

China's Regional Influence in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

Introduction

This essay would portray the influence that China had on the other Asian countries, especially during the second half of the twentieth century. The People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949 and quickly became a significant participant in determining the political, ideological, and strategic directions in this region of the world (Breslin, 2020). The purpose of this paper is to argue that the nature of China's leadership in this regard has changed drastically from the initial emergence of revolutionary leadership through Maoism to the later adoption of a pragmatic, state-centered leadership, motivated by the security needs of the region, and influenced by the Cold War. This paper will illustrate these changes in China's leadership style by examining the nature of China's ideological outreach to Asia, the use of military interventions, and the patterns of diplomacy adopted by China, and demonstrate that China's changing role in the region reflects and contributes to larger changes occurring in Asia between 1950 and 2000.

The thesis statement of this paper will be arguing about the evolution of China's influence over other Asian countries after World War II changed from an ideological leadership based on revolutionary principles to a form of pragmatic geopolitical relationship that affected the political landscape of Asia through the use of ideology, military force and diplomacy, as well as indicating the changing nature of China's priorities as defined by the Cold War.

Historical Background of China's Regional Emergence

While initiating the research, it became apparent that China's pathway since the end of the civil war as well as the foreign occupation in 1949 was heavily influenced by Cold War tensions worldwide. After gaining sovereignty for itself, the PRC attempted to present itself as the leader of an Asian movement against imperialism all over Asia (Breslin, 2020). At the beginning of the Cold War, China chose to ally with the USSR. However, as time went on, the alliance occurred under unequal circumstances, which led to a conflagration generated by ideology and strategy disputes.

Many newly independent nations in Asia were investigating possibilities for political systems and economic development based on models other than the Western capitalist model. The success of China as a country that had engaged in socialist change with a foundation of anti-colonial struggle established a successful model for many Asian countries. The revolutionary experience China went through resonated strongly with the societies of postcolonial countries, especially those with large rural populations. The information about the historical background is an important part of the explanation of how China's influence grew out of China to areas beyond its own borders during this time.

Ideological Influence and the Spread of Maoism

In the perspective of ideological influence which was one of the most crucial aspects of China's regional hegemony. During the rise of Mao Zedong, his reading of Marxism created an ideology that stressed mobilizing the rural population, engaging in revolution through guerrilla warfare, and developing a sense of self-reliance among revolutionaries (Plys, 2024). The model was extremely appealing to the revolutionary groups in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and policymakers in China provided those groups with both ideological education, and training,

propaganda, and organizational direction, in the 1950s and 1960s, on how to use Mao's Revolutionary Model. During their struggle against France and in the early stages of the Vietnam War, Vietnamese leaders used the revolutionary model derived from China as a major influence on their foreign policy and military strategy (Plys, 2024). Although Vietnam was an independent nation, it still had an internal presence of China in terms of influence in shaping its policies, strategy, and how its political structure was organised.

The supported views of assessment signifies the limitations in China's influence regarding ideology; in addition to analysing positive impacts, my assessment also identified negative consequences associated with the misuse of Maoist thought by the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia through direct application as an extreme level of violence and social breakdown. Ultimately example reflects how the idea China holds regarding the effect of ideologies within the country where it is being practiced is indirectly generated. Since local circumstances have great bearing upon how China and its ideologies have a bearing upon these areas as well as regions of interest (Plys, 2024). Additionally, as has now been demonstrated in current literature, revolutionary camaraderie doesn't necessarily create political cohesion nonethical results.

Military Intervention and Strategic Power

In the ideology of China, it is seen that China has used military intervention and displays of strength against regional rivals to defend its interests and promote its ideology. The Korean War was China's first major regional intervention supporting North Korea. When China supported North Korea in 1950, it sent a clear message to the world regarding the possible extent of its military might to support its ideology and challenge the United States. Research suggests

that China's military intervention remains a significant factor affecting the security landscape of East Asia (Bradley, 2021).

The military power of China was utilized through the provision of arms, training programs, and logistical support to friendly governments and insurgent movements. For example, in Vietnam, Chinese engineers helped build infrastructure and develop air defense systems with assistance from Chinese military advisors. The Chinese Communist Party also showed its resolve to use military force against non-communist governments throughout Asia by taking military action against India's (then) prime minister Nehru following the armed conflict between the People's Republic of China and India in 1962, to which was prompted in part by India's interventionist policies toward Tibetan refugees. This suggests that China's military power was shaped by a combination of nationalism and territorial security, and was not based solely on an ideological commitment to the Communist Revolution. It appears that China's influence in Asia was, at times, pragmatic, driven by real or perceived threats rather than the principle of revolutionary solidarity.

Diplomatic Competition and the Sino-Soviet Split

When researching "The Changing Sino-Soviet Relationship and its Impact on Asian Communism, it was evident that the Sino-Soviet Split was one of the most critical moments of change. The increase in the distance between China and the Soviet Union, as well as the perceptions that both countries had towards one another, were significant factors influencing how other Asian communist states would relate to and support one another in trying to achieve their respective goals to eradicate imperialism (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025).

The relationship between Vietnam and China illustrates how deeply China's priority is for national interests and regional authority, rather than ideology; both countries agreed with the Soviet Union to a considerable degree, creating friction that culminated in the Sino-Vietnamese war in 1979. The war illustrates the Chinese fear of encirclement and strategic isolation during this time, as has been shown in many studies (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025). This suggests to me that China's diplomatic competition highlights the limitations of China's regional authority, but allows for smaller states to exercise their own agency to restrict or alter the power and influence of China.

Economic Assistance and Developmental Influence

While most of the Cold War period was characterized by China being economically undeveloped, I found that China utilized economic aid to exert influence. China gave allied countries economic assistance in the form of technical assistance, infrastructure development, limited financial aid, etc., specifically to promote Socialist cooperation and reduce their dependency on Western Economic Aid. Towards the end of the 20th Century, through Economic Reforms within China, a changed regional resourcing strategy emerged. Although these reforms primarily occurred after the conclusion of the Cold War, they represent a change from the use of foreign ideological exportation to an Economic Cooperation Strategy (Norris, 2021). As such, many Scholars would argue that Economic Reforms represent the beginning of China as a major Regional Influence in the world today.

Comparative Evaluation of China's Regional Impact

As certain the degree to which China has influenced other nations of Asia; however, China's influence was neither homogenous nor uncontested. China's influence on its communist neighbours included a strong initial ideological and militaristic approach, followed by a movement towards a more independent and resistant stance of the respective communist nations to pursue their own independent approaches. Non-communist nations were approached from a mainly strategic view that was frequently in conflict with each other, and therefore, much of the influence that China exerted over its non-communist counterparts was through antagonistic strategic endeavours (Rawcliffe, 2025). The research on the scholarly literature reflects the multiple viewpoints regarding the nature of China's influence. Some authors have suggested that China's ideology is an example of an "idealistic" approach, while others cite an example of "pragmatic" nationalism in China and China's warlike, action-oriented behaviour. Both the views are valid and necessary for understanding the role of China in the region. China functioned as the "revolutionary model" as well as a "strategic player" when attempting to navigate a hostile world (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025).

Conclusion

In summary, the comprehensive analysis of the work indicates that China has exercised a significant and complex influence on the construction of the Asian continent in the second-half of the twentieth century through a range of means, including ideology, military, diplomacy, and development assistance; all these avenues impacted communist and non-communist countries. Where earlier Chinese policies were more ideologically based and revolutionary in nature, the policy focus during the later decades has evolved toward a greater level of pragmatism and a deeper focus on security issues. As such, an understanding of this change is critical to

interpreting China's current influence in Asia and the historical basis for the application of its influence throughout the region.

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