Alexander V. Pantsov Mao: The Real Story (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 424.


militancy in Chinese society, which could be used to his advantage. It seems clear that these ideological differences precipitated economic and military disagreements, not vice-versa. It was the inability of the Soviet Union and the PRC to agree on the future direction of the socialist camp that caused the deterioration of relations between the two countries.25

This does not mean that ideology trumped all other concerns, especially considering what was happening inside China in the late 1950s and early 1960s. When assessing the Sino-Soviet relationship, Li Mingjiang places greater weight on domestic developments as a cause for the split. He contends that Mao purposely escalated Sino-Soviet tensions so that he could criticize his enemies in the CCP, who he viewed as committing the same revisionist errors as Soviet officials.26 Mao was especially displeased with his comrade’s resistance to the Great Leap Forward. By criticizing the Soviet Union Mao provided himself with the ammunition to attack moderates in his own party. In this case, domestic politics were clearly dictating the direction of foreign policy, and not vice-versa. The split therefore had multiple causes which cannot be boiled down to any single factor. Nevertheless, by the end of 1962, both countries had assembled propaganda teams that constantly castigated each other. Renmin Ribao and Pravda became the new fronts of this war, and open attack between the two countries became the norm.27

Because of all this, China’s Soviet-centric worldview, which was an important propaganda tool in the early years of the PRC, became untenable in the 1960s. Following the Sino-Soviet split, China was forced to pivot away from the Soviet Union and to develop a new worldview that was compatible with domestic political attitudes in the PRC. This new worldview

26 Li, 5.
27 I also begin my analysis here because 1962 marks the end of the Great Leap Forward and the beginning of China’s economic recovery. Setting aside the frenetic pace of the Great Leap Forward allowed for a reconfiguration of the Communist Party, as well as for new ideas to come to the fore. Moreover, 1962 begins Mao’s obsession with the rising threat of revisionism within the CCP. Mao’s fear of revisionism is only reinforced by some of the policies that Liu and Deng enact to help the Chinese economy recover.
was animated by a fear that revisionist elements in Chinese society could undermine the CCP, just as they had done in the Soviet Union. Implicit in this campaign was also the need for stringent militancy. It required a national mentality which saw China, and not the Soviet Union, as the leading communist force in the world. This was paramount. From the CCP’s perspective, if the Chinese people were going to guard themselves against revisionists they had to discard old notions of Soviet utopianism, and instead vest themselves in the superiority of the CCP and Mao Zedong Thought. They also had to believe that the Chinese revolution could serve as a model for leftist struggles everywhere. This new worldview reoriented not just foreign policy, but also shifted domestic policy and inculcated a mentality in Chinese society that was more aggressive, global, and, most importantly, Sinocentric.

While a good part of China’s new worldview was precipitated by the Sino-Soviet split, there were international machinations beyond the Soviet Union that shaped the way that China understood global events. One of the consequences of the Sino-Soviet Split is that China turned more toward Africa, Asia, and Latin America as sources of ideological and revolutionary fraternity. China’s Third World posture, however, was not entirely new, nor did it suddenly appear in the 1960s. The origins of this mentality can be traced to the global transition from anti-colonialism to post-imperialism, the Cold War, and the Bandung Conference of 1955, each of which were innately interrelated. It was at Bandung that the first iteration of the Third World –

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28 The CCP consistently invoked revisionism in the 1960s. They also vociferously condemned Nikita Khrushchev, the Premier in the Soviet Union, as someone who had abandoned Communist revolution for stability and appeasement. CCP officials also attacked Khrushchev for criticizing Joseph Stalin, and for agreeing to negotiate a missile treaty with the United States. For the CCP, a revisionist was a Communist cadre who had given up on revolution. Khrushchev’s actions were antithetical to the very nature of the CCP and to Mao himself. A central part of Mao Zedong Thought was the idea that society had to be in an almost constant state of revolution in order to avoid stagnation.

29 Throughout this dissertation I use the term “Third World” to refer to the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Although this term is not used very widely today because of its supposedly hierarchical connotations, I use it here to capture a political affinity that existed among many of these countries in the 1950s and 1960s. During this time these countries embraced the idea of Third World as a means of carving out space between the Soviet Union and the United States. For me see Christiansen and Scarlett (2012), 3.
a community of postcolonial countries committed to self-representation and nonalignment – emerged. Of course this community was conceived of as a loose coalition that depended on imaginative connections rather than strategic alliances for its composition. Nevertheless, the idea of the Third World was commensurate with China’s new worldview. Moreover, China was able to articulate a historical affinity with the Third World, which was based on the country’s own experience with semi-colonialism. The transition was easy partially because the CCP always saw itself as a member of the Third World, even when the relationship between the Soviet Union and the PRC prospered. Indeed, since the founding of the PRC, China maintained a bifurcated identity. As Chi-kwan Mark puts it,

On the one hand, for the sake of ideological legitimacy and solidarity, China saw itself as part of the socialist bloc headed by the Soviet Union. On the other hand, as a newly independent and undeveloped nation, China identified with the oppressed peoples and nations in the ‘Third World’.

Bandung also engendered the concept of a community of developing states that bound most of the Third World. For the CCP the greatest threat to this new community was American imperialism and Soviet revisionism. Radical officials therefore claimed leadership of this new Third World community. However, it would be a mistake to draw a direct line between the ideology expressed at Bandung and China’s post-Soviet global mentalities. Doing so would distort the intent of many Bandung participants, as well as privilege Bandung as a point of

30 In this case, China used its own history in order to establish solidarity with the Third World. China was certainly the victim of European colonialism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Even today, visitors to cities like Shanghai can see the remnants of European influence on the mainland. However, China was never fully colonized by any single European nation, as opposed to areas in South and Southeast Asia. Instead, colonialism was achieved in a “piecemeal” fashion. Scholars refer to this as semi or informal colonialism. Since the founding of the PRC, however, the CCP has used China’s colonial history as a justification for its rule. China’s colonial past was especially emphasized in the 1960s as the CCP attempted to differentiate itself from the Soviet Union. Like the Third World, China portrayed itself as a victim of both the United States and the Soviet Union. For a discussion of China’s colonial past, see Bryna Goodman Twentieth-Century Colonialism in China: Localities, the Everyday and the World (New York: Routledge, 2012).


genesis, when really it was an articulation of a nebulous and malleable mentality that was applied differently around the world. This malleability, however, served the PRC best in the 1960s. China shaped, manipulated, and inserted the spirit of Bandung into its own politics, appropriating Third Worldism to fit with the post-Soviet atmosphere of politics in the PRC.

Like Bandung, the mentalities engendered by the Cold War came to serve domestic politics in the PRC during the 1960s. Recently, scholarship on the Cold War has embarked in new directions, away from the Western-centric focus on the Soviet Union and the United States. A rash of studies have pointed out that the Cold War was actually more dynamic and impactful in Asia than in Europe. The Asian experience disabuses the idea that the Cold War was a geopolitical struggle among discreet nation-states and instead examines the regional aspects of this conflict. Even more important, new analysis of the Cold War deconstructs the perceived bipolarity of this era by emphasizing shifting alliances, varying identities, and the tendency for states to go back and forth between Soviet and American aid. In the case of China, such formulations help elucidate a complicated picture, while challenging the perception that China retreated behind the “bamboo curtain” during the Cold War. Instead, China played a vital role in shaping Cold War mentalities and was particularly determined to influence Asian allies, especially North Korea and North Vietnam.

As I demonstrate below, this was not accomplished through a series of policy decisions alone but was rather an intricate process that affected people at the very basic levels of Chinese society. China’s efforts in the Cold War were intended to influence foreign nations. However, the greatest impact of these efforts was felt at home. The PRC used Cold War bipolarity to its advantage. For Mao and the Party, the world was divided between imperialist and revisionist

34 Christiansen and Scarlett (ed.) (2012).
powers on the one hand and the postcolonial world on the other.\(^{35}\) This perception legitimized China’s claim of revolutionary fraternity in the Third World, especially as China positioned itself as the enemy of both imperialism and revisionism. This position was accelerated by the Cold War, which was used as definitive proof of American and Soviet perniciousness in the Third World. The realities of this new bipolarity seeped into the very basic levels of Chinese society and played an integral role in shaping Chinese political narratives following the Sino-Soviet rupture.

The spirit of Bandung and the realities of the Cold War amounted to what scholars have called the “Asian Sixties.” This term has been used to describe the political, social, and cultural machinations that guided many Asian countries from Dienbienphu in 1954 to Mao Zedong’s death in 1976.\(^{36}\) Like much of the rest of the world, many Asian countries during this time were convulsed by radical politics, national liberation movements, and novel forms of experimentation in everyday life.\(^{37}\) China loomed large during this decade and played an extremely influential role in shaping radical politics in Asia during the 1960s. This ability to affect the Asian Sixties was cultivated not only outwardly but also inwardly. After the Sino-Soviet split, Chinese officials actively advanced Maoism abroad, while promoting the idea of internationalism at home. The Asian Sixties in China, as well as the Sino-Soviet split and the Cold War, therefore each caused a shifting paradigm that deemphasized the Soviet Union and took on the extraordinary task of recategorizing the globe and implementing a new worldview at home.

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Theory and Methodology

This dissertation is concerned primarily with how global symbols were used to produce knowledge, stake out power, spur masses of Chinese people to revolutionary action, and legitimize the Chinese Communist Party and later specific Red Guard groups in their factional struggles. Michel Foucault’s work on knowledge production is particularly informative here, especially in understanding how basic epistemological questions were conceived in Chinese society.\(^\text{38}\) The questions that this dissertation asks are not just about shifting foreign policy over time, but about the very means by which the CCP and the Red Guards understand the globe and used global symbols to inform and shape domestic politics. Foucault’s work is also pertinent when analyzing how the CCP conceived of the various categories it used to order the world. As I will argue below, the construction of these categories was purposeful and deliberate, and very much reflected the state of politics in the PRC. This was also a project of “cutting,” of creating incisions throughout the world so as to bring order and accessibility to China’s post-Soviet reality.\(^\text{39}\) While the world was a major part of Chinese politics and culture, it was nonetheless a world negotiated by the CCP and mediated through a Maoist ideology.

Comprehending how the globe became a part of Chinese politics also requires a reading of scholars and historians who have looked at how culture flows across borders, and how it is reinterpreted and reassembled in different places and temporalities. This dissertation sheds light on how symbols that hold familiar meanings can be reoriented when engaged with contemporaneous political networks like those that were formed during the Cultural

\(^{38}\) This is especially true in Michel Foucault The Order of Things (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), in which he discusses how different sets of knowledge (which he calls epistemes) were used to frame discourses surrounding science and linguistics. The changing nature of this knowledge altered the fundamental ways in which these subjects were even approached by scholars.

Revolution. In China, this also means understanding how familiar Maoist symbols took on a new resonance after being placed in a global context. The PRC, of course, was a highly centralized state, which also meant that the CCP could exercise a good deal of agency over global symbols. This was not only a process of inclusion, but also one of rejection, as certain facets of global radicalism were discarded in favor of those that were most compatible with Chinese society.

Global symbols were amalgamated with familiar Maoist codes in order to produce an easily accessible knowledge of the outside world that could also legitimate power in China. This depended a great deal on how the CCP and the Red Guards framed the outside world. This dissertation therefore relies on sociologists and other scholars who have tried to understand how framing affects social movements and mass political actions. I am particularly interested in understanding how the CCP and the Red Guards “located, perceived, identified and labeled” their own movement in the context of global events. I also use framing analysis to determine the students’ “elasticity,” and to examine the negotiation of global narratives between the Red Guards and the CCP.

When global narratives were affixed with Maoist codes they became more potent and more easily understood in Chinese society. This was a process through which a new global reality was created in Chinese society. As I discuss in future chapters, the CCP engaged in an
ontological pursuit during this period. The party attempted to birth a world in which the PRC had supplanted the Soviet Union as the dominant communist state. Not only was the state trying to create a new reality, but it was also attempting to “constitute” itself through this reality.\textsuperscript{44} This process was accomplished by “ascribing” being or essence to certain things, particularly categories and cultural artifacts.\textsuperscript{45} The state viewed it as imperative that this new reality excised the Soviet Union and vested all ideas of socialist modernity squarely in the Chinese state. This created the perception that the world had conformed to Chinese politics, and that all Chinese political actions had global repercussions.

I am also interested in understanding how the CCP synchronized the globe to make it appear as if events around the world mirrored what was occurring in China. One of the important tactics deployed by the CCP to authenticate global narratives was to construct a world that mirrored what was happening in the PRC. Foreign social movements therefore became little cultural revolutions, and activists abroad appeared to coalesce around the Red Guard movement. The synchronicity of the 1960s was vital to the construction and maintenance of China’s revolutionary community, in the same way that synchronicity is central to the creation of the modern nation-state.\textsuperscript{46} The synchronicity of the 1960s produced a political, social, and cultural

\textsuperscript{44} Here I use the philosophical term ‘ontology’ in a very specific way. Generally, ontology is concerned with concepts of being beyond the individual soul and beyond the deity. It is often considered to be a branch of metaphysics that is concerned with, among other things, beauty, truth, goodness and perfection. Leaving those ontological questions aside, I use this term as a means of identifying another central question of ontology: reality and the creation of reality in the human mind. As Peter Coffey puts it, “ontology is concerned with the objects of knowledge, with reality considered in the widest, deepest, and most fundamental aspects under which it is conceived by the human mind” (emphasis added). Peter Coffey, Ontology or the Theory of Being: An Introduction to Metaphysics (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1980), 23. For a discussion of how ontology can inform historical inquiry, see Ian Hacking, Historical Ontology (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

\textsuperscript{45} Stoler (2007), 4.

topography that valued ideological space over the modern nation-state; in some instances, imagined revolutionary fraternity obviated political borders. And, similar to the creation of the nation-state, the global revolutionary community imagined by the CCP and employed in the PRC was largely discursive, relying not only on elaborate ceremonies and shared temporalities, but also on personal testimonials and stories from foreign revolutionaries. This discourse, however, was also subject to “ambivalence and varying vocabulary” constantly oscillating between global dispositions and extreme statements of Chinese nationalism. Throughout this dissertation, I rely on Lydia Liu’s claim that “national and even racial identity needs to be understood and analyzed in terms of what the international is doing within the national imaginary, not just beyond its borders.” This proved true during the 1960s, when the domestic and the global crashed into each other at such a rate as to become nearly indistinguishable. Textual statements of globality were latent with subtextual nationalism reinforcing the primacy of Chinese politics, and vice-versa. In this way, the global and the national worked side-by-side to create a revolutionary ethos that was both of the world and firmly grounded in the People’s Republic of China.

Uncovering embedded meanings and deconstructing Chinese sources is a crucial task of this dissertation. Global codes were rarely expressed explicitly during this period. Recovering the global requires looking for the truth in language, in constructed categories, and, in some cases, in the very structure and make-up of historical documents themselves. Like Ann Laura Stoler, this dissertation is concerned with archives and historical documents that were deployed to create

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47 Rebecca E. Karl discussed a similar phenomenon in regard to the concept of modernity and global space at the beginning of the 20th century. See Rebecca E. Karl Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 196.
sustainable categories. Throughout my research I attempt to treat documents as historical sources in-and-of themselves, observing not only their content, but also their construction and the ways in which they were recorded and preserved. This means examining the words in the document, as well as the document and the archive as an artifact in and of itself. I also attempt to breathe life into some of these documents. As Stoler points out, “Documents [are] dead matter once the moment of their making has passed. What is ‘left’ is not ‘left behind’ or obsolete.” In this dissertation, I treat the archive as a site through which power was constructed and maintained. In the very creation of some of these documents we can read a planned and long term campaign to frame the world in a very specific way. Finally, these historical documents reflect a deep and broad anxiety about the direction of Chinese society. This anxiety suggested that inculcating the PRC’s new worldview was imperative to Chinese politics in the 1960s, especially the CCP’s campaign against revisionists. In approaching documents and archives in this way, I attempt to uncover the importance of global symbols in constructing and shaping politics, in legitimating power, and in sustaining mass campaigns, especially the Cultural Revolution.

Finally, this dissertation approaches global history differently from scholars who have attempted to flesh out the social, political, economic, and cultural institutions that have connected the world for millennia. World historians tend to see the global taking shape in contact, and often train their scholarly sights on instances when communities crossed traditional borders to forge new connections. Scholars of global history have taken a particular interest in China, as the country’s history has proven to be a productive vehicle for understanding human

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52 Stoler (2009), 3.
53 Stoler calls this anxiety “epistemological” Ibid., 3. This is also a term used in Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison Objectivity (New York: Zone, 2007).
contact and connections. These scholars have also investigated the various ways that China fit into a world historical system by analyzing, for example, how China fueled the global economy at various times in human history, or the Chinese and European economy in the 19th century. These scholars have elucidated exactly how China fit into the world, and disabused the idea that the country was ever isolated from its neighbors.

This dissertation, however, takes a different approach. While I investigate connections and contact between foreigners and the Chinese state, I am more interested in understanding the globe as a potent and powerful cultural symbol. Rather than sketching out an accurate picture of the globe in the 1960s, I instead highlight how the idea of the world – as was constructed by the CCP – played such an important role in Chinese politics during this period. This approach helps highlight several aspects of Chinese politics in the 1960s. First, by affixing global symbols to mass campaigns, the CCP made everything in China seem more important. This partially fed the radicalism of the 1960s, and helped spur countless Chinese students to action. Second, because the world is such an abstract concept, it was easy to manipulate, homogenize, and bend to the political will of any specific regime or government. This is a process that still plays out today as countless American politicians use ideas of global relevance to stake out the boundaries of their policies and ideas, while also increasing the importance of their own election. In China, the globe was transformed into a cultural symbol and pressed into service for the revolution. Global symbols did not need any foreign force to give them shape, nor did it require actual contact with the outside world. Instead, the CCP acted as a catalyst for the global, breathing life into this


concept and connecting it with familiar Chinese codes so as to imbue the world with new meaning. The globe as a cultural symbol turned out to be versatile, malleable, and perfect for the political climate the gripped the PRC in the 1960s.

**The Periodization and the Historiography of China’s 1960s**

This dissertation engages with multiple historiographies and theoretical works on modern Chinese history, the Cultural Revolution, the international protest movements of the 1960s, the Cold War, and studies on global and world history. Despite these various historiographies, this dissertation is firmly grounded in Chinese history, and is specifically interested in the ten-year period between the Sino-Soviet split and American rapprochement. This is an uncommon and somewhat awkward periodization, especially because the Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966, slices through this period. Nevertheless, one of the primary questions this dissertation asks is how we can better integrate the Cultural Revolution into modern Chinese history so that it does not appear as a hermetically sealed event. This involves not only reperiodizing China’s modern history but also in asking new questions about the 1960s and in devising novel approaches to this topic. The goal is to unpack and interrogate the events, people, and mentalities that shaped this ten-year period in Chinese history.

Because of the complexity and tragedy of the Cultural Revolution, scholars have tended to approach this decade on its own, analyzing what led to the movement, and the forces that pushed Chinese students and the CCP to acts of extreme violence. There is room, however, to contextualize the Cultural Revolution in China’s modern history. The interplay between Chinese politics and culture, and global narratives was not unique to the 1960s; indeed, the roots of China’s modern engagement with the world lay very much in the reforms of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. That is, certain aspects of the Cultural Revolution, particularly those
discussed above, where a function of a larger question that has consumed Chinese intellectuals for decades: What is China’s place in the modern world? As Rebecca Karl has pointed out, intellectuals in the late 19th and early 20th century were fixated with the meaning of the world and its place in China, developing a nationalism that was heavily influenced by events outside of China. 57 Colonial and imperialist abuse in Asia, Africa and Latin America “allowed for Chinese intellectuals to appropriate world events and places for a reconceptualization of China that was both of and in the world, both of and in modernity.” 58

We see this tendency to use the globe to clarify Chinese politics in China’s earliest reformers. For example, in his story “New Year’s Dream” (新年梦) Cai Yuanpei, one of China’s leading intellectuals of the early 20th century, wrote of a hypothetical future in which China was an equal member of a community of nations. 59 In the story, the global community searched for an alternative to capitalism and imperialism, which they found in China. Cai concludes his story with a peaceful world that values brotherhood and cooperation among disparate nations. It was China that led the world to this utopia. Cai himself was a leading educational reformer during a period of massive transition in Chinese society. He published “New Year’s Dream” at a time when the Qing Dynasty was near collapse. Besides being an author, Cai also worked as an educator – acting as the first president of Beijing University – and generally strove for a stronger and more self-sufficient Chinese society. Cai envisioned a China that would someday act as a model for the rest of the world. From the perspective of the Red Guards, his vision came true, and was embodied in the Cultural Revolution.

Although the means of conceptualizing the world had changed by the Cultural Revolution, the process of identifying and clarifying global trends in a Chinese context had not. In the PRC,

58 Ibid., 147.
59 This story can be found in Cai Yuanpei Cai Yuanpei quanji (Hangzhou: Zhejiang jiaoyu chuban she, 1997).
the “modernity” of the late 19th century was replaced by revolution, “the people” (renmin) of the nascent Chinese republic supplanted by “global revolutionaries” (shijie geming ren). The historical conditions of the 1960s similarly gave the world a seeming synchronicity, such as had existed at the end of the 19th and 20th century. During the final years of the Qing Dynasty, China used the threat of “losing its own country” (wangguo) to Western imperialism as a means to construct and define its new nationalism.60 In the 1960s, the People’s Republic of China used the rising tide of anti-imperialism in the Third World and student rebellions in the West to create a global revolutionary ethos, which was then employed to make the Cultural Revolution appear to be an international event. This reversed the polarity of the world – instead of China using the world as a cautionary warning about the perils of a weak and ill-defined nation-state, the CCP positioned China as a revolutionary beacon and a model for the development of the world. China did not seek to learn from the rest of the world, but to instruct the world in Maoist revolution. The angst of the early 19th and late 20th century was ostensibly replaced by a zealotry that led to chaos and violence. Nevertheless, the events of the 1960s represented a continuation of a conversation that emerged in the 19th century and were tied up with issues of modernity, the nation-state, and the birth of a new society.

Rather than contextualize the Cultural Revolution or study the movement from a global perspective, most scholars have attempted to disentangle the forces behind the Cultural Revolution and analyze the various factions that contributed to the violence and chaos of this movement. This work has been crucial in giving shape to the Cultural Revolution and in helping to understand the motivation of students and government officials. Studies of the Cultural Revolution have also changed over time. Early on, scholars concentrated primarily on the

60 Ibid., 33-38.
politics that animated the Cultural Revolution. These studies generally focused on politics in the Chinese Communist Party and attempted to unravel the various factions within the government that were pulling the strings of the movement. Hong Yung Lee’s study, for example, places a good deal of emphasis on the Cultural Revolution Small Group (CCRG), a faction within the CCP that consisted of radical Maoists, including Jiang Qing, Mao Zedong’s wife. For Lee, the Cultural Revolution was the result of factions within the government “attempting to resolve the basic contradictions between the egalitarian view of Marxism and the elitist tendencies of Leninist organizational principles.”

Lee also emphasizes that much of Mao’s power during the Cultural Revolution came from forces within Chinese society, including the army, the students, and the CCRG. Other scholars also attribute the violence and chaos of the Cultural Revolution to the breakdown of cohesiveness within the CCP itself. These scholars especially point to the factionalism engendered by the disaster of the Great Leap Forward, and the failure of the party to essentially heal itself after the ensuing famine. Lynn T. White, meanwhile, identifies the origins of the Cultural Revolution within the compositional make-up of the CCP. For White, the CCP’s proclivity to exercise power by labeling, monitoring, and mobilizing the Chinese population laid the groundwork for the Cultural Revolution. When the Cultural Revolution actually began the Chinese people adopted these methods and applied them to society without discrimination or consideration. Finally, Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, whose work represents one of the most complete studies of the Cultural Revolution, tend to emphasize the role that Mao Zedong himself played in the Cultural Revolution. MacFarquhar and

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62 Ibid, 5
Schoenhals contend that Mao’s willingness to tear Chinese society apart – especially in the first three years of the movement – contributed to the violence of the Cultural Revolution and made the campaign itself possible.\(^{65}\) Each of these scholars tends to place politics at the center of their studies and focus specifically on how factions, individuals, and policies in the CCP created the environment for launching and sustaining the Cultural Revolution.

Other scholars have investigated the social forces in Chinese society that contributed to the violence of this period. These scholars are especially interested in student factionalism, and can be divided into roughly two camps. The first tends to see factionalism as a result of pre-determined labels (whether your family was from a “red” or “black” background) and from narrow group interests.\(^{66}\) Scholars such as Hong Yung Lee contend that factionalism stemmed from the differences among student groups over who the Red Guards should attack. Radical factions generally wanted to target most high officials in the CCP, while students from a more conservative background wanted to work within the power structures of the CCP, and only target those who came from a bad family background.\(^{67}\) Meanwhile, Andrew Walder has challenged this strictly social perspective. Rather than privileging inherent class backgrounds, Walder claims that students’ individual experiences, especially in the first months of the Cultural Revolution, often determined whether their Red Guard groups were radical or conservative. Specifically, Walder focuses on the students’ experiences with the work teams, which were sent to China’s college campuses soon after the Cultural Revolution began in an attempt to control the movement. According to Walder, “whether to cooperate with or challenge the work team was

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65 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals state plainly that “it was indeed Mao who was responsible for the Cultural Revolution.” Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals Mao’s Last Revolution (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 3.
67 Hong Yung Lee “The Radical Students in Kwangtung during the Cultural Revolution” The China Quarterly No. 64 (Dec, 1975), 646.
not a choice for which one’s prior identities provided any clear guidance, for the issue was not the pre-Cultural Revolution status quo, it was the work team itself.” Walder imbues the students with a good deal more political agency than previous scholars, and presents factionalism as a political choice made by students who rejected the CCP’s attempt to place “authoritarian leaders” in charge of the student movement. Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun also generally emphasize the autonomy of student and worker organization. According to Perry and Li, the Cultural Revolution “spawned a great deal of bottom-up organizations” and was characterized by a “diversity of popular responses that exploded from below.”

Both victims and participants of the Cultural Revolution have also contributed to our understanding of the movement by writing various memoirs and testimonials about their experiences during the movement. This so called “scar literature” has greatly elucidated the day-to-day tumult of the Cultural Revolution, and has shed light on the long-term psychological impact of the movement. Much of it specifically brings out the intensity of the violence that punctuated daily life. One of the criticisms of this body of literature, however, is that it comes largely from an urban-based and educated group of people. Scholars have attempted to rectify this imbalance by shedding light on violence in China’s rural areas. Yang Su, for example, has shown the shocking nature of this violence in the countryside, which often pitted neighbor

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70 Elizabeth Perry & Li Xun Proletariat Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 5-6
against neighbor. Other scholars have interrogated works that focus on violence and memory, especially “scar literature.” While these scholars do not challenge the value or veracity of this literature, they do question its monolithic tone, which has rendered the Cultural Revolution in very specific and sometimes limiting ways. Peter Zarrow points out that the tone of this “scar literature” is largely conservative, and stresses personal liberation and exodus from the PRC. Arif Dirlik, meanwhile, notes how “scar literature” plays into current policies in the PRC, namely market reforms. For Dirlik, this literature reinforces the “madness” of this era, and the saving graces of capitalism.

While the studies discussed above have informed my dissertation, I specifically engage with two sub-categories of scholarship that analyze the Cultural Revolution: writings on how foreign policy was impacted by the movement and studies that privilege culture as a frame of reference to understanding this period in China’s history. First, it is important to differentiate between this dissertation and scholarship that focuses on China’s foreign policy. While such writings are informative, the fundamental questions that these scholars ask are unlike those that drive this dissertation. Scholars interested in foreign policy elucidate the myriad ways in which domestic radicalism impinged on foreign affairs. Their works make the important point that foreign policy cannot be separated from domestic events, especially at times of extreme radicalism, such as the Cultural Revolution. There are parallels between my study and these works. Primary among these parallels is an overlap in periodization. Chi-kawn Mark, for example, notes that Chinese foreign policy was increasingly radicalized beginning in 1962, when

Mao reasserted his leadership over day-to-day policy decisions. This dissertation begins in the same years, as radicalism impinged on both foreign and domestic affairs. Barnouin and Changge, meanwhile, assert that while domestic radicalism guided foreign policy in the initial phase of the Cultural Revolution, roughly to the end of the 1960s, foreign policy in the early 1970s was dictated by a growing concern over normalization, national security, and eventually rapprochement with the United States. As I will demonstrate below, global narratives also changed dramatically following the end of the Red Guard movement in 1968. By the 1970s, these global narratives were more anodyne and were largely devoid of the revolutionary fervor that characterized their early construction and implementation. The same forces changed foreign policy and altered the use of global narratives in Chinese society.

While this dissertation therefore shares similarities with studies that examine China’s foreign policy, its primary interests and fundamental questions differ from the studies mentioned above. In a way, this dissertation takes studies of foreign policy one step forward. Instead of asking how the domestic informed the foreign, this dissertation looks at the overlap between foreign and domestic policy and examines how foreign events returned to the mainland and reverberated within Chinese politics. I am interested in the foreign, but only as a means to understand how foreign events were used to exercise power and establish legitimacy and how these events became one more cultural trope in the CCP’s arsenal to promote radicalism in Chinese society.

Finally, there are several studies of Cultural Revolution histories that place culture at the center of their analyses. I have left these studies for last because this is where I see this

76 Mark, 51.
77 Barnouin and Yu (1998), viii.
78 Barbara Mittler A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Elizabeth J. Perry Anyuan: Mining China’s Revolutionary Tradition (Berkeley:
dissertation fitting in best. At the center of this dissertation are questions about how culture – and the symbols, codes, and embedded meanings behind culture – was constructed and how it operated in Chinese society during this period. For the purposes of this study, I am particularly interested in following how the globe became a powerful cultural symbol that lay at the center of radical campaigns during the 1960s. Although this approach is unique, the questions asked herein are informed by and intended to be in dialogue with other scholars who also see culture as central to the Communist Party’s authority in Chinese society. Paul Clarke, for example, explores the CCP’s attempt to create a coherent revolutionary culture that corresponded to the dynamics of politics during the Cultural Revolution. For Clarke, this was also a process in which modern institutions were amalgamated with traditional Chinese cultural practices to form something wholly new (and modern). As I argue throughout this dissertation, the same was true of global narratives: they were manipulated, homogenized, and then affixed to familiar Chinese codes to form a potent hybrid that resonated deeply in Chinese society. Similarly, these foreign-Chinese amalgams were deeply intertwined with modernity, and suggested that China had absorbed all that the world had to offer and produced a society that was innovative, unique, and a model for progressive societies.

Elizabeth Perry similarly privileges culture in her study of Chinese communism and the Anyuan mines, which became one of the PRC’s most potent revolutionary symbols. Perry argues that “cultural positioning” was a key component of establishing a revolutionary tradition that was

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79 Clark (2008), 250 – 251.
80 Clark (2008), 256. Clark specifically discusses the homogenization and centralization of ethnic minorities and their cultural traditions. By the Cultural Revolution, this homogenization became so common place that its origins were no longer interrogated, and the representation of minorities in this manner was taken as fact. Instead, they became short-hand for modern culture during the Cultural Revolution.
purely Chinese.\textsuperscript{81} Her overall goal is to analyze the divergences in the Chinese and Russian revolutions, and the means by which the CCP was able to articulate a specifically Chinese revolutionary ideology. For Perry, this was accomplished through bringing culture to bear on revolutionary tradition. Perry, however, does not analyze cultural positioning devoid of personal or political context. Instead, she stresses that the means of distributing cultural messages was just as important as the message itself, an approach that this dissertation adopts.\textsuperscript{82} So too was the ability of young cadres to convert cultural capital into revolutionary currency vital to expanding the CCP’s authority. As Perry points out, this included deploying classical phrases in service of a proletariat ethos.\textsuperscript{83} Throughout this dissertation, I particularly emphasize the importance of cultural capital. I specifically refer to the value of global narratives in creating revolutionary currency that was then spent in various factional struggles as a means to exercise power.

\textbf{Chapter Outline}

Chapter 1 focuses specifically on the Sino-Soviet split and its immediate impact on the People’s Republic of China. It traces the development of techniques used to construct post-Soviet global narratives. In this chapter I investigate three different aspects of this process: the attempt to categorize foreign students studying in the PRC; the celebration of certain foreign holidays, such as national liberation anniversaries and the October Revolution; and the way in which the visit of a Japanese delegation to the PRC in 1965 was framed, recorded, and catalogued. Throughout this chapter, I focus specifically on how the CCP responded to the Sino-Soviet split. I contend that this response was largely ontological; that the state had to create a new global reality that would sustain the claim that China was the leading Marxist state in the world.

\textsuperscript{81} Perry (2012), 4-5.
\textsuperscript{82} Perry (2012), 5.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 8
Chapter 2 focuses explicitly on the Vietnam War and its impact on Chinese politics. In this chapter, I make three primary arguments: that the war in Vietnam was used as a symbol to prime the pump of radicalism in Chinese society, especially among young people; that China’s resistance to the war brought many Chinese youth into alignment with their counterparts around the world; and that the war proved to be one of the most sustainable and deeply resonating global symbols to emerge during the 1960s. In this chapter I specifically analyze two antiwar protests held in Beijing in 1964 and 1965, as well as the war’s depiction in various official propaganda and newspapers. I also investigate the Red Guards’ engagement with the war in Vietnam. For some Red Guards, the Vietnam War was one of the primary fronts in the battle against imperialism. Vietnam became so important that certain Red Guards actually traveled there to volunteer or fight, a phenomenon that I investigate in this chapter. Overall, I position the Vietnam War as a shibboleth for radicalism and for China’s post-Soviet worldview, especially during the Cultural Revolution.

Chapter 3 looks at China’s engagement with the African and African-American liberation movements. In this chapter I first examine the interplay between the Black Panthers and the Red Guard Party of America, a group of radical Asian-Americans based in San Francisco. I use these two groups to highlight how foreigners similarly imagined and constructed a PRC that closely mirrored political realities in their respective countries. I then spend the bulk of this chapter studying how African and African American liberation was viewed in the PRC. Like the war in Vietnam, racial discrimination became a codeword for the evils of imperialism and the injustice of American society. In this chapter, I rely on primary documents from Beijing archives regarding various rallies held in support of civil rights in the United States. I also investigate how African students studying in Beijing shaped the PRC’s perception of race. Finally, I analyze how
the Red Guards adopted the methods laid down by the CCP to engage with racial injustice. Certain Red Guards reported on the struggle for equality and even wrote articles declaring that racial discrimination in the United States stemmed from the pernicious impact of Liu Shaoqi. In short, race and racial injustice became an essential trope in the Cultural Revolution.

Chapter 4 focuses specifically on the Cultural Revolution and the global rhetoric deployed therein. This chapter is presented on two levels: one that analyzes official rhetoric and the other that looks at Red Guard newspapers. I examine how the CCP incorporated global narratives into the Cultural Revolution, thereby internationalizing the movement and increasing the stakes for its success. This process was accomplished through the amalgamation of international events and familiar Chinese codes. The second half of this chapter examines how individual Red Guard groups engaged with these global narratives. I argue that this engagement was largely driven by Red Guard groups’ early experiences during the Cultural Revolution. The Red Guard group at Beijing University, for example, constantly related foreign developments to the influence of the first Marxist-Leninist big character poster, which they themselves composed. The conditions and factors that led to the founding of these Red Guard groups, I argue, played a large part in how they perceived the outside world. I have also found that engagement with these global narratives cut across factional divides, and was not affected by political or social categories between so-called “red” and “black” Red Guard groups.

The final chapter examines how the CCP globalized Mao Zedong’s cult of personality. This chapter begins with the Sino-Soviet split and analyzes how Mao’s global cult developed as a response to the crisis engendered by the split. It investigates how the CCP and the Chinese people projected Maoism into an international space. A great deal of scholarship has already been written on Mao’s impact on the rest of the world; however, this chapter examines how
Mao’s global significance reverberated in the PRC. I argue that Mao existed in a domestic and a global space. This reinforced Mao’s cult and increased his influence over Chinese society in the 1960s, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. This chapter begins by examining the global dimensions of Mao Zedong Thought. It also analyzes the ways in which Mao’s perception of the world changed in the 1960s. Finally, I investigate the Red Guards’ role in globalizing the Mao cult. Many Red Guard groups filled their newspapers with vivid descriptions of the ways in which Mao had changed the world. Mao Zedong therefore became a vehicle for globality, and was used as the primary example of China’s international significance.
Chapter 1

Ordering the New World: The PRC and the Sino-Soviet Split in the Early 1960s

In 1962, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) faced its largest crisis since the founding of the state in 1949. Following the catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward, many in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) recognized the disaster that Mao’s policies of rapid industrialization had caused in China’s countryside. Between 1959 and 1962, an estimated 45 million people died of starvation, largely because of the famine caused by the Great Leap Forward.¹ China also faced a severe crisis in foreign affairs. Beginning in 1956, relations between the People’s Republic and the Soviet Union had gradually worsened, and the following years were characterized by growing suspicion, mutual recriminations, and fundamental ideological differences.

Between 1962 and 1965, the CCP directed a large portion of its time and resources to helping the economy recover and restoring stability in China’s industrial and agricultural sectors.² By and large, the party was successful at accomplishing this task; led by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, agricultural and industrial output eventually returned to normal, and the effects of the famine abated. Mao Zedong spent these years in semi-retirement, placing Liu and Deng in charge of the day-to-day business of the state. Recovering from the Great Leap Forward, however, was only one of two major crises that the CCP faced in the early 1960s. The second of these crises was caused by the breakdown and finally rupture of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the PRC. The consequences of Sino-Soviet split would have a profound impact on the PRC, and would shape both foreign and domestic policy for the next ten years.

Since the PRC’s founding, the Soviet Union had loomed large in official propaganda and state policy. Planners in the CCP mimicked the Soviet Union’s agricultural and industrial techniques, and the country was often presented as the exemplar of modernity and model Communist society. There was a certain linear trajectory to much of the Chinese propaganda and rhetoric regarding the Soviet Union. Much of this propaganda suggested that through sacrifice and hard work, the Chinese people could eventually enjoy the same success and prosperity that existed in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union’s present was China’s future. This worldview, however, became untenable after relations between the PRC and the USSR broke down. The CCP claimed that the Soviet Union under Nikita Khrushchev had deviated away from true Communism and had abdicated its role as the supreme revolutionary state in the world. Following the demise of the Sino-Soviet relationship, the CCP quickly abandoned Soviet modernity in favor of a more Sinocentric and Maoist modernity.

Convincing the world that the PRC now represented a new socialist modernity was a difficult task. However, more essential to the CCP was convincing the Chinese people themselves of this new reality. This task was crucial for several reasons. First, it was an important way to raise awareness about the dangers of revisionism. Indeed, the CCP’s campaign against revisionism shaped Chinese politics in the 1960s, and became a key means of criticism among leftist officials. Second, as I argue throughout this dissertation, global narratives and China’s post-Soviet worldview were a means by which the CCP (and eventually the Red Guards) exerted power and maintained legitimacy in Chinese society. This chapter will demonstrate that at the center of this post-Soviet worldview was an unflinching belief that mass campaigns in

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4 Throughout this dissertation I will use the term global narratives to refer to the various ways in which the CCP and the Red Guards packaged and disseminated global symbols. When taken together, these global narratives articulated a Sinocentric socialist modernity that was intended for both domestic and global consumption.
China had global repercussions. By expanding the meaning of Chinese politics beyond the traditional borders of the state, the CCP imbued itself with significance and power. It also internationalized Chinese politics and raised the stakes for the success or failure of movements like the Cultural Revolution.

Using global narratives in this fashion, however, required reorienting foreign and domestic policy in China. The Soviet Union was completely excised from official rhetoric and propaganda; between 1962 and 1965, the CCP slowly incorporated a more Sinocentric worldview into everyday politics. Creating this new worldview, however, was not a simple matter of issuing a decree or a pronouncement. After all, the People’s Republic of China was not Orwell’s 1984, and adapting to the Sino-Soviet split required more than the introduction of new policies. What was instead needed was an ontological shift, which entailed recategorizing, remapping, and reordering the rest of the world. 5 This historical process of coming into being – of “constituting oneself” – has been central to ontological inquiry. While ontological pursuits are often focused on the individual, in this chapter I emphasize the way that the Chinese nation-state, its people, and its government went about constituting itself within a new reality that opposed the Soviet Union. 6 Between 1962 and 1965, the main way the CCP attempted to introduce China’s post-Soviet worldview to the Chinese people was by creating a set of new taxonomies. Foreign countries were sorted into various categories, depending on their relationship with both the CCP and the Soviet Union. Groups of people were identified as supportive of Mao Zedong or the CCP,

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5 Here I use the philosophical term ‘ontology’ in a very specific way. Generally, ontology is concerned with concepts of being beyond the individual soul and beyond the deity. It is often considered to be a branch of metaphysics that is concerned with, among other things, beauty, truth, goodness and perfection. Leaving those ontological questions aside, I use this term as a means of identifying another central question of ontology: reality and the creation of reality in the human mind. As Peter Coffey puts it, “ontology is concerned with the objects of knowledge, with reality considered in the widest, deepest, and most fundamental aspects under which it is conceived by the human mind” (emphasis added). Peter Coffey, Ontology or the Theory of Being: An Introduction to Metaphysics (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1980), 23.

even if they lived in hostile countries. Essentially, the world was mapped along largely Maoist terms, and reoriented to highlight which countries were friendly and which countries clung to Soviet revisionism.

These new taxonomies were intended for Chinese use. The goal was to clarify China’s worldview and provide new schemata of interpretation so that the Chinese people could understand the primacy of the PRC and the perniciousness of Soviet revisionism. The CCP introduced these new taxonomies by a variety of means, three of which I explore here. The first was accomplished through actual contact with foreigners; students studying in the PRC were divided into different categories depending on their home country’s level of support for the PRC. The CCP provided schools and Chinese students with specific instructions on how to interact with foreigners and how to interpret their actions within China’s new post-Soviet worldview. The second way these new categories were introduced was through celebrating foreign anniversaries, national holidays, and various other ceremonies. In 1964 and 1965, the PRC recognized the twenty-year anniversary of the end of World War II and the founding of numerous Communist states in Europe. These celebrations, however, were often attended with sharp ideological undertones, and many Eastern European countries were castigated for remaining loyal to the Soviet Union. Those that were more independent were often given a larger celebration and greater recognition in the PRC. This process of celebrating non-revisionist countries was an easy way for the Chinese people to access and engage with China’s new worldview. Finally, the CCP also used a process of recoding and preserving foreign support for the PRC and the CCP. Here, I specifically focus on the visit of a Japanese delegation to the PRC in 1965, as well as the lengths the CCP went to insure the success of this visit and to record any instances in which Japanese delegates praised the PRC. The personal anecdotes, testimonials,
and generally positive remarks made by the Japanese delegation were then archived and preserved, giving China’s new worldview a tangible authenticity.

As with most of the sources presented herein, my goal is to uncover embedded meaning in the text, rather than take the texts themselves at face value. This is particularly true of the section in which I discuss the Japanese delegation’s visit to China. The testimonials and statements recorded by the PRC are so enthusiastic and exaggerated as to stretch the limits of credulity. The fact that the CCP felt compelled to make (or make-up) such a detailed record of the Japanese delegation’s visit to China speaks to a broader implicit campaign to inculcate and authenticate China’s new post-Soviet worldview. I use these sources both to mine the information they provided, but also to understand the context and reason for their creation.7 Documents of this kind suggest a purposeful and planned campaign to use foreigners to portray China in the most laudatory light. For example, when a Japanese delegate states that there is no crime in China, I am more interested in the meaning behind this statement – which suggests that Chinese communism had created a better and more modern society than Japanese capitalism – than as proof that Chinese society was without criminals. These sources suggested a prolonged campaign directed by the CCP to portray that Chinese state as modern, and as a model for the rest of the world. Accomplishing this task also depended on removing Soviet modernity from Chinese political discourse and replacing it with a Sinocentric outlook. This worldview required that Chinese people recognize that the PRC now represented socialist modernity. Furthermore, people were expected to conduct politics – and particularly mass campaigns – as if the entire world was looking to the PRC as an example. The CCP used the visit of the Japanese delegates

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7 This is similar to the approach Ann Laura Stoler adopts when examining colonial sources. Stoler historicizes the very existence of these sources, and analyzes the anxieties expressed in these documents in order to better understand past societies. For my purposes, I examine documents like those discussed above as cites of political contention in which power was exerted and exercised. Ann Laura Stoler Ann Laura Stoler Along the Archival Grain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
to buttress this claim, and provided evidence that seemed to indicate that China was now the most important socialist state in the world.

The tactics of embedding global narratives in various ceremonies, creating new categories with which to view the world, and recording all instances of foreign support had tremendous staying power throughout the 1960s in the PRC. These tactics and approaches to defining and mapping the world along Chinese lines were replicated to deal with specific events, such as the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the Vietnam War, and by specific groups of people, especially the Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution. Throughout, the tactics of using ceremonies, language, and archival methods remained remarkably similar, and relied on implicit and embedded meanings. The goal was to alter everyday political discourse away from the Soviet Union and toward a Sinocentric socialist modernity. The most effective means to accomplish this, at least in the mind of the CCP, was to imbue global narratives with implicit meaning and new categories. More than a shifting ideology, what the CCP provided was a type of Rosetta stone that allowed officials and the Chinese people to translate and incorporate the post-Soviet world into the PRC.

**Studying Abroad in the People’s Republic**

One of the characteristics that animated the radicalism of the 1960s in Asia and around the world was the new mobility of students, particularly among Third World populations. Studying abroad became a vehicle for spreading radical ideas around the world and bestowed a sense of global community among disparate student bodies.³ Third World students specifically gave seemingly distant injustices an immediate proximity. In West Germany, the presence of foreign students sparked a growing concern over the political situation in the Congo and Iran.

³ This is not only true of Third World students. Student mobility in general fostered a worldwide discourse about injustice and the future of global society. For a Western example, see: Martin Klimke The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
Students realized that the West German government’s support of the Congolese and Iranian regimes facilitated injustice in these parts of the world, which further exposed the corruption of domestic politics.\(^9\) Similarly, Paris became a hub of Third World radicalism. African students in France propelled a growing concern over the demise of the French empire in places such as Tunisia and Senegal, and the implications of the end of French colonialism. Many French students confronted France’s imperialist abuses during the 1960s, and Paris acted as a key place of exchange for radical ideas among Westerns and non-Westerns alike.\(^{10}\)

China similarly took part in the global exchange of foreign students, although the impact of these students differed from that of West Germany or France. The presence of foreign students in the PRC during the 1960s became one of the factors that facilitated the construction and implementation of new global categories. Rather than importing and illuminating the injustices of the Third World, as was the case in Europe, these students became part of the PRC’s continued effort to demonstrate the relevance of Chinese politics in the Third World, as well as the CCP’s argument against Soviet revisionism, and the Party’s attempt to recategorize and remap the outside world. These students afforded the CCP a key opportunity: they were a tangible group that the party could use to enumerate its post-Soviet worldview. Doing so meant placing these students into specific taxonomies. In order to facilitate this process, the CCP created interpretative schemata that could be deployed to interact with and better understand these foreign students. These categories were often based on each student’s country of origin and their perceived support of the Soviet Union.


According to a report issued in 1963 by the central government, students from over 60 countries were accepted for study in the PRC in the 24 years since the founding of the state. During this time, 643 students arrived from Vietnam, North Korea, and Albania (these three countries are specifically mentioned because they were considered to be the PRC’s closest allies at the time). Meanwhile, 330 students came from elsewhere in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and 53 students represented Europe, North America, and Japan. The categorization laid out in this report on foreign students is telling. It clearly demarcates the world along geopolitical lines, suggested that students from the trusted countries of Albania, Vietnam, and North Korean deserved their own distinctive category. Meanwhile, the Third World was represented as a cohesive whole, while still maintaining its status as a potential ally. Both the low number of students from North America, Europe and Japan, as well as the grouping of these three states, suggests the antipathy that the PRC felt toward these imperialistic countries.

The CCP often placed foreign students in a positive light, as these students offered the CCP and the Chinese people an important opportunity. In the report cited above, the party continually refers to “the work of foreign students,” suggesting that this was more than an educational exchange. Educators and Chinese students were not supposed to receive these foreign guests passively. This report was intended to lay out how students and educators could win over foreigners to Mao Zedong Thought and convince them of the perniciousness of revisionism. It also provided them with the basic categories with which they can approach each student.

The report is illuminating in its frankness toward the mission at hand. Educators and Chinese students had to realize that the process of winning over foreigners would be long and

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11 “Guanyu waiguo liuxuesheng gongzuo de baogao” 102-001-00306, Beijing City Archives, herein (BJCA).
tortuous. The report admitted that this was a very “complicated” process, that most foreigners’ level of Chinese was “very low,” and that one should not “plan on success.”

Nonetheless, Chinese students and educators were to commit themselves to helping foreigners understand and appreciate Chinese politics. The report noted that the presence of foreign students in the PRC “can help greatly raise the status and prestige of our country, allow for the development of our international connections, and help continuously expand our country’s revolutionary influence.”

Most of all, studying in the PRC would allow for the spread of “Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.” According to the report, “foreign students in China would not only be gaining practical knowledge, they would also be able to see with their own eyes the great achievement of our country’s socialist construction.”

The “work” required to host foreign students in China was not to be conducted in an overly aggressive manner. Unlike during the Cultural Revolution, when students abandoned all methods of subtle persuasion, the CCP cautioned against being too overbearing with foreigners. Instead, educators and students were urged to “exert subtle influence” (潜移默化) and to “go about their work little by little” (细水长流). This last colloquialism is particularly arresting in its vividness – it can literally be translated as “small water, long flow,” suggesting that rather than immediately confronting these students over their political beliefs, the goal was to wear them down little by little.

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12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 The “work” described here of subtly converting students to the Communist cause was a longstanding tradition of the party, and was used on the Chinese masses during the Communist Revolution. As Elizabeth Perry notes, the Communist Revolution “can be read as a textbook illustration of how emotional energy may be harnessed to revolutionary designs.” As Perry notes, the “emotional work” of the CCP was crucial in winning the general support of the Chinese population before the founding of the CCP. The party deployed similar tactics to those discussed in Perry’s article in the 1960s, this time aimed at foreigners. See Elizabeth Perry “Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution,” Mobilization, 7(2) (2002): 111-128, 112.
16 “Guanyu waiguo liuxuesheng gongzuo de baogao” 102-001-00306, Beijing City Archives, herein (BJCA).
The report also asserts that all foreigners are not to be treated in the same manner. In fact, “the development of their (foreigners’) thinking has fluctuated, and the unique characteristics among each country must be thoroughly researched.”\textsuperscript{17} Even students from capitalist and revisionist countries were to be respected, and one was to avoid being “discriminatory toward these students.” Teachers and students were to pay special attention to those who “came from a country with a very small population, because this would likely have generated some sensitive feelings, and therefore we must avoid big country chauvinism (大国主义思想).”\textsuperscript{18} Overall, educators were to be “prudent, hard-working, and conscientious” toward all foreign students.

While the 1963 report was intended for a wide audience, some schools and universities issued their own memos on how to deal with foreign students. In 1964, Beijing University issued three such reports, which established the guidelines of how to treat and interact with foreign students. These documents share two characteristics with the general report detailed above: they are rife with politics and they rely on specific categories that are heavily influenced by the Sino-Soviet split and China’s emerging worldview. In 1964, 60 foreign students from socialist countries came to study at Beijing University. These students fell into categories based on their country of origin and on how deeply these countries had been affected by Soviet revisionism. According to the university’s observation of the student population from the Soviet Union and Europe in 1963, foreigners could fall into three categories.\textsuperscript{19} The first were those who had been deeply affected by revisionism, which constituted the smallest group of foreigners. These people would most likely “remain silent” (沉默寡言), and would avoid talking about politics. However, readers were warned that while these people may appear “gracious, they would slyly cause

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} “Beijing daxue dui waiguo liuxuesheng jixing fanxiu xuanchuan de jidian tihui dui Su, Ou, Meng xuesheng de fanxiu xuanchuan wenti.” 102-001-00383 (BJCA).
mischief.” The second category was made up of students who had been slightly affected by revisionism, which constituted the majority. While these students held some incorrect ideas, and have a “generally blurred point of view,” they would still maintain a friendly attitude toward China. These students were also likely to hold “extreme” views on the question of Joseph Stalin, and they would likely be unsatisfied with both Khrushchev and with Chinese politics.\footnote{This refers to Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization campaign, which he launched soon after he rose to power in the Soviet Union. The CCP rejected Khrushchev’s criticism of Stalin, partially because Mao had modeled his rule in China on Stalin. One of the ways of identifying friendly foreign Communists was by determining their attitude toward Stalin; those who still supported him were considered to be friends of the PRC.} However, on the questions of building socialism independently, on the relationship between fraternal parties, and on agricultural cooperation, this group of students would likely agree with the PRC.\footnote{Ibid.} Finally, a portion of the students were classified as being unhappy with revisionism. These students tended to disagree with the Soviet Union over the Stalin question, as well as over the treatment of fraternal parties. Furthermore, they generally agreed with China on the issue of Yugoslavia and the Sino-Indian border dispute.\footnote{Ibid.}

Hosting foreign students from capitalist countries held many pitfalls, according to the report by Beijing University. What seemed to bother school officials most about these students – who came from Japan, Thailand, Ceylon, Cameroon, and Chad – was that they still identified communism with the Soviet Union. Indeed, these students were said to have “muddled thoughts,” and they mistakenly believed that the Soviet Union was the “head of the socialist camp.” Still,
these students were not completely sympathetic toward the Soviet Union. Many were deeply unsatisfied that the Soviet Union would not support national liberation movements and that it supported India over China in the border dispute. These students tended to attribute these decisions to the Soviet Union’s chauvinism and its separatist attitudes, according to the CCP.23 This final criterion for categorizing foreign students is particularly revealing and reflects how China saw itself in the Third World. The CCP criticized the Soviet Union repeatedly for not being more supportive of decolonization movements in Asia and Africa. By assessing what a foreign student thought about Third World liberation, one could determine whether the person in question held any revisionist views.

While dealing with students from capitalist countries presented a number of challenges, converting students from socialist countries to Chinese communism was considered paramount. Once again, a report from Beijing University detailed how students from various socialist countries could be categorized. Here we see a tendency to debase one of China’s most stalwart allies, Albania. According to this report, the Albanian students’ antipathy toward the Soviet Union was undeniable. However, while these students had knowledge of the anti-revisionist struggle, they lacked any rational understanding of the subject. Furthermore, they did not have any appreciation for anti-revisionist art and literature and were apathetic toward the “study Lei Feng” campaign.24 This is surprising; for much of the 1960s, Albania was China’s staunchest supporter. Albanian propaganda proliferated during this period, and the Albanian people were held in a certain reverence. However, based on this report, it appears that the relationship was imperfect, and that perhaps some officials in the CCP looked down at their Albanian comrades.

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
The North Korean students, on the other hand, were recognized as the most reliable group studying in the PRC. According to the report, their conduct and their actions were a model for other students. As soon as an anti-revisionist essay was published by the PRC, for example, North Korean students formed study groups to discuss the implications of the article, according to the report. Cuban students, on the other hand, disagreed with the PRC’s views on the Soviet Union. While they could not be counted on to support the CCP’s anti-revisionist campaign, a good deal of common ground existed between Cuban students and Chinese educators. The report notes that Cuban students agreed with the CCP that “Stalin was a great Marxist-Leninist, that U.S. imperialism is a paper tiger, that peaceful transition in Latin America is impossible, and that guerrilla warfare is the only way to effect change.”

The crude categories constructed by the CCP in order incorporate foreign students into Chinese society suggest the immensity of the Sino-Soviet split and its impact on the Chinese worldview. What is distinct here is not that the CCP adopted a political posture in dealing with foreign students, but that it worked so doggedly to overcome the grip that the Soviet Union maintained on most foreign Communist parties. The party also supplied Chinese educators and students with the tools necessary to help sway students away from the Soviet Union. Most important, these reports were an attempt to group foreigners into categories that conformed with China’s new worldview. These foreign students presented the CCP with a grand opportunity not only to try to win over new supporters but also to test, modify, and implement their new global narratives. This process is on full display in the reports above, which served as didactic primers for educators and students alike. Contact with these foreigners established a precedent and allowed the CCP to extrapolate their initial perceptions of these students into broader paradigms.

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Ibid.
that became the backbone of China’s developing worldview. At the core of this worldview was a dynamic mixture of anti-revisionism, a sense of mission among global revolutionaries, and, perhaps most significant, a constant eye toward insuring that the Chinese people had the necessary tools to understand the outside world and to comprehend the dangers of revisionism.

The Japanese Delegation

Although relations between Japan and China remained tenuous since the end of World War II, in 1965 CCP officials decided to invite more than 500 Japanese delegates to visit the PRC and tour the country. This delegation was composed of mostly young people, and all of its members were leftists who mostly sympathized with the PRC and Mao Zedong. The delegation visited more than 15 cities, met with Chinese youths, and heard speeches from some of China’s top officials. The trip itself lasted approximately three months; the highlight was the delegation’s visit to Beijing and their brief meeting with Mao Zedong. The delegation was well supported along the way, and Chinese crowds often greeted them upon their arrival in new cities. In Wuhan, for example, 100,000 people attended a parade for the traveling Japanese delegation.26

The delegation’s visit was a major event, particularly for China’s young people. More important it provided fertile ground for reaffirming China’s worldview. Chinese officials’ seized on this opportunity and kept a detailed – and likely doctored – record of the Japanese delegation’s visit. Any utterance or testimonial of admiration for the PRC was sure to be included in this record. Documents of this type gave the CCP’s perception of foreign support a definitive authenticity. Like foreign students studying in China, the CCP saw the Japanese delegation as an excellent source for affirming established categories and for demonstrating the global importance of Chinese politics. In this case, while the Soviet Union still loomed over the

26 “Zhongguo gei le wo dierci shengming” in 102-001-00401 in (BJCA).
Sino-Japanese relationship, the issue of American imperialism dominated a good deal of the discussion. The delegation’s tour of China brought out feelings of bitterness toward the war in Vietnam and toward American imperialism throughout Asia. In many ways, the delegation’s visit proved to be an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that Chinese politics – and specifically Mao Zedong Thought – had a deep global resonance.

Despite the importance of this visit to the CCP, it was also potentially risky. Officials in the PRC viewed Japan as a lackey of the United States and a key propagator of America’s imperialist interests in Asia. By the 1960s, however, that view had begun to change. This was partially driven by the Sino-Soviet split and China’s turn toward Asia. It was also propelled by a growing concern over the war in Vietnam. During the 1960s, the war became increasingly controversial in Japan, even though the Japanese government officially supported the American war effort. For many youths in Japan, the Vietnam War became a metaphor for the ills of modern Japanese society: the country’s turn away from the pacifism enshrined in its constitution, its subservience to the United States, the American military’s presence on Japanese territory (and specifically in Okinawa), the dysfunction of Japanese politics, and the ills of modern capitalism. Beginning in 1965, many in Japan, including officials in the Japanese government, began to criticize the American presence in Vietnam and protest against the Japanese government’s support of the American war effort.²⁷

And yet, Japan’s position vis-à-vis the war in Vietnam was entwined in post-World War II politics and the Cold War. During the 1960s, Japan actually strengthened its relationship with the United States, and the Japanese government continued officially to support the country,

²⁷ The leading voice in opposition to the war in Vietnam was a group called Beheiran, a nebulous collective of artists, academics and young people all opposed to the war. Beheiran organized daily activities, as well as launched letter writing campaigns and small community demonstration. See: Thomas R. H. Havens Fire Across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan, 1965-1975 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 63.
despite their differences. In China, the revised 1960 U.S. – Japanese security treaty, which reaffirmed the alliance between these two countries, seemed to be a clear indication of the revival of Japanese militarism.28 Those Japanese citizens opposed to the treaty and to America’s actions in Vietnam (and there were many), seemed, from the Chinese point of view, to be natural allies with the People’s Republic. The increased social activism in Japan in the mid – 1960s, therefore, served to strengthen the bond between Chinese youth and a small number of Japanese radicals. Once again, however, Chinese officials managed to blur the line between contact and cooption, often subsuming antagonism toward American policy and the Japanese government as proof of the preeminence of Chinese politics in Asia and the importance of Maoism in the world.

Despite the potential benefits of welcoming a Japanese delegation into the PRC, there was some amount of trepidation on the behalf of Chinese government officials about the visit. These officials were apprehensive not only about the Japanese youths’ political orientation but also about the reception the group would receive from the Chinese people, many of whom had not forgotten the Japanese invasion of China during World War II. Documents from the Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council demonstrate a surprising amount of frankness when discussing the Japanese delegation’s visit. The Foreign Affairs office thought that because many in the delegation were rightists or center-rightists (relative to the CCP and Mao Zedong), “meeting with these students would be very complicated.”29 Indeed, the left in Japan was thought of as a weak international partner, susceptible to revisionism and vacillations from internal party conflicts. One memo noted that certain Japanese activists harbored “Trokyists sentiments, took a sectarian approach, and imposed their own views on mass organizations, while obstructing the

29 “Guanyu jixu jiedai canjia zhongri qingnian youhao dalianhua de qingnian daibiaotuan de tongzhī” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA).
development of a youth movement.” However, the Foreign Affairs Office also made plain the potential benefits of this trip to both Japanese and Chinese youths: “in the current upheaval and among the major reorganization of the international situation, the work of these Japanese youths is of important significance, (because) it will add to the understanding of the international situation among China’s youths.” Furthermore, some leftists in Japan had “opposed the Japanese-American security treaty and made good progress in organizing youth groups.” Official concern was not relegated to the political conduct of the Japanese delegation. Chinese officials and Chinese youths were both warned against being too strident toward the Japanese delegation or forcing their politics onto any of its members. One of the most difficult obstacles to the upcoming trip was “the need to put politics up front” without alienating the delegation. As with foreign students, Chinese officials and youths were instructed to “use Mao Zedong Thought flexibly (活学活用), to understand the guiding principles of the Central Committee, and to conform these principles to the reality of the foreign guests’ ideologies.”

Politics aside, the central government had other reasons to be nervous about the Japanese delegation’s visit. Barely twenty years had passed since the Japanese occupation of China, and bitterness and resentment (partly stoked by the CCP) still lingered among the Chinese population. In order to head off any potential animosity among the Chinese people, the Beijing Foreign Affairs Office issued a proclamation to various provincial, township, and city governments organizations explaining why such resentment was unfounded. First, according to the Beijing government, the Chinese people had to separate Japanese militarism from Japan. The atrocities committed in China could be blamed on Japanese militarists and the Japanese capitalist

30 “Riben shehuizhuyi qingnian tongmeng” 102-001-00401 in Beijing Municipal Archives
31 Ibid.
32 “Zai zhongri qingni an youhao dalianhuan zhongzuo waibin zhenghi sixiang gongzuo de jidian tihui” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
monopoly, but the Japanese people themselves were not responsible. The Chinese people were also told to excise various insulting phrases from their everyday speech and were instructed not to call the Japanese guests “Japanese devils” or “little Japanese.” The point of this visit was to improve relations between the two countries. And who, according to the Beijing government, was opposed to a better Sino-Japanese relationship: “American imperialists, Chiang Kaishek, Japanese reactionaries, and Khrushchev revisionists.” According to these officials, America was determined to start another world war and planned to use Tokyo as a bulwark in East Asia. The Americans therefore opposed the resumption of Japanese and Chinese diplomatic relations because it would hamper their plans to invade more countries. In sum, the relationship between China and Japan was “mutually beneficial.” These Japanese youths had, over many years “opposed talks between South Korea and Japan, opposed the restoration of Japanese militarism, and had overall opposed American imperialism.” The ostensible overlap in Japanese and Chinese politics was enough to warrant a prolonged visit by this delegation of young activists.

Much of the perceived mutual ground between the Japanese youths and the People’s Republic revolved around opposition to the war in Vietnam and more generally to antipathy toward American imperialism. The amalgamation of these issues comes through in the slogans with which the Chinese people often greeted the Japanese delegation. These slogans were passed down from the central government and distributed to various municipal and city governments around China. Those attending the welcome ceremony for the Japanese youth group were instructed to shout a variety of slogans. First among these slogans was a call to “support the movement to restore diplomatic relations between China and Japan.” After this, the slogans

33 “Guanyu zhongri qingnian youhao lianhuan xiang qunzhong xuanzhuan de yaodian” in 102-001-401 (BJCA)
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 “Guanyu zhongri qingnian youhao lianhuan xiang qunzhong xuanzhuan de yaodian” in 102-001-401 (BJCA)
became less specific and focused on Japanese militarism, the war in Vietnam, and the dangers of American imperialism: “support the struggle against American patriotism and American militarism;” “oppose the restoration of Japanese militarism;” and finally, “American imperialists, get out of Japan, Chinese Taiwan, and Vietnam.”

The war in Vietnam proved to be a central issue as the delegation traveled around China. In Japan itself, the general public was becoming increasingly disaffected by the war, and opposition to America’s actions increased throughout 1965. According to Peng Zhen, who delivered a speech to the Japanese delegation during their stay in Beijing, things were getting quite bad in Vietnam, and the “heroic Vietnamese people were being placed in a desperate situation.” Despite this gloomy report, he assured his audience that the unity of the Japanese, Korean, and Chinese people could absolutely defeat the American imperialists and the Japanese reactionaries. The war in Vietnam was not just an issue in official speeches. Vietnam also came up in various situations as the Japanese delegation traveled around the country. For instance, one Japanese delegate who interviewed a primary school student in Shaoshan, the birthplace of Mao Zedong, wanted to know if this student knew about the conflict in Vietnam. The student responded: “We know all about it. We read reports and our teachers talk about it (the war). We listen and we detest American imperialism even more. We support the Vietnamese people’s struggle, and we want the American imperialists to get out of Vietnam.” The militancy of the Chinese people and their opposition to American imperialism and the war in Vietnam made a profound impact on some members of the Japanese delegation. In Beijing, a Japanese delegate happened to ask a woman why Chinese people wore overalls. The woman answered that it was a

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37 “Guanyu zhongri qingnian youhao dalianhuan juti jihua de buchong tongzhi” 102-001-4001 in (BJCA)
38 Of particular issue was America’s use of Okinawa as a staging point for the bombing of North Vietnam. Havens (1987), 76-78.
39 “Peng Zhen shichang zai huanying riben qingnian pengyou yanhui shang de jianghua gao” 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
40 “Shanshan de shaonian ertong bu kui wei Mao zhuxi guxiang de shaonian ertong” in 102-001-00401 in (BJCA)
sign of the Chinese people’s commitment to “resisting America and aiding Vietnam.” The Japanese delegate was so impressed by this woman he “couldn’t wait to return to Japan and tell all of the workers that they should study the great international spirit of the Chinese people.”41

Feelings of guilt, both contemporary and historical, also interjected themselves in the Japanese delegations’ assessment of the war in Vietnam. While conducting an interview, one Japanese delegate noted that “the fact that Japan was helping the Americans bomb the Vietnamese people, and that the Japanese people were doing nothing to stop this makes me feel very guilty.” Historical guilt also played a role in the construction of the Vietnamese narrative. In fact, American imperialism in Vietnam was sometimes connected to the Japanese army’s atrocities committed in China during World War II. On their tour, the Japanese delegation visited with a family who had suffered injuries (受害) at the hands of the Japanese army during World War II. One of the delegates was a member of the army that invaded China in 1937. After telling the Chinese family about the horrors of the invasion and about how it altered his ideas and beliefs, he went on to compare Japanese atrocities to the American imperialists’ invasion of Japan, Taiwan, South Vietnam, and South Korea.42 The war in Vietnam therefore proved to be a catalyst for Japanese and Chinese contact. It also functioned not just as a contemporary issue, but one that had deep historical significance. By using the Japanese invasion of China to frame the war in Vietnam, both Japanese and Chinese citizens were able to articulate outrage that resonated within the Sino-Japanese historical sphere.

While a great deal of work was done to assure the success of this tour, the CCP also worked assiduously to record every moment of the visit. The result of this project was gathered in a document titled “The Collected Stories from the Sino-Japanese Friendship Alliance,” a

41 “Weile zhongguo renmin de geming he jianshe reqing gandong” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
42 “San wei waibin fangwen rijun zuixing de shouhai jiating hou zengqiang fanmei juexin” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
compilation of interviews, anecdotes, reflections, and testimonials. This collection offers a
glimpse not just into the way that global narratives were extrapolated and catalogued; it also
shows the archival process through which the CCP attempted to preserve China’s global
importance. Furthermore, it reinforced a number of important perceptions about socialist
modernity in the PRC and served as a means of interpreting the outside world. This text was a
sustaining force that allowed the CCP to reaffirm continually its position of influence in both
Asia and around the world. Even in Japan, as the collection suggests, Chinese politics were
making inroads.

Throughout the collected materials, Japanese delegates often praised the achievements of
Mao Zedong and the CCP while denigrating their own country’s reactionary tendencies. China
itself was presented as a vastly superior country to Japan. For example, while in Xi’an, two
members of the Japanese delegation went for a walk around the city. While on the streets, one of
the visitors mentioned that the streetlights weren’t very bright. However, he noted that “it’s not a
problem at all if the lights are a bit dark. China has neither thieves nor rapists.” His companion
quickly agreed, and stated, “in Japan if the lights were this dim we would have already been
robbed.” He then asks (with “a great deal of emotion”), “when can Japan have this kind of
society.”43 Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this document is the way it is written, as if it
was intended for reenactment. The dialogue is recorded so that it could be spoken line by line.
Even the emotional cues associated with one of the speakers suggests that the CCP intended for
this anecdote to be read as a piece of theater that could be reproduced around the country.

The lament captured in this conversation was not isolated to the People’s Republic of
China alone; many members of the Japanese delegation expressed a similar admiration for the

43 “Bu lai zhongguo jiu mei faxiang xiang zhongguo shi zheyang de hao” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
Chinese people themselves. These sentiments were also included in the collected testimonials of the Japanese delegation and appear in a document entitled “The Consciousness of Chinese Children is Greater than Mine” (中国小朋友的觉悟比我高). In this document, a member of the Japanese delegation expressed surprise about the militancy and thoroughness of the average Chinese child. He recalled one conversation in which he was asked by a seven-year old if the Japanese people are struggling (for revolution). When he replied that Japanese people do indeed “struggle” the child proved to be unsatisfied and demanded that they sit down and give him a detailed introduction to Japanese politics.\(^{44}\) One member of the Japanese delegation similarly expressed admiration for how women were treated in the People’s Republic. On a scheduled visit to a hydraulic dam, the Japanese delegate noticed a Chinese woman operating a crane. According to the delegate, “some people in Japan would say that this was forced labor, but in fact this type of meticulous work is very suitable for women.” In reality, according to this observer, “Japanese women probably envy Chinese women.”\(^{45}\) This observation about women seemed to be particularly important to the CCP; it was included in a collection of Japanese stories and testimonials that were recorded and publicly broadcast in China. What this amounted to was a public confirmation of the position of the People’s Republic and its extremely high status in the global hierarchy of revolution.

While the Japanese delegation registered its admiration and respect for the Chinese people and the People’s Republic, its greatest accolades were reserved for Mao Zedong. Mao was praised as a shining beacon, a visionary, and the true hope of all revolutionary people. These refrains echoed again and again throughout the 1960s. Many of the Japanese delegates framed Mao not as a leader of China but as a truly global figure. Indeed, one Japanese delegate was

\(^{44}\)“Wo haixu le, zhongguo xiao pengyou de juewu bu wo gao!” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
\(^{45}\)“Sheqing tong daibiaotuan quanti chengyuan dui ri guangbo jilu” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
recorded as saying, “in Chairman Mao’s heart is a map of the world; on his mind are the people around the world who have not yet been liberated.” Another visitor, upon his departure from China, summed up all he had learned by evoking Mao’s global importance: “Mao Zedong is the leader of the world’s revolutionary youth, Mao Zedong Thought brilliantly illuminates the entire world.” Others made commitments to study Mao’s work after they returned to Japan so that “day-by-day, Japan could become more like China.” Those who were able to meet Mao treated the experience with near religious awe. One delegate mentioned that after shaking Mao’s hand, he “felt a great responsibility from that day forward. This was not only a hand, it was the steady hand that guided the revolution, the hand that the American imperialists dreaded.” Throughout these documents, Mao was treated as a true revolutionary leader. He became an international figure, one who was just as important in Japan as he was in China.

The Japanese delegation’s visit to the People’s Republic of China proved to be an important opportunity for both the CCP and the Chinese people. For their part, CCP officials used the delegation’s visit to record various testimonials and stories from their Japanese guests. This action alone – of collecting archival documents that spoke to the PRC’s global importance – is a form of evidence in and of itself. The CCP wished to create a permanent record of its own importance not just in Japan but around the world. This record perfectly reflected the PRC’s new worldview and was meant as both a challenge to Soviet revisionism and American imperialism. The timing of the visit was also significant. Only five months later the Cultural Revolution erupted. Meanwhile, in Japan, radical activism increased as the Vietnam War became more and more unpopular. What was most significant, however, was the assiduousness with which the

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46 “Yi ge shangye meishu jia de zhuanbian” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
47 “Zuoye longxin he chu lai shi panruoliangren” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
48 “Zhongguo geile wo dierci shengming” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
49 “Mao zhuxi shijie geming de lingxiu jiandao ta she yisheng de zui da xingfu” in 102-001-00401 (BJCA)
CCP tried to insure the success of the Japanese delegate’s visit and its determination to record and preserve every instance of support expressed by the Japanese guests. What this amounted to was the amalgamation of actual contact, official policy, and imagined global narratives. That Mao was popular among some Japanese people for instance is not in doubt; however, the CCP used this support to frame Maoism as a global ideology. By recording the Japanese delegation’s testimonials, China used foreigners as a means of constituting itself, as well as providing an interpretative document that would clearly demonstrate that the PRC was the last great revolutionary state in the world.

**Celebrating Communist Anniversaries and National Holidays**

The years 1964 and 1965 were extremely important anniversary celebrations for many Eastern European countries. For most, these years marked the twentieth anniversary of victory over Germany, and the founding of a new communist state. These anniversaries were also highly political, as they tacitly recognized the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. For the Chinese government, this was a difficult situation. In 1964 and 1965, the goal of wresting potential allies away from the Soviet Union remained paramount; the PRC could not completely turn its back on all socialist or communist countries. Furthermore, celebrating international Communist holidays was an important tradition in the PRC, reinforcing the internationalism of the Communist movement and the concept of proletarian brotherhood across national borders. Although fraught with ideological pitfalls, these anniversaries had potential benefits. For one, they gave the masses an opportunity to engage with the international Communist movement. These anniversary ceremonies were meant for mass participation, and many people, especially in China’s major cities, were included in the festivities. Following the Sino-Soviet split, these ceremonies became
an important opportunity to further China’s anti-revisionist line and to enhance the developing worldview in the PRC.

In 1965 Czechoslovakia and Hungary celebrated the 20th anniversary of their liberation from German occupation, while Poland celebrated its 21st. The CCP received each of these anniversaries in a similar manner, and the Foreign Culture Liaison Committee issued a series of documents that reflected the difficulty of recognizing these dates in history.\(^{50}\) In each case, the committee noted that none of these three countries celebrated or even recognized the 15th anniversary of the founding of the PRC in 1964. Nevertheless, in each case the committee recommended that the Chinese people attempt to overcome this slight and that a celebration be held in Beijing recognizing the anniversary of the founding of each of these countries. These anniversaries were also to receive proper attention in the national media, and several messages of congratulations were written to send to each of the countries. Overall, the committee urged all those involved to “maintain a positive attitude and a high profile.” The subtext of these documents, however, is clear; the PRC would recognize these anniversaries but would do so unenthusiastically and with the memory of past offenses and continued support of the Soviet Union in mind.\(^{51}\)

In these measured celebrations of Eastern European liberation, a hierarchy once again emerged. While the PRC begrudgingly recognized the anniversary of the founding of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, it was much more enthusiastic about recognizing Romania’s national holiday. Since the Sino-Soviet split, Romania had remained largely neutral, refusing to back the Soviet Union. In the 1960s, relations between Romania and the Soviet Union remained

\(^{50}\) For Hungary and Czechoslovakia and Poland see, Zhongguo Renmin Gongheguo Dui Waiwenhua Lianluo Weiyuan Hui (The People’s Republic of China Liaison Committee on Foreign Culture), Fazi (65), Zidi 370, 484, 880 in 102-001-00395 (BJCA).

\(^{51}\) “Guanyu qingzhu Jieguo qing juti huodong de qingshi” in 102-001-00395 (BJCA).
poor, giving the PRC hope that a potential ally could emerge in Eastern Europe (or at least a country that was not so blatantly anti-Chinese). In both 1964 and 1965, the Cultural Liaison Committee set up festivals to recognize Romanian liberation. During the first of these celebrations, a commune was formed in Beijing to promote Sino-Romanian friendship. In 1964, an exhibition in Beijing was also established that showcased Romanian culture, including several Romanian paintings, and highlighted Sino-Romanian friendship. A film festival was also held, that featured a Romanian film called *Tuduoer*. All of the cultural exhibits, as well as speeches delivered by the Romanian ambassador and representative from the Chinese foreign ministry, were broadcast on TV and reprinted in the national media. Similar ceremonies were held again in 1965 and 1966, this time including a large celebration at a factory in Beijing, as well as more speeches of friendship from Romanian and Chinese officials. In his speech Zhou Wenlong, the head of the Sino-Romanian friendship association, offered the clearest articulation of how the CCP now saw the Soviet Union. According to Zhou, the Soviet Union had fallen into collusion with the United States and had “devolved into the number one accomplice of American imperialism.” Romania was one of the only countries safeguarding against this imperialism, while also preserving peace in Europe. Along with Albania, Romania was thought of as an important potential ally. This also suggests that while the CCP may have turned increasingly toward the Third World during the 1960s, it never completely retreated from Europe. Winning Eastern European countries to its side was seen as a huge victory for the PRC, particularly because many of these countries chafed under Soviet rule. If countries such as Romania turned pro-Chinese, it could severely undermine the Soviet position in Eastern Europe.

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52 “Guanyu liusi nian wo qingzhu Luomaniya guoqing ershi zhounian huodong qingkuang,” 102-001-00395 (BJCA).
53 “Guanyi qingzhu Luomaniya jiefang ershi zhounian huodong de qingshi,” 102-001-00395 (BJCA).
While most of the ceremonies and anniversary celebrations discussed above were meant directly or indirectly to criticize the Soviet Union, many officials in the CCP never gave up hope that the relationship could be repaired. In fact, despite the barrage of polemics published in 1963 that criticized the Soviet Union, the relationship between the two countries actually improved in 1964. This was because of two events, both of which occurred in October 1964. The first was that Nikita Khrushchev was deposed as the leader of the Soviet Union and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev. On assuming leadership of the Soviet Union, Brezhnev moved to repair relations with the PRC. He particularly emphasized international class struggle and a shared ideology between the two countries. Brezhnev also saw an opportunity in the Vietnam War, which he believed would force the PRC to make concessions and be open to repairing the relationship.55 The second event was the PRC’s successful test of the country’s first nuclear weapon. The fact that the Soviet Union refused to share nuclear technology with the PRC in the 1950s was one of the original fissures that led to the Sino-Soviet split.56 Since then, the PRC resented the fact that it did not possess a nuclear bomb: the successful explosion of such a weapon greatly buoyed confidence and caused the country temporarily to reassess its relationship with the Soviet Union.

These two events had an impact not only on international Communism but also on how China perceived various countries. For example, Cuba’s enthusiasm for China’s successful test of a nuclear weapon caused the PRC to reconsider its relationship with Castro’s government. During the 1965 anniversary of Cuban independence, a large celebration took place, partly

55 Radchenko (2009), 120-122.
56 While the Soviet Union provided China with technological advice and helped them build a nuclear reactor meant for peaceful purposes, the Soviets were very hesitant to help the Chinese military build a nuclear bomb. The Soviet Union likely wanted to hold onto its nuclear monopoly and also feared some of Mao’s statements that a nuclear war would not be all that bad. See Sergei Goncharenko, “Sino-Soviet Military Cooperation,” in Odd Arne Westad (ed.), Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945 – 1953 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 157-159.
because the Cubans had “rejoiced” following the nuclear test and Khrushchev’s ouster. Hints of the PRC’s shifting attitude can also be found in the ceremonies held to recognize the October Revolution. The October Revolution, despite its obvious Russian origin, was too important a Communist holiday to be simply discarded, no matter the antipathy between the Soviet Union and the PRC. The holiday, however, took on a greater significance in 1964. Coming literally days after China’s nuclear test and Khrushchev’s ouster, the Foreign Ministry and the Sino-Soviet Friendship Alliance decided to recognize the holiday with a large ceremony. A report issued in late October noted that, “due to the situation that has arisen because of Khrushchev’s ouster, we should celebrate the October Revolution with enthusiasm and pageantry.” Eight cities across China were expected to mark the holiday, and in Beijing a number of high-ranking CCP officials joined in the festivities, including Zhu De and Kang Sheng.

In recognition of the holiday in 1964, Beijing invited a delegation from the Soviet Union to visit China. The delegation was to be made up of eight people, and was to stay in China for 15-20 days. As in the case of the Japanese delegation, there was some trepidation about this visit. The Sino-Soviet Friendship Alliance could not predict what the Soviet delegation would attempt to discuss with their Chinese hosts and wanted to avoid any potential conflict. In a report issued before the Soviet delegation’s arrival, the Friendship alliance laid out some general guidelines for all those that came into contact with the Soviets: “If the delegation wants to discuss the differences between China and the Soviet Union, you should try to avoid discussion. If they are provocative, use simple language to explain our position. If the delegation produced any anti-

57 “Guanyu juban qingzhu Guba jiefang liu zhounian huodong de qingshi,” 102-001-00395 (BJCA).
58 The October Revolution is so named based on the Julian calendar. According to the Gregorian calendar, the October Revolution took place on November 7.
59 “Guanyu shiyue geming sishiqi zhounian qingzhu banfa de qingshi baogao,” 102-001-00349 (BJCA).
revisionist material, it is recommended that you temporarily remove yourself.” The delegation, meanwhile, had planned to spend some time at Beijing University attending a film festival. This worried the Beijing city government, which was concerned about what the students could potentially say to the visiting delegation. The city government issued a similar report urging all students who met with the delegation to, “avoid the major issues, especially Khrushchev’s stepping down and China successfully exploding its first atomic bomb. One should not express any attitude, take care to speak respectfully, and basically not discuss any problems.”

Despite this temporary thaw, the window for repairing Sino-Soviet relations that opened in 1964 quickly slammed shut. When Khrushchev was overthrown, officials in Beijing were so hopeful that they could mend relations between the two countries that a group of 50 delegates from the CCP was dispatched to Moscow, just as China was marking the anniversary of the October Revolution. The hope of the Chinese officials quickly faded, however, when Soviet Defense Minister Marshal Malinovsky told He Long, “we’ve already got rid of Khrushchev, you should get rid of Mao Zedong.” He Long was indignant and quickly reported the incident to Zhou Enlai who complained to Brezhnev. Brezhnev attempted to pass the incident off as a drunken outburst, but the damage was done and the Chinese delegation quickly returned to Beijing. No further attempts were made to restore the relationship between the two countries until after Mao’s death in 1976. The rupture, however, continued to shape China’s worldview, as well as impact its domestic politics. From 1962 to 1972, Chinese officials continuously categorized foreign countries based on their antipathy not only toward imperialism but also toward revisionism, which was considered to be just as great a threat to the communist world as

60 “Guanyu jiedai Su-Zhong youxie daibiaotuan de qingshi baogao,” in 102-001-00349 (BJCA).
61 “Guanyu qingkuang shiyu e geming jie dianying wanhui kuang huibao,” 102-001-00349 (BJCA).
the United States. Not only did the realities of the rupture affect foreign policy, but it was a drama that played out on the ground and dictated how the PRC came to organize itself around communist holidays and how these holidays and anniversaries would be recognized in China. Most important, the CCP hoped that these holidays laid plain the hierarchy of China’s new worldview and allowed the Chinese people to access easily and understand the international situation that resulted from the Sino-Soviet split.

**Conclusion**

The Sino-Soviet split was one of the most significant events of the post-World War II era. It not only changed the Cold War, altered the dynamics of power in both Asia and Europe, and fractured the international Communist movement, it also reshaped radical activism in the 1960s and changed the trajectory of Third World liberation movements. For China, the Sino-Soviet split was no less significant, although it has often received secondhand treatment in the historiography of the PRC. Scholars have tended to focus a great deal of attention on the Great Leap Forward to the general neglect of the breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations. This justifiably stems from the chaos caused by the leap, but also from the fissures that arose out of the post-leap recovery. The early 1960s is often presented as an attempt to right the Chinese economy, as well as a period of growing tension among the so-called Yan’an leadership, two phenomena that had significant repercussions moving forward. And yet, the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet split was just as consequential. The tensions exposed by the Sino-Soviet split became a major aspect of the growing antagonism among the Yan’an leadership, as various officials accused each other of harboring revisionist and pro-Soviet thoughts, especially during the Cultural Revolution. The realities of life without the Soviet Union impinged on Chinese politics and society and altered the trajectory of the CCP.
The reason the Sino-Soviet split was so significant was that the Soviet Union was central to the PRC’s early development. For nearly a decade, the Soviet Union had helped shape political, social, cultural, and economic policies in the PRC. Entire factory blueprints and equipment were exported from the Soviet Union into the PRC, and the two countries adopted a similar approach to industrialization. Cultural production was often modeled after the Soviet Union, and films and fashion were imported from China’s northern neighbor. What was most important, however, was the ideal that the Soviet Union represented. More than importing a cultural or industrial policy, the Soviet Union embodied socialist modernity. The country was held up as the future of Chinese society, and praised for its advancement and for bravely forging a path along the road of communist development. When the relationship between the Soviet Union and the PRC failed, this conceptualization of modernity was no longer sustainable.

Because of this, the Sino-Soviet split meant more than altering Chinese policy; it required constructing an entirely new worldview. It also opened up a new line of criticism among CCP officials, who charged each other with being revisionists and with abandoning revolution. Most important, the Sino-Soviet split allowed the PRC to use global narratives as political weapons. The CCP claimed that Chinese politics resonated with leftists and revolutionaries around the world, thereby imbuing mass campaigns with an international significance. This new worldview was primarily engendered by means of ontological shifts – of reconstituting the state based on a new global reality. What was required was not a simple decree or announcement from the CCP but a sustained campaign of remapping, recategorizing, and re-envisioning the rest of the world. The realities of the Sino-Soviet split had to be translated into a new imagined world that no longer placed such an emphasis on the Soviet Union’s idea of socialist modernity. Instead of China looking toward the Soviet Union as a model, the PRC would now take on the burden of
guiding the rest of the world, and ostensibly providing support for leftist socialist movements everywhere.

The primary method deployed by the CCP to construct and sustain this worldview was creating new taxonomies by which to understand the world. These taxonomies had to be easily accessible to the everyday person and often depended on Maoism. They were, in essence, a schematic map for understanding the world after the Soviet Union. What these categories often amounted to was an affirmation of Chinese politics and the implication that China now served as a model for socialist modernity. The tactics used for conveying this post-Soviet worldview, and detailed herein, proved fundamental over the coming ten-year period in helping to exert power and sustain the CCP’s (and later the Red Guards’) claims of legitimacy. More important, global categories were deployed during the Cultural Revolution to stoke the flames of radical students and spur them to mass action. During the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards used similar tactics to those described above, and often categorized foreigners based on their level of revolutionary commitment to Maoism. Moreover, they used these categories to demonstrate the global importance of the Cultural Revolution and to convey a hierarchy that reinforced the global consequences of their actions.

The means through which these early categories were constructed is also telling. The CCP used actual contact with foreigners, in the form of young people studying in the PRC, to devise these categories. Similarly, the CCP assiduously recorded anecdotes and testimonials about the importance of Chinese politics in the world, and it distributed these stories to the Chinese population as evidence and justification for China’s new worldview. Later, the tactic of recording foreign testimonials would be used again by the Red Guards, who devoted portions of their newspapers to foreign testimonials. Finally, political ceremonies and rallies were often
transformed into repositories of global narratives and were used to express not only solidarity with other Communist movements but also as a means of constantly reinforcing international categories and global hierarchies.

Overall, the PRC was trying to create an interpretative map of the world that was based on specific categories. These categories were primers, and they were easy to access, understand, and consume. Such a practice became vital to the CCP in the 1960s. Instilling these new categories in society, however, required a massive effort on behalf of communist officials to provide the Chinese people with the tools necessary to understand a world devoid of Soviet influence. This process was inexorably entangled with internal politics, and it was difficult to separate the foreign and the domestic during the 1960s. The CCP’s efforts were such a success that over the next ten years, the worldview described above gripped Chinese politics, and was one of the major factors that determined the direction of the country. Moreover, the tactics of categorizing and mapping the world by using Chinese political frames had amazing staying power, and came to dominate mass campaigns during the 1960s. As we will see, these tactics fit perfectly with the radicalism and the aggression of the Cultural Revolution, and became a favorite tool of the Red Guards in their attempt to wrest the mantle of revolutionary authority away from an older and stultified generation of officials.
Chapter 2:

“The Lips and the Teeth”: Chinese Politics and the War in Vietnam

Other than the Sino-Soviet split, no other international event had a greater impact on the People’s Republic of China than the war in Vietnam. The war altered the trajectory of foreign and domestic policy in China, and became deeply intertwined with Chinese politics and Maoist radicalism. Security and military concerns, ideology, policy considerations, antagonism toward American imperialism, and the memory of the Korean War all propelled China’s perception of the war in Vietnam. Many Chinese officials came to believe that the United States intended to expand the war into North Vietnam, and eventually into China’s southern provinces. China therefore had a tremendous stake in the outcome of the war. This altered the security orientation of the country. Concerned over the ability of the United States to bomb coastal areas, the CCP ordered that much of China’s industry be moved inland, to the so-called “third front.” Mao and his allies reacted to the war by radicalizing politics and calling for mass mobilization in order to prepare for war. For much of the 1960s, the People’s Republic pledged unyielding support for the North Vietnamese government. It was often said that the two countries were “closer than the lips and the teeth” (唇齿相依). This closeness partially explains why the Vietnam War so fundamentally reoriented portions of Chinese society.

The impact that the war in Vietnam had on the People’s Republic of China has, in recent years, become a topic of extreme interest. Part of this interest is motivated by scholars’ desire to

write a Cold War history outside of Europe and the United States. For these scholars, the relationship between East and Southeast Asia has proven to be fertile ground. When it comes to the People’s Republic of China, however, much of this work has been conducted at the official and diplomatic levels. Scholars have explicated the connection between China’s foreign and domestic policy, showing how officials approach to the war, especially within Maoist circles, provoked a change in domestic policy. In essence, these scholars have argued that growing concern over the war in Vietnam caused Mao and his allies to introduce increasingly radical policies in Chinese society, which eventually led to the Cultural Revolution.

I analyze how the Vietnam War manifested itself in everyday politics in the PRC. Rather than focus on policy decisions, I trace the war as it was portrayed within a domestic and international framework, analyzing the means used to convey the implications and even danger of the war. I show how the Vietnam War was seamlessly incorporated into life in the PRC, and how it became such a strong and durable aspect of China’s post-Soviet worldview. The Vietnam War was the shibboleth of the Chinese 1960s, used as a codeword to encompass foreign and even domestic threats: American imperialism, revolutionary ossification, and revisionism, and the dangers of a population unaccustomed to mass mobilization and revolutionary action.

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Of the many foreign events that were used to construct China’s revolutionary discourse during the 1960s, the war in Vietnam was the least abstract. While the CCP tended to imagine, homogenize, and essentialize foreign revolutionaries and their support of the PRC, this was not typically the case with the war in Vietnam. Vietnam was an issue that went beyond ideology; the American presence in Southeast Asia posed a genuine threat to the PRC, in the minds of many Communist officials. The fact that the war was so tangible meant that it resonated more deeply at various levels of Chinese society. Unlike the African revolution, the U.S. civil rights movement, the Paris student movement, or a host of other events with which China engaged during the 1960s, the war in Vietnam was happening on the country’s doorstep. There was no need to imagine or exaggerate the connection between China and Vietnam. Proximity, however, was only one reason why Vietnam made such a large impact on China. Throughout the 1960s, there was also an active exchange of people between North Vietnam and China, and the Sino–Vietnamese border served as a contact zone for much of the 1960s. Chinese workers went to North Vietnam to construct roads and as technical advisers. Later, during the Cultural Revolution, a number of Red Guards went to Vietnam to join the Vietcong. By 1971 there was thousands of Chinese living in Hanoi. The reverse is also true; Vietnamese came to China both as part of official delegations and as technical trainees and students. Both the geographical proximity of the war and the exchange of technicians, students and military personnel between the two countries made the relationship less remote, and more tangible.

The power of Vietnam as a codeword, the threat that the war posed to the PRC, and the actual day-to-day contact between the Chinese and Vietnamese people also gave the war an important durability in the Chinese consciousness. The Vietnam War proved to be a powerful tool in the Cultural Revolution and continued to function as a stand-in for the international
threats posed by American imperialism and Soviet revisionism. The characteristics associated with the Vietnam War were highly compatible with the Cultural Revolution. The war represented heroic struggle, militancy, vigilance, and the need to confront enemies of Communism. Furthermore, the Vietnamese were the antithesis of Soviet revisionists. In the eyes of Chinese officials, the Vietnam War demonstrated the naivety of Khrushchev’s statement that the communist and capitalist worlds could coexist. The Cultural Revolution was intended to root out and expose all those capitalist-roaders and revisionists who were hidden in the Chinese Communist Party and to separate revolutionaries from pretenders. Vietnam took on a similar meaning in Chinese society; as Chen Jian has stated, the war itself became a “litmus test for true Communism.” The Cultural Revolution embodied the anti-revisionist and anti-imperialist ethos so often associated with the Vietnam war making the rhetoric surrounding the war, perfectly commensurate with the Cultural Revolution. It also gave Vietnam significant staying power; the war continued to serve as a potent tool during the Cultural Revolution.

Not only was the Vietnam War a powerful symbol in Chinese society, but the international reaction to the war connected China to a wider global discourse. The war was universally unpopular among leftist activists in the 1960s. Many of these activists framed the war in similar terms as the CCP, connecting the war to the evils of capitalism and imperialism, using pointed language to accuse the United States of wholesale slaughter in Southeast Asia, and using culture, such as the political play, to demonstrate the evils of the war in Vietnam. Furthermore, the war in Vietnam proved to be a turning point for radical politics in China, and in other parts of the world. In Berkeley, university students connected their movement for free speech to the

6 Chen (1995), 363.
atrocities committed in Vietnam, thereby adopting a radical internationalism. In West Germany, the war in Vietnam proved to be the temporary death of liberal and humanitarian politics, as more and more students abandoned any hope of reform and instead began to criticize both the state and West German society. In China, the war acted as a key pillar for a radical international discourse. What’s more, Chinese officials were acutely aware of the power of the Vietnam War to unite radical elements around the world, as well as the war’s unpopularity, especially in the United States. The Chinese press often connected injustices in the United States – such as racial discrimination – with America’s policy in Southeast Asia. They also reported widely on antiwar protests in the United States and Europe, and even borrowed political cartoons from American newspapers that criticized the war.

That the war in Vietnam held a significant place in Chinese society is related to the history of the PRC. The reaction to the war in Vietnam was partially motivated by the PRC’s experiences during the Korean War. Many officials feared that the war would spread into China, just as they feared that the American army would cross the Yalu River from North Korea into China in 1950. The response to the American army in Southeast Asia was also similar; as with the Korean War, the PRC organized a “Defend Vietnam, Resist America” campaign to mobilize the Chinese people. This gave the war in Vietnam a historical familiarity. This is yet another

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9 One such cartoon, originally published in the Washington Post, appeared in People’s Daily in 1965. The cartoon shows an American soldier flying through the air, tripped by two objects labeled “general’s coup” and “government upset.” Although the cartoon is in English, People’s Daily provided a faithful translation that reads, “the uneven war footing of the United States.” “Bu yin de zhanzheng lizudian” Renmin Ribao (Feb 2, 1965). In 1963, the Vietnamese army conspired to overthrow the President of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem. Various officials in the United States government knew about and supported the plan, although many were shocked that Diem was executed after his arrest. The coup was supported by several members of the South Vietnamese army, including Nguyen Khoanh, who became the head of state. Diem’s removal only led to more chaos and instability in South Vietnam.
reason why the Vietnam War resonated so deeply in Chinese society. Vietnam not only encapsulated China’s post-Soviet worldview, but the war also reintroduced the threat of the American army, a historical foe that was written into the very fabric of the People’s Republic of China.

Interpreting the War in Vietnam: Language and Festival

The war in Vietnam altered foreign and domestic policy in China and caused both radical and moderate officials to reassess the international situation. The impact of the war, however, was not just felt in official circles or government ministries. Making the Chinese people aware of the war and preparing for a possible American invasion required a prolonged campaign that took place at all levels of Chinese society. The goal was to communicate the dangers of the war, and make people aware of the threat that the American army posed to the PRC. However, there was also a subtler undertone to this campaign. The CCP was not only preparing for war; the party was also inculcating vigilance and militancy in Chinese society, and radicalizing Chinese politics. Doing this required more than traditional propaganda. Instead, the party engendered a specific language and set of codes and symbols that could help mobilize the Chinese population, as well as communicate the situation in Southeast Asia. The new language and new codes were incorporated by celebrating important Vietnamese anniversaries and through various mass protests condemning American imperialism in Southeast Asia. In examining both, one finds a sustained message about the war in Vietnam and how it was to be interpreted and incorporated into Chinese society.

Celebrating Vietnamese independence took on an added dimension in the 1960s, beginning in 1964. In August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred, after which the United States government committed more troops to Vietnam and escalated the war in Southeast Asia.
The incident also brought North Vietnam – one of China’s staunchest allies – into direct confrontation with the United States. North Vietnam was an important buffer for China, which, beginning in 1964, became deeply concerned about being encircled by hostile forces. With the Soviet Union to the north and the Americans gaining influence around Asia, it was the states of North Korea and North Vietnam served as important buttresses against foreign enemies.\(^\text{10}\) If North Vietnam were overrun by the American army, it would almost insure the complete encirclement of the PRC.

China therefore had both an ideological and a strategic reason to celebrate an independent Vietnam. In 1964 and 1965, widespread celebrations were held in Beijing; although 1965 – the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) anniversary of the founding of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam – proved to be a real gala affair. The tone of these two anniversary celebrations also differed in important ways. Chinese perception of the war in Vietnam and the discourse surrounding the war shifted from 1964 to 1965. In 1964, the case against the war was still presented in legal terms: the war was seen as a violation of the Geneva Convention and a threat to world peace. During the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) anniversary celebration Wang Ren, the head of the Sino-Vietnamese friendship association, characterized the war as a “heinous crime” (taotian zuixing 滔天罪行) committed by the American imperialists.\(^\text{11}\) Wang also reaffirmed the close relationship between the two countries and concluded his speech, “the Chinese and Vietnamese people are brothers. When a bandit hits you, he also hits us, and at this moment we are preparing for war side-by-side with you.”\(^\text{12}\) Wang also gave a particularly harsh assessment of American imperialism and its threat to world peace. He characterized American imperialism as the “enemy of all people around the world.”\(^\text{13}\) One can

\(^{10}\) Conversation between Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng and Pham Van Dong, Beijing, April 29, 1968 in 77 Conversations

\(^{11}\) Speech delivered by Wang Ren, August 31, 1964, Doc. Number 102-001-00348 (BJCA).

\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) “Zhongyue youhao gongshe de jianghua gao,” 102-001-00348 (BJCA).
also detect an increased anxiety over American provocations in North Vietnam. The 19th anniversary celebration was held only a short time after the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. In fact, Wang specifically mentions the Gulf of Tonkin, declaring that the episode was “a plot to expand the war and invade North Vietnam” and that this represented a major threat to “peace in Southeast Asia and around the world.”

Other speakers from that day also suggested that Vietnam and China would fight the United States together. Tsinghua University student Li Chouci spoke about the close relationship between Vietnamese students studying in Beijing and their Chinese classmates. This relationship had forged a permanent brotherhood, and Li pledged that, “from this day forward, no matter if it’s opposing our common enemy in war, or if it’s in building socialism, the Vietnamese and Chinese people will always be united, will fight wars together, and will be victorious together.”

Another Tsinghua student, Zhang Fulan, offered a harsher assessment of the war in Vietnam. “American imperialists and their running dog allies have destroyed the Geneva Convention, have obstructed the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, and have engaged in a brutal massacre of the South Vietnamese people.” Zhang also stated that not only did the Vietnamese people enjoy the support of all Chinese but also that “people around the entire world were standing with the Vietnamese people.” Like his classmate, Zhang invoked the concept of youth and the impact that the war in Vietnam had on this generation, which came of age during the Cultural Revolution. One can even see some of the familiar language used during the Cultural Revolution in Zhang’s speech. According to Zhang, the youth of South Vietnam were “standing on the

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14 Ibid.
15 “Qinghua daxue Li Chouci tongzhi de jianghuagao,” Doc. Numner 102-001-00348 (BJCA).
16 “Qinghua daxue xuesheng zhuxi Zhang Fulan tongzhi jianghua gao,” 102-001-00348 (BJCA).
17 Ibid.
frontline of battle, as they have given the prime of their lives for the fatherland.” These ideas of youthful sacrifice and standing on the frontline were frequently used as codes during the Cultural Revolution to demonstrate the significance of the movement.

While the nineteenth celebration of Vietnamese independence was important, it was the twentieth anniversary celebration in 1965 that made the deeper impact. Indeed, even the central government decided that it would hold back in 1964 so that it could devote more resources to the twentieth anniversary. The number of people mobilized in 1965 was staggering, outnumbering other previous anniversary celebrations for any country, not just Vietnam. The CCP instructed every Foreign Culture Office to mobilize large swaths of people. Trade unions, youth and student federations, the Communist Youth League, and the Women’s Federation all played a role in recognizing the twentieth anniversary of Vietnam’s independence. Ten thousand people gathered at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to recognize the anniversary, and twenty five cities around the country were instructed to hold Vietnamese movie festivals for the week of the anniversary.

A delegation from North Vietnam was also scheduled to visit China to participate in the celebration. This visit was given a special priority, and instructions were issued on how the delegation should be greeted and how it was to be treated while in China. The goal of the visit, according to Song Yiping, the deputy director of the Foreign Culture Committee, was to make the delegation understand that China fully supported the Vietnamese people’s war against the American invaders. It was also important, according to Song, to make sure that the week-long visit went as smoothly as possible; officials were therefore instructed to avoid sensitive or

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18 Ibid.
19 “Guanyu qingzhu yue, chao guoqing de qingshi,” 102-001-00348 (BJCA).
20 “Qingzhu yuenan guoqing ershi zhounian de qingshi,” 102-001-00396 (BJCA).
21 Ibid.
22 “Jiedai yuezhong youxie daibiao tuan jihua,” 102-001-00396 (BJCA).
potentially contentious issues, especially the problem of revisionism, and to curb any
crude feelings they may have toward Vietnam.\footnote{Ibid.} During the actual visit, a reception was
held at which several model workers met with the Vietnamese delegation and made brief
statements. As one model worker noted, “the workers (of China) rejoice at the construction of
socialism in Vietnam and the defeat of the American bandits.”\footnote{“Jiedai yuenan guibing baogao,” 102-001-00396 (BJCA).} The CCP’s goal was both to
make sure that the Vietnamese knew that China supported their struggle and, less explicitly, to
make the Chinese people aware of the Vietnamese struggle and the perilous situation that existed
on China’s southern border.

The speeches and statements delivered during the twentieth anniversary celebration
reflected the mood in the PRC and how the war in Vietnam was interpreted and represented in
Chinese society. What is striking about some of these speeches is their engagement with the
pressing issues facing Vietnam; while speeches about other foreign countries could sometimes
seem imagined or exaggerated, the CCP was well informed about the conditions in Vietnam.
Take, for instance, a statement issued by the Foreign Culture Committee. While celebrating the
heroism of the Vietnamese people over the last twenty years – beginning with their defeat of the
Japanese and the French, and moving into their battle against the Americans – the statement
detailed the various ways in which the Vietnamese people had been wronged. The statement
specifically cited the American policy of creating strategic hamlets. According to the statement,
“the Americans have committed a heinous crime in South Vietnam, setting up more than one
thousand prisons, and establishing more than 8,000 strategic hamlets, wounding, killing, and
placing great pressure on more than one million inhabitants of these hamlets.”\footnote{“Zai qingzhu yuenan minzhu gongheguo chengli ershi zhounian dahui shang de jianghua,” 102-001-00396 (BJCA).} The strategic
hamlet program was a controversial policy developed by the United States in 1961, was intended to protect the peasantry from communist insurgents in South Vietnam. The program, however, had the opposite effect, and many Vietnamese peasants were removed from their land and made to feel as if they were living in prison camps, thereby angering a wider segment of society. The Chinese government’s choice to home in on this specific issue, as this document demonstrates, suggests a high level of engagement with one of the core issues concerning the war in Vietnam.

The statement is also significant in that it uses politics and official policy to convey the idea that the Chinese are prepared and willing to enter the war. One of the primary functions of this twentieth anniversary celebration seemed to be preparing the Chinese people for the possibility of war, demonstrating to the world that China was prepared for war. In fact, in 1965, Zhou Enlai passed a message to the American government through Pakistan that made three points, the third of which was that China was prepared for war. Zhou’s pronouncement was largely the result of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, which greatly alarmed Beijing. On April 8, 1965, Liu Shaoqi reinforced Zhou’s sentiments when he told Le Duan, the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Worker’s Party, that “it is our policy that we will do our best to support you.”

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26 This plan was initially implemented in 1962 after Ngo Dinh Nhu, Diem’s brother, and William Colby, the CIA section chief in Vietnam, came up with the idea for the strategic hamlets. Nhu devised this plan after studying the British experience in Malaya and the American strategy in the Philippines. The fact that this plan was based on colonial strategies of controlling a restive population suggests why it was so unpopular with the Southern Vietnamese. Even worse, the Vietcong easily penetrated the strategic hamlets, which made Diem’s assurances that the hamlets would be secure seem foolish. As one author noted, “The hamlets became prisons rather than sanctuaries.” Richard H. Immerman, “Dealing with a Government of Madmen: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Ngo Dinh Diem,” in David L. Anderson (ed.), The Columbia History of the Vietnam War (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 137; For a general overview of the Strategic Hamlet Program, see: Thomas L. Ahern, Jr. Vietnam Declassified: The CIA and Counterinsurgency (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 2010), 71-90.

27 Conversation between Zhou Enlai and Pakistani President Ayub Khan, Karachi, April 2, 1965 in 77 Conversations.


29 Conversation between Liu Shaoqi and Le Duan, Beijing, April 8, 1965 in 77 Conversations.
While these statements were surely meant to reassure the Vietnamese, they were also intended for the Chinese people and Chinese workers specifically. As the statement celebrating Vietnam’s twentieth anniversary declares, “whatever the Vietnamese people want, we will support them; however long they are attacked, we will support them.” Others echoed these sentiments. A speaker from the Sino-Vietnamese Friendship Alliance declared that the United States “may gradually expand the war in Vietnam, so that we must be ready to increase our production, collect the harvest, and improve our skills and training to kill the enemy.” These documents are also arresting in their artful use of politics, suggesting that increased production alone would not be enough to support the Vietnamese people. Instead, China had to “raise the flag of Mao Zedong Thought even higher, promote politics, and raise class consciousness. The workshop is a battlefield.” Moreover, these statements proved highly compatible with the Cultural Revolution, which was in its inchoate stages at the time of the 20th anniversary celebration. The idea of letting politics and class struggle dictate everyday life was a tactic that had abated slightly following the Great Leap Forward, but it soon resurfaced during the Cultural Revolution. The twentieth anniversary grafted a prototype language onto the Vietnam War; it was not as extreme as that of the Cultural Revolution, but a foretaste of the incipient campaign.

The symbols used in these ceremonies were also significant, if not a harbinger of things to come. During the Cultural Revolution, both the CCP and the Red Guards positioned their struggle as a matter of global significance, suggesting that the campaign’s success or failure would have international and historical implications. The war in Vietnam was framed in a similar way. A speaker who represented the Sino-Vietnamese Friendship Alliance stated that “the

30 “Zai qingzhu yuenan minzhu gongheguo chengli ershi zhounian dahui shang de jianghua,” 102-001-00396 (BJCA).
32 “Zai qingzhu yuenan minzhu gongheguo chengli ershi zhounian dahui shang de jianghua,” 102-001-00396 (BJCA).
brilliant victory of the Vietnamese people in their struggle against the armed aggression of the U.S. imperialists has strongly encouraged national democratic revolutions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and has set a shining example for the revolutionary struggle of oppressed people around the world.”33 During the twentieth anniversary celebration, the war in Vietnam and opposition to the war were also framed in a global context. The CCP and various official speakers conveyed to the Vietnamese and Chinese crowd that the war was extremely unpopular around the world. Yi Ping, a representative of students and faculty at Tsinghua and Beijing Universities, suggested that “the patriotic struggle of the Vietnamese people has great international and historical significance.”34 Yi Ping’s speech also sounded a note of youthful defiance, laying much of the responsibility of learning from the Vietnamese example at the feet of China’s college students. Yi Ping concludes his speech with a clarion call to “study the revolutionary spirit of the Vietnamese people in opposing American imperialism and learn from the Vietnamese people’s internationalism. The entire staff and student body at Beijing and Tsinghua Universities will fight side-by-side with the Vietnamese people.”35 This idea of youth and Third Worldism were predominant themes in dealing with Vietnam; they also became cornerstones of the Cultural Revolution.

After the twentieth anniversary celebration of Vietnamese independence concluded, the war in Vietnam did not fall out of everyday political discussion in the PRC. The CCP attempted to sustain the international momentum that such ceremonies often engendered, especially as anxiety that the war could spread into China continued through 1965. By 1965, the rhetoric surrounding the war in Vietnam had also taken on many of the same concepts that soon animated the Cultural Revolution: class struggle, vigilance, militancy, youth, the importance of Mao

33 “Zhong-yue youhao she de jianghua gao,” 102-001-00396 (BJCA).
34 “Liu Ping tongzhi de jianghua gao,” 102-001-00396 (BJCA).
35 Ibid.
Zedong Thought, and confronting the enemy were all used to frame the war in Vietnam. Thus, in December 1965, Beijing planned a national week of festivities to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the founding of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front (NLF). The Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council coordinated the propaganda surrounding this celebration. The council specifically noted which points were to be stressed in the speeches and public editorials commemorating the NLF’s founding. These points included: that the North Vietnamese soldiers had tremendous respect for the NLF; that it was American imperialists, and no one else, that were responsible for the expansion of the war; that there was a need to expose the Johnson administration’s conspiracy surrounding “peace talks;” and that the Vietnamese people would continue to fight until the motherland was reunited. In Beijing, the State Council ordered a rally that included more than ten thousand people. Zhou Enlai, Peng Zhen, Chen Yi, and Luo Ruiqing were also scheduled to attend the ceremony. Perhaps most interesting is that the event was partially tailored to an international audience. All of the speeches and any editorials associated with the anniversary celebration were translated into seven different languages, including French, English, Spanish and Albanian.

The State Council commissioned a photo exhibit portraying the birth of the NLF, their growth in battle, the NLF’s international supporters, and their continued war against the American and South Vietnamese governments. The council stressed that the exhibition, which traveled to 12 Chinese cities, had to be taken very seriously, and presented with great responsibility. This was intended to show support for the Vietnamese people. The exhibit was

36 “Difang chengshi juxing qingzhu Yuenan Nanfang Minzu Jiefang zhenxian chengli wu zhou nian dahui de tongzhim” 102-001-00396 (BJCA).
37 “Shoudu ge jie renmin qingzhu Yuenan Nanfang Minzu Jiefang zhenxian chengli wu zhou nian dahui,” 102-001-00396.
38 “Yuenan Nanfang zai shengli qianjin tupian zhanlan zai jingzhan chu jihua,” 102-001-00396 (BJCA).
also a response to the expansion of the war in South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{39} Some of the pictures included newspaper clippings from foreign countries, especially, as the State Council suggested, “newspapers from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as well as American newspapers showing the American people’s struggle against the war.”\textsuperscript{40} The exhibition, along with the celebration of the war in Vietnam, concluded a two-year stretch of ceremonies and performances held in support of the Vietnamese people. Although the Gulf of Tonkin Incident and the expansion of the war largely animated these protests, Chinese politics also entered into the ceremonies. The rhetoric of these celebrations is also a precursor to some of the language that became essential to the Cultural Revolution. This language married class struggle, resistance, and politics into one coherent worldview, making it seem that victory in the Vietnam War was one aspect of a larger struggle taking place in China and around the world against revisionism and imperialism.

**Political Protests**

Translating language into action became another key component of constructing a new worldview during the 1960s, and the Vietnam War played a key role in this process. While the language and ceremonies discussed above emanated from elites with the general Chinese population in participation, the CCP also organized a series of protests against American aggression in Vietnam. These protests engaged everyday people and followed a similar pattern to the anniversary ceremonies. Those held in 1964 – before the Gulf of Tonkin incident – were mainly concerned with the legality of the war, the importance of the Geneva Convention, and maintaining peace in Southeast Asia. In 1965, however, protests against the war turned more radical and militant, and the United States was portrayed as an implacable imperialist power. Any references to international laws or treaties such as the Geneva Convention were excised

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
from the record. Part of this increased militancy can be explained by the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which occurred on August 4, 1964 and increased the possibility of an American invasion of North Vietnam. However, the domestic situation in China also impinged on these protests. Both the Socialist Education Movement and the Four Clean-ups Campaign made Chinese politics more radical, and further expanded Mao Zedong’s cult of personality. In fact, Maoist codes gained greater expression in the protests against the Vietnam War held in 1965. Overall, antiwar protests illuminate not just the Chinese population’s direct engagement with the Vietnam War but also the general trajectory of the PRC. As the Cultural Revolution approached, notions of peace and law were abandoned for militancy, mobilization, and Maoist political action.

Internationalism was very much on display in 1964 at a rally in support of the Vietnamese people. The rally came at a low point in Sino-American relations. In 1964 the Chinese military shot down an American U2 spy plane, an incident that became a potent symbol for American imperialist designs as well as the strength of the Chinese army. At the same time, the Beijing Municipal Government and the Office of Foreign Affairs in Beijing organized various meetings and rallies in recognition of the Geneva Convention of 1954, which ended the French occupation of Vietnam. These rallies were held in Beijing between July 13 and July 20, 1964, and featured a wide array of international groups, including the Sino-Vietnamese friendship organization and the Afro-Asian solidarity organization.41 In a speech written by the Sino-Vietnam Friendship Association, American imperialism was presented as the primary enemy of the Geneva Convention, and the current struggle in Vietnam was seen as a defense of

that treaty. The speaker (who is not identified) reassured the crowd that the Chinese people would always protect Ho Chi Minh.

This speaker also captured the rising tension between China and the United States. Much of the antagonism between the two countries stemmed from the downing of an American U2 plane over Fujian in July 1964. A rally was organized on July 14, 1964 to commemorate this event. The Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council oversaw the rally, declaring the need for a “publicity campaign” to “expose the crimes of U.S. imperialism.” The fact that the U.S. was spying on China was evidence of “the (American) plot to expand the war beyond South Vietnam and Laos.” 500 people were selected to attend the rally from various factories, schools, and danwei in the capital, and the rally was filmed so it could be shown on television and in movie clips.

The slogans generated for this week of protests help illuminate the atmosphere of these rallies. These slogans were fabricated by the Beijing city government, and attendees at the rallies were told specifically what to chant. Nationalist and global sentiments intertwine in these slogans, which express support for Vietnam and urge the Chinese people to remain vigilant. Rally cries from that day included: “Support the Vietnamese people in their opposition to the invasion of American imperialists” and “American imperialists, get out of Vietnam!” So too did participants chant, “American imperialist get out of Chinese Taiwan,” which connected American imperialism with what was viewed as an internal Chinese affair.

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42 “Zhongyue youhao renmin gongshe de jianghua gao” 102-001-00351 in Beijing Municipal Archives, Beijing.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
The slogans at the U2 rally were more aggressive, but no less internationalist. Those attending the rally shouted: “strengthen national defense and protect the motherland.” Participants, however, also shouted “safeguard world peace,” suggesting that the biggest threat to stability in the world was American foreign policy. Finally, the Chinese people demanded that the American army get out of Taiwan, Korea, South Vietnam, Japan, Laos, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and any other area that the United States illegally occupied. While striking a militant tone, these slogans and speeches also suggest an ostensible desire for world peace and emphasize international law. At least rhetorically, the violent and militant ethos of the Cultural Revolution had not yet overwhelmed China’s interaction with the Vietnam War.

Relations between the United States and China did not improve in the waning days of the summer of 1964, and Beijing’s approach to the war fundamentally changed following the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. Immediately after the incident, the Beijing city government put together a document that ostensibly recorded the views of the workers, cadres and masses around the city. The document, however, better reflects the Beijing government’s general approach to recording Chinese sentiments toward the war in Vietnam than it does the people’s feelings about the Gulf of Tonkin. Whether the people were “angry,” as the document claims, cannot be confirmed or denied; rather, what we can learn is that the government felt a compelling need to record and catalogue the feelings of the Chinese population. This act of getting the Chinese people on the record suggested that China was actively resisting the United States. The document also takes care to place Beijingers’ anger in familiar terms. According to the government,

49 Ibid.
50 “Beijing shi guangda ganbu he qunzhong dui meidiguo zhuyi quzhuang qinlue yuenan de fanying,” 102-001-00352 (BJCA).
the anger… in factories and in schools resembles the attitude in 1950 on the eve of the Resist America, Support Korea campaign. Many people have pledged, applied to participate in and expressed a desire to pick up the momentum of the Resist America Aid Korea campaign and resist America and aid Vietnam.\(^{51}\)

The document also quotes (anonymously) from among Beijing’s population: “Vietnam is our neighbor and our brother country, we are as close as the lips and the teeth, without the lips the teeth get cold (唇齿相依, 唇亡齿寒). If the American imperialists invade Vietnam, they invade China.”\(^{52}\) The document divides the Chinese people into four categories depending on their level of support and understanding of the war in Vietnam. These categories include: people who understood the perniciousness of American imperialism and were prepared to fight the United States; people who feared that war would break out between the United States and China, especially capitalist elements and some intellectuals; those who adopted the attitude of the Khrushchev revisionist clique; and finally, those who completely opposed the party and all of its positions.\(^{53}\) The document was a telling reflection of the government’s reaction to the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, and the measures deemed necessary to meet the increased pressure from the United States. It likely reflects some of the general feelings among the Chinese people; however, it also speaks to the larger campaign carried out by the government both to map and to catalogue Chinese attitudes toward international events.

In addition to writing reports on the mood of Beijing’s residents about the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the government lined up four speakers to deliver condemnations of American imperialism at a larger rally that took place later in August 1964. A parade held in Beijing on August 7 attracted 104,000 people,\(^{54}\) while 185,000 participated in a parade held the next day.\(^{55}\)

\(^{51}\) Ibid.
\(^{52}\) Ibid.
\(^{53}\) Ibid.
\(^{54}\) “Ge xitong canjia jiwei youxing renshu, shijian anpai biao,,” 102-001-00352 (BJCA).
As with other protests, the government issued a set of slogans that were to be used at this gathering. While many were familiar, the CCP chose to include the phrase, “the invasion of Vietnam is an invasion of China.”

Perhaps the most interesting part of this protest, however, is the diverse background of those who delivered speeches. Four people spoke at the rally: a worker, a farmer, a student, and a member of the capital militia. The CCP’s choice of speakers reflects a concerted strategy to portray the Gulf of Tonkin incident as affecting all sectors of Chinese society. Each of the speakers expressed varying degrees of anger, while condemning American imperialism. Tian Qi, a Chinese farmer, asked, “Do the Vietnamese bring their warships and aircraft to America’s front door? People around the world can now clearly see, a wolf is a wolf, no matter what lies they tell.” Tian Qi also warned the United States: “if your aggressive claws do not retract, you will have to face the Vietnamese and Chinese people, and all of the peace-loving people of the world will counterattack and crush you.” Meanwhile, Yang Kangsheng, a student at Tsinghua University, blamed the situation in Vietnam on the Johnson administration. He stated that, “the Johnson administration has released its own lies about the so-called Gulf of Tonkin incident, in which he claimed that American warships were attacked unprovoked by the North Vietnamese. This is completely meant to deceive people and is the logic of gangsters.”

Finally, Wang Zhiguo, a worker in Shijingshan Iron and Steel Company, put the Gulf of Tonkin incident in historical perspective. “The gradual expansion of the war has been entirely premeditated by the American imperialists. We Chinese people have experienced this before.

The imperialist Truman invaded North Korea and John F. Kennedy invaded Cuba, both of which

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55 “Ge xingtong canjia zhichi yuenan renmin renmin fandui meidiguo zhuyi qinlue youxie shiweir renshu, shijian anpai biao,” 102-001-00352 (BJCA).
56 “Huwei kouhao,” 102-001-00352 (BJCA).
57 “Nongmin daibiao, lu guo qiao gongshe fu zhuren, Tian Qi de fayan,” 102-001-00352 (BJCA).
58 Ibid.
59 “Xuesheng daibiao, Beijing daxue xuesheng Yang Kangshan de fayan,” 102-001-00352 (BJCA).
were the tactics used by bandits.”\textsuperscript{60} Taken alone, each of these statements suggests a certain amount of anger among the Chinese population, as well as a commitment to defend the Vietnamese people. And indeed, many in China likely were angry, and saw American aggression in Southeast Asia as a grave crime. However, perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this array of speakers is their diversity. This suggests the government’s desire to portray the war in Vietnam’s affect on every section of Chinese society as well as the need for the government to articulate and catalogue Chinese people’s broad outrage. Moreover, it signifies the growing anxiety in the CCP and the Chinese government over the potential of an American invasion. Officials believed that the best way to prepare for a war with the United States was to mobilize the people, a process made easier when it seemed that broad sectors of Chinese society were prepared to fight the Americans. With these speeches we have an official record that the Chinese people would back Vietnam in their struggle against American imperialism.

By 1965 America’s presence in Southeast Asia had only increased. Officially, the Chinese government remained committed to assisting the Vietnamese people. In May 1965, Mao agreed to send Chinese workers to Vietnam to help construct roads, thereby freeing up 30,000 North Vietnamese soliders, who were sent south.\textsuperscript{61} In 1965, the Chinese government had also abandoned all emphasis on legality or hope that the Geneva Accords would lead to peace in Southeast Asia. As Mao stated in 1965, “we all believed the Geneva Accords, but the enemy did not respect them. At first, our motto was mainly for the political struggle and the military struggle was secondary. Later, the political and military struggle became equal.”\textsuperscript{62} By 1965, officials in the CCP believed that the only way the Americans would leave Southeast Asia was through a protracted war.

\textsuperscript{60} “Gongren daibiao, Shijingshan gangtie gongshe Wang Zhiguo de fayan,” 102-001-00352 (BJCA).
\textsuperscript{61} Conversation between Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh, Changsha, May 16, 1965. \textit{77 Conversations}.
\textsuperscript{62} Conversation between Mao Zedong and Hoang Van Hoan, Beijing, July 16, 1965, in \textit{77 Conversations}. 
This new attitude in Beijing was exhibited in anti-Vietnam War protests held in 1965. These protests, however, also reflect the political climate in China at the time. In 1965 the first glimmers of the Cultural Revolution appeared on the horizon. While it is true that some of the language that was employed during the Cultural Revolution was present in aspects of the anti-Vietnam rallies of 1964. In 1965, however, a shift is more evident. The following year, for example, Maoist symbols became intertwined with anti-Vietnam War rallies in 1965 as the chairman himself began to reclaim his old authority from his supposed rivals. These changes are evident at a rally held in July 1965 to protest the war in Vietnam. The size of this rally was larger than any held in 1964. 700,000 people amassed in and around Tiananmen Square to condemn American imperialism and demonstrate China’s support for Vietnam. Beijing’s mayor Peng Zhen was joined by Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Enlai, and a host of other high officials in the CCP. The rally, which ostensibly focused on Vietnam, was in fact more directed at American imperialism and the crimes committed thereby. It was also more international in both its scope and in those who participated. Attendees at the rally in 1965 included representatives from Tanzania, East Germany, Romania, Poland, the Sudan, Indonesia, Ghana, Argentina, Chile, and South Africa. People’s Daily also published a series of pictures, which included a group of Japanese protesters who attended the rally and carried signs that read, “down with American

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63 Throughout 1965 Mao railed against revisionism in the CCP and continued to surround himself with close allies. He even told Edgar Snow, years later, that he had made the decision to purge Liu Shaoqi in January 1965. Whether this is true, or simply a rewriting of history, is still in question. However, it seems clear that by 1965, Mao began to move very slowly in his plan to eliminate his enemies, rectify the party, and launch the Cultural Revolution. For a detailed discussion of these events, see: Roderick MacFarquhar, The Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Coming of the Cataclysm (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 431 – 460.

64 “Shoudu gejie ren zhichi Yuenan renmin fandui Meidiguo zhuyi wuzhuang qinlue dahui jihua” No. 102-001-00398 in (BJCA).

65 Ibid.

66 “Canjia shoudu gejie renmin zhichi yuenn renmin fandui meidiguo zhuyi wuzhuang dahui de waibing mingdan” (BJCA)
imperialism.” Under the picture is a caption that stated, “Our Japanese friends attend the march to support the Vietnamese struggle.”

The differences between the slogans used at anti-Vietnam rallies in 1964 and 1965 are also telling. Any demand for the protection of world peace and the maintenance of international law disappeared in 1965, and America’s presence in Vietnam was no longer a question of legality. Instead, many of the slogans and signs carried that day suggest a militancy that was not present in 1964. Participants called for the downfall of American imperialism and demanded that America extricate itself from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. After criticizing American foreign policy and congratulating the Vietnamese on their heroic struggles and great victories, those at the rally also chanted, “Long live the Communist Party” and “Long Live Chairman Mao!”

The speeches given that day, including one by Peng Zhen and another by Liu Ningyi, suggest a further rhetorical fusion between Chinese politics and the global situation. In his speech, Liu Ningyi cited specific examples of American imperialism not just in Vietnam but around the world. He discussed American interference in Cuba and sharply criticized the United States for giving West Germany weapons, declaring that it contributed to “West German militarism.” The war against American imperialism was a battle fought on many fronts. Liu framed this struggle not just in terms of Southeast Asia but as a challenge that the entire world

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67 “Fandui meiguo quefan yuenan, qingzhu yuenan renmin fanmei douzheng de weida shengli!” Renmin Ribao (February 10, 1965), Pg. 5.
68 “Shoudu gejie ren zhichi yuenan renmin fandui meidiguo zhuyi wuzhuang qinlue dahui chengyu” in (BJCA)
69 These two men had diametrically opposite experiences during the Cultural Revolution. Peng Zhen, who originally headed the Group of Five charged with investigating the playwright Wu Han, was one of the first victims of the Cultural Revolution. He was purged from the party in May, 1966. Liu Ningyi, meanwhile, actually benefitted from the Cultural Revolution, and was promoted to the head of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. The fall of the man Liu replaced, Wang Jiaxiang, was a long time coming, and the Cultural Revolution was not the first time he was publicly criticized. In fact, in 1962, Mao criticized Wang publicly for a report he wrote urging China not to become involved in the War in Vietnam.
70 “Zhonggong zhongyang weiyuan, zhonghua wanguo zonggonghui zhu Liu Ningyi tongzhi zai shoudu gejie renmin zhiyuan yuenan renmin fandui meidiguo zhuyi quzhuang qinlue dahui shang de jianghua” No. 102-001-00398 (BJCA)
needed to meet. And in Liu’s view, the world was indeed rising up to face this challenge. Toward the end of his speech, Liu declared:

Comrades, friends! The struggle of the Vietnamese people is one important part of the struggle against the United States. All of the revolutionary people around the world enthusiastically support the Vietnamese people’s struggle for justice.71

In his speech, Peng Zhen applied an even more global perspective to the situation in Vietnam. He declared that “American imperialism is the moral enemy of the entire world” and “America’s new provocation against Vietnam is not only a provocation against the 650 million Chinese people, but a provocation against the entire world.”72 Peng also stated that the American imperialists had “one way of thinking; they want to continue running wild and continue to make trouble, and if they are defeated, they will continue to make trouble and continue to be defeated.”73 This defeat, according to Peng, would come at the hands of the revolutionary people and the oppressed minorities of the world. The only choice the Chinese and Vietnamese people had was to “unyieldingly continue to struggle” in the face of American imperialism.74 Both Peng Zhen’s and Liu Ningyi’s speeches, as well as the diverse and massive crowd that gathered, suggest that the war in Vietnam was increasingly important in composing Chinese politics.75 By tying the war in Vietnam to China’s own security as well as the prospect of international revolution, Chinese officials were able to imbue a militancy that relied on Vietnam for its own substantiation. These new narratives did not abate in 1966, as Chinese students and the CCP incorporated their evolving worldview into the Cultural Revolution.

Traversing Borders: From the DRV to the PRC

71 Ibid.
72 “Zhonggong zhongyang zhengzhiju weiyuan, beijingshi shichang Peng Zhen tongzhi zaishou du gejierenmin zhiyuan yuinan renmin fandui meidiguo zhuyi quzhuang qinlue dahui shang de jianghua,” (BJCA)
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Of course, that did not necessarily reflect itself in foreign policy; indeed, China’s more aggressive rhetoric did not amount to any significant increase of aid for Vietnam. See: Chen (1995).
During the 1960s a large number of foreigners came to China either to study or to tour the country and supposedly marvel at the achievements of socialist development. While these visits were continuous, the groups themselves remained small, and often had little contact with actual daily life in China. This often skewed the official perception of foreigners. Chinese officials gleaned what they could from limited contact with foreigners and simply imagined the rest. The interaction with Vietnamese people was an exception. While the CCP did sometimes distort the situation in Vietnam, the contact between Vietnamese and Chinese people was significant, prolonged, impactful, and provided some Chinese people with actual contact with a group of foreigners. The Sino-Vietnamese border was a two-lane highway rather than a one-way street. Politics also entered into China’s decision to send people to Vietnam. Thousands of Vietnamese people came to the PRC to train in various specialties, while Chinese workers went to North Vietnam to build roads and work on other construction projects. When the relationship between the PRC and North Vietnam became strained, the Chinese were stingier in their help and pulled back some of their manpower. Nevertheless, the border between Vietnam and China was easily traversed and allowed for an active exchange of peoples, but crossing the border was not apolitical. Because of the nature of the PRC, in which politics entered into daily life almost ceaselessly, those who came to China from Vietnam were regarded with a mix of suspicion and hostility. At the very least, the presence of Vietnamese in China was considered an opportunity to educate a foreign population about Maoism.

Throughout the exchange between Vietnam and China, the CCP remained mindful that people from North Vietnam could stir domestic political waters, even if they were ostensibly allies. Beijing therefore cast a wary eye toward many of the workers and trainees who came to

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China, often subjecting them to some form of political influence or education. This treatment was not limited to Vietnamese, overseas Chinese who were living in Vietnam – some for many generations – were also regarded suspiciously when they came to China. Even more problematic was the fact that the war had obviously created a crisis in Vietnamese society, and so many overseas Chinese who had been living in North Vietnam were anxious to return to the mainland. According to a report issued by the State Council in 1965, the economic situation was dire in North Vietnam, and ethnic Chinese people were coming into the PRC because “they could not find a job, or their lives had become too difficult.”

Many who had legally returned to China to visit family members had no intention of going back to Vietnam, the report also claimed. Although these overseas Chinese were from a socialist country, their refusal to return to Vietnam suggested that did not want to construct socialism. Their presence was therefore thought to have a “harmful impact on China.”

The State Council instructed border regions such as Guangdong and Guangxi provinces to round up and deport any overseas Chinese who had crossed into China illegally from Vietnam or were in China on expired papers. The State Council also prescribed a number of measures to be adopted by border regions, including increased security and vigilance against overseas Chinese from Vietnam. Perhaps most interesting, the State Council concluded the report by noting a political opportunity, despite its open hostility to the overseas Chinese community. Before returning overseas Chinese to North Vietnam, Chinese officials were instructed to “inspire them to establish who the hated enemy of Vietnam really is, to believe in Vietnam’s ultimate victory, and to eliminate all ideological misgivings.”

Overseas Chinese thus represented a threat to China’s political stability as well as an opportunity to instruct these same

77 “Guowuyuan guanyu chuli yuenan huaqiao jing deng wenyi de tongzh,” 002-020-00928 (BJCA).
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
people in the correct ideological approach to the Vietnam War. Moreover, this document demonstrates that the Sino-Vietnamese border became a contact zone during the 1960s, and was fraught with political anxiety, and a desire to instruct foreigners in Communist ideology.

Still, there were legal ways to cross the Sino-Vietnamese border, and the two governments participated in myriad exchanges in the 1960s. Many of these exchanges brought Vietnamese people to China for study or for work. One such exchange actually occurred during the Cultural Revolution, beginning in 1966. In October of that year, the Vietnamese agreed to send 15,000 trainees, apprentices, and interns to China for technical training. They worked in various industries, ostensibly to learn from the advanced industrial techniques of the Chinese people. Of these, 13,740 were workers, 895 were technicians, and 365 were engineers. These 15,000 apprentices and trainees were to be spread throughout nineteen provinces and cities in China, with the largest number going to Shanghai (3,809), followed by Guangdong (1,707), Liaoning (1,623) and Hubei (1,194).

The Vietnamese who came to China trained in everything from arms-making to industrial equipment repair and metalworking. The majority of the workers were short-term, staying in China lasted anywhere from one to four months. However, there were a number of long-term workers, technicians and engineers from Vietnam. For example, 623 Vietnamese came to Beijing, of whom 133 were long-term visitors, remaining in Beijing for one to four years. The industries in which these apprentices and trainees worked focused mainly on industrial production and maintenance. Among short-term workers, the largest number (120) were trained in diesel engine repair. Ten short-term trainees were assigned to arms manufacturing, spending six months in

81 “Guanyu Zhonghua renmin gongheguo wei yuenan minzhu he guo peixun jishu ganbu he gongren wenti de tan ji yao,” 002-018-00039 (BJCA).
82 “Peixun yuenan jishu ganbu he gongren de renwu fenpei biao,” 002-018-00039 (BJCA).
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
Beijing studying this particular industry. Among long-term workers, the focus was also on industry, although these workers and trainees were often assigned to research positions rather than maintenance or repair. Among these long-term trainees, the greatest number were assigned to learn how to manufacture railroad ties, although others studied geology, the production of communication equipment, and manufacturing concrete for construction projects.85

This data suggests a mundane existence of work and training for the Vietnamese who came to China in 1966 and 1967. However, politics, as with most things in the PRC, played a role in the Vietnamese workers’ stay in China. Their presence in China also took on an international significance. As the original agreement that formalized the exchange stated, the purpose of these trainees’ visit to China was “to defeat our common enemy the American imperialist invader, to train technical personal from Vietnamese villages, and promote the spirit of mutual support, unity, and cooperation.”86 The document mainly focuses on the technical aspects of the training program, laying out who would cover the cost of living for the workers in China, and how much they would be paid (workers were provided with eighteen yuan per month for the cost of living). However, political considerations also entered into this document. It was clearly stated that “implementing production practices would come first but would be supplemented by the study of (political) theory.”87 The two sides also agreed that “the Vietnamese government will be responsible for the political education of all Vietnamese workers.”88 It appeared that politics would play a minor role in the Vietnamese workers’ stay, but would not interfere with their technical training.

85 Ibid., The number of trainees, as well as the industry in which they would work, is laid out in this document.
86 “Guanyu Zhonghua renmin gongheguo wei yuenan minzhu he guo peixun jishu ganbu he gongren wenti de tan ji yao,” 002-018-00039 (BJCA).
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
Despite this agreement, the State Council issued another internal document that instructed individual work groups to use Chinese politics when dealing with the Vietnamese. Work units were told to “hold high the flag of Mao Zedong Thought,” and use “conscientiousness, foresight, and effectiveness” to promote Maoist politics.\(^8\) Work units were also told to use Chinese model workers and mobilize the masses in order to introduce politics to the Vietnamese visitors.\(^9\) The overall goal, according to this memo, was not only to provide technical training for the Vietnamese visitors but also to “promote revolutionary ideology and an international education.”\(^9\) The policies expressed in this second memo, which seem to override the agreement that the Vietnamese government would take charge of the Vietnamese workers’ political education, reflect the tectonic shift in China’s approach to intellectualism and expertise during the 1960s. In the early 1960s recovering from the Great Leap Forward necessitated an emphasis on experts and an attenuation of politics in certain spheres. Experts were given more political leeway and were relied on to help repair the Chinese economy. Such notions were discarded during the Cultural Revolution. Of the many factors that propelled the Cultural Revolution, the debate over the role of expertise and its relationship with Chinese politics was particularly fierce. Mao and his allies looked at politics as an important litmus test for all bureaucrats, eschewed technical expertise, and criticized the diminution of politics in Chinese society.\(^9\) After 1966 politics saturated Chinese society, and no person, whether Chinese or foreign worker, could escape the need to politicize daily life thoroughly. As this memo suggests,

\(^8\) “Guanyu peixun Yuenan jishu ganbu gongren de jidian yijian,” 002-018-00039.
\(^9\) Ibid.
\(^9\) Ibid.
\(^9\) As scholars have noted, the red vs. expert debate was not actually a debate over reds and experts, but between an alliance of reds and experts on one hand and professionals on the other. Ray continues by asserting that the true target of the Cultural Revolution was not experts, but professionals who were often characterized by bureaucratic autonomy and self-interest. Expertise per se was not a target of the Cultural Revolution; rather, Maoists attacked professionals who tended to detach themselves from the masses, act mostly in their own self-interest, and avoid politics altogether. See: Dennis Ray, “Red and Expert and China’s Cultural Revolution” Pacific Affairs Vol. 43 No. 1 (Spring, 2007): 22-33.
any notion that politics would not be a central focus of government activities, even if that activity was meant to help a foreign friend win a war, was simply incommensurate with the mentality that permeated the PRC during the Cultural Revolution.

**Vietnam and the Cultural Revolution**

The Chinese official language that surrounded the Vietnam War in 1964 and 1965 fit like a puzzle piece with the ideology of the Cultural Revolution. The frame constructed in the early 1960s to understand the Vietnam War was imported into the Cultural Revolution. The Vietnam War acted as a platform that bridged China’s global narratives across the “1966 divide.”

However, a shift also occurred during the Cultural Revolution. Whereas in 1964 and 1965, much of the discourse surrounding the war focused on China’s support for the Vietnamese people, this attitude reversed itself once the Cultural Revolution began. Red Guards and Chinese officials insisted that it was the Vietnamese people who actually wanted nothing more than to see victory in the Cultural Revolution. They furthermore claimed that the Cultural Revolution was an inspirational model, and was essential to success in Vietnam. These officials and Red Guards suggested that the outcome of the Cultural Revolution would determine the victor in Vietnam.

And yet, despite this rhetoric, there was still a strong belief among China’s youth that the Vietnam War was an important revolutionary moment. As Chen Jian has stated,

> Like many of my fellow students of that age, I felt much concern for the fate of Vietnam. How could we feel otherwise? Every day, broadcast and newspaper reports would transport us to the seemingly so remote southern jungles, and stories about how the heroic Vietnamese people were struggling against the American ‘paper tiger’ would move us to tears.

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93 Generally, scholars have presented the beginning of the Cultural Revolution as the beginning of a new ten-year era in Chinese history. These scholars often parse out the “ten years of chaos” of the Cultural Revolution, and many see this period as entirely unique in the history of the PRC. Many Chinese people also tend to quarantine these years as a tragic aberration. Few compare the early 1960s to the years of the Cultural Revolution, instead positing a 1966 divide.

94 Chen Jian, “Personal-Historical Puzzles about China and the Vietnam War,” in *77 Conversations*. 
The power of the Vietnam War to elicit such emotions did not abate during the Cultural Revolution. Rather, the Cultural Revolution released tensions that had been building in Chinese society for several years and finally gave China’s youth the opportunity to act on their revolutionary ideals. For some Red Guards, swept up in the fervor of the Cultural Revolution and the revolutionary tourism that characterized the first year of the movement, this meant actually going to Vietnam and joining in the struggle against the Americans. Their reasons for doing so capture not just the atmosphere in China but also the feelings that had suffused some youth throughout the world in the 1960s – that life had become boring or stagnant and that a new generation had to commit itself to really changing society. The Red Guards who traveled to Vietnam shared this outlook, products of an extreme political environment. Such a decision to leave China and go fight in Vietnam, however, was not arrived at overnight. As the students describe below, the CCP had already primed the pump, using the Vietnam War to stir feelings of revolutionary fervor and to support mass mobilization. The Cultural Revolution proved to be the catalyst that released the revolutionary energies building since the Sino-Soviet split.

The Red Guards preserved the language and methods used to frame the Vietnam War in 1964 and 1965. For example, in his memoir *Born Red*, Gao Yuan recalls attending a rally during the Cultural Revolution to support the Vietnamese people in their battle against U.S. imperialism. The rally, which took place in July 1966, used much of the same rhetoric and tactics described above. The Red Guard groups who participated in the rally shouted familiar slogans: “Down with U.S. imperialism! Resist the United States and aid Vietnam! We must liberate Taiwan.” After the march, the students gathered at the intersection of the two main streets in Yizhen, a small town in Jiangsu province, where they performed a play under the theme “Resist the United

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States and Aid Vietnam.” This play included an American soldier, pilot and sailor, each of whom confessed their crimes committed in Vietnam. This was not the first time that such a performance took place: in 1965, at a rally against the Vietnam War, marchers performed the same play. People’s Daily reprinted pictures from the rally, which included Chinese dressed as an American soldier, pilot, and sailor, each with a gun pointed at their back. Around them was a large crowd watching as the American military paid for its aggression in Southeast Asia.

The codes present in 1965 that spilled into the Cultural Revolution were not limited to Gao Yuan’s experience. The diffusion of rhetoric across the “1966 divide” suggests how entrenched the war in Vietnam became in the Chinese national discourse. Rallies in support of the Vietnamese people were not simply confined to Beijing but spread around the country, reaching the little town of Yizhen. Rallying against the war in Vietnam was one aspect of the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. At one such rally, students waved banners declaring that “China is behind Vietnam.” They were backed up by official sentiment. Even in 1967, during the most violent days of the Cultural Revolution, a headline in Peking Review declared that “the 700 million Chinese people who are armed with Mao Tse-tung Thought most resolutely support their Vietnamese brothers in resisting U.S. aggression to the end.”

The Cultural Revolution, the leadership of Mao Zedong, and the war in Vietnam were often connected in official rhetoric. In April 1967, for example, People’s Daily published an article detailing the historical importance of the Cultural Revolution. The article stated that the targets of the Cultural Revolution included American imperialism and Soviet revisionism. Under

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96 Ibid., 67.
97 “Fandui meiguo qinfan yuenan, qingzhu yuenan renmin fan mei douzheng de weida shengli!” Renmin Ribao (February 10, 1965).
98 Yang Kelin Wenhua dageming bowuguan (Hong Kong: Dongfang Chubanshi, 1995), 502.
the leadership of Mao Zedong, eliminating these enemies would rescue the people of Vietnam, but only if they were also willing to “follow the line of China’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.” Another article declared that “our Vietnamese friends are celebrating Mao Zedong Thought and China’s Cultural Revolution.” The CCP, however, also relied on foreigners to convey the message that the Cultural Revolution was vitally important to the Vietnamese war effort. People’s Daily, for example, published a speech from the chairman of the Italian Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist). In it, the chairman declared that the “Cultural Revolution terrified American imperialists and Soviet revisionists.” He also claimed that the imperialists and revisionists were “attempting to stifle the heroic Vietnamese people and China’s enthusiastic support of the Vietnamese people” and that their dream was to “defeat the Vietnamese people and isolate China.” These articles show not only the fusion of the Cultural Revolution and the Vietnam War but also a reversal of the rhetoric present in 1964 and 1965. The articles are largely devoid of pledges of support for the war in Vietnam and instead suggest that the Cultural Revolution was guiding the Vietnamese people in their struggle. The underlining meaning of these articles, which were obviously meant for a Chinese readership, is intended to convey the importance of the Cultural Revolution, despite ostensibly being written about the war in Vietnam. They used the powerful resonance of the Vietnam War to bolster the justification for the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, they rely not only on Chinese voices but also on foreign revolutionaries, providing the Red Guards with an air of authenticity and legitimacy.

101 “Yuenan pengyou reqing songyang weida de Mao Zedong sixiang he zhongguo wenhua dageming,” (April 18, 1967), Renmin Ribao.
102 “Zhongguo wenhua dageming shi mei di su xiu gandao kongju Aodaliya gongchandang (malie zhuyi zhe) ai fu xi er tongzhi de jianghua,” Renmin Ribao (October 2, 1966).
The Red Guards followed suit, picking up the discursive thread laid down by articles such as those discussed above. Through their newspapers students also suggested, that the Vietnamese people relied on the Cultural Revolution, and that the success of the Red Guards would help bring about victory against the American imperialists. Red Guards at the Beijing No. 2 Foreign Language Institute, for example, published an article declaring that the Vietnamese people wanted nothing more than to “witness the ultimate victory of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.”

The radical Red Guard organization New Beida, which consisted of students at Beijing University, similarly reported on the impact that China and, specifically, Chinese technological advancements had on Vietnam. In October 1966 the People’s Republic successfully tested another nuclear bomb. New Beida placed the success of this test in an international context. They noted that when the government announced the successful test, Vietnamese students studying at Beijing University were “incomparably overjoyed.” The article also quotes the leader of the Vietnamese student association, who declared that “the testing of a nuclear weapon is not just a great victory for China, but it’s also a great victory for the Vietnamese people. When China achieves this type of success, it is a great encouragement to Vietnam.”

Other newspapers incorporated Vietnam by invoking Mao Zedong and the impact his theories had on Vietnam’s struggle against the United States. One Beijing-based Red Guard group published an article that described the various ways Mao Zedong Thought had altered the international landscape and influenced foreign revolutionaries. According to the newspaper, Mao’s influence would provide “the ultimate victory of the Vietnamese people in their war of

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103 “Mao zhuxi she shijie renmin xin zhong de hong taiyang” Wai shi zhanbao (October 9, 1967) in Song (2001), 11890.
104 “Wo xiao relie huanhu woguo fashe daodan hewuqi shiyian chenggong,” (June 1, 1968), Xin Beida in Song (2001), 6985.
resistance against the United States.” Another article, published by the Center United to Liberate Foreign Affairs, contained an anecdote about a group of Red Guards who randomly met a Vietnamese student in Beijing. According to the article, the Vietnamese student recalled that he had studied Chinese for a long time, but the only phrase that ever really stuck with him was “long live Chairman Mao.” Whether the student and the Red Guards communicated in Vietnamese, the newspaper does not mention. Like many other articles, this anecdote conveys to the reader the idea that the language of Mao Zedong was universal.

Despite the above examples, the war in Vietnam was not simply a tool to demonstrate the importance of the Cultural Revolution. Both the Red Guards and Chinese officials connected the war in Vietnam to broader global machinations and positioned American imperialism as one evil iteration of a corrupt capitalist system. The struggle of the Vietnamese and African-Americans, for example, were presented as part of the same issue by the Red Guard organization called Dongfang Hong, also formed at Beijing University. According to Dongfang Hong, “the armed uprising of the heroic Vietnamese and African American people will bring down the world’s common enemy, American imperialism.” New Beida, meanwhile, noted that the war against American imperialism in Vietnam was one part of a torrent of revolutionary movements enveloping the world. The article specifically connects the French student movement of May 1968 with the Vietnam War and suggests that the Vietnamese and French movements are part of the “routing” of Western capitalism. Of course the Red Guards were not alone in relating the struggle in Vietnam with other protest movements and instances of revolutionary activism

108 “Gei faguo gongren xuesheng de shengyuan dian,” (June 1, 1968) Xin Beida in Song (2001), 7649.
around the world. The Chinese press, for example, also reported on foreign opposition to the war. When four students were killed at Kent State in 1970 during an anti-Vietnam War rally, the Chinese press detailed the “crisis” that this incident had provoked in American society. According to Reference News, a Chinese paper that specifically reported on foreign developments, the American government was facing the highest degree of student opposition toward the Vietnam War since the end of the Johnson presidency in 1968.\textsuperscript{109} The article also suggested that the deaths of the Kent State students was a product of the continued violence in Southeast Asia.

The official press also made connections between the American army in Southeast Asia and British imperialism in Hong Kong. During the most radical period of the Cultural Revolution the issue of British ownership of Hong Kong became an important point of contention, especially among the Red Guards. People’s Daily published an article that declared that America’s war in Vietnam and British colonialism in Hong Kong were elements of a plot to encircle the People’s Republic.\textsuperscript{110} The article also suggests that the Cultural Revolution was “shaking the entire world” and propelling the struggle in Vietnam and Hong Kong. For the Chinese press and the Red Guards, the war in Vietnam was not an isolated incident but part of a sustained imperialist plot perpetrated by the entire West. It was interconnected to global politics and international machinations, and could not be separated from the Cultural Revolution, student protests in Ohio, the French student movement, or the Civil Rights movement in the United States.

The evidence presented above suggests two divergent ways in which the war in Vietnam was employed in official rhetoric during the Cultural Revolution. On the one hand, the war functioned as a familiar global narrative, meaning that it was a way to globalize the Cultural

\textsuperscript{109}“Nikesong yi xianru zui yanzhong de kunjing,” (May 8, 1970), Cankao Xiaoxi.
\textsuperscript{110}“Beijing gejie geming quanzhong shengtiao ying diguo zhuyi zhenya Xianggang aiguotongbao baoxing dahui zhi Xianggang aiguotongbao de weiwen dian,” (May 19, 1967), Renmin Ribao.
Revolution and bolster the importance of the movement. This was accomplished by altering trends established in 1964 and 1965, and by suggesting that the Vietnamese people wanted nothing more than to see the success of the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, many Red Guards were deeply invested in the war in Vietnam and believed that the heroic Vietnamese people were important revolutionaries. The idea of aiding revolutionaries around the world, as I have contended, was one of the primary mentalities fostered during the 1960s. This mentality pervaded the Cultural Revolution and influenced how the Red Guards constructed their identity.

One of the popular sayings from the Cultural Revolution urged the Red Guards to “not leave for tomorrow what we ourselves can do today” (当仁不让). Discussing the Vietnam War in newspapers and reporting on American atrocities in Southeast Asia was not enough for some Red Guards. If the Cultural Revolution was about politicizing one’s life and confronting the enemies of the People’s Republic, then what better place to do that than in Vietnam. The heroic Vietnamese people had been lauded throughout the Red Guards’ lifetime, and, for some of these Red Guards, joining in the struggle against the American imperialists was the most revolutionary act one could undertake. Below, I focus on four such Red Guards who left Beijing in November 1966 and joined with the NLF in January 1967. Their story is not only a representation of the porous border that existed between China and Vietnam but also a product of years of sustained propaganda which placed the struggle in Vietnam at the heart of the global revolution. If the Cultural Revolution was an effort to save the world from revisionism and imperialism, then these Red Guards took it upon themselves to meet the American imperialists head-on in Vietnam. They were not crossing the border from China into Vietnam; they were simply moving up to the front.
The four students described here met in September 1966 following the party’s official endorsement of China’s Red Guards. Their trip came at a time of intense machinations and of great optimism for many of China’s young people. In August 1966, throngs of Red Guards descended on Tiananmen Square to hail Chairman Mao. Local and national meet-ups among Red Guards were common at this time, and the Red Guard movement, which had begun in Beijing became a national phenomenon. These four students were introduced to one another at the first city-wide meeting of the Beijing Red Guards. Looking back, the students described themselves as typical teenagers before the Cultural Revolution began, listening to music, enjoying dancing, and discussing reform. However, as Hui notes, “they became caught up in the era of the mid-1960s, and after meeting, their heads became filled with revolution, rebellion, uniting, the spirit of the Red Headquarters, and the time and place to start an armed struggle.” After being swept up in the spirit and momentum of the Cultural Revolution, the four students decided that life in Beijing was too small. They were also influenced by the advice they heard from an old soldier, who told them “it took twenty eight years to create a shining red new China, now under the leadership of Chairman Mao, we will take another twenty eight years to liberate mankind. We will create a shining new world!” The underlying message was that the next generation – the Red Guards – would be responsible for ushering in this new world. Such sentiments of generational handover characterized the Cultural Revolution. Mao often referred to the Red Guards as his revolutionary successors. Red Guards themselves expressed a certain

111 The Red Headquarters is a reference to China’s radical officials, who had presumably assembled into a single unit that was going to fight the capitalist-roaders and revisionists alongside the Red Guards. Those in the so-called Red Headquarters adopted a radical approach to the Cultural Revolution, and were usually considered to be Mao’s closest allies.


113 Ibid., 109. Here, the old soldier that talks to the students is likely referring to the start of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The official history of the People’s Republic often emphasizes that the Communist Party’s road to power began with the defense of China against the Japanese invaders and continued right through the Chinese Civil War and the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949.
yearning to make the same impact on Chinese history as their parents. Many from the Red Guard generation were filled with a sense of ennui and a desire to reinvigorate Chinese politics before the Cultural Revolution began. For these particular Red Guards, assuming the role of Mao’s revolutionary successor meant traveling to Vietnam.

The decision to go to Vietnam, however, was arrived at only after some consideration, which was influenced by events that took place in 1966 as well as by revolutionary thinkers both inside and outside China. The four Red Guards were inspired by Lin Biao’s instruction to use the countryside to surround the cities.\textsuperscript{114} They commented that “there are two methods to promote global revolution. One is to fight imperialism, the other is to fight revisionism.” The Red Guards decided that since there was no Communist army in Russia fighting the Soviet revisionists, the wisest choice was to travel south to Vietnam, where they could immediately join the fighting.\textsuperscript{115} The four Red Guards were also influenced by the campaign launched by the CCP to create awareness about the war in Vietnam. The Red Guards planned to find the NLF in South Vietnam, which was possible only because “everyday Chinese newspapers and radio report the location of the army.”\textsuperscript{116} Their decision to travel to Vietnam must also be placed in the context of the Cultural Revolution and the events that transpired in the fall of 1966. Following a series of gatherings at Tiananmen Square in which Mao implicitly sanctioned the Red Guard movement, the CCP decided to promote the spread of the Cultural Revolution. The government issued directives that made travel for China’s Red Guards basically free. With the country’s vast rail system at their disposal, Red Guards began to flow out of the cities and into China’s rural areas to promote the Cultural Revolution and reenergize local populations. They also made sojourns to China’s revolutionary monuments, traveling to Mao’s hometown or following the path of the

\textsuperscript{114} Yu (1993), 109. Lin Biao \textit{Long Live the Victory of the People’s War}.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 119.
Long March. This phenomenon, known as revolutionary tourism, was but one aspect of the mobility that characterized the Red Guard movement in 1966. A new energy had overtaken Chinese students, and many thought it was their duty to leave China’s cities and spread the Cultural Revolution. Still, going as far as Vietnam was unusual, even if the desire to cross the Sino-Vietnamese border was an outgrowth of the traveling Red Guard phenomenon.\textsuperscript{117}

Although some Red Guards were swept up in the travel movement and revolutionary tourism during the fall of 1966, their actions were not devoid of revolutionary thought or inspiration. The four Red Guards who traveled to Vietnam applied an array of revolutionary thought to their decisions, and demonstrated a breadth and understanding of the global revolutionary situation. They specifically cited Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara as key revolutionaries whose writings and ideas had motivated them to go to Vietnam. What’s more, they recognized the differences in these two approaches to revolution, and attempted to rectify their tactics and ideas as they applied to Vietnam. The students describe Che’s ideology of revolution as a “broad-leaf forest plan” (阔叶林计划), meaning that he promoted widespread “continental” revolution.\textsuperscript{118} Meanwhile, Ho Chi Minh’s approach to revolution was called “miraculous” and even “strange.”\textsuperscript{119} Unlike Che, Ho adopted a much more local approach to revolution, and his ideas were thought to be specific to Vietnam rather than universal. Both men, however, had made a serious contribution to revolutionary thought, according to the Red Guards, and both had inspired them to enact their revolutionary ideals and travel to Vietnam.\textsuperscript{120}

Furthermore, by citing Che and Ho as specific influences, these Red Guards belie the common

\textsuperscript{117} MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006), 110 – 113.
\textsuperscript{118} Yu (1993), 110.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Jeremy Varon \textit{Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and the Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 294 – 295. Identifying Che as a revolutionary inspiration also aligns these Red Guards with other 1960s radicals; during this period, Che was one of the most admired revolutionaries in leftist circles, and his works on the \textit{foco} theory inspired a number of radicals.
notion that the Mao cult was exclusive and insular during the Cultural Revolution period. While no one would deny the supremacy of Mao Zedong and his role in Chinese society, it is significant that outside revolutionaries like Che and Ho entered into the Chinese discourses during the 1960s and inspired such dramatic actions from the Red Guards.

Having met and established the reasons to travel to Vietnam, the students set off in November 1966. In November 1966, after crossing the border between China and Vietnam, four Red Guards from Beijing arrived at the Chinese embassy in Hanoi. There, they met with several officials, who were both shocked and impressed that the Red Guards had made it so far from home. When the four young Red Guards informed the officials that their plan was to cross into South Vietnam, however, the officials demurred and told them that crossing the border without papers was illegal. One of the Red Guards responded by quoting Lenin: “Workers do not have countries. We want to engage in world revolution, so we therefore don’t have borders.”

In 1967, during a meeting with Vietnamese officials, Mao Zedong made a similar statement: “some Red Guards do not know what a national border means.” Throughout the Cultural Revolution, officials in North Vietnam complained to their Chinese counterparts that Red Guards and other Chinese workers in Hanoi were unruly and obstreperous.

After the students arrived at the Chinese embassy in Hanoi, Chinese officials immediately reported them to Beijing. Zhou Enlai sent a message back to Hanoi that officially sanctioned the Red Guards’ action. Although Zhou stated that the Red Guards had made things more difficult, he also recognized that they were acting in the spirit of “supporting Vietnam and resisting America” and that they could remain in the country for a short period.

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121 Yu (1993), 127.
122 Conversation among Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong, Beijing, April 10, 1967, 77 Conversations.
123 77 Conversations
124 Yu (1993), 128.
received sanction from such a high figure in the government, the students continued their journey to South Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They successfully found the NLF and were assigned to an army division. They even saw some action. On January 13, 1967 the Red Guards were involved in an attack that took the life of another Chinese soldier who was with the division. The death outraged one of the Red Guards, who was shocked and saddened. More significant is the way that the death of this Chinese soldier was depicted. Discovering the body, one of the Red Guards lifted his head to the sky and yelled “murderers.” As one Red Guard recalled, “just then the sun appeared over the battlefield and completely encircled the sky. The smoke from the battle disappeared behind the mountains and the red fire of the sunset faded into the gray clouds.”

On January 19, this same Red Guard who was so outraged by the farmer’s death was killed in another attack. His death was described in similarly heroic fashion, as he was killed in an air raid attempting to perform his duty as an artilleryman. In his pocket, his comrades found a single sheet of paper in which he wished farewell to his “comrades, fatherland, and to Vietnam.”

The accuracy of these hyperbolic descriptions is certainly questionable, and it’s impossible to know exactly how these two men died. However, the message conveyed by their deaths is telling. The notions of sacrifice and dying for the communist cause are evident. Maoist symbolism also played a major role in the description of the first death. That the red sun – a symbol of Chairman Mao – appeared just as the Red Guard accused the Americans of being murderers demonstrates the symbolic power of China’s leaders, and Mao’s role in the Red Guards’ consciousness. Indeed, the image of the red sun hovering over Vietnam commonly was used in descriptions of the war. In one popular propaganda poster, for example, a Vietnamese family, armed with rifles and grenades, stands above a slogan that reads, “American imperialists,

125 Ibid., 132.
126 Ibid., 135 – 136.
get out of South Vietnam.” Above the family is a blazing red sun. To reinforce this symbolism, some Red Guard newspapers published a weekly section entitled “Mao is the Reddest Sun in the Heart of the World’s Revolutionaries,” which described the importance of Mao Zedong and Mao Zedong Thought around the world. The red sun therefore became a way of invoking Mao Zedong and suggesting his truly universal presence. That the red sun appeared and then faded with the life of a Red Guard killed in Vietnam is a powerful metaphor that suggests the merger of Chinese politics and the war.

The recollections above were recorded from the three Red Guards who survived the Vietnam War. Their memory of the time in Vietnam reflects a broader internationalism that pervaded the Cultural Revolution, particularly when it came to Southeast Asia. By analyzing how the Vietnam War functioned rhetorically during the Cultural Revolution, and how the Red Guards put this rhetoric into action by actually traveling to Vietnam, one begins to sense the pervasiveness of the war, and its looming presence in Chinese society. Indeed, the evidence presented above suggests that the momentum and opposition to the war in 1964 and 1965 was sustained in the initial years of the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, we see how certain techniques, phrases and symbols crossed the “1966 divide.” And yet, there were other instances in which the nature of this rhetoric and the way that Vietnam was framed in Chinese propaganda were altered during the Cultural Revolution. Red Guards and Chinese officials tended to portray Chinese politics as more important in Vietnamese society following the start of the Cultural Revolution than they did in 1964 and 1965. This created the impression that the Cultural Revolution was crucial to victory in Vietnam. Despite this shift, Vietnam still played a major

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role in China, especially as a codeword for revolution. The war, and the way that it was depicted, fit perfectly with the mentality of the Red Guards and the ethos of the Cultural Revolution.

**Conclusion**

China’s relationship with Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s is a study in contradiction. From the beginning of the war to roughly 1968, China pledged almost limitless assistance to North Vietnam, providing not only official support, but also materials, training, and even manpower. The relationship, however, quickly soured, and China’s own ideological obstinacy got in the way of what was once a very close relationship. After 1968, the relationship was characterized by mutual suspicion, recriminations, and finally warfare. Things started to go bad when the North Vietnamese government agreed to negotiate with the Americans in 1968, a perfidy that the People’s Republic could barely stomach.\(^{129}\) For Chinese officials, agreeing to negotiate gave quarter to an enemy who was on the run and legitimized the American government at a time when it was being criticized from multiple sectors. What really struck Beijing as a betrayal, however, was the North Vietnamese government’s increasingly close relationship with the Soviet Union, which improved steadily throughout the 1960s. By the end of the decade, North Vietnam relied more on the Soviets for help and support than it did on China, and officials in Beijing began to see North Vietnam as a Soviet lackey.\(^{130}\) Throughout the 1970s, the relationship between the two countries went from strained to downright hostile, until the People’s Republic finally invaded North Vietnam in 1979. Although the war lasted briefly, it was a tragic coda to a relationship that Beijing once characterized as close as the lips and the teeth.

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\(^{129}\) Conversation between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong, Beijing, April 13, 1968 in *77 Conversations*; Conversation between Chen Yi and Le Duc Tho, Beijing, October 17, 1968 in *77 Conversations*.

Despite the 1979 invasion, the war in Vietnam was one of the most significant international developments to affect the People’s Republic of China during the Maoist period. Throughout the 1960s, as the American presence in Southeast Asia grew, the issue moved further to the fore of the Chinese consciousness, until it occupied such a place that it saturated daily life. What I have presented above are various instances in which the war in Vietnam entered into political life in the PRC and impacted the way that China saw itself and the rest of the world. The war became the cornerstone of the country’s post-Soviet worldview. It provided a template with which the CCP could contextualize and frame the rest of the world. Vietnam was used as a codeword for China’s post-Soviet worldview and encapsulated the role that global narratives played in Chinese society following the Sino-Soviet split. The power of the war was its pervasiveness; it represented everything from the evils of imperialism and revisionism, the interconnectedness of international institutions, such as industry, war, and economic ideology, the looming threat to the People’s Republic of China, the historical legacy of the Korean War, and the need for militancy, vigilance, and class struggle in everyday life.

The meaning of the war in Vietnam, and the symbolic role of the war in Chinese society also played perfectly into the ideology of the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution stressed youthful sacrifice, heroic action, commitment, defiance in the face of supposed adversity, and a take-no-prisoners attitude. These very ideals were embodied in the way that the PRC saw the Vietnamese struggle. Furthermore, the Cultural Revolution was predicated on the notion that revisionist powers had cowardly accepted coexistence with American imperialism and had abandoned revolution. The Vietnam War was the antithesis of this revisionism, as Vietnamese communists refused to accept coexistence with the Americans. The Vietnam War also stirred the Red Guards, whose nature was to assume responsibility for reinvigorating politics in China,
grasping every opportunity to further the Communist revolution. And yet the Red Guards and communist officials also manipulated the perception of Vietnam during the Cultural Revolution. While still professing support for the Vietnamese people, newspaper articles also claimed that the Vietnamese people were now inspired by the Cultural Revolution. This expanded the implications of the Cultural Revolution and made it appear as if victory in the movement was foundational to success in Southeast Asia. Vietnam and the Cultural Revolution were intertwined in official and Red Guard discourses and mutually reinforced each other.

China’s engagement with the war in Vietnam also provides a comparative framework that allows scholars to consider the PRC in the context of the global 1960s. Some of the language used in the political protests described above, for example, could have easily been lifted from similar protests held in Tokyo, West Berlin, Paris, or Chicago. The Chinese ability to see the war as the worst iteration of a larger system that had become fundamentally corrupt also captures the universality and global significance of the war. What emerged from this rhetoric was a complex worldview that connected the war in Vietnam to a host of other issues. In this we see the closest connection between China and various radicals and revolutionaries around the world. By presenting Vietnam not as an isolated incident but as an example of the rot that was affecting Western politics, economies, and societies, China was engaging with one of the universal issues of the “global 1960s.”

Martin Luther King Jr., for example, believed the Vietnam War was an obstacle to creating a just and peaceful society at home. Some students in West Germany were convinced that the war in Vietnam was a symptom of a wider problem and that the solution was

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131 I refer to the Global 1960s as the massive student protest movements that consumed much of the world in the 1960s. Many of these protests were precipitated by the war in Vietnam, and the perceived corruption of Western society. Nevertheless, they were truly global in scope, and involved students from the West, as well as the Third World.
to discard capitalism altogether.\textsuperscript{133} In Japan, support for American policies in Vietnam was taken by some people as a sign of the dysfunction of Japanese politics and the pitfalls of capitalism.\textsuperscript{134} Conflating the war in Vietnam with the larger ills of Western society and capitalist systems was a global phenomenon and not just the result of radicalism during the Cultural Revolution in China. Moreover, the language deployed in China was similar to that used by angry youth around the world during the 1960s. For many, the war had become tantamount to massacre and even genocide, and any system that willingly abided such a heinous act was fundamentally corrupt. These sentiments seeped through the various newspapers in China and intertwined with the ethos of the Cultural Revolution. However, they also permeated various youth protest movements around the world in the 1960s, and at least temporarily connected events in the People’s Republic with countless international protest movements. These conclusions aligned perfectly with China’s own rhetoric, and offer the most fruitful point of comparison between China in the 1960s, and the international protest movements that swept over the world during the same period.

The sources that I have used above to enumerate the role that the war in Vietnam played in China are interesting not necessarily for their historical accuracy, but for the underlying messages that they convey, and what they suggest about Chinese politics in the 1960s. In China’s response to the war in Vietnam, we see a slew of familiar tactics used to make the public aware of the dangers that the United States posed: political protests, newspaper editorials, official speeches, cultural performances and a desire to record any instance of contact between the Chinese and Vietnamese people. However, we must be cautious in conflating the war in Vietnam with other instances when the CCP constructed or imagined global narratives. The war in Vietnam loomed large in Chinese society partially because it was so much less abstract than

\textsuperscript{133} Slobodian (2011).
\textsuperscript{134} Thomas R.H. Havens (1987).
other global developments. For example, compared to the war in Vietnam, African liberation, which the CCP championed throughout the 1960s, seems somewhat remote and abstract. The Chinese government and people had less actual contact with Africans, and so officials easily imagined that African revolutionaries were very supportive of the PRC. During the war, there was a genuine engagement with Vietnam that was partially motivated by ideology but also by a major concern for China’s security and for the sovereignty of the state.

Here is where the ghosts of the Korean War enter the picture. One reason Vietnam resonated so deeply in Chinese society was that the war seemed to follow the same trajectory as events in the Korea in the 1950s. If people felt trepidation over the intentions of the American army it was because China had lost one million soldiers fighting the United States in Korea a decade earlier. Historical memory therefore played a role in how the war in Vietnam functioned in Chinese society. Officials were able to invoke the threat of the American army more deeply by relying on China’s recent past. This brought a certain air of reality to the war in Vietnam and transformed events in Southeast Asia from an abstract to a concrete ideological and military threat. The real power of the Vietnam War, however, was that it allowed the CCP to combine China’s past and its present. In the end, this powerful cocktail of history and present-day politics made Vietnam an extremely potent symbol and primed the pump for the radicalism of the Cultural Revolution. Vietnam was portrayed as the epicenter of revolutionary struggle, and if the CCP purported to represent a post-Soviet socialist modernity, it needed to support and harness the war effort, while mobilizing the Chinese people, politicizing everyday life, and preparing them for a new period of class struggle.
Chapter 3

Race, Anti-Colonialism, and Civil Rights in China’s 1960s

After the end of World War II, racial injustice and discrimination became fundamental issues that shaped global politics. Few countries were unaffected. Race became one of the prisms through which activists and radicals viewed the world. This trend climaxed in the 1960s. Racial inequality was also seen as a symptom of systemic corruption, and critics boiled down unpopular policy decisions to the inherent racism in Western society. In the United States, for example, many radicals and leftists saw the American presence in Southeast Asia as an extension of racist colonial policies. Issues of discrimination and racism also fostered a more global consciousness. While protests against discriminatory policies differed from place to place, many movements also drew inspiration from one another. African activists, for example, closely followed the civil rights movement in the United States.\(^1\) Elsewhere, young students were influenced by African independence movements, like that which occurred in Algeria, or the ideas of African revolutionaries, especially Franz Fanon.\(^2\) Meanwhile, Afro-Asian solidarity movements flourished. The fight for racial equality was not limited to Africans or African Americans either. Throughout the decade various minority activists confronted racism in their respective societies and drew on connections among radical movements around the world. This, more than any other aspect of the 1960s, created a global zeitgeist among a new generation of activists. By tracking the struggle against racial inequality and discrimination one can map radical activism around the world.

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Although ostensibly China did not face the same racial tumult within its own borders as did other countries during the 1960s, the PRC was keenly aware of discrimination and racist colonial practices, and of inequality in supposedly democratic countries like the United States. The international struggle for racial justice occupied a broad discursive space in China, affecting society and influencing politics. And yet, China’s position within this discourse was complicated and fraught with contradictions. From the founding of the People’s Republic, China had supported racial equality and had championed various causes around the world. The Chinese Communist Party’s very existence was predicated on China’s own recent experiences with imperialism. The CCP came to power trumpeting an end to imperialist abuse in China, among many other agendas. Anti-imperialism became a fundamental trope in CCP discourse and was often connected to various racial struggle around the world. One of the most visible instance of this anti-imperialism occurred at the Bandung conference in 1955, at which Chinese representatives articulated an Afro-Asian racial solidarity that had a major impact on the proceedings. China’s relationship with African and with African Americans was therefore not entirely imagined but was based on a sense of a shared colonial past and a feeling of solidarity.

This discourse, however, also tended to conceptualize race in Maoist terms and often framed the quest for racial justice as one component of the larger struggle against capitalist imperialism. The issue of race therefore fell within the purview of Chinese politics; racial equality could be accomplished by adopting Maoist tactics and launching a full-scale continuous revolution (which was on display during the Cultural Revolution). These ideas became even more important after the Sino-Soviet split when China accused the Soviet Union of abandoning

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communist revolution. For many in the CCP, issues of racism could only be confronted under the guidance of Maoist politics.

The phenomenon was not a one-way street. While China focused heavily on racial justice, many activists from around the world attempted to peer into China and mimic the country’s radical ideology. During the 1960s, countless organizations adopted Maoist theory in one form or another. This was true among some radical African American organizations, particularly the Black Panthers. Furthermore, throughout the 1960s, a steady stream of radical activists from the United States visited China. The African American activist Robert F. Williams, for instance, took refuge in China after fleeing trumped-up charges of kidnapping in North Carolina. Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver and Huey Newton, three of the most prominent and visible members of the Black Panther Party, each visited Beijing. In America, the Black Panther Party actively studied Mao Zedong Thought and often cited Mao as one of several revolutionary inspirations (along with Malcolm X and Franz Fanon). Mao appeared on the cover of the Black Panther Party’s official newspaper several times, and the paper often quoted Mao’s work. For some, China became a model for national liberation. The Black Panthers’ fascination with China even affected how they saw other radical organizations in the United States. When a leftist Asian-American group called the Red Guard Party of America formed in San Francisco, representatives of the Black Panthers demanded that it attempt to mimic the Red Guard movement in China.

The product of this discourse was not an easily understood worldview. Instead, what existed was an amalgam of narratives, perceptions, projections, and cultural signifiers that were local, national, and global all at the same time. Within this cacophony was the racial zeitgeist of the 1960s, which, above anything else, strove for an end to imperialism and depended on global

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narratives both to contextualize national movements and to expand the meaning and importance of radical politics. Race was a touchstone for countless activists around the world. In China, civil rights and African decolonization were viewed as potential sources of international revolution. However, these movements were also used to define and shape domestic politics, and confirming the country’s post-Soviet worldview. The reverse was also true; organizations such as the Black Panthers relied on China to contextualize their politics and to understand the potential for revolution in America. China provided these organizations with a barometer to gauge their radicalism. The result of these interactions was the creation of multiple and sometimes contradictory global frames. Sustaining these frames required an amalgamation of global narratives and familiar cultural signifiers that would make international politics more easily digestible at home. As much as race may have become a “global” discourse, political activism was still filtered through local and national lenses.

**African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Revolutionary China**

Civil rights was one of the great connective tissues that bound global activists during the 1960s. The issue of civil rights created not only a revolutionary community across the Atlantic, it also bound together groups on the west coast of the United States and in East Asia.\(^5\) This is especially true of California, a hotbed of radical activity in the 1960s. Groups such as the Black Panthers and the Red Guard Party of the United States both formed in San Francisco and Oakland and used China to shape their identities and the way in which they viewed radical politics in their own communities. The Chinese were not alone in connecting domestic politics to international events, especially the struggle for racial equality. Nor were they the only group to construct a distorted image of foreign activists. African and Asian Americans similarly used

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China as a trope to elucidate their politics and to stake out an international identity. These two groups often distorted reality in China and manipulated the image of Chinese politics to fit with domestic political goals. Just as the Chinese imagined the global struggle for racial equality as conforming to Chinese politics, so too did the Black Panthers and Asian American activists in California tended to imagine that Chinese politics conformed to their views of the world.

The Panthers were one of the most international organizations to emerge in the 1960s, forming revolutionary networks not just in China, but in Cuba, Algeria, and a host of other countries. The Black Panthers’ official party newspaper often contained letters and stories about how the international community was supportive of the African American struggle in the United States, a tactic the Red Guards also used in Chinese newspapers. The Black Panthers used international connections not just to globalize their movement and to demonstrate the importance of their cause to their readers. The strongest link between the Black Panthers and China’s Cultural Revolution, however, was the important role that Mao Zedong Thought played in shaping each movement. For many in the Black Panthers, Mao was considered a hero, having led a national liberation and having stood up to American power in Asia. Mao’s support of armed rebellion in the Third World proved particularly attractive for many Panthers, who believed that they themselves were also a part of the Third World living in the United States. Mao’s prominence within the movement was often displayed in the party’s newspaper, *The Black Panther*.

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7 Red Guard newspaper used a similar tactic, sometimes concluding editions with a section entitled “Mao Zedong is the Reddest Sun among the World’s Revolutionary People.” This section contained letters from revolutionaries and leftists from around the world who had been inspired by Mao Zedong and by the Cultural Revolution. See, for example, the Red Guard newspaper *Waishi hongqi, Wai shi zhanbao, and Women shi xiwang*.

8 See, for example, “Eyes of the Third World on U.S. Racism” *The Black Panther* (May 4, 1968) as well as “African, Asian and Latin-American Appeal” *The Black Panther* (September 7, 1968). The first article is a collection of letters from the international community expressing outrage over the assassination of Martin Luther King. The latter is an account of international support for the cause of Huey Newton, who was imprisoned in 1967 after being accused of shooting a police officer.

Panther. Articles about community issues or struggles facing the Black Panthers were sometimes accompanied by a revolutionary quotation from Chairman Mao. For example, an article about revolutionary schools established by the Panthers concludes with a quotation from Mao: “the young people are the most active and vital force in society.”

Another edition of the paper that focused on the need for African Americans to organize and conduct urban warfare featured Mao on the cover. Below his face was another of Mao’s famous quotation: “Without a people’s army, the people have nothing.” Mao’s influence became so pervasive among the Black Panthers that one party memo estimated that 50 percent of morning education class was spent studying *The Quotations of Chairman Mao.* The Panthers, however, did more than simply quote Chairman Mao. They also adopted many of his opinions about global politics. This obviously included China’s views on imperialism. The Black Panthers also expressed hostility to Soviet revisionism. One particular article in *The Black Panther* was printed with the headline, “Washington/Moscow Collaboration Intensified.” The article discusses how the “U.S. imperialists” and “Soviet revisionists” were conducting secret meetings to strike a counter-revolutionary global deal, a charge that Mao had leveled against the Soviet Union for years.

The international networks that were established between China and the Black Panthers moved beyond adopting the rhetoric of Mao Zedong and applying it to the American situation. Robert F. Williams, whose influential book *Negroes with Guns* shaped the Black Panthers’ conception of themselves and armed struggle, spent two years in China during the Cultural

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Revolution, publishing a newsletter from Beijing called *The Crusader*. Eldridge Cleaver, one of the most influential Panther members in the late 1960s, traveled first to Korea and then to China along with his wife and Elaine Brown in 1969 as members of the U.S. Anti-Imperialist Delegation. Williams and Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver particularly championed the idea of cultural revolution and pushed the party to adopt some Chinese tactics. Yet Chinese communism and the Black Panther party diverged in important ways. For many Maoists, racial oppression was an outgrowth of class distinctions and was endemic to the capitalist system. While the Black Panthers may have agreed with the latter, many resented putting class before race as a means of understanding oppression. Nor were the Panthers wielding the words of Mao Zedong in the same way as the Red Guards in China. While Panthers did end up in violent encounters with police throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the type of chaos that embodied the Cultural Revolution was not repeated in the United States. Much of the rhetoric imported from the Cultural Revolution was used to justify self-defense against police oppression and brutality, not as a means to attack and victimize one’s enemies as in the Cultural Revolution. Nonetheless, Mao’s emphasis on the Third World and continued revolution found an eager audience in the Black Panthers and partially fused the rhetoric and ideology of the Cultural Revolution and the African American struggle. It also pervaded the Black Panthers’ perception of other radical groups in the United States, especially the Red Guard Party of the United States.

In 1969, in the Oakland – San Francisco area where the Black Panthers were most active, a small group of radical Asian Americans established the Red Guard Party of the United States. The party, which was active into the mid-1970s, focused primarily on conditions in San

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15 Huey Newton was one of the most important Black Panthers to turn away from a more class-based racial struggle. His ideas eventually won out over more radical members of the Black Panthers such Eldridge Cleaver and the party newspapers later apologized for its early anti-capitalist stance.
Francisco’s Chinatown, where living standards were lower than the surrounding city. From the beginning, the Black Panthers and the People’s Republic of China simultaneously shaped the Red Guard Party. This produced a bifurcated consciousness in which the Red Guard Party ostensibly identified with the PRC but used the Black Panthers as a point of entry into radical activism constructed along racial lines. For example, in 1969, the Red Guard Party published its own ten point program laying out its demands. The first nine points were almost identical to the Black Panther platform, calling for an end to racial discrimination and police brutality and demanding better housing and education. The tenth point, however, diverged from the Black Panthers and demanded that the United States recognize the People’s Republic of China and cut ties with Chiang Kaishek and the Taiwanese government.

This final point reflected the unique position of the Red Guard Party of America (and Asian Americans more generally), suggesting that while the Black Panthers were influential in the development of the group’s political consciousness, China was still a part of the party’s identity. The Black Panthers and the Red Guard Party sometimes framed their relationship with each other through China, using international networks in order to forge local connections. For example, Alex Hing, minister of information for the Red Guard Party, noted in an interview that the two books that shaped his political consciousness were *Red Star over China* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.16 For some in the Black Panther Party, China was used as a litmus test for one’s revolutionary credentials. At the first official meeting of the Red Guard Party, David Hilliard, one of the high-ranking members of the Black Panther party, castigated the crowd of Asian Americans for their lack of militancy. At one point he interrupted the meeting and shouted, “Uncle Toms of the non-white people of the U.S. If you can’t relate to China then

you can’t relate to the Panthers.”\(^{17}\) This was not the only instance in which the Black Panthers pointed the Red Guard Party toward China. Originally, Asian American founders wanted to call their new political party the Red Dragons. However, Bobby Seale, the chairman of the Black Panther Party, believed that the new group needed a more provocative name that would reflect the revolutionary potential of the Asian American community. It was Seale who suggested that the group called itself the Red Guard Party.\(^{18}\)

While the Black Panthers profoundly influenced and shaped the Red Guard Party, the group was in no way insular or parochial; Red Guard Party members also cultivated a global consciousness. This discussion often conformed to both the Black Panthers’ and the Chinese worldview. For instance, the Red Guard Party’s newspaper *Getting Together* published a review of the Russian ballet *Swan Lake*. Still, the review was political. The reviewer expressed disgust that the ballet has been revived in the USSR. He claimed that this play was a metaphor for Soviet revisionism: “from this performance we can see the USSR reviving capitalism. We can see the USSR using stage techniques to fool the people... we can smell the blood stained on the anti-revolutionary knife of the USSR.”\(^{19}\) This anti-revisionism aside, the Red Guard Party often returned to race to contextualize the Asian-American experience. For example, one article published in *Getting Together* discusses the experience of Chinese expatriates living in Hong Kong. These expatriates, according to the article, had suffered under imperialism in the same way that Africans and African Americans had. The author of the article tells how Hong Kong students organized their classmates and raised consciousness about American racism. Students in Hong Kong had chosen to use Mao Zedong Thought and the performing arts to accomplish this task. These students wrote and performed a play that recounted the entire history of the African

\(^{17}\) AAPA Newspaper (March, 1969), 4.

\(^{18}\) Ho (2000), 296.

\(^{19}\) “On *Swan Lake*” *Getting Together*. (Vol. 3, No. 9 June 10-23, 1972)
American from slavery to Jim Crow. During one section in which people are sold into slavery on stage, the students sang:

Carrying the coffin, singing the requiem, we’ll walk over the U.S. with our fists holding tight, holding back tears, and with fire of anger burning in our hearts, we resist, we struggle, we question, how many blacks were slaughtered?\(^{20}\)

Before their first performance, the Hong Kong students met to debate the political importance of this play. During this meeting, each student engaged in a criticism/self-criticism session, mimicking a common political tactic of the PRC. While discussing racial discrimination in the United States, and the nature of the African-American struggle, the students broke into a song:

I’m a black person, my motherland in Africa, Africa! Africa! When is it going to be liberated?/ Africa! When is it going to be liberated?\(^{21}\)

The Red Guard Party and the Black Panthers occupied the same metaphorical space. And yet, they felt compelled to turn to China in order to mediate their existence and contextualize their political goals. That China entered into a political relationship of such proximity speaks to the importance of the PRC, at least in the imagination of many radical activists in the 1960s. It seemed difficult if not impossible for these two groups to escape China’s impact, and both groups continually turned to the Chinese as a model for revolution. And yet, what this relationship produced was a sort of dissonant identity, constructed by multiple narratives, some of which were received second or third-hand. What appeared to be “Chinese” to the Red Guards, for instance, was sometimes mediated by the Black Panthers, who used their own familiar cultural codes to internalize and understand Chinese politics. “China” was first African American before it became Asian American. This produced a distinct hybridity in which

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
perception and imagination tended to trump actual contact. The Red Guard Party was torn between attempting to emulate the Black Panthers, whom it used to shape its political identity and protest against racial discrimination, and its own heritage as Chinese Americans. The result was a distinct and dynamic dialogue across the Pacific in which radical American activists looked to China and to each other in an attempt to penetrate the opaqueness of the PRC.

**Discourses of Anti-Colonialism: China and Africa**

In the 1960s, the prospect of African decolonization played a major role in igniting the imagination of activists and sparking radical protests in numerous countries. The struggle against colonialism in Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s, tinged as it was with leftism and anti-imperialist rhetoric, seemed to wake a new generation of activists to the many problems facing the Third World. Although China had long recognized the perils of colonialism and imperialism, many in the CCP now seemed encouraged by events in Africa, particularly the string of defeats European countries suffered as decolonization accelerated. This produced a dynamic global narrative, especially in China. During the 1960s, the rhetoric and imagery employed to frame the African struggle suggested partnership rather than paternalism. Chinese officials and students seemed to admire the heroic African struggle, and, along with the war in Vietnam, African liberation was often identified as one of the primary fronts in the global revolution. And yet, China’s African narratives were not devoid of Chinese codes and symbols, and Chinese society was not free of racism and discrimination. This was particularly the case when it came to Mao’s importance and the relevance of Mao Zedong Thought to the African struggle. Both the CCP and the Red Guards continuously claimed that Mao was a central figure in the African liberation movement. This was also reflected in China’s foreign policy.

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23 Christiansen and Scarlett (2012).
between Kenya and Ghana and the PRC, for example, became strained during the 1960s, and Chinese diplomats were asked to leave both countries because they refused to stop handing out leaflets and other materials that contained Maoist propaganda.\textsuperscript{24}

Creating an African frame that was easily digested by the wider Chinese public required more than an aggressive foreign policy. For example, from time to time, specific days or entire weeks were dedicated to promoting African independence and remembering the African liberation struggle. In 1962, China began to celebrate “African independence day,” which was spent observing various African cultural traditions.\textsuperscript{25} In 1964, the Foreign Culture Committee dedicated an entire week to this holiday, expanding the festivities to make the ceremonies progressively larger and more involved. The Foreign Culture Committee instructed the Beijing city government to host a series of documentaries about life in Africa, along with producing shows of traditional African dance and other arts. African guests visiting the PRC were taken to various factories, schools, and communes so that the Chinese people could “hear reports about the African people’s heroic struggle.”\textsuperscript{26} Women’s organizations from Northern Rhodesia, Mozambique, and South Africa visited the Number 3 Cotton Factory, lawyers’ associations from Angola and Guinea visited the Chinese-Vietnamese commune, and a delegation of African journalists visited People’s University in Beijing.\textsuperscript{27} As always, these visits were recorded so they could be rebroadcast to a wider Chinese audience. The celebration of African Independence Day seemed to be the primary means through which at least urban Chinese could experience and internalize African politics.

\textsuperscript{24} Ma Jisen The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2004), 167.
\textsuperscript{25} “Guanyu juban ‘zhichi feizhou duli zhou’ de qingshi” 102-001-00351 (Beijing City Archives, hereafter BJCA).
\textsuperscript{26} “Guanyu juban “zhichi feizhou duli zhou” huodong de baogao” 102-001-00351 (BJCA).
\textsuperscript{27} “Zhichi ‘feizhou duli zhou’ baogao hui richeng anpai” 102-001-00351 (BJCA).
African students also played a major role in fostering communication between China and Africa. In one particular instance, several African students studying in Beijing received a great deal of attention after they wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party expressing Mao’s importance in the fight for racial justice. This letter came in response to Mao’s own statement of support for the civil rights movement in the United States, which he published in 1963. In the letter, the African students suggested that Mao’s statement was of great significance for African Americans and the entire continent of Africa. According to the students, “Chairman Mao’s statement has revealed the ugly face of racism and opened the eyes of the people of the world.” The letter goes on to state that the only person capable of such an act was Mao Zedong, who was presented as the “contemporary leader of all oppressed people.” These students also expressed the African American struggle in largely Maoist terms: to them, racism, discrimination, and apartheid were the result of class struggle, and not skin color. What was most important, from a Chinese point of view, however, was how they framed both Mao Zedong and the Chinese people, elevating both to international levels of importance. To these African students, the Chinese people were “the most reliable friends of oppressed people in their struggle against exploitation.”

The CCP quickly recognized the importance of this letter. The foreign affairs office of the Beijing city government declared that the politics of the letter were “relatively good.” The government encouraged the students to continue their struggle and to study hard while in China.

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 “Guanyu Feizhou liuxuesheng wei yonghu Mao zhuxi zhichi Meiguoyi heiren douzheng de shengming gei wo dangyang xixi wenti de biaoshi” Zhongyang Beijingshi wei waishi xiaozu fazhong No. 23 (1963) in Xi lan liuxuesheng zuzhi “ya fei xuesheng lianhe hui” yinri liuxuesheng chengli zai hua xue sheng lianhe hui, qingzhu xi yili an yijiao yinri, feizhou liuxue sheng yonghu Mao zhuxi zhichi meiguoyi heiren douzheng yizhou geyou sijing xue sheng jinian ya fei huiyi ba zhounian, No. 102-001-00310 (BJCA)
More important, they suggested that a summary of the letter be published in local and national newspapers. Both *Beijing Daily* and *People’s Daily* printed an article praising the African students and excerpting their letter. Both newspapers led their articles with the African students’ declaration that, after Mao’s statement, “all African people now better understand that the American treatment of African Americans is a continuation of their imperialist policies in Africa.”*35* The editors of both newspapers echoed these sentiments. *Beijing Daily* declared that “Chairman Mao’s efforts to expose U.S. imperialism are relentless,”*36* while *People’s Daily* underscored Mao’s commitment and his “support for the struggle of all people.”*37*

The importance of Mao’s civil rights statement was also reiterated in one instance at Beijing University, where, in 1963, Vice-Principal Huang Yiran met with a group of Cameroonian students to discuss China, Africa, and the civil rights movement in America. This discussion began with Huang encouraging the students to use Mao Zedong Thought to support the civil rights movement in America. Huang also related the talk back to China, stating that the struggle against discrimination and imperialism was an “indication of support for the revolution and construction of China.”*38* Huang also discussed the ill effects of revisionism in Africa, declaring that this was a new type of colonialism. He drew on events in the Congo to illustrate his point, declaring that “old and new colonialists” (by which he means American imperialists and Soviet revisionists) conspired to strangle the Congolese revolution and remove Patrice Lumumba from power in 1961. *39* After Huang’s talk an audience member responded that everyone was “extremely moved by the fact that Mao was supportive of the struggle of black

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35 Ibid.
38 “Guanyu Huang Yiran fu xiaojiang jiejian feizhou xuesheng qingkuang de huibao” 102-001-00310 (BJCA).
39 Ibid.
people in America.” The speaker concluded by contextualizing African liberation within Chinese politics: “what Mao said was correct, the problem of discrimination is the same as the problem of class struggle. We not only express our thanks to Chairman Mao for his statement, but we will also put his words into action, study hard, and return to our countries to create revolution.”

African liberation was not purely an academic subject. The continent appeared in various media in Chinese society. Books about African politics were available for purchase, although because they were written in foreign languages their mass appeal was limited. Nevertheless, in 1964 the Beijing Foreign Language Bookstore offered copies of *The African Revolution*, a book printed in Algeria and written in French, along with an English book entitled *African Communism*. Visual propaganda also became one of the main vehicles for depicting the struggle in Africa. The imagery in these pictures generally employed the codes that were used to depict loyal citizens of the PRC. Africans and African-Americans were presented as strong, determined, and provocative. However, not all African propaganda posters conformed to Chinese norm. For example, figure 3.1 and figure 3.2 below have two immediate themes that stand out. Each caption unequivocally identifies American imperialism as the oppressive force in Africa. Evoking the common language of the People’s Republic, figure 3.2 urges the unity of all oppressed people. Both posters demand that American imperialists get out of Africa. There was nothing unique about this language. What is unusual is that each of these figures is a woman. Figure 3.1 emits a certain aura of maternity, with an armed woman revolutionary carrying a small child on her back. This image connotes the importance of African liberation for future generations of African children. It also portrays a certain revolutionary maternity that was uncommon in China. Chinese propaganda often depicted women in an androgynous manner.

40 Ibid.
41 Beijing shi renmin weiyuanhui waishi bangongshe (64) document No. 31, 102-001-00383 (BJCA).
Propaganda was intended to portray China’s commitment to gender equality, which often meant that women were depicted in conventionally masculine ways, performing activities associated with men.\textsuperscript{42} Men were the ideal of socialist modernity represented centrally as strong workers, dedicated revolutionaries, or determined members of the army. Women conformed to these characteristics, portrayed in a similar manner, although often on the periphery.\textsuperscript{43} The fact that African women not only appeared so prominently in these pictures but were also presented as both revolutionary and maternal, suggests that the codes of the People’s Republic of China were not always glibly applied to a global framework but were instead subject to nuance and reinterpretation.


\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 72.
Figure 3.1⁴⁴- “American imperialists, get out of Africa.”

![Image of a propaganda poster with a gun and a woman's face]

Figure 3.2⁴⁵- “Oppressed peoples unite, resolutely oppose American imperialism.”

Of course Africa itself was not always depicted as female, and males were also used to represent African revolution. Figure 3.3 and figure 3.4 are two such images. The first is a propaganda poster printed in 1968, while the second is a photograph that was published on March 2, 1967 in People’s Daily. Both of these images are from the period of the Cultural Revolution, and suggest a change in the political tenor of China from the early 1960s. Although the themes of anti-imperialism remained in Chinese global discourse during the Cultural Revolution, the techniques used to express this anti-imperialism began to change. The most significant of these changes was that Mao was more central to global narratives, appearing as a key figure in the success of the worldwide revolution. Both of these images demonstrate this point. Figure 3.3 depicts a group of African soldiers gathered together to read the Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, a book that was one of the ubiquitous symbols of the Cultural Revolution.

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⁴⁴ Printed December, 1965. Maopost.com, reference number 0863-001L
⁴⁵ Printed November, 1964. Maopost.com, reference number 1314-001M
caption reads, “Chairman Mao is the savior of the world’s revolutionary people.” In the second image, two men peruse what appears to be more of Mao’s work, while the chairman himself is pictured in the center of the frame (a technique that was often repeated in pictures of foreign Maoists). What is most fascinating about the latter image is that the man on the right wears an armband that reads “Red Guard.” During the Cultural Revolution, almost every student wore a similar armband, and it became one of the fashion symbols of the movement. The caption printed below this image underscored the importance of Mao Zedong and Chinese politics in the African liberation movement: “Because of Chairman Mao’s leadership, today there is a new China and a new society, and if you didn’t have the Chinese Communist Party and the leadership of Chairman Mao, this unexpected miracle would have never occurred. This completely inspires us and encourages us in our heroic struggle for liberation.” 46 These two images show Chinese media and propagandists imposing very common Chinese symbols on the African revolution.

46 “Mao Zedong sixiang shi shijie geming renmin de zhilu mingdeng” Renmin Ribao, March 12, 1967.
Although the Cultural Revolution officially lasted until 1976, the direction of the movement changed significantly after 1968. In that year, most Chinese students were sent to the countryside, and a combination of bureaucratic propaganda teams and army units restored order in China’s cities. The remaining conflicts of the Cultural Revolution were largely fought among elites, and revolutionary rhetoric was slowly replaced by a call for greater stability and a more cautious foreign policy, culminating in President Nixon’s visit to Beijing in 1972. American rapprochement changed the tone of global narratives, not just in reference to Africa, but the way in which global revolution was contextualized in China. It also affected the depiction of Africa in the People’s Republic.

In the three posters below, all published between 1971 and 1972,

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47 <chinaposter.net>, BG E16/339 (IISH collection)
48 “Mao Zedong sixiang shi shijie geming renmin de zhilu mingdeng” Renmin Ribao, March 12, 1967.
49 After President Nixon’s visit, groups such as the Black Panthers were rarely mentioned in the Chinese press. The party circular Reference News, for example, published 49 articles about the Black Panther Party in 1970 alone. By 1972, that number had dwindled to just one. This final article that references the Black Panthers is about an Asian-American student who had previously worked with the group but was writing to express his current support for
revolutionary rhetoric is largely absent. Furthermore, Mao is not depicted in any of the pictures, nor is he represented by standard symbols, such as the red sun. Instead, we see a much more anodyne approach to Africa, largely focused on development and grassroots efforts at improving the country, rather than radical Maoist revolution. The only remaining aspect of the Cultural Revolution present in the posters can be found in figure 3.5, in which a doctor teaches Africans about medicine. During the Cultural Revolution, China sent medical professionals into some of the country’s poorest villages. Here the same technique is being reprised, and the poster’s caption reads, “we cannot be separated by seas and oceans, the needle passes along friendship.” Although the official periodization of the Cultural Revolution encompasses a ten-year period from 1966 to 1976, these pictures demonstrate that the movement’s rhetoric, particularly that deployed to create global narratives, shifted over time. As talk of global revolution receded around the world, China’s approach to framing foreigners began to change, and certain hints about the country’s future direction emerged.

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On the surface, the Chinese perception of African liberation was based on concepts of fraternity and solidarity. Official propaganda tended to treat African revolution as one
component of a larger global revolution. Although China was presented as the leader of that global revolution, the politics of Africa were often treated with respect and with a feeling of camaraderie. Beneath much of this propaganda, however, are clear hints of paternalism and even racism. The tendency to see Africa as a homogenous whole, for example, speaks to an unwillingness to recognize regional differences or the nuances of African politics. African students who studied in China similarly felt the constraints of Chinese society and were often subject to discrimination and unfair treatment. Much of this discrimination was embodied in the experiences of the African student union, which formed in Beijing in 1961. The union was made up of students from Chad, Uganda, Cameroon, and Kenya who were all studying in China. According to Emmanuel John Hevi, one of the students who helped found the group, the Africans were spurred to action by the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. These African students were tired of standing by and watching the Chinese rally against oppression in Africa and wanted an organization through which they could voice their opinions. As a result, the African students decided to form a political union that would encompass all African students studying in China.\(^5^3\)

According to Hevi, party officials were lukewarm about the idea of starting an African student union. These officials likely feared a quasi-independent group that would fall outside of the purview of the party. Furthermore, most political organizations in the PRC were initiated by the CCP and therefore retained a connection to the party. The African students’ initiative probably unnerved the party. Because of this, CCP officials initially demurred at the idea of an African student union, and they only relented when the African students accused the CCP of actually opposing African unity. The Africans essentially used the CCP’s ostensible support for African liberation as a means of shaming the party into allowing the formation of an African

student union. The first action of the new union was to organize a march in Beijing that condemned the assassination of Lumumba and generally criticized American imperialism in Africa. More than 4,000 people from Asia and Europe attended the march. The majority of participants (3,000) were Chinese. At the actual rally three of the officers from the African Student Union spoke along with one Chinese representative.

Despite the presence of so many Chinese at their march, John Hevi, one of the officers in the African student union, quickly realized that the Chinese were not genuine in their support of African unity. Hevi was particularly disgusted by the artificiality of most protests organized by the CCP to support African unity. He details the ways in which people were marshaled to these rallies and how the slogans and speeches at these events were strictly controlled by the center. According to Hevi, at another rally held to protest Lumumba’s assassination, 50,000 Chinese people were marched into Worker’s Stadium without any real understanding of the political situation in Africa. Hevi summed up the event by later writing:

Thus, with rigged rallies and protest marches, the Chinese Communist Party manages to deceive us African into believing that the Chinese people are solidly behind us. What hypocrisy! What abject insincerity.

Relations between the African students and the Chinese government continued to deteriorate until they reached a breaking point in 1962, during the so-called Ali Affair. The incident became when a man named Ali went to the Friendship Hotel in Beijing to try to buy some cigarettes. For some reason, the clerk at the counter refused Ali, who then began to protest loudly. As the quarrel became more intense, two hotel clerks took Ali from the shop and dragged him into a back room where they proceeded to beat him up. Two other Africans in the hotel heard the commotion and went to see what was happening. When they appeared in the room the

54 Ibid., 145.
55 Ibid., 151.
56 Ibid., 161.
Chinese began to beat them up as well, and to chant, according to Hevi, that “all Africans are bad people.” 57 One of the people beaten up was a pregnant woman who was employed by Radio Peking and who broadcasted stories to East Africa. One of the stories recently reported by this woman was about an American soldier who had recently beat up a pregnant woman in Korea. The story was used to demonstrate the racism that Americans felt toward the people of East Asia.

The story of Ali and his African companions soon reached the African students studying in Beijing. The students quickly planned a week of protests, including a hunger strike. Word of the African discontent reached the Chinese government who called on African diplomats to try to quell the students’ anger. Representatives from the embassies of Mali, Ghana, and Guinea arrived at the African Students’ Union meeting to try to convince the students not to go through with their strike plans. 58 These diplomats, however, made a serious mistake by claiming that the African students were in the wrong, which only inflamed their anger. The students immediately decided to call a general meeting of all Africans in China in order to discuss possible actions. This deeply troubled the Chinese authorities, and they began to round up and even arrest African students studying at the Beijing Foreign Language Institute. Although these students were only briefly detained and then eventually released, the incident proved too much for many African students. A number of them eventually turned in their passports and demanded fare home from the government. John Hevi followed suit and, disgusted with the ruse of Sino-African friendship, left the country in March 1962. 59 For Hevi, these experiences taught him that communist imperialism in Africa was no less a threat than American imperialism. His experiences demonstrate that latent racism did exist in Chinese society and that some CCP officials viewed

57 Ibid., 163.
58 Ibid., 165.
59 Ibid., 198.
African students not necessarily as comrades but as tools meant to further China’s international credentials.

The relationship between China and Africa was fraught with contradictions during the 1960s. The decade began with the founding of the Sino-African friendship organization, and, as time progressed, the connection between China and Africa became a mainstay of Chinese politics. Not only did Chinese officials look to Africa as one of the centers of the global revolution, but events in Africa also helped many in China contextualize, interpret, and consume the rest of the world. Africa became a framing tool, providing an anti-colonial worldview that conformed to China’s own political realities. This led to a strong and yet inconsistent approach to Africa. On the one hand, Chinese officials and Chinese students tended to apply domestic political frames to their interpretation of Africa. During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese students followed suit. Mao also became a central figure in how Africa was depicted in the PRC. Supposed African and Chinese support of Mao was often conflated, used to reinforce each other. Of course this propaganda, paternalistic or not, hid a deeper resentment for Africans that existed in Chinese society. African students who actually lived in Beijing were often subjected to discrimination and abuse. While the government may have officially supported African liberation, clearly Chinese society itself was not devoid of racism.

Yet, it would be inaccurate to describe this relationship as overly paternalistic or as purely discriminatory. The Ali incident aside, the struggles of Africans (and African-Americans) resonated in the People’s Republic like few other issues, and the global narratives applied to these events oscillated between didactic and inspired. A revolutionary fraternity was present in these narratives, and many looked at Africa as the best hope outside of China for revolution. Perhaps Zhou Enlai, China’s premier, best captures this sentiment in a conversation he had with
Shirley DuBois, W. E. B. DuBois’s widow. The DuBoises had moved to Ghana in the early 1960s, where Shirley remained after her husband’s death. In 1967 she traveled to China and met with various Chinese leaders. Her meeting with Zhou happened to come after Chinese students attempted to burn down the British mission in Beijing. This event particularly frustrated Zhou, who feared the Cultural Revolution had become excessive. Disgusted, he informed Shirley that

The whole Chinese Revolution may go down to defeat for a while. We may lose everything. But never mind. If we are defeated here, you in Africa will learn from our mistakes and you will develop your own Mao Zedong, and you will learn to do it better. In the end, we shall succeed.\(^{60}\)

**The Great Hope: China and Race in America**

On November 10, 1963, Malcolm X, amid an acrimonious split with the Nation of Islam, delivered a sermon to the Solomon Baptist Church in Michigan excoriating the lack of radical activism in the civil rights movement. During his speech, Malcolm connected the civil rights movement in the United States with the Bandung Conference and African decolonization. It was China, however, that could serve as the true model for revolutionary action, not necessarily in its ideology, but in its absolute commitment to throwing off the tyranny of the old regime. “There are no Uncle Toms in China,” Malcolm declared.\(^{61}\) Since its founding, the People’s Republic of China had ostensibly supported African American activists. China’s commitment to American civil rights was a part of the PRC from almost the beginning, and was not limited to 1960s. In 1959, W. E. B. DuBois visited Beijing where he met with Mao Zedong and toured the countryside.\(^ {62}\) This was DuBois’s second visit to China, leaving him invigorated and hopeful for the future of the world. According to DuBois, China was going to lead the underdeveloped world

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on the road to socialism. Perhaps no two figures more deeply influenced the radical wing of the civil rights movement than W. E. B. DuBois and Malcolm X. Although Martin Luther King Jr.’s broad appeal made him the most recognizable figure in the civil rights movement, the radicalism of DuBois and Malcolm X, along with each man’s commitment to immediate action, came to influence young radical African American groups such as the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and later the Black Panthers. In China, each of these men saw a model for revolution and, more important, a nation whose revolutionary will seemed unbending.

In the 1960s, the Chinese government also saw great potential in the civil rights movement. The struggle for civil rights in the United States was framed as the best hope for the liberation of the American people and the overthrow of the American government. This hope particularly manifested itself in radical groups, especially the Black Panthers. The Black Panthers were often portrayed as the vanguard of the revolutionary movement, therefore occupying the same place as the Red Guards in China. And yet the struggle of the African American was also employed in Chinese rhetoric in more generic terms and served an expressly Chinese purpose. Racism in the United States was seen as the epitome of the pernicious capitalist system and of the evils of American imperialism. Press releases, propaganda posters, and both student and official rhetoric often suggested that American society’s treatment of American blacks was but a microcosm of the country’s larger imperialist designs. And yet, as in Africa, Chinese insight into the nature and shape of the civil rights struggle was often tainted by a tendency to homogenize the movement. Certain figures, particularly those who expressed Maoist viewpoints, were often taken to represent all proponents of civil rights. For instance, people such

as Robert F. Williams, an American fugitive who lived in China during part of the Cultural Revolution, and Eldridge Cleaver, the minister of information in the Black Panther party and perhaps its most vocal advocate for global revolution, were seen as typical of all African Americans. China’s perception of the African American therefore vacillated between insight and a tendency to use Chinese politics to contextualize and essentialize the broader movement.

As in Africa, the civil rights movement in America was often portrayed in the form of propaganda. Three propaganda posters, pictured below, demonstrate the perceived primacy of African Americans in radical American politics. They suggest the globality of civil rights, and connect the movement to wider anti-imperialist causes. These posters each suggest that the African American was an important member in the struggle for global revolution, akin to the African anti-colonialist, the Vietnam soldier, and of course the Chinese peasant/worker. This is especially evident in figure 3.8, which places the African American in the foreground, surrounded by a group of generic revolutionaries from around the world. The poster reads, “Resolutely support the just struggle of the African American against racial discrimination.” Figure 3.9 similarly suggests a global dimension of the civil rights movement. This time the African American is pictured in front of various pamphlets written in several languages, all supporting civil rights and opposing discrimination and imperialism. The caption of this poster simply declares, “Resolutely support the just struggle of the African American.” In the lower left-hand corner is a more detailed analysis of the struggle for racial justice in America, which draws on American history and further globalizes the movement. The text reads, “The evil systems of colonialism and imperialism followed slavery and the trafficking of black people for the purpose of prosperity, and this period will only come to an end with the complete emancipation of all black people.” The final poster, figure 3.10, is not in support of the civil
rights movement but is rather a condemnation of the war in Vietnam. Its caption reads, “resolutely support the American people in their opposition to the imperialist invasion of Vietnam.” Two aspects of this poster suggest the Chinese interpretation of African Americans. First, the fact that an African American is front and center underscores the importance of the black radical in the minds of the CCP. Second, these posters connote the Chinese tendency to contextualize civil rights within the broader spectrum of revolutionary activism. For the Chinese, events such as the Vietnam War went hand-in-hand with the civil rights movement. Effective opposition to the war would be led by African Americans. The portrayal of the African American man in this poster is also significant, especially because many of the tropes used to signify the Chinese worker/peasant are reproduced here. Figures in Chinese posters often had “macho strength,” and were portrayed as a type of “socialist pin-up.” The same occurs in each of the posters below, particularly the final one. The customs, mannerisms, posture, and general disposition of the archetypical Chinese socialist was projected onto the African American civil rights movement. This both suggests the esteem with which many officials in the CCP viewed the African American struggle as well as the tendency for propagandists to use Chinese tools in order to frame the civil rights movement.

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64 This was an attitude that many African Americans shared. To African American activists, events like the Vietnam War could not be separated from civil rights.
65 Evans (1999), 69.
While projection and imagination played an important role in framing the African American movement for civil rights in China, the Chinese government also relied on actual events and real people to compose their image of race in America. One figure who loomed large over the Chinese understanding of race was W. E. B. DuBois. DuBois represented a Third World radicalism that appealed to many in China. Although DuBois died in 1963, a few days before the

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66 <maopost.com>, Reference number 1690-001M. Printed September, 1963.
68 <maopost.com>, Reference number 1196-001L. Printed April, 1966.
March on Washington and never lived to see the radicalism of the 1960s, his persona was readily used to describe the African American struggle. His death in particular was seen as a major event in world history, and DuBois was widely mourned in the People’s Republic. Immediately following Dubois’s death, Guo Morou, the famous Chinese poet, published a mock conversation between himself and DuBois. Guo began by asking, “Dr. DuBois, have you really left this world?” Dubois answered, “No! I have not left! I have become a red flag, I occupy the place where there are oppressed people and oppressed minorities, I occupy the place where people maintain the just struggle for national liberation and for lasting peace.”

In another section, Guo imagined DuBois saying, “Amazingly, some people say that you Chinese people are actually racist, and that President Kennedy and the Ku Klux Klan are the real philanthropists (cishanjia).” Guo replied to DuBois by stating, “it is eagles, crows, vultures and parrots that are emitting this toxin.” After dismissing the accusation, Guo allows DuBois to have the last words: “no matter if it is the black continent, the yellow continent, the red continent or the white continent, all oppressed people will received the greatest amount of friendship and support from China.” By imagining this conversation, Guo is able to sidestep DuBois’s death and project his support for China into the indefinite future.

Although DuBois died in 1963, his name impacted the Chinese consciousness throughout the 1960s, including during the Cultural Revolution. In 1968, China commemorated DuBois’s hundredth birthday with a range of celebrations. Mao declared that DuBois was a “great African

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69 “Guo Morou he Duboyisi boshi wenda” Renmin Ribao (September 9, 1963).
70 Guo does not address the source of this criticism, nor does he cite any specific individual who may have charged the PRC with racism. It is difficult to determine if Guo is responding to anything specific, or if this is hyperbole of such a magnitude as to outrage the Chinese readership, while also suggesting an association between the American president and the country’s most notorious racist organization.
American leader” who fought for “freedom, equality, and liberation.”71 People’s Daily also quoted a speech DuBois gave (although there are no details about when or where this speech was given) in which he declared, “African people arise, and face the rising sun. China is the closest thing to your flesh and blood.”72 Guo Morou was again involved, delivering a speech at the ceremony to commemorate DuBois’s work. According to Guo, “under the beacon of Mao Zedong Thought, the struggle of the African American has today won a new victory.”73 Shirley Graham-DuBois was also present at the festivities and delivered her own speech. While commemorating DuBois she expressed her support for the Cultural Revolution: “Today, the guidance of Mao Zedong Thought and the Chinese Cultural Revolution have propelled the revolution to an unprecedented height in human history. I am elated that we could celebrate the birth of Dr. DuBois during the Cultural Revolution.” DuBois’s birth, death, and legacy were important components in creating a narrative of the African American struggle, while keeping that struggle firmly within the frame of Chinese politics.

DuBois, however, was not the only figure that was used in such a manner. As hallowed as DuBois’s memory may have been, it was Robert F. Williams who was most often invoked when discussing the struggle of the African American. Williams was, in many ways, treated as the ultimate arbiter of African American sentiment, used in multiple ways during his stay in China (which coincided with the Cultural Revolution). Williams was drawn into various events in China, political or otherwise. For example, in May 1966 on the eve of the Cultural Revolution, China successfully detonated a nuclear weapon for the third time. Soon thereafter People’s Daily published an article on Williams’s reaction. Williams is identified as a “leader of the African American” who fought for “freedom, equality, and liberation.”71 People’s Daily also quoted a speech DuBois gave (although there are no details about when or where this speech was given) in which he declared, “African people arise, and face the rising sun. China is the closest thing to your flesh and blood.”72 Guo Morou was again involved, delivering a speech at the ceremony to commemorate DuBois’s work. According to Guo, “under the beacon of Mao Zedong Thought, the struggle of the African American has today won a new victory.”73 Shirley Graham-DuBois was also present at the festivities and delivered her own speech. While commemorating DuBois she expressed her support for the Cultural Revolution: “Today, the guidance of Mao Zedong Thought and the Chinese Cultural Revolution have propelled the revolution to an unprecedented height in human history. I am elated that we could celebrate the birth of Dr. DuBois during the Cultural Revolution.” DuBois’s birth, death, and legacy were important components in creating a narrative of the African American struggle, while keeping that struggle firmly within the frame of Chinese politics.

71 “Ya-fei zuojia changshe ju jinian meiguozumin heiren lingxiu boyi si dansheng yibai zhounian” Renmin Ribao (Feb 24, 1968).
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
Americans.” In the article, Williams stated, “we pay tribute to our Chinese brothers for successfully testing a nuclear weapon for the third time, because we know that they [the Chinese] are the uncompromising defenders of those who are subject to cruel exploitation and brutal oppression.”

Readers of *People’s Daily* were also provided with pictures of Williams, who was often depicted as a dedicated adherent of Mao Zedong. On March 12, 1967, for example, the newspaper published a series of pictures that included Williams and his wife studying one of Mao’s works. Williams is accompanied by his family, while a picture of Mao Zedong is shown above his wife’s shoulder. This was a common tactic used by the CCP; Williams was often deployed in order to demonstrate African American support for Mao Zedong. On the fourth anniversary of Mao’s 1963 statement in support of the African American struggle, *People’s Daily* published an article in which Williams effusively praised Mao’s impact on race relations in America. According to Williams, because of Mao’s statement, “more and more African Americans were turning toward armed struggle.”

The article, however, is not without insight. Williams, for example, declares that Mao was the first world leader to “raise the African American struggle to the scope of global revolution.” Whether Mao was the first person to make such a connection is impossible to know; however, Mao did recognize the globality of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and he often connected the movement to the African struggle against imperialism, the war in Vietnam, and various national liberation movements. What was often depicted as a local or regional problem in the United States – the problem of civil rights in the South – was considered one component of a larger global revolution in China. Here, Williams is used to confirm Mao’s perception. In other instances, Williams became a representation for all oppressed Black people. And since he enthusiastically supported the CCP,

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75 “Mao Zedong sixiang she shijie renmin de zhilu mingdeng” *Renmin Ribao* (March 2, 1967).
his image also conferred status on the People’s Republic and confirmed the global importance of Chinese politics.

Other major events, especially the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, shaped the Chinese perception of race in America. Although King himself was never extensively discussed in the Chinese press (the CCP likely ostracized him because of his comparably moderate views), his death was taken as the perfect example of the pernicious nature of American racism. The riots following King’s death were seen as an important step toward revolution. Mao declared that these riots were a “component part of the contemporary world revolution.”77 King’s assassination was also used as a means of furthering Chinese political goals, and reaffirming the importance of Mao Zedong Thought. King was a secondary figure in the article that appeared in the Chinese press following his death; Mao occupied center-stage. The Chinese press widely reported Mao’s reaction to King’s assassination and another statement Mao made condemning American racism. According to most newspapers, this not only changed the civil rights movement, it also altered the trajectory of radical politics around the world. People’s Daily declared that this was not just a statement in support of African Americans but all oppressed people who suffered under the weight of American imperialism.78 The articles about King’s death turned from the situation in the United States to a more global discussion about how Mao’s statement and the Cultural Revolution served as a guiding light for all oppressed people. China was depicted as the “base area” of the world’s revolutionary people, which strengthened the likelihood of global revolution.79 Another article claimed that Mao’s statement reflected the ultimate success of the Cultural Revolution and represented China’s strong support

78 Renmin Ribao (April 19, 1968).
79 “Mao zhuxi de daida shengming gei shijie renmin jiefang douzheng zhiming shengli hangxiang” Renmin Ribao (April 19, 1968).
of the African American people and all oppressed people in their struggle for liberation.\textsuperscript{80} Activists throughout Africa and Asia had warmly welcomed Mao’s statement, according to the \textit{People’s Daily}. The same article also declared that upon reading Mao’s statement, unidentified admirers in Africa declared, “Long live Chairman Mao!” This same phrase, of course, could be heard throughout China’s major cities during the Cultural Revolution, as Red Guards screamed themselves hoarse to demonstrate their love of the chairman.\textsuperscript{81}

While men like DuBois, King, and Robert Williams may have, at times, dominated the Chinese representation of the civil rights movement, the Chinese public was also provided with a series of images that helped frame the struggle for racial justice in America. These images helped Chinese readers map the progression of the movement; the press was found of printing maps of where riots and protest had occurred. In other instances, photographs of African Americans sufficed to convey a sense of poverty, oppression, and revolutionary determination. For example, in a number of stories and photos published by \textit{People’s Daily} that supposedly captured the essence of the civil rights movement, the newspaper suggested that Chinese politics were the primary force behind the African American movement. On April 25, 1968, for example, \textit{People’s Daily} published an image of a group of African Americans who had gathered to discuss the current state of global revolution. The image showed the group assembled around a table with their fists raised in militancy. On the wall behind the group, positioned in the center of the frame, is a picture of Mao Zedong, whose ideas and ideology, the article explains, were crucial to the African American movement and were a beacon for global revolution.\textsuperscript{82} Sometimes picturing African Americans denoted violence, or at least the prospect of armed struggle. In August 1967, a photo of an African American man holding a rifle was published in \textit{People’s Daily} with a

\textsuperscript{80}“Bixu yong geming de baoli fandui geming de baoli” \textit{Renmin Ribao} (April 19, 1968).
\textsuperscript{81}“Gongren lianghuai jiqing huanying Mao zhuxi de daida shengming” \textit{Renmin Ribao} (April 25, 1968).
\textsuperscript{82}Ibid.
caption that read, “African Americans are gradually penetrating the dual hands of reactionaries and counter-revolutionaries. In California, black people take up various weapons during protests for the purpose of armed struggle.”

Readers of *People’s Daily* were not only able to picture the civil rights movement, they could also map its progress. As American cities erupted in violence in both 1967 and 1968, *People’s Daily* published maps of the United States that showed the progress of the civil rights movement. The first of these maps, published in 1967, declared that “the African American struggle against violent oppression had gained surging momentum.” The second, meanwhile, stated that “among the 20 million Black Americans there is an extremely strong revolutionary force. It has struck a heavy blow against the imperialists, who are beset on all sides at home and abroad.” Both maps suggest that the United States was on the verge of revolution.

Occasionally, the African American struggle was also incorporated into Chinese Red Guard discourse during the Cultural Revolution, particularly in their effort to criticize and discredit their perceived enemies. This was true in the case of Liu Shaoqi, who was perhaps the most heavily criticized official during the Cultural Revolution. While much of this criticism was wrapped in Communist jargon and focused on how Liu Shaoqi had supposedly attempted to restore capitalism in China, Red Guards and the CCP also employed global narratives to build their case against Liu. In 1967, the Cultural Revolution Small Group, headed by Mao’s wife Jiang Qing, asked the foreign ministry to hand over all of their archives so that they could be searched for Liu’s supposed international crimes. Both Liu Shaoqi and Chen Yi, China’s

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86 Ma (2004), 212.
foreign minister, were accused of being “flunkies of imperialism” and of severely impeding the international revolution.\textsuperscript{87}

The civil rights movement was specifically incorporated into the Red Guards’ criticism of Liu Shaoqi. In 1967, at the behest of CCP officials, a group of various students formed an organization called the Center to Liberate Foreign Affairs. The group published a number of articles criticizing Liu and his reluctance to support foreign student movements. In May 1967, the group’s newspaper ran an article detailing why so many people were leaving the American Communist Party and coming to China. The article tells one story of an activist who attempted to organize workers at an unnamed American factory. During this process the activist was told by a representative of the American Communist Party that he needed to forget about the black workers and instead “let the white workers organize first.” Disgusted, the article criticizes this policy and the revisionism of the American Communist Party. The newspaper then asks its readers, “Comrades, where have we heard this before? This is the line of Liu Shaoqi!” The article concludes with a firm assertion than any American who wants to “truly participate in revolution” should come to China immediately.\textsuperscript{88}

As with African anti-colonialism, the American civil rights movement resonated deeply in the Chinese press. It also impacted how the Red Guards saw their struggle and the supposed crimes of their enemies during the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese government treated the African American struggle as part of the world revolution, elevating its status and presenting it as a referendum on American democracy and imperialism. And yet, no matter how important the discursive space occupied by African Americans, this was not quite a dialogue among equals. Chinese officials and students framed the civil rights movement in Chinese terms, just as they

\textsuperscript{87}“Chen Yi she ‘san xiang yi mei’ de chuigushou” \textit{Wai shi hongqi} (June 30, 1967) in Song Yongyi \textit{Xin bian Hong wei bing xi liao} (Oakton, VA: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 2001), 11864.

\textsuperscript{88}“Meiguo pengyou zai dahui shang de fa yan” \textit{Wai shi hongqi}, (May 17, 1967) in Song (2001), 11848.
used the political and cultural codes to map the movement and make it more accessible to Chinese society at large. Furthermore, they often imposed Mao Zedong Thought on the civil rights movement, declaring it to be the only path by which African Americans could secure their rights. This created a situation in which the civil rights movement was presented as both a possible means of ending American imperialism and also a confirmation of the importance of Chinese politics. These global narratives became imperative in China’s effort to engender a new global ideology that conformed to the realities of Chinese politics in the 1960s.

**Conclusion**

Despite the importance of race in creating and sustaining global narratives in the PRC during the 1960s, this was not the first time in which racism, at least American racism, played a part in Asian politics. During World War II, Japanese officials were acutely aware of the plight of African Americans and used this situation to promote their vision of an Asia free of white imperialism. As Pearl Buck reported from Asia during World War II,

> Every lynching, every race riot gives joy to Japan. The discriminations of the American army and navy and the air forces against colored soldiers and sailors, the exclusion of colored labor in our defense industries and trade unions, all our social discriminations, are of the greatest aid today to our enemy in Asia, Japan. “Look at America,” Japan is saying to millions of listening ear. “Will white America give you equality?”89

Meanwhile, among African Americans, as well as in many other Third World countries, Japan was regarded with great esteem and respect for most of the early twentieth century. After

Japan’s defeat of Russia in 1905, the country great informed African American internationalism, and provided activists with both racial pride and hope for the future.90

By the 1960s the polarity of Asian politics had shifted.91 Japan was now an American ally. The threat of fascism had meanwhile been replaced by the menace of communism, and the People’s Republic of China was considered to be the greatest threat to stability in Asia. What remained from World War II, however, was the international embarrassment of racial discrimination in the United States, and, more broadly, the pernicious system of colonialism in places such as Africa. Issues of racism and colonialism were both incorporated into Chinese politics and contextualized in the broader Cold War. American officials were well aware of this, and the perception of the United States in the world deeply impacted racial politics in America. In 1961, for example, amid the first Freedom Rides in the South, the American government issued a report noting Beijing’s “business-like effort” to highlight any instance of racial tension in America.92 And yet, despite the prominent role that race played in PRC narratives, there was only so much that the country could know about conditions on the ground in Africa and the United States. The same is true for activists in the United States, many of whom had never actually visited China. Those that did visit were given a cursory tour of the country. Imagination, therefore, played just as important of a role in creating these dynamic relationships and in informing attitudes toward race and discrimination throughout the world as did actual contact.

Nevertheless, the struggle for racial justice, while typically carried out in a local or national context, was an international movement, and was very much a part of the Cold War and

92 Dudziak (2000), 159.
“The Sixties.” While scholars have studied the globality of the struggle of African Americans, I have instead focused on what was occurring in the PRC, behind the so-called “bamboo curtain.” What one realizes immediately is that, despite China’s supposed isolation during this period, there was deep and abiding fascination with matters of racial justice in both the United States and Africa. Chinese officials and students were attuned to developments in both areas, and the permutations of anti-colonialism and the civil rights struggle were felt deeply in the PRC.

Indeed, the issue of racial justice in the 1960s resonated like few other international issues in the PRC. The plight of Africans and African Americans became a central part of the global discourse developed in the PRC, and, along with the war in Vietnam, was most often evoked to contextualize the global situation and frame the potential for international revolution. African revolution and the African American struggle were more than fetishized in China. Rather they became part of a new ideological paradigm that manifested itself in Chinese society in the 1960s, precipitated largely by the Sino-Soviet split. After the Soviet Union supposedly abandoned communism in favor of stability and peaceful co-existence, China was forced to look elsewhere for revolutionary partnership. Officials believed that the activists and revolutionaries confronting Western racism could serve as this new ally. The African and African American experience were quite easily and naturally incorporated into China’s global narratives, perhaps more easily than any other trope aside from the war in Vietnam. Racism in America and the battle against imperialism in Africa demonstrated authoritatively that Western democracy was a sham.

And yet, neither the Black Panthers, the Red Guard Party of the United States, nor Chinese officials could escape the tendency to homogenize, essentialize, and use familiar codes to frame and contextualize race and international revolution. This tendency comes through most
clearly in China, where the international struggle for racial equality was also used as a tool to
demonstrate the importance of Chinese politics and the global significance of Mao Zedong
Thought. We should not, however, view the Chinese narrative as purely Machiavellian, nor as a
concerted effort to manipulate the international situation to the advantage of the PRC. Global
narratives were created and implemented in the PRC as they are in every country, sometimes so
as to make global events less daunting and more palatable for local and national consumption.

The issue of race demonstrates that global narratives are political and cultural products;
their creation and implementation is affected by a vast array of local and national cultural
phenomena and is mediated by familiar codes and symbols. Innumerable Africa’s existed around
the world in the 1960s, each of which was the creation of specific countries that used familiar
signifiers to understand race and global revolution. In China, Africa was constructed via the
means of Maoist culture and was specific to the Chinese political experience. Moreover, contact
with foreigners only went so far in informing ideas of race and inequality; what was often more
important was the means through which foreign events were framed and packaged into familiar
narratives. Imagination took precedent over contact. The process of creating these narratives,
however, was neither linear nor orderly. What developed instead was a frenetic dialogue among
disparate communities in China and the United States that relied on familiar codes to understand
the world. The result was a “network of signifiers” that were “reconfigurations of other cultural
signs” in and of themselves. In the end, narratives of race, inequality, and discrimination fit
perfectly into the political ideology of the 1960s, and helped globalize Mao’s cult of personality,

93 Alexander C.Y. Huang, Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange (New York: Columbia
University Press, 2009), 34. Although Huang’s study neither discusses Chinese politics of this era, nor focuses on
racial issues, the themes of his work overlap quite prominently with this study. Huang focuses primarily on the way
in which cultures traverse national borders, and how culture is re-packaged and internalized into national and local
settings. The same phenomenon is described here.
transform the Cultural Revolution into an international event, and supposedly provided a model for national liberation in Africa, America, and around the world.
Chapter 4

Globalizing Rhetoric: Text and Language in the Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution was a campaign conducted through violence and through language. Rhetoric was the fuel that animated the Cultural Revolution, helping to conceive, initiate, and propagate the movement. CCP officials were tempered in the fire of rhetorical critique, developing distinctive methods of criticizing their enemies by evoking Mao Zedong. Students followed suit, using language as a weapon to cut down specific targets, to promote their own agendas, and as a means to gain tactical advantages over opposing student organizations. This rhetoric was employed with such intensity that it is small wonder that the Cultural Revolution became so violent. Scholars have noted that official rhetoric, and especially Cultural Revolution propaganda, was full of “enthusiasm and excess,” the abundance of which overwhelmed the senses. Indeed, during the Cultural Revolution it was impossible to escape either Red Guard or official rhetoric, which was confrontational, demanding, and, as two scholars put it, quite frankly “rude.” The loftiest of accolades praising the accomplishments of Mao Zedong were just as common as the basest of language, and terms such as “bastard,” “son of a bitch,” and “go to hell” populated the everyday discourse of the Cultural Revolution. Overall, words had tremendous power during the Cultural Revolution, and deploying the language of this period was a means of both attack and self-preservation. As Paul Clark notes,

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3 Ibid., 225.
“the inflation of rhetoric and language reached unprecedented heights in the Cultural Revolution. Everything… could be presented as part of some vast, all-encompassing, and life-or-death struggle between good and evil.”

This chapter focuses on how the global symbols infiltrated and impacted the Cultural Revolution’s rhetoric and how global narratives were deployed during this period. This approach illuminates various facets of the Cultural Revolution that have previously gone unnoticed. First, I explore the linkages of Cultural Revolution rhetoric to the PRC’s past, as well as the novel dimensions of this rhetoric. A good portion of Red Guard rhetoric relied on historical tropes, especially those that developed immediately after the founding of the PRC. For example, officials and Chinese students implicitly referred to the Korean War to contextualize American imperialism. Red Guard rhetoric, therefore, was not completely new. However, in this chapter I also highlight certain unique aspects of the Cultural Revolution’s rhetoric. I show that specific key phrases, such as the term “global revolution,” increased dramatically during the Cultural Revolution, and that the term’s use followed the trajectory of the movement. When Cultural Revolution radicalism fell out of favor with the CCP in 1968, for example, the term “global revolution” disappeared from the official press. Furthermore, global developments unique to the late 1960s were incorporated and used in the Cultural Revolution. The French student protest that seized Paris in May, 1968, for example, became a powerful rhetorical symbol during the Cultural Revolution. In other words, ideological developments and international events specific to the late 1960s impinged on the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution, and made aspects of this rhetoric unlike that which was deployed in earlier periods of the PRC.

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Analyzing global narratives also allows for a better understanding of individual Red Guard groups. Red Guard rhetoric was characterized by hyperbolic grandiosity – the tendency among the Red Guards to overemphasize the effect that the Cultural Revolution had on global politics, and the historical importance of their movement. Global narratives also helped illuminate the mythology of certain Red Guard groups and explain how the origin of these groups propelled their identity during the Cultural Revolution. This question of Red Guard identity has long been a favorite subject of scholars, who have focused a great deal on the factionalism that plagued students during the Cultural Revolution. Rather than take up this question of factionalism, I focus on how individual Red Guard groups interpreted international developments and global narratives. These interpretations tended to cut across factional lines and subvert any neat categorization. Following the multiple strands of global narratives elucidates what motivated and propelled individual Red Guard groups and how they saw themselves as part of a larger international revolution.

Finally, studying the global rhetoric of this period offers one explanation as to why the Cultural Revolution became so violent, and why the campaign nearly consumed Chinese society. Global narratives and the Cultural Revolution were perfect bedfellows. The language deployed during this period portrayed a political campaign that was a matter of life-or-death. Establishing such high-stakes required a global platform that was much larger than the Chinese state itself. Claiming that the fate of the world hung in the balance, which officials and Red Guards did repeatedly during the Cultural Revolution, increased the urgency of this campaign, and was one reason Chinese students sprung into action. In other words, global narratives were a powerful

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and potent tool during the Cultural Revolution, and were used to reinforce and ratchet-up the intensity of this political campaign. These global narratives also released a tremendous amount of energy that had been building since the early 1960s. Following the Sino-Soviet split, the CCP had made repeated claims that China now represented the apex of socialist modernity. The Cultural Revolution was the perfect opportunity to back up these claims with action, and necessitated the use of global narratives. This universality made mass violence an acceptable means of achieving the movement’s goals.

The Changing Rhetoric of the People’s Republic of China

The origins of certain aspects of Cultural Revolution rhetoric can be traced directly to the Sino-Soviet split. Global narratives became crucial to the state’s effort to reclassify the world and reorient China’s worldview following the breakdown in relations between the two countries. The Red Guards deployed many of these familiar tactics, which I have discussed in earlier chapters. Namely, they reinterpreted and often homogenized foreign events so as to make them more easily accessible to their readership. Furthermore, they took actual contact with foreign revolutionaries – who often visited China during the Cultural Revolution – and extrapolated their support to include larger groups of people. Support from a single African American activist, for example, was taken as evidence that all African Americans were behind the Cultural Revolution. This was a tactic that was first used by the Chinese state in the early 1960s to demonstrate that Leftists around the world supported the PRC rather than the Soviet Union.

And yet, despite these familiar tactics, there were significant differences in how China engaged with the world after the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. A number of new phrases and mentalities began to appear in the Chinese press during the Cultural Revolution, most of which conveyed the sense that China was at the center of a larger global movement to
overthrow capitalism. The establishment of this new rhetorical repertoire began to alter the use of global narratives in the PRC. This is perhaps best illustrated by tracking the use of the term “global revolution” (世界革命) in the Chinese press. As the tables below suggest, two major newspapers – People’s Daily and People’s Liberation Army Daily – began to use the term with greater consistency in 1966. Before that, the term was not widely used in the Chinese press and consistently remained out of the Chinese vocabulary even during some of the radical campaigns of the late 1950s.

The vicissitudes of this term’s use in the Chinese press also reflects the general trajectory of the Cultural Revolution. In the summer of 1966, students hung the country’s first big character poster at Beijing University (and unofficially launched the Cultural Revolution). As the tables reflect, this was the first time that the term “global revolution” came into widespread use. The use of the term “global revolution” reached a peak soon after the movement began in 1967, which was arguably the most radical and chaotic year of the movement. Two major developments in 1967 stoked this radicalism. The first was the January Power Seizure, in which students and workers in Shanghai overthrew the Shanghai Municipal Government and replaced it with a revolutionary committee.6 Second, fighting between radical Red Guard factions and the People’s Liberation Army broke out in Wuhan in 1967. These two sides vied for control of Wuhan throughout the summer. After a zealous army general overstepped his authority and actually sanctioned the kidnapping of a high-ranking member of the CCP in Wuhan, the army was criticized, and the Leftist students were lauded. Following the incident, Mao and his allies (especially Jiang Qing) continued to declare that China should arm the left and that the students

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6 Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun discuss how “subcultures of opposition” surprised and sometimes even overwhelmed power structures in certain areas in China. See: Elizabeth Perry & Li Xun Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 67.
had a right to use violence to defend themselves. The result was that China descended further into chaos.\(^7\)

The peak of radicalism during the Cultural Revolution coincided with the highest use of the term “global revolution” in the Chinese press. Beginning in 1968, however, the use of the term declined precipitously until it fell out of favor in 1971. During these years, Mao and the central government reasserted control over the Cultural Revolution, ended the student movement, and cut down the radicalism that had proliferated in 1966 and 1967. Beyond Beijing’s attempt to clamp down on radicalism, two events effectively excised the term global revolution from the Chinese vocabulary: in 1971 Lin Biao was branded a traitor and died in a plane crash; and in 1972 President Nixon visited China and the country embarked on a policy of rapprochement with the United States.

The Cultural Revolution of 1966 and 1967 differed tremendously from the Cultural Revolution between 1968 and 1972. During these years, the party promoted an orderly Cultural Revolution that largely eschewed radicalism and revolution. In 1968, Mao made a crucial decision to end the urban student movement in China and to send many of China’s students to the countryside. He also sent worker propaganda teams to occupy China’s campuses, which were tasked with controlling the Red Guards and restoring order. Mao was infuriated when students at Tsinghua University attempted to resist these teams and killed several factory workers on the university campus. Following this incident Mao summoned many of the leading Red Guards to a meeting and informed them that he was “dispersing” the Red Guards and sending them into the countryside.\(^8\) Although this ended much of the chaos on China’s campuses and in the largest cities, the killings did not abate. Instead, the Cultural Revolution was now characterized by

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\(^7\) MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006), 199 – 220.  
\(^8\) MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006), 247 - 252.
increasing factionalism, internecine violence, and a more directed and centralized movement on the ground. The radicalism that had propelled the student movement in 1966 and 1967 was now overtaken by the controlling hand of the CCP.

The factionalism that gripped the CCP climaxed in 1971, when Lin Biao was accused of trying to overthrow Mao Zedong and assert himself as China’s new leader. Lin quickly attempted to flee the country, but died in a plane crash. The shock of Lin Biao’s supposed treachery and death was a major blow to the Cultural Revolution. For the first years of the Cultural Revolution Lin had been promoted as a true revolutionary and as Mao’s successor. Following his death, however, Lin was vilified as a reactionary, a capitalist, and as harboring “feudalistic thoughts.” The impact that Lin Biao had on the idea of global revolution is perhaps most evident in PLA Daily. Lin was, after all, the head of the People’s Liberation Army. Following his death, the public organ of the army completely stopped running articles about global revolution. Order was prized over radicalism and revolution. While the campaign against Lin Biao continued after 1971, China’s foreign policy also began to shift. In 1972, following years of secret talks, President Nixon visited Beijing and launched a new era of relations between China and the United States. America, which had been presented as China’s primary enemy and as an evil imperialist power, was now working closely with the Chinese government to countervail Soviet power. The years 1968 to 1972 therefore represented a transition for the PRC, despite the fact that the Cultural Revolution did not officially end until 1976. As radicalism declined in China, and as the state continued to push for centralization and stability over the upheaval that characterized the first two years of the Cultural Revolution, the use of the term global revolution all but vanished from the official Chinese press. Global revolution, as it turned out, was simply a rhetoric tool and a powerful code, used to raise the stakes of the Cultural
Revolution. When the term’s usefulness evaporated, it was discarded, and a new reality, in which the students were in the countryside, Lin Biao was a traitor, and the United States was no longer China’s biggest enemy, took hold and guided Chinese society.

‘Global Revolution (世界革命)’ appearances in headlines of People’s Daily

<table>
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9 The numbers represented in the graph reflect the times in which the term ‘global revolution’ appeared in a headline in People’s Daily, the official state newspaper of the PRC. Because of the monolithic influence of the press, its appearance suggests that this term was becoming more commonplace in Chinese society after 1966. This is also reflected in Red Guard newspaper, which often used the term ‘revolutionary people of the world’ (世界革命人民). Research for this particular graph was conducted using the Renmin University Library database, and was confirmed in a second search of the Harvard-Yenching Library database.
The Global Cultural Revolution

The rise and decline of the term global revolution in the official press was also reflected in many Red Guard newspapers. While these newspapers used the specific term “global revolution” to varying degrees, what came through in countless articles was a profound sense of global mission. This globality was often expressed through rhetoric and was most apparent in the various ways that the Red Guards used global narratives to frame the Cultural Revolution.

10 Although both charts remain relatively consistent, the term “global revolution” does appear again with greater frequency in 1976 and 1977, after years of absence. The term appeared in articles commemorating the life of Mao Zedong, who died in 1976. In these articles Mao was portrayed as a revolutionary leader who cared deeply about global revolution, particularly in the Third World. When Deng Xiaoping rose to power the term once again disappeared from the Chinese press.
Analyzing this rhetoric is helpful not just in illuminating how the Cultural Revolution was understood among China’s young people, but also in how the Red Guards conceptualized themselves and their specific role within the broader global revolution. Studying this rhetoric also tells us a good deal about the origin stories of these Red Guard groups, and how they understood themselves in the context of the Cultural Revolution. These global narratives cut across factional categories within the Red Guard movement. Infamous groups like Tsinghua University’s Jinggangshan and Beijing University’s New Beida were both considered to be part of the rebel faction. However, they used global narratives in different ways. Jinggangshan came into being in the fiery heat of criticism and battle, first with the work teams at Tsinghua University, then against China’s President Liu Shaoqi and his wife Wang Guangmei.11 Jinggangshan gained national recognition for being implacable critics of certain CCP officials. Reading their newspaper, one finds scant mention of global events. Rather, Jinggangshan sustained itself as one of the first groups to criticize Liu Shaoqi. The group simply had no need for internationalism. Other groups, such as New Beida, relied on global narratives to establish their authority within the Cultural Revolution. New Beida was composed of Beijing University students who coalesced around the person of Nie Yuanzi. Nie herself practically set off the Cultural Revolution when she hung China’s first big-character poster criticizing the president of Beijing University. This afforded New Beida tremendous power and prestige, and they were even recognized by Mao Zedong. For the next several years, the group maintained this prestige through a variety of different tactics, including using global narratives. Specifically, the group contextualized Nie’s big-character poster within a global framework. It was reported that radicals

and revolutionaries from around the world were heavily influenced by Nie’s actions. Each newspaper article that reinforced the international importance of the Cultural Revolution further legitimized a group like New Beida, who also claimed that their actions had altered the course of human history. Other groups, such as the Foreign Ministry Red Guards, were specifically established to deal with the problem of foreign affairs. Of all the Red Guard groups discussed here, the Foreign Ministry students were the most likely to refer to specific global events, especially in the Third World. Each of these groups were part of China’s rebel faction. Nevertheless, studying their rhetoric demonstrates that global narratives were malleable during the Cultural Revolution, and could be used to either legitimize a group, or to demonstrate its importance in world history. Such usages did not necessarily conform to factional groups.

I have already referred to Red Guard rhetoric as hyperbolic and grandiose. Red Guard groups often imbued their rhetoric with a bombast that reinforced the Cultural Revolution’s importance. There were few greater tools used in the production of this bombastic rhetoric than global symbols. The globe cued observers to the supposed significance and scale of the Red Guard movement, provided a platform that was adaptable to the domestic politics of the Cultural Revolution, and proved useful in mapping the international significance of the movement. For example, the inaugural edition of the Beijing No. 2 Railroad Middle School’s Red Guard newspaper carried a headline that boldly declared, “We are the hope for the liberation of all mankind.” The article continued: “We are hope! Chinese revolutionaries have all pinned their hopes to us, the world has pinned the liberation of mankind to us.”¹² Other Red Guard organizations claimed ownership of the new world, which the Cultural Revolution sought to engender. Students at the Beijing Telecommunications Institute declared, “We proletarian

revolutionaries are the inheritors of the new world.”13 And New Beida urged its readers to do more than limit themselves to China.14 Early on, the newspaper declared that students must “become the critics of the entire world, and the constructors and protectors of a new society.”15

Nie Yuanzi earned her reputation on May 25, 1966 after she hung a big-character poster criticizing Beijing University’s president.16 The poster spawned countless mimics, and soon students everywhere were hanging their own. When Mao encouraged all Chinese people to read Nie’s writing, her Red Guard group became instantly famous. New Beida clung to this fame throughout the Cultural Revolution, referencing China’s first big-character poster repeatedly in order to stake out its authority on Beijing University’s campus.17 Global narratives eventually became imperative to this case. In May 1968 the paper recognized the two-year anniversary of Nie’s actions in an article entitled “Long Live the Victory of Mankind’s First Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.” According to the paper, “China’s Cultural Revolution has had a tremendous impact, and has spread all over the world. The lofty flame of the Cultural Revolution has illuminated all of the blood spilled by the heroes and heroines of the Paris Commune.”18 The image of the Paris Commune was common during the Cultural Revolution, used as a temporal mooring to place the Cultural Revolution in a broader historical continuum.19

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14 Walder (2009), 209.
16 Although Nie was hailed as a hero, it’s clear that she was prompted to write her poster by CCP officials close to Mao, including Kang Sheng. See: MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006), 55.
17 By 1967, Beijing’s Red Guards had essentially split into two factions: one, called the ‘Heaven’ faction, was led by groups like Jinggangshan, New Beida, and the Red Guard groups at the Beijing Aeronautical Instituted. They were opposed by the ‘Earth’ faction, led by the Beijing Geological Red Guard group. The ‘Earth’ faction mainly opposed the leadership of the Heaven group, and chafed at their monopoly of power. See: Walder (2009), 217-222.
contended that Nie’s big-character poster altered the course of human history in much the same manner as the Paris Commune changed 19th century history.

The group also used a global context to demonstrate the broad impact that the Cultural Revolution and their Red Guard group supposedly had throughout the world. New Beida was not alone in employing such global language. The Red Guard group from the Beijing Mining Institute published a similar article commemorating the May 1 Worker’s Holiday. According to its newspaper, “The current victory of our motherland’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is the greatest event in the history of mankind. This revolution will have an important impact on the history of China, the history of the international Communist movement, and the history of the world.”

This grandiose rhetoric often utilized global narratives to illustrate the importance of the Cultural Revolution. However, this rhetoric was not solely generated by the Red Guards, nor did it only emerge when the Cultural Revolution began. The CCP played a major role in shaping Red Guard rhetoric. Once again, propaganda proved to be an effective means of communicating this internationalism. For example, Figure 4.1, below, was first published in People’s Daily in September 1968; captions printed next to various countries depict the state of the global revolution. The orientation of the map, with China at the center and most of the Third World prominently featured, reinforces the hierarchy of global revolution. The caption at the top of the figure reads, “A map of the excellent situation in the world.” Figure 4.2 is perhaps the clearest image of the Red Guards existing in both a Chinese and international space. The caption of this image reads, “Our Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is shaking the entire world.” Like the propaganda posters discussed in earlier chapters, this image uses familiar tropes from Chinese

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20 The group at the Beijing Mining Institute was also part of the ‘Heaven’ faction. See Walder (2009), 220.
politics. At the center of the poster are four people striking at various villains. These villains are respectively labeled imperialism, revisionism, capitalism, and feudalism. Each of the four aggressors represents one of the heroic classes of the Cultural Revolution: Red Guard students, soldiers, farmers and workers. By interjecting the codes of the Cultural Revolution into international politics and literally removing the border of the Chinese state, the CCP produced global propaganda that was easily accessible. Moreover, by depicting the Cultural Revolution as global, more Red Guards were able to think of themselves as international actors, thereby expanding the meaning of Chinese politics.

Figure 4.1

Figure 4.2

Images were not the only way that the CCP attempted to convey globality to the Red Guards. The official press often evoked the idea of the global revolution and connected the Cultural Revolution and the Red Guard movement to broader international events. Officials similarly stressed the idea that the Red Guards’ actions had broader international implications. In a speech delivered in March 1967, Chen Boda, one of the leaders of the Cultural Revolution Small Group, and an ally of Jiang Qing, declared, “Victory [in the Cultural Revolution], the final victory, belongs to us, it belongs to you, it belong to everyone. The final victory belongs to the entire world.” On June 17, 1966, in the first days of the Cultural Revolution, Foreign Minister Chen Yi also delivered a speech to students in which he declared that, “he [the revolutionary] will strive for the victory of world revolution. It is our obligation to internationalism to build up

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23 Woguo wuchan jijie wenhuadageming zhenhan quan shijie, Chinese Cultural Revolution Papers, University of Michigan, ccs0014.
our strength.‖\textsuperscript{25} Ironically, in 1968, the Red Guards accused Chen Yi of subverting global revolution and giving comfort to imperialist enemies.

Chen Boda and Chen Yi were not alone in expressing such an international outlook. \textit{People’s Daily} was often filled with articles conflating the Cultural Revolution and foreign events. Headlines such as “Revolutionary People around the World are Cheering the Cultural Revolution” were common and created a sense of not only the importance of the Cultural Revolution but the international support the movement supposedly enjoyed.\textsuperscript{26} Such sentiments were often mapped via familiar Chinese codes and symbols. For example, the CCP transformed revolutionary heroes into global figures. These models, who often sacrificed themselves for the communist cause, were powerful figures in PRC society and were held up as examples for the Chinese people to follow.\textsuperscript{27} Perhaps the most famous of these models was Lei Feng, a soldier in the People’s Liberation Army who died a premature death in 1962. Following Lei’s death, the CCP published his journal, in which he enthused profusely about the PRC, the CCP, and Mao Zedong. Eventually a national propaganda campaign was launched that focused on Lei’s good deeds while serving in the army. The campaign, however, was primarily used to bolster Mao’s growing cult of personality.\textsuperscript{28}

Although Lei was the most famous revolutionary hero, many others served as communist models. During the Cultural Revolution, Cai Yongxiang was memorialized as one such revolutionary hero. On October 10, 1966, Cai, who was also a member of the People’s Liberation Army, was guarding a bridge over the Qiantang River. As a full train of Red Guards

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Quoted in: Ma (2004), 13.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} “Yi chang jueding shijie geming qiantu de zhongda zhanyi, geguo geming renmin huanhu zhongguo wuchanjieji wenhuadageming,” \textit{Renmin Ribao} (February 9, 1967).
  \item \textsuperscript{28} MacFarquhar (1997), 338 – 339.
\end{itemize}
approached the bridge, Cai noticed a log lying on the tracks. He managed to remove the log – saving all those on board – but was struck by the train and died. Following his death, Cai was memorialized in Zhejiang and made into a national hero.29 His martyrdom was quickly instilled with international significance. In February 1967, People’s Daily published an article with the headline, “Foreign Friends Warmly Praise Cai Yongxiang as a Great Example of a Global Revolutionary.”30 According to the article, after hearing the details of Cai’s stories, all foreigners agreed that “his heart was for revolution, his heart was for the people, he was fearless in the face of danger, and he courageously sacrificed his body.”31 The article goes on to quote foreign friends from Africa, Latin America, Albania, Romania, and Mali. Each of those quoted expressed a similar sentiment of being awed and motivated by Cai’s sacrifice. Each speaker furthermore represented a familiar geographical area, and all came from countries that were less friendly toward the Soviet Union. Globalizing Cai, then, was a two-pronged task that involved introducing his story to foreign friends as well as making their reaction accessible and easily consumed by the Chinese readership. Both tasks were equally important, and made it seem as if the heroes of the Cultural Revolution were being recognized all over the world.

The CCP and the Red Guards also transformed familiar vocabulary and common phrases into global triggers. These triggers called to mind the Cultural Revolution’s ostensible internationalism. From the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, Mao declared that the Red Guards were China’s new “vanguard” (先锋), a concept that played an integral part in the development of the student movement, as well as the students’ understanding of both Chinese

29 In 1967, the People’s Liberation Army publishing house put out a book commemorating Cai and his dedication to the Communist cause. Cai Yongxiang, Yi xin wei gong de gongchan zhuyi zhanshi Cai Yongxiang. (Beijing: Jiefang jun wenyi she, 1967).
31 This passage uses several Chinese idioms – called chengyus – to convey Cai’s heroism and his sacrifice. Although the article is meant to convey how foreigners felt about Cai’s actions, it still uses familiar Chinese terminology. This made foreigner sentiments more accessible and more Chinese.
politics and their place in the wider world. The very foundation of the Cultural Revolution was imbued with the idea of a youthful vanguard – Mao’s revolutionary successors – tearing down the stultified Communist Party and instilling a new revolutionary momentum in China. Both the Red Guards and the CCP quickly attempted to globalize this idea – Chinese students became the vanguard in the PRC, and around the world. According to People’s Daily, “many revolutionaries have already pointed out that ‘China has become the vanguard of all revolutionaries around the world;’ and the revolutionary Chinese people ‘have overcome and buried the powerful force of imperialism, and are the strongest force [in the world].’”

This idea was reaffirmed by friendly foreign sources in both the West and the Third World. People’s Daily assiduously recorded any foreign support of the Red Guards and was sure to reprint these accolades in their newspaper. When the Belgium Communist Party passed a resolution expressing solidarity with the Red Guards, for example, People’s Daily printed an article that declared, “the Chinese Red Guards are the vanguard of the world’s revolutionary youth.”

The paper did not limit itself to the Red Guards. People’s Daily also took to publishing letters from foreigners expressing their support for the Cultural Revolution, a tactic that was mimicked by the Red Guards, especially when it came to anti-imperialism and the Third World. The newspaper reprinted one letter from an Albanian friend in which the writer stated, “we see that the Red Guards are the most lovable people (最爱的人) and that they are the vanguard of the revolution.” Significantly, this letter appeared in an article entitled, “The Red Guards are the Hope of the World’s Revolutionary People,” a phrase that was directly co-opted by Red Guard

32 “Yi chang jueding shijie geming qiantu de zhongda zhanyi, geguo geming renmin huanhu zhongguo wuchanjieji wenhuadageming,” Renmin Ribao (February 9, 1967).
33 “Bi gong qingnian yundong relie zanyang woguo wenhua dageming,” Renmin Ribao (October 6, 1966).
groups and used in their own newspapers. The article concluded authoritatively by quoting a Spanish revolutionary: “the Red Guards are the modern-day revolutionary vanguard, and they are an example to all of Europe.” The Red Guards themselves sometimes mimicked this tactic. In 1967, the Red Guard group at China’s Foreign Ministry pointed out how people in Europe envied China. The group reprinted a letter from an English writer, which declared, “You young people are together with Chairman Mao, and this makes you very fortunate. Our country is so small, and we cannot unite. China’s population is so large, but you can unite so that every person is the same.”

Despite these claims, and Albania’s place in Chinese politics, Europe remained on the periphery of the Red Guards’ worldview during the Cultural Revolution. The one exception to this was France. The student activism that nearly paralyzed the French government in May 1968, captivated the Chinese press and was quickly incorporated into the Cultural Revolution’s rhetoric. This also revived interest in the Paris Commune, which played an important role in the Cultural Revolution and was used as a distinctive rhetorical trope deployed to demonstrate the historical significance of the movement.

The image of the Paris Commune fit well with the ideology of the Cultural Revolution, especially in its early years. This was a relatively new phenomenon; despite its popularity in the

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34 “Hongweibing shi shijie geming renmin de xiwang que guo renmin he xinglun relei huanhu hongweibing zuo dehao, gan dehao,” Renmin Ribao, January 15, 1967.
37 China was not alone in seeing Europe as existing on the margins of 1960s activism. Indeed, the Naxalites similarly treated European student movements as an echo of the more massive and much more important Third World Liberation movement. For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon, see: Avishek Ganguly, “Politics and Periodicals in the 1960s: Reading around the ‘Naxalite Movement,’” in Christiansen and Scarlett (2012).
38 For a discussion of the Paris student movement, see Ross (2002).
Cultural Revolution, the Commune itself was not a traditional Maoist symbol, and only rose to prominence in the 1960s. This was partially because of Marx’s interpretation of the Paris Commune. His depiction of the Commune as fundamentally anti-bureaucratic, and as a model for the self-organizing impulses of the proletariat, fit perfectly with the Cultural Revolution. The “revolutionary zeal” of the Paris Commune furthermore conformed with the need to breathe new life into the Chinese Communist Party. The image of the Paris Commune only became more important in February 1967, when students and workers established their own communes, first in Shanghai and then in Beijing. These two communes were initially praised by Mao and his colleagues and often compared to the Paris Commune. However, in the weeks to come, the undisciplined and extremely democratic nature of the communes proved incommensurate with Leninist party ideals. The idea of the commune was quickly discarded in favor of revolutionary committees, which were populated by dedicated Communist cadres. With the deaths of the Shanghai and Beijing Communes the Paris Commune was temporarily discarded as a trope.

The Paris Commune reappeared in the Chinese press in May 1968. When students in Paris took to the streets and effectively paralyzed the French capital, the Chinese press treated the moment as a reawakening of the spirit of the Paris Commune, over which the CCP claimed ownership. In this instance, employing the Paris Commune was an effective way of codifying and incorporating events in France into Chinese politics. The events in Paris were often referred

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40 Ibid., 490.
42 For a discussion of events in Shanghai, see: Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun, Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 149-151.
to as the “continuation of the traditional revolutionary spirit of the Paris Communes.”\footnote{“Jianjue zhichi faguo he ouzhou, beimei geguo renmin de zhengyi douzheng,” Renmin Ribao (May 23, 1968).} This message was also conveyed through the various marches and demonstrations held throughout China in May and June 1968, in support of the French student movement. According to one article in People’s Daily demonstrators at these marches would often shout, “Down with American imperialism! Down with Soviet revisionism! Down with the world’s reactionaries! Long live the traditional revolutionary spirit of the Paris Commune!”\footnote{“Shoudu wushiwan gongren, hongweibing, geming quanzhong daweishi zhichi faguo he ouzhou, beimeiguo geguo renmin zhengyi douzheng,” Renmin Ribao (May 22, 1966).} As events in Paris became more heated and the French police confronted the students, the Chinese press once again invoked the Paris Communes to demonstrate the seriousness of the situation as well as the heroism of the French students. According to one article published on May 25, “the French youth used the precedent of the Paris Commune to once again construct heavy barricades along the Boulevard Saint-Michel and the Boulevard Saint-Germain, and then engaged in a heroic struggle with the heavily armored police and soldiers.”\footnote{Bagongrenshu zhan faguo quanguo renkou de wufenzhiyi, gongren zhanjingle quanguo yiban yishang de gongkuang qi ye,” Renmin Ribao (May 25, 1968).}

This fixation on the Paris Commune increased the importance of events in France, and made it easier to incorporate Parisian students into the Cultural Revolution. Red Guards were also attuned to what was happening in France, particularly after Mao issued a statement of support for the French students. These groups often used the language of the CCP to situate French “youth” within a broader revolutionary spectrum. This process was partially guided by the events of May 1968; France and China, however, also enjoyed a historical relationship, and Maoism had a strong following in France.\footnote{Wolin (2008).} In late May 1968, millions of people rallied in
Tiananmen Square and around the country to show their support for Parisian students. This seeming solidarity further historicized and globalized the Cultural Revolution, portraying the French movement as one example of the influence that Chinese politics had around the world. Tsinghua University’s Jinggangshan, for example, wrote that “the rising storm of the Western European and North American student movements especially stems from the influence of the Red Guard movement. This is also the result of the dissemination of Mao Zedong Thought in the world.” Their counterparts at the Beijing Mining Institute – the Red Guard group called Dongfang Hong – similarly declared that “the student and worker strike in France and the deep influence of China’s Cultural Revolution cannot be separated (分不开的).”

Nie Yuanzi’s Red Guard group at Beijing University even went so far as to dispatch a letter of support to the French students. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of New Beida’s letter was the group’s ability to contextualize the French student movement in terms familiar to the Cultural Revolution and Chinese politics. The French movement was seen as part of a larger Third World movement, deeply opposed to imperialism and revisionism. While anti-imperialism was certainly a hallmark of the French student movement, the situation in Paris was treated as simply a continuation of the broader Third World struggle. In its letter, New Beida expressed support and encouragement for the French students. Later in the letter, however, the Red Guard group states, “Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, and all suppressed people and minorities of the

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48 This was not only a political relationship. Many Chinese students read French philosophy during the 1960s. Sartre, for example, was particularly popular in China during the 1960s. Sartre was also highly popular in the West, and his writings influence many students in Europe and the United States. This made it easier for students to recognize the revolutionary potential of the French people. For more, see Paul Clark. The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History. (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2008), 228.

49 “Zhichi xi’ou bei mei gongren xuesheng zhengyi douzheng de shengming” Jinggangshan (May 24, 1968) in Zhou Yuan (ed.) Xin bian hong wei bing zi liao, Part I (Oakton, VA: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 1999), 4186. At the time, Paris was paralyzed by a large worker and student strike, and it appeared that the DeGaulle government was on the verge of collapse.

50 “Quan yuan wuchang jieji geming pai he geming shisheng yuanrong jianjue zhichi faguo gongren xuesheng zhengyi douzheng” Dong Fang Hong, May 28, 1968 in Zhou (1999), 1363.
world fighting for liberation, along with European and American workers and students, are like a noose, firmly wrapped around the necks of American imperialism and its accomplices. The day of American imperialism’s final collapse is not far away.‖ The letter also referenced French history. In the final lines, New Beida wrote, “You (French students) have a luminous revolutionary history. Early in 1871, you overthrew the reactionary government, and established the Proletarian Paris Commune. Today, your struggle has once again struck a devastating blow against the reactionary government of Paris.” By positioning the French student movement as one part of Third World liberation, and by situating the students within the context of the Paris Commune (whose spirit resided in the Cultural Revolution), New Beida made the events of Mai ’68 their own.

Taken together, this rhetoric exemplifies a protracted campaign to historicize, globalize, and contextualize the events of the Cultural Revolution. By using familiar Chinese tropes – the revolutionary spirit of the Paris Commune, the idea of a new global vanguard, familiar imagery, and revolutionary martyrs – Chinese students and officials were able to create a legible map of the international revolutionary situation that was both easily internalized and reproduced. This rhetoric also demonstrates the tendency to synthesize complex world events and rearrange them with an attendant vocabulary that was recognizable and consumable. This phenomenon came to bear in particularly important ways when discussing anti-imperialism and the position of the Third World in the Cultural Revolution. It was here in which the CCP and Red Guards most easily co-opted global narratives and broadcast Chinese politics into an imagined global space. The aim of this phenomenon was to increase the supposed importance of the Cultural Revolution. By making it appear that the sinews of the Cultural Revolution extended around the world, the Red Guards bolstered their own claims that they were the true revolutionary vanguard and the

inheritors of a reinvigorated Communist Party. Imagining the Cultural Revolution’s importance in the world also made the CCP’s claim to socialist modernity real and true. This was the fullest expression of China’s new worldview and resounding confirmation that the PRC had displaced the Soviet Union.

Red Guards and Anti-Imperialism

Despite the importance of the global rhetoric discussed above, the struggle for Third World revolution made the largest impact in China. Indeed, even when discussing European student movements, Red Guard groups often situated these movements within the Third World liberation struggle. Examining the Third World as a loosely based imagined body illuminates how anti-imperialism and tropes of Third World solidarity became an integral rhetorical strain during the Cultural Revolution. The Third World, however, was also portrayed within a clear global hierarchy, which often elevated the PRC to the figurative head of revolution in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Such a hierarchal and homogenizing approach to the Third World spawned a paternalistic rhetoric that permeated the imagination of these three continents. China was in league with the Third World, but only as a shining example of how to free oneself from the yoke of imperialism and revisionism. If the Third World wanted to actually liberate itself, the formula was simple: use Mao Zedong Thought and enact the politics of the Cultural Revolution. Solidarity thus became a one-way dialogue; China acted as instructor rather than revolutionary partner.

52 Throughout this chapter, I have used the term “Third World” as shorthand for Asia, Africa and Latin America. Although the term has fallen out of favor with many scholars today, its currency in the 1960s cannot be underestimated. During the time of the Cultural Revolution, the Third World actually meant something. It was used to describe a loose collective of non-aligned countries who had suffered under colonialism and had rejected the influence of the United States and Soviet Union. It was not intended as a hierarchical judgment. Although the term is rarely seen today, I use it here to preserve a historical disposition and capture the spirit that existed in many Third World countries during the 1960s. For more, see Christiansen and Scarlett (2012).
As with many other events during the Cultural Revolution, the state manipulated and influenced the students’ engagement with the Third World. Chinese officials and elite organizations also co-opted the Third World to promote their own agendas during the Cultural Revolution and to criticize foreign countries, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union. This had a trickle-down effect; students, adopted the language and the affectations of these officials. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the Foreign Ministry took the lead in promoting Maoism and global revolution in the Third World. This quickly became a project that involved the entire party. At the Eleventh Plenum of the CCP, which took place from August 1 to August 12, 1966, the party declared that the world was “in a new era of revolution.” Officials at the plenum also reaffirmed Lin Biao’s essay entitled Long Live the People’s Victory, which declared that the Third World had become an important revolutionary area.\textsuperscript{53} People’s Daily published several articles proclaiming Mao’s importance to the Third World revolution.\textsuperscript{54} The newspaper also carried editorials approved by high officials that encouraged students to remain vigilant against imperialism. The Central Cultural Revolution Committee (CCRG) also played a role in shaping the Red Guards’ relationship with the Third World. The CCRG promoted a radical approach to foreign affairs and attempted to manipulate China’s foreign policy during the Cultural Revolution to support activism in the Third World.\textsuperscript{55}

Much of China’s support of the Third World was animated by antagonism toward the Soviet Union. Officials believed that the Third World was China’s natural ally and moved to prevent the growing Soviet influence there.\textsuperscript{56} There was also a genuine ideological disagreement

\textsuperscript{53} Cheng (2006).
\textsuperscript{54} Ma (2004), 153.
\textsuperscript{55} For example, in 1967 Qi Benyu and Guan Feng, two members of the CCRG, encouraged members of the Foreign Ministry to break with Chen Yi and to take a more radical stance toward Burma and Mongolia. See: Ma (2004), 191.
between the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic. Many in the Soviet Union tended to favor gradual development in the Third World under the leadership of the Comintern. Chinese officials rejected this idea wholesale and ostensibly promoted immediate revolution in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This typically meant spreading Maoist propaganda, including Mao’s collected works and other writings that supported Maoist ideology. Except in the case of Vietnam, the CCP offered little more than ideological support of Third World countries. Still, the CCP engaged with Third World liberation, and continually tied the outcome of liberation movements to Chinese politics and the success or failure of the Cultural Revolution.

Chinese students were able to keep abreast of developments in the Third World by reading the Atlas Fighting Papers, a leaflet published in Shanghai. This paper denoted exactly where revolutionary struggles (Palestine, Vietnam, Burma) were taking place. Red Guard groups also used music to demonstrate their support for the Third World. One popular song during the Cultural Revolution was titled “Third World- Let’s Unite and Fight.” Revolutionary fraternity, however, most clearly manifested itself in the students’ tropes of anti-imperialism. The Third World’s struggle against Western influence, including the Soviet Union, was referenced again and again in many student newspapers during the Cultural Revolution. This anti-imperialism was used to project fraternity with the Third World, as well as castigate American aggression, Soviet revisionism, and the ideals of bourgeois capitalism. On the surface, anti-imperialism established a common discourse among the Red Guards and their Third World counterparts.

57 Westad (2005), 6.
By reporting on the Third World’s support of the Cultural Revolution, students also used the international situation to justify domestic actions and reaffirm their own political campaign. For example, during the foundational meeting of a student group called The World’s Revolutionary Proletarians for the Repudiation of Revisionism in Beijing, a Brazilian and a South Africa “freedom fighter” both took the stage to laud the Cultural Revolution. The article describing this meeting, which was published by the Center to Liberate Foreign Affairs, concluded that even though all of those attending the meeting were speaking different languages, they were able to communicate with one another and “convey the fact that Mao was the reddest sun among the world’s revolutionaries.” Red Guard groups also dedicated portions of their newspaper to reporting on events in the Third World. In June 1967, for example, the Center to Liberate Foreign Affairs lamented the invasion of Arab countries by Israeli forces and claimed that this invasion was the work of surging imperialists. According to an article published in the organization’s newspaper, “if Israel did not have American backing, it could not conduct the invasion of Arab countries.” The article went on to blame the predicament in the Middle East on “the armed invasion of the American imperialists and their running dogs.” Student newspapers also often suggested that the Red Guards were solely responsible for the Third World’s revolutionary education.

At times, the Red Guards’ anti-imperialism did move beyond rhetoric, but only when matters specific to China were at hand. In June 1967, during some of the most chaotic and

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60 The race of this South African freedom fighter was not mentioned. While Chinese students during the Cultural Revolution were keenly aware of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, there is little mention in student newspapers of the oppressive South African regime. Usually when South African revolutionaries are mentioned, they are positioned as fighting for Communism, not necessarily to end apartheid.


radical days of the Cultural Revolution, British ownership of Hong Kong became a major issue. After a demonstration in Hong Kong against English rule, a Red Guard newspaper lauded the “patriotic acts of our fellow countrymen in the struggle to resist the English invaders.” The same article went on to mention that demonstrators in Hong Kong were emulating the Cultural Revolution and were even planning to “hold a Beijing style march.” When in August 1967 it became clear that the Chinese government would not support protesters in Hong Kong with anything beyond words, Chinese students and workers began to hold mass demonstrations in front of the British mission in Beijing. These protesters formed into the “Liaison Station of Capital Revolutionary Rebels against Imperialism and Revisionism” and continued to pressure the British government to abdicate its rule in Hong Kong. The protest became frenetic and took on an air of fanaticism. Many workers and students believed that their actions were truly revolutionary. They were bolstered by a People’s Daily editorial published on June 3, 1967 that urged all Chinese to support protesters in Hong Kong. While the party may have called for support for the Hong Kong protesters, it seems clear that officials were taken aback at the fervor of these protesters and their determination to confront the British government over ownership of Hong Kong. Both Zhou Enlai, the vice-chairman of the CCP, and Chen Boda, the head of the CCRG, tried to intervene and disperse the students, but they were largely ignored.

The protest lasted through the summer, until finally on August 20, 1967 students and workers stormed the British embassy and burned part of the building to the ground. These events embody the chasm between rhetorical denunciations of imperialism in the Third World and tangible action on the part of the Red Guards. During the Cultural Revolution, students used their own newspapers vociferously to condemn imperial aggression in the Third World. And yet the

63 Gary Ka-wai Cheung, Hong Kong’s Watershed: The 1967 Riots (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).
64 “Yao jiefang, na qi qiang” Wai shi zhan bao September 18, 1967 in Song (2001), 11881.
Chinese government’s anti-imperialism and support for the people of Hong Kong proved to be illusionary – Zhou Enlai and Chen Boda were both furious with the students and workers who burned the British mission. Zhou and Chen held a meeting on August 22 that excoriated the students’ actions. Zhou declared that burning the embassy was tantamount to anarchy, and that the students and workers were out of control. He also downplayed China’s future support for Hong Kong and pledged that diplomacy rather than militancy would guide foreign affairs for the time being.\(^66\) The events of August 1967 had major repercussions on the Cultural Revolution as well. It seems clear that Mao himself was not happy with the burning of the British mission, and blamed this event on radical officials. Soon thereafter, Mao purged Qi Benyu and Wang Li from the party. Qi and Wang were two of the most vocal leftist officials in the CCP, and their ouster signaled that extremism in foreign affairs would not be tolerated.\(^67\)

This example demonstrates how anti-imperialism became a means through which the Red Guards could target foreign enemies, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as legitimate their own actions. Anti-imperialism and Third World liberation were also used to criticize enemies in the CCP. According to the Red Guards, these enemies were not only responsible for suppressing the masses at home but also had conspired to stifle revolutionary people throughout the world. Much of this criticism, however, was dictated by factions in the CCP. For example, in the campaign against Liu Shaoqi, the CCRG ordered officials in the Foreign Ministry to hand over their archives concerning Liu’s attitudes toward global revolution. The propaganda team of the CCRG was instructed to look through this archive and ascertain whether Liu had suppressed foreign revolutionaries, as he (supposedly) had done in China.\(^68\) Other students in China followed the lead of the CCRG. In September 1967, Red Guards from

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\(^{66}\) Ibid, 205-207.
\(^{67}\) MacFarquhar and Schoenhalts (2006), 229 – 231.
\(^{68}\) Ibid, 212.
the No. 2 Foreign Language Institute reported with a certain amount of disgust that in 1965 Liu Shaoqi told the people of Latin America that, “if American imperialists interfere with you, we cannot go to help you because it is too far.” The article, which was entitled “If You Want Liberation, Pick up a Gun” (要解放, 拿起枪), concluded that this statement proved that Liu Shaoqi had a highly revisionist and anti-revolutionary attitude.

The case against Chen Yi relied even more heavily on global narratives, mainly because Chen Yi was the foreign minister. Chen Yi was one of the more moderate high officials during the Cultural Revolution, and he was eventually criticized by members of the CCRG and by the Chinese students. In a meeting among leading government officials on February 16, 1967, Chen Yi and several others criticized the radicalism of the Cultural Revolution and the actions of the CCRG. After the meeting, Mao learned of Chen’s statement and quickly reprimanded the foreign minister. This incident became known as the February Adverse Current and eventually led to Chen’s downfall. Once again, the students followed Mao’s lead. A new organization called the Liaison Station to Criticize Chen Yi was formed, attracting members from more than 35 different Red Guard units. Chen Yi was accused of being a “flunky of imperialism” and of proposing less hostile relations with the United States. Any mention of Chen Yi’s domestic crimes was almost immediately followed by a criticism of his willingness to capitulate to foreign enemies and tolerate American imperialism. These actions were approved by the CCRG, but some in the government moved to protect Chen Yi. Zhou Enlai particularly criticized the phrase “Down with Chen Yi,” which the Liaison Station to Criticize Chen Yi began to write on big-character posters and chant at rallies. In February 1969 Chen Yi was sentenced to hard labor along with

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70 For a broader discussion of the February Adverse Current, see MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006), 194 – 197.
71 Ma (2004), 117.
73 Ma (2004), 118
other officials involved in the February Adverse Current. His supposed crimes, both foreign and domestic, were used to justify his removal from all positions of authority.

The Third World played a complex and contradictory role in many instances of official criticism. The passion displayed in these articles suggests that many students actually believed that Liu and Chen had hindered the Third World revolution and were disgusted by these officials’ actions. On the other hand, the Third World was co-opted by the Chinese students and used for purposes that furthered their own chaotic and violent revolution at home. The cases against Liu and Chen also demonstrate the pervasive influence of the state. CCP officials initiated criticisms of Liu and Chen and dictated the direction of the campaigns against these two leaders, using global narratives wherever necessary.

That China used the Third World as a tool during the Cultural Revolution is not unique. The Third World became a major symbol of the global student movement during the 1960s, employed in various countries and contexts as a means to promote revolution. This was particularly true in the West, where the Third World acted as a type of inspirational model of revolution for European and American students. Although the Third World played a major role in China during the 1960s, it did not function in the same way as it did in the West. In fact, China’s relationship with the Third World was inverted; Chinese students were going to inspire and educate the Third World, not vice versa. What Chinese and Western students did share, however, was a somewhat reductionist attitude toward the Third World. National realities impeded Chinese and Western understanding of the Third World. Struggles in the Third World were co-opted, distorted, and manipulated so as to fit the framework of the Cultural Revolution. Many Chinese viewed the Third World as a place devoid of a true revolutionary identity, and

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flattened this part of the world so as to make it seem as if revolutionaries there shared the ideals and goals of the Cultural Revolution.

Two scholars who have studied the relationship between China and the Third World have stated that “the Cultural Revolution had very little to do with the Third World” and that one of the goals of the Cultural Revolution was to demonstrate to foreign radicals that they could not rely on China for help. While this may be true in some official circles, Red Guard newspapers indicate that the Third World played a major role in the construction of the students’ identities during the Cultural Revolution. Articles detailing the Third World’s putative reliance on China and on Mao reinforced the Red Guards’ actions and expanded the implications of their movement beyond the borders of the Chinese state. By projecting national cultural symbols – namely language and Mao’s image – into the global arena, the Red Guards were also able to maintain a national as well as an imagined transnational identity. In order to sustain these identities, the Red Guards needed to construct a Third World whose revolutionary mission was nearly identical to the Cultural Revolution’s. This profoundly altered the students’ worldview. For many Red Guard organizations, the activism of the 1960s was a time when the Cultural Revolution was being repeated over and over again throughout the rest of the world.

Conclusion

In the early years of the Cultural Revolution, especially during the radical period between 1966 and 1968, global narratives had a tremendous ability to give shape to the Cultural Revolution and define its parameters. During this two year period, the CCP conveyed the sense that the Cultural Revolution was an international movement and that the Red Guards were global actors. This was largely achieved through manipulating language and through constructing

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global rhetoric. The rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution has sometimes been dismissed as predictable and outlandish. Yet, despite its formulaic nature, studying the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution is vitally important to understanding Chinese politics and society in the 1960s. The Cultural Revolution’s rhetoric – and its global components – was both distinctive and predicated on earlier codes used in the PRC. In previous chapters, I have examined how global narratives were reshaped and reassembled in the year leading up to the Cultural Revolution. The Korean War and the mythology of the Chinese Communist Party also propelled these narratives, and made them a basic part of the PRC. Much of this early rhetoric was carried over into the Cultural Revolution. And yet, there was a disjuncture that also occurred in 1966, after the Cultural Revolution began. Terms such as global revolution appeared with greater frequency in the Chinese press, and the idea of China as the leader of the Third World liberation became more prominent; this phenomenon only abated after the Red Guards were sent to the countryside, Lin Biao was disgraced, and the Sino-American relationship improved. The CCP relied on global rhetoric, but only when it fit the overall policy of the party. When policy changed and the CCP set off in a new direction, narratives of global revolution and Third World liberation were abandoned.

Studying this rhetoric also illuminates how the Red Guards’ constructed their respective identities. The Red Guard groups discussed in this chapter have not been placed in familiar factional categories, or been subjected to homogenizing models: instead, I have treated each differently, while also pointing out the similar ways in which these groups deployed language during the Cultural Revolution. By analyzing global narratives, I have highlighted the origin story and history of some of these groups. These origin stories had a large impact on how certain Red Guard organizations deployed global narratives, and how they thought of themselves in the
context of international revolution. Infamous “rebel” groups like New Beida and Jinggangshan deployed global narratives in extremely different ways. New Beida relied on global developments, such as the French student movement, to legitimize themselves and demonstrate their importance in the Cultural Revolution. Other rebel groups, like Jinggangshan, had little need for global narratives, and therefore rarely invoked them. The ways in which each of these groups used global narratives demonstrates that the Red Guards’ early history played an important role in how they perceived themselves and how they operated during the Cultural Revolution. It also demonstrates how these narratives could be deployed to establish a group’s legitimacy. New Beida confronted challenges to their place on Beijing University’s campus with assertions that their actions had changed not just China, but the course of human history. Deploying global rhetoric to reinforce these claims gave them a strong resonance, and proved a valuable asset during the intense period of student factionalism.

Red Guard and official rhetoric also illuminates the ferocity of this period and helps explain the nature of the violence that became a hallmark of the Cultural Revolution. The rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution was often a matter of life and death. Creating such intense and critical language required symbols that could convey an awesome sense of importance. Globality became one such cue that increased the scale and scope of the Cultural Revolution and conflated the movement’s importance to such an extent as to seem universal. Indeed, global narratives reaffirmed, reinforced, and extrapolated certain revolutionary tropes, creating a sense of confidence and, frankly, arrogance among many Red Guard groups that came through in their newspapers. Based on the rhetoric of these groups, the Cultural Revolution was not just a movement to save the Chinese Communist Party, it was also a campaign to rescue the world from the threat of capitalism, revisionism, and reactionaries. The Red Guards made it appear that
the Cultural Revolution held a significance that went beyond the Chinese state. This increased
the likelihood of violence and provided the Red Guards with a grandiose and bellicose identity.

Finally, the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution represented the full expression of the
CCP’s campaign to inculcate a post-Soviet socialist modernity in Chinese society. Since the
early 1960s, the CCP had cultivated language, propaganda, and various mentalities that placed
China at the center of global revolution. Between 1962 and 1965, this Sinocentric attitude was
largely expressed through language. However, the Cultural Revolution released a torrent of
energy in Chinese society, and allowed Chinese students to act on the claims that the Communist
Party had made for the past several years about the superiority of Chinese communism to Soviet
communism. So while much of the language used in the Cultural Revolution was borrowed from
the early 1960s, it became more aggressive and more confrontational after 1966. So too did the
Red Guards. The CCP positioned the Cultural Revolution as the apex of global revolution. It was
up to the Red Guards to demonstrate this to the rest of the world. The corpus of the Cultural
Revolution’s rhetoric, when viewed as a whole, signifies the final blow to the Soviet Union in
Chinese society. This blow, however, could only be struck after a global sensibility took hold in
Chinese society, and the Red Guards believed that their actions carried an international
significance. The mentalities required to accomplish this task partially fueled the Cultural
Revolution, and expanded the meaning of this campaign beyond the borders of the Chinese state.
This was an easy task to accomplish. The pump had already been primed by years of propaganda,
rhetoric and official proclamations. The result was that many Red Guards positioned themselves
as the generation that would oversee a global revolution.
Chapter 5

National Hero, International Savior: The Global Mao Cult

For Mao, the 1960s was a time of great difficulty. The decade was the most perilous period that he faced since his days in Yan’an when he and his comrades were virtually surrounded by the Japanese and Guomindang armies. Mao also experienced the greatest threat to his power and personal prestige during the 1960s. Much of this threat was precipitated by the disasters of the Great Leap Forward and the personal stake that Mao put into this campaign. Mao and his allies responded to this threat by increasing the breadth of his cult of personality, which eventually saturated Chinese politics and Chinese culture. This cult of personality dominated political culture in the 1960s, especially during the Cultural Revolution. Mao Zedong’s image was everywhere during the Cultural Revolution, and students evoked his name in order to justify many of their actions. Rival student factions in particular claimed that they were the true protectors of Mao Zedong’s legacy. This turned Mao into a weapon that was used to justify everything from criticisms to acts of violence.

The centrality of Mao’s cult of personality was precipitated by his need to reassert his authority and control over the CCP in the early 1960s. During these years, as the country recovered from the Great Leap Forward, Mao ceded some power to officials like Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Mao, however, soon found himself disagreeing with Liu and Deng’s decisions, and moved to counteract their more centrist policies. There were also broader developments that increased the importance of the Mao cult. During the 1960s, Mao began to lose some faith in the party apparatus itself. In the years leading up to the Cultural Revolution Mao expressed
frustration over the stultification of the party and its increasingly rigid and bureaucratic nature. When the Cultural Revolution finally began it was Chinese students, and not party cadres, who acted as the foot soldiers in this new campaign. Even though Mao publicly criticized personality cults, he clearly realized the power of such cults to ward off rivals and to establish a direct link with the Chinese people.\(^1\) Mao’s cult of personality was very much intended for the Chinese people; through it, Mao forged an unbreakable bond between himself and the masses.

Forging this bond, however, required a massive expansion of the meaning and the size of the Mao cult. Global narratives were essential. Mao had always held a place of prominence in Chinese society, and his cult had been a feature of the CCP since the 1930s. Extending Mao’s influence during the 1960s required new symbols and references that went beyond the PRC. In the 1960s, Mao and his allies relied more and more on the world as a means to sketch out the parameters of his cult and to make Mao seem more important. Mao’s cult of personality became deeply intertwined with global narratives. This chapter highlights how Mao and his allies used global symbols and global events to extend his cult of personality and to convey the extent of his power.

During the 1960s, and especially after the Cultural Revolution began, Mao occupied a bifurcated position in China. He was simultaneously Chinese and global. He was seen as the protector of the Communist revolution and as a leader whose reach was supposedly boundless. These two perceptions were intimately connected. In the 1960s Mao and his allies partially rewrote Chinese history and made it appear as if Mao was the sole catalyst of the Chinese revolution. His colleagues who aided the communist cause in the 1920s to the 1940s were slowly

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written out of the historical record. This is best exemplified in a famous painting from the Cultural Revolution that depicts Mao’s arrival at the Anyuan mines to lead a workers’ strike in 1922. The painting is historically inaccurate, and actually two of Mao’s rivals, Li Lisan and Liu Shaoqi, were also instrumental in organizing the strike. During the Cultural Revolution, however, Mao was positioned as the center of revolution, whether that revolution was Chinese or international. This gave Mao tremendous power to act, not just for China, but in defense of the world. Globalizing Mao’s cult of personality became a key way of legitimizing his role in Chinese society and in asserting power over restive comrades in the CCP.

This chapter is also intended to advance old debates in new directions. Following the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, many observers declared that communism was a foreign ideology in China, and that Mao was simply a puppet of the Soviet government. This view, however, was quickly challenged, as scholars like Benjamin Schwartz disabused the idea that Mao was somehow a foreigner in his own country. Many scholars have agreed with Schwartz and have emphasized the genuineness of Chinese revolutionaries’ commitment to Marxism. Other scholars have also challenged the notion that communism was somehow foreign to China or that the Chinese could never properly adopt a European political ideology to their social and economic circumstances. However, these debates have not ended, and scholars still point to the undeniable influence that the Soviet Union had on the CCP, especially in its early days. Recently, two Mao biographers, using previously unavailable documents from the Soviet Union, have reemphasized Mao’s reliance on the Soviet Union, noting that Mao only dared

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2 Perry (2012), 12.
3 For more on the painting depicting Mao’s arrival in Anyuan see Perry (2012), 217-219.
deviate from the Stalinist model following the latter’s death in 1953.\textsuperscript{6} This is likely a debate that will take many decades to resolve as new sources and information become available.

Nevertheless, what I wish to point out in this chapter is that following the Sino-Soviet split there was a greater desire not only to articulate a Sinocentric communism, but also to demonstrate the superiority of Maoism to the rest of the world. Mao’s independence from the Soviet Union is best exemplified in China’s global narratives, which were a prominent feature of politics and culture in the 1960s. Indeed, global narratives became one of the primary vehicles through which Mao positioned himself as the successor of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, and by which he staked out the universality of his political theories. Mao positioned himself as the modern iteration of these brilliant theoreticians. As evidence he often pointed to how popular his theories were throughout the world.

Mao’s cult not only relied on global narratives, it also helped create and convey these narratives to the Chinese people. Mao was the primary window through which many Chinese people accessed the outside world. This is especially true of the Red Guards. During the Cultural Revolution, students constantly evoked Mao’s name to justify their actions. Mao Zedong and his cult of personality saturated the student movement to the point that his image and his name became ubiquitous. For the Red Guards, using the Mao cult meant more than simply praising Mao’s leadership. The Red Guards filled their newspapers with reports that claimed that Mao’s influence was the engine behind many of the radical social movements of the 1960s. These same newspapers also reprinted various letters and testimonials from foreigners that supposedly proved how influential Mao and his theories were around the world. Mao therefore became a symbol of globality, and was used as a point of entry in order to contextualize and frame global events.

The Mao Cult and Mao Zedong Thought

Understanding how the Mao cult functioned requires also disentangling Mao the person and Mao Zedong Thought. While Mao Zedong Thought was a central feature of the Chinese Communist Party beginning in the 1930s, his cult of personality developed slowly over time, and changed in orientation and message. By the founding of the PRC, the Mao cult played an important role in shaping political culture in China.\(^7\) Mao’s image often appeared at parades, ceremonies, and various rituals, and political rhetoric became deeply intertwined with Mao’s cult. During the first national parades held in Tiananmen, for example, attendees remember shouting the phrase “long live Chairman Mao” over and over again.\(^8\) And yet, Mao himself had a contradictory relationship with his own cult. Scholars have concluded that one of the reasons for the development of the Mao cult was to counterbalance Chiang Kaishek’s own cult of personality, which he created in the 1930s.\(^9\) Mao, therefore, may have been making a strategic decision in promoting his own cult so widely. Furthermore, in the 1940s and 1950s, Mao and the CCP took steps to counteract the cult, whether that meant forbidding that streets, factories, and cities be named after a political leader, or in restricting the official titles that could be granted to any one party official.\(^10\) Mao’s early cult therefore occupied a contradictory place in the party and in Chinese society. Mao was not afraid to use it to control rival party members or to counterbalance political enemies in the Guomindang. However, he also took measures to stem the spread of the cult, and to promote the party over his personal image. By the 1960s, however,

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\(^7\) Hung (2011), 98.
\(^8\) Ibid., 99.
\(^9\) Leese (2010), 228.
\(^10\) Ibid., 228.
this began to change as Mao grew increasingly suspicious of his comrades and placed greater
stock in his own personal leadership.\textsuperscript{11}

There are also important differences in the ways in which the Mao cult and Mao Zedong
Thought engaged with the world. From the beginning, Mao used global events to inform and
shape his theories, and like all communist leaders, Mao often pondered the international
implications of his writings. Many of Mao’s theories (and the entire Chinese reform movement)
were also shaped by imperialist and colonial encroachments in China.\textsuperscript{12} Maoism, especially in its
early days, was very much a response to Western aggression, and so always had an international
bent. Moreover, Mao’s early political theories were born in the May 4\textsuperscript{th} Movement, and the
political maelstrom that gripped China during this period. The politics of the May 4\textsuperscript{th} Movement
were very much influenced by international developments: European ideas of modernity and
nationalism, as well as Russian revolutionary discourse.\textsuperscript{13} Mao was not alone in engaging with
these tropes. Most socialist reformers and revolutionaries in China flirted with various kinds of
socialism, including anarchism, and were influenced by global events. These reformers, Mao
Zedong among them, saw themselves as part of a global conversation, and they placed their early
theories within the context of concepts of modernity and revolution that were popular around the
world.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} Elizabeth Perry argues that the reappearance of Mao’s cult in the 1960s was an attempt to counterattack the
growing prestige of Liu Shaoqi. Hence Mao claimed one of Liu’s most famous victories, the 1922 strikes at the
Anyuan mines, as his own doing. As Perry notes, this was a “major redirection and escalation of a prior exercise in
\textsuperscript{12} Brantly Womack identifies three major intellectual trends that impacted the early development of Marxism in
China. One of these trends was the tension between the West as a model and the West as a menace. Mao’s earliest
ideas embodied these tensions as he advocated modernity (in the spirit of the May 4\textsuperscript{th} Movement) while condemning
imperialism as one of the greatest obstacles impeding China’s development. Brantly Womack “From Urban Radical
to Rural Revolutionary,” in Cheek (2010), 63.
\textsuperscript{13} Arif Dirlik “Modernism and Antimodernism in Mao Zedong’s Marxism” in Arif Dirlik, Paul Healy, and Nick
Knight (eds.) Critical Perspectives on Mao Zedong’s Thought (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997), 72-73.
Mao’s theories about revolution, and global communism developed as time progressed. His earliest writings in the 1930s criticized both imperialism and fascism. The CCP later rose to power based on the perception that they were the only political party willing to stand up to foreign aggression.\(^{15}\) Mao himself was deeply impacted by imperialism, and many of his political theories revolve around the perniciousness of the colonial system. When the CCP emerged victorious in the civil war, Mao also cast the moment in international terms. He saw the Communist victory in China as a continuation of Russia’s October revolution.\(^{16}\) He also placed it within the context of the broader global revolution, and declared that it was a great glory for all people.\(^{17}\) It was, according to Mao, an important moment for Asia’s battle against imperialism. The success of the Chinese revolution, at least in Mao’s eyes, had arrested the advancement of imperialist power in the East.\(^{18}\)

This was not the only way in which Mao engaged with the globe. Throughout his writings, Mao attempted to take the lessons of the Chinese revolution and apply them to international situations, especially national liberation movements in the Third World. He specifically promoted ideas that he himself developed even before the Communist party came to power. For example, Mao is largely recognized, along with Zhu De, as one of the founders of the

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\(^{16}\) “Zhongguo geming shi shiyue geming de jixu, shi shijige geming de weida de yi bufen” (“The Chinese revolution is a continuation of the October Revolution, and is a great part of the world revolution”) in Mao zhuxi lun shijie geming (Chairman Mao’s Theories on Global Revolution) (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1967), 8.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) “Zhongguo geming de shengli chongpo le diguo zhuyi de dongfang zhanxian” (“The Victory of the Chinese Revolution has breached the Eastern front of the imperialists”) in Mao zhuxi lun shijie geming (Chairman Mao’s Theories on Global Revolution) (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1967), 9.
People’s Liberation Army. The guerrilla tactics that he helped to develop insured the survival of the party, even when the army was completely encircled by Nationalist forces in 1928. Mao and Zhu also came up with the idea of a rural-base area that could combat the influence of the Guomindang in China. Mao himself considered his ideas about rural bases and people’s armies to be universal. In 1945 he declared that “without a people’s army, the people have nothing.” Similarly, in 1939, during the Japanese invasion of China, Mao wrote that the only hope for combating the imperialists was “using the peasantry to advance and consolidate rural base areas.” In the 1960s Mao promoted these same guerilla tactics, claiming that they were universal. And many small revolutionary organizations did indeed look at Maoism as a means of constructing grassroots movements among the peasantry. Promoting these ideas abroad therefore became a way of praising Mao as a theoretician.

For Mao, the end of colonialism could only be achieved by applying the lessons of the Chinese revolution to the entire world. He believed that imperialists and the Guomindang were cut from the same cloth; the tactics that the CCP used to defeat the Guomindang in the 1940s were therefore universal. From the 1930s onward Mao ostensibly supported anti-colonial revolution in the Third World, although he stressed that the Chinese path was the best way to achieve such a revolution. He maintained this support after the CCP took power. In 1956, Mao reiterated the need to aid independence movements throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America.

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19 The actual role that Mao played in the founding of the PLA has likely been exaggerated by party historians. Still, for several years in the 1920s Mao insisted on being stationed in the countryside where he attempted to build mass movements and foster armed struggle. He may not have been as important in the founding of the army, but he did use his experiences in the countryside to develop his early political theories.

20 Pantsov and Levine (2012), 210-212.

21 “Jianshe yi zhi renmin de jundui” (“Constructing a people’s army”) in Mao zhuxi lun shijie geming (Chairman Mao’s Theories on Global Revolution) (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1967), 160.

22 “Jianli nongcun genjudi” (“Constructing rural base areas”) Mao zhuxi lun shijie geming (Chairman Mao’s Theories on Global Revolution) (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1967), 179.

23 “Zhongguo renmin ba ya fei la fandi douzheng de shengli kanzuo shi ziji de shengli” (“The Chinese people consider the victory of the Asian, Africa, and Latin American struggle against imperialism as their own victory”)
This support, however, often meant promoting Maoism abroad. Mao was like most other communist leaders: he believed that the theories he developed in China were universal. Mao Zedong Thought was therefore promoted as an international ideology that was especially relevant to the Third World. It is still important, however, to separate Mao’s cult from his theories. While the latter was always universal, the Mao cult was not completely globalized until the 1960s. This process also warped Mao Zedong Thought and made it appear that his theories were perfect for the revolutionary zeitgeist of the decade.

The Mao cult was unique in its origins and in the way that it interacted with the world. Although the tactics used to spread the Mao cult through global narratives – recording testimonials, using familiar language, extrapolating and imagining support for Mao – are now familiar, certain aspects of the cult’s use of global narratives were unique. First, Mao was promoted as a revolutionary for his time, someone who fit perfectly with the zeitgeist of the 1960s. This was especially true in the Third World, among nationalist and anti-colonial revolutionaries. Mao Zedong Thought and Mao’s personal leadership were seen as commensurate with the wider goals of Third World revolution, as well as with students around the world who took to the streets in the 1960s. Mao’s global image was therefore presented as “current,” and international revolutionaries who praised Mao often included a line or two about how his theories fit perfectly with the political situation that existed in their own countries. Mao was often called the greatest leader of “this time” as well as the present-day embodiment of Marxism-Leninism. These sentiments were expressed through revelation and epiphany. The CCP suggested that by the 1960s the world had finally caught up to Mao’s genius and his global relevance. In fact, many of Mao’s most popular theories weren’t necessarily new in the 1960s;

Mao zhuxi lun shijie geming (Chairman Mao’s Theories on Global Revolution) (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1967), 257.
instead some, like his ideas about the spontaneous power of the masses, had been developed in Hunan province in the 1920s. Many of the foreigners discussed below came gradually to support Mao Zedong as they realized how relevant Mao Zedong Thought was to their contemporary societies. Fitting Mao into this modern paradigm was a way of exerting power while also criticizing the Soviet Union. Soviet communism was seen as important but old, the product of a world that no longer existed. Mao suggested that only his ideas could address the most pressing contemporary issues. Sustaining these claims, however, required a global perspective, as well as a slew of “evidence” from foreigners that reaffirmed Mao’s importance and relevance.

The second feature that was distinctive to the way that the Mao cult used global narratives was the paranoia that surrounded much of the propaganda and the discourse. While the Red Guards seemed, at times, to believe genuinely that their actions had profound global resonance (especially when it came to events like the war in Vietnam or the civil rights movement) the same does not seem true for Mao Zedong. Mao’s cult was more wrapped up in politics and power. Mao may have been upset with American and Soviet actions, but he harnessed this anger and used it as a tool to maintain power. This paranoia stemmed from the events at the end of the Great Leap Forward and Mao’s supposed “retirement” from the daily activities of the state. The moderate policies enacted by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping in the early 1960s seemed to have genuinely unnerved the chairman, who worried that the revolution that he had worked his entire life for could be subverted from within. Mao was also troubled by

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24 One of the most important of these theories was a belief in the spontaneous revolutionary capacity of the Chinese people, and specifically the peasantry. Mao’s views on this were expressed in his Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan.

25 Among the issues that particularly upset Mao were the decisions to create a family mutual responsibility system in the countryside, which Mao saw as antithetical to communist development, and the decision to grant more rights and freedoms to intellectuals, who often criticized the CCP. MacFarquhar (1997), 273.
complacency in foreign affairs. In 1962, as the horrors of the Great Leap Forward were becoming clear, Wang Jiaxiang, a high-ranking CCP official, suggested that China needed to adopt a more moderate foreign policy so that it could concentrate all of its resources on restoring stability in the countryside. Wang specifically advocated for reducing foreign aid, and for a more moderate approach to the Soviet Union and the United States. His main goal was to avoid another Korean War style conflict, which would have depleted China’s already limited resources. For Mao, however, Wang’s ideas were a personal affront, and were antithetical to Mao’s theories about communism and international relations. As Roderick MacFarquhar notes, “Mao was in danger of being marginalized; his policy preferences were being implicitly questioned as irrelevant at best and harmful at worst.” Mao needed his cult of personality to overcome the grip that Liu and Deng had on the CCP. He seized on global narratives to overcome these challenges. These narratives became deeply intertwined with party factionalism and with Mao’s own personal paranoia about his colleagues.

The Mao cult incorporated global narratives into its cultural repertoire slowly. In the early days of the CCP, Mao’s cult did not rely heavily on these narratives. The cult became an important feature of the Chinese Communist Party beginning with the Long March, before the party was even in control of China. In fact, during the Long March, at the Zunyi Conference, Mao forged an alliance with the army, which gave him the political capital to criticize Bo Gu, the then leader of the CCP, and Otto Braun, the Soviet representative in China. This relationship between Mao and the army was the first iteration of the Mao cult. The cult also found support within the Comintern. When the CCP settled at Yan’an, in the days after the Long March, it was

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26 Ibid., 269 – 274.
28 Ibid., 274
clear that Mao was not only the undisputed leader of the party, but also that his force of personality was a dynamic and integral part of the way that the party operated. In 1935, at the Seventh Conference of the Comintern, Mao was labeled as a standard-bearer of the world Communist movement. Indeed, Mao was patronized by the Soviet Union throughout the 1930s. For example, the Soviets forced Wang Ming, one of Mao’s chief rivals in Yan’an, to acknowledge Mao Zedong’s authority. And yet, despite the power of the Mao cult during the 1930s, it is important to note its limited scope. While Mao’s force of personality reigned in recalcitrant party members and was used as a weapon to blunt criticism from rivals, it remained confined to the party itself. Obviously Mao could not force himself onto the Chinese population, especially since the party was relatively small in the 1930s. Even after the CCP came to power, however, his cult was most often used to force internal party discipline.

Domestic and international events changed the role of the Mao cult in Chinese society. This change began to manifest itself in the early 1950s. Once again, however, the global dimensions of Mao Zedong Thought and the Mao cult were very much shaped by the Soviet Union. Beginning in 1953, following the death of Joseph Stalin, Mao came to see himself as the most experienced Communist leader in the world. This helps explain the personal animosity between Mao and Khrushchev. Mao saw himself as Stalin’s successor, and was angered when Khrushchev continued to treat him and the People’s Republic of China as a junior partner. Of course this was not the only reason for the Sino-Soviet split, but Mao’s conceptualization of

30 Pantsov and Levine (2012), 291.
31 Ibid., 293.
32 Ibid., 40.
himself within the global communist movement was certainly a contributing factor in the deterioration of the relationship. Other events in the late 1950s and early 1960s increased Mao’s need to use global narratives to prop up his cult of personality. One of these events was the deleterious policies of the Great Leap Forward. At the beginning of the Great Leap in 1959 many CCP officials were dubious that Mao’s plans for rapid industrialization and agricultural expansion were feasible. During the campaign itself many peasants, a constituency typically supportive of Mao, chafed under the Spartan lifestyle engendered by the Great Leap and the communalized life that Mao’s policies forced on China’s rural areas. Within the party, Mao demonstrated both truculence and insecurity toward any opponents of the Leap. When Peng Dehuai, the head of the People’s Liberation Army, criticized Mao’s policies at the Lushan Conference in 1959, Mao exploded in anger. He took Peng’s criticism as a personal attack. Peng was quickly purged from the party, and Mao’s comrades proceeded with extreme caution, careful not to upset the chairman or incur his wrath.

By 1962, however, even Mao could not deny the ruinous consequences of his policies, especially in the countryside. In an unprecedented move he actually offered his own self-criticism at the 7,000 Cadres Conference, held in the winter 1962. Moreover, several high-ranking members of the CCP actually directly and indirectly criticized Mao’s policies. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping both offered reports that noted the decline of the economy and the need for immediate action. Liu’s report was especially scathing, and although it did not mention

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34 Judging the reaction of the peasantry to the Great Leap Forward is difficult because, as Frederick Teiwes notes, the situation varied so widely from place to place. However, Teiwes does not that there was dissatisfaction in the countryside and even outright rebellion in some areas. Frederick Teiwes “Mao and his Followers” in Cheek (2010), 142.
Mao Zedong by name, it directly criticized many of his personal policies.\textsuperscript{35} Even more brazenly, Peng Zhen, the mayor of Beijing, suggested that any report on the Great Leap Forward should not be afraid of criticizing the center – including Mao Zedong himself – if they deserved it. Only Lin Biao was willing to offer full-throated support of Mao Zedong and his policies during the Great Leap Forward.\textsuperscript{36} Despite Lin’s efforts, Mao decided to go into semi-retirement and ceded the day-to-day decision-making of the state to Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. He also entrusted these two senior officials with the recovery of the Chinese economy.

Mao remained in this state of semi-retirement for only a brief time, however, and soon returned to Beijing displeased with the quick dismantling of the communes established during the Great Leap Forward, and by what he saw as the capitalist undertones of Liu and Deng’s policies.\textsuperscript{37} He spent the next several years attempting to restore his legitimacy and to preserve his leftist policies. Indeed, the 1960s was a decade of recovery and reestablishment of prestige for Mao Zedong. Global narratives were central to this process and were to place Mao at the center of not just the Chinese revolution, but revolutionary movements around the world.

**The Global Mao in Official Publications**

Beginning in the 1960s, global narratives became part of Mao Zedong’s cult of personality and were used to convey Mao’s importance. As expected, the official press was filled

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\textsuperscript{35} MacFarquhar (1997), 148-149.

\textsuperscript{36} Observers have noted that Lin Biao’s speech was incongruous with the mood of the general conference. See MacFarquhar (1997), 168. It should be noted that during the Cultural Revolution Deng Xiaoping, Liu Shaoqi, and Peng Zhen – the most vocal critics of Mao – were all purged out of the party while Lin Biao was initially raised to a position of extreme power.

\textsuperscript{37} Mao’s personal relationship with Liu and Deng deteriorated throughout the 1960s, as the Chairman became increasingly paranoid that the two were attempting to subvert his power. Things came to a head in January, 1965 at a conference held to discuss the socialist education movement. At the conference, Mao claimed that the problems in China’s countryside were due to the contradiction between socialism and capitalism. During his speech, Liu Shaoqi interpreted Mao and claimed that the issue was more complicated. Mao, infuriated by Liu’s interruption, returned to the conference the next day with a copy of China’s constitution, which he claimed gave him the right to speak as a citizen of the PRC. Mao also accused certain people in the party – Liu and Deng – of attempting to suppress his opinion. For a description of this incident, see Li Zhisui *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York: Random House, 1994), 416-417.
with paeans to Mao Zedong and his contributions to global revolution. This was especially true in the first two years of the Cultural Revolution. As the term “global revolution” appeared more frequently in the Chinese press so too did Mao’s global cult of personality become more ubiquitous. Increasing Mao’s supposed global appeal was accomplished through a variety of methods. Official articles, for example, often detailed the various ways in which Mao Zedong Thought was illuminating and guiding global revolution. Just as in the Red Guard newspapers discussed below, Mao was described as a “beacon” as “universal” and as “applicable to all revolutionary people of the world.”

To back up these statements, newspapers like People’s Daily included testimonials from various revolutionaries praising Mao and his vision of Communist society. When asked about the Cultural Revolution, for example, the American Robert Williams said, “I have confidence in the victory of the Cultural Revolution because Chairman Mao has unlimited trust in the masses. Because of this I have unlimited trust in Chairman Mao.” The same article quotes an Indonesian revolutionary, who claimed that “people cannot ignore Mao Zedong Thought. Mao Zedong thought is the truth, and is our most powerful weapon.” Articles like these tied the Mao cult together with Mao Zedong Thought and presented the two as the absolute truth, not just in China, but around the world.

The official press especially used the globe to emphasize Mao’s absolute leadership over the Cultural Revolution. By doing this, the press also conveyed a sense of fraternity between Chinese youth and their global counterparts. Take, for example, an article published in People’s Daily on January 7, 1967 about Japanese residents of Yamaguchi prefecture who fulsomely praised Chairman Mao. According to the article, the Japanese residents “enthusiastically praised

38 “Mao Zedong sixiang shi jie jie geming renmin de zhi lu mingdeng” (“Mao Zedong Thought is a beacon for the world’s revolutionary people”) Renmin Ribao (March 12, 1967).
39 Ibid.
Chairman Mao’s personal leadership of the Cultural Revolution.” Once again the press relied on personal testimonials to demonstrate the importance of Mao Zedong Thought around the world. One Japanese well-wisher noted that “under Mao Zedong Thought the Chinese people have advanced their militant and revolutionary struggle, while at the same time taking on the responsibility of global revolution.” The article concluded by both criticizing the Soviet Union, and tacitly praising Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution. According to the Japanese friends, “the Soviet Union’s reliance on bourgeois methods to increase production is completely contradictory. They (the Soviets) say that you only have to think about revolution in order to insure the development of production.” This final quote is an allusion to Chinese politics, especially those that led to the Cultural Revolution. The Sino-Soviet split was partially predicated on differences over what constituted revolution; for Mao, continuous revolution was the only way to insure the protection of socialism. Here, the Japanese “friends” invoke these political debates in order to demonstrate that Mao was indeed correct about continuous revolution and about the need for a Cultural Revolution. The article also pokes fun at the Soviet idea that one can simply think about revolution and call himself a revolutionary. *People’s Daily* used articles like these as evidence to advance the superiority of Chinese communism over Soviet communism.

As discussed in earlier chapters, revolutionary tourism was a common feature of the early years of the Cultural Revolution. Following the tumultuous summer of 1966, many young people in China were given leave to travel around the country and spread the ideas of the Cultural Revolution. To facilitate this “great networking” (*dachuanlian*) the Chinese government allowed

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40 “Riben shankou xian pengyou reqing gesong Mao zhuxi qinzi lingdao de wehhua da geming” (“Friends from Japan’s Yamaguchi prefecture enthusiastically praise Chairman Mao’s personal leadership of the Cultural Revolution”) *Renmin Ribao* (January 7, 1967).
41 Ibid.
students to travel for free, sending the Red Guards around the country and overwhelming Chinese infrastructure. Even though the great networking only lasted for a few months, many students still managed to see some of China’s most important revolutionary sights. Attractions pertaining to Mao Zedong, like his birthplace in Hunan province, were particularly popular. According to the CCP, foreigners followed in the Red Guards’ footsteps. The national press reported on various visits of foreigners to Shanghai, to visit the location where the Chinese Communist Party was founded, and to Shaoshan, where Mao was born. The press made sure to report that foreigners were overcome with awe at each of these sites. The first of these articles appeared in September, 1966, just as students were embarking on their great networking journeys. The article reported that a man from Somalia had come to Shaoshan with feelings of adoration and respect. The article also contained a picture in which the foreign visitor kneels outside of a house and scoops a handful of dirt into his handkerchief. The Somali friend is quoted as saying, “I feel very honored to come to the hometown of Mao Zedong. Many people from Somalia have never been to Shaoshan, but when they see the dirt that I am bringing back with me they will feel as if it is the same as being here.”

Another article reported on the construction of a railway station in Shaoshan that was supposed to ease the flood of travelers who had overwhelmed this relatively small village. The construction of the railroad station was presented as a “happy occasion” for all revolutionary people around the world. The article also notes that “the great leader Chairman Mao Zedong’s hometown of Shaoshan is the place that all Chinese people and all revolutionary people around

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43 “Mao zhuxi shi shijie geming remin xin de hong taiyang” (“Chairman Mao is the Red Sun in the Heart of the World’s Revolutionary People”) Renmin Ribao (September 25, 1966).
the world long for day and night." 

Shanghai, where the Chinese Communist Party was officially founded in 1921, was a popular destination for foreigners. A Danish friend who visited the site of the founding of the Communist Party three times between 1959 and 1966 noted that during each visit he felt new emotions and was reminded of the deep meaning of Mao Zedong Thought. The article also claimed that each visitor recalled one of Mao’s famous sayings that “a single spark can start a prairie fire.”

According to the article, visiting this site filled foreign revolutionaries with enthusiasm and love for Chairman Mao, while also helping them recall his early commitment to revolution, even in the face of long odds.

The official press was not the only means by which the CCP extended Mao’s cult of personality. Books and pamphlets also became an important way of conveying Mao’s global appeal. Numerous texts, all published by the CCP, were designed as testimonials to Mao’s greatness in China and around the world. In 1967, for example, the People’s Publishing House released two short books that were filled with testimonials and recollections from around the world. In each of them, Mao was fulsomely praised and was presented as the inspiration for global revolution. Not only was Mao the person at the center of many of these testimonials; Maoism, and the theories that made Maoism distinctive, were also praised throughout these

44 “Weida de lingxiu Mao zhuxi sixiang weiran yili Shaoshan hong taiyang shengqi de difang xin jiancheng hongse tielu” (“The Great statue of Chairman Mao Zedong stands in Shaoshan while the red sun rises over the newly built railway line”) People’s Daily (December 30, 1967).
45 “Mao Zedong sixiang shi shijie geming de qianda wuqi – ji waiguo pengyou zai Shanghai canguan Zhongguo Gongchandang di yi ci daibiao dahui hui zhi” (“Mao Zedong Thought is a powerful weapon for world revolution – many foreign friends visit the site of the first congress of the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai”) People’s Daily (February 14, 1967).
46 The article, like the official historical record, slightly skews Mao’s participation in the founding of the party. While Mao was very active in the early stages of the party and was present at the founding meeting, his role was not as important as this article makes it appear. Other early leaders, especially Chen Duxiu and Zhang Guotao, were elected to leadership roles. Mao Zedong Thought, which is reference repeatedly in this article, was something that Mao himself had not yet considered. This was not the only instance in which the historical record was rewritten and Mao’s role in an important event was exaggerated. During the Cultural Revolution one of the most famous paintings of Mao depicted him as a youth going to Anyuan to lead a coal strike, which was one of the most important moments in the early worker movement. The only problem was that Li Lisan and Liu Shaoqi were really organized the strike. For more on this, see Perry (2012), 216-224.
works. As in other cases, there is a sense of revelation in many of these testimonials, as naïve but well-meaning revolutionaries usually encounter Mao by accident but, after long periods of study, come to realize that his theories are best suited for their respective societies. Many of these testimonials also made Mao’s thought seem modern and well-suited for the 1960s.

In one volume a Mexican youth recounts his experiences with Mao Zedong and the development of Maoism in his country. The Mexican student’s testimonial has a definitive narrative. It begins two years prior when the first Maoist organization was founded in Mexico. In the interceding years between the organization’s founding and 1967, the members studied Mao’s work conscientiously. According to the text, “the more we studied the more we believed and the better we began to see the future of Latin America.” This Mexican revolutionary also expressed the universality of Mao Zedong Thought not just in Latin America, but around the world. “All revolutionaries need to study Mao Zedong Thought and utilize Mao Zedong Thought. As far as Latin America goes, this should become the first priority in our daily lives.”

The Mexican revolutionary also used a familiar vocabulary to engage both Mao Zedong and politics in China. First, Mao was presented as the bulwark against imperialism, and the dam that was holding back the Americans from moving into Mexico. Furthermore, Maoism was positioned as the only possible means through which Mexicans could combat the United States. From the revolutionary’s perspective, “all those who wish to get rid of the imperialist enslavers should study and use Mao Zedong Thought, Mao Zedong Thought is the truth, Chairman Mao is the leader of all people around the world.” Here the Mexican youth uses familiar anti-

47 “Mao Zedong sixiang shi Lading meizhou renmin de di yi xuyao,” in Mao Zedong sixiang de guanghui zhaoyaozhe quan shijie (Renmin chubanshi: 1967), 63.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 64.
imperialist cues to promote Mao Zedong Thought and to convey the idea that all people in Latin America should study his works.

When describing the Cultural Revolution and Mao’s role in the Cultural Revolution, the speaker uses an even more precise Chinese vocabulary. Asked for his reflections on the current situation in China, the youth replies “the Cultural Revolution has already awoken the soul of the Chinese people, tomorrow it will awaken the soul of the entire world. Those ox demons and snake spirits are already facing their deaths.” Here, the term “ox demons and snake spirits” is especially significant. This phrase was used early on in the Cultural Revolution to castigate the movement’s supposed enemies. It is a phrase that is derived from Buddhism and that has a cultural resonance within China, but was not a phrase that was commonly used by radicals outside of China. To find it coming out of the mouth of a Mexican revolutionary calls into question the accuracy of this statement. It also demonstrates how the cult of Mao was internationalized and the means by which it was spread. Chinese students likely had little contact with Mexican students in the 1960s. However, by using these familiar terms to praise both Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution, as well as to admonish supposed enemies of the party, documents like this one made foreigners relatable. They also made claims of Mao Zedong’s importance around the world all the more credible.

This was not the only example of Mao’s supposedly global appeal. In an essay titled “Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman,” foreign experts residing in Beijing praised the

50 Ibid., 65.
51 On May 31, 1966, Chen Boda led a group of loyal Mao supporters to the offices of People’s Daily and removed all editors who he assumed were antagonistic toward the Cultural Revolution. The following day, on June 1, the paper published an editorial titled “Sweep Away all Cow Demons and Snake Spirits.” June 1 was a momentous day in the history of the Cultural Revolution. With the publication of the People’s Daily editorial Mao also order that Nie Yuanzi’s first big character be read on a national broadcast. Both the editorial and the broadcast suggested that the Cultural Revolution was becoming increasingly radical, and that party officials could be targeted in this new campaign. For a discussion of the editorial, see Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao The Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 41.
Cultural Revolution and the leadership of Chairman Mao.\(^5^2\) The essay also excerpts from a number of big character posters that these foreign specialists wrote while in Beijing. A “friend” from Asia praised the Cultural Revolution, stating that “the Chinese Cultural Revolution is related to various historical revolutionary movements around the world. With the eternal red flag of the Cultural Revolution, these various global revolutionary movements will have hope.”\(^5^3\) An Italian revolutionary was also quoted as saying, “no matter if it is in China or the entire world, the Cultural Revolution has deep historical significance.” Of course each of these writers made clear that the global significance of the Cultural Revolution was possible only through Mao.

These writers treated Mao as a conduit; he was presented as the force that connected China with the rest of the world, and facilitated the globality of the Cultural Revolution. This same Italian revolutionary quoted above also claimed that Mao had “personally initiated” the Cultural Revolution, and that he was a major force driving the construction of socialism in China.\(^5^4\)

Often, foreigners who praised Mao Zedong came from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These areas of the world were well represented in books, pamphlets, and other literature published by the CCP that was meant to act as evidence of Mao’s universal appeal. However, when it came to Mao Zedong’s impact, the Third World was often represented as a single whole, devoid of any nuance or local variation. People from Asia, Africa, and Latin America were treated as an amorphous whole, with one common characteristic: their support for Mao Zedong and for the Cultural Revolution. According to an essay entitled “The People of the World Love Chairman Man and Love Mao Zedong Thought,” a person (who is not identified except for being from Asia, Africa, or Latin America) noted that “it is the great fortune of the East to have Mao

\(^5^2\) “Da hai hangxing kai duoshou” (“Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman”) in Mao zhuxi shi shijie renmin xinzhong de hong taiyang (Vol.1 ) (Renmin Chubanshe: 1967), 10.
\(^5^3\) Ibid., 12.
\(^5^4\) Ibid., 13.
Zedong, as it is the great fortune of the all the world’s people.”55 A friend from Africa expressed similar sentiments, declaring how lucky he felt that Mao Zedong Thought had come to Africa. According to this friend, “We love Mao Zedong, and his writings are very popular in Africa. With the leadership of Mao Zedong Thought alone, the world revolution will soon be victorious.”56

Much of this language is slightly benign and ambiguous, promising global revolution only by following Mao’s political theories. Language like this, however, was often coupled with more aggressive and even mystical statements, and Mao Zedong Thought was often compared to a “talisman” or a “magic weapon” (fabao). This was true particularly when it came to Mao’s declaration of the need to create a people’s army, and the importance of mobilizing the countryside to struggle against urban areas. The CCP used foreign testimonials to demonstrate the universal appeal of these ideas, which were specific to Mao Zedong’s own political theories. According to one essay, a foreign revolutionary leader was quoted as saying “we must build an armed revolutionary force.” The same revolutionary went on to state how fortunate the Chinese People and the People’s Liberation Army were that Mao developed these theories.57 These ideas were also presented as the “treasure house” (baoku) of the world’s revolutionary people, and as having mass global appeal.58 In the same essay, a Laotian revolutionary states that “the revolutionary people of the world all mutually support each other, but the Chinese people give the most support to the people of the world.”59 Essays of this type suggested that Mao Zedong Thought was not just a set of theories that were to be studied abstractly; his ideas could and

55 “Shijie renmin re’ai Mao zhuxi re’ai Mao Zedong sixiang” Mao zhuxi shi shijie renmin xinzhong de hong taiyang (Vol.1 ) (Renmin Chubanshe: 1967), 17.
56 Ibid., 19.
57 “Mao zhuxi de renmin zhanzheng sixiang shi shijie geming renmin de fabao” (“Chairman Mao’s Thought on the people’s war is the magic weapon of the world’s revolutionary people”) Mao zhuxi shi shijie renmin xinzhong de hong taiyang (Vol.1 ) (Renmin Chubanshe: 1967), 29.
58 Ibid., 31.
59 Ibid., 32.
should also be deployed as a weapon. Mao’s influence, according to CCP propaganda, was almost mystical in its applicability to foreign revolutionaries. This same language, and the almost quasi-religious way in which it was employed to contextualize Mao’s global appeal, was later co-opted by the Red Guards. Many of China’s students treated Mao Zedong Thought with the same encompassing awe as the foreigners described in these essays. Through propaganda of this sort the CCP was able to globalize Mao’s appeal and make it appear as if he exercised the same amount of influence abroad as he did in China.

The CCP did not solely print testimonials and other accounts of Mao’s importance around the world. They also worked to globalize Mao Zedong Thought. In 1968, the People’s Daily Publishing House issued a collection of Mao Zedong’s sayings and writings that centered on the theme of global revolution. This new book was included in the deluge of Mao’s collected writings that were released during the 1960s; not just the famous red book, but a series of books that addressed a range of topics. Most Chinese students owned a personal copy of the red book. The size of their collection of Maoist writings could sometimes determine their popularity among classmates. The timing of this specific volume of Mao’s global revolutionary theories speaks more to Mao’s cult of personality rather than to his political theories. The overall theme of the book presented Mao as a leader whose theories had truly international appeal. The layout of the book is also significant. The first two-thirds of the volume is dedicated to Mao’s writings form the 1930s to the 1950s. However, the last third of the book is specifically set aside for Mao’s writings in the 1960s. These writings are much more specifically antagonistic toward the United States and are highly critical of American imperialism. Most of the selections are writings in which Mao Zedong communicates with various revolutionaries from around the

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60 Mao zhuxi lun shijie geming (Chairman Mao’s Theories on Global Revolution) (Beijing: Renmin ribao guojibu, 1968).
world, including Cuba, Brazil, Panama, Iraq, Iran, and Japan. This section also included personal letters and correspondence that Mao sent to various world leaders.

Take, for example, the letter that Mao wrote to Kwame Nkrumah on January 9, 1964. The letter came just seven days after an attempted assassination of Nkrumah by a police official in Ghana. Mao himself expressed “indignation” at this attempt on Nkrumah’s life, but also relief that he was safe. Mao blamed the assassination on rightists and imperialists, and claimed that this was absolute proof that these two forces would never leave Africa in peace. He also declared that the Chinese people would always support the political struggle of Ghana and of every other African country. In another essay, Mao responds to eight “friends” from Latin America who expressed their admiration for the PRC. In this essay Mao laid out the similarities between China and Latin America, noting that both faced abuse and invasion from imperialists. He also states that the only way to overcome poverty and to develop one’s country is through “time, stability, and friendship.” Overall, there is nothing necessarily unique or provocative about these individual essays, although they do demonstrate Mao’s continued support of the Third World. However, they do suggest that those who put this volume together wanted to distinguish between Mao’s writings in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, and his writings in the 1960s. One gets the sense that Mao and the PRC has entered a new age in the 1960s in which Mao was at the center of countless revolutionary struggles around the world. Besides providing a comprehensive survey of revolution in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, this section suggests the ubiquity of Mao Zedong in each of these movements. Learning about and understanding what was happening

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61 “Weiwen Enkeluma zongtong de xin” (“A letter of Condolence to President Nkrumah”) Mao zhuxi lun shijie geming (Chairman Mao’s Theories on Global Revolution) (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1967), 306.
62 “Jiejian Lading Meizhou ba ge guoji de pengyou de tanhua” (“A conversation with eight friends from Latin America”) in Mao zhuxi lun shijie geming (Chairman Mao’s Theories on Global Revolution) (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1967), 291.
around the world was mediated by Mao Zedong. His presence was required to access any of these foreign revolutionary movements.

**Mao in Red Guard Newspapers**

Of the many global events, figures, and symbols that appeared in Red Guard newspapers – the Civil Rights Movement, African Liberation, the Vietnam War, the Paris Commune – none were more ubiquitous than the image of Mao Zedong.\(^{63}\) Mao saturated Red Guard newspapers, appearing in various forms from propaganda and pictures to drawings and sketches that often festooned the margins and the headings of Red Guard newspapers. Where Mao was not visually present, his words were used to justify the Red Guards’ action and to give legitimacy to various student factions. Evoking Mao Zedong was a tactic used repeatedly among warring student factions. Mao Zedong occupied a singular, quasi-religious status among most Chinese students. Mao’s most important impact on the Cultural Revolution, however, was not as a Communist theoretician or as a leader, but as a malleable symbol that the students used as a tent pole in their revolutionary struggle. Mao’s cult of personality was his power. He did not necessarily control the students anymore than Jiang Qing and her colleagues in the CCRG. Mao infused himself with global rhetoric to augment his power in the day-to-day politics of the Cultural Revolution.

Mao was able to accomplish this through the Red Guards and through propagandists in the CCP who both emphasized his global importance. The Red Guards quickly attached themselves to Mao’s global cult of personality, and often compiled reports of Mao’s influence around the world. Specifically, the Red Guards transformed parts of their newspapers into repositories for Mao’s global influence, and then filled these sections with letters from foreigners that supposedly detailed exactly where and how Mao had shaped the global revolution. Red

Guard newspapers therefore became mini archives, especially when it came to Mao Zedong. If one was to “check the record” to confirm that Mao Zedong was an important global figure, they need only flip to the back of certain Red Guard newspapers and read the various testimonials and stories from foreigners reprinted there.

In an article published by the Red Guard group formed at the Beijing Broadcast Institute students recorded various testimonials and stories from foreigners about the importance of Mao Zedong in their lives. The article, which is titled “Closely Follow Mao Zedong’s Red World,” contains stories from people from Spain, Chile, Tanzania, Belgium, the United States, and Iran. The Iranian made clear that the influence of Mao and Mao Zedong Thought had blanketed “every corner of the world.” The writer also declares that people around the world would “grab Mao Zedong Thought so that they could also become their own revolutionaries, and they could all become great students of Chairman Mao.” 64 The writer from Spain used no less flowery language, declaring that he loved Chairman Mao, and that on behalf of all proletariats around the world, he wanted to wish Mao a very long life. 65 Meanwhile, the writer from Chile noted that he had hung a picture of Mao Zedong up in his house. Everyone who visited, according to the writer, inquired about Mao, and wanted to learn more. 66

Others repeated these claims, and Red Guard newspapers created a world in which Mao’s picture hung in every home. Another writer from Morocco noted that he had hung two pictures of Mao Zedong on his wall, which he declared was a “symbol for the struggle of the proletariat, and for the friendship between the Chinese and African people.” 67 A writer from Guinea stated that he was especially proud to have a picture of Mao Zedong on his wall because it “represented

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
opposition to the American invaders and their running dogs, and the struggle of the Chinese people.”68 These images allow the reader to better access home life around the world, and created a commonality among disparate activists, at least in their wall decorations. Indeed, for much of Mao’s reign almost every house in China contained a portrait of Mao Zedong. The Chilean writer’s testimonial offers readers a cultural reference that used a familiar Chinese symbol to construct affinity across state borders. Saying that Mao was beloved around the world was one thing; mentioning that you followed the same practice of hanging his picture in your home as countless other Chinese families had done provided a tangible means of engagement.

Perhaps one of the most prevalent ways of engaging with a global Mao was in positioning him as a man of the world. Many Red Guard newspapers adopted an altruistic tone – the idea that a great revolutionary hero like Mao must be shared with the rest of the world. Hence Tsinghua University’s Red Guard group Jinggangshan’s declaration that “Mao Zedong is China’s and he is also the world’s.”69 Red Guards also used the Cultural Revolution to globalize Mao’s cult of personality. Dongfang Hong declared that the Cultural Revolution was a campaign launched by Mao that was intended to broaden the revolutionary impetus of the people.70 Furthermore, Dongfang Hong presented the Cultural Revolution as a major development not just in Chinese history, but in world history. Because Mao was behind the Cultural Revolution, he was given credit for changing the direction of human history, and for overseeing the birth of a new world. The hyperbolic language of this article is perhaps best captured in its title: “Pledge one’s life to protect Chairman Mao.”71 This sentiment was echoed by foreigners, and appeared regularly in Red Guard newspapers. In May 1967, the Beijing Red Guard group in the Foreign

68 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
Ministry published an article quoting an Indonesian leftist, who stated that “in my opinion, the great leadership of Chairman Mao is not only intended for the Chinese people, it is also meant for Indonesians and the entire world.”

Red Guard groups did not always declare Mao’s globality so blatantly. Instead they often deployed vivid language and various metaphorical devices that implied Mao’s global reach. The vocabulary used to describe Mao suggested a borderless figure whose influence and theories stretched around the world. This is most obviously demonstrated in the image of the red sun, which came to represent Mao’s supposedly awesome power in the world. Like the red sun, Mao reached every corner of the globe. His light was not only pervasive, but it helped others see their societies and their surroundings more clearly, at least according to many Red Guard accounts. Many of the letters from foreigners were indeed printed in sections of newspapers titled “Mao Zedong is the reddest sun in the hearts of the world’s revolutionary people.” Mao and Mao Zedong Thought were also commonly referred to as a “beacon” and a “lighthouse.”

According to the Red Guards, Mao was a global leader who stood constantly opposed to revisionism and imperialism. This sense that Mao was too great of a figure to simply confine himself to China pervaded many Red Guard descriptions of the chairman. Some Red Guard groups used foreign testimonials and anecdotes to back up their claims of Mao’s globality. These testaments often included stories of revelation and enlightenment that was gained through reading Mao’s works and through studying Mao Zedong Thought. Red Guard reports on foreigners often employed an epiphanic undertone. A Moroccan student, for example, informed one Red Guard of the evolution of his own politics. According to Moroccan student, he spent two month studying Mao’s seminal 1927 “Report on an Investigation of the Hunan Peasant

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73 Mao Zedong sixiang she shijie geming de dengta” Dui wai maoyi (June 14, 1966) in Song (2001), 4186.
Movement.” After finishing, the Moroccan claimed that “he realized that Mao’s analysis of the Chinese peasantry fit with the plight of the Moroccan peasant today.”74 The student concluded his letter by stating that Mao’s theories “are perfectly suitable to us, if we Moroccans want revolution, we must first solve the problem of the peasantry.” This letter resonates on two levels and employees familiar Chinese cultural and political codes to globalize Mao’s cult of personality. First the political sentiments expressed by this Moroccan student – that the problem of the peasantry had to be addressed first in a pre-revolutionary society – were the cornerstone of Mao Zedong’s theories. Mao’s faith in the peasantry as a revolutionary body was first expressed in his essay on Hunan, which the Moroccan student cites above. Moreover, Mao’s Hunan report impacted the Cultural Revolution, and the Red Guards, in significant ways. In Mao’s original report, he described the spontaneous actions of the Hunan peasantry as they confronted their landlords and criticized them for various injustices.75 To further the humiliation of these exploitative landlords, the Hunan peasantry took to gluing posters to the back of their victims explaining their crimes, and marching them around in dunce caps. Later, in 1966, this became the chosen tactic of the Red Guards, as countless teachers, communist cadres, and government officials were humiliated in public.76 Mao’s 1927 essay therefore proved fundamental to the Cultural Revolution. It was also presented as a book with a global appeal, whose lessons could be applied to societies as far away as Morocco.

As at home, Mao’s global image was one of action. The Red Guards often presented Mao as a figure who was inspiring people to great revolutionary heights, just as he had done in China during the Cultural Revolution. This characterization also fit into Mao’s core belief of continuous revolution. The Cultural Revolution was predicated on the notion that the original

74 Ibid.
75 See Levine and Panstov (2012), 171 – 175.
76 MacFarquhar (2006), 74.
Chinese revolution had become stale, and that a new generation of Chinese students was needed to reenergize the party and harness the potential of the masses. Conveying the sense that Mao was inspiring people to greater revolutionary heights abroad reinforced this concept of continuous revolution. The Red Guards therefore reprinted both letters and reports from foreigners which detailed their personal struggles against those who opposed Mao Zedong Thought. Sometimes these struggles could be prosaic but meaningful, as when a student from Tanzania wrote to the Red Guards to say that after receiving and reading _The Quotations of Chairman Mao_, he rushed right over to the local library and demanded that the book be included in their collection. This was a common theme that ran throughout Red Guard newspapers. The act of acquiring and then reading Mao Zedong’s political theory was described as revelatory, and as a means of expanding one’s political consciousness. These descriptions were also paternalistic, and foreigners were sometimes characterized as fawning and eager to consume whatever they could from China. A Red Guard newspaper reported that one student from West Pakistan followed Chinese students around all day begging them for a book on Mao Zedong Thought. The Chinese students finally relinquished and gave the Pakistani visitor some copies of Mao’s writing. In other reports, Mao Zedong Thought was described as “the spiritual food of the revolutionary people of Africa.” Even when times were particularly difficult, as with revolutionary movements in places like Angola, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, the Red Guards reported that the people were “still using Mao Zedong Thought to arm themselves.”

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For the Red Guards, Mao Zedong and Mao Zedong Thought were gateways to the wider world. Mao was not only the leader of the Red Guards and the Cultural Revolution, he was presented as a stateless figure whose revolutionary influence extended around the world. Mao the individual profoundly shaped the Cultural Revolution and controlled the direction, tone, and violence of the movement. Mao as a symbol, however, allowed the Red Guards to conceptualize and frame the Cultural Revolution beyond the borders of the Chinese state. His image and his political theories also became a means of Sinifying the outside world. Chinese students intently studied Mao Zedong Thought and used his political theories to arm themselves; Red Guard newspapers made it appear as if revolutionaries around the world were doing exactly the same thing. The language that became associated with Mao’s global cult of personality is also revealing. Mao was often described as a “beacon” and a “visionary” by the Red Guards, words that suggested his boundless appeal around the world.

Mao’s global image also suggests how influential the state was in shaping Red Guard ideology and dictating the terms of the Cultural Revolution. At times these terms were negotiated, and the students deployed state language in a unique fashion. When it came to Mao Zedong, however, most student groups simply adopted the language of the state and applied it to the Cultural Revolution. Mao’s cult of personality was almost inseparable from the student movement, which also meant that Mao’s image was closely intertwined with the way in which the students’ globalized the Chairman. Much of this had to do with Mao’s cultural resonance not just during the Cultural Revolution, but throughout his tenure as Chairman of the Communist Party. Mao became a weapon that could be used to justify a host of political actions and destructive behaviors. As much as Mao was a weapon, he was also a shield, and many people evoked his name during the Cultural Revolution to stave off attack or to avoid criticism from
belligerent Red Guard units. Finally, Mao was cultural currency, perhaps the most valuable currency that the students could use during the Cultural Revolution. This cultural currency was only made more valuable through global narratives. Increasing the resonance of Mao’s cult meant conflating his theories and his image with global revolution. Acting in Mao’s name was therefore not only a means of defending the CCP, it was also a way of preserving global revolution and continuing the struggle against revisionism and imperialism.

**Conclusion**

Today, Mao’s place in Chinese society is unclear. As a new generation of leaders takes power in China, Mao is sometimes pushed to the background of history, and often appears as a leader who laid the groundwork for China’s rise to power, but whose methods of accomplishing industrialization and modernization were not ideal. During the 1960s, however, there is no question that Mao was a central figure in Chinese society. It is important, however, to separate Mao Zedong the person, Mao Zedong Thought, and Mao’s cult of personality, each of which operated differently. Mao himself often functioned within a conglomerate of officials and had to shrewdly negotiate the vicissitudes of Chinese politics. Although he was clearly powerful within the party, he could not always exercise his will freely, and instead often had to use subterfuge to subvert rivals and to advance his political ideas. Mao Zedong Thought also proved malleable and was often changed depending on specific political circumstances. During the Cultural Revolution certain of Mao’s writings, like the “Report on an Investigation of the Hunan Peasantry,” became more popular and more relevant. So too did Mao’s writings on global revolution experience a greater popularity during the 1960s, both in China and around the world. In fact, publishing
houses compiled Mao’s writings on global revolution and issued them in a single volume, suggesting that this specific subject within his writing was important. This volume drew from writings and speeches that stretched all the way back to the 1930s. Much of Mao’s early political theory was also predicated on ending the cycle of imperialist abuse in China. He therefore wrote about Chinese communism as part of the international proletariat movement and global anti-colonialism. Unlike Mao’s cult of personality, Mao Zedong Thought had always been global in its scope.

The cult of Mao Zedong, however, was different, and global narratives were deployed with increasing frequency following the Sino-Soviet split. These narratives informed the cult and gave Mao’s image shape. The power of Mao’s image was largely due to the cultural aspects of the cult. This cult was predicated on concepts of ritual, ceremony, propaganda, text, and rhetoric; in short, it operated as a cultural institution with a profound political impact. It was also malleable and adoptable, and was given meaning by senior Communist officials like Lin Biao. Global narratives also became a means of constructing this cult and of giving it definition.

There are certain characteristics of Mao’s global cult of personality that I have highlighted in this chapter. The first is that Mao’s cult follows the same trajectory as global narratives. Faced by the challenges of the Sino-Soviet split and the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward, both Mao and the CCP gravitated toward global narratives to stake out their legitimacy and to reclaim any power lost as a result of both events. Global narratives were political currency that was used to increase the reach and the prestige of Mao Zedong’s cult of personality. This made Mao’s rule in China ostensibly unimpeachable; Mao specifically became the center of both the Cultural Revolution and the global revolution of the 1960s. These claims were made more believable and more authentic by the number of foreigners who did indeed embrace Maoism.
during the 1960s. Throughout the world, Mao’s image became synonymous with revolutionaries who wanted to confront the state, build mass movements, and radicalize politics. Many Maoists also made their way to China, and if they were lucky enough to meet the Chairman, they treated the experience as a religious moment. These visits served as evidence to propagate the Mao cult, and to demonstrate Mao’s global appeal.

Mao’s cult was built on ritual and repetition, both in one’s daily actions and in the language that was used to deify Mao. This made the cult much less negotiable. Global narratives flowed from the top of Chinese society, and were usually generated by the CCP and distributed to the Chinese people. The language and images surrounding Mao’s cult of personality were rigid and largely homogenous. The same goes for Mao’s global cult of personality; words like “beacon” and “visionary” appear over and over again to convey Mao’s global importance. The ritual that came to surround Mao’s cult of personality all but guaranteed uniformity. As Daniel Leese has noted, “the language of the Mao cult was aimed at demonstrating personal loyalty by relying on the indefinite capacity of language to produce statements that are ‘linguistically flawless by semantically empty.’”

According to Leese, this rigidity made Mao’s cult of personality largely hollow. Leese concludes that “the massive flattery employed during the Mao cult is an extreme example of language serving a ritual instead of transmissive function. It is the demonstration of a social skill rather than the relaying of the messages.” In many ways this assessment is correct. Praising Mao Zedong or pledging fidelity to his brand of revolution became so common that it bordered on the prosaic. We can see this in the student factionalism of the Cultural Revolution. The

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82 Ibid., 185.
differences among students were rooted in political ideology, social differences, and past experiences; what these groups all shared was an ostensible loyalty to Mao Zedong. But does this mean that the cult of Mao Zedong was devoid of any transmissive function, as Leese claims? In some instances, the answer is no. Indeed, Mao Zedong’s cult of personality became the primary vehicle for constructing and distributing global narratives. For many people, Mao was their entrance into the world, and served as a mediating tool that could be used to gauge foreigners’ support for Chinese politics. These aspects of the Mao cult embodied a larger campaign that began after the Sino-Soviet split and was meant to convey the importance of the PRC around the world. In previous chapters I have discussed the multiple methods through which this post-Soviet worldview was constructed and distributed. Mao Zedong’s cult of personality was perhaps the most viable means of distribution, and was used to expand the meaning of Chinese politics beyond the state. Mao also became a tool used to contextualize daily life in China through a global frame. The CCP made it appear as if the outside world was following the same trajectory as the PRC; revolutionaries and activists around the world studied and internalized Mao Zedong Thought, just as the Red Guards did in China. While the ritual of the Mao cult usually lacked any transmissive function, it was not completely empty or devoid of cultural and political meaning. Global narratives were inexorably bound to Mao Zedong and became a means of exerting power in Chinese society, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. The Mao cult was also a vehicle for distributing China’s post-Soviet worldview. Central to this worldview was seeing Mao Zedong not just as a great Communist revolutionary whose theories guided politics in the PRC, but also as a global figure whose importance and influence extended well beyond the state.
Conclusion

Several aspects of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution were unprecedented in the history of modern China. Party-states like the PRC tend to monopolize power, and rarely relinquish that power to non-party members. The Cultural Revolution was an exception. There are few other historical examples in which a political party launched a mass campaign whose targets were largely its own members, and then ceded control of this campaign to young people.¹ The result was a mass shearing of the party as high-ranking officials from Liu Shaoqi to Deng Xiaoping (twice) and Lin Biao were all purged. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution it seemed that each of these men could be Mao’s possible successor. These purges caused a major power vacuum at the top of the party so that by the time of Mao’s death a relatively unknown official, Hua Guofeng, succeeded the Chairman.

Political factionalism, mass campaigns, and internecine violence were all common features of political life in the PRC. The type and level of violence engendered by the Cultural Revolution, however, was unparalleled and left deep psychological scars in Chinese society. The Cultural Revolution often required that Chinese students “draw a line in the sand” by separating themselves from friends, family, classmates, and teachers who had supposedly harbored capitalist or revisionist tendencies. Previously stable communities were tore apart. Many people had no choice but to accept the Cultural Revolution; resisting the movement could have very negative consequences. If you weren’t on the attack during the Cultural Revolution then you

¹ At least this was the case between 1966 and 1968. I am not arguing for an autonomous student movement here. There is no doubt that Mao Zedong and members of the CCRG influenced the student movement and shaped the Cultural Revolution. However, when it comes to the day-to-day violence of the Cultural Revolution, radical party members found it difficult to control the students. Events like the Wuhan Incident in 1967, in which students directly confronted the army, demonstrated that students were not afraid to confront the power structures in Chinese society. The same is true of the burning of the British embassy in 1967, which outraged CCP officials like Zhou Enlai. By 1968, however, it appears that Mao and his colleagues had grown tired of semi-independent student movement and therefore decided to send the students to the countryside.
were in danger of being attacked, often physically. Violence and criticism therefore became a means of survival. The result was death on a mass level, either at the hands of the Red Guards or the Communist Party.

This makes studying the Cultural Revolution profoundly challenging. Much of this challenge lies in contextualizing and historicizing the Cultural Revolution without minimizing the violence and chaos of this period. Scholars have long been at work attempting to do exactly that. Since the Cultural Revolution began in 1966 political scientists, anthropologists, and sociologists have produced insightful analyses describing what happened during Cultural Revolution, the causes of student violence, and the roots of party and Red Guard factionalism. Historians have tended to focus on earlier periods of the PRC; only recently have historians begun to take a greater interest in the 1950s and the 1960s. What historians have to offer is both valuable and potentially risky. The task of the historian is to unpack, challenge, and upset common assumptions about the Cultural Revolution without excusing Mao and his allies or engaging in revisionist history that denies that calamity of this decade. This also means discussing the violence and the carnage of the decade within a broader historical perspective, and connecting the events of the Cultural Revolution to wider machinations in Chinese society.

Historicizing the Cultural Revolution also means challenging hardened narratives. One such narrative that has become ossified is that the Cultural Revolution was a period of isolation and insularity during which China was closed off from the rest of the world. This is largely due to the efforts of Deng Xiaoping and his successors in the Communist Party, who have used the Cultural Revolution as a means to justify capitalist reforms and to eschew extreme politics in favor of stability. Getting the Chinese people to go along with these reforms, which have proven to be both beneficial and traumatic, requires a dichotomy between the period of Mao and the
period of Deng. Today, Mao is often treated as a leader who made profound contributions to Chinese society: namely, that he ended the cycle of imperialist abuse, and laid the groundwork for mass industrialization in the PRC. His methods of achieving these goals, however, have been largely discarded, and the government tends to treat the Maoist period as the PRC’s fitful adolescence. This includes the party’s perception of China’s relationship with the world. Official propaganda suggests that one of Deng’s most important reforms was opening China up to the world, thereby undoing Mao’s policies of isolation.

Historicizing the Cultural Revolution is difficult for many reasons. While the CCP uses the Cultural Revolution as a means to justify capitalist reforms, it also prefers that the movement not be analyzed too closely by scholars both inside and outside of China. Rather than being open for close examination, the Cultural Revolution is entombed. We may be able to see it in everyday Chinese society, but it is difficult to approach the subject for a close investigation. This was brought home to me personally in 2011 when I was conducting research in the Beijing City Archives. Then, as now, obtaining documents from the Cultural Revolution is difficult. Upon arriving I explained to the archivist that I was a scholar writing a history of the Cultural Revolution. The archivist looked at me and replied that the Cultural Revolution was not history. In a way, she is correct. The Cultural Revolution is a part of China’s past, but it is not part of Chinese history. It remains sealed off and isolated from both the Maoist period and from China’s modern history.

In this dissertation I have attempted to unmoor the Cultural Revolution and the years leading up to the campaign from their geographical and temporal anchors. Specifically, I have brought a global perspective to bear on the Cultural Revolution. This global perspective, however, does not fall within the traditional auspices of world or transnational history. World
historians tend to focus on areas of the world where traditional borders are breached and where people, culture, and commodities come into contact with one another. In this dissertation I too have analyzed the world as a contact zone, and have specifically highlighted various foreigners who visited the PRC in the 1960s. However, to the PRC the world in the 1960s was more of a cultural product than it was a zone of contact. The CCP used actual contact with foreigners to extrapolate and imagine the world, and to imbue it with meaning that conformed to a Maoist ideology.

This approach allows for global history that is not necessarily predicated on contact and interaction. I have focused on individuals who globalized themselves and their society without ever actually leaving home. My intent has been to broaden the spectrum of historical inquiry while still conducting a global survey. Because world histories are often predicated on movement they inadvertently privilege historical subjects who had the means to be mobile. These histories have elucidated the nature of human contact, but also limited the scope of those who appear in global histories. By generally investigating how people understood the world as a political and cultural object, my work has not limited itself to those who actually met or interacted with foreigners. Instead it offers a broader survey of how the world functioned at multiple levels of Chinese society.

Studying the world in this manner has meant contending with the globe as it existed on an official level and as it was imagined by the CCP. I have attempted to sketch out this world here, highlighting the means by which it was constructed, distributed, and negotiated in Chinese society. This dissertation is not intended to be an analysis of policy; far from it. This is a dissertation that investigates how cultural tactics were used to transform the world into political currency. This study fits in with those scholars who have similarly privileged culture as a way to
view society in the PRC. Rather than analyze culture broadly, however, I have instead chosen to focus on one specific cultural object and the way that this object was transformed into a potent political symbol.

Transforming the world into a cultural symbol required an array of tactics, and the CCP employed language, constructed categories, images, and texts to give the world shape and to insure that the globe conformed to Maoist ideology. Language was perhaps one of the most potent tools used by the CCP and the Red Guards to construct the world and to distribute it to the Chinese population. The CCP developed a specific vocabulary that was used to describe and to map the world. This vocabulary was evoked constantly throughout mass campaigns like the Cultural Revolution. It was used to contextualize Mao’s cult – calling Mao a beacon and a global visionary – and to globalize the Red Guard movement. Events occurring abroad were described by the Red Guards as an extension of Chinese politics, and Red Guard newspapers in particular became the most viable way of internationalizing the student movement. So too were words like imperialism and revisionism deployed consistently throughout the Cultural Revolution. Events like the Sino-Soviet split and the Vietnam War gave these words new meaning, and altered the way they were deployed in Chinese society. Moreover, ideas of imperialism and revisionism were used to demonstrate the importance of Chinese politics and the centrality of Chinese society within the global revolution. Political language was therefore infused with global narratives and was used as a means to internationalize mass campaigns.

Language, however, was not the only tactic deployed by the CCP to construct the world. A number of categories were created following the Sino-Soviet split that divided foreigners into various groupings meant to reflect China’s new worldview. These groupings often depended on whether a country was friendly or hostile to the Soviet Union, or whether a person was from the

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2 Mittler (2012); Perry (2012); Clarke (2008).
West or from a Third World country. These categories were often constructed by the CCP and passed down to the general population, especially within China’s schools and universities, where foreigners often came to study. Chinese students were instructed on how to treat foreigners as well as told which foreigners were potential friends and which were foes of the PRC. So too did general categories impact China’s understanding of the Cold War. Following the Sino-Soviet split, the CCP saw the Cold War as a conflict between the West (the United States, Europe, and the Soviet Union) and the post-colonial world, encompassing Asia, Africa, and Latin America. China used these categories to pivot away from Soviet communism and to articulate a political ideology based on solidarity between those countries that had experienced colonial abuse. This meant privileging Third World revolutionaries and in creating affinities based on shared colonial histories. Of course, this language aside, China often adopted the role that they had spurned, and treated much of the Third World with a paternalistic attitude. The Third World was also viewed as a homogenous unit devoid of nuance. These new categories essentially created a hierarchy in which modern revolutionary ideology emitted from the PRC and flowed outward to the rest of the world.

Images, like propaganda, maps, and newspaper pictures were also key elements in constructing the world. These images were often saturated with Maoist imagery and with codes lifted directly from the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, the CCP engaged in a campaign to both map and to illustrate the outside world through these images. For example, propaganda posters depicting foreign revolutionary movements often contained an image of the red sun, which was meant to signify Mao Zedong’s presence. Maps were used to demonstrate the extent of protest movements in the 1960s. The civil rights movement, for example, often appeared in the Chinese press through maps, which detailed African American unrest across the United States. Many of
these images also conformed to the political realities of the PRC, and people were often depicted as engaging in the same revolutionary activities as they Red Guards, for example. Thus African revolutionaries appeared in *People’s Daily* wearing Red Guard armbands. Or foreigners were shown visiting famous revolutionary sites like Shaoshan. Through these images, the world was “Sinified” and was made easily recognizable to the larger Chinese public.

Although images, language, and categories each helped construct and politicize the world, it was texts, and specifically government reports and Red Guard newspapers that were most frequently used to incorporate global narratives into Chinese society. The archive and archival methods specifically became a means by which the world was made accessible to the Chinese public. Text and the archive were political spaces through which China’s worldview was mediated. The CCP and the Red Guards used text as irrefutable evidence of China’s importance around the world. Both groups assiduously recorded instances of foreign support, and government reports and Red Guard newspapers were turned into repositories for global narratives. The CCP specifically produced a wealth of text that was meant to confirm Mao’s global influence. Throughout this work I have attempted to analyze archival sources and newspapers both for their actual content, as well as historical sources in and of themselves. I treat these sources as historical artifacts that portray the means by which text was used to construct the world. The pervasiveness of these records also demonstrates how important global narratives were to maintaining power in the PRC. Their volume suggests that the CCP undertook a massive campaign to create a world that conformed to Chinese politics. Texts and archives became an important political and cultural space that helped sustain mass campaigns like the Cultural Revolution.
While I have explicitly attempted to globalize China’s 1960s and thereby expand the geographical scope of the movement, this study is also meant as a means to contextualize the Cultural Revolution within China’s modern history. The antecedents of the Cultural Revolution can be found not just in the founding of the PRC, but in the trajectory of the modern Chinese state. I would submit that the issues discussed in this dissertation capture a fundamental question that has been central in China since the 19th century: how to understand the world, and China’s place in that world. It is this question that has guided reform and revolution in China for nearly 150 years. And although the answer to these questions has differed tremendously from decade to decade, the questions themselves have remained the same. It was these questions that drove Cai Yuanpei, the great education reformer, to pen a short story about a futuristic world in which China was a model for reform around the globe. Other reformers used the world as a cautionary tale to demonstrate the dangers of a weak nation-state. Even the Guomindang used the world as a means to probe various political systems and cultural practices, settling on a party-state model that was favored by other new but powerful countries, like Germany.

By studying global narratives we can therefore feel along the contours of the modern Chinese state. Global narratives have always been important to politics and culture in China, and they have influenced reformers and revolutionaries for generations. So too can scholars use global narratives to better understand the development of the state, as well as China’s general

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3 For example, scholars of the Cultural Revolution have focused a great deal of attention on the destruction of culture that occurred during the movement. However, many of China’s modern ruling parties, from the Guomindang to the CCP, have had a fitful relationship with traditional Chinese culture. For example, during the Northern Expedition in 1927, when the Guomindang swept China’s warlords from power, they also oversaw the wholesale seizure and destruction of countless local temples and religious sites in the countryside. The Nationalist government strongly believed that local superstitions were one of the key hurdles preventing the formation of a modern nation-state. Rebecca Nedostup details how people of the town of Shangshui in Henan took to the streets one day in October, 1928 and smashed most of the temples, statues, and religious artifacts that they could get their hands on. This same scene was repeated over and over again during the Cultural Revolution. See Rebecca Nedostup Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 67-68.

4 Countries like Poland and Turkey were used as examples of what could happen to a country who did not stand up to foreign pressure. See Karl (2002).
attitude toward the outside world. These global narratives reflect the vicissitudes of Chinese politics as well. In the case of the 1960s, they portray both the coming of the Cultural Revolution as well as the diminution of revolution as a mode of politics – specifically in their disappearance following the end of the Red Guard movement and the arrival of President Nixon in 1972.

Despite these changes, the central question about China’s place in the world is still very relevant today. This fact is on display at the National Museum in Beijing, which reopened its doors in 2011 after a major renovation project. In the days leading up to the museum’s reopening, officials promoted a new exhibit that recounted the history of modern China from the Opium Wars in 1840 to the present. The exhibit was titled “Road to Rejuvenation” and was meant to demonstrate how China has recovered from imperialist abuses to form a strong nation-state. As expected the section on the Maoist period was devoid of much detail; however, it did include a series of pictures like the one shown below. Here Mao is represented once again at the center of a multitude of nations. This, of course, is a more anodyne interpretation of the past that is devoid of any militancy and truculence. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that the state continues to use global images as a means to stake out its history and the way it sees itself today. Any history of modern China, even up to the present, must therefore account for the global dimensions of Chinese society. China’s politics and culture, as well as its reformers and revolutionaries, have all been shaped by a desire to understand and articulate China’s position in the world. At times, as in the 1960s, that search became deeply intertwined with revolutionary politics, and provided a platform with which the CCP and the Red Guards could proclaim their legitimacy, exert power, and conduct revolutionary politics on a massive and ultimately destructive scale.

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5 This picture comes from the Chinese National Museum. It was shown in an exhibit which opened in 2011 titled “Road to Rejuvenation.” Photo taken by the author.
During the 1960s, China may not have been an active part of the world, but the world was a part of China. In fact, global narratives became intimately bound up with radical politics, and Mao, the CCP, and Chinese students all used these narratives to stake out claims of legitimacy and exert power in Chinese society. The idea that China could somehow recede from the world is a misrepresentation of the way in which the world works. Isolation is a relative term, and exists on multiple levels. China may have been diplomatically isolated, as many countries
sided with the Soviet Union during the Sino-Soviet split (largely out of fear of Soviet reprisal), but the world still seeped in, and China used the world as a means of composing Maoist politics. In some cases the world entered China unadulterated, as when Chinese students or government officials received foreign guests who supported PRC. In other instances, however, the world became a cultural symbol and a means to claim legitimacy. It was malleable, mediated, and imbued with meaning. It was also constructed along familiar Chinese lines. The CCP and the Red Guards used Maoist political and cultural symbols to make the world accessibly and easily incorporated into mass campaigns. This made the world a very powerful tool. Global narratives gave the CCP and the Red Guards power to act not just in defense of the Chinese state, but for the entire world. In the end, the world proved itself to be a perfect platform for the PRC’s most radical decade.
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