

一分为二 One divides into Two¹²

Atom Bombs. June 1958

Let us work on atom bombs and nuclear bombs. Ten years, I think, should be quite enough.³

Atom bomb goes off when it is told.

Ah what boundless joy! (Mao, *Renmin Ribao*, October 19 1964)⁴

In *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967*, Sergey Radchenko (2009) documents the internal "One Divides into Two" Controversy (一分为二) in Beijing in the summer of 1964. 'Yang Xianzhen, the deputy director of the Central Party School, became the focal point of Mao's criticism for propagating the thesis that "two combine into one" [he er er yi]. For Mao, *he er er yi* invalidated the inevitability of internal contradictions after unity is obtained, for if two combined into one, *unity* and not further struggle defined the course of societal transformation, the dialectical machinery of the permanent revolution breaks down. In one divides into two 一分为二, more significantly, one could posture that Mao's sense of structural realism was a nuclear realism. In *Mao: An Unknown History*, Chang and Halliday (2005) document the nuclear realism that drove Mao's strategic bipolar engagement in the Korean War: 'Mao knew that America just would not be able to compete in sacrificing men. He was ready to wager all because having Chinese troops fighting the USA was the only chance he had to claw out of Stalin what he needed to make China a world-class military power.' Three years into the war, 'on 2 February 1953 the new US president, Eisenhower, suggested in his State of the Union address that he might use the atomic bomb on China. This threat was actually music to Mao's ears, as he now had an excuse to ask Stalin for what he wanted most: nuclear weapons. As soon as Eisenhower made his remarks about possibly using the Bomb, Mao dispatched his top nuclear scientist, Qian Sanqiang, to Moscow.' Mao's message to Stalin: Give me the Bomb, so that you will not be drawn into a nuclear war with America. This confronted Stalin with a serious dilemma, as Russia had a mutual defense pact with China.' (Chang and Halliday, 2005, 468 - 469).

It could be argued in this sense that to comprehend Mao's policy of 'leaning to one side' must be to understand his thoughts about the structural reality of an international environment constrained by the unparalleled power of nuclear diplomacy. In 1958, Mao wrote of a sort of nuclear *tianxia*, 'Under the atomic bomb, the big and small partners must rally around the U.S, pay tribute, and prostrate themselves as inferiors. This is the so-called unity of the Americans. Such a situation will inevitably head toward the opposite of unity, to disintegration. Comrades, under today's situation, to whom does the world belong?!'⁵ The Sino-Soviet split furthermore emerged around Khrushchev's renege on an agreement for technical aid to develop the nuclear Project 596 Chinese atomic bomb, compounded by the Soviets siding with India in the Sino-Indian War. Nuclear materiel and technology in this sense go much of the way to responding to Avery Goldstein's provocations as to why deviations did emerge from the expectations of neorealist theory under Mao: 'why did the Sino-Soviet split emerge after 1957 despite continuity in the bipolar, anarchic structure of the international system? Why did Beijing, at perhaps its moment of greatest weakness (following the disastrous Great Leap Forward), undermine its close relationship with Moscow despite the perception that the U.S. remained the principal external threat to China's security?' (Goldstein, 2009, 123)

As an interesting counter-proposition, we could perhaps argue against Goldstein's statement that the deviations 'reflected choices made *at moments international-structural constraints eased*, times when preference rather than necessity could shape policy' [*italics mine*]. In contrast, could we argue that Mao's foreign policy decision to split with the Soviet Union emerged at a moment where *nuclear constraints tightened*? Furthermore, could we argue that far from the rational actor assumption in structural realism (see Alen Shadunts, 2017⁶), a key non-structural constraint of the split

¹ <https://twitter.com/onedivides?lang=en> "The splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts ... is the essence ... of dialectics." (Lenin, Philosophical Notebooks)"

² <http://marxistphilosophy.org/ChinTrans1221.htm>

³ <http://michaelharrison.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Selected-Works-Volume-VIII-Partial.pdf>

⁴ *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Sergey Radchenko, 2009, page 128)

⁵ On Huan Hsiang's Comment On The Disintegration Of The Western World November 25, 1958 [SOURCE: Long Live Mao Zedong Thought, a Red Guard Publication.]

⁶ <https://www.e-ir.info/2016/10/28/the-rational-actor-assumption-in-structural-realism/>

were the personalities involved, just as the Cuban Missile Crisis brought to the fore personalities - over structural-external or institutional-internal and bureaucratic competition - in determining both Soviet and U.S. military and force-building postures. In the Sino-Soviet split, Khrushchev's de-Stalinization; Mao's disdain at the father-son relationship with the Soviet Union and his preoccupation with the Leninist maxims - war causes revolution and revolution prevents war, the two possibilities of the nation are success or destruction⁷. The Great Leap Forward cannot be seen outside of the constraints of Mao's obsession with the nuclear international environment, indeed Mao saw China as threatened by Soviet expansionism in geographic (in what Ng-Quinn documents as a 'strategic cordon around the Asian continent, stretching from the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and up to Haishenwei (Vladivostok), and using the "Cuba of Asia" Vietnam as its hatchet man, seize the whole of Indo-China to dominate South-East Asia and South Asia and so edge the United States out of the continent) and technological terms and saw China itself in a nuclear teleology like a 'nucleus whose thermal energy was waiting to be released.' Wu Lengxi in *Shi nian lunzhan, 1956-1966, Zhong Su guanxi huiyilu (Ten-Year War of Words, 1956-1966, a Memoir of Sino-Soviet Relations)* offers an interesting perspective on this era. In December 19, 1958 Mao stated to the Plenum:

"Our people's Republic of China has two possibilities: continue to succeed, or become destroyed. Lenin did not conceal the possibility of destruction. China also has two possibilities, and we must recognize them. *We are not in possession of the atom bomb*. Should there be a war, running away is the best of the 36 stratagems. If Peking, Shanghai, and Wu-han are occupied, we will resort to guerrilla warfare. We will regress one or two decades and return to the Yanan era. Meanwhile, we must actively make preparations, vigorously promoting iron and steel, machinery, and railways, striving for several ten million tons of steel output in three or four years, establishing an industrial foundation, and becoming more consolidated than today [...] We are still poor and blank⁸

In *Strategic Stability in the Cold War*, David S. Yost (2011, 10) notes two particular dynamics that were probably a source of strategic stability during the Cold War. One was the weakness of potential rivals, 'Mao's policies in the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, gravely weakened China and slowed its economic development, protracting U.S.-Soviet bipolarity', and secondly - in a more curious line of thought - 'the United States and the Soviet Union came to prize and institutionalise measures supporting strategic stability - in the sense of war avoidance - during the Cold War.' Yost cites the communications channels such as the 'hot line' between Moscow and Washington; agreements on dealing with incidents at sea and elsewhere, and "rules of the road" about acceptable boundaries for behavior in crises. 'It can also be argued', Yost notes, 'that the USSR and the United States promoted strategic stability when they adopted principles of prudent management of nuclear forces, such as personnel reliability programs, robust command and control systems, and safety and security measures.' In this sense the structural constraints that Cheng and Zhang (1991) document in Mao's pattern of foreign policy decision making: *yibiandao* (leaning to one side) strategy in the 1950s, the *liangge quantou daren* (fighting with two fists strategy in the 1960s, and the *yitiaoxian* (one united front) strategy in 1970s were conditioned by a nuclear realism that observed US-Soviet nuclear stabilisation as containment. Stability in this sense in the intermediate zone⁹ just like stability in China's domestic economy was anathema to Mao's understanding of dialectical class struggle, the permanent revolution of *one divides into two*, and power. Why then did Mao's behaviour not radically change after the first successful Chinese nuclear experiment, Project 596 was conducted on 16 October 1964? An interesting theory is that whilst China had joined the nuclear club, it was still far from a capability to deliver a nuclear bomb to European Russia or the continental United States. One in this sense divided into two, generating a new technological quandary, in Leninist terms 'the splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its

⁷ In January a month later, Mao spoke at the Supreme State Conference: "Ours is an ardent nation, now swept by a burning tide. There is a good metaphor for this: our nation is like an atom . . . When this atom's nucleus is smashed the thermal energy released will have really tremendous power. We shall be able to do things which we could not do before. When our nation has this great energy we shall catch up with Britain in fifteen years; we shall produce forty million tons of steel annually."

⁸ https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_23.htm

⁹ In September 1963, Mao spoke: "All of you are concerned about the situation, particularly the international situation. Some comrades are concerned that the collaboration between the Soviet Union and the United States will bring disadvantages to us. I always believe what Wang Xifeng says in *A Dream of Red Mansions*: "Bigness has the difficulties of being big." Now the U.S. and the Soviet Union both have big difficulties." He went on, stating: 'there are two intermediate zones: Asia, Africa and Latin America are the first, and Europe, North America and Oceania, the second. Japan belongs to the second intermediate zone [...] *The monopoly capitalists in Japan are not happy with the U.S.; some openly oppose it*. Although there are still others who rely on it, in my view, in the course of time many of these people will finally throw out the Americans sitting on their backs.'" In the speech, what is significant here in relation to the broader question of structural constraints and China's Foreign Policy, is the sense one gains of Mao's realpolitik - internal and external - of competitor nations: "Are the Eastern European countries that satisfied with Khrushchev of the Soviet Union? I don't believe so. *Things are evolving and contradictions are revealing themselves*." "So far as its international status is concerned, Japan is secondary to the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Secondary countries also include Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, and so on. Thus we have some work to do. Japanese monopoly capitalists are not that united with the U.S. Though Britain is quite close to the U.S., they are not that united either. France annoys the U.S., and West Germany has become important. It will inevitably confront the U.S." Though it was not made explicit in his speech, the contradictions in Japan were perhaps referring to the Anpo protests and tide of anti-nuclear, anti-war sentiment in Okinawa and Tokyo to the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan. (See: ⁹ <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121207.pdf?v=8d8b07d69e21da7a223599963adc01ba> and ⁹ https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/tokyo_1960/anp2_essay01.html

contradictory parts' held 'the essence of dialectics'. In a sense this fear of two dividing into one and the paradoxical oneness of the stability of bipolarity was what drove Mao's line of thinking on the 'intermediate zone' as a base to defy strategic bipolarity.¹⁰

Yost's line of thought on USSR-US joint management of nuclear bipolarity is provocative because it counters an orthodox line of strategic realist thought that considers 'bipolar systems more stable than multipolar ones 'because two superpowers primarily use internal balancing to offset each other's capabilities that includes arms buildups and bolstering economic strength. External balancing such as alliances is of secondary importance because of the superpowers' outsized capabilities. This yields stability because internal balancing is more predictable, reliable, and transparent than use of alliances' (Kupchan, 2019). In contrast, the theory of joint Soviet-U.S. nuclear stabilization places emphasis on the external balancing account of the Cold War.

In *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Morgenthau draws on Max Weber's conception of interest: 'Interests (material and ideal), not ideas, dominate directly the actions of men. Yet the "images of the world" created by these ideas have very often served as *switches determining the tracks on which the dynamism of interests kept actions moving.*' [italics mine] In 1978 and January 1979, 'Deng visited Japan and the United States and witnessed the depth of China's economic backwardness. According to Arne Westad, Deng was 'bowled over by the technology, the productivity, and the consumer choices he found during his visit of several American cities in 1979' (Zubok, 2017). In *The Soviet Union and China in the 1980s: reconciliation and divorce*, Vladislav Zubok¹¹ stresses the significance of this episode and the images it formed as switches determining the tracks on which Deng's Four Modernisations came to re-dynamise an outward-looking economic realism over Mao's paranoid worldview of nuclear constraints and impending war. For Deng, Zubok notes, geopolitics 'was merely a tool to serve domestic economic transformation' and not vice versa as Mao had used the Great Leap Forward to drive his geopolitical-nuclear imperative. For Zubok, the shock of both visits pushed Deng and his allies in the Politburo to decide, radically, that 'the main engine of China's modernization would not be the state enterprises, built by the Soviet Union in the 1950s, but instead the "free economic zones" in China's coastal areas, open to foreign capitalist investments and Western technologies.'

In June 1985, Deng gave an illuminating speech on switching tracks: "China ha[s] made two important changes in our assessment of the international situation and in our foreign policy. The first change is our understanding of the question of war and peace. We used to believe that war was inevitable and imminent. Many of our policy decisions were based on this belief, including the decision to disperse production projects in three lines, locating some of them in the mountains and concealing others in caves. In short, after analysing the general trends in the world and the environment around us, we have changed our view on the danger of an imminent war.' There is a danger here of over-determining an apolitical worldview to Deng, indeed Mao's 'intermediate zone' and sense of strategic bipolarity did not disappear under Deng but were reformulated against shifting structural realities, external and domestic. Indeed, as Zubok notes, several scholars see Deng Xiaoping's decision to support Sino-Soviet rapprochement in 1985-1989 for geopolitical reasons:

'First, the Chinese leadership could see that the Afghanistan altered the balance of power in international relations: the Soviet Union was bogged down, like the United States had been earlier in Vietnam; Soviet isolation sharply reduced Soviet threat to China's security. Kenneth Waltz, a theorist of structural realism in international relations, was in China in 1982 and argued to his Chinese hosts, that the occupation of Afghanistan weakened, not strengthened the Soviets. Deng Xiaoping, historians argue, had another powerful reason to make

¹⁰ In September 1963, Mao spoke: "All of you are concerned about the situation, particularly the international situation. Some comrades are concerned that the collaboration between the Soviet Union and the United States will bring disadvantages to us. I always believe what Wang Xifeng says in *A Dream of Red Mansions*: "Bigness has the difficulties of being big." Now the U.S. and the Soviet Union both have big difficulties." He went on, stating: 'there are two intermediate zones: Asia, Africa and Latin America are the first, and Europe, North America and Oceania, the second. Japan belongs to the second intermediate zone [...] *The monopoly capitalists in Japan are not happy with the U.S.; some openly oppose it.* Although there are still others who rely on it, in my view, in the course of time many of these people will finally throw out the Americans sitting on their backs.'" In the speech, what is significant here in relation to the broader question of structural constraints and China's Foreign Policy, is the sense one gains of Mao's realpolitik - internal and external - of competitor nations: "Are the Eastern European countries that satisfied with Khrushchev of the Soviet Union? I don't believe so. *Things are evolving and contradictions are revealing themselves.*" "So far as its international status is concerned, Japan is secondary to the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Secondary countries also include Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, and so on. Thus we have some work to do. Japanese monopoly capitalists are not that united with the U.S. Though Britain is quite close to the U.S., they are not that united either. France annoys the U.S., and West Germany has become important. It will inevitably confront the U.S." Though it was not made explicit in his speech, the contradictions in Japan were perhaps referring to the Anpo protests and tide of anti-nuclear, anti-war sentiment in Okinawa and Tokyo to the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan. (See: ¹⁰ <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121207.pdf?v=8d8b07d69e21da7a223599963adc01ba> and ¹⁰ https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/tokyo_1960/anp2_essay01.html

¹¹ http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/79133/1/Zubok_Soviet%20Union%20and%20China_2017.pdf

geopolitical readjustment; his course of 1979-81 leaning on the United States did not pay off: the Reagan Administration revived the policy of “two Chinas” and balked at the transfer of advanced technologies to the PRC. This questioned his decision to turn to the United States as a strategic ally in China’s national rise, still controversial among his colleagues. This prompted China, as Radchenko argues, to resurrect the concept of strategic triangle, where the specter of Sino-Soviet rapprochement would be used as a bargaining tool with regard to the United States. (Zubok, 2017, 5)

Mao’s strategic bipolarity emerged under Deng in this sense but with a new economic realism that sought inward advancement of economic modernisation over outward nuclear posture. An interesting counter-point would be to analyse the prioritisation in Xi’s politburo today between both realisms. The Sino-Soviet rapprochement of 1985-1989 furthermore suggests that if neorealist balance-of-power theory is to be analytically useful and to move beyond a Darwinian, anarchic, Cixin Liu-‘dark forest theory’-type understanding of state behaviour as predatory and state interest as unitary, then it must attune to non-unitary dimensions of state behaviour and the capacity for the state machinery to pursue multiple realisms at once. In this sense just as polyform state actors are sensitised to the costs that systems impose on them, and to different perceptual realities of the international structure, then the state as polyform is sensitised to opportunistic behaviours, rapprochments and deviations from the structural expectations of neo-realism without recouring immediately to the notion that these are non-structural in nature. What after all is a “non-structural cause” but a structural incident that has yet to be understood in structural terms?

Where did Deng Xiaoping sit in the "One Divides into Two" Controversy (一分为二)? What was the route to multipolarisation in Deng’s era? What happened when the Soviet Union collapsed, and two became one? What now in an era where one divides into two again? And where is Mao’s intermediate zone today? Realism holds that the distribution of capabilities in the system determines its structure. Is the intermediate zone a geographical designation? In Xi’s Belt and Road - an arc from China’s eastern seaboard, dual pronged through southeast Asia and CPEC, to the Indian Ocean and the economies of the Gulf and East Africa? Or is it a topology? In qubits and quartz, nano-, quantum-, synthetic-, semi-conductive, artificial-, -outer space, -deep ocean? If it is both, should the Belt and Road be observed in defensive realist or offensive realist terms? Thinkers in the former school argue that the BRI is merely a foreign policy strategy to secure China’s food security in East Africa and Oceania, energy security in the Gulf and external security in CPEC, the South China Sea and Indo-Pacific. In *From Third World Theory to Belt and Road Initiative: International Aid as a Chinese Foreign Policy Tool*¹², Corrêa Vieira (2019) argues that the BRI is ‘the complete expression of the country’s ‘quaternity’ model of co-operation, combining aid, trade, investment, and technical assistance’ and places equal priority on “bringing in” new technologies as “going global” to shape the international trade and investment structure of globalisation.

An offensive realist like Mearsheimer (2010) views China’s ‘going global’ behaviour in a Darwinian, anarchic frame of state unitary interests. Chen and Wang (2011) draw open recent debate within China on the legacy of Deng’s *Tao Guang Yang Hui* strategy - conceal capabilities, avoid the limelight - which as Ye Zicheng writes should not be lost on political theorists was stated by Deng on the *defensive* in 1990 in the kernel of a collapsing Soviet Union and international Tiananmen sanctions. Closer to political economy, there are thinkers like Nicholas Lardy who observe the economic indicator switches determining actions that keep or waste the dynamism in Xi’s Mao-inherited state-military bureaucracy and Deng-inherited private coastal enterprise moving. A current line of thought is that the CCP’s new United Front work directive risks sapping the dynamism from China’s private enterprise¹³, and is compounded by distorted incentives in China’s financial system between state-owned banks and inefficient state owned enterprises. Lardy covers a perceived inversion of the economic reform program started by Deng under Xi in *The State Strikes Back: The End of Economic Reform in China?* (2019) In International Relations, there is a broader school of thinkers in emergent biopolarity - Yan Xuetong, Tao Wenzhao¹⁴, Oystein Tunsjo, Stephen Brooks, William Wohlforth.

¹² <https://www.scielo.br/pdf/cint/v41n3/0102-8529-cint-201941030529.pdf>

¹³ <https://epochtimes.today/does-the-ccps-new-united-front-work-directive-mean-chinas-private-sector-is-doomed/>; <https://www.ft.com/content/582411f6-fc3b-4e4d-9916-c30a29ad010e>; <https://sinocism.com/p/xi-weighs-in-on-united-front-work>

¹⁴ Bipolar Rivalry in the Early Digital Age (Yan Xuetong, June, 2020) Why a Bipolar World Is More Likely Than a Unipolar or Multipolar One (Yan Xuetong, July 2015) International Order Won't Be Bipolar (Tao Wenzhao, January 2020) -

In *US-China: a cool war*, Cliff Kupchan (2019) raises a number of provocations, suggesting China will emerge to dominate southeast Asia as the U.S. continues to hold hemispheric sway over Northeast Asia: 'Indonesia and Singapore will try harder to remain non-aligned, but both will come under great economic pressure from Beijing. The Philippines' trajectory depends on whether President Rodrigo Duterte completes his term through 2022, who succeeds him, and how much of his pivot toward China becomes institutionalised.' Intriguingly, Kupchan sees Russia and India as secondary powers to US-China bipolarity with "floater" status that 'won't have major impacts on the system or outcomes.' For Jeff M. Smith (2019), in contrast to Mearsheimer's world of unitary offensive interests, the deep economic integration of China with ASEAN member states and the depth of Sino-US economic integration is a brave new world from the 20th Century version of U.S.-Soviet bipolarity. Smith notes patterns of *institutional balancing* through rule-building and multi-lateral institutions by secondary powers such as Indonesia and Malaysia in contrast to the more overt military balancing strategies of the Quad nations of Australia, India, Japan and the United States. Smith writes: 'many Indo-Pacific capitals are increasingly devoting their energy not toward "containing" China but toward constraining its capacity to infringe on their interests and undermine the rules-based order. They're seeking to craft, enhance, and defend norms, laws, institutions, and principles that constrain China's most aggressive impulses and its capacity for misbehavior.' To this dynamic, Kun-Chin Lin¹⁵ raises a number of broader provocations: does China's South China Sea militarism detract from the neomercantilism of the BRI. Where the former promotes A2AD anti-access/area denial, the latter project's realism must surely rely on supporting an open sea policy, blue water navy, support of the maritime commons. Secondly, how sustainable is the equation of deep economic integration with political hedging for ASEAN member states as the US-China decoupling dynamic tightens constraints on the hedging space?

Thirdly, how will the fiscal and political constraints of the pandemic alter both the U.S. and China's international BRI and counter-BRI programs? As Kupchan notes: 'China has been stepping up in the provision of public goods, from contributing to UN peacekeeping to founding new development institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Beijing is increasingly interested in rulemaking and maintaining a stable trading environment, though on its own terms. If or when there's another global financial crisis, *expect mutual interests to lead to common efforts*' [italics mine] Kupchan's structural reality, written before the pandemic, could also be joined by a gloomier scenario. Focus on a number of consumer indexes in China and a deep economic crisis limiting the capacity to internally balance coupled with a BRI program of cascading loan defaults, renegotiations, diplomatic fray and withheld U.S technology transfers a la Khrushchev-Project 596 Split form one possible cascading matrix of tightening constraints on Xi's foreign policy in the intermediate zone as geography and topology - deviation over Taiwan in this sense might form part of a Polanyian double movement by the PLA-Politburo to the containment aspects of decoupling and perception of domestic social instability. Likewise Kupchan's mutual interests to lead common efforts in the next system-wide financial crisis is made more complex by recent tightening constraints in the Sino-US economic sphere: NYSE delisting of Chinese stocks, tighter technology transfer regulations, student visa cancellations, Hong Kong losing out to Singapore as International financial centre and so on.

How to maintain social stability, to prosper economically to a high income nation level before growing old in a tight window; how to deal with U.S. and Quad containment in the Indo-Pacific, whilst maintaining economic integration, bilateralism of the BRI and new multilateral ASEAN institution-building, these are the current politburo's structural constraints. As *one divides into two*, will a greater schism or re-stabilisation of the intermediate zone emerge? In a sense, structural realism must get a lot weirder, an infra-structural realism, Polanyian in following the deep tectonic rhythms of an emergent economic bipolarity, Sino-ASEAN v. U.S. - Oceania - Pacific with the quantum indeterminacy of secondary powers, pressure-deviation, emergent multilateral effects and black swans like the pandemic to electrify the structure and its thermal potential.

As one divides into two 一分为二, in Leninist terms: what is to be done? Что делать? Chto délat'? Where will Weber's images of the world emerge? And why is the zone alive? In Stanislaw Lem's Solarian conception. Or Cixin Liu's Trisolaris.

¹⁵ Talk held by YCW SF: China's Maritime Strategy w/ Kun-Chin Lin, Cambridge University [Oct 8]

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