

CHINA'S IRREDENTA: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN ELITE VIEWS OF MONGOLIA

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Historically, China was an expansionist empire. The Tang and Ming dynasties extended Chinese influence to "outer barbarians" through "rule-by-virtue" and payment of tribute to the Chinese court.¹ But this Chinese conception of world order did not always correspond with fact. The normative theory of an emperor who held a mandate from heaven to rule the empire by benevolence was contradicted by the fact that the nomads of Inner Asia held the balance of forces. The Great Wall is evidence that the tributary system was not totally effective in maintaining a sinocentric world order. It is a symbol of China's inability to control its northern frontiers through the tributary system and also of its inability to expand northward and conquer the nomadic tribes. Nearly every Ming account of wars with the Mongols mentions the Great Wall as the boundary of "China proper" and as a barrier against "barbarian" encroachment.²

During the Qing dynasty, the Manchus wedded their military supremacy with the centripetal forces of Chinese culture to directly control or claim to be "suzerain" over vast regions, including Xinjiang, Tibet and Mongolia. But even this vast empire was defined more in cultural terms than by clearly delimited boundaries. This "idea of a cultural core area . . . has remained potent and continuous in the Chinese consciousness."³ The power of the historical greatness and

¹ John K. Fairbank, "Introduction: The Old Order," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 10, eds. Dennis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 30-31. See also Mark Mancall, "The Ch'ing Tribute System: An Interpretive Essay," in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

² Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3, 22-23.

³ Tu Wei-ming, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center," *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (Spring 1991), 3. See also Waldron, *The Great Wall of China*, 180-81.

glory of China's past over the present is evidenced by the fact that many Chinese today continue to hold a normative vision of a China with boundaries that correspond with the borders of the Manchu empire at the height of the Qing dynasty.

The borders of the Manchu empire were, however, "soft," and tributary status bestowed upon other national entities the right to trade with China under specified conditions. Yet this did not guarantee them the protection of the Qing court. The only true "protectorates" were Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet which the Manchus considered "dependencies" of the Qing court.⁴ At the height of Manchu Qing power, territory outside the eighteen Chinese provinces was under the control of Manchu tribesman; Chinese officials were seldom, if ever, appointed as local administrators. These Manchu "conquests" were not regarded as part of China and were administered (except for Manchuria) through the *Lifan yuan* (Court of Colonial Affairs). Chinese were also not permitted to settle in these regions.

During the latter Qing, the Manchus' nominal control over their frontiers was challenged, especially by the West. Russian and British expansion, and later Japanese encroachment, alarmed the Manchus about the possible loss of Xinjiang, Mongolia and Tibet as buffer regions, and Manchuria as their ancestral homeland. This external threat, combined with growing population pressure in China, resulted in a belated attempt to bolster the Manchu empire by allowing Chinese to colonize these regions.⁵ For the Manchus, the purpose of these dependencies was to preserve peace and "forestall the rise of rival powers."⁶ For the Chinese, on the other hand, these territories were an attractive region for settlement and economic expansion.

Following the 1911 Revolution, the new government claimed that the "suzerain" relationship between the Manchu court and these "dependencies" provided the basis of the Republic of China's claim to sovereignty over these formerly "tributary" states as a "natural consequent development."⁷ Responding to a request to define the territorial limits of China during the Simla Conference of 1914, which

⁴ Joseph Fletcher, "Ch'ing Inner Asia c. 1800," in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 10, 38.

⁵ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Chinese: Their History and Culture*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1954), 542-44; Fletcher, "Ch'ing Inner Asia c. 1800," 37-38.

⁶ Fletcher, "Ch'ing Inner Asia c. 1800," 106.

⁷ Ting-tsz Kao, *The Chinese Frontiers* (Palatine, Ill.: Chinese Scholarly Publishing Co., 1980), 92-94, 125, 196, 203, 222; Du Hengzhi, *Zhongwai tiaoyue guanxi zhi bianqian* (Taipei: Zhonghua wenwu gongying she, 1981), 153.

attempted to negotiate a boundary between China and British India, the Chinese representative asserted: "The Republic has no right to alienate any part of the territory which she has inherited from the Manchu dynasty, and she must maintain the extent of her territory the same as before."⁸ But the Manchu had ruled this part of their empire separately from China proper and had endeavored to prevent the extension of Chinese influence beyond the eighteen provinces, allowing it to happen, to the extent that it did, only reluctantly.

The role of the frontier regions as buffers protecting the heartland of China was also an important consideration.⁹ In 1919, as the Mongolian independence movement gained momentum, the Chinese official in Urga (Ulaanbaatar) described the impact of Mongolian independence on China's security as more threatening than the ongoing civil war because it could mean the loss of sovereignty in the entire northwest.¹⁰ Contemporary Chinese writers echo the same sentiments: "From a purely geographical point of view, China looked like a heart; but now, without Outer Mongolia, the heart shape is incomplete. In a way, when Mongolia is in enemy hands, it becomes a dagger in China's heart."¹¹

The Republic Of China, Russia And Mongolian Independence

Resentful of Chinese colonialism and taking advantage of the chaos in China following the October 1911 revolution, "Outer" Mongolia declared independence in December and selected the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu (the Living Buddha of Urga) as the leader of an independent Mongolian nation.¹² Mongols argued that they had enjoyed a special relationship with the Manchu court and that Mongolia was not an integral part of China. Because of the weakness of its new

⁸ Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Documents Concerning the Simla Conference*, appendix 11, quoted in Kao, *The Chinese Frontiers*, 227.

⁹ George Moseley, *The Party and the National Question in China* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966), 14.

¹⁰ *Zhong-E guanxi shiliao, Wai Menggu (1917-1919)* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, 1929), 409.

¹¹ Luke T. Chang, *China's Boundary Treaties and Frontier Disputes* (New York: Oceana Pub., 1982), 167.

¹² For a detailed account upon which the following is based, see Allen S. Whiting, *Soviet Policies in China, 1917-1924* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954); Gerard M. Friters, *Outer Mongolia and its International Position* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1949), 151-216; and Thomas Ewing, *Between the Hammer and the Anvil? Chinese and Russian Policies in Outer Mongolia, 1911-1921* (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1980).

government, China was unable to use military pressure to force the integration of Outer Mongolia with the new Chinese republic.

The Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu characterized his newly independent country as "a lonely and isolated spot, in a critical condition, like piled up eggs, in the midst of neighboring nations."¹³ Ever since Russian expansion into the Far East and the extension of China's power north of the Great Wall, Mongolia has been an arena of Russo-Chinese competition. Historically, Russia viewed Mongolia as a classic buffer state, much like Afghanistan. On the other hand, China saw Mongolia as an integral part of China. In light of these geopolitical circumstances, Mongolia looked to Russia for support. With the assistance of first the Czar and then the Bolsheviks, Mongolia was able to resist all Chinese attempts to assert sovereignty over the region.

Yuan Shikai, as President of the Republic of China, made a personal appeal to the Khutukhtu for unity. His arguments are remarkable because they not only reveal Yuan's Chinese chauvinism, but the Urga Khutukhtu's understanding of *realpolitik* and Mongolia's precarious position. After several unanswered telegrams from Yuan, the Khutukhtu responded:

Mongolia and China differ in customs and in religion. Their written and spoken languages are entirely unlike. We are in a far corner and there is no mutual understanding of one another. . . . If the poor stupid Mongols were to dwell in the same house with the cultured sons of Han, there would be likelihood of feuds arising which would result in conflict. . . .

Therefore we should establish ourselves in amity and peace as neighboring states each adhering to its own territory and preserving its integrity.

As to the matters of trade and those of travel and delimitation of boundaries, it will be to our mutual advantage to invite a neighboring state to act as intermediary.

President Yuan rebutted:

We are men of the same race. . . . For many centuries, our peoples have shared the same roof and have grown and become one family. . . . There is danger and peril to you and to us if Outer Mongolia is severed from China.

¹³ *Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations Between Russia (and the Soviet Union) and Other States, 1910-29* (National Archives Microfilm Publications), microcopy no. 340, 761.93/88).

Look at the territories around us and say if there be any. . . which has escaped annexation after its separation from China. Verily, the relation that lies between Mongolia and China is like that of the "lips to the teeth" of the "entrance hall to the main building." Your Holiness will doubtlessly be able to perceive where danger lurks and where safety lies. Thrust not incalculable harm on the people of Outer Mongolia. It is earnestly hoped that you will appreciate rightly my frank and open presentation of the actual situation. . . .

The Living Buddha countered:

As to whether happiness or disaster shall result, will depend upon the considerate treatment of Your Excellency. If we may hope for your assistance in establishing internal government, peaceful foreign relations, a satisfactory arrangement of boundaries and in firmly laying the foundation of the states, then not only will Mongolia be preserved intact, but China herself will have no cause for anxiety on her northern borders. I, the lama, am by nature stupid, but I understand the duties of a neighbor. . . . Truly Outer Mongolia is a lonely and isolated spot, in a critical condition, like piled up eggs, in the midst of neighboring nations. . . . In the event of any unforeseen occurrence she would share the fate of Formosa and Korea. . . . Thus placed between strong powers we find it alike difficult to advance or retire. If we do not maintain independence how shall we escape the fisherman's net? As the situation now stands our preservation or destruction depends upon the attitude of Your Excellency. If you hold to a course too severe, I cannot be responsible for the consequences. Will it not be driving us to desperate courses?

Yuan's final telegram appealed to the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu to rescind Mongolia's declaration of independence:

Today when the five races are united in an effort to form a new government, I, the President, and you, Reverend Sir, are like the hand and foot of the same body, like elder and younger brother in the same family, sharing together good fortune or ill. . . . Why should we trouble others to meddle in the affair to the loss of sovereignty? I earnestly hope that you will with broad charity consider the general welfare and cancel the declaration of independence very soon and unite with us as a single nation. Thus the threatening danger may be averted and the foundation of the state made strong. . . .

The Khutukhtu countered:

Your work in uniting the five races and laying the foundation of the republic has aroused the admiration of all, at home and abroad.

But we of the Mongolian Banner in this period of wrangling and contest find ourselves living on the dangerous frontier and are in circumstances quite unlike those of the other races. . . .

With regard to your statement about "troubling others to meddle in the matter to the loss of sovereignty," although I am not intelligent I have a general understanding of your meaning. Under the pressure of the present condition, however, no other course is open.

Otherwise it is difficult to conjecture "in whose hands the deer will die."¹⁴

China, failing to achieve its objectives through direct negotiations with Urga, turned to Russia in its efforts to assert sovereignty over Mongolia. Russia's objective, however, was to preserve Mongolia's autonomy, much as Britain had done in Tibet; and to ensure Moscow's commercial and other privileges in Mongolia, granted earlier by the Manchu court.

Sino-Russian negotiations on Mongolia began in November 1912. China pressed for recognition of its "sovereignty" over Outer Mongolia. Russia insisted on three conditions: no Chinese occupation, administration, or colonization in Outer Mongolia. An agreement was reached after nearly one year of negotiations. Russia recognized Chinese "suzerainty" over Outer Mongolia in exchange for Beijing's acceptance of Mongolian "autonomy." It also was agreed that Russia would facilitate the establishment of relations between Urga and Beijing, and the boundaries of Mongolia would be negotiated in the near future.¹⁵

China was no doubt somewhat appeased by the agreement, but Mongolia felt betrayed. The prime minister of Mongolia sent a protest

¹⁴ *Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations Between Russia (and the Soviet Union) and Other States, 1910-29* (National Archives Microfilm Publications), microcopy no. 340, 761.93/88-89.

¹⁵ For treaties see *Supplement to The American Journal of International Law* 10, no. 4 (October 1916), 230-57. For legal implications of agreements see E.T. Williams, "The Relations Between China, Russia and Mongolia," *The American Journal of International Law* 10, no. 4 (1916), 798-808; Louis Nemzer, "The Status of Outer Mongolia in International Law," *The American Journal of International Law* 33, no. 3 (1939), 452-64.

to Beijing, declaring that the Mongolian government "considered its relations with China severed forever."¹⁶ Nevertheless, a tripartite agreement was finally signed in June 1915. It included agreements on trade, taxes, etc., but did not establish the boundary, only a neutral zone between Outer and Inner Mongolia. However, the conditions under which this agreement was concluded changed dramatically two years later, following the overthrow of the czar and the October Revolution.

In 1919, Beijing made its intentions clear when the Chinese foreign minister dismissed the tripartite agreement as "nothing but a diplomatic trick of a temporary character."¹⁷ The new Bolshevik government was in no position to assist Mongolia in resisting China's attempts to reassert hegemony over Outer Mongolia. Under extreme pressure from Beijing, the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu "petitioned" for the abolition of Mongolia's autonomy in November 1919, and China gladly "complied." Reassertion of Chinese control did not last long, however. Mongolia became one of the battlefields of the Russian civil war, and the Chinese were driven from Urga in 1921 by White Russians, but the Whites were soon defeated by the Bolsheviks.

Led by Mongolian Marxists Sukhe Baatar and Choybalsan, and with the blessings of the Urga Khutukhtu and the support of the Soviet Union, a revolutionary regime was established in Urga in 1921. But the Soviet Union, like Czarist Russia earlier, still used Mongolia as a bargaining chip in its relations with China, and in May 1924 it recognized China's full sovereignty over Outer Mongolia. A month later, however, following the death of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, Mongolia declared its independence as the Mongolian People's Republic. The capital, Urga, was renamed Ulaanbaatar (Red Hero), and Choybalsan eventually became premier. China's own internal problems and impotence prevented it from ever reasserting control. The most it could do was protest Soviet-Mongolian agreements.

Nationalist And Communist Attitudes Toward Mongolia

This policy of the new republican government of China toward Mongolia also reflected the early views of Sun Yat-sen. Even after Mongolia declared independence, Sun did not resign himself to the permanent separation of Mongolia from China. He warned his "Mon-

¹⁶ Friters, *Outer Mongolia and its International Position*, 174.

¹⁷ Quoted in Friters, *Outer Mongolia and its International Position*, 186.

golian compatriots" of Russia's "aggressive and ambitious" designs.¹⁸ In 1923, while negotiating for Soviet assistance, Sun extracted a statement from the Soviets that "it is not, and never has been, the intention or the objective of the present Russian government to carry out imperialistic policies in Outer Mongolia, or to work for Outer Mongolian independence from China."¹⁹

Yet, as would be the case with later Chinese leaders, political realities forced Sun Yat-sen to modify his vision of a greater China. After being expelled from the government by Yuan Shikai in 1913, the Guomindang (Nationalists), under Sun, eventually adopted a more liberal policy. When Sun was considering going to war in order to oust Yuan, he was warned that civil war could very well result in "the takeover of Mongolia," but Sun indicated that what remained would be the "true China."²⁰ Under the influence of Comintern advisors at the First National Convention of the Guomindang, held in January 1924, Sun also accepted the principle of national self-determination.

But the Guomindang, under the leadership of Sun's successor, Chiang Kai-shek, rejected the right of self-determination; in the Provisional Constitution of 1931, Mongolia was included in the territorial definition of China.²¹ Yet as the Nationalists' power base declined, it grudgingly accepted the right of self-determination and recognized the Mongolian People's Republic as an independent state.

Following the defeat of Japan in 1945, an independent Mongolia was a reality that China had to accept because of Soviet insistence on Mongolia's independence at the Yalta conference in 1945 and the acquiescence of the United States and Great Britain. The realities of *realpolitik* forced Chiang Kai-shek to cloak his normative images of China in order to placate his American allies and facilitate the conclusion of an alliance with the Soviet Union, hopefully to strengthen his hand against the Chinese Communists. Chiang set forth this change in Guomindang policy on August 24, 1945, just ten days after the

¹⁸ Sidney H. Chang and Leonard H.D. Gordon, *All Under Heaven: Sun Yat-sen and His Revolutionary Thought* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1991), 44.

¹⁹ "Joint Manifesto of Sun Yat-sen and A.A. Joffe" (January 26, 1923), in *A Documentary History of Chinese Communism*, eds., Conrad Brandt, Benjamin Schwartz and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 70.

²⁰ C. Martin Wilbur, *Sun Yat-sen: Frustrated Patriot* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 81-82.

²¹ *China Yearbook, 1934* (Shanghai: The North-China Daily News and Herald, Ltd., 1934), 466.

conclusion of a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with the USSR. Chiang proclaimed that:

If frontier racial groups situated in regions outside the provinces have the capacity for self-government and a strong determination to attain independence . . . our government should, in a friendly spirit, voluntarily help them to realize their freedom . . . and as equals of China we should entertain no ill will or prejudices against them because of their choice to leave the mother country.²²

In a plebiscite held in Mongolia on October 20, 1945, the vote was nearly unanimous in favor of independence. The following year, the Republic of China recognized the Mongolian People's Republic as an independent state.

Recognizing the independence of Outer Mongolia was a bitter pill for Chiang to swallow, but a necessary expedient in order to conclude an alliance with the Soviet Union. The Republic of China rationalized its recognition of the MPR as a benevolent act--a "momentous decision. . . [based] on the assumption that by consenting to these infringements upon her territorial sovereign rights to a wartime ally, China might contribute to the cause of peace."²³ No doubt reflecting the feelings of many Chinese, one Chinese scholar characterized the treaty with the Soviets in the same light as the many previous treaties China was compelled to conclude with western powers:

Of course China was free to resist such arbitrary measures. But the brutal fact was that she had been at war with Japan for eight long years. She could not fight three more enemies. The only path open to this war-torn country was the signing of a new unequal treaty with the Soviet Union!²⁴

Also, like the Guomindang's policy, the Chinese Communist Party's policy toward Mongolia underwent several incarnations. The Manifesto of the Second National Congress of the CCP, held in July of 1922, spelled out the Party's policy toward Mongolia:

²² *The Collected War-time Messages of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek*, Vol. 2 (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969), 857.

²³ *China Presents Her Case to the United Nations* (New York: Chinese Delegation to the United Nations, 1949), 11

²⁴ Kao, *The Chinese Frontiers*, 175.

The CCP struggles to secure . . . the following objectives: . . . the liberation of Mongolia, Tibet, and Sinkiang. . . . [And] the establishment of a Chinese Federated Republic by the unification of China proper, Mongolia, Tibet, and Sinkiang into a free federation.²⁵

But this statement is ambiguous: did "Mongolia" include both "Inner" Mongolia and "Outer" Mongolia? The Mongolian People's Republic had declared its independence the previous year. As was the case with the Guomindang under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen, the Chinese Communist Party also eventually adopted a policy that recognized the right of self-determination. This issue caused friction between the CCP and the Guomindang during the First United Front. In 1924, many Nationalists protested the Communists' support of Mongolian independence.²⁶ Following the breakdown of the united front, at the First All-China Congress of Soviets held in November 1931, a resolution on the "Question of National Minorities" declared:

The Chinese Soviet Republic categorically and unconditionally recognizes the right of national minorities to self-determination. This means that in districts like Mongolia . . . where the majority of the population belongs to non-Chinese nationalities, the toiling masses of these nationalities shall have the right to determine for themselves whether they wish to leave the Chinese Soviet Republic and create their own independent state . . . or form an autonomous area inside the Chinese Soviet Republic. . . . The Chinese Soviet Republic shall also support . . . national minorities that have already won their independence as, for example, the Outer Mongolian National Republic.

In the Fundamental Law (constitution) of the Chinese Soviet Republic it shall be clearly stated that all national minorities within the confines of China shall have the right to national self-determination, including secession from China and the formation of independent states, and that the Chinese Soviet Republic fully and unconditionally recognizes the independence of the Outer Mongolian People's Republic.²⁷

Despite these statements, subsequently irredentist views were expressed. But following the conclusion of a neutrality pact between

²⁵ "Manifesto of the Second National Congress of the CCP" (July 1922), in *A Documentary History of Chinese Communism*, 64. See also Zhu Xinfan, *Zhongguo geming yu Zhongguo shehui ge jieji*, Vol. 1 (Shanghai: Lianhe Shudian, 1930), 272-74, 278.

²⁶ Wilbur, *Sun Yat-sen: Frustrated Patriot*, 242.

²⁷ *Fundamental Laws of the Chinese Soviet Republic* (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc., 1934), 78-83.

the Soviet Union and Japan in April 1941 in which the territorial integrity of the MPR was affirmed, references to the "sacred task" of recovering "lost" territory no longer included Outer Mongolia.²⁸ Recognition of the independence of the Mongolian People's Republic was necessary because of support it received from the Soviet Union, and for the sake of an anti-Japanese united front, the status of Mongolia could not be openly questioned. Later statements confirm, however, that the Communists were not reconciled to the fact of an independent Mongolia, though it was unlikely that it would ever become part of a greater China.

The ambiguity of CCP policy toward Mongolia also is illustrated in the textbook *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*, used to train Party cadre. Originally published in 1939, it describes the territorial boundaries of China:

The present boundaries of China are: Bordering on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the northeast, northwest and a portion of the west.

There was no mention of Mongolia. The revised edition published in 1952 does demonstrate how CCP views were circumscribed in light of political considerations:

The present boundaries of China are: Bordering on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the northeast, northwest and a portion of the west. Bordering on the Mongolian People's Republic in the north.²⁹

Mao Zedong, much like Chiang Kai-shek, betrayed his irredentism toward Mongolia. In an interview with Edgar Snow in 1936, Mao expressed his naive belief that "When the people's revolution has been victorious in China the Outer Mongolian republic will automatically become part of the Chinese federation, at their own will."³⁰ In a July 1944 interview with Gunther Stein, Mao still held sentiments similar to those he had expressed to Edgar Snow earlier.

²⁸ Max Beloff, *Soviet Policy in the Far East, 1944-1951* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 92-93. See also "Statement of the Communist Party of China" (April 21, 1941), in Anna Louise Strong, *China's New Crisis*, Key Books No. 14 (London: Fore Publications Ltd., n.d.), 49-51.

²⁹ Mao Zedong, *Zhongguo geming yu Zhongguo gongchandang* (Zhangjiakou: Xinhua shudian, 1945), 1; revised edition, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1952. Mao did not author this chapter, but he did edit it.

³⁰ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 96.

Outer Mongolia is part of China. . . . China must first recognize Outer Mongolia as a national entity. Then organize a sort of United States of China to meet their aspirations. We believe they will come to join.³¹

While in Moscow in early 1950 to negotiate the Sino-Soviet alliance, Mao also raised the issue of Mongolia's independence with Stalin. Although little has been written about this issue, it is clear that Mao made known his desire for the eventual "reunion" of Mongolia with China. But Mao did not allow his irredentist dreams to block conclusion of a Sino-Soviet treaty--a "bitter pill to swallow for a man who had been obsessed since his earliest boyhood with the disintegration of the Chinese empire, and who had always defined the empire in the broadest possible terms."³² That the MPR and the USSR were apprehensive of China's irredentism toward Mongolia is evidenced by Stalin's insistence on a joint declaration that acknowledged the MPR's independence.

Sensitive to popular Chinese feelings regarding the status of Outer Mongolia, the CCP published the following statement:

During the time the new Sino-Soviet Treaty and Agreements were signed, . . . China and the Soviet Union exchanged notes to the effect that both governments affirmed that the independent status of the M.P.R. was fully guaranteed as the result of its plebiscite of 1945. . . .

To each and every truly patriotic Chinese, our recognition of Mongolia as an independent state was a right and proper act, but to the reactionary bloc of the Kuomintang, which was somewhat compelled to accord recognition to Mongolia, it has always been a bitter memory. . . . "The independence of Mongolia is the loss of Chinese territory," they said. Among our people, there are some . . . who have been contaminated with the sentiments of

³¹ Gunther Stein interview with Mao, July 14, 1944, in United States Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws (91st Cong. 1st sess.), *The Amerasia Papers: A Clue to the Catastrophe of China*, Vol. 2 (Wash., D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), 982. See also, Gunther Stein, *The Challenge of Red China* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1945), 244-45, 442-43.

³² "Talk at the Chengdu Conference, March 10, 1958," *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* (1969 edition), 163-64; M.S. Kapitsa, *KNR: trideyatiletiya, tri de politiki* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1979), 31-32; A. Kruchinin and V. Olgin, *Territorial Claims of Mao Tse-tung: History and Modern Times* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Pub. House, 1971), 25; quote from Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 256.

"suzerainty," and they think the map of China appears out of shape and unreal without Mongolia. These are the people who have been intoxicated by the poison of "Hanism." . . . While the various ethnical [sic] groups within China were still under the oppression of both imperialism and feudalism and while their liberation was still very far off, Mongolia found rightful assistance from a socialist country--the Soviet Union--and by its own hard struggle achieved liberation and independence. Such liberation and independence we Chinese should hail, and we should express our respect to the Mongolian people. We should learn from them, we should not oppose their independence, we should not drag them to share our suffering. . . . Therefore, our attitude should be one recognizing its independence and not one pulling them back to our fold and making them follow us again.³³

Despite the 1950 declaration affirming Mongolia's independence, the issue was raised a second time following the death of Stalin, during Khrushchev's first trip to Beijing in October 1954. According to Khrushchev's memoirs, Zhou queried, "What would you think if Mongolia became part of the Chinese state?" Khrushchev declined to speak for Mongolia but did not, at the time, voice strong opposition.³⁴ *Pravda* reported:

The existence of an independent Mongolian state which maintains friendly relations with the USSR and other countries of socialism does not suit the Chinese leaders. They would like to deprive the Mongolian People's Republic of independence, to make it a Chinese province. The CPR leaders proposed to N.S. Khrushchev . . . that they "reach agreement" on just this.³⁵

According to later Soviet accounts of the meeting, however, Khrushchev insisted that the status of Mongolia was not negotiable. Although the Soviets may have refused to reconsider the status of the

³³ *New China Daily* (Nanjing) (March 5, 1950), quoted in Robert A. Rupen, "The Mongolian People's Republic and Sino-Soviet Competition," in *Communist Strategies in Asia*, ed., A. Doak Barnett (New York: Praeger, 1963), 288-89.

³⁴ *Khrushchev Remembers: the Last Testament*, trans. and ed. by Strobe Talbott (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), 285, 325. See also *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* (1969 edition), 540; Kruchinin and Olgin, *Territorial Claims of Mao Tse-tung: History and Modern Times*, 25.

³⁵ *Pravda* (September 2, 1964), in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 16, No. 34 (September 16, 1964), 5-7; *New York Times* (September 6, 1964), 3.

MPR, evidence suggests that an agreement was reached to allow greater Chinese influence.³⁶

Conclusion

Since the establishment of the CCP, its policy toward the MPR has been inconsistent. Although its position was at times moderated, it is clear that Mao and other leaders of the CCP believed that territory formerly administered by the Qing dynasty should be restored to China. Officially stated rationale aside, other factors account for this inconsistency. Mao was a more chauvinistic Chinese nationalist than other Communists who had been trained abroad, such as the returned students who became influential during the Jiangxi Soviet when the CCP clearly stated its support for Mongolia's independence. On several occasions, Mao indicated his obsession with the disintegration of the Chinese empire. Clear examples of this are the interviews with Edgar Snow and Gunther Stein cited earlier.³⁷ Mao's support for the Party's official policy, as possibly the case with others, was due in part to an idealistic view of the historical unity of China. Mao believed that denouncing Chinese chauvinism would allay Mongolian apprehension of Chinese hegemony and result in the eventual inclusion of Mongolia in a federated Chinese republic.

It is clear that the continuity in elite attitudes toward Mongolia, which transcend conflicting political ideologies, is deeply rooted in a shared image of an earlier Chinese empire and the desire to realize its restoration in modern times. Despite the fact that this image influenced the Communists' perceptions of Mongolia, the dynamics of the international system also play a role, as they did historically; and the PRC's aspirations toward Mongolia were tempered by the realities of *realpolitik*. This is also a clear example of how the PRC's territorial claims were muted by strategic considerations and rationalized by the argument that finally relinquishing China's ambitions in Mongolia was

³⁶ C.L. Sulzberger, "India and Russia--A Study in Contrasts," *New York Times* (February 14, 1955), 18; Alexander Kaznacheev, *Inside a Soviet Embassy: Experiences of a Russian Diplomat in Burma* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1962), 142. See also, Robert A. Rupen, "Partition in the land of Genghis Khan," *Current Scene* 2, No. 5 (September 27, 1962), 4; Robert A. Rupen, "The MPR and Inner Mongolia, 1964," *China News Analysis*, No. 540 (November 13, 1964), 2; George Ginsburgs and Carl Pinkele, "The Genesis of the Territorial Issue in the Sino-Soviet Dialogue: Substantive Dispute or Ideological Pas de Deux?" in *China's Practice of International Law: Some Case Studies*, ed., Jerome Alan Cohen (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 174.

³⁷ See also, Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*, 255-256.

"for every truly patriotic Chinese, a perfectly justified action, and something which deserves acclaim." But accepting Mongolia's independence is difficult for any Chinese because of the dissonance caused in their normative image of what China's territorial boundaries should be. A statement by a contemporary Chinese scholar underlines this point:

Such unbridled annexation of territory is rare in history. Moreover, people older than 40 years of age in today's China still remember how China's map was turned from a "mulberry leaf," as the school textbooks described it before 1945, into a "rooster," as current Chinese geographers characterize it, due to the nibbling away of Outer Mongolia by the Soviet worm.³⁸

Addendum

After being driven to Taiwan in 1949, the Guomindang rescinded its recognition of the MPR; Republic of China maps include "Mongolia" as a province while "Inner Mongolia" is divided into several smaller provinces. The Nationalists argued that recognition of Mongolian independence was contingent on the Soviets concluding a treaty of friendship and alliance. Following Soviet recognition of the Chinese Communists, the treaty was null and void, and therefore the ROC was no longer obligated to recognize the independence of Mongolia.

The "velvet revolution" in the MPR, in conjunction with the collapse of the Soviet Union, has created a new twist in ROC-Mongolia relations. Following no contact for over forty years, economic exchanges have been initiated, and Taipei has extended food assistance to Ulaanbaatar, but the ROC has deliberately obscured the issue of recognizing Mongolia's independence. At a press conference held for a Mongolian delegations visiting Taiwan, the Chinese banner welcomed the representatives of "Outer Mongolia." The democratic opposition in Taiwan also has gained representation in the National Assembly and Legislature and has begun to put pressure on the government to consider the "Mongolia question." The Guomindang now faces the dilemma of either recognizing the independence of a "child that has long ago left its mother's side" and strengthening relations with Ulaan-

³⁸ Hua Di, "China's Comprehensive Strategic Doctrine," *The Role of Technology in Meeting the Defense Challenges of the 1980s* (A special report of the Arms Control and Disarmament Program, Stanford University, 1981), 85-86. The date 1945 is notable given pre-WW II CCP statements supporting the independence of Mongolia.

baatar, or continuing its hidebound policy of seeking to restore the unity of China's historical empire.

After coming to power in 1949, the Communists recognized the Mongolian People's Republic. The dream of unification of Mongolia with China nevertheless continued for over a decade. It was not until the early years of the Sino-Soviet split, in an attempt to gain Ulaanbaatar's support in its dispute with Moscow, that the People's Republic of China agreed to finally negotiate a Sino-Mongolian boundary in 1962. Relations between Beijing and Ulaanbaatar continued to be only coolly cordial but are now complicated by the resurgence of Mongolian nationalism following Mongolia's democratic revolution.