Laurence Toal

POL 350 / Independent Study

Moon

Fall 2012

Their Soviet Elder Brothers: The Soviet Union's Hand in Shaping Reunification Policy for East Germany and North Korea

Introduction

After the end of World War II, much of Europe and Asia was divided between the victorious Allies (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union). These dividing lines crossed countries such as Korea, Germany, and Vietnam, and even cities, as in the case of the strategic crown jewel of Berlin. The division of these countries, already troubling for citizens who found themselves not only living in a country with no national sovereignty to speak of and separated from friends and family, soon became major points of international contention and the United States and the Soviet Union formalized their positions as two rivals (later superpowers) with two very different economic and social systems. Germany became the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany, or the FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany, or the GDR). Korea became the Republic of Korea (South Korea, or the ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea, or the DPRK). From the perspective of the great powers, they were spoils of war, proxy states necessary in the battle to establish ideological supremacy across Europe and Asia. From their own perspective, the Germanys and Koreas were new, perhaps temporary states struggling to find their own new national identity in the wake of World War II's devastation and the ensuing division across arbitrarily drawn lines.
As the twentieth century went on, however, things changed in ways the superpowers never envisioned, leading to an entirely new balance of power across Europe and Asia. The two Koreas and the two Germanys, after undergoing an initially rough period of defining their national institutions and identities, soon set about trying to make themselves invaluable in regional (and world) politics. The Germanys went from being spoils of war, to necessary allies of the superpowers in the early days of the Cold War, to actors in their own right, inextricably tied to the unification of Europe. This was especially evident in the mid 1980s, when leaders of East Germany's ruling "Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands" (Christian Democratic Union, CDU)/"Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern" (Christian Social Union of Bavaria, CSU) coalition stated that Germany's "unity would be restored on that distant day when the division of Europe itself was overcome". North and South Korea also became close allies of the USSR and the US respectively, though they never quite achieved the same level of association with a united Asia that Germany did with Europe.

There are numerous reasons for the transformation of the Koreas and the Germanys into independent actors and (in Germany's case) a reunified country, but this paper chooses to focus on one: the Soviet Union. Much has been written about the relationships the Soviet Union maintained with both its allies in East Germany and North Korea, as well as the capitalist leadership in West Germany and South Korea. However, this paper aims to go several steps further. First, it addresses the relationships the Soviet Union had with the Koreas and the Germanys with respect to the reunification policies of the smaller countries. This involves a focused examination of the changing Soviet attitudes towards reunification and the effect those attitudes had on Korean and German leaders. Related is the question of how much influence the

---

GDR and the DPRK were able to exert on their more powerful Soviet ally. Literature of alliance theory and the role of bargaining in superpower-ally relationships (and more general patron-client relationships) will serve as a useful framework. Specifically, I will be looking at both Hope M. Harrison's conception of a "super-ally" and Alexander Wendt and Daniel Friedheim's essay on the Soviet Union's "informal empire" - both theories developed to describe the USSR/GDR relationship – and discussing how the USSR/DPRK relationship fits the two theories. This is especially important given the relative lack of discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the USSR/DPRK relationship. Second, it will also use the lessons learned from the USSR's role in German reunification, as well as its involvement in Korean reunification plans to explore Russia's potential role as mediator in the ongoing Korean reunification question. Third, the paper examines the role of China and its relationship with the Soviet Union: from how the East German and North Korean government exploited the Sino-Soviet rift in the late 1960s and 1970s to gain concessions from Moscow to how China is emerging as the main mediator in intra-Korean conflicts, to the detriment of Russia.

Roadmap/Outline

This essay is divided into two main sections: a historical comparative study of the role the Soviet Union played in Korean and German reunification proceedings until its collapse in 1990 and an exploration of how future Korean reunification (if and when it eventually occurs) will differ from German reunification due to the absence of the Soviet Union and the presence of Russia as well as a more moderate China. Although the question of Korean reunification deals with a longer time span (sixty-some years as opposed to forty-some), the extreme isolation of
North Korea means there is correspondingly less documentation, especially when compared to the wealth of information in the recently opened and declassified archives in the former Eastern Bloc countries. This first section will trace key Soviet policies towards the Germanys and the Koreas, from its role in dividing the two countries through Moscow's support or lack thereof of a reunified country and its recognition of West Germany/South Korea, and its legitimacy as a mediator. This section will also discuss the rhetoric of reunification in the Germanys and Koreas, and how both public opinion and intra-governmental negotiations influenced the sort of support East Berlin and Pyongyang asked of Moscow.

I will identify the key areas in which Soviet policy diverged from East German/North Korean policy. Although the USSR was the main communist backer of East Germany and North Korea, it did not always agree with those countries' leaders about what a reunified Germany or Korea would look like, indeed, it didn't always agree with them about whether Germany and Korea should be unified. Its views changed over time – at some points supporting a two state solution whereby both Germanys and both Koreas would gain full international recognition and at others supporting a unified-under-communism Germany and Korea. These views are expressed in Soviet government documents and in correspondence between Soviet, German, and Korean leaders. I will present them chronologically and explore what influenced the USSR's policies at the different points in time and discuss the impact they had on intra-German and intra-Korean views of their countries' reunifications. Such a relationship is demonstrably not one-way, however, as German and Korean views on reunification affected Moscow's priorities as well. One of those priorities most susceptible to influence was the USSR's willingness to accept West Germany and South Korea as independent states or establish formal diplomatic relations with
them, and that acceptance was often an indicator of how inclined Moscow was to compromise on its reunification policies. Thus, this section will also compare the factors contributing to this acceptance in the two cases, and how Moscow's policy toward South Korea shifted after the collapse of the USSR.

The next section addresses Moscow's role as mediator between East/West Germany and North/South Korea and is a transition section, as it takes us from historical comparison to the current state of the Korean question and potential resolutions. The final section will focus on the future of the Korean question and how potential Korean reunification might compare to German reunification due to the absence of any hard-line communist external backers for the DPRK. As both Russia and China are interested in at the very least presenting themselves as neutral third-party mediators, the DPRK has no superpower ally on which to rely unconditionally anymore. This section will explore the legitimacy of Russia and China as mediators, especially since, as Elizabeth Wishick writes, “[w]hile China, Japan, and the United States all have varying interests in maintaining the status quo on the [Korean] Peninsula, Moscow is the only power to unequivocally support a process of gradual reunification”\(^2\). It will explain why Moscow's policy shifted from the USSR's unequivocal support for North Korea before its collapse and why this current support differs from the USSR's disapproval of German reunification.

This essay makes use of a number of both primary and secondary sources, including transcripts of government proceedings, Four Power conferences, and meetings between high level officials from the GDR, FRG, Soviet Union, ROK and DPRK; correspondence between various German, Korean, and Soviet ministers and officials; and previous scholarly studies of the

Soviet Union's role in German and Korean reunification proceedings. One of the main benefits of the German case is the amount of historical reflections published by several key players such as Willy Brandt, in the case of Korea's relatively opaque government, analysis depends less on memoirs and government records and more on Soviet documentation and that of various other diplomats stationed in Pyongyang. These sources will be examined in more detail in a literature survey later in this paper.

**From Occupation to Division: The Role of the Soviets in Creating the GDR and the DPRK**

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics did not start out its occupation of the eastern zone of defeated Germany with the intent of adding another member to its ranks. In fact, it did not even necessarily plan on establishing a new communist state in the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ). Rather, the USSR was focused on revenge: the maximum exploitation of its defeated enemy and the total reconstruction of all political apparatuses in its zone. It would be four years before the German Democratic Republic was formally established in October of 1949, six years before Walter Ulbricht convinced the Soviets to support his *Aufbau des Sozialismus* (Construction of Socialisms) in 1952, and eight years until the Soviets formally received a delegation from the GDR and transformed their mission in East Germany into an embassy. At no point during these eight years was East Germany’s existence as an independent state ever assured, much less its existence as a communist ally to the USSR.

Soviet policy on if and/or how to divide Germany after the war underwent several significant changes as Stalin and other top officials shifted their priorities. Stalin, in fact,
“publicly changed his mind on the key issue of dismembering Germany after the war in May 1945. As recently as the Yalta Conference, just a few months before, he had been urgently pressing that very policy in secret discussion with his allies”\textsuperscript{4}. But by the time the Soviets took over administration of the SBZ, they had a vested interest in all-Germany politics and a definite goal of turning all of Germany communist, a process to be overseen by the Soviets and their allies in the Ulbricht-led Communist Party of Germany (KPD). Thus, Stalin and Ulbricht focused on gaining popular approval for their politics, mainly by anti-fascist/anti-Nazi campaigns and by trying to “set aside local fears of sovietization”\textsuperscript{5}. This helps explain J.P. Nettl's observation that “there is no evidence of any official increase in the tightness of the zonal frontiers on the part of the Russians until the end of 1947”\textsuperscript{6}. Stalin still had hopes of making all of Germany into a communist state ruled by his proxies in the KPD (and later, after the KPD's merger with the socialist party (SPD) into the \textit{Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands}, the SED), and seemed unwilling to take any actions that could curtail the work of his agents in the Western Zones, or discourage residents of the west from coming to the east to join the communist efforts there.

As Nettl makes clear, the simple fact that the four zones of Germany were occupied by powers with differing economic systems is not enough to explain the establishment of two Germanys. Not even the fundamentally incompatible political ideals of the USSR and the Western powers are sufficient on their own to explain this division. Rather, it was a combination of economic and political differences: on the part of the West, the “creation of economic zonal boundaries [...] in response to Russian political and economic policy”\textsuperscript{7}; on the part of the Soviets,
their eventual deliberate policy “to eliminate all political contact with the Western zones except such as had their official approval”\(^8\). By 1947 trade between the East and West more closely resembled trade between two foreign countries and hope of a peaceful unification of Western and Soviet occupation zones was quickly fading among Soviets, Americans, and Germans alike.

Soviet policy, however, did not remain fixed on the prospect of fully unified, fully communist Germany. In fact, it was in a state of flux for much of the decade immediately following the end of the war as the various personalities in the Kremlin vied for supremacy (a process that will be examined in more detail later on)\(^9\). The separation of the SBZ from the rest of Germany and the formation of the GDR as a permanent new state seem to have been the Soviet's contingency plan, only to take effect once the implausibility of quickly uniting all of Germany under the SED was established. Stalin believed that as long as the Soviets could control at minimum the SBZ without Western interference the USSR would be in good shape to extend its influence to the western half of the country or, at minimum, deny the West a united Germany as an ally. Ann L. Phillips classifies these as the Soviets' “maximum” and “minimum” goals: “maximum being incorporation of all Germany within the Soviet orbit, minimum, retention of the Eastern Zone”\(^10\).

R.C. Raack chronicles a closed meeting in 1945 with Ulbricht and future GDR president Wilhelm Pieck in which Stalin “denied to his Germans that he had ever been in favor of dismembering Germany [but] went on to describe it to them as already more that slightly mutilated [...] and to express himself ready to dismember it further, should he not get his way.

---

\(^{8}\) Ibid., 263.
\(^{10}\) Ibid., 5-6.
with all the rest of it”\textsuperscript{11}. Stalin’s ultimate goal remained complete control over a communist Germany, but even at this early stage he realized that intermediate steps – including the temporary division of Germany in order to consolidate the SED’s power in the East – might be necessary. Thus, the “establishment of the [GDR] did not imply, at least in the beginning, any important change in the situation in the Eastern zone”\textsuperscript{12}. It was all part of the Soviets' careful balancing between their maximum and minimum goals, a way for them to ensure that at least part of Germany would remain firmly in their orbit. In fact, the first treaties signed by the East German government that weren't solely economic were “more a declaration of policy for the future when all Germany would be under Russian control, a policy ensuring Germany's place among Soviet satellites”\textsuperscript{13}.

A similar pattern can be seen in the case of Korea, where the Soviets proclaimed unswerving loyalty to the Moscow declaration – a document that provided for the administration of the northern half of Korea by the Soviets and the southern half by the US and promised the Koreans their independence “in due course” – and consistently chastised US officials for trying to divide (or subordinate, depending on the occasion) the Koreans. Although the division of Korea into the DPRK and the ROK was made final after the cease-fire that put a halt to the Korean War in 1953, the establishment of two different governments – one headed by Kim Il Sung in the Soviet-supported north and one led by Syngman Rhee in the US-supported south actually occurred in 1948. The division of Korea was, as with the division of Germany, meant to be temporary, with the joint communiqué from the Moscow Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Soviet Union, United States of America and United Kingdom in 1945 proscribing “a Joint

\textsuperscript{11} Raack, “Stalin Plans His Post-War Germany,” 64.
\textsuperscript{13} Nettl, \textit{The Eastern Zone}, 293.
Commission consisting of representatives of the United States command in southern Korea and the Soviet Union in northern Korea [...] helping and assisting (trusteeship) the political, economic, and social progress of the Korean people [in] the development of democratic self-government and the establishment of national independence of Korea”¹⁴. This period of trusteeship by the US, the USSR, the UK, and China was to last five years, after which time Korea would theoretically (in the view of the great powers) be ready for independence. But fierce Korean opposition to the Moscow Declaration, as well as disagreements between the US and the USSR over which Korean parties would be allowed to participate in discussions about their country’s future stalled the work of the Joint Commission and delayed implementation of the plan laid out in the Declaration.

Throughout 1946 and 1947, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and US Secretary of State George Marshall exchanged letters in an effort to reach agreements on key points of contention in the Joint Commission. These letters, collected in The Soviet Union and the Korean Question (Documents) feature a fascinating look into the behind-the-scenes maneuvering that defined the division of a nation and the evolution of Soviet policy in the months leading up to separate elections in the northern and southern occupation zones.

Although the Moscow Declaration stipulated that all-Korea elections would be held when the work of the Joint Commission was completed in five years, problems became evident as early as May 1946, when the Commission adjourned over disagreements about “the definition of the word ‘democratic’ as it pertained to the representatives of the parties and social organizations

¹⁴ “Communiqué on the Moscow Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Soviet Union, United States of America and United Kingdom, December 27, 1945.” in Ministry of Foreign Relations of the USSR, The Soviet Union and the Korean Question (Documents)
mentioned in the Moscow agreement to be consulted by the Joint Commission in its task of
assisting in the formation of a provisional government”\textsuperscript{15}.

A close reading of the letters between Marshall and Molotov suggests that the conflict
was due in large parts to the Americans’ attempts to keep communist parties out of any
discussions, and a corresponding reluctance on Moscow’s part to engage with parties opposed to
the Moscow declaration. This meant that, because the only Korean parties not to oppose the
Moscow Agreement were the communist ones under direct orders from Moscow\textsuperscript{16}, common
ground was incredibly difficult to find. Neither side, despite their protestations of supporting a
democratic, unified Korea, wanted to give parties not directly aligned with their vision of an
ideal Korea a voice in the process of creating that democratic, unified Korea.

Progress toward the peaceful establishment of an all-Korean government slowed even
further in 1947. A reconvened Joint Commission “lasted about three months and could not agree
even to submit a joint report”\textsuperscript{17}. When the matter was formally referred to a plit United Nations
Temporary Commission on Korea for discussion, the creation of two Koreas was almost
assured\textsuperscript{18}. Separate elections in the North and South were held in 1948, with each side claiming
to speak for all of Korea, and an uneasy coexistence prevailed until the Korean War began in
1950.

Soviet policy in Korea differed from their policy in Germany in two key ways. First, the
shared border between Russia and Korea meant that Soviet influence was more direct (to the
point of Stalin personally installing Kim Il Sung as the leader of the Korean Workers’ Party

\textsuperscript{15} \textquotedblleft Letter from George C. Marshall to V.M. Molotov” in Ministry of Foreign Relations of the USSR, \textit{The Soviet Union and the Korean Question (Documents)}, 12.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 29.
(KWP), something they didn’t manage even in their strategic jewel, Germany). Second, as Korea had not been an antagonist during WWII, the Soviets did not have to deal with the tricky issue of balancing a desire for reparations with a desire to bring Korea fully into their sphere of influence. Thus, the decision to Sovietize the northern part of Korea was made much more quickly than the equivalent decision in Germany.

Learning to Coexist: Changing Reunification Policies in the Post-Division Years

After the establishment of the FRG and GDR as separate countries in 1949, Soviet policy continued to evolve according to the balance of power in Moscow, the actions of the US, France, and United Kingdom in the West, and the domestic situation in the East; East German policy evolved along with it. There were two events during the early 1950s that signaled major shifts in the Soviets' German reunification policy. First, the FRG began to negotiate for entrance into the European Defense Community (EDC), prompting an immediate scramble by the Soviets to prevent that. Thus began a two-year long campaign “in which East German officials bombarded their West German counterparts with proposals for direct East-West German contacts leading to the establishment of a provisional all-German government”19. Soviet policy, which, according to a diplomatic note from March 10, 1952, favored “the creation of a unified, armed, and neutral German state to the integration of West Germany into the Western alliance system”, was aimed at deriving “maximum advantage from the differences between the Western camp and the Eastern camp”20. The reunification offer, which came to be known as the “Stalin Note” was widely viewed as a bluff by Western officials, and its sincerity remains a hotly contested topic in the

20 Ibid., 261-2.
West to this day. East German leaders at the time, however, had no such doubts. They “took every such overture [by the Soviets to the West for reunification that would be detrimental to the GDR] seriously” and made plans to go underground or fight should Stalin allow the GDR to be absorbed into the West.

After the failure of the East Germans and Soviets to prevent the FRG's entry into the EDC and Stalin's death, his successors continued to push for reunification on the permissive basis of the Stalin Note. Although Victor Baras notes that Soviet policy in that note was so permissive, so “fraught with risks for the West and the USSR that the Russians themselves might not have permitted reunification on the terms described in their own diplomatic note,” the ideas espoused in the note remained Soviet policy for two years and was a defining part of the post-Stalin succession struggle. The governing trio of Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, Minister of Internal Affairs Lavrenti Beria, and Premier Georgy Malenkov had differing reactions to the note - “According to Molotov, Beria kept insisting that ‘it made no difference whether Germany was socialist or otherwise, the most important concern was that Germany be peaceful,’” a position shared by Malenkov; Molotov, more conservative than his companions, “believed that Stalin would never have forsaken the socialist regime in Berlin while he was alive.”

Nevertheless, the Stalin note guided reunification policy in the USSR and the GDR until the popular uprisings in East Germany on 16-17 June 1953. The uprisings, which saw Soviet tanks deployed to stabilize the East German regime and resulted in the dismissal of Beria for allegedly being willing to sell out the East Germans to the West, marked the end of any

21 McAdams, Germany Divided, 27.
23 Ostermann, “The Post-Stalin Succession Struggle,” 64
reunification policy that could be considered pro-Western. Khrushchev, under pressure to make it very clear that he would never abandon the GDR to western imperialists, frequently asserted “that the Soviet Union would never agree to the reunification of Germany 'at the expense of the GDR [or] through the liquidation of the GDR and its socialist achievements'”\textsuperscript{25}. Thus, Soviet policy moved steadily toward solely focusing on building up the GDR and away from reunification, whether under socialism or not.

It is important to note that at this time, Soviet reunification policy was East German reunification policy, and the SED's position on reunification “was subject to change as directed by Moscow”\textsuperscript{26}. Up until his death in March 1953, Stalin personally controlled much German policy, and those policies he wasn't directly involved in needed to be cleared with him beforehand. The GDR may not have legally been an occupied territory in the early 1950s, but it was difficult to tell based on the level of influence and control the Soviets had in the GDR's political sphere. In fact, “the Soviets continued to exercise numerous occupation rights at the time of Stalin's death,”\textsuperscript{27} and reports from the Council of Ministers of the USSR included references to “the occupation regime […] being carried out by Soviet troops” under Andrei Grechko's command as late as June 1953\textsuperscript{28}. As time went on, however, the direct control of the GDR's policy faded, and although East Germany remained utterly loyal to Moscow, “this course [was] not always based on coercion but on the ideological preferences and interests of the East

\textsuperscript{25} Harrison, \textit{Driving the Soviets Up The Wall}, 47. Soviet commitment to the “socialist achievements” of their client states was a common rhetorical theme, also see Ambassador Suzdalev's acceptance of North Korea existing as a “dominion within united Korea, her socialist achievements … guaranteed by the great powers” (Szalontai, \textit{Kim Il-Sung in the Soviet Era}, 52).

\textsuperscript{26} Phillips, \textit{Soviet Policy Reconsidered}, 127.

\textsuperscript{27} Baras, “Stalin's German Policy After Stalin,” 265.

\textsuperscript{28} Sneshnoi, T.K., “USSR Council of Ministers Order 'On Measures to Improve the Health of the Political Situation in the GDR,' 2 June 1953,” in Ostermann, “The Post-Stalin Succession Struggle,” 80.
German leadership who [saw] loyalty to Moscow as their most important goal in foreign policy.”

Partly due to the Soviets' penchant for replacing leaders who displeased them, East German policy did not noticeably begin to diverge from Soviet policy until the late 1970s and early 1980s. With the onset of detente between the USSR and the United States came a corresponding easing of relations between the two Germanys as leaders on both sides began to recognize that, while they both wanted a reunified Germany on their own terms, that was a long term goal that need not impede agreements on issues, such as environmental worries and currency exchange, that affected both countries. While this coexistence was at first enthusiastically supported by both superpower patrons, “as U.S.-Soviet relations deteriorated in the early 1980s, the FRG and the GDR embraced a new and often courageous course designed to preserve the fruits of detente […] apart from and sometimes against the will of the superpowers”.

North Korea gained both freedom from the direct interference of Soviet troops and diplomatic recognition from the USSR much quicker than East Germany did. The Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) stated on September 30, 1948, that Soviet leaders had “given appropriate instructions to the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. to evacuate the Soviet troops from Northern Korea and to complete the evacuation by the end of December 1948”.

Soviet (and Chinese) troops would be back in two year’s time to fight in the Korean War, but they would withdraw again soon after the Armistice. East Germany, however, still hosted a

---

30 Ibid., xiii.
31 “TASS Statement” in Ministry of Foreign Relations of the USSR, *Documents*, 80
garrison of more than 300,000 Soviet troops at the time of its dissolution, that had been actively working to stabilize the GDR’s regime.

Full diplomatic relations between the DPRK and the USSR were established in late 1948 at Kim Il Sung’s request. Stalin’s response welcoming the formation of the North Korean government and proclaiming the USSR’s “readiness for establishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S.S.R. and the Korean People’s Democratic Republic and exchange of ambassadors” was sent on October 12, 1948, little more than a month after the DPRK’s formal establishment on September 9, 1948 – a stark contrast to the four years East Germany had to wait to exchange ambassadors. This early lack of Soviet military presence in North Korea and recognition of its sovereignty can explain some of the leeway Kim Il Sung had to engage in his later, public disagreements with Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders, as well as Moscow’s inability to erase Kim Il Sung’s reliance on hardline nationalism to assert the DPRK’s independence from Moscow.

In a notable departure from the German case, there was no desperation for unification on the Soviet side immediately post-division like there had been in the GDR. Perhaps because there was no comparable threat of South Korea being integrated into an EDC equivalent, Moscow did not seem to view South Korea's alliance with the United States as enough of a security threat to necessitate the willingness to give up their foothold in the north. This lends some credence to the idea that the Stalin Note was mostly designed to stop the formation of the EDC, regardless of what the East German leaders believed at the time.

Soviet policy for Korean reunification largely depended on how good of an ally North Korea was at any given time. For instance, “support for reunification by military means was
forthcoming during the period of greatest Korean dependence on the USSR,” when the Soviet Union had the most to gain from a united Korea, “while Soviet reticence in providing even lip service to North Korean demands for a military solution to end the division in the early 1960s occurred when the Soviets appeared least able to influence KWP policy decisions”33. As North Korea's value to the Soviets fluctuated, so too did Soviet policy and aid. Kim Il Sung's attempts to balance between his own independence and his need for Soviet support would be a defining characteristic of the USSR/DPRK relationship and set it definitively apart from the USSR/GDR relationship, where Moscow's desires dictated East Berlin's policies.

**Personalities versus Policies: Exploiting Party Divisions in the USSR, DPRK, and GDR**

There was a noticeable split in the Kremlin over German policy that was reflected in the attitudes of Soviet officials in Germany, and in those of East German politicians. Andrei Zhdanov, Chairman of the Soviet of the Union and a proponent of rapid Sovietization of the SBZ found a protégé in Sergei Tulpanov, Chief of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD); Lavrenti Beria, the Soviet Minister of Internal Affairs, took a more moderate, reformist line and found a proxy in Valdimir Semenov, political advisor to the military governor and later the Soviet ambassador to the GDR34. Tulpanov and Semenov’s fortunes were tied to those of their patrons in the Kremlin – Zhdanov’s death in 1948 meant a corresponding decrease in Tulpanov’s influence; Beria’s execution and Malenkov’s loss of the party leadership to Khrushchev meant Semenov’s influence and the proposals for reunification dwindled as well.

The close association of personality and policy meant that Soviet reunification policy

depended not only on who was in power currently, but who had been in power and how they had left. Soviet leaders eager to put their own stamp on their country set aside their predecessors' ideals not only because they disagreed with them, but because they wanted a space to make policy that was unequivocally their own in order to gain domestic support. Thus, as we shall see, most major changes in the Soviets' reunification policies (for both Germany and Korea) came after leadership changes in the Kremlin, with bigger changes coming after a leader left in disgrace or was purged from office. The patronage system employed by Soviet officials – whereby different officials supported different factions in East Germany and North Korea – meant that leadership changes in the USSR, at least in the early days, often meant leadership struggles in the client state.

The East Germans had their own share of factionalism: Walter Ulbricht led a radically Soviet faction that was supported by Zhdanov and Tulpanov, while Otto Grotewohl and Wilhelm Pieck headed a moderate one mostly made up of former SPD members and in favor with the Malenkov faction in the Kremlin. Ulbricht’s power was not consolidated until after he gained Soviet military support during the June 16-17 uprisings in 1953 and Grotewohl and Pieck's Moscow patrons fell out of favor. In fact, up until the workers' uprisings, the growing discontent with Ulbricht had the Soviets looking for replacements. They found possibilities within the SED itself, in a faction centered around “Rudolf Herrnstadt, the editor of the party daily, Neues Deutschland, and Wilhelm Zaisser, the minister of state security” which “favored removing [Ulbricht] from office in order to slacken the pace of the transition to socialism”.

The Zaisser-Herrnstadt attempt to seize power from Ulbricht was directly “supported by Sem[e]nov with
Beria’s blessing”³³ and illustrated both the deep divisions in Moscow and its growing inability to assert total control over the GDR.

Beria’s subsequent arrest and execution for supporting non-socialist reunification “set the stage for the removal of the Zaisser-Herrnstadt faction in the SED”³⁸ and provided Ulbricht and later Honecker with a foolproof way to get what they wanted from the USSR: simply remind whoever was currently in power in Moscow of Beria’s planned betrayal, and receive assurances of continued support and tangible economic aid in return. In this way, East Germany was able to exert a considerable amount of influence in the Soviets' German policies. There were limits, of course – the Soviets established relations with the FRG in 1955 without asking for anything in return over Ulbricht’s objections – but there are also very obvious cases of the Soviets capitulating to the GDR even though it was clearly the “client” in their patron-client relationship, the most notable example of major Soviet concessions being the Berlin Wall³⁹.

The absolute limit of Ulbricht's influence in Moscow was reached in May 1971 during the move toward superpower detente. Unable to get along with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev and unwilling to trade increased legitimacy for increased Western influence, he “attempted to mobilize his friends in the Kremlin to prevent the Soviet Union from signing the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin […] challenged the Soviet leadership in foreign policy […] and] questioned Moscow's ideological predominance”⁴⁰. Enough was finally enough for the Soviets: they forced Ulbricht to resign and installed the more compliant Erich Honecker in his place. Eager to avoid his predecessor's fate, Honecker spent much of his time in office to keeping German policy in line with the opinions of the ruling party in Moscow.

³⁸ Ibid., 151.
³⁹ Harrison, Driving the Soviets Up The Wall, 226-8.
⁴⁰ Frey, Division and Detente, 9.
Exploiting political factionalism was common in North Korea as well. Although Stalin had personally ensured Kim Il Sung’s position as head of the KWP, Kim did not fully consolidate his dictatorship until he was able to purge the South Korean, Soviet, and Chinese Korean factions after the Korean War. During the de-Stalinization of the USSR and other Communist states, Kim, with his “susceptibility to being labelled a Stalinist” was a major target of Khruschev. They were invested enough in getting rid of Kim that “the Soviets reportedly offered support (while Kim Il-sung was out of the country) to anti-Kim factionalists within the KWP Central Committee”\(^{41}\) just as they had offered support to Herrnstadt and Zaisser in their move against the similarly recalcitrant Ulbricht in the GDR. Kim’s attempted purge of Pak Ch’ang-Ok, leader of the pro-Soviet faction, and Ch’oe Ch’ang-Ik, leader of the Yan’an (Chinese) faction in 1956 could only be stopped by both the Soviets and the Chinese working in concert. Although Anastas Mikoyan and Peng Te-huai were able to get Pak and Ch’oe back into the party, they were not able to reinstate their leadership positions or change Kim’s policies, and the two were purged for a second and final time in 1958\(^{42}\). With this series of purges, Kim not only established himself as the sole voice of policy in North Korea and in the KWP, but severely weakened opportunities for Moscow and Beijing to use their allies inside the country to push pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese policies.

Direct Soviet intervention in North Korean policymaking declined after these purges, as did indirect Soviet and Chinese influence. In the future, “the twists and turns of Soviet domestic policies would not produce such an effect on North Korea as had been the case until 1958,” and Kim Il Sung's initiation of a re-examination of his regime's economic policies meant that he

---

\(^{41}\) Shapiro, “Soviet Policy Toward North Korea,” 338.  
“could put an end to the [Soviet] reform experience at will”\textsuperscript{43}. Not only had Kim successfully quashed any internal opposition to his rule, he had managed to isolate his country and his policymaking from Moscow’s changing views. Less than 13 years after its founding, “North Korea was transformed from the purest of Soviet satellites into an independent communist state which the Russians would have to court and cajole in order to wield influence”\textsuperscript{44}. Rather than forcing Kim Il Sung to support policies favorable to them, as they were able to do in East Germany, the Soviets were themselves forced to focus on making sure that North Korea would remain their ally, “rewarding” them for good behavior with more aid or more explicit support for their policies in the international arena\textsuperscript{45}. This was due not only to the lack of opportunities for political influence due to the purges but also to the very public, very bitter falling-out between Khrushchev and Mao that introduced formerly unprecedented factionalism into the Communist bloc and dominated relationships between communist states in Asia for nearly three decades: the Sino-Soviet Split.

**Dividing the Communist World: The Sino-Soviet Split and the Superpowers’ Changing Ideas of Reunification**

Relations between Moscow and Beijing were strained even before Stalin’s death, when Stalin insisted that he “have the final word on Chinese affairs, but Mao Tse-tung refused to submit”\textsuperscript{46}. But the Khrushchev government began to repair relations with China, and although Chinese ambitions continued to grow through the 1950s the atmosphere between the two remained mostly cordial, with Moscow inviting Beijing to become directly involved in

\textsuperscript{43} Szalontai, *Kim Il-Sung in the Khrushchev Era*, 208.
\textsuperscript{44} Zagoria and Kim, “North Korea and the Major Powers,” 1029.
\textsuperscript{46} Dallin, *Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin*, 423
communist affairs in Eastern Europe (Chinese representatives were present at the Moscow and Warsaw Conferences in 1955\(^\text{47}\)) and China encouraging independent-minded Soviet satellites not to break with Moscow. Relations worsened in 1959 and 1960, with several public spats, but the split was not totally irreversible until the CPSU’s 22nd Party Congress and Khrushchev's repudiation of Stalinism\(^\text{48}\). Suddenly, the communist states were not merely faced with a choice between the USSR and the West, but with a choice between the USSR, China, and the West. Some states, like Albania, chose to throw their lot in completely with the Chinese. Some, like Romania, sided completely with the Soviets. And some, like North Korea, chose (or were forced to choose) to remain neutral and play the two superpowers against each other.

Although both Walter Ulbricht (and his successor Erich Honecker) and Kim Il Sung depended largely on the USSR to stay in power, their reliance came in very different forms, which shaped their reactions to the split and formed the basis of all changes to reunification policies in the Soviet Union, East Germany, and North Korea. Ulbricht and Honecker's dependence was on the Soviet military: even in the 1960s and 1970s, much of the East German government's legitimacy came from the Soviet troops. Kim's dependence was entirely economic: his position as leader of both North Korea and the KWP was completely assured after the last of the purges in the late 1950s. However, the war-ravished country was nowhere near self-sufficient economically, no matter how many “reforms” were put forward by the government, and North Korea owed continued economic stability to loans from the Soviet Union – and, most importantly for the purposes of this section, China. This dual dependence gave Pyongyang much more room to maneuver over the course of the Sino-Soviet split, as Scott Snyder writes, one of

\(^{47}\) Ibid, 429.
the most important underlying facts of “Kim's management of his relations with Beijing and Moscow was North Korea's structural economic dependence on external existence from both powers to ensure the survival and prosperity of its regime”\textsuperscript{49}. Ulbricht, though his priorities tended to align much more with the Chinese positions, could not really express that alignment by either speeches or policies for fear of alienating Moscow\textsuperscript{50}.

North Korea spent much of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s taking as much advantage of the Sino-Soviet split as possible. For much of that time, this meant letting Moscow and Beijing proffer support and aid, and choosing to give their support (via gestures such as more prominent places in North Korean newspapers) to the side offering the better deal. This meant that Pyongyang's allegiances were quite variable during this time. As Jane Shapiro writes, “although generally supporting the Soviet position during the early period of the rift, the North Koreans after 1960 seemed determined to remain neutral, not only because of their geographical position, but because of the benefits to be reaped by withholding support for one side or the other until favors, usually economic, were proffered”\textsuperscript{51}. With the communist victories in Indochina in 1975, Kim II Sung “made a hurried trip to China during which he reportedly asked for Beijing's assistance in liberating the South through a renewed military campaign”\textsuperscript{52}. East German diplomats stationed in Beijing considered China's refusal to consider Kim's proposal one of the main factors that “pushed Kim Il Sung to rebalance his position in the triangular relationship with the PRC and the Soviet Union in the late 1970s”\textsuperscript{53}. This illustrates the tentative balancing act that defined the Sino-Soviet split in Asia: China could not force North Korea to comply with

\textsuperscript{49} Snyder, \textit{China's Rise and the Two Koreas}, 27
\textsuperscript{50} Harrison, \textit{Driving the Soviets Up The Wall}, 80
\textsuperscript{52} East German documents, 1
\textsuperscript{53} East German Documents, 3
its ideals for reunification, nor could they make explicit the depths of their disagreement. They settled for emphasizing “that Kim Il Sung 'has defined the correct policy for the independent and peaceful reunification of Korea' and 'always referred to the three principles [of the 4 July 1972 declaration] and the [1973 DPRK] Five-Point Proposal’”\textsuperscript{54}. Unfortunately for the Chinese, those proposals, while always official North Korean policy, were not always in favor with Kim Il Sung, and their support of them would occasionally tip Kim's support toward Moscow.

Responding to North Korea's renewed interest in improved relations with the USSR in the 1980s, Michael C. Hall pointed out that “[t]he Soviet Union has allowed North Koreans to act as the suitors […] Moscow is likely to want to see a much more pronounced shift in North Korean policy away from China and towards the Soviet Union before it is willing to respond wholeheartedly to the North Korean overtures”\textsuperscript{55}. This highlights what has been one of the most consistent trends in DPRK/USSR relations: Moscow, when unable to directly influence events in North Korea, modifies its own policies to be more favorable to North Korea when its leaders prove themselves worthy by complying with the Soviet party line. While that has been the case ever since the early 1960s when “Soviet public support for North Korean reunification efforts, by military means or by indigenous revolution in South Korea, was forthcoming only when North Korea dutifully submitted itself to Moscow,” nowhere is it more evident than during the middle years of the Sino-Soviet split\textsuperscript{56}. With both Moscow and Beijing basing their policies on North Korea's level of adherence to their side, North Korea gained pride of place in two powers' foreign policies, greatly increasing the amount of influence they were able to wield over politics abroad.

One of the most lasting effects of the Sino-Soviet split was the weakening of Moscow's

\textsuperscript{54} East German Documents, 9
\textsuperscript{55} Williams, “North Korea: Tilting Toward Moscow?”, 404-5
\textsuperscript{56} Shapiro, “Soviet Policy Towards North Korea,” 340.
already scant influence in North Korea. As seen previously in the aftermath of the 1956 purges, Beijing and Moscow needed to work together to convince Kim Il Sung to change his policies. With the possibility of a Beijing-Moscow alliance rendered nonexistent by the frosty atmosphere between the two communist giants, Pyongyang found itself with more independence than it had had up to the beginning of the feud. Like Ulbricht, Kim found the disagreement between his patrons to be an opportunity to set the course of Korean reunification himself, without interference from Moscow or Beijing.

It was in reunification policy that Kim was able to reap some of the biggest benefits of having two allies vying to make him happy. Whenever Kim became unhappy with one regime, such as when he “gradually demonstrated its reluctance and then its unwillingness to support Soviet policies [and] the Soviets made it clear they would not provide support for any North Korean effort at reunification other than through bilateral negotiation and compromise with the ROK,” Kim could turn to the other and gain support. It was only during the rare times when Chinese and Soviet policies aligned that Kim modified his own proposals.

With no Chinese troops to keep him in power, Ulbricht found it prudent to set aside his personal agreement with Mao and remain loyal to Moscow. The split, in fact, often angered him, as he viewed Khrushchev’s preoccupation with reasserting the Soviet Union’s power over the Asian countries and resisting the domestic pressure that arose as a result of the split as taking his attention away from the German question. Khrushchev, although he increased aid packages in the early 1960s in an effort “to show the GDR he was a more reliable ally than China,” was not able to completely satisfy Ulbricht. True to form, though, Ulbricht found a way to turn the split

57 Ibid.
58 Harrison, Driving the Soviets Up The Wall, 54.
and Khrushchev's resulting inattention to his own advantage. Just as he had taken the chaos in
the Kremlin after Stalin's death as tacit permission to do what he liked as far as consolidating his
position in the SED went, he took the Sino-Soviet split as an opportunity to take his own steps
toward solving the German question. Specifically, he worked to solidify the division of the two
Germanys by beginning construction on the Berlin Wall in 1963 and used his connections with
the Chinese to seek “increased leverage on Khrushchev to pursue a tougher policy on Berlin”60.

Theoretical Frameworks

Throughout much of the Cold War and the few years immediately following it, it was
convenient for Western politicians to talk about all communist states as a monolithic group, with
no respect for the power dynamics at play in the Soviet/communist bloc. To this end, the Soviet
Union tended to be portrayed as the final arbiter of all decisions in the East, in total control of the
weaker states it had coerced into alliances. Scholars, lacking access to party archives and the
memoirs of leaders, judged relationships between the USSR and other communist states to be
created by and to benefit only the USSR, with the other states being completely subservient61. In
Michael Handel’s Weak States in the International System, he notes that his choice to focus on
formal alliances “made by free choice between weak states and great powers” was a choice that
(based on the information at the time) necessarily excluded “most of the 329 bilateral treaties,
agreements, and protocols signed by the USSR and the East European countries in the 10 years
preceding the Warsaw Pact”62.

60 Ibid., 165.
61 There is definitely something about this somewhere in the alliances readings
62 Handel, Weak States, 121.
However, in light of new documents recovered after the fall of East Germany and the USSR, we can see that the USSR/GDR relationship actually shares a lot of the key features Handel identifies as belonging to voluntary patron-client relationships between superpowers and smaller states. This makes sense, considering the revelations that not only were East Germany and North Korea’s relationships with the USSR were much more voluntary than previously thought, Ulbricht, Honecker, and Kim all had many opportunities to affect policy decisions in Moscow. Handel's models – which are valid on their own, even if the way they were applied to the German and Korean situations suffered from lack of information – are therefore more useful than he imagined, and are a good starting point for analyzing the patron-client dynamics of the USSR/GDR and USSR/DPRK relationships.

Handel's framework is most applicable when determining how the states involved in the alliance interact on the international stage and how the alliance affects the states' interaction with outside powers. For instance, Handel defines the process of “coercive deficiency”, whereby states will threaten to collapse when “the continued existence or support of the weak power is of outstanding importance to the great power” in order to gain concessions from the great power. This was a favored tactic of East German leaders, and was also practiced to a lesser degree by Kim Il Sung. Additionally, Handel defines a gap between weak states and great powers due to the former's “provincial or parochial” outlook “focus[ed] on a limited range of foreign policy problems” and the latter's more internationalist view. This gap was certainly in evidence in the USSR/GDR and USSR/DPRK relationships, as the USSR's focus on its position on the world

---

63 For a detailed discussion of areas where East Germany asserted its independence from the USSR and highlighted the voluntary aspects of their relationship, see Harrison, Driving the Soviets Up The Wall, and Frey, Division and Detente; for a comparable discussion of the Korean case, see Szalontai, Kim Il-Sung in the Khrushchev Era
64 Handel, Weak States, 131.
65 Ibid., 42.
stage and its relationship with the United States sometimes meant that it came into conflict with its client states' national- or regional-based reunification policies.

Applying only Handel’s model to the USSR/GDR and USSR/DPRK relationships is problematic, though, as there are significant conflicts with reality and it is made clear that the relationships do not fit his frameworks. This is usually the case when dealing with the power dynamics between the client and the superpower. First, Handel operates from the assumption that weak states will always want to have absolute or near-absolute freedom to change allegiances whenever they want, citing weak states in a sphere of influence “los[ing their] freedom to maneuver” and being unable to “ask for the help of other great powers” as some of the worst things that could happen to a country. But neither Ulbricht and his fellow East German leaders, firmly in the Soviet sphere of influence, nor Kim and the North Koreans would not have accepted help from the United States had it been offered. Handel also cites weak states in a sphere of influence as being unable to “improve [their] bargaining position politically or economically by playing one power against another”, which, given the actions of both the GDR and the DPRK during the Sino-Soviet split, is a flawed premise.

Thus, we need to look elsewhere to describe how the USSR/GDR and USSR/DPRK relationships affected reunification policies specifically. For the former, one of the most compelling frameworks is laid out in Harrison’s *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall*. She suggests that, much like West Germany was John F. Kennedy’s “superdomino”, “Khruschev treated East Germany as a ‘super-ally’, an ally of the greatest importance to Soviet security and prestige, the

---

66 Interestingly, these points of conflict serve to highlight, rather than disprove, the voluntary nature of the USSR/GDR and USSR/DPRK relationships, leading to some interesting questions about the basis of Handel's theories. Those questions, however, are out of the scope of this paper and it is enough to examine how the relationships fit the models as presented.


68 Ibid.
loss of which was to be avoided at all costs”\textsuperscript{69}. This explains why Moscow was willing to grant the GDR so much leeway on both their domestic and foreign policy: it was more important to them that the GDR remain an ally than that they follow all of Moscow's directions to the letter. North Korea, while sharing some characteristics of a super-ally such as carrying great weight in Soviet foreign policy circles and receiving aid even when not in direct compliance with Moscow, is not a super-ally on the level of the GDR. Its independence is gained not from Soviet fear of losing it as an ally but from Kim's policy nationalistic policies and balancing between the USSR and China, and, while very important to the Soviets, they did not view it as vital the same way they did East Germany.

Perhaps the most comprehensive and applicable framework is Glenn H. Snyder's, which defines two main concerns of states involved in an alliance: abandonment and entrapment. Abandonment or defection can occur when an ally leaves an alliance, re-aligns with an opponent, fails to comply with specific commitments, or fails to provide support when expected\textsuperscript{70}. Entrapment, defined as “being dragged into a conflict over an ally's interests that one does not share, or shares only partially,” is most likely when an ally “becomes intransigent in disputes with opponents because of his confidence in [his ally's] support”\textsuperscript{71}. The East Germans' concerns all revolved around unification: “they feared the Soviets would abandon the GDR to German reunification on Western terms” and, similarly, that they would be “forced or entrapped by the Soviets into more liberal policies […] which in turn might facilitate German reunification on Western terms”\textsuperscript{72}. The Soviets' concerns were almost entirely on the entrapment side: they worried “that the East German regime would involuntarily abandon the alliance by collapsing

\textsuperscript{69} Harrison, \textit{Driving the Soviets Up The Wall}, 7.

\textsuperscript{70} Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” \textit{World Politics} 34 (July 1984), 466.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 467.

\textsuperscript{72} Harrison, \textit{Driving the Soviets Up The Wall}, 7.
and being absorbed into West Germany". The set of concerns for the Korean alliance was quite different as North Korea, more isolated from the effects of USSR policy changes than the GDR, didn't have entrapment concerns, and their potential abandonment concerns were offset by the presence of China. The Soviets, however, were concerned about both entrapment (that they would end up forced to support a North Korean war against the ROK that would end poorly for all parties involved) and abandonment (that North Korea would ally completely with China). By viewing the alliances with these concerns in mind, we understand much more about some of their seemingly paradoxical aspects. German reunification policy was such a push-pull competition between the East Germans and the Soviets not only due to the force of the personalities involved but because both sides were trying to resolve their entrapment/abandonment concerns. The Soviets were willing to base their Korean policies on Pyongyang's desires because they had entrapment and abandonment concerns that their Korean partners didn't.

**Fraternizing with the Enemy: The USSR/FRG and USSR/DPRK Relationships and Their Impact on Reunification Policy**

As the years went on and superpower detente became a reality, the USSR began to realize that it could no longer completely discount relationships with the Western-allied halves of Germany and Korea. Khrushchev's recognition of the FRG in 1955 had already committed the USSR to at least a modicum of engagement in Europe. The situation was slightly different in Asia, where it wasn't until right before the Soviet Union's collapse in 1990 that Moscow extended formal recognition to South Korea. This helps explain some of the discrepancies in

---

73 Ibid.
Moscow's Korean and German reunification policies, as those policies were influenced both by Moscow's dealings with the West and its desire to influence West German and South Korean public opinion and policy. As Moscow tended to put a higher priority on influencing the FRG, both directly and through East Germany (consistent with Moscow's overall trend of de-prioritizing the Korean situation\textsuperscript{75}), the FRG-USSR-GDR triangle had a much more noticeable effect on German reunification policies in the USSR and the GDR than the comparable ROK-USSR-DPRK triangle did on the USSR's and DPRK's reunification policies. Given Russia's recognition of South Korea and its newfound interest in being a mediator/balancer on the peninsula, we have seen Moscow's new position relatively equidistant between the two Koreas lead to significant changes in its reunification policy.

The USSR first recognized the legitimacy and sovereignty of West Germany in 1955 with two very clear goals in mind: show the West they were being reasonable in their treatment of the German question, and influence West German public opinion and policy favorably toward the East\textsuperscript{76}. As a strategic move, it was a coup in and of itself: the fact that West German Chancellor Adenauer had agreed to establish relations with Moscow was an implicit admission that he was dropping his demand that free elections in the GDR take place before any other steps toward answering the German question be taken\textsuperscript{77}. Normalization was intended to “announce the finality of its solution of the paramount question of Germany and to emphasize the 'two Germanys' concept as a mode of settlement” and signaled Moscow's preference for coexistence over reunification\textsuperscript{78}. But recognition did not mean that relations between the USSR and the FRG improved overnight. On the contrary, their relationship was cold bordering on hostile for much of

\textsuperscript{76} Harrison, \textit{Driving the Soviets Up The Wall}, 54.
\textsuperscript{78} Dallin, \textit{Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin}, 261.
the 50s and 60s. Three years after normalization, “Konrad Adenauer was again Enemy Number One in the roster of Soviet 'class enemies’”79.

As Moscow's relationship with Washington improved, so too did its relationship with Bonn, a development that “led to a test of wills with the SED First Secretary […] and illuminated the divergence of Soviet and East German priorities”80. This was a key part of Moscow's “peaceful coexistence” plan and another sign of lessened interest in reunifying Germany. It was not until Honecker took over in the 70s that East Germany brought its own policies back in line with Moscow's, and, with Moscow's support, “the notion of reunification […] all but disappeared in East German official rhetoric”81.

In contrast to Moscow's early normalization with Bonn, which “contained a definite anti-Western element,”82 normalization with Seoul was the last great pro-Western movement of the Soviet Union before its collapse. Unlike China, which was “willing to wait seven years [after the start of regular trade with Seoul] to normalize relations with South Korea in deference to its ideological ties with North Korea,”83 Moscow's growing disillusionment with the regime in Pyongyang, its increasingly poor economic situation, and its desire to be seen favorably in the West all contributed to its normalization with Seoul and acceptance of its near-total loss of influence in Pyongyang as a result. Gorbachev also took things one step further in the Korean case: normalization with the South meant a temporary end to all aid to the North. Although Kim did mellow his rhetoric and policies after the normalization between the USSR and the ROK, that was only one factor in his decision, along with the overall trend towards de-Sovietization84.

79 Ibid., 269.
80 McAdams, Germany Divided, 90.
81 Frey, Division and Detente, 8.
82 Dallin, Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin, 261.
83 Snyder, China's Rise and the Two Koreas, 37.
84 Meyer, “Gorbachev and Post-Gorbachev Policy,” 772.
Conclusion

East Germany collapsed largely because it lost the support of the Soviet military and Gorbachev declined to intervene in the popular uprisings of 1989-90. When the collapse of the USSR meant the sudden withdrawal of all its support for North Korea, many hoped for a quick, German-style reunification. But such was not the case, due in part to China's continued close relationship with North Korea (their aid during the 1996/1997 floods led many South Korean officials to “grouse that China had denied an opportunity for Korean unification on South Korean terms,” although they couldn't do much more than that)\(^85\).

In the last years of the USSR, North Korea had much more freedom to make its own decisions about Korea-Korea relations than East Germany had to make decisions about German-German relations. For example, Erich Honecker's conversation with Helmut Kohl at Yuri Andropov's funeral caused friction with the Kremlin “over the idea that the GDR was competent to make such foreign-policy decisions on its own”\(^86\). Kim Il Sung, who had been making his own foreign policy decisions for several decades at that point, did not need to worry nearly as much about angering his benefactors in the Kremlin.

\(^85\) Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas*, 88.
\(^86\) McAdams, *Germany Divided*, 161.
## Appendix A: Collection of Reunification Proposals, Korea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Proposed By</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Propaganda Purposes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military reoccupation of the south</td>
<td>DPRK</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>No, cause of Korean War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorganize the KWP, advance the DPRK’s economy, support revolutionary elements in the south, and reject unification by force</td>
<td>DPRK</td>
<td>Late 1953 until 1960</td>
<td>No, actual economic restructuring occurred in order to make the DPRK more attractive, remained official KWP line until 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting in Seoul or Pyongyang to negotiate reunification without other countries</td>
<td>DPRK</td>
<td>October 10, 1954</td>
<td>Yes; also a way to “pay lip service to Khrushchev’s policy of peaceful co-existence without making any actual concessions”[87]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonaggression pact, armed forces reduction</td>
<td>DPRK</td>
<td>March 7, 1955</td>
<td>Nonaggression pact yes, armed forces reduction no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“International conference of the powers concerned in a peaceful unification”[88]</td>
<td>DPRK</td>
<td>June 2, 1956</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

87 Szalontai, *Kim Il-Sung in the Khrushchev Era*, 141. Szalontai considers this an explanation for (and at minimum a major factor in) all DPRK reunification proposals between 1954-1958.

88 Cho 226
Appendix B: Collection of Reunification Proposals, Germany

This section will look at how Moscow's recognition of the FRG and the ROK and its attempts to remain on good terms with them while still supporting its allies affected its reunification policies and which, if any, patterns from the German case can be seen emerging in the Korean one.

As we shall see, the fact that Germany's reunification occurred before a wholly united Europe was formed would become a source of mild consternation for German and Soviet leaders.
Works Cited


Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR. *The Soviet Union and the Korean Question (Documents)*. Moscow, 1948.


