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Patterns in conflict: an historical analysis of PRC crisis/conflict management based on Chinese perceptions of sovereignty and national strategic frontiers

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THESIS

**PATTERNS IN CONFLICT:
AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF PRC
CRISIS/CONFLICT MANAGEMENT BASED ON
CHINESE PERCEPTIONS OF SOVEREIGNTY
AND NATIONAL STRATEGIC FRONTIERS**

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Primarily based on Chinese perceptions of sovereignty and their national strategic frontiers, this study attempts to discern patterns in PRC uses of force to attain foreign policy objectives. Both concepts are instrumental in understanding when and where the Chinese are willing to use force. For the PRC there exists a dual concept of sovereignty that extends from territorial to influential. Not only is Chinese control expected within its recognized borders, but also predominating Chinese influence is expected in areas *outside* the territorial borders of the PRC. Exactly where this perceived sphere of influence has been at any given time is difficult to establish. Through a twelve case study pattern analysis, this thesis demonstrates that the PRC has repeatedly been willing to use force to ensure their primacy of influence. As the strength of the Chinese nation expands and contracts, so has the PRC definition and application of Chinese influence. This work also identifies past demarcations of the PRC's strategic frontier and how far Chinese strategic interests might extend in the future. Within the last twenty-five years there has been a shift in PRC focus from a continental to a maritime frontier. As Chinese comprehensive national strength allows, the maritime claims of the PRC will be defended with force in the name of sovereignty as part of the historic territory of the Chinese people.

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ABSTRACT

Primarily based on Chinese perceptions of sovereignty and their national strategic frontiers, this study attempts to discern patterns in PRC uses of force to attain foreign policy objectives. Both concepts are instrumental in understanding when and where the Chinese are willing to use force. For the PRC there exists a dual concept of sovereignty that extends from territorial to influential. Not only is Chinese control expected within its recognized borders, but also predominating Chinese influence is expected in areas *outside* the territorial borders of the PRC. Exactly where this perceived sphere of influence has been at any given time is difficult to establish. Through a twelve case study pattern analysis, this thesis demonstrates that the PRC has repeatedly been willing to use force to ensure their primacy of influence. As the strength of the Chinese nation expands and contracts, so has the PRC definition and application of Chinese influence. This work also identifies past demarcations of the PRC's strategic frontier and how far Chinese strategic interests might extend in the future. Within the last twenty-five years there has been a shift in PRC focus from a continental to a maritime frontier. As Chinese comprehensive national strength allows, the maritime claims of the PRC will be defended with force in the name of sovereignty as part of the historic territory of the Chinese people.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis attempts to discern patterns in the People's Republic of China (PRC) uses of force to attain foreign policy objectives. First, an attempt is made to determine if there was an inclination inherited from pre-communist Chinese history which favored or disdained the use of force to solve disputes. Conventional wisdom maintains the latter. According to this argument, China had a pacifist tradition which eschewed the use of force. Known as the Confucian-Mencian Paradigm, this tradition holds that the Chinese perceived the use of force only as a last resort. When it was necessary, it was most often used defensively in a limited, controlled manner. Occasional exceptions included punitive wars. Proponents of the Confucian-Mencian paradigm maintain that it prevails in Chinese thinking even today. The Chinese would like the world to believe this view as well.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, an alternative view began to emerge. Concurrent with the rise of the comprehensive national strength of the People's Republic, a reassessment of the conventional view toward the Chinese use of force led to the development of a *parabellum* strategic culture viewpoint. The *parabellum* paradigm asserts that Chinese culture was historically not averse to using force to solve disputes and in fact sought resolution via military means when conditions were favorable. *Parabellum* proponents argue that China was exceptionally flexible in its application of force and was willing to use accommodationist strategies until conditions were ripe for more assertive postures. This thesis argues that the pacifist-*parabellum* cultures coexisted and alternated in predominance in a rhythmic manner as the strength of the Chinese nation ebbed and flowed with the dynastic cycle.

While the literature is relatively sparse with respect to establishing patterns in the PRC's crisis and conflict behavior, several conclusions have stood the test of time. PRC crisis and conflict behavior demonstrates an emphasis on timing and pauses in crisis and conflict. Likewise, history demonstrates that the PRC is traditionally not averse to taking risks against a far superior military power. The 1995-1996 Taiwan Straits Crisis reiterated this point. Another PRC tradition is a pragmatic, at times opportunistic, flexibility in the face of changing threats. Finally, contrary to the theory that territorial disputes will abate as the state increases in age, there has been a fairly consistent, if not increasing tendency of the PRC to engage in territorial disputes as the Chinese have expanded their frontiers and asserted additional irredentist claims. In general, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been used as an offensive tool more often than not. The case study analysis provided here confirms this view—none of the PRC uses of force to attain foreign policy objectives were within Core China.

None of the works reviewed in this thesis, however, sufficiently analyzes the connection between PRC perceptions of sovereignty, their national strategic frontiers, and their willingness to use force. China's national territory has always been in a state of flux, expanding and contracting with the strength of the nation. This thesis demonstrates that the Chinese, indeed Asian, view of spatial boundaries led to ambiguity over the actual territorial extent of the Middle Kingdom. The collision of Western political theory and Asian political practices led to a blurring of the interrelationship of suzerainty and sovereignty vis-à-vis influence and control. In the minds of the PRC elite, this confusion still exists. Areas that have traditionally only been strongly influenced by Chinese culture are also expected to fall within the PRC orbit. Thus, not only was Chinese and later PRC control expected within the recognized borders of China without foreign interference,

but their leaders also expected predominating Chinese influence in areas that have historically been under the suzerainty of the Chinese people. As the strength of the Chinese nation expands and contracts, so does its definition and application of its influence as well as its concomitant strategic frontier. This thesis demonstrates that the PRC has been willing to use force to ensure this primacy of influence.

But to the Chinese, PLA actions in these regions have been justified as reunification of the Motherland or fighting off imperialists and hegemonists. Their anxiety and mistrust of foreign intrusion and interference are predominantly based on the treatment China received from the imperial powers during their century of humiliation and are best exemplified by their obsession with sovereignty. This work identifies three areas in which the Chinese asserted their sovereignty and influence: Core China, Greater China, and regionally. The case study pattern analysis demonstrates that the second and third areas have provided the impetus for conflict more than the first. Conflicts involving sovereignty within Greater China were essentially aimed at reunification. Conflicts involving influence were regional. Thus, it is demonstrated that a dual concept of PRC sovereignty exists that extends from territorial to influential. The latter concept implies an assertion of Chinese influence in regions *outside* the territorial borders of the PRC. It is difficult to establish exactly where this perceived sphere of influence has been at any given time. But as the strength of the nation allowed, regions such as Tibet, Chinese Turkestan, Korea, Vietnam, and elsewhere fell within the Chinese and later PRC orbit.

The analysis of PRC conflicts confirms these points, and alarmingly perhaps, signals a rising tide of expansion as the strength of the PRC grows and opportunities arise. The second research question asks if any lessons from previous uses of force by the PRC can aid in

recognizing future uses of the PLA for foreign policy objectives. This question is analyzed vis-à-vis PLA modernization, which has received renewed emphasis. Technology and power projection are stressed in the PLA's new force structure. Together with the doctrine of active defense, this bodes for a PLA which seeks to meet the enemy at a distance or on the Chinese periphery.

Aspirations for an advanced force capable of making this doctrine credible do not ensure success. Nevertheless, PRC military modernization remains a regional concern. This work identifies where and how far PRC strategic interests might extend in the region. Certainly, there has been a shift in PRC focus from a continental to a maritime frontier. PRC official pronouncements and unofficial but sanctioned articles are clear in stating that a Chinese expansion within the maritime frontier is needed to secure living space and economic resources. Two defensive island chain perimeters have been proposed as a demarcation of Chinese control and interests. As the situation permits, Beijing will defend this territory as it is perceived to contribute to the national comprehensive strength.

As PRC strength grows, Sino-American interests are surely going to collide. The diametrically opposed national policies of PRC sovereignty versus American "shaping the international environment" will continue to plague the two countries' relations. As this thesis suggests, however, the Chinese will be pragmatic and will not upset economic development which, along with domestic stability, will remain the top priority of the CCP.

Nevertheless, many sources of potential PRC conflict exist. Taiwan remains the most volatile and contentious issue. Most likely, the PRC will back up its threats of force should it perceive Taiwan as carrying its "splittist" activities too far. Only a slightly reduced chance for conflict exists on China's maritime frontier where the territorial disputes over the South China Sea

continue. The PRC continental frontiers are relatively secure. As long as the Koreans, Indians, Vietnamese, and Russians do not attempt to upset the status quo, the PRC will likely not instigate conflict in these areas. Even the considerable irredentist claims against Russia in Northeast Asia will not be pressed as long as the PLA remains dependent upon Russian military technology.

It is hoped that this thesis will help develop a greater understanding of the PRC's decision to use force based on national interests and trends in previous PRC crisis and conflict management. In that sense, this thesis uses historical analysis not for predictive value, but for its ability to provide insights into the strategic context in which the PRC functions. This may help our understanding of Chinese policies. We should analyze PRC interests and willingness to use force to protect those interests from a position of greater understanding of where they have been and where they intend to go as a country. If we know China's interests, we can better calculate when and where they will choose altercation over accommodation. If we understand the manifestations of their historic tendencies, we will be better able to gauge present and future actions.

DEDICATION

For Tanya, Casey and Allie

I. INTRODUCTION

At a glance, it would appear that East Asia is more secure than it has been since the end of the Second World War. The Spring 1998 nuclear tests by India and Pakistan on the sub-continent notwithstanding, the People's Republic of China (PRC), in particular, enjoys its most secure environment in its existence. Indeed, the country has not been more peaceful since the middle Qing era. However, many security analysts see storm clouds looming on the horizon as economic problems and historic animosities rise to the surface. Even more troubling, many argue, is the return of the fabled Chinese dragon rising like a phoenix from the ashes of one hundred fifty years of humiliation. The rapid developmental progress of the PRC is unquestioned. Over the last twenty-five years the PRC's economic growth is the highest recorded in its history.[1] Along with this economic development is a massive military modernization program that started in earnest in the mid-1980s. Despite previous and projected cuts in size approaching 1.5 million men, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has made significant strides in improving its capabilities. PRC intentions remain suspect, however. The question of how a modernized PLA will be used is the focus of the fear and apprehensions experienced by so many both in the region and around the globe.

A. PURPOSE

It is extremely difficult to forecast PLA activities without an appreciation of previous uses of the PLA in pursuit of foreign policy objectives by the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Thus, it is the purpose of this thesis to locate trends in PRC conflict management with a special

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[1] See Zuliu Hu and Mohsin S. Khan, "Why Is China Growing So Fast?," International Monetary Fund, 1997. Source obtained online at [http://web.nps.navy.mil/~relooney/IMF_7].

focus on how it is related to the Chinese concept of sovereignty and what has been described as China's strategic frontier. The thesis will contain six chapters including this introduction:

I. Introduction
II. Survey of the Literature
III. Case Study Parameters
IV. Case Studies
V. Analysis and Synthesis
VI. Conclusion

Chapter I will introduce the reader to the topic, outline the purpose, and discuss the methodology of the thesis. Although there are numerous studies of PRC conflicts, most are case study specific and do not offer interpretative patterns. The attempts that have been made in determining patterns in PRC conflict behavior are by no means comprehensive, nor have they been altogether enlightening. In addition to a brief survey and comparison of previous analytical attempts at determining patterns in PRC crisis and conflict behavior, Chapter II will provide a discussion of the pre-Communist Chinese view toward using force, analyze what has historically been regarded as China's national territory, and provide the reader with a contemporary context by discussing the China Threat Theory. Chapter III will provide the reader with a contextual background from which to approach the subsequent case study chapter. It will also define in detail the terms that will be included in Chapter IV's analysis. Chapter IV consists of a comparative twelve case study[2] review of PRC conflict and crisis behavior vis-à-vis the Chinese concepts of sovereignty and strategic frontier. Chapter V will be conclusions arrived at from the case study analysis data as well as a synthesis of the arguments presented thus far. Chapter V will also discuss PLA

[2] The twelve case studies are: Tibet (1950), Korea (1950-1953), Taiwan Straits (1954-1955, 1958), India (1962), Vietnam (1965-1969), USSR (1969), Xisha Islands (1974), Vietnam (1979), Johnson Reef (1988), Mischief Reef (1995), Taiwan Straits (1995-1996).

modernization and examine the implications it might have on U.S. policy and the PRC's most likely areas of conflict. Chapter VI will review the conclusions arrived at from the previous chapters' analyses.

B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

The central question asked throughout this thesis is: are there discernible patterns in PRC threats or uses of force to attain foreign policy objectives? In particular, the thesis will attempt to answer this question with respect to the Chinese concept of sovereignty and their perception of the PRC's national strategic frontier. It will be argued that the former concept is crucial to understanding *when*, and the latter perception crucial to understanding *where* the Chinese use force. After a compilation of data from the case studies, a second question will focus on: what, if any, lessons from previous uses of force by the PRC can aid in understanding future uses of the PLA for foreign policy objectives? This question will be answered with respect to PLA modernization and potential implications for U.S. policy.

The primary method with which these questions will be addressed is through case study pattern analysis. For each case study, a brief description of events will be followed by a more detailed examination. Each case study analysis will be based upon the parameters outlined in Chapter III. Cumulative case study data and interpretations will provide both objective and subjective conclusions respectively. The former will be the empirical data while the latter will include more deductive determinations. Specifically, Chapter III definitions will allow objective conclusions to be achieved through the cumulative empirical case study results.[3] Subjective

[3] It is acknowledged that the author's interpretations and analysis of each case study based on the definitions contained in Chapter III is to some degree subjective. Nevertheless, such a procedure allows one to quantify PRC conflicts and crises based on several crucial criteria that might shed light on past as well as future

conclusions will be developed as a means to elicit possible implications for the future.

Several other issues will be addressed in order to place the experience of the PRC in using force in perspective with not only Chinese history but with the present course of PRC military modernization as well. The first is a survey of literature that has analyzed the Chinese propensity to use force to solve international disputes. The survey will be addressed in the next chapter. Knowledge of the different interpretations of imperial China's propensity to use force will provide the reader with a groundwork with which to approach the case study chapter. These conclusions, arrived at from an examination of China's use of force in the past, reveal a changing perception of a munificent China to one significantly more prone to use force to solve disputes than was previously thought.

The second issue is PLA modernization. PRC efforts at military modernization will be addressed in Chapter V in order to provide the reader with a perspective of recent attempts by the PRC to mold their military into an effective fighting force capable of projecting power across their borders. Modernization analysis will shed light on where Beijing expects future conflicts and how they intend to fight. Likewise, PLA doctrinal shifts reveal where and how the PRC envisions future conflicts to erupt. These analyses tend to support the conclusion that the PRC is emphasizing power projection capabilities, especially within its naval and air forces, in order to be prepared for conflicts on the Chinese periphery—particularly the maritime periphery.

Finally, the contemporary PRC view of its strategic frontiers will be assessed. If taken at face value, PRC and particularly PLA elite views on the concomitant relationship between China's "comprehensive national strength" and "national territory" are alarming. Implications for Sino-

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uses of the PLA.

American security concerns are important and must be measured to ensure each country's views and policies, which are inherently inimical, do not lead to unavoidable conflict. Where Chinese strategic interests may cause friction with other states and ignite conflict is the last topic addressed. During the last twenty-five years the Chinese have shifted from a purely continental to a largely maritime focus, making this area their most likely stage of future conflict. Nevertheless, considerable Chinese interests remain on the Asian continent and, if threatened, could lead to military action there as well.

C. RELEVANCE

With a population approaching 1.3 billion people the PRC is the world's largest country and remains one of the United States' most pressing concerns for East Asian security in the 21st century. PRC reforms, both economic and military, have made them a more powerful player in the region. Successful reforms could make China an even stronger potential opponent or a more valuable strategic partner. PLA modernization through technological advances will provide enhanced capability, if not parity, vis-à-vis China's potential adversaries in the region, including the United States. How they will employ this capability remains an open question. A greater understanding of prior uses of force by the PRC will aid in determining subsequent intentions of the PLA and future *casus belli*. As noted by Alastair Iain Johnston, this does not presuppose future behavior can be predicted by a study of past events, but it is a good place to start.[4]

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[4] Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949-1992: A First Cut at the Data," *The China Quarterly*, No. 153 (March 1998): 1.

II. SURVEYING THE LITERATURE

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

What does pre-communist history suggest about the Chinese inclination to use force? There are conflicting conclusions, but it should be noted that the qualifications of sovereignty and territorial integrity that are examined in this work's case studies are not applicable to most of pre-1949 Chinese history. Until relatively recent times, China had different concepts of spatial boundaries than the typical Western ideal. Indeed, Europe was still in the process of developing these principles when their search for spices first brought them and their ideas to Asian shores. The fact that Asia's traditional views of space and national territory were quite different from the modern view we hold today provides one explanation why irredentist claims in Asia have been so difficult to deal with in modern times.[5]

1. A Confucian-Mencian Pacifist Tradition?

However, one can still attempt to ascertain if the Chinese have developed during their long history a definable strategic culture[6] with which they view the use of force. Conventional wisdom

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[5] When Europeans first began arriving in significant numbers in the 16th century they brought with them the idea of spatial boundaries to a region that had hence only known delimitation at best and overlapping power centers at its murkiest. Not until the 19th century did Europeans themselves start claiming the land (and hence surrounding sea) as their own. The Asians were slow to realize what was happening and even then could do little about Western territorial claims. Indeed, much of the present-day Asian claims in the South China Sea originated with their former colonizers. For an excellent analysis of the concept of spatial and non-spatial constructs of national territory see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

[6] Although he listed many working definitions, Alastair Iain Johnston defined strategic culture as "an integrated system of symbols (i.e., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors, etc.) that acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting grand strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious." Johnston went on to say that "strategic culture consists of two key elements. The first is a central paradigm, or a central set of assumptions that provides answers to three questions: what role does conflict or warfare play in human affairs; what is the nature of the enemy and the

holds that since the end of the bellicose Spring and Autumn Period (722-481 B.C.), Chinese strategic thinking was influenced by the essential passivity and morality of Confucian and later the exaggerated idealism of Mencian thought. This Confucian-Mencian Paradigm holds that the Chinese perceived the use of force only as a last resort. When it was necessary, it was most often used defensively (with some qualifications including punitive wars) and in a limited controlled manner.[7] Perhaps the standard bearer of such arguments was John K. Fairbank who pointed to a "pacifist bias" in China. Fairbank argued that "warfare was disesteemed in this [Confucian] imperial orthodoxy of the Han bureaucrats, and the disesteem was given an ethical basis that colored Chinese thinking ever since."[8]

2. The *Parabellum* Paradigm

How then, does one explain the centuries, even millennia, of Chinese warfare that existed not only within China but also outside its borders? Scholars at the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences counted 3,790 *recorded* wars of both internal and external origin from the period of the Western Zhou (ca. 1100 B.C.) to the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1911.[9] From the "First Emperor"Qin Shih Huangdi's (reigned 246-210 B.C.) unification campaigns; the remarkable Han

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threat it poses; and how efficacious is the use of force in dealing with threats to state security?" The second element is based on "the empirical footprint of strategic culture and should be a ranked set of grand strategic preferences that is consistent across relevant objects of analysis." See Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 36, 248.

[7] Ibid., 62-66. Note, Johnston catalogues a considerable array of contemporary proponents of this Chinese Confucian-Mencian pacifist tradition. I will not attempt to replicate them here.

[8] John K. Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties of the Chinese Military Experience," in *Chinese Ways in Warfare*, eds. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. and John K. Fairbank, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 6.

[9] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 27.

(206 B.C.-221 A.D.) expansion under Wu Di; incessant warfare during the Three Kingdoms period (220-280); the expansion during the Sui and Tang dynasties (581-907) into Annam (Vietnam), Taiwan, Tibet, Chinese Turkestan, Korea; up through the Qing dynasty, the history of China is replete with examples of aggressive internal and external warfare. Tang territorial control and suzerainty were essentially the high water marks for the Chinese empire. At its height, the Tang extended Chinese influence over a huge area from southern Siberia to Southeast Asia westward through Tibet and Central Asia to the Caspian Sea.[10] As the dynastic cycle took its course, so too did contraction and re-expansion of the empire, approaching the frontiers set by the Tang. It should be noted however, while reclamation of lost territories was later termed "reunification," these lands initially came into the empire through expansionism.

Johnston is one of the few who dispute the accuracy of labeling China as a pacifist state. He argued instead for viewing China within a *parabellum* paradigm.[11] While the Confucian-Mencian paradigm did in fact exist, it was dominated by the less espoused *parabellum* strategic culture. Johnston qualified this assertion by arguing that the Chinese concept of absolute flexibility (*quan bian*) mediated the offensive application of violence. Offensive violence "is likely to be successful only if strategic conditions are ripe. Until such time...strategy should be aimed at creating these conditions. Under certain limited, temporary circumstances, this may require less

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[10] John K. Fairbank, and others., *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation, 5th Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1989), chap. 3-9 passim, but especially see 62-65, 96-99.

[11] Johnston defines the *parabellum* paradigm as one that accepts: (1) warfare and conflict as relatively constant features of interstate affairs, (2) a zero-sum characterization of conflict, and (3) war and violence as a highly efficacious means for dealing with conflict. See Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 61. Very much a realpolitik model, the literal translation of the phrase from which the *parabellum* paradigm is derived is "if you want peace, prepare for war" (*si pacem parabellum*).

coercive, even accommodationist strategies."[12] Therefore, the existence of a culture favorable to the use of force to solve disputes does not guarantee the use of such methods at every circumstance.

Johnston used ancient Chinese texts on war and strategy compiled together in one work as the *Seven Military Classics*[13] for theoretical evidence of a more bellicose China than traditionally believed. Ironically, these are some of the same texts the proponents of the Confucian-Mencian tradition cite to support their claim of a pacifist tradition in China. The most notable of which is Sun Zi's *The Art of War* which includes such benign phrases as "subduing the enemy without fighting," "invincibility is a matter of defense, vulnerability is a matter of attack," and "attacking the enemy's strategy first" to reference just a few.[14] However, Johnston concluded that, with an occasional exception, the texts support the *parabellum* paradigm over the Confucian-Mencian tradition. To test his hypothesis, Johnston used the Chinese relationship with the non-Han peoples, especially the Mongols, during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). While mediated by the *quan bian* concept, he again concluded the evidence (Ming policy arguments and decision making with regard to using force) supports the preeminence of a *parabellum* strategic culture. During

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[12] Ibid., 249.

[13] As the title suggests, *Seven Military Classics* was a collection of seven works written between 600 B.C. and 600 A.D. and compiled in 1083. For an English version of this work, see Ralph D. Sawyer, trans., *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).

[14] Griffith, Samuel B., *Sun Tzu: The Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), passim but especially Chapter III translation of "Offensive Strategy." Roger Ames, in a comparison of Sun Zi to classical Western strategy, implicitly favors the *parabellum* paradigm although he too admits the existence of a Confucian tradition. He writes of a "militarist domination of the Confucians," but argues that the militarist texts are "extension[s] and instantiation[s] of the philosophical tenets of the 'schools' to which they belong. In other words, these texts [such as the *Seven Military Classics*] describe the implications of philosophical ideas in the practical area of military affairs." See Roger Ames, "The Sunzi Legacy and Classical Western Strategy: A Tale of Two Warfares" in *Chinese Military Modernization*, eds. C. Dennison Lane, Mark Weisenbloom, and Dimon Liu (Washington, D.C.: The AEI Press, 1996), 19-20.

the Ming dynasty alone, an average of 1.12 *external* wars occurred per year through the entire 276 years of its existence.[15] The fact that the Chinese compiled this data for the Ming period (which is considered by some to be the prototypical *Chinese* dynasty) and not the foreign controlled Yuan (Mongol) or Qing (Manchu) dynasties is critical to refuting arguments that any expansionism or militarism that emanated from China was the product of barbarian periods of rule and not indigenous Han rule. Later, the Warlord Period (1911-1928) and the subsequent wars between the Nationalists and Communists touched every facet of Chinese life and consciousness. Therefore, while it may not completely invalidate the traditional Confucian-Mencian interpretation, the *parabellum* paradigm provides a more accurate picture of pre-1949 Chinese tendencies.

3. The Chinese World View

Thus, when the Peoples' Republic was proclaimed on 1 October 1949, the Chinese Communist nation had a distinct strategic culture that transcended not only the previous imperial government, but also the subsequent Nationalist attempt at governing the mainland as well. The nearly incessant warfare that had ruled Chinese life since the end of the empire only served to buttress the view of force as the ultimate arbiter of disputes. Even the defensivist claims vis-à-vis Japanese aggression and the brief United Front between the Communists and Nationalists proved to be a sham. Both sides all but collaborated with the Japanese in order to save strength for more offensive pursuits against each other once the Western Allies had defeated Japan.[16]

Another slowly developed viewpoint culminated with the birth of the People's Republic.

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[15] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 27.

[16] See Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War, 1901-1949*, (New York: Longman Publishing, 1995), 266.

The Chinese believed their long slow and painful decline from greatness to a subjugated nation at the hands of the Western and Japanese imperialists had finally come to an end. PRC leaders saw China as a rising power—rising to the heights it had held previously and should have held all along if it were not for bankrupt (imperialist) policies and false (capitalist) ideology.

Mao Zedong and the rest of the CCP elite did much to play up the end of the Chinese "century of humiliation" and the beginning of a return to Chinese greatness. Yet, the Chinese perception of their place in the global hierarchy was not new. The Sinocentric perception dates from their history of greatness and their concept of China as the Middle Kingdom. Sinocentrism affects much of their policy and security sensitivities even today. Steven I. Levine proposes an "informal ideology" or world view that pervades Chinese policy and decision making. Levine's proposal is depicted in Figure 1.

1. The Chinese are a great people, and China is a great nation.
2. The Chinese nation deserves a much better fate than that which it has experienced in the modern world.
3. China should be accorded compensatory treatment from those powers which have insulted or injured it in the past.
4. As a great nation, China naturally occupies a central position in world affairs and must be treated as a great power.
5. China's national sovereignty must be respected absolutely, and such respect precludes any foreign criticism of China's internal policies.
6. China's special virtue in international affairs consists in the fact that its foreign policy is based not on expediency but on immutable principles that express universal values such as justice and equality.

Figure 1. Levine's Chinese World View
Source: Steven I. Levine, "Perception and Ideology in Chinese Foreign Policy," eds., Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh, *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 43.

Levine's informal ideology can be referenced as a foundation for China's strategic culture. He offers a much more idealized perspective than Johnston's realist typology. Levine's world

view is based on Chinese *perceptions* of their own foreign policy. More importantly, it is what they would like others to believe and not necessarily reality. Regardless, Levine characterizes the idealism that the Chinese profess and that many others accept as fundamental to their foreign policy. For this study's purposes, his characterization provides a rationalization for some elements of Chinese foreign policy decision making, namely Beijing's obsession with sovereignty and territorial integrity.

B. PATTERNS IN CONFLICT

Even if one accepts that pre-1949 China had a tendency to favorably view the use of force to solve disputes, there is no guarantee a similar view would also exist throughout the Communist era. This section will survey prior attempts at establishing patterns in the PRC's use of force. A considerable amount of material on PRC conflicts exists. However, most are single, specific case-studies that do not offer comments on overall PRC crisis management and conflict behavior since 1949. Few attempts have even come away with substantive conclusions. The most ambitious work yet concluded that "no real pattern exists" in the PRC's use of force.[17] The following literature survey is based on sources which examine trends in PRC conflict management.

1. Calculus of Deterrence

Alan S. Whiting's *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence* in 1975 set the early standard.[18]

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[17] Gerald Segal, *Defending China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). 1. Segal's work is still the most ambitious and in many ways the most similar to this study.

[18] While Whiting's work (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1975) was not the first, it was the best early analysis into PRC conflict behavior. Another interesting analysis in this period is Steve Chan's, "Chinese Conflict Calculus and Behavior: Assessments from a Perspective of Conflict Management," *World Politics*, No. 2 (1978): 391-410. Chan examines five conflicts including Korea, the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958, the Sino-Indian War, Vietnam (1964-1965), and the Sino-Soviet War. He finds five general phases similar in each conflict consistent with PRC actions: (1) probing, (2) warning, (3) demonstration, (4) attack, and (5) détente, 395. Chan also does an excellent job of compiling numerous sources of interest. For a thorough but by no means

Whiting's analysis of Chinese conflict behavior centered on the 1962 Sino-Indian border dispute. He also included PLA actions in the Korean War and its deployment to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the 1960s. He used these three conflicts to determine a distinct Chinese calculus of deterrence.[19] Whiting studied PRC behavior rather than classical Chinese strategic thinking such as Sun Zi or Mao. Citing a "consensual core of perceptions and behavior" of "strategists in Beijing," Whiting did not attempt to identify, whether from individuals or organizations, the origins of the calculus.[20] Using Johnston's strategic culture definition as a primer, Whiting's calculus is in fact a Chinese strategic culture of deterrence.

Based on his three case studies, Whiting's paradigm was predicated on a set of "deterrence principles that reflect [PRC] patterns of perception and behavior" (see Figure 2).[21] The first proposition was based on a traditional Chinese proverb that "disorder from within" invariably leads to "danger from without." Linked with the second point which argued "the best deterrence is belligerence," the admonition to prepare for the worst-case threat scenarios implied a PRC *parabellum* posture which recognized the utility of force or the threat of force in attaining foreign policy objectives. However, Whiting contradicted this supposition several times. In his conclusion, he explicitly downplayed the role that force plays in PRC foreign policy. "The use of

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complete listing of previous works on Chinese conflict behavior see Chan, 393-395(nn. 10, 12).

[19] Whiting defines calculus of deterrence as "an attempt to infer what *general strategy* [emphasis added] underlies persistent patterns of behavior aimed at persuading a perceived opponent that the costs of his continuing conflictual activity will eventually prove unacceptable to him because of the Chinese response," 201.

[20] Ibid., 201-202.

[21] Ibid., 202-203. The subsequent discussion of Whiting's three propositions is derived from *Chinese Calculus*, 202-220.

1. The worse our domestic situation, the more likely our external situation will worsen.
   a) A superior power in proximity will seek to take advantage of our domestic vulnerability.
   b) Two or more powers will combine against us if they can temporarily overcome their own conflicts of interest.
   c) We must prepare for the worst and try for the best.

2. The best deterrence is belligerence.
   a) To be credible, move military force; words do not suffice.
   b) To be diplomatic, leave the enemy "face" and a way out.
   c) To be prudent, leave yourself an "option."
   d) If at first you don't succeed, try again but more so.

3. Correct timing is essential.
   a) Warning must be given early when a threat is perceived but not yet imminent.
   b) The rhythm of signals must permit the enemy to respond and us to confirm the situation.
   c) We must control our moves and not respond according to the enemy's choice.

Figure 2. Whiting's Threats and Deterrence Principles as Seen from Beijing
Source: Whiting, *Chinese Calculus*, 202-203.

force," he argued, "is not a paramount characteristic of Chinese foreign policy as manifested in the behavior of the People's Republic over the past quarter of a century."[22] Yet, he also argued that "PRC foreign policy has not eschewed the use of force in less threatening situations" than Korea, India, and Vietnam (1965-1969) and that there exists "a fundamental policy which places a premium on deterrent action against a threat to vital interests even when that threat comes from a markedly stronger military power."[23]

Whiting concluded that while China regularly acts in a rational matter, its leaders often

[22] Ibid., 243. To be fair, Whiting also added that the attention he gave the use of force was intentionally selective. Nevertheless, the importance he gave the use of force for deterrence and the suspicion with which other powers are viewed by PRC decision-makers leads one to believe his conclusions do not necessarily match his case-study data.

[23] Ibid., 233.

misperceive potential adversaries' intentions which result in a validation of the "disorder from within—danger from without" theory. Often, Chinese misperceptions result in a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Whiting points out, the Chinese feel that the best deterrence is belligerence. Indeed, they are willing to take enormous risks, even in the face of war, when they perceive a threat to their security. He qualified his conclusions by stating that PRC belligerence is typical of reflexive moves by the PRC to an external threat stimulus. Initial Chinese actions are often more constrained and limited. Limited PRC initial responses allow the enemy as well as the Chinese a way out of difficult situations that entail great risks with disproportionate benefits.[24]

The Chinese place particular importance in correct timing of deterrence moves. They seek to establish early deterrent signals which change with strength based on the enemy's response. Whiting points out the irony of clockwork-like diplomatic and military moves by the PRC during the Korean and Indian preludes to conflict that "provided ample opportunity for functional 'feedback' by preserving options for both sides."[25] This type of incrementalism has been evident throughout PRC conflict behavior in various forms.

Whiting only briefly mentions one of the main themes of this thesis when he discusses Chinese perceptions of territorial integrity and sovereignty. Yet, he appears to recognize the centrality of these issues. He writes:[26]

> It is impossible to exaggerate the psychological importance of past events in determining both this perception [of territorial security] and the means adopted to deter and defeat the threats.... [However,] China's response to foreign pressure and penetration between 1840 and 1937 rarely included outright resistance. Instead reliance on alternative means...left China a second-class

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[24] Ibid., 196-248.

[25] Ibid., 205-215.

[26] Ibid., 243-245.

> power whose sovereignty and territorial integrity depended more on the will of other nations than of itself....[With] this cavalier treatment of Chinese sovereignty...it is understandable that any situation involving China's territorial integrity is certain to arouse concern in Beijing. *In addition, it is likely to evoke a determined response designed to deter or defeat an opponent before he can pose a more serious threat* [my emphasis].

Again, he seems to contradict himself. On one hand he argues that the psychological importance of territorial integrity cannot be exaggerated and threats to such are likely to evoke a determined response, while on the other he points to "alternative" responses other than the use of force. On this point, this author would argue that the Chinese attempted on numerous occasions to resist imperial powers with force including Great Britain (1839-1842, 1856-60), France (1856-60, 1883-1885), Russia (1876-1878), Japan (1874, 1894-1895, 1931, 1937-1945), and the Boxer Rebellion (1900).[27] Chinese non-resistance was due more to military impotence and a hope to minimize the damage through negotiation than any true inclination toward pacifism. Overall, however, Whiting was completely accurate regarding the significance of PRC perceptions of threats to their territorial integrity and sovereignty. Unfortunately, he did not pursue these issues at any length.

2. "No Consistency or Logic"

Gerald Segal authored another significant contribution to the study of PRC crisis and conflict management. Published in 1985, Segal's *Defending China* concluded that there simply is no consistency or logic to the PRC's use of force in foreign policy. PLA operations have been characterized by pragmatic, at times opportunistic, flexibility in the face of changing threats. Although no pattern was found, Segal did an excellent job of synthesizing numerous variables within the context of PRC hostilities. However, perhaps the reason he found no pattern is

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[27] Fairbank, and others., *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation, 5th Edition* , chap. 16, 19-20, 25 passim.

because he had too many variables instead of focusing on just a few key themes. His nine case studies examined PRC objectives, how the PLA carried out its military operations, and the role of domestic politics in China's use of force. He also included chapters on geography, history, ideology, and institutions. Further themes included military strategy and tactics, and outside powers' influence on the way in which the People's Republic uses its military power. No fewer than ten research questions were considered. What he lacked in depth, he made up for in breadth. Given the similarity of topics, all of Segal's conclusions remain germane to this study. A few particularly relevant ones will be discussed here.

Segal determined that there have been at least four major types of actions by the PLA. They include a deterrence/compellence model, an opportunistic model, an offensive model, and a backfire model.[28] The first and last models only occurred once—the 1960s Vietnam intervention and the 1969 border clashes with the Soviet Union respectively. The middle two models provide a better picture. Segal defined the opportunistic model as a situation in which the PRC attempts to capitalize on early military success by increasing the military pressure on an adversary. Examples include Korea, Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1954-1955, and the Sino-Indian conflict. The offensive model, usually beginning with a probe, culminates in the seizure of territory or attempting to teach the enemy a lesson. Tibet, the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958, the Paracel Islands seizure, and the punitive attack on Vietnam are examples of the offensive model. The People's Liberation Army-Navy's (PLAN) subsequent excursions in the South China Sea in 1988

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[28] Segal defines the deterrence/compellence model as the need to compel an enemy to PRC demands if deterrence had previously failed. The backfire model is when China begins with offensive purposes, but is forced by a superior foe to take defensive action. The other two models are described above. For a more detailed explanation of these models see Segal, 240-241. He also lists seven different objectives followed by the Chinese which seems rather useless in a nine case study analysis.

and 1995 also fit Segal's offensive model. The 1995-1996 Taiwan Straits Crisis falls into the deterrence/compellence category since it appeared the PRC had no real intention of launching an attack on Taiwan nor of probing US intentions.

Thus, according to Segal's analysis, seven of the nine case studies involved the offensive use of force by the PRC to some extent (see Table 1). He maintained that his breakdown was "not intended to suggest that China acts any more or less offensively than any other great power. It is, however, intended to make clear that Chinese actions are at times aggressive" and that "China acts pragmatically, seizing opportunities where it finds them."[29] PRC pragmatism

Table 1
Segal's Types of PRC Military Actions 1949-1985

Model	Frequency	Conflict/Crisis
Deterrence/Compellence	1	Vietnam (1965-1969)
Opportunistic	3	Korea, Taiwan (1954-1955), India
Offensive	4	Tibet, Taiwan(1958), Paracels, Vietnam(1979)
Backfire	1	USSR

Source: Author based on Segal's typology, 240-241.

precludes Segal from accepting the unchanging calculus or logic of policy which Whiting proposed. While Segal downplayed the evidence, past uses of force by the PRC suggest that, despite claims to the contrary, the PLA is an offensive tool more often than not. If not offensive, then the evidence at least implies a *parabellum* paradigm.

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[29] Ibid.

PRC domestic politics as a function of their propensity to use force was another important element Segal examined. It has been frequently argued that a domestic dimension is critical to any decision by the PRC to use force.[30] Indeed, domestic events juxtaposed against PRC conflicts seem to validate this concept. The consolidation of communist power in 1949-1950, the disastrous policies of the Great Leap Forward (1958), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969) generally coincide with aggressive moves by the PLA. Segal concluded, however, that a real link between PRC domestic politics and the use of force can only be made in two cases—Korea and Vietnam (1965-1969). Even in these instances the link was not the sole determinant. While factional politics were a fact of life in the PRC during these periods, "There is little evidence to support the opposing notion that China uses force in foreign policy to deflect internal dissent."[31] Moreover, more recent events tend to disconfirm that domestic instability causes a more assertive foreign policy. For instance, there was no saber-rattling following the Tiananmen Square events in 1989.

In a final analysis, Segal structured his case studies on the Chinese objectives, how they subsequently changed, and how successful the PRC was in achieving these objectives. Given this context, his conclusion that there is no real pattern in the PRC's use of force is no surprise. Crisis management and war are some of the most fluid of all human endeavors. Indeed, his opening quotation was a Chinese description of how Mao "never adhered to one pattern. He always

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[30] This domestic dimension most often involves the argument that the CCP uses external threats to diffuse internal disorder or Whiting's "disorder within–danger without" view. For a short list of studies that espouse such a position see Greg Austin's "The Strategic Implications of China's Public Order Crisis," *Survival*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Summer 1995): 7-23.

[31] Segal, 254.

adopted flexible strategic and tactical principles in the light of the political, economic, and military conditions of the enemy and [the PRC]."[32]

While Segal's study provided an excellent analysis of numerous variables affecting the PRC's use of force, this thesis intends to take a step back and examine the Chinese objective calculus for patterns. In other words, why did the PRC view certain objectives as worth fighting for? Segal discussed this question in detail but never found a causal determinant to link the various events because he focused on PRC input and output crisis variables rather than pre-existing Chinese principles, such as their concept of sovereignty. Segal unfortunately did not fully address the justification China uses to warrant its use of force nor did he sufficiently relate it to ante-bellum security concerns vis-à-vis its perceptions of sovereignty.

3. The MID Study

A more recent and intriguing study is that of Alastair Iain Johnston in the March 1998 issue of *The China Quarterly*.[33] He based his conclusions on research conducted by the Correlates of War (CoW) research group at the University of Michigan. The group has collected an enormous amount of data on management of international crises, known as Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID), which it defines as "united historical cases in which the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member is explicitly directed towards...another state."[34] The two key variables analyzed in MID data are the type of action taken and the goal. Johnston used the data to come up with some interesting conclusions on China's dispute behavior:

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[32] Segal, 1.

[33] Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949-1992," 1-30.

[34] Ibid., 5.

1. *There is no relationship between domestic unrest and China's use of force externally.*

The data revealed that an increase in domestic unrest actually led to a *decrease* in MID-related violence. This conclusion contradicts not only Whiting's "disorder within–danger without" theory, but also the conclusions of many other China analysts as well. Johnston suggested that in the event of domestic unrest, China becomes "pre-occupied" with internal issues and does not become overly misperceptive about foreign intentions.[35] Segal's conclusions were consistent with this first point.

2. *There is no relationship between Chinese military expenditures and military capabilities with PRC dispute-proneness.*

Johnston's second observation contradicts the "China Threat" theorists (see below) who fear increased Chinese economic and military power will lead to a more assertive foreign policy. It should be noted, however, that this data is relative and based on past extreme military weakness of the PRC that frequently they overcame only by sheer mass of men. What Beijing has traditionally lacked in firepower and technology, they have made up with men and the willingness to accept casualties. Increased fiscal expenditures aimed at PLA modernization will indeed make the military a better force, but it is still unclear whether or not increased capability will translate into a more assertive force. What is clear, however, is that the transition of the PLA to a technology-oriented form of war rather than manpower-intensive warfare reflects Beijing's

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[35] Greg Austin agrees with Johnston. Austin states that "domestic crisis in China is more likely to be a constraint on Chinese assertiveness abroad than an impetus to it." See Austin's "The Strategic Implications of China's Public Order Crisis," 7. John K. Fairbank also implicitly agrees when he describes the origins of China's inherent defensiveness as the result of "her primary concern for social order at home instead of expansion abroad." He qualifies this assertion, however, by saying this propensity "came from her landlocked situation in North China." See Fairbank, "Introduction," 3.

recognition of the inefficacy of past doctrine in today's "modern high-tech conditions."[36]

3. *PRC dispute proneness is positively related to the gap in relative power between China and other major powers in the system.*

This third assertion is based on the theory that states which perceive a lack of international respect accorded to them believe it "is a result of insufficient material power and their insufficient willingness to demonstrate this power. The notion that the strategies chosen to close the status gap should be coercive implies that states have internalized *realpolitik* world views where relative material power is equated with relative status."[37] Johnston acknowledged the difficulty of substantiating when PRC leaders are most dissatisfied with China's international status. His evidence included Mao's known acceptance of this status argument as well as the CoW figures for "national share of material capabilities." The CoW data suggested the lower the relative capability of the PRC the higher its dispute proneness.[38] Assuming overall national wealth will lead to an increase in military power, a subsequent conclusion is that as the PRC's economic development and military modernization continue, the PRC propensity to engage in MIDs will decrease. However, this inverse relationship somewhat contradicts Johnston's conclusion that there is *no* relationship between PRC military capability (assumed to be dependent on overall wealth) and dispute proneness.

The data to support these conclusions are also interesting, especially given the utility the

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[36] There are numerous primary sources which reflect this change in thinking and a concomitant shift in doctrine. One excellent source is *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, ed. Michael Pillsbury (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1997) which includes translated essays of PLA officers.

[37] Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behavior," 26. Note, the first part of this statement conforms nicely to Levine's ideology 1-4; the second part conforms to the PRC perception of zero-sum international relations.

[38] Ibid., 27.

MID data provides in comparing the PRC with other states. Under MID criteria, the People's Republic engaged in 118 disputes between 1949 and 1992, an average of 2.74 per year. This ranks the PRC as the second most dispute prone state among the major powers during the period, behind only the United States (see Table 2). For the entire data set representing most if not all of each state's existence, the PRC is still second, this time to the Soviet Union (see Table 3). Again, the data supports the *parabellum* view that the PRC favorably views the use of force to solve disputes.

Table 2
Comparative Frequency of MIDs During the Cold War

State	Period	MIDs/yr
U.S.	1946-92	3.93
PRC	1949-92	2.74
UK	1946-92	1.89
India	1947-92	1.87
USSR	1946-92	1.72
France	1946-92	.94

Table 3
Comparative Frequency of MIDs (Entire Data Set)

State	Period	MIDs/yr
USSR	1918-92	3.22
PRC	1949-92	2.74
India	1947-1992	1.87
U.S.	1815-1992	1.75
UK	1815-1992	1.44
France	1815-1992	.94

Source: Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949-1992," 9.

The MID data reveals that the largest portion of PRC MIDs were territorial (as opposed to policy or regime) in origin. While this is "consistent with the hypothesis that new states will be more sensitive about establishing territorial control, and thus…[a] prevalence of territorial MIDs earlier in the regime's history,"[39] the number of PRC territorial MIDs has yet to return to its low

[39] Ibid., 11.

point reached during 1969-1973. Moreover, the MID study classifies Taiwan as a regime dispute but the CoW group acknowledges that they could reclassify these as territorial.[40] This study will classify Taiwan as a territorial dispute based on the ultimate goal of reunification.

The MID data also suggested that the PRC was the most violence-prone state. In a variegated statistical analysis, the data showed that the PRC resorted to force more often, and at a higher level of violence when force was used, than any other major power. Overall, "There has been a fairly constant level of hostility and violence across Chinese [PRC] MIDs up to the end of the 1980s."[41]

Johnston's general conclusions both support and contrast with what this study intends to prove. In agreement, he stated that China is more dispute prone than most states and that these disputes usually center on territorial questions. In contrast, he stated that when the PLA is involved in disputes, it is more likely to use a higher level of violence than other states. While this thesis does not compare the PRC with other states' behavior, it will demonstrate that China's use of force is frequently over territorial questions but that it is typically limited in nature.

C. CHINA'S NATIONAL TERRITORY

Thus far the literature surveyed has only briefly touched upon one of the themes of this work—the relationship between China's national territory and the PRC's willingness to use force. The Chinese world view provided a construct with which to perceive Chinese actions and belief systems. Within this purview, what does the literature say about Chinese history and views toward their national space?

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[40] Ibid., 12.

[41] Ibid., 15-17.

A fundamental starting point is the traditional view that China has always perceived the outside world from a uniquely Sinocentric position. The Chinese view of the Middle Kingdom as the center of the civilized world, their hierarchical scheme of foreign relations, and their assumption of superiority have all been well documented.[42] As Norton Ginsburg points out, what made this state-centered position unique for China as opposed to other modern views of the state was that "China possessed this view long before the modern European state had come into existence."[43] A distinct Asian view existed contrary to the Western ideal that state power extended to the farthest reaches of the realm with the same efficacy as that which emanated from the center. He writes:[44]

> China's traditional view of her role in the world order did not place equal premium on all of her territory, and also placed different value on territories beyond her actual control....The localization of power and authority was greatest in a core area and tapered off in all directions....
>
> The spatial model that incorporates these conditions was composed of a series of overlapping, merging concentric zones; each associated in somewhat different ways with the core; each varying somewhat in their relations with the others as the power of the Chinese state waxed and waned.

Paradoxically, Theodore Herman notes ancient texts which demonstrate "from very early times [2000 B.C.] the historical records were concerned with the delineation of political areas."[45] These records provide one of the earliest cosmographies of political geography and delineate the country into five concentric domains: the Domain of the Sovereign, the Domain of the Nobles,

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[42] For a classical summary of this view, see John K. Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework," in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 1-19.

[43] Norton Ginsburg, "On the Chinese Perception of a World Order," in *China in Crisis*, Vol. 2, ed. Tang Tsou (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 75.

[44] Ibid., 75-76.

[45] Theodore Herman, "Group Values Toward the National Space: The Case of China," *The Geographical Review*, Vol XLIX, No. 2 (April 1959): 171.

the Peace-Securing Domain, the Domain of Restraint, and finally the Wild Domain of the barbarians.[46] Herman's evidence does not disconfirm the concentric model but rather confirms that the Chinese were aware of their system. Until the Europeans arrived with their ideas, the Chinese simply had no reason to believe it was unique or that there was a different way of constructing national and political areas of influence.

Like Fairbank and Ginsburg, Herman also points to the fluidity of the Chinese concept of spatial territory.[47]

> The boundaries referred to above were not permanent. Chinese claims and actual possession extended beyond [and within] for various periods, as with Mongolia, parts of Manchuria and Korea, the Liuchiu Islands, and Formosa. Such extensions were of most concern to Chinese living nearby or to those who traveled or were sent to these distant areas. *But they became important in a broad national sense when their seizure by other powers was regarded as an assault on China's existence as a culture and as a state* [my emphasis].
> ...[Thus the] frontiers of China came to have a political and cultural meaning far greater than their economic value, and it was against inroads from these frontiers that Chinese society exercised its absorption technique persistently, though not always successfully.

Herein lies the key to China's perception of their national territory. Herman's analysis was written only ten years after the birth of the People's Republic, but is basic to this study's attempt to determine how the PRC perceived their frontiers and how much effort they were willing to exert to protect or reassert their influence in them. The Chinese distinction of different values on territory, the tidal flows of this value, and the heightened sense of value when threatened, all come together to form a distinct, time-honored but fluid, Chinese concept of national territory and boundary within which Chinese control and influence should reign supreme.

From this perspective, Table 4 lists several typologies that have been developed

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[46] Ibid., 172.

[47] Ibid., 173.

Table 4. Views of the Chinese Concentric Rings of Control/Influence					
Author	Center	Ring I	Ring II	Ring III	Ring IV
Great Yü (2000B.C.)	*Domain of the Sovereign*	*Domain of the Nobles*	*Peace-Securing Domain*	*Domain of Restraint*	*Wild Domain*
Fairbank	*Middle Kingdom* Han peoples	*Sinic Zone* Korea Vietnam Ryukyus Japan	*Inner Asian Zone* Mongolia Tibet Central Asia	*Outer Zone* Russia Sulu Portugal Holland England	
Ginsburg	*China Proper- "Core"* Continuous control	*China Proper- "Ecumene"* Control present but less effective	*Inner Zone* Manchuria, Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan Tibet, Korea Annam, Trans-Amur, all other tribute-bearing or subordinate states	*Outer Asian Zone* Persia Southeast Asia Japan	*Foreign Zone* Rest of World

Source: Author derived from Herman, 172; Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework," 2,13; and Ginsburg, 76-79.

characterizing concentric Chinese rings of authority and influence emanating from the center.

1. Herman's Imperialist Dismemberment

Other than suggesting that the ancient tradition of concentric domains was passed down for "millennia," Herman offers no new interpretations of the concept. Instead, he points to the pecking away of Chinese territory and influence abroad under Western and Japanese imperial powers from 1689-1945. He divides this diminution into six groups (see Figure 3), roughly by area and method of change. They are central to understanding the Chinese perception of humiliation and territorial dismemberment by the imperial powers.

2. Fairbank's Chinese Zones

Fairbank's graded and concentric hierarchy of Chinese foreign relations included four zones. In the center was the Middle Kingdom and extended outward with the Han people. The

1. Fixing of the border with Russia, largely by force or the threat of force, 1689-1881.

2. Detachment of Outer Mongolia by a local independence movement and aid from Russia, later the USSR, 1911-1945.

3. In Manchuria, a constant shift of control and pressures by Russia, Japan, and the USSR, 1898-1952.

4. Along the coast a series of forcible concessions to rival powers, clustered in the north and south, 1557-1945. No power seized the middle until the Japanese invasion, 1937-1945.

5. Countries to the south detached by the Western powers from political ties and tribute payments to China, 1885-1912.

6. Fifty-two former treaty ports and three former leased territories, selected by various foreign powers for commercial and strategic posts, gave foreigners many rights of residence, activity, and political privilege, 1842-1945.

Figure 3. Alterations of Chinese Territory and Influence by the Imperial Powers
Source: Herman, 175. For a map corresponding to these losses of territory see Herman, 176.

second, which he described as the Sinic Zone, consisted of adjacent and culturally similar tributaries including Korea, Vietnam, the Ryukyu Islands, and for brief periods Japan. The third, Inner Asian Zone, consisted of tributary tribes and states of the nomadic peoples of Inner Asia who were not only ethnically and culturally non-Chinese but were outside or on the periphery of Chinese culture. The Outer Zone consisted of "outer barbarians" usually at great distances but also eventually including Japan as well as states in Southeast Asia, South Asia and Europe. In theory, all these non-Chinese states were expected to pay proper tribute to the Middle Kingdom. Reality was far from theory, however. It was one of the great challenges, Fairbank's argues, for China to reconcile the fact of non-submission within their Sinocentric paradigm.[48]

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[48] Preceding paragraph summarized from Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework," 2-3. For an interesting presentation on the types and means of China's relationships with these zones see ibid., 13.

3. Ginsburg's Chinese Zones

At the center Ginsburg put China Proper and divided it into "Core" and the "Ecumene." The "Core" were areas over which control was virtually continuous from Han times to the present. The "Ecumene" were regions over which control was present but less effective. Next was an irregular Inner Zone over which China, at certain periods, exerted nominal if not genuine sovereignty. It included Manchuria, Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan, Tibet, Korea, and Annam. Periphery regions ranging from those territories actually held under Chinese suzerainty such as the Trans-Amur territories and eastern parts of former Soviet Middle Asia to those which were merely subordinate tributary states such as those extending from Afghanistan to the Ryukyus were also in the Inner Zone. The Outer Asian Zone included areas running from Persia to India, Southeast Asia, and Japan. These states, excluding Japan, had never really been in a full tributary status, but were relatively well known to the Chinese. The last ring, the Foreign Zone or "The Great Beyond," included the rest of the world.[49]

D. THE "CHINA THREAT THEORY"

Finally, a survey of the literature should include the so-called "China Threat Theory." Indeed, it is the debate for and against this argument that most determines the current responses and policies toward China. Moreover, both its proponents and opponents cite the PRC's (as well as Imperial China's) past uses of force to support their arguments.

As Denny Roy suggests, "the China Threat argument maintains that an increasingly

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[49] Preceding paragraph derived summarized from Ginsburg, 76-79.

powerful China is likely to destabilize regional security in the near future."[50] Proponents of a China Threat argue that this destabilization will be fueled by a number of factors, namely the PRC's rapid economic growth, military modernization, and unsatiated appetite for territorial expansion and regional hegemony. The manifestations of such increased Chinese power will be in the form of military assertiveness including an armed resolution of the Taiwan question. More aggressive moves in the South and East China Seas can be expected. Increased Chinese intransigence and even belligerence toward international efforts to get the PRC to follow accepted norms such as World Trade Organization (WTO) trade standards, human rights practices, and arms proliferation restrictions will become commonplace. The PRC will continue eschewing multilateral dialogues and organizations that neutralize their power and influence vis-à-vis smaller states.

In response to this perceived Chinese threat, an inflammatory essay in *Time* argued U.S. policy should not only contain, but also "undermine" the communist regime.[51] A recent and widely-read book, *The Coming Conflict with China*, describes the most dire of the China Threat scenarios in which a Sino-U.S. war breaks out.[52] The authors depict a rising China bent on regional hegemony and ultimately superpower status. Even Samuel Huntington, the highly regarded political scientist, contributed to the frenzy with his book on the West's impending clash

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[50] Denny Roy, "The 'China Threat' Issue: Major Arguments," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 8 (August 1996): 758. Up to its date of publication, this article (pp. 758-771) does an excellent job of objectively synthesizing and articulating both arguments. There have been many more since; see below for just a few of these.

[51] Charles Krauthammer, "Why We Must Contain China," *Time*, 31 July 1995, 72.

[52] Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

with the non-West.[53]

The Chinese themselves are well aware of the China Threat debate but have not helped the matter with such publications as *China Can Say No* and *Can the Chinese Army Win the Next War?*[54] Often these types of responses to American criticisms of China only serve to fan the flames of trepidation and validate the original warnings of a threatening China, ultimately making the original China Threat Theory a self-fulfilling prophecy. Officially, however, the Chinese are careful not to provide more verbal fodder for the "anti-China crowd," and opt for more restrained Chinese responses. A 1996 article argued that any supposed increased assertiveness implied in the China Threat Theory is "untenable" because "history shows that China has *rarely* [emphasis mine] waged war against other nations unless threatened on a large scale from the outside." It goes on to say that the theory is "concocted for the purpose of containing China's development."[55]

Roy lists several reasons why China should not be viewed as a threat. First, the PRC may not be able to develop into a hegemon, even if it wanted to. There are simply too many political, economic and military constraints to allow Chinese power to grow to such proportions. Second, as the Chinese themselves like to point out, China has a benign history, even at times when it was

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[53] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

[54] *China Can Say No–Political and Emotional Choices in the Post-Cold War Age* (Beijing: China Industry and Commerce Publishing House, 1996) by Song Qiang and others, was described by Si Cheng in *Beijing Review*, 21-27 October 1996, 13, as "a strong Chinese voice opposing US power politics and hegemony." Another controversial work was *Can the Chinese Army Win the Next War?*, an internal document with unknown authors who assert that China must seize the initiative in "the future military order" in order to prepare China for a "sustained state of confrontation" with the U.S., cited in Bernstein and Munro, 33.

[55] Ren Xin, "'China Threat' Theory Untenable," *Beijing Review*, 05-11 February 1996, 10-11.

the dominant and unchallenged power in the region. Third, its military modernization is simply a readjustment for decades of neglect and nothing more than its neighbors have done in the past decade. Fourth, the "anti-threat" crowd argues that those against China fear an Asian resurgence led by China and a concomitant decline in Western (especially American) power and influence; they argue the China Threat Theory is merely a way of fanning the flames of hostility toward China.[56] Moreover, there are those in the U.S. (the authors of *The Coming Conflict With China* are prototypical) who are too quick to demonize China and thus find a successor strategic threat for the U.S. that disappeared with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This author would add to this list the economic imperatives of China which may make increased assertiveness not propitious for the near future. In addition, the Chinese have begun to play the race and culture card in their counterattacks against the China Threat theorists. The Chinese feel they are being unfairly judged against Western values and point to "neo-racism and neo-colonialism in Western countries" in which "white values are the universal gauge."[57]

The China Threat Theory has led to an increasing polarization of views vis-à-vis the PRC. The most compelling disagreement between the two sides of the spectrum is how a rejuvenated China will use its strength. Fundamentally, the China Threat argument is a contemporary discourse on the strategic culture of China, its expanding power and presence in global affairs, and the potential for conflict, military or otherwise, with competing states. The understanding of past uses of force by the PRC will be a significant determinant in how the China Threat issue is

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[56] Roy, 762-765.

[57] Shi Yinhong, "Why Against China," and Li Xiguang, "US Media: Behind the Demonization of China," *Beijing Review*, 21-27 October 1996, 11-12.

interpreted. Consequently, the world and especially the U.S. will be well served to understand the causal links to the PRC use of force.

E. CONCLUSION

A common theme appears to run through each of the studies reviewed here. The PRC views the use of force in resolving foreign policy disputes more favorably than conventionally believed. At the least, as Johnston argues, the data suggests "that there should be some skepticism towards the conventional wisdom"[58] that views China as conforming to the Confucian-Mencian tradition. Indeed, an alternative school has already formed that advocates viewing Chinese and PRC history as more bellicose than pacifist. The most vehement and alarmist of this school is represented by the China Threat Theorists who warn against the excesses of a resurgent China. The PRC has been quick to mobilize their own verbal counterattack against the China Threat Theory and have pulled out the standard verbiage of a benign China which only desires "peaceful co-existence."

The survey also revealed the origins of the PRC's world view. Imperial China was deeply embedded with a Sinocentric hierarchical view of foreign relations that manifested itself in subject and tributary status for all those states within China's reach. The result was a concentric ring of overlapping control and influence that waxed, waned, and varied in importance with the strength of the Chinese state. Each view presented, remarkably even the 4000-year old one, varied only slightly. Juxtaposed against the strength of the state, Chinese strategic frontiers determine the territorial limits to which they are willing to use force for foreign policy objectives.

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[58] Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behavior," 28.

III. CASE STUDY PARAMETERS

The battle lines have been drawn between advocates of a traditionally benign China and those who see an historically aggressive China. For any observer of China, one must determine which is valid, both from an historical and contemporary context. As the survey of literature suggests, older writing favors a peaceful benign China based on its Confucian-Mencian heritage. However, more recent studies have begun to distinguish a non-pacifist tradition described as a *parabellum* paradigm. This perspective has perhaps culminated in the China Threat Theory. Yet, none of the studies fully addressed the purpose of this thesis—to examine trends in PRC conflict and crisis behavior with a special focus on the Chinese concept of sovereignty and their national strategic frontiers. Such a focus can aid in determining why and where the PRC will use force. A theoretical framework must therefore be established in order to analyze the historical data presented for this study. The parameters outlined in this chapter will facilitate and guide the case study discussion and analysis.

A. SOVEREIGNTY ABSOLUTISM

Sovereignty has proven to be the most fundamental element of Chinese foreign policy since 1949. Indeed, it is a concept which they use perhaps more frequently than any other in their security policy.[59] Added to the variable of "territorial integrity," to which the Chinese also consistently refer, their concept of sovereignty is a very volatile and contentious issue.

While not ancient, the Chinese idea of sovereignty has deep roots. It could be more aptly

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[59] In their latest Defense White Paper, the Chinese use the word or forms of the word "sovereignty" no less than fifteen times. "White Paper--China's National Defense." released 27 July 98 by the Information Office of the State Council of the PRC. Source obtained online from [http://www.china-embassy.org].

described as deep scars—scars from humiliation and territorial dismemberment during their "century of shame." Their anxiety and mistrust of foreign intrusion and interference are predominantly based on the treatment China received from the imperial powers. These feelings still significantly shape their security policy.[60] Deng Xiaoping said, "The sovereignty and security of the country should always come first...there is no room for maneuver for China."[61] A senior PLA officer wrote of the "sovereignty of exercising independence" as "the essential symbol of a nation being an independent entity, while security if the precondition of the survival and development of a nation. Therefore, sovereignty and security should be placed ahead of all other national interests."[62]

One manifestation of this type of thinking is what Johnston calls "hyper-sovereignty."[63] I prefer to call the PRC approach to this issue "sovereignty absolutism." Sovereignty absolutism is defined here as the inflexible or nearly inflexible policy of a state whose paramount security consideration is the undisputed (free from external) control and influence within its borders. The

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[60] For a view on how the PLA and presumably the entire PRC security establishment perceives these issues see Li Jijun, LTG, PLA, "Traditional Military Thinking and the Defensive Strategy of China," 29 August 1997, address at the United States War College, obtained online at [http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usassi/ssipubs/pubs97/china/chinap1.htm]. He also speaks of the unequal treaties forced upon China before 1949 costing them 1.8 million square kilometers of Chinese territory. "This was a period of humiliation the Chinese people can never forget. This is why the people of China show such strong emotions concerning our national independence, *unity, integrity of territory and sovereignty*. This is also why *the Chinese are so determined to safeguard them under any circumstances and at all costs*" [my emphasis].

[61] Deng quoted in Hong Bin, "Deng Xiaoping's Perspective on National Interest," in *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, ed. Michael Pillsbury (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1997), 34-35.

[62] Ibid., 33.

[63] According to Johnston hyper-sovereignty is a description based on a *realpolitik* foreign policy in which PRC elite struggle to reconcile its concepts of "majorpowerhood" power status symbols with the external, institutional and normative constraints on Chinese behavior. See Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behavior," 2.

PRC follows this model. For the PRC there are two corollaries. First, there exist varying degrees of PRC influence that should be received or acquiesced to by China's neighbors. Traditionally, acquiescent regions have included much of non-Han East Asia, Southeast Asia, and parts of Central Asia. Second, the CCP, as the standard bearer of the revived Chinese state, is the sole proprietor of sovereignty within the PRC. Any threat toward the Party is considered a threat to *Chinese* sovereignty. The inflexibility refers to the willingness of the PRC to protect these sovereign rights of control and influence "at all costs."

Thus, for the PRC there exists a dual concept of sovereignty that extends from territorial to influential. Subsequently, the PRC's notion of sovereignty versus the typical Western ideal is somewhat different. Sovereignty is defined in the Western sense as the "freedom from external control" or as "controlling influence."[64] Like the Western definition, the Chinese interpret sovereignty as the ability to govern *its own* citizens without foreign influence or attempts at influence. However, the Chinese focus on influence much more acutely than is typical from a Western perspective. The Chinese also implicitly demand influence in regions *outside* the territorial borders of the PRC. This influence, from the Chinese perspective, should encompass all the areas that have historically been under the suzerainty of the Chinese people plus areas that have traditionally been dominated by Chinese culture. By design, this is a vague concept. The Chinese prefer it that way. Ambiguity provides an intellectual and legalistic protective blanket in times of Chinese weakness while simultaneously providing flexibility in times of Chinese strength. As the strength of the nation expands and contracts, so does their definition and application of

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[64] *The Mirriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition, (Springfield, MA: Mirriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1997), 1125.

their influence.

The key terms are *control* and *influence*. The Chinese want both. Indeed, in practice they maintain three concepts of sovereignty: control over their own territory, influence over areas perceived to be within the Chinese sphere, and freedom from foreign influence in either of the two previous areas. The mere interference of foreign powers in Chinese policy within its perceived sphere of influence is considered a violation of Chinese sovereignty. Exactly where this perceived sphere of influence has been at any given time is difficult to establish. This brings up the question of sovereignty versus suzerainty. The Chinese have been extraordinarily successful in convincing various constituencies throughout the world that where they once had suzerainty, they now deserve sovereignty. Obviously, the extent of their success is arguable, but one only needs to study the evolution of the term Greater China (see below) to recognize that a de facto expansion of Chinese sovereignty has taken place—even without the direct involvement of the PRC. Regardless, the Chinese use the term flexibly, often merely as a crutch to call upon when threatened by foreign powers. The PRC has found that citing sovereignty is an extremely effective tactic when dealing with contentious issues and claims in the international community.

Now let us examine the terms that will be used to discuss this relationship between sovereignty, security and the use of force. Listed below are my definitions, which generally coincide with, but do not mirror, Ginsburg's zone of control and influence (see Table 4). Vis-à-vis territorial security, the Chinese define a threat to their sovereignty in three areas.

1. Core China

"Core China" can be described as the areas under direct administrative control by the

Qing dynasty.[65] Generally *not* included are Manchuria, Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang), Tibet, and–conspicuously–Taiwan. Another variation of Core China is "China Proper." But due to the ambiguity this term represents in light of the PRC territory now legitimately claimed and internationally recognized, I have chosen the term Core China over China Proper.

The importance of Core China in this study is that it is the area *least* fought over. More precisely, it has not been fought over with a foreign power since 1945. Interrelated with the Chinese ability to legitimate and legally incorporate its Greater China claims into the People's Republic (for example: Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia), the expansion of their strategic frontier has enabled them to defend the country beyond the gates of Core China and out into the periphery.

2. Greater China

As David Shambaugh puts it, "Greater China is largely an *informal* phenomenon, lacking institutionalization."[66] The term itself is a controversial one because it conjures up evil representations of "Greater" that were used by Japan (Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere) and Germany (Greater Reich and *lebensraum*) during the Second World War. Indeed, articles published in the *Liberation Army Daily*, the PLA's newspaper, argued for an expansion of China's ground, sea, and air strategic frontiers for "living space" for the Chinese people.[67]

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[65] See John K. Fairbank, and others., *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation, 5th Edition*, 438.

[66] David Shambaugh, "Introduction: The Emergence of 'Greater China,'" *The China Quarterly*, No. 136 (December 1993): 655.

[67] Xu Guangyu, "Pursuit of Equitable Three Dimensional Strategic Boundaries," *Jiefangjunbao*, 03 April 1987, 3; referenced in David Shambaugh, "The Insecurity of Security: The PLA's Evolving Doctrine and Threat Perceptions Towards 2000," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (Spring 1994): 15.

Greater China subsumes three relatively distinct themes: economic integration, cultural interaction and political reunification with the international Chinese community.[68] This study's analysis focuses on the last of the three which is often the final manifestation of the first two. The impact and coercive pressure of economic integration and cultural interaction often shape and legitimize the potential political framework of Greater China. The political connotation of Greater China refers to the expansion of the PRC's boundaries to include territory formerly under its control during various periods of Chinese history. Due to the historic tributary relationship China had with its neighbors, China can link suzerainty with sovereignty when convenient or when national power allows such linkage. Similarly, China's diaphragm-like strategic frontier expands and contracts with the strength of the nation and allows extension to the areas referred to as Greater China. The concept of strategic frontier will be discussed below in more detail.

The history of the term Greater China dates as far back as the 1930s, but the concept directly stems from the term "Chinese Empire" which itself included "China Proper" and "Outer China."[69] Beginning in the 1970s, the concept of Greater China has grown as the economic impact of Deng's Open Door Policy expanded Chinese influence in the region. By the mid-1990s the term had extended in breadth to be increasingly used as political lexicon describing:

1. Core China

2. Areas previously incorporated into the PRC including Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia

3. Areas eventually to be incorporated into the PRC including Hong Kong (acceded

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[68] Harry Harding, "The Concept of 'Greater China': Themes, Variations and Reservations," *The China Quarterly*, No. 136 (December 1993): 661.

[69] Ibid, 662.

1997), Macao (to be acceded in 1999), and Taiwan (reunification still debatable but generally assumed it will occur)

4. Areas still in contention with other states including the Paracel (Xisha) Islands, Spratly (Nansha) Islands, Diaoyutai Islands, and various other maritime claims in the East and South China Seas

There are limits to Greater China, but they almost certainly depend on a Chinese willingness to use the term to describe only the most obvious—mainland China (including Xinjiang and Tibet), Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and a few legitimately claimed offshore islands. More importantly, however, the term's limitations depend on the willingness of the international community to hold the PRC to a narrowly defined concept of Greater China. Scholarly conferences have convened to debate the issue and have essentially expanded the definitions of the term. The debate allowed what in the past has been regarded as "Maritime China" to be included in Greater China. In addition, overseas ethnic Chinese have been included as well.[70] The extended claim of Maritime China is based on centuries-old forays of Chinese explorers and emissaries of the emperor best exemplified by Zhen He's expeditions in the 15th century. The implicit scholarly acceptance of Maritime China as part of Greater China has been a boon to present and future Chinese expansionists and in effect gave them significant legitimacy to

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[70] Shambaugh, "The Emergence of 'Greater China,'" 654. Shambaugh describes a 03-05 January 1993 debate in Hong Kong hosted by *The China Quarterly* over the term "Greater China." At first considered "too vague, too pejorative and implying expansionism," the conferees initially were leaning to dropping the term altogether but eventually reached a "consensus" and added overseas Chinese. While the inclusion of overseas Chinese could have serious implications in several countries especially in Southeast Asia, the ability of the PRC to influence or claim these citizens as their own will always be regulated by the citizenship ethnic Chinese hold in their country of residence and consequently that country's legitimate authority over them. However, the extension to maritime claims has no such limiting factor since most of what could be included under Chinese sovereignty are disputed but uninhabited islands and reefs in the South and East China Seas. Also see Stephen Uhalley, Jr., "Hong Kong and 'Greater China,'" *Pacific Rim Report*, No. 5 (July 1997) which is a revised version of the keynote address from another conference on Greater China held at the University of San Francisco on 17-18 April 1997. From a more economic perspective but no less significant, Uhalley also adds Maritime China to his definition of Greater China.

reinforce Chinese claims to areas such as the Paracel and Spratly Islands.[71] Despite these trends, I have chosen not to recognize Maritime China as part of Greater China because it is a relatively recent phenomenon and there are simply too many overlapping and contested claims to recognize any single state as the rightful owner of these islands. Instead, I classify Maritime China as part of the PRC's regional sovereignty claims.

3. Regional

Regional sovereignty is a term the Chinese rarely state explicitly but often imply and is very much based on Chinese perceptions.[72] Throughout PRC history, the Chinese used sovereignty to lay claim to areas that covered the above definitions of Core China and Greater China. But they have also used sovereignty as a justification to enter conflicts beyond their recognized borders. Whether the justification involved the threat of superpower intrusion or a reassertion of traditional Chinese influence, this type of "regional sovereignty" most aptly identifies China's expansionist tendencies over the past fifty years.

During the Mao era the struggle against first U.S. and later Soviet "social imperialism" substituted for regional sovereignty. Imperialism was a sensitive and convenient term that conjured up China's past humiliation at the hands of the Western powers and Japan.[73] However,

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[71] The jump from a "scholarly" Greater China to a "political" Greater China should not be overlooked. The PRC generally refers to Greater China as the Motherland, a term with less derogatory connotations. They are essentially the same thing. For an example see Jiang Zemin, "Continue to Promote the Reunification of the Motherland," speech made 30 January 1995; source obtained online at [http://members.aol.com/mehampton/PRC/JZM.1.30.95. txt].

[72] Note Levine's Chinese World View numbers 1 and 4.

[73] See Arthur Huck's *The Security of China: Chinese Approaches to Problems of War and Strategy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 8-12 for reproductions of the pictograph "American Imperialism's Military Encirclement of China" and the "Map of the Excellent World Situation" from the *People's Daily* 29 January 1966 and 26 September 1968, respectively. The former shows China surrounded by American military

it meant much more than that. The struggle against imperialism was also a struggle to prevent further erosion of Chinese power and to initiate a reassertion of the traditional levels of Chinese influence in Asia.

Later, the term hegemony replaced imperialism as the euphemism used by the PRC to label those powers that threatened or supplanted Chinese influence in the region.[74] Today, while they still aim the term hegemon at the U.S., they also indirectly aim it at U.S. allies in the region. Japan and Korea are perceived as co-conspirators in a hegemonic bloc to contain China.[75] Thus, the Chinese perceive a form of regional sovereignty that encompasses both their ability to exert their influence in the region as well as other states' efforts or perceived efforts at supplanting Chinese influence. This type of sovereignty is more inferential than the direct type of sovereignty which Core China and Greater China describe. Nevertheless, the PRC's words and actions indicate an extension of their sovereignty to areas beyond their borders has often been an important factor in their decision to use force. Within the last fifty years national interests based on regional claims of sovereignty, more aptly described as Chinese influence, represent some of

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might from Hokkaido to Thailand while the latter shows the disintegration of the "imperialist bloc" around the globe.

[74] While I cannot place a precise time and author of the switch, sometime in the early 1970s Chinese literature seems to have replaced imperialism with hegemony as the label applied to foreign powers threatening to China. While the significance of this semantic shift should not be overstated, a likely impetus for the change was to allow an easier reconciliation with the U.S. and condemnation of the Soviets. The term hegemon allows the Chinese to turn on and off their derision of specific countries by labeling them with "hegemonic intentions" rather than the historically enduring negative connotation that "imperialist" implies.

[75] A remarkably balanced 1996 article in *Renmin Ribao (People's Daily)*, 16 January 1996, translated in FBIS-CHI-96-014, reviewed a *New York Times* article entitled "The Third American Empire." Without directly attacking the U.S., it described the post-Cold War policy of the U.S. with familiar terms such as "suzerain," "sphere of influence, "regions under its jurisdiction," in various areas of the world including East Asia. It concluded that "The United States uses political, economic, diplomatic, military, and even spiritual civilization means to seek dominance and influence in all parts of the world, especially in places where it is concerned about its vital interests."

the most important factors in the PRC decision to use force.

B. DESCRIPTION OF TERMS

As stated, this thesis will attempt to discern patterns in PRC conflict behavior vis-à-vis their perceptions of sovereignty and their strategic frontier. In that context, the case studies will examine several issues including:

1. The justification for the threat and/or use of force (both implicit and explicit) by the PRC
2. The type of force used by the PRC
3. Whether or not territorial concerns were pre-eminent in the PRC decision to use force
4. The type of sovereignty/regional influence perceived by the PRC to be threatened
5. The extent to which the PRC strategic frontier was shifting to meet the threat

1. Justification

Justification refers to the PRC explanation of the danger that warranted the initial threat and/or use of force to achieve security objectives. The analysis includes any justification for escalation after initial hostilities began. Explicit justifications cited by the Chinese to the international community are typically propaganda for both foreign and domestic consumption and may or may not have matched the actual or implicit reasons PRC leaders felt compelled to use force for security objectives. Implicit justifications are often difficult to determine due to the lack of transparency in CCP decision-making processes. However, the true reasons for using force often can be derived from interpreting thinly veiled references in PRC official statements.

2. Force Used/Method

The amount of force used by the PLA in the past is an important consideration in

determining how they might react in the future. The number of troops committed signifies the degree of effort the PRC is willing to commit to achieve its foreign policy goals by force. Force level also provides a means of controlling the conflict though limitation or expansion. The method with which force is used or threatened also provides insight into how a state will respond to specific types of threats.

The Force/Used Method category is divided into two parts: the numbers of PLA personnel involved in the conflict and the method by which they were employed. I divide the first part into four categories:[76] *limited, moderate, substantial, and total.* The numbers of PLA troops involved is considered limited if less than 50,000 men. Between 50,000 and 500,000 men is considered moderate, while greater than 500,000 troops involved is considered substantial. While I included "total war" as a conflict category, the People's Republic has yet to be engaged in such a conflict since they expelled the Nationalists from the mainland, which essentially predates the period analyzed in this study.

The method with which force was employed is used to determine the incrementalism of Chinese deterrence posture and force escalation/de-escalation. I simply categorize the methods as *incremental* or *non-incremental.* An additional identifier of *risk acceptant* may be added to these two descriptions.

Limited information exists of PRC top-level decision-making regarding the use of force. However, the methods of deterrence and the escalation level of a crisis/conflict can be observed

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[76] For a theoretical discussion of the degree of force concept see "Scale of the Military Objective and of the Effort To Be Made," Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 585-594. In my use of the term 'total war,' numbers are not necessarily (but could be in the case of a complete mobilization of society for a conventional war) significant since a nuclear exchange of any sort could be considered 'total war.'

through pre-crisis warning signals and actions respectively. Methods of deterrence included public statements of warning such as the famous "cannot sit idly by" used by the Chinese prior to both the Korean and Indian conflicts. PRC actions are more easily observed than deterrence signals, but the lack of primary source material also inhibits this interpretation.

It is generally assumed here that incremental uses of force are those involving military engagement, followed by a pause in the intensity and effort of battle, and then a subsequent increase (or decrease) in the force level and engagement. The PRC response after the lull in battle is based on two components: (1) to provide the opportunity for the opponent to respond, and (2) a pause to allow an escalation or de-escalation of the conflict based on the first criterion. Non-incremental is the absence of clearly registered pauses and progressive changes in PRC crisis and conflict behavior.[77]

The importance of this distinction between incremental and non-incremental approaches to crises or conflicts is the existence or nonexistence of an escalation control/escalatory relief valve. A control/relief valve offers a relatively easy means of diminishing the level of force or threats used without overly jeopardizing national interests or prestige. Examples of controlling the escalation of a conflict include limiting it to a small geographical area or limiting the type of weapons employed such as tanks, aircraft, artillery.[78] The PRC used these and other types of

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[77] The preceding paragraph is based on a discussion of "conflict" incrementalism. Depending on the applicability within each case-study, pre-conflict or "crisis" incrementalism may also be discussed. In this case, add "threats" to "use of force/military engagement," substitute "battle" with "crisis interaction" and substitute "force level and engagement" with "deterrent signals."

[78] In addition to limited troop and force levels Chan discusses other Chinese methods of conflict escalation control measures. He describes a "variety of détente measures" including "unilateral cease fires, troop disengagements, proposals for conflict negotiation [that] are usually applied immediately after each series of military operations. They provide escape hatches for both China and its adversary...." See Chan, "Chinese Conflict Calculus," 408.

escalation control measures to prevent a conflict from getting out of hand or losing too much prestige in case things went badly. Pauses and gradations in diplomacy or conflict enable the PRC to implement a flexible policy that would otherwise be impossible once they had pulled the trigger toward conflict.

Finally, the identifier of "risk acceptant" may be applied to either method. It is understood that any use of force implies a certain acceptance of national risk. But here it describes methods which the PRC neglected to consider or deemed it worth the risk of using force against an adversary with far greater military capability. Similarly, risk acceptant also describes cases in which the PRC believed the use of force was worth the expected backlash to be received from non-belligerents and transnational organizations. Presumably, in such cases the PRC understood it was placing itself in an extremely unfavorable position if things did not go well on the battlefield or the bargaining table. A scenario in which the negative implications simply were not considered by the PRC would be extremely hard to prove. Thus, the risk acceptant label will rely exclusively on the assumption that the PRC was aware of and willing to accept the risk that diplomatic or military failure might bring.

3. Sovereignty/Strategic Frontier

The three levels of sovereignty have already been discussed in detail. The strategic frontier was described above as a diaphragm-like extension of Chinese boundaries (both territorial and influential) that expands and contracts with the strength of the nation. Shambaugh more specifically describes strategic frontiers as "a concept in security studies that attempts to delineate the territorial parameters of a nation's national security interests, i.e., territories to which it would

be willing to commit military forces in pursuit of goals."[79]

The fluctuating zones of control and influence of Imperial China have already been discussed in detail. The People's Republic is no different. As the state has matured, it too, has seen its zones of influence (if not control) change. Where it perceives these zones to be and where it would be willing to use force to protect or exert its interests in these areas is important for interpreting the past as well as understanding the future. The PRC's concept of its strategic frontier during conflict management is best divided into three categories: *status-quo*, *traditional*, and *expanding*. Status-quo represents a maintenance of the current strategic frontier that is within the legitimate, or legitimately disputed, boundaries of the PRC.[80] It is neither an assertion over historical areas of influence beyond PRC boundaries nor an expansion of the existing strategic frontier. The two case study examples of a status-quo strategic frontier (India-1962 and the USSR-1969) were instances of maintaining control over PRC-held territory (disputed with the USSR) and the disputed North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) territory which both the PRC and India claimed but neither side permanently held. A "traditional" strategic frontier represents an attempt to return or protect historic areas of territorial *control or influence*. From a non-Chinese

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[79] Shambaugh, "The Insecurity of Security," 14.

[80] Legitimate boundaries refers to de jure and recognized boundaries by the international community as well as PRC neighbors. Legitimately disputed boundaries refers to specific sectors where international boundaries have yet to be delimited and recognized by all concerned parties. PRC examples include the Sino-Vietnam border, the Sino-Indian border, and various locations along the Sino-Russian border. In these cases, neither side recognizes the other's claim, but each has also elected to remain with the status-quo until de jure demarcation can occur. Crisis and conflict occur when the status-quo is rejected.

Johnston's comments on status-quo powers (though not necessarily ones with status-quo strategic frontiers) are interesting. He writes, "A (self-perceived) status-quo power could use highly coercive, expansionist means in a conservative, restorationist effort to eliminate rising threats to its hegemony," Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 111. Likewise, a power that defended traditional interests through a punitive attack could also be considered expansionist.

perspective, a traditional strategic frontier could be perceived as expansionist. As will be demonstrated, however, a traditional strategic frontier implies the willingness of the PRC to use force to protect national interests in areas that the Chinese nation has pursued throughout its history—most notably Taiwan, but also Tibet, Korea and Vietnam. An expanding strategic frontier is an attempt by the PRC to *incorporate* new areas previously not identified or recognized within the Chinese orbit. These areas represent a fundamental shift in PRC strategic interests toward areas that have, at best, only marginally been included within the realm of strategic Chinese interests.

IV. CASE STUDIES

The case study sections are divided into two sub-sections. A general description of events will precede an analysis based on the parameters outlined in Chapter III. Specifically, PRC justification for using force, the amount and method with which they used force, territorial considerations, PRC sovereignty claims, and the PRC's strategic frontier will be analyzed. It should be stated at the outset that I do not try to explain or analyze all the variables which affected Chinese decision-making prior to and during the use of force. To do so would be virtually impossible with such a large sample. At any rate, it is well beyond the scope of this study.

When it is deemed significant to the overall decision-making process, the analysis will contain discussion of other variables. Notably, I do not consider domestic political factors such as internal bureaucratic or personal power struggles. Nor do I focus on the impetus domestic crises at home may have contributed to the use of force abroad. Concerning the former (internal bureaucratic or personal power struggles), it is still undetermined how much of an influence these issues have had in the PRC's decisions to use force. Whiting as well as Gurtov and Hwang lament the inadequacy of information.[81] Segal concluded that institutional biases and domestic politics had determining but not deciding effects.[82] Johnston used only empirical data for his

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[81] Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, xv; Gurtov and Hwang, 2. This remains relatively true today. While more information is becoming available into the decision making processes of PRC elites, the analysis is still very speculative. It is still intellectually hazardous to make conclusions based on such specious information. Other works have also minimized the effects of domestic politics on China's foreign policy. See Jianwei Wang, "Coping with China as a Rising Power," in *Weaving the Net: Conditional Engagement with China*, ed. James Shinn (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1996), 133-174.

[82] Segal concludes that "institutions need to be understood, but seem to have little direct impact on Chinese policy," 238. Domestic policy links to foreign policy are evaluated on two levels. He states that despite the

analysis and did not delve into other variables outside the Correlates of War data group.[83] My intention is not to imply that other variables not considered here are nonexistent or insignificant, but that they form no coherent interpretive pattern. Table 5 provides a synopsis of each case study analysis.

A. TIBET (1950-1951)

1. Description

Little is known about PLA operations in Tibet. It is known that the PLA moved into Tibet on 7 October 1950. Despite fighting and marching on the "roof of the world," the Chinese were able to defeat the small number of Tibetan troops positioned around Qamdo by 19 October. Qamdo was one of only a few battles during the entire campaign.[84] Movement was arduous. Roads had to be built as they were used. Settling into their Qamdo bivouac, the PLA made few moves beyond the town and instead waited for a political settlement. Their use of force was intended to bring Tibetans to the bargaining table, and within a year it had succeeded.[85] The Dalai Lama had fled Yatung but a Tibetan delegation signed a Seventeen-Point Agreement on 23 May 1951 which essentially "return[ed Tibet] to the big family of the Motherland—the People's

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apparent link to the PRC use of force and domestic turmoil, "There is little evidence to support the opposing notion that China uses force in foreign policy to deflect internal dissent," 254. The second level, factional political infighting between PRC civilian and military elite, is recognized. However, the "cleavages of power were varied and often changed during the same crisis." Subsequently, "no neat and coherently consistent lines of factional argument" can be made, 255.

[83] Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949-1992," 1-30.

[84] The is an extreme paucity of objective Western analysis of this conflict. Most Western descriptions tend toward sensationalism and extreme bias against Communist China. One source that fits this pattern but also examines PRC strategic interests and military considerations in Tibet is A. H. Stanton Candlin's monograph *Tibet at Bay* (American-Asian Educational Exchange, Inc., 1971). See Candlin, 13.

[85] Segal, 82-83.

Table 5. PRC Conflict/Crisis Management Summary

Conflict/Crisis	Justification for Threat/Use of Force Explicit	Implicit	Force Used /Method	Territorial	Sovereignty/ Strategic Frontier
Tibet (1950-1951)	1. Liberate Tibetans 2. Defend PRC frontier	Unification of China	Limited/ Incremental	Yes	*Sov*: Greater China *SF*: Traditional
Korea (1950-1953)	1. Security of DPRK 2. Deterrence of US moves north of 38th parallel	1. Stabilize NK front 2. Prevent US positioning on PRC northeastern flank 3. Withdrawal/defeat of all UN forces 4. Status quo ante	Substantial/ Incremental-Risk Acceptant	No	*Sov*: Regional *SF*: Traditional
Taiwan Straits (1954-1955)	Unification	1. Express displeasure w/ US policy (SEATO) 2. Probe US intentions	Limited/ Incremental-Risk Acceptant	Yes	*Sov*: Greater China *SF*: Traditional
Taiwan Straits (1958)	Unification	Probe US intentions	Limited/ Incremental-Risk Acceptant	Yes	*Sov*: Greater China *SF*: Traditional
India (1962)	1. Deter Indian territorial threat against NEFA 2. Teach India a lesson	Teach anyone else (foreign & domestic) that PRC 'would not sit idly by' against threat	Moderate/ Incremental	Yes	*Sov*: Greater China *SF*: Status quo
Vietnam (1964-1969)	1. Deter US attacks against DRV	1. Deter US positioning on PRC southern flank 2. Inhibit Soviet influence in DRV	Moderate/ Non-incremental Risk Acceptant	No	*Sov*: Regional *SF*: Traditional
USSR (1969)	1. Deter Soviet intrusion into PRC airspace & territory 2. Response to Soviet aggression	Send signal to USSR that PRC was not to be bullied	Limited/ Incremental-Risk Acceptant	Yes	*Sov*: Regional *SF*: Status quo

Table 5 continued on p. 56

Table 5—*Continued.*

Conflict/Crisis	Justification for Threat/Use of Force Explicit	Implicit	Force Used /Method	Territorial	Sovereignty/ Strategic Frontier
Paracel Islands (1974)	Reclamation of historic Chinese territory	Expansion of frontier	Limited/ Incremental (Step 1)	Yes	*Sov*: Regional *SF*: Expanding
Vietnam (1979)	Vietnamese border violations	1. Punish Vietnam 2. Send signal to USSR 3. Deter Greater (Soviet) & Lesser (VN) hegemonism	Moderate/ Non-incremental Risk Acceptant	No	*Sov*: Regional *SF*: Traditional
Johnson Reef (1988)	Reclamation of historic Chinese territory and natural resources	Expansion of frontier	Limited/ Incremental (Step 2)	Yes	*Sov*: Regional *SF*: Expanding
Mischief Reef (1995)	Reclamation of historic Chinese territory and natural resources	Expansion of frontier	Limited/ Incremental (Step 3)	Yes	*Sov*: Regional *SF*: Expanding
Taiwan Straits (1995-1996)	1. Influence Taiwanese elections 2. Send msg that PRC still willing to use force against Taiwan	1. Training exercise to: a. Target foreign forces interfering in reunification b. Dissuade Taiwan independence factions	Limited/ Incremental-Risk Acceptant	Yes	*Sov*: Greater China *SF*: Traditional
Legend	Justification for initial threat/use of force and any escalation thereafter.		Lim <50K Mod <500K Sub >500K Incremental Non-incremental Risk Acceptant	Were territorial factors most influential in decision to use force?	Sovereignty: Core China Greater China Regional Strategic Frontier: Status-quo Traditional Expanding

Republic of China."[86]

2. Analysis

The two most repeated justifications the Chinese used in invading Tibet were "to liberate the Tibetan people and defend the frontiers of China."[87] Neither were very credible. The Tibetan people desired no such "liberation" from the Chinese nor did they represent any military threat to China. The perceived threat from "the aggressive influence of British and American imperialism,"[88] was little more than anxiety over an Indian commonwealth tied to Britain and paranoid delusions that the Chinese Nationalists, with American help, would open a second front in Tibet. The lesser stated but most likely reason for PRC invasion was the consolidation and unification of Greater China. Tibet had tributary ties to China at least as far back as the Ming Dynasty. By the early 18th century (Qing Dynasty) China had again solidified suzerainty over Tibet.[89]

With only 30,000 PLA troops committed[90], China's opportunistic takeover of Tibet was limited in nature. It was also relatively cautious. It entailed little risk with a world focused on the Cold War turning hot in Korea and seemingly approaching that in Europe. Encouraged by Beijing, peaceful attempts at reunification preceded and continued throughout sporadic PLA-

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[86] Quoted from Point 1 of the agreement. Cited in Candlin, 17.

[87] Segal, 83.

[88] Quote from Chinese general commanding troops in the region. Cited in Candlin, 12.

[89] Fairbank, 219-222. Attempting to cite a "weakness of Chinese claims to influence in Tibetan affairs," Candlin nevertheless admits to "Chinese" influence in Tibet as far back as the Yüan (Mongol) dynasty, 9.

[90] Segal, 84. Note, Candlin states there were 50,000 PLA troops involved, 13.

Tibetan engagements. The seizure of Tibet was for completely territorial ends and was considered the first step toward reunifying Greater China and returning the PRC strategic frontier to more traditional boundaries. In words that would become increasingly familiar regarding China's irredentist claims, the Chinese stated in a secret cable to India:[91]

> Tibet is an integral part of Chinese territory, the problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic problem of China. The Chinese People's Liberation Army must enter Tibet to liberate the Tibetan people and defend the borders of China...No foreign influence will be tolerated in Tibet....

In 1949 the PRC began warning to Tibet to enter negotiations on the political future of the PRC-Tibet relationship. While military preparations proceeded simultaneously, diplomatic pressure on Tibet continued. However, Tibetan foot-dragging on the matter eventually led to the end of Beijing's patience.[92] Thus, even in this first use of force, there was both political and military incrementalism in PRC behavior.

B. KOREAN WAR (1950-1953)

1. Description

On the evening of 19 October 1950 Chinese troops crossed the Yalu River into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK-North Korea). In an effort to put PLA regulars into Korea without giving the U.S. justification to expand the war, the PLA soldiers who entered North Korea were known collectively as the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV). Within six days they had counterattacked South Korean forces inflicting heavy casualties. Within eight months they had launched five offensive campaigns against the UN forces before settling down

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[91] Chandlin, 15. India was serving as an intermediary between the Tibetans and Chinese. Much of the PRC-Indian correspondence during this crisis was not released at the time, but later became public due to undisclosed leaks.

[92] Segal, 81.

to a stalemate along the 38th Parallel. The most notable instance in the PRC's use of military force, the "War to Resist America and Aid Korea," is also the standard by which all subsequent Chinese uses of the PLA have been measured. Likewise, the Chinese also view this war as their most important. They learned numerous lessons from the war, but most significantly, discovered the limitations of Chinese power.[93]

Even before the Inchon landing Mao was the biggest proponent of entry into the war. He was forced to convince and later squelch opposition, however.[94] PRC interest in the DPRK-ROK (Republic of Korea) "civil war" was not even evident in military, economic or political actions until Zhou Enlai telegraphed the UN on 20 August 1950 and "officially declared the PRC an interested party."[95] From there, PRC military preparations began in earnest while limited political deterrence failed miserably. Warnings to the U.S. through India that China "will not sit still and do nothing" while UN forces crossed the 38th parallel in pursuit of the routed DPRK

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[93] For a more detailed discussion of Chinese lessons drawn from the Korean War see Bin Yu, "What China Learned From Its "Forgotten War" In Korea," *Strategic Review* (Summer 1998). Source obtained online at [http://ebird.dtic.mil/supplement/980716learned.htm].

[94] See Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1998), 153 and Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 80-81. Mao's biggest military opponent to intervention was his best field commander from the Civil War, Marshall Lin Biao, who refused to command the CPV. Mao placed Marshall Peng Dehuai in his stead.

[95] Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, vi. Note, Chen Jian disputes Whiting's interpretation that preparations were not underway for intervention earlier than Zhou's announcement. Instead, he argues that Mao had convinced his CCP comrades earlier in August that an intervention in Korea was ultimately going to be necessary. The UN perimeter around Pusan was looking as if it would hold and provide a springboard for a counteroffensive against DPRK troops. Thus, according to Jian, Mao ordered acceleration of preparations that had begun in July with the establishment of the Northeast Border Defense Army (NEBDA) to be effected toward eventual intervention. The NEBDA was later renamed the CPV. See Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 135-147 and n. 61 (pp. 271-272).

forces did nothing to restrain U.S. actions.[96]

Chinese objectives changed throughout the war. The changes resulted from an expansion of original goals and then a disjuncture between political ends and military means. Early successes of the First and Second Campaigns led to an increase in Chinese expectations that resulted in an expansion of political goals without the military means to achieve them. The Chinese shifted their political objective from deterrence of U.S. expansion north of the 38th parallel to a complete victory and expulsion of the UN from the peninsula.[97] After the failure of the Fifth Campaign in mid-1951, a stalemate ensued, and the PRC reverted to a deterrence policy of keeping U.S. forces below the parallel.

2. Analysis

Mao's decision in early October 1950 to enter the war in Korea was based on his fear of facing a unified Korean puppet-state of the U.S. Initial CPV engagements were specifically designed to avoid U.S. troops and were halted after less than two weeks of fighting to determine the UN response and allow for reorganization and resupply of CPV troops. Mao was well aware that crossing the Yalu involved great risk. From a strategic position, however, he felt it was necessary. With an American foothold on the continent, China would be further encircled (the Philippines, Indochina, and Taiwan were the other barriers). The U.S. and its allies would be free to undertake additional aggression. China would be vulnerable from at least two and

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[96] Zhang, 80.

[97] For an alternative view see Thomas J. Christensen, "Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace: The Lessons of Mao's Korean War Telegrams," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1992): 147-153. Christensen argues that Mao's *original* goal was to push the U.S./UN forces off the peninsula. Regardless of when Mao determined to intervene, his basic justification for entering the war remained the same.

possibly three fronts. The long-term economic drain that sustained defensive forces along these frontiers would more than outweigh the expected short-term effects that intervention would have on rebuilding the shattered Chinese economy. PRC intervention was a gamble that the vastly superior technology, firepower, and organization of the U.S. would not crush the CPV and move across the Yalu themselves. The potential of U.S. nuclear weapons, despite Chinese assertions otherwise, was a constant threat and convinced Mao that China needed them as well. However, Mao felt the strength of the U.S./UN forces could be overcome due to weaknesses of a "long and cumbersome supply line, insufficient manpower, low morale, domestic opposition, and disunity among allies."[98] Expected support from the Soviet Union would also aid the Chinese. For Mao, the avoidance of "a situation that would be very unfavorable to the whole East" was well worth the costs and risks of intervention.[99]

The initial force of 300,000 men that flowed south over the Yalu gradually increased to over a half-million men. The early attempts to limit direct combat with the U.S. troops enabled a pause to allow a U.S. response to Chinese intervention. Instead of a reconsideration of their advance on the Yalu, the Americans responded with MacArthur's "Home by Christmas" offensive. The pause in CPV intensity and effort of battle after the First Campaign was broken by MacArthur's drive and then culminated in another Chinese increase in effort with its Second Campaign which forced the U.S./UN forces back to the 38th parallel. Subsequent campaigns would be similar in pauses and increases in intensity by the Chinese.

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[98] Ibid., 81.

[99] Cable from Mao Zedong to Joseph Stalin, 2 October 1950, quoted in Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 175-177.

The decision by Mao to enter the war was primarily a political decision and not a perceived territorial threat to China.[100] To be sure, the territorial threat was present, but even Mao's encirclement fear was primarily based on political and ideological rather than territorial concerns. His cable to Stalin confirms this view as evidenced by his "unfavorable situation" comment. Even Mao's worst case scenario was a PRC-U.S. war that would only result in a limited conflict with desultory attacks by the U.S. on the Chinese periphery. Rather, the Chinese entry into the war was to prevent the loss of one of its traditional regions of influence to an imperialist United States and prevent the containment of the PRC which Mao feared would last "year after year."[101] Moreover, the Korean Peninsula was a traditional strategic frontier where China had chosen to use force to protect its interests before—namely, against Hideyoshi in the late-16th century and Imperial Japan in the late-19th century.

C. TAIWAN STRAITS (1954-1955, 1958)

1. Description[102]

The establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in September 1954 and the Formosa Resolution of January 1955 signaled a militarization and formalization of U.S. policies toward China vis-à-vis Taiwan. This formalization was unacceptable to Beijing. Likewise in 1958, the U.S. placement of the 7th Fleet on alert for fear of the Chinese taking

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[100] Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 1960), 155. Whiting refutes the argument that the Chinese intervened to defend PRC territory from the U.S. troops advancing toward the Yalu. Instead he cites the political factors of intervention and its effects on U.S.-Japan relations, China's role in Asia, and the security of the regime from domestic threats, p. 160.

[101] Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 178.

[102] Since these two crises were so similar in nature and purpose, both are included in a single analysis. However, for data purposes, they are treated as two incidents. In addition to Segal's work, also see Bruce Swanson, *Eighth Voyage of the Dragon* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982) for more detailed discussions of these crises.

advantage of American preoccupations elsewhere (namely, the U.S. intervention in Lebanon) was also perceived as an affront.

In 1955 the Chinese response was to seize, in a minor military action, the Dachen Islands which Taiwan deemed indefensible and abandoned. However, the U.S. made it clear that they would not tolerate any further moves by Beijing against the Nationalists, including actions against Quemoy and Matsu Islands. Sporadic military engagements continued well into 1955 but eventually dissipated and then ended altogether.

Sometime in mid-July 1958, China appeared to have made "a conscious decision...to probe U.S. intentions in continuing to support Taiwan."[103] The seizure of Quemoy, one of the Nationalist-held islands only miles from the PRC's Fujian coast, was to be the litmus test for U.S. support. The PLA began shelling the island on 22 August 1958. The U.S. quickly showed its determination not to yield this time, and China lacked the strength or the will to challenge the U.S. Mao decided to back down and settle for the long-term goal of weakening U.S. power in the region. In an amazing confession similar to what would occur nearly thirty-eight years later in another crisis in the Straits, Mao stated after the 1958 crisis that "I simply did not calculate that the world would become so disturbed and turbulent [over the] firing of a few shots."[104]

2. Analysis

The far-reaching Chinese justification for using force in both crises was to regain the territory of Greater China. However, their more immediate reasons were to probe U.S. intentions and commitment to the Nationalists. A 1998 Taiwanese article based on "declassified documents

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[103] Segal, 117.

[104] Ibid., 125.

in Beijing" states that Mao saw a "golden opportunity to wage battle in the Taiwan Strait...and occupy the island groups of Kinmen [Quemoy] and Matsu." The PRC's initial shelling of Quemoy was to "determine the extent of Washington's willingness to protect Taiwan."[105]

Due to the nature of the conflicts, the Chinese were able to control any undesired escalation. Neither case exhibited a gradual escalation but rather sporadic and brief campaigns as the Chinese saw an opportunity.[106] The use of force was limited in scope and cautious but was inherently risky. PLA operations might provoke a determined response from the U.S. Indeed, the U.S. formalized its relationship with the ROC in 1954 and provided substance to the arrangement by escorting convoys to the beleaguered islands in 1958. Overall, the tactical seizure of undefended islands (1955) combined with the intermittent shelling of Quemoy (1958) were highly flexible and controllable operations aimed at seeing how far they could push the Nationalists without drawing the U.S. in too deeply.

Even after the December 1954 articulation of the U.S.-Republic of China (ROC-Taiwan) mutual defense pact, the early 1955 seizure of small islands by the PRC was preceded only by a statement to the UN by Zhou Enlai and a few leaflets dropped on the islands warning of an attack. Other islands had been seized in previous years and nothing seemed incremental about the PRC's political approach. However, the limited means used and the nature of small island warfare enabled the PRC to control the military escalation and tempo of the events.

The PLA was ostensibly used for reunification but conducted its operations for political

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[105] "CNA Cites PRC Perspective on 1958 Taiwan Strait Battle," Taiwan Central News Agency in English, 22 August 1998, obtained from FBIS-CHI-98-234.

[106] Segal, 116-117.

purposes as well. The U.S.'s response to Beijing's initial probes determined subsequent PLA actions of territorial seizure as in 1955 or backing down and conducting face-saving periodic shelling as they did in 1958. From the perspective of protecting sovereignty and their strategic frontier, the Chinese acted as they always do with Taiwan—for the reunification of Greater China based on a traditional strategic frontier.[107]

D. SINO-INDIAN WAR (1962)

1. Description[108]

The Sino-Indian War of 1962 was a conflict that the PRC had no intention of entering, yet once it did determine to fight, it relished the opportunity to crush a much weaker enemy and hopefully send a message to all who would antagonize Beijing. The conflict also gave the world prima facie evidence of Chinese "patience and self-restraint" and magnanimous behavior in victory.[109] India's increasing territorial encroachments (see Figure 4) into the Aksai Chin and North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) regions and Prime Minister Nehru's seeming intransigence to Chinese attempts at deterrence began in 1957. Eventually they cost the Indians dearly. Segal points out that following the Tibetan Revolt of 1959 and another Taiwan Straits crisis in June

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[107] Qing China had fought previously over Taiwan against the Japanese in 1874 and again in 1894-1895. The 1895 encounter with Japan ended with the Treaty of Shimonoseki which forced China to cede the island to Japan. It was not officially returned until after WWII.

[108] In addition to Segal's brief analysis in *Defending China* (pp. 140-157), see Whiting's *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, and Gurtov and Hwang's *China Under Threat*. For a strictly Chinese view of the conflict see *The Sino-Indian Boundary Question*, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1962).

[109] For more details on Chinese self-proclaimed "patience and self-restraint" during the Sino-Indian conflict see *The Sino-Indian Boundary Question* which contains official PRC press releases and Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, p. 105.

Figure 4. China-India Border: Western Sector

Source: Online at [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/middle_east_and_asia].

1962[110], the Chinese began to focus more on their border disputes with India.[111] The Indians had perceived prior lack of attention by Beijing to be a sign of Chinese weakness or acquiescence. However, once determined, the Chinese initiated combat against Indian patrols and eventually routed Indian forces which retreated beyond the NEFA. The victorious PLA units stood overlooking the Assam plain, and beyond it, central India. As evidence of their magnanimity in victory, the Chinese called a unilateral cease-fire, repatriated all Indian prisoners of war (not a single PLA soldier had been captured) and hardware, and withdrew to their original positions north of the McMahon Line—a boundary which they did not officially recognize.[112]

2. Analysis

The Chinese had indeed "taught India a lesson." Although doubted at the time by the West due to the Cold War environment, the Chinese use of force against the Indians was fairly justifiable. The Chinese viewed Indian territorial encroachments as provocative and dangerous for three reasons. First, Tibetan stability was still in doubt after the 1959 revolt. Much of the assistance to the Tibetans had come by way of India. Second, the recently constructed Aksai Chin road, a critical PLA avenue between the volatile provinces of Xinjiang and Tibet, was only a few miles from Indian probes. Third, for no apparent reason other than domestic political consumption, the Indians had upset the status quo arrangement in the region.[113]

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[110] Note, the Taiwan Straits "crisis" in 1962 is not included in this study because it was not much of a crisis to begin with. It was, rather, an increase of tensions on the mainland over perceived U.S. and Nationalist preparations to invade. Whether real or imagined, Chinese fears dissipated as the U.S. became preoccupied with the Cuban missile crisis.

[111] Segal, 143.

[112] Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 149.

[113] Segal, 143.

There is perhaps no better example of PRC incrementalism in crisis and conflict behavior than their actions leading up to and during their conflict with the Indians. The Chinese continually reiterated their warnings to the Indians since the latter began intrusive patrols in 1957. Indian patrols were in the vicinity of the newly completed Aksai Chin road linking Xinjiang and Tibet. India claimed the road crossed some of its territory. PRC warnings consisted of increasingly bellicose statements such as:[114]

1. 9 July 1962– "sanguinary clashes may occur at any time"

2. 22 July 1962– China "can by no means sit idle"

3. 13 September 1962– "he who plays with fire will eventually be consumed by fire"

4. 21 September 1962– the "flames of war may break out"

5. 14 October 1962– "massive invasion of Chinese territory seems imminent...be well-prepared...to deal resolute counterblows to any invaders!"

A moderate force of 150,000 PLA troops were in the region. But only a fraction was required or used for operations against the Indians. Their employment was generally deliberate. PLA units initiated combat and attacked forcefully, but also halted, consolidated and withdraw when they could have made further attacks. The escalation of the conflict was controlled through the strict adherence to objectives despite significant military victories. PRC extension of the war could have guaranteed PRC territorial gains. However, the Chinese use of force was aimed at maintaining a status quo frontier in the NEFA and Aksai Chin regions, which, as part of Tibet, was Greater China. Additionally, it was probably hoped that the remarkable success of the PLA would also deter any regional moves by the Soviet Union with whom the PRC had recently split

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[114] See Whiting, *Chinese Calculus*, 77, 92, 107.

over ideological differences.

E. VIETNAM (1964-1969)

1. Description[115]

After earlier verbal commitments to the North Vietnamese in their expanding war with the South, Beijing began providing concrete support in late-1964 to their "brotherly comrades." This

support was based on three principles of deterring the U.S. from extending the ground war into the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). First, if the U.S. sent ground forces north, China would reciprocate and send them south. Second, China would send signals to the U.S. that should they do so, another Korean War-type scenario would result. Third, China would avoid direct confrontation with the U.S., but would not shrink from U.S. provocation.[116] PRC assistance took the form of engineering troops to aid in the building and repairing of DRV roads and bridges, anti-aircraft artillery units which would defend key North Vietnamese positions no further south than Hanoi, and massive logistical support.

2. Analysis

Chen Jian argues that Beijing's decision to support the DRV reflected a profound domestic agenda based on Mao's attempt to reinvigorate the domestic situation during the

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[115] Notable sources for this period of PLA operations are few. Segal's *Defending China* only covers 1964-1965. Chapter 6 (pp. 170-195) of Whiting's *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence* discusses the evidence and reasons for the PLA deployment to the DRV. A more recent and probably better informed study comes from Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," *The China Quarterly*, No. 142 (June 1995): 356-387. However, Chen commends Whiting on the essential validity of his work, despite not having the documents and source materials that were at Chen's disposal twenty years later.

[116] Chen Jian, "China's Involvement," 366.

Cultural Revolution.[117] More important, however, was the international context. China had recently split with the Soviets in a dispute that was becoming increasingly bitter. The PRC feared encirclement by the Soviets in the north and the U.S. to the east (in Japan) and south (in Vietnam). Moreover, Beijing wanted to deter any growing Soviet influence in Vietnam by showing *their* commitment to Ho Chi Minh's communists.

The force used to display this commitment was moderate. All told more than 320,000 PLA troops were sent to Vietnam from 1965 to 1969 with a peak of 170,000 in 1967.[118] PLA troops were specifically restricted to areas well north of the DRV-RVN (Republic of Vietnam) border. The PRC ensured the U.S. was well aware of what would occur should they move U.S. troops north. A 1 July 1964 *People's Daily* editorialized on the "300th serious warning" and other PRC statements included the "cannot sit idly by" warning to the U.S.[119] Any extension of the ground war into the DRV would clearly result in PRC intervention. Politically, these warnings were not really a sign of incremental crisis management, but rather an ultimatum to the U.S.—an ultimatum reinforced by their shared Korean experience. Militarily, the covert positioning of troops in specific areas well north of the border enabled a flexible option of plausible deniability. At the same time PLA positioning ensured the American intelligence community was aware of Chinese presence and the Americans recognized the consequences of an expanded war. In this context, they were very successful in deterring escalation of the war. Again, Mao considered the risk of war with a superpower acceptable to preserve Chinese

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[117] Ibid., 365-366.

[118] Ibid., 378

[119] Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence*, 173 from 3 July 1964 *Peking Review* article.

influence in Vietnam and prevent encirclement by the imperialist (American) as well as revisionist (Soviet) superpowers.

The PLA presence was not territorial in nature. Beijing's political motives were based on deterrence (to the U.S. and USSR) and support (for the DRV) rather than any irredentist claims.[120] Hence, Beijing's use of the PLA in "operations to assist Vietnam and resist America" were based on a regional perception of sovereignty and influence. Despite Vietnamese quasi-independence since 939 A.D. and numerous clashes before and after, China had exerted at least tributary status over Vietnam for two millennia.[121] History has proven Vietnam to be a traditional strategic frontier for China. On this occasion, the Chinese were there to maintain PRC influence and deter expanding U.S. and Soviet influence.

F. SINO-SOVIET BORDER CONFLICTS (1969)

1. Description

Like the Sino-Indian conflict, the accounts of the clashes between the Soviets and Chinese in 1969 vary considerably (see Figure 5).[122] Not surprisingly, each side blames the other

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[120] It is acknowledged, as Chen Jian asserts, that Mao used the imperialist American threat "to prepare politically and militarily for this coming challenge" in Indochina and elsewhere in Asia. However, it was the opportunistic use of the international situation by Mao to promote domestic themes, not the *creation* of an external threat for these purposes as Jian implies. See Jian, "China in the Vietnam War," 361-362.

[121] Fairbank, 265.

[122] There is a considerable amount of material on this dispute, most of which has been written from the Soviet or Western perspective vis-à-vis the Cold War. An excellent analysis from this vantage point is Thomas W. Robinson's chapter "The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict" in *Diplomacy of Power: Soviet Armed Forces as a Political Instrument*, ed. Stephen S. Kaplan (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1981), 265-313. A detailed account taken from actual Chinese participants can be found in Neville Maxwell's "The Chinese Account of the 1969 Fighting at Chenpao," *The China Quarterly*, No. 56 (October 1973): 730-739. Other notable analyses include Tai Sung An, *The Sino-Soviet Territorial Dispute*, (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1973) and Richard Wich, *Sino-Soviet Crisis Politics: A Study of Political Change and Communication* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980). For a recent picture of the disputed island and its situation in the river channel, see *Beijing Review*, 22-28 January 1996, 2.

China-USSR Border

China-USSR Border: Western Sector

Figure 5. PRC-USSR Border

Source: Online at [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/middle_east_and_asia].

for initiation of hostilities. Chinese-Soviet clashes first took place at Zhenbao (Damansky) Island in the far Northeast region of Manchuria and spilled all the way over to Xinjiang on the far Northwest border of the PRC. The clash at Zhenbao Island on 02 March 1969 was the culmination of an intensifying state of belligerence between the two nations.[123] Which side initiated combat is still debatable. It is clear, however, that the Chinese were better prepared for such an eventuality and had a second patrol waiting in reserve.[124] As a result, it was the Chinese who got the better of the Soviets in this first encounter. Less than two weeks later, the roles were reversed and it was the Soviets who came better prepared, this time with armor and more artillery.

Determining the victor depends upon which account is read. Regardless, the Chinese still hold the island. Believing that bilateral discussion would place them at a disadvantage, the Chinese steadfastly resisted Soviet attempts to initiate discourse over their boundary disputes. In response, Soviet troops instigated conflicts on the Xinjiang border inflicting large losses on the Chinese troops. Meanwhile, the Soviets hinted at preemptive "rocket" strikes on PRC nuclear weapons facilities. Coupled with the Xinjiang show of force and Soviet threats of a surgical nuclear strike, the Chinese were forced to the bargaining table in October of 1969.

2. Analysis

Chinese objectives were to deter any Soviet expansionism ("social imperialism"),

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[123] According to Tai Sung An, "thousands" of previous border incidents had taken place, 15. Both sides, however, chose to propagandize this particular event until each nation was in a frenzy over the incident.

[124] Maxwell interviewed the Zhenbao PLA Frontier Guard patrol commander who "strongly rejected" his suggestion that the Chinese had set a trap for the Soviets, 734.

especially in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.[125] The Soviet threat cut across all three Chinese interpretations of sovereignty: (1) Core China (the PRC had a legitimate claim to Zhenbao), (2) Greater China (the Soviet threat to stability in Xinjiang and its implications to other Chinese autonomous regions), and (3) regional (the threat of Soviet hegemony over China and throughout Asia). But it was the latter which was of paramount consideration. Beijing's concern over the extension of the Brezhnev Doctrine[126] to Asia or any similarly clumsy bullying in Asia by their erstwhile ally was central to their decision to make a point and resist increasing Soviet border pressures on the Ussuri River.

The force used by the PLA throughout was limited. Both they and the Soviets were careful not to escalate the situation. Each committed a relatively small number of troops, artillery and tanks (Soviets) and no airpower. While the PLA was cautious in its employment and avoided moving beyond stated territorial claims, Beijing made the continued use of force a risky one when they refused repeated Soviet calls for negotiation. Likewise, there was a noted absence of pre-crisis political methods of deterrence by the Chinese. Militarily, the character of border clashes allowed incremental and escalation control responses, but did not necessarily result in any PRC actions to control the conflict. It was the looming nuclear precipice along with

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[125] Wich, 7. Wich's work is the best on this Czechoslovakia linkage to the PRC decision to use force with the Soviets.

[126] The Brezhnev Doctrine, as USSR leader Leonid Brezhnev's defense of the invasion of Czechoslovakia came to be known, stated that "each Communist party is free to apply the basic principles of Marxism Leninism and of socialism in its country, but it cannot depart from these principles." When a country does depart, it is the right and duty of the other socialist countries, and "above all the Soviet Union" as the leader of the Socialist Camp, "to act decisively...against antisocialist forces." Obtained from Pravda, September 25, 1968; translated by Novosti, Soviet press agency and obtained online at [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1968brezhnev.html]. This implied that not only could the Soviet Union intervene in Warsaw Pact countries but in the PRC as well. The Brezhnev Doctrine was a significant concern for CCP leadership undergoing the throes of the Cultural Revolution.

a "lesson" in Xinjiang that eventually forced Mao to allow Zhou Enlai to negotiate with Kosygin and reduce tensions. Even then, it was only Ho Chi Minh's funeral in Vietnam which afforded the Chinese a face-saving way to initiate contact.

Since the conflicts in both regions ostensibly involved disputed land, the conflict can be described as territorial in nature. However, in a broader sense, the Chinese were sending a strategic signal to the Soviets and merely used the border disputes as the vehicle for transmitting their message. Finally, Beijing chose these hinterlands as part of their strategic frontier because of the larger discord with the Soviets, but this was not a shift or an extension of what they had been previously willing to use force to protect. Rather, it was an attempt to validate the status-quo and deter further territorial and ideological encroachment by the Soviets.

G. PARACEL (XISHA) ISLANDS (1974)

1. Description

Fighting ensued between the PLA Navy (PLAN) and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) over the Paracel Island group from 15-20 January 1974. As usual, each account varied, but it is generally assumed the Chinese instigated the clash by attacking the weak and vulnerable RVN forces scattered over the island chain after Saigon's forces had probably attempted to drive off PRC fishing vessels. The PLAN landed 600 men on the various islets and used aircraft based out of Hainan for support in dislodging the Vietnamese. By the end of the month the PRC effectively controlled the entire Paracel group.[127]

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[127] The preceding section relies heavily on Marwyn S. Samuels' *Contest for the South China Sea* (New York: Methuen and Co., 1982) and John W. Garver's "China's Push Through the South China Sea: The Interaction of Bureaucratic and National Interests," *The China Quarterly*, No. 132 (December 1992): 999-1028. Segal also covers the 1974 Paracel campaign by the PRC. A more recent overview of claims and counterclaims in the region is U.S. Pacific Command's April 1996 *South China Sea Reference Book*.

2. Analysis

Beijing's moves in the South China Sea deserve special attention because they were the first military moves by the People's Republic into the maritime region. As will be discussed later, these moves were also harbingers of future Chinese expansionism. China's claims to the Paracels are rooted at least in the Ming Dynasty and Cheng Ho's voyages in the 15th century and arguably as far back as two thousand years.[128] However, rarely have the Chinese had the need or wherewithal to backup these claims.

When the tottering RVN regime began selling drilling rights near the Spratlys and incorporated the islets into the RVN provincial framework, Beijing decided to react at the only place it could—the Paracels (which both Vietnams also claimed). But the PRC reaction was more than just an attempt to secure oil and natural gas reserves in the South China Sea. It was a continuation of China's reclamation of great power status manifested in the irredentist claim that the four island groups in the South China Sea are sovereign Chinese territory.[129] The difference between this first move in the South China Sea, and previous attempts at consolidating areas of the extinct empire such as Tibet, was that China's claim to the South China Sea was even more contentious than its claim in the Asian highlands. The assertion of China's irredentist claims was nothing new; however, the *method and location* which they chose were.

PLA actions in such areas as the Paracel and Spratly Islands were wholly dependent upon the Chinese perception of the risks of such moves. The 1974 seizure of the Paracel group from

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[128] Swanson, 268.

[129] Samuels, 7. The four island groups in the South China Sea claimed by China are the Pratas Island and Reefs (Dongsha), Paracel Islands (Xisha), Macclesfield Bank (Chungsha), and the Spratly Islands (Nansha).

the crumbling South Vietnamese regime was indicative of China's willingness and skill in probing world reactions to the assertion of the PRC's historical territorial claims. When faced with little to no resistance by the great powers, they pursued their objectives fully. The Paracel operation was a classic case of opportunism. The world had little desire to challenge Chinese claims.[130] It was a limited use of force, but nevertheless a meaningful shift in policy, as the PLAN was first used to assert Chinese claims of sovereignty. In retrospect, some have interpreted an 11 January 1974 denunciation of Saigon's awarding of drilling rights for the contested region as "a signal for [Chinese] action in the Paracels," but there was no coherent build-up toward deterrence.[131]

Even against a weak opponent it was an unprecedented shift in strategy for the PRC. The PRC claimed "complete, indisputable sovereignty"[132] over the Paracels. Their actions in January 1974 were intended to extend PRC definitive control to the Paracel region and exhibited a significant expansion of their strategic frontier. Heretofore, Beijing had chosen only to use diplomatic and symbolic means to assert its sovereignty in the South China Sea. Likewise, from a regional perspective, China knew that if it did not move on the Paracels in 1974 it would only be a matter of time before Hanoi consolidated its position and asserted its claims over Saigon's former possessions. Beijing saw a golden opportunity and took it.

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[130] The RVN was near dissolution; the Vietnamese communists were busy finishing off the South and had no desire to seriously challenge the PRC's move in the Paracel's and risk yet another war; the Soviets did not want to risk pushing the Chinese further toward the Americans; and the U.S. had no stomach for another Southeast Asian intervention over a few specks of land to help a dying ally.

[131] *Jen-min jih-pao* (People's Daily), 12 January 1974, 1. Quoted in Samuels, 100.

[132] Ibid.

H. VIETNAM (1979)

1. Description[133]

On 17 February 1979 the PLA sent at least six infantry divisions across the Sino-Vietnamese border (see Figure 6) in a move to "teach the Vietnamese a lesson."[134] Ostensibly a response to Vietnamese intrusions on its frontier, the Chinese maintained that their "sovereignty and territorial integrity" along the border were violated more than seven hundred times by the Vietnamese in the preceding six months alone.[135] In addition to supposed border violations, other irritations in PRC-Vietnamese relations included confiscation of ethnic Chinese property and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam. Finally, Beijing also cited Vietnam's Christmas Day invasion in 1978 of Kampuchea (Cambodia) aimed at Chinese ally Pol Pot as an attempt to establish an Indochina Federation "in their quest for regional hegemonism."[136]

Having attained the goals that were set for them prior to entering Vietnam, China ordered the PLA to withdraw only sixteen days after they entered Vietnamese territory. The PLA's

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[133] There is a dearth of Western analysis of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War. Most of the existing material came within a year of the end of the conflict and subsequently may not be judged fully in its historical context and without the benefit of any additional sources that have since become available. In additional to Segal's account in *Defending China* (pp. 211-230), see Edgar O'Ballance, *The Wars in Vietnam 1954-1980* (New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1981), 213-227 and Daniel Tretiak, "China's Vietnam War and its Consequences," *The China Quarterly*, No. 80 (December 1979): 740-767. Another account is from former South Vietnamese official Nguyen Manh Hung "The Sino-Vietnamese Conflict: Power Play Among Communist Neighbors," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XIX, No. 10, (October 1979): 1037-1052.

[134] Tretiak states that Deng Xiaoping, as a means of feeling out the U.S. response only weeks before the invasion, first used this phrase in a television interview while visiting the United States.

[135] Official press release by Xinhua News Agency quoted in *Beijing Review*, 23 February 1979, 8-9.

[136] "Indochina Federation" and "regional hegemonism" were two consistently used phrases throughout PRC official pronouncements during and following the two week war.

China-Vietnam Border

Figure 6. PRC-Vietnam Border

Source: Online at [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/middle_east_and_asia].

twenty-five mile penetration into Vietnam was excruciatingly slow and reportedly cost them more than 20,000 casualties, half of which were killed. The Vietnamese casualties were estimated to be 50,000.[137] By 15 March all PLA troops were back in Chinese territory and a tense but stable status quo returned.

2. Analysis

While the Chinese outwardly claimed victory in the conflict since they had achieved their military goals, they recognized the fact that they had failed in their political goals of easing border tensions, relieving pressure on ethnic Chinese in Vietnam (they continued to be harassed and deported) and compelling Vietnam to withdraw from Kampuchea.[138] However, when evaluating PRC behavior in this conflict one must look closer at exactly why Beijing chose to use force.

The Chinese claim that they were defending their territory against Vietnamese aggression was dubious. Vietnamese intentions and ability to threaten China's southeastern border also are debatable. It was likely that Chinese enmity was indirectly, if not equally, aimed at an intruding Soviet Union. The Chinese sought to display their displeasure with the Vietnamese for allowing the Soviets such a strong position on the Chinese southern flank. At the same time, Beijing attempted to assuage Soviet fears over the invasion. While as many as 200,000 soldiers moved across the border making it a moderate use of force, the PLA was careful not to escalate the

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[137] Tretiak, 757. Note, these figures are still debatable. O'Ballance listed total casualties for both sides at 45,000. Regardless, it is clear that the fighting was fierce and bloody.

[138] Tretiak, 753 and Nguyen, 1050.

conflict by involving only a small number of tanks and mechanized vehicles and no aircraft.[139] However, there was no real political incremental deterrence other than bringing attention to alleged Vietnamese border violations and strategic political jockeying between Beijing and Vietnam vis-à-vis the two superpowers. Military incrementalism such as the lulls in battle to allow an enemy response was even less evident primarily due to the poor performance of the PLA. The PLA was unable to dictate the tempo of conflict. Instead they were challenged by the Vietnamese just to meet their operational objectives. While PRC pronouncements repeatedly stated that they wanted not "a single inch of Vietnamese territory" and would "strictly keep to defending the border" after "counterattacking the Vietnamese aggressors as they deserve,"[140] the Soviets issued warnings to the Chinese not to escalate the conflict any further.[141] To an extent, Beijing was able to control escalation control by not using significant numbers of armor or aircraft. But de-escalation could only be effected by the withdrawal of troops. Even that could not be done without losing face until stated objectives had been met.

Only weeks prior, Deng had returned from the U.S. and Japan confident that those powers would endorse the invasion or at least remain silent. These efforts by the Chinese to demonstrate the punitive rather than permanent nature of the attack were attempts to temper the superpowers' responses. However, the PRC had little assurance that the Soviet Union would not intervene

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[139] PLA force allocation figures obtained from O'Ballance, 224-225. Note, however, that while I maintain that the PLA purposely used limited armor and no aircraft in order to emphasize China's punitive but restrained attack, O'Ballance states that the lack of armor and aircraft numbers were due to availability and capability restrictions respectively (p. 225). Tretiak (p. 750) and Nguyen (p. 1049) implicitly support the view proposed in this thesis.

[140] Xinhua in *Beijing Review*, 23 February 1979, 8.

[141] Tretiak, 763-764.

either directly in Vietnam or indirectly somewhere along the disputed Sino-Soviet frontier. Moreover, Deng significantly misperceived the U.S. position due in large part to mixed or nonexistent signals given by the Carter administration. Thus, the Chinese decision to invade was an extremely risky use of the PLA. To make matters worse, PLA capability was overestimated after its brilliant success against the weak Indian Army in 1962, while Vietnamese capabilities were underestimated.

Despite the poor showing by the PLA, the war had strategically positive implications for the Chinese. The 1979 war in Vietnam served notice that Beijing would resist further Vietnamese expansionism (Thailand was considered the next domino) and regional hegemony, as well as any other perceived Soviet attempts at encirclement via proxy. Moreover, the threat of a second PRC invasion led Vietnam to divert scarce resources to maintain a strong border force on its northern frontier—resources that otherwise would have gone toward rebuilding the country and making it the regional force which China was attempting to prevent.

The PLA's punitive attack on Vietnam had several complicated objectives. While Beijing explicitly stated the war was for defense of its territorial integrity, the conflict was not territorial in nature. Perhaps most important was what Beijing called "the greater and lesser hegemonists, working hand in glove."[142] In short, Soviet greater and Vietnamese regional hegemonism were the real reasons for the PLA excursion. The Chinese admitted as much in a *Renmin Ribao* editorial titled "The Crux of the Sino-Vietnamese Dispute" in which the author cited "hostility towards China...implemented by the Vietnamese authorities with the backing of

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[142] 23 February 1979 speech to the Security Council by Chen Chu, the PRC's representative to the UN. Excerpts cited in *Beijing Review*, 02 March 1979, 21.

Soviet social-imperialism. Herein lies the crux of the matter."[143] As perceived by the Chinese, this hostility was manifested in Vietnamese neglect and disregard of traditional Chinese influence in the region. The Chinese zero-sum perception of international relations suggested any gain in Soviet or Vietnamese power and influence in the region meant a commensurate loss by the PRC. Thus, an attempt at Vietnamese hegemony or influence in Southeast Asia was a threat to PRC regional sovereignty and influence.[144] Finally, considering this perceived threat, one should not be too surprised at the Chinese use of force against Vietnam. As described above in the Vietnam (1965-1969) analysis, China's southern strategic frontier has traditionally included Vietnam since the earliest days of the empire.

I. THE SPRATLYS [JOHNSON REEF (1988)/MISCHIEF REEF (1995)]

1. Description[145]

For analytical purposes, the discussion of the two PRC uses of force in the Spratlys are combined. Figure 7 is a map of the area.

Routine surveying of the Spratlys by the PRC began in November 1980 with PLA Air Force (PLA-AF) overflights. Later, survey vessels ventured as far south as James Shoal, less

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[143] See *Renmin Ribao* editorial titled "The Crux of the Sino-Vietnamese Dispute" quoted in *Beijing Review*, 23 March 1979, 19-21.

[144] Tretiak (pp. 740, 753) and Nguyen (pp. 1050-1051) tend to support this conclusion.

[145] While not the most recent, Garver's "China's Push Through the South China Sea: The Interaction of Bureaucratic and National Interests," *The China Quarterly*, No. 132 (December 1992): 999-1028, remains the best work for this analysis. Other more comprehensive studies include Marwyn S. Samuels, *Contest for the South China Sea* (New York: Methuen, 1982) and Bob Catley and Makmur Keliat, *Spratlys: The Dispute in the South China Sea* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1997). Some recent articles include Allan Shephard, "Maritime Tensions in the South China Sea and the Neighborhood: Some Solutions," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (April-June 1994): 181-211 and William J. Dobson and M. Taylor Fravel "Red Herring Hegemon: China in the South China Sea," *Current History* (September 1997): 258-263. Numerous other useful articles have been written on recent events in the South China Sea but are not listed here since they can be referenced in the sources listed above.

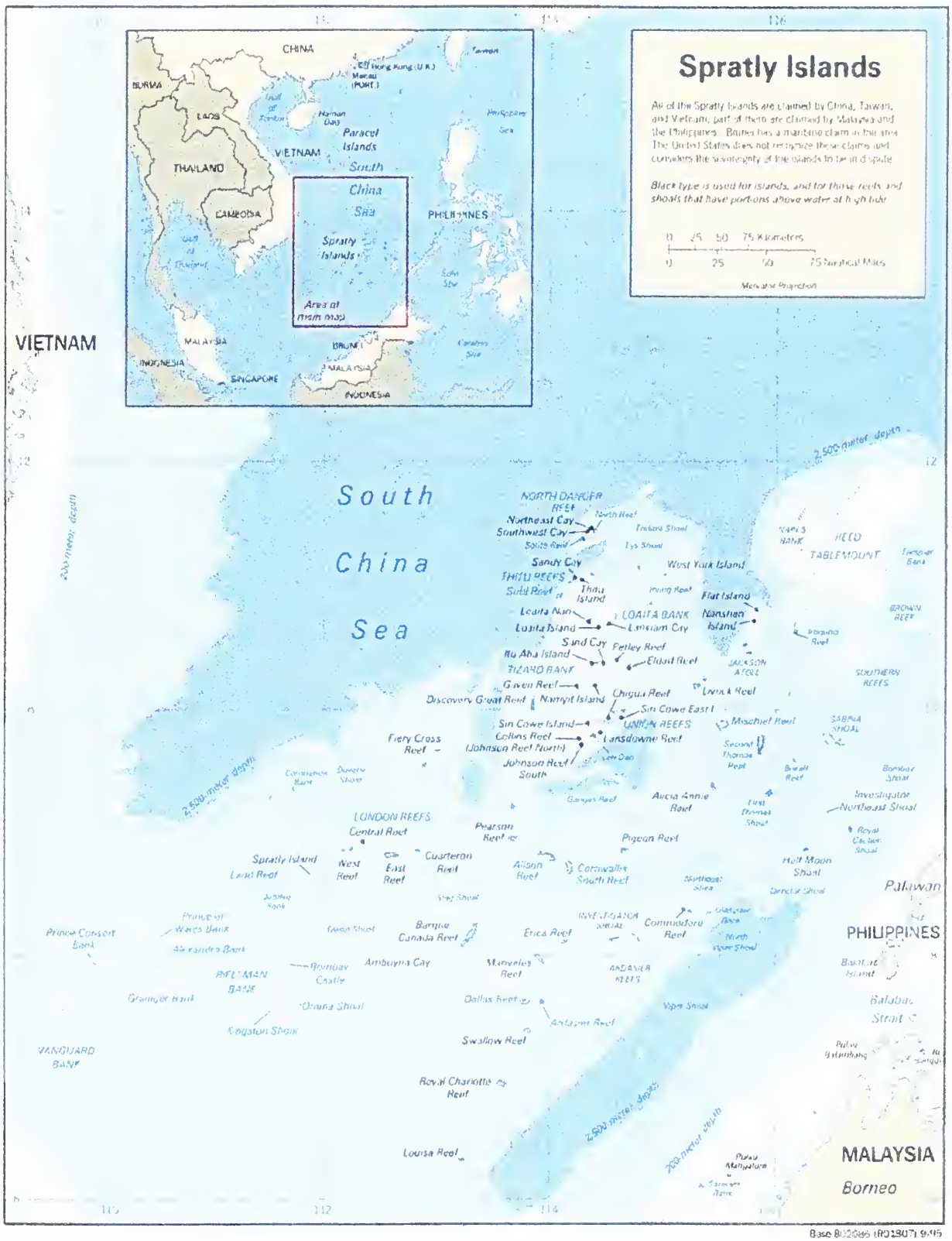

Figure 7. Spratly Islands

Source: Online at [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/middle_east_and_asia/Spratly_95.jpg].

than a hundred miles off the Malaysian coast of Borneo. James Shoal, despite being a coral reef over fifty feet below the surface, was claimed as "the southernmost outpost of China's territory."[146] By 1988 the PRC had begun a major effort to establish a permanent physical presence in the Spratlys. Fiery Cross Reef was the initial location selected and in August a permanent "oceanographic research station" was established.[147]

At this time the PRC's main competitor for the Spratlys was Vietnam, which, like China, claims the entire Spratly group. However, due to material support from Beijing in Vietnam's wars, the Vietnamese communists did not articulate their claim until 1975, after the Chinese seizure of the Paracels. By the late 1980s tensions over the Spratly claims were rising. The 14 March 1988 Johnson Reef incident was merely a culmination of tensions between the Vietnamese and Chinese as they raced to build up their permanent structures (and hence their claim to sovereignty) in the numerous shoals, reefs, and islets that make up the Spratlys. The Chinese account of the skirmish stated that the Vietnamese landed forty-three troops on Johnson Reef against the verbal demands of Chinese personnel already on the islands. Small arms fire broke out and covering PLAN surface vessels opened fire on the Vietnamese ships. Seventy-two Vietnamese were killed and two Vietnamese ships were sunk.[148] The Chinese maintained possession of the reef. Immediately after the clash, the Chinese occupied six more islands.[149] By

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[146] This description is provided by Garver, "China's Push Through the South China Sea," 1008, from an article by a PLAN Vice Admiral in *Jianchuan and zhishi [Naval and Merchant Ships]*.

[147] Allan Shephard, 210.

[148] Garver, "China's Push Through the South China Sea," 1013. Note, the accounts vary on the exact number of Vietnamese casualties. The *South China Sea Reference Book* states that three Vietnamese ships were sunk, 9.

[149] Dobson and Fravel, 259.

1997 China had occupied eight sites and Vietnam twenty-one.

Others in the region also sought to reinforce claims. The Philippines, Malaysia, and Taiwan had occupied eight, four, and one islands respectively.[150] Another incident erupted in 1995 when China built military structures on Mischief Reef, less than 120 nautical miles from the Philippines' Palawan Island.[151] In retaliation, the Philippines seized Chinese fishing boats and destroyed Chinese markers on the site. Despite unrelenting tension (mainly between Beijing and Manila) over incidents involving "sovereignty plates," fishing rights, and further construction on existing facilities, the Spratlys have remained relatively peaceful since 1988.[152]

2. Analysis

The Chinese have deliberately maintained an ambiguous claim over the South China Sea, especially in the Spratlys. In what Manila calls "talk and take,"[153] Beijing has floated shrewd proposals to other claimants trying to prove their sincerity for peaceful resolution of the disputes. However, there is no easy answer to the historical, legalistic and symbolic claims that each nation has put forth. China, perhaps no less than Vietnam, has taken advantage of this ambiguity.

Ostensibly, the PRC asserts "indisputable sovereignty" over the Nanshas but since 1990

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[150] Ibid., 258.

[151] Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Chen Jian (no relation to previously cited author of same name) claimed that the facilities were constructed under the authority of "local fishing administrative departments...to provide shelter for [Chinese fishermen]." *Beijing Review*, 20-26 February 1995, 25. However most foreign reports stated the facilities were military in nature and included a wharf capable of handling frigate-sized warships. Later, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen played down the incident stating "I don't think there is any tension or crisis in the South China Sea." *Beijing Review*, 20-26 March 1995, 21.

[152] Sovereignty plates are nothing more than markers placed on the reefs indicating a country's control.

[153] See "Manila looks for peaceful solution to Spratlys row,"*South China Morning Post-Internet Edition* online at [http://www.scmp.com] (hereafter referred to as *SCMP-IE*), 7 November 1998.

has proposed peaceful joint development of the islands and the mutual withdrawal of all military forces in the region. Garver cites this proposal as important, signifying a fundamental shift in PRC Spratlys policy from one of geostrategic to economic importance.[154] A policy that had been primarily, though not exclusively, designed to prevent superpowers, or their proxies', penetration and encirclement of China's strategic frontier became a policy designed to exploit the economic resources of the region—even if that meant cooperation with other claimants.

Whether one subscribes to this fundamental change or not, initial PRC designs on the Spratlys were clearly designed to expand the frontier and extend the Soviet and American naval threat hundreds of miles to the south.[155] China's use of force in the Spratlys, indeed the whole South China Sea, has been slow and incremental using only limited moves that were deliberately planned and advantageously executed.[156] Whether an attempt to capture "lost territories" or gain access to potentially tremendous economic resources, their moves have been territorial.[157] PRC claims of "undisputed territorial sovereignty" in the region are little more than regional assertions of influence. The Spratlys represent an expansion of China's strategic frontier. However, if it is

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[154] Garver, "China's Push Through the South China Sea," 1000.

[155] Garver says essentially the same thing in regard to the Chinese policy toward the Paracels. "China's Push Through the South China Sea," 1001.

[156] Individually, PRC moves in the South China Sea appear episodic and to have little pause and effect characteristics. However, as Garver's "China's Push Through the South China Sea" article asserts, it has been a steady incremental expansion over the course of two decades.

[157] Dobson and Fravel state that rather than "hegemonic objectives....China's behavior is best viewed in terms of its fragmented foreign policy decision-making process, the imperatives of domestic politics, and the leadership's crisis of legitimacy," 260. This author disagrees. The leadership gained little domestically from seizing shoals and knocking heads with a weak Vietnam or an even more impotent Philippines. Similarly, the gradual and incremental advances in the South China Sea over decades belie any strategy that was based purely on domestic concerns or a "fragmented foreign policy." Rather, it was a function of adaptive interests of the PLAN in an effort to strengthen bureaucratic prestige coincident and collaborating with PRC leadership seeking to enhance regional power and national economic interests.

true that economic considerations now drive its policy in the South China Sea, it remains to be seen whether or not the PRC will choose force to assert their claims against others in the region at the risk of damaging any possibilities of harvesting this economic potential.

J. TAIWAN STRAITS (1995-1996)

1. Description[158]

The crisis essentially began in May 1995 when the Clinton administration was forced by a sympathetic Congress to allow Taiwan president Lee Teng-hui a visa to attend his college reunion. Previously, the administration had repeatedly assured the PRC—which clearly understood Lee's "vacation diplomacy" tactics—that no visa would be forthcoming. In response the PRC conducted the first of six military exercises. In June 1995 the PLA held live-fire missile "tests" only ninety miles from Taiwan's northern shores. A second round of missile tests was held from 15-25 August 1995 north of Taiwan. In November, just before Taiwan's legislative elections, the PLA held large ground exercises including a simulated invasion.[159] These events were designed to demonstrate that the PLA had the capacity to interdict and disrupt Taiwan's sea and air traffic.[160] Even after the longer more complex tests of August, the U.S. failed to respond. Not until December did the passing *USS Nimitz* (CVN 68) carrier battle group (CVBG) send a message to Beijing by transiting through the Taiwan Straits on its way to the Persian Gulf.

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[158] Both sides of the Pacific were flooded with articles and descriptions of the crisis. An early and fairly complete analysis was done by John Garver, *Face Off* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997). Another is *Crisis in the Taiwan Strait*, eds. James R. Lilley and Chuck Downs (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press in cooperation with The American Enterprise Institute, 1997).

[159] "XINHUA Reports China Missile Exercises Announcement," Hong Kong AFP, 05 March 1996, FBIS-CHI-96-044.

[160] Garver, *Face Off*, 74.

However, even then, the White House did not announce the *Nimitz* transit until six weeks after it occurred.[161]

The PRC held the 1996 "exercises" (note the shift from "tests" in 1995 to "exercises" in 1996) in three phases involving 150,000 troops, 300 aircraft, and elements of all three PLAN fleets.[162] Phase I (08-15 March) involved live-fire missile exercises within 15 and 55 miles from Taiwan's major ports of Keelung and Kaohsiung respectively. Unsure of where the PLA exercises would lead, on 09 March the U.S. ordered the *USS Independence* (CV 62) CVBG to the region. Two days later the *Nimitz* CVBG was rushed to the Straits as well. The same day as the *Independence* received its orders, the PRC announced Phase II (12-20 March) of the exercise including PLA air, land, and naval units conducting simulated operations just west of the Taiwan-held Pescadores. The third phase (18-25 March) was a large scale joint exercise against Haitan, a PRC held island located off the mainland coast having similar features as Taiwan. U.S. intelligence concluded that inclement weather caused the cancellation of most of the third phase which was to involve over 30,000 troops.[163]

2. Analysis

While the 1950s Taiwan Straits crises reflected Chinese probes of U.S. intentions, the

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[161] Ibid., 96. To be sure, the Chinese were aware of the transit as the U.S. no doubt wanted them to be. But the timing of the announcement left ambiguity in exactly what and how purposeful a message the U.S. was trying to send. There has even been some speculation that the U.S. Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific (CINCPAC), Admiral Joseph Prueher, ordered the transit on his own initiative without the explicit approval of those back in Washington (ibid). However, it seems highly unlikely that any move as significant as this would be undertaken without the Pentagon's or the National Command Authorities' direction.

[162] Ibid., 99.

[163] Preceding paragraph derived from multiple sources including Garver, *Face Off*, 96-106 and FBIS-CHI articles "XINHUA Reports China Missile Exercise Announcement," FBIS-CHI-96-044 and "'Military Observer' on 3d Round Combined Exercise," *Hong Kong Wen Wei Po*, 16 March 1996 translated in FBIS-CHI-96-053.

1990s incident *lacked* any such motive. The Chinese had no objective to determine U.S. response, but merely wanted to reinforce their indignation over increased Taiwanese moves toward independence and reaffirm their commitment to use force against Taiwan if the latter's "splittist" activities went too far. Indeed, the Chinese were shocked that the U.S. reacted so strongly to their missile exercises. The Chinese felt that they had made it perfectly clear that while they retained the right to use force to deter Taiwanese independence moves, for the present they had no intention of attacking Taiwan.[164] Nevertheless, to many observers exact PRC motives were *not so clear.*[165] Moreover, an equivocating U.S. response perhaps led the Chinese to believe they could continue their method of coercion against Taiwan without any repercussions. While Beijing lost a certain amount of face due to the eventual strong U.S. response, the PRC also sent a message to both Taiwan and the U.S. of their continued willingness to go to war over their "renegade province." Not coincidentally, since the crisis the two major Taiwanese political parties have toned down their independence rhetoric.[166]

Exactly what was Beijing's intent? Ostensibly, they designed the exercises to demonstrate the PLA's "determination and capabilities for safeguarding national unity,

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[164] See Garver, *Face Off*, 111-117.

[165] China's options at intimidation, coercion and outright bellicosity were numerous. Attacks on Quemoy and Matsu or missile attacks on Taiwanese cities had to be considered by ROC defense forces as well as the American forces standing off in the East China Sea. For a picture of the uncertainty surrounding PRC intentions see "Playing With Fire," *Far East Economic Review (FEER)*, 14 March 1996, p. 14-15, 21 and "The Pacific Moment," *FEER*, 21 March 1996, p. 5, 14-16.

[166] The runner up in the 1996 election, Peng Ming-min from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) generally acknowledged as a pro-independence party , recently quit the party arguing that it had become soft on independence. See "Forthright election runner-up quits DPP," *SCMP-IE*, 03 September 1998.

sovereignty, and territorial integrity."[167] They made little attempt to conceal the fact that they were intended to influence Taiwanese public opinion and possibly even the election. More important, however, was the threat against "the schemes of foreign forces [expecting] to interfere with China's reunification and to bring about the 'independence of Taiwan.'"[168] However, despite U.S. accusations of Beijing's "reckless" behavior, the PLA's actions were notably cautious and incremental throughout the exercises, especially those in 1996 during which a U.S. response had to be considered. Despite involving more than 150,000 personnel, the actual combat elements involved in the exercise were limited in nature. The PLA ground forces did not mass men and material that would be sufficient to invade Taiwan. The PLAN did not have all of its lift capability in the area. Nor did the PLA-AF flood the Straits with its fighters and attack aircraft. The possibility remained that this exercise was a prelude to a move against the ROC held islands adjacent to the mainland. As one source has suggested, however, since the 1950s when the islands of Quemoy and Matsu nearly engulfed the Straits in a full-blown war, the islands have become strategically useless.[169] It is likely, however, the PRC had no intent of doing anything more than sending a message.

The timed announcements of the 1996 exercises confirm this viewpoint. The first exercise was announced 05 March. The same day the U.S. announced the *Independence* deployment, 09 March, Xinhua announced the second phase of the exercise. Evidently, the

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[167] "Joint Editorial Comments on Military Exercises," *Xinhua* Domestic Service, 15 March 1996, translated in FBIS-CHI-96-053.

[168] "Li Peng Rejects Taiwan Split From Mainland," *Xinhua* in English, 05 March 1996, in FBIS-CHI-96-044.

[169] "General loses frontline fervour," *SCMP-IE*, 31 August 1998.

Chinese were determined to carry through with their plans. On the 11 March the U.S. announced the *Nimitz* deployment to the region. Still not deterred, Xinhua announced four days later the third and last phase of the exercise. The Chinese incrementally announced their exercises and had every opportunity to cancel them without losing face. In other words, it was not known that China was going to conduct *three* exercises. Thus, the Chinese were deliberate in their announcements of the exercises and cautious in their implementation. The exercises did entail a significant amount of risk, which Beijing felt was worth it considering the message being sent.

Though there was no intent to invade, the PLA coercive use of force in 1995-1996 was territorial in nature. It was an effort to *prevent* any de jure territorial "loss" that a Taiwanese declaration of independence would have entailed. That is one reason why Beijing views a declaration of independence by Taipei with so much hostility. The PRC Defense Minister was quoted as saying, "As long as Taiwan is not liberated, the Chinese people's historical humiliation is not washed away; as long as the Motherland is not reunited, our people's armed forces responsibility is not fulfilled."[170] As has been the case for years, the PRC's sovereignty over Taiwan was considered part of Greater China that, along with Macao, is the only remaining scourge from their century of humiliation. Similarly, just as it was in the 1890s against Japan and the 1950s against the U.S., Taiwan represented a traditional strategic frontier where the PRC would use force to prevent undue foreign influence or encouragement for unification.

K. SUMMARY

From a detailed view, there seems to be little pattern to the use of force by Communist China. However, when viewed from the PRC's fundamental interests, the preservation or the

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[170] Ibid., 102. Quote of General Chi Haotian.

extension of historically claimed sovereignty has been their most likely *casus belli*. Cold War confrontation and the prevention of regional hegemony have been derivatives, but not exceptions to this rule. Likewise, recent trends have proven that the Chinese strategic frontier is expanding to include areas previously incapable of being affected by PLA power projection or not considered worth fighting for. As the next chapter will show, aggregate case study data provides empirical evidence confirming these points.

V. ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

A. ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY DATA

The data provided by the case study analyses lead to several interesting conclusions which are listed below. Table 6 provides cross-references to the parameters discussed in the case studies. The purpose of the table is not quantitative, but rather to elucidate the interrelationship between the parameters and their mutual frequency of occurrence. For example, limited force was used a total of eight times by the PRC. Vis-à-vis conflicts of territorial origin, limited force was used in eight of nine instances. Vis-à-vis the PRC's perceived strategic frontier, limited force was used in the maintenance of the status-quo once, in the "defense" of a traditional strategic frontier four times, and in expansion three times.

1. Force Used[171]

In eight of twelve conflicts (67 percent), the PRC used 50,000 troops or less. This is somewhat surprising for a country that had espoused the people's war doctrine, vowed to lure the enemy in deep, and had the largest standing military throughout the Cold War. In all eight instances except one, territory was the driving factor behind the decision to use force.[172] A moderate use of force was used in three conflicts. These three included the traditional strategic frontier of Vietnam (twice) and the reprisal against Indian attempts to upset the status quo in the

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[171] As a reminder, limited force was used in eight conflicts (Tibet, all three Taiwan Straits crises, USSR, Paracel Islands, Johnson Reef, and Mischief Reef), moderate force three times (India, both Vietnam conflicts), and substantial force in only one occasion (Korea).

[172] The lone exception is the border clashes with the Soviet Union in 1969. As previously mentioned, I have categorized the conflict as territorial because it was ostensibly over disputed land. But it had a more strategic origin, especially for the Chinese which used the territorial dispute as a vehicle for a larger grievance(Soviet "social imperialism").

Table 6. PRC Crisis/Conflict Management Parameter Analysis

		Force Used			Incremental		Territorial		Sovereignty		Strategic Frontier		
		Limited (8)	Moderate (3)	Substantial (1)	Yes (10)	No (2)	Yes (9)	No (3)	Greater China(5)	Regional (7)	Status quo (2)	Trad (7)	Expanding (3)
Force Used	Lim (8)				5	0	8	0	0	4	4	4	3
	Mod (3)				1	2	1	2	1	2	0	2	0
	Subst (1)				1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Inc	Yes (10)	8	1	1			9	1	5	5	2	5	3
	No (2)	0	2	0			0	2	0	2	0	2	0
Terr	Yes (9)	5	1	0	9	0			5	1	2	1	0
	No (3)	0	2	1	1	2			0	3	0	3	0
Sov	Greater (5)	4	1	0	5	0	5	0			1	4	0
	Regional (7)	4	2	0	5	2	4	4			4	3	3
Strat Front	Status-quo (2)	1	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	1			
	Trad (7)	4	2	1	5	2	4	4	0	1			
	Exp (3)	3	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	3			

Note: Numbers in parenthesis indicate total number of occurrences from twelve case studies. Numbers inside table indicate mutual frequency of cross-referenced parameters.

NEFA and Aksai Chin regions. Surprisingly, only in the Korean War intervention did the PRC commit a substantial force. This substantial troop commitment occurred when the Chinese perceived their regional interests at stake within their traditional strategic frontier. Similarly, two of the three instances in which the PRC used moderate force involved a threat to their regional influence, again within their traditional strategic frontier. The data indicates a PRC willingness to use increased force beyond its gates into areas that have traditionally been within its orbit. However, when expanding their frontier, the Chinese have restricted their use of force.[173]

2. Incrementalism[174]

The case study data supports the conclusion that the PRC approaches crises and conflicts incrementally. Beijing uses timing and pauses in intensity of diplomacy and conflict to allow the opponent time to react and provide escalatory relief options for both itself and its adversary. Ten of the twelve (83 percent) cases saw politically or militarily incremental PRC actions. Even when discarding PRC South China Sea actions, which were not necessarily incremental in themselves but were considered as three incremental steps advancing Chinese interests in the area, six of nine crises/conflicts were incremental. Specifically, the Chinese use of key phrases such as "cannot sit idly by" should be regarded with extreme caution. Likewise, pauses in intensity of battle should

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[173] For a qualification to this determination, refer below to the strategic frontier data conclusions. PRC expansion in their maritime frontier via limited use of force is perhaps just as much a function of littoral and maritime warfare than any PRC tendency to use limited force.

[174] The nine cases which were viewed as incremental include Tibet, Korea, all three Taiwan Straits crises, India, USSR, and the Paracel and Spratly Islands operations. As noted, the South China Sea operations are viewed as incremental in their entirety (i.e., each was a stepping stone) and not necessarily individually. Though there was a degree of escalation control in each, PRC operations in both Vietnam conflicts were not viewed as incremental. In seven (Korea, all three Taiwan Straits crises, both Vietnam conflicts, and the USSR) cases the PRC was viewed as risk acceptant. In PRC operations against Tibet, India, and in the South China Sea, there was not determined to be a significant amount of risk.

be viewed from not only a military perspective but also from a political perspective. The pauses also serve as a stimulus for an opponent's response. In seven conflicts (58percent) the PRC was judged to be considerably risk acceptant even with the chance of an expansion of the conflict.

3. Territorial[175]

It should not be surprising that territorial questions as they relate to sovereignty are paramount Chinese considerations for their security. The CoW project and others demonstrate that "contests over territory (including boundaries) generated more wars than any other issue,"[176] especially when the state is relatively new. The data presented here does not disconfirm this hypothesis—nine of twelve (75 percent) of the disputes originated over territory. However, contrary to Vasquez's theories[177], the PRC has yet to show a noticeable decrease in territorial disputes as the state matures, delimitation becomes more formalized, and its national territory is better defined. In fact, the PRC has found new areas to press irredentist claims such as the South China Sea.

4. Sovereignty[178]

Despite claims of "never occupying an inch of foreign soil," "never being engaged in

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[175] The nine cases in which the origins of the conflict were deemed to be territorial in nature include Tibet, all three Taiwan Straits, India, USSR, Paracel Islands, Johnson Reef, and Mischief Reef. The remaining three were Korea and both Vietnam conflicts.

[176] Vasquez, 128.

[177] See Vasquez's chapter "Territorial Contiguity as a Source of Conflict Leading to War," 123-152.

[178] No conflicts were over Core China. Five cases involved perceived violation or the establishment of the PRC's sovereignty within Greater China including Tibet, all three Taiwan Straits crises, and India. Seven cases involved the violation or the assertion of Chinese influence in the region including Korea, both Vietnam conflicts, USSR, and the three South China Sea clashes.

military expansion" and "by no means constituting a threat to any country,"[179] the People's Republic has yet to fight a war within Core China. Rather, all twelve cases involved either an assertion of Chinese sovereignty outside its existing *de facto* borders or an attempt to deter undue foreign presence in perceived areas of Chinese influence. Five were perceived violations of Chinese sovereignty within Greater China while seven were regional in nature. This implies a PRC that seeks to "protect" its sovereignty beyond its internationally recognized borders and even extend its influence throughout the region.

5. Strategic Frontier[180]

China's traditional strategic frontier was the location of seven (58 percent) disputes. Two (India and the USSR) disputes were based on the PRC's desire to maintain a status quo in the region while three were based on an expanded strategic frontier. More important, over the last twenty-five years the focus on an expanded strategic frontier narrows to three of five conflicts. These three were the PLA advances into the South China Sea. In each of these three cases the PRC used limited force. However, the limited force used may be more a factor of maritime and small island operations that characterized the South China Sea advances than any specific tendency of the PRC. This expansion is more indicative of an opportunistic and carefully timed extension of Chinese power beyond traditionally defended areas.

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[179] Primary PRC sources are littered with these statements, but for a few key references see Zhao Yining, "How to Build Crack Troops: China Reduces the Number of Its Armed Forced by Half Million," *Beijing Liaowang*, 17 November 1997, translated in FBIS-CHI document FTS19971229000185. Also see Jiang Zemin's 10 March 1998 speech at the PLA delegation attending the 9th National Peoples' Congress (NPC) translated in FBIS-CHI-98-070.

[180] Of the twelve cases, two (India and the USSR) involved the maintenance of a status quo frontier. The PRC had no designs on foreign territory, or at least did not pursue them, in these conflicts. Within its traditional strategic frontier, the PRC engaged in seven conflicts (Tibet, Korea, the two Vietnam cases, and the three Taiwan crises). The three cases involving expanding strategic frontiers were the PRC moves into the South China Sea.

B. ANALYSIS OF MODERNIZATION TRENDS

It is asserted here that an understanding of past PRC conflicts, changing doctrine, and strategic principles can aid in determining when and where the PRC is willing to use force to attain foreign policy objectives. Analyzing PLA modernization can assist in determining how they will use force. Moreover, PLA modernization efforts provide an indication of power projection capabilities and the practical extent to which force can legitimate PRC territorial claims. Indeed, just as the U.S. military's emphasis on technology and power projection sheds light on where and what type of conflict the U.S. expects to engage in the 21st century, so too does the PLA's modernization emphasis elucidate their ideas of 21st century warfare. Capability, regardless of intention, determines the maximum utility of military force. For the PRC, PLA modernization determines how far the Chinese can *effectively* extend their strategic territorial interests should their leaders so desire.

Ever since China embraced Zhou Enlai's "Four Modernizations" in 1975, military modernization has been one China's national goals.[181] However, not until 1989 and the rapprochement with the Soviet Union did the PRC elevate military modernization to a level approaching that of industrial growth and agricultural development and at least as high as science and technology. Jiang Zemin summarized the relationship between the PRC economy and national defense:[182]

> Building a modernized army and national defense is a guarantee for the country's safety and modernization drive. But without a highly developed economy, it is also impossible to promote the

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[181] The Four Modernizations included agriculture, industry, science and technology, and the military.

[182] Speech from Jiang Zemin to PLA deputies and National People's Congress 10 March 1998. "Jiang asks forces to support reforms," *SCMP-IE*, 11 March 1998.

modernization of national defense and the Army.

The warming of Moscow-Beijing ties in the late 1980s, which made sophisticated hardware again available, coincident with sustained double-digit growth rates, provided the impetus for the Chinese to make PLA modernization a higher priority.

Several factors, based on a triad of strategic interests, are driving China's military modernization. First, and foremost, is reunification. The PRC will likely maintain its position of not renouncing the use of force to settle the Taiwan question and is determined to ensure its threats of using the PLA can be backed up with credible power projection. The second strategic interest is the PRC's need to protect perceived vital security interests and defend its territory in the maritime areas to the east and south. Third is Beijing's desire to consolidate and extend its influence throughout Northeast and Southeast Asia and eventually beyond.[183] Military power commensurate with China's perception of its place in the world and these strategic interests call for an educated, technologically sophisticated, and qualitatively superior force far greater than what the PLA consists of today. The success of Western high-tech weapons in the Gulf War against Iraqi equipment very similar to their own confirmed what would happen should the Chinese decide not to embrace technology. Finally, the need to deploy forces quickly within China to maintain domestic stability provides another reason for effective modernization.

1. PLA-Ground Forces

Of the four PLA services, the ground forces have the lowest modernization priority.[184] In

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[183] "Introduction," *Strategic Trends in China*, eds. Hans Binnendijk and Ronald N. Montaperto, (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1998), 10-11.

[184] U.S. General Accounting Office, National Security Division, "Impact of China's Military Modernization in the Pacific Region," (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, June 1995), 23. Hereafter cited as GAO (1995).

September 1997 it was decided to reduce the PLA by 500,000 men over the next three years. The ground forces will bear the brunt of this reduction. Instead of quantity, the PLA is concentrating on training small but elite "fist" and rapid response units that can be called on to put out potential fires throughout China and its periphery. The brigade-sized PLA Marine Corps is also receiving attention. Notably, the PLA is not reducing its capability. The forces being cut are likely the mass of under-trained and under-equipped men that arguably make up over half the total force.[185] The emphasis on small elite units and an amphibious capability shows the type of threats Beijing expects to face in the near future such as local limited conflicts on the periphery—especially the maritime periphery.

2. PLA-AF

China's initial purchase of forty-eight Russian-made Su-27 Flankers in 1992 (now forty-six due to accidents), with a follow-on purchase of twenty-four in 1995, for the first time provided the PRC with front line fighters. In 1995 the PRC agreed to an assembly and purchase agreement with the Russians for an additional two hundred aircraft to be built in China.[186] Ultimately, they hope to indigenously produce the Flanker. However, due to historically incompetent industry attempts to reverse engineer or even reproduce foreign blueprinted military hardware, this effort is in doubt. The remainder of the Air Force, while massive, is essentially of 1950s and 1960s Soviet design. The most glaring weakness in the Air Force power projection capabilities is its lack of an in-flight refueling platform and an airborne warning and control system

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[185] "The People's Republic of China," National Security Planning Associates, *Asia-Pacific: Issues and Developments* (Cambridge, MA: November 1997), 39.

[186] Ibid, 40. Also see "Russian imports step in to fill the arms gap," *Jane's Defence Weekly* (hereafter cited as *JDW)*, 10 December 1997, 27-28.

(AWACS). Despite Jiang's pronouncement that "We would rather have proficient personnel waiting for weapons rather than equipment waiting for personnel,"[187] maintenance and training deficiencies have plagued the Su-27 program. Simply put, "attaining the needed standards of training and support is much harder than obtaining airframes."[188] Absent any credible naval air defense systems, the military recognizes that control of the skies is important not only for continental conflicts but over the ocean as well. That is one reason refueling capability and open ocean navigation exercises are increasingly being emphasized in the PLA-AF.

3. PLAN

With perhaps the highest modernization priority, the Navy has focused on both indigenous production and foreign purchases. The new Chinese-built *Luhu* destroyers and *Jiangwei* frigates reflect the Navy's emphasis on cruise missile technology in the 1980s. While a significant improvement over past models, the ships still fall short in anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and over-the-horizon (OTH) capabilities, which are major considerations for any cross-strait or South China Sea operations. The purchase of two Russian-built *Sovremennyy* class destroyers equipped with the SS-N-22 Sunburn anti-ship cruise missiles, will provide a potent anti-surface capability for the PLAN. Possibly the most important PLAN acquisition is the Russian *Kilo* class diesel submarines. Two export versions have already been delivered, and the Chinese have negotiated for two additional *Kilos* of a more capable variant that the Russians themselves use. There have

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[187] Speech from Jiang Zemin at a meeting of the Central Military Commission (CMC) 11 December 1997. "PLA told to arm itself for 21st century," *SCMP-IE*, 13 December 1997.

[188] "The People's Republic of China," 41.

been numerous reports about PLAN interest in obtaining an aircraft carrier.[189] However, Beijing has reportedly conceded that acquisition of a carrier will be delayed until 2020 and probably beyond.[190] Assuming its acquisition eventually becomes a reality, PRC possession of an aircraft carrier will probably give the PLAN more headaches than capability enhancements as the admirals worry about how to protect such a valuable asset. Nevertheless, it could be a force multiplier against all the regional navies except perhaps Japan's.

Like the imported fighters, the Chinese will also run into significant training and maintenance problems with the Russian-built ships and submarines. The technical proficiency and support requirements to keep these sophisticated units at sea may overwhelm the Chinese. Nevertheless, it will give them firsthand knowledge and experience that will be required once they find the ability to produce such highly technology-driven platforms and weapons indigenously. These new platforms will theoretically allow the PLAN to challenge regional navies and provide a limited threat to the U.S. Navy. As one officer has written, "For the present and a fairly long period to come, China's strategic focus will be in the direction of the sea."[191] The PLAN will be the executor of this focus.

4. Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF)

Also known as the Second Artillery Corps, the strategic force modernization seeks to "develop the capacity to fight short, limited wars in the region while simultaneously posing a

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[189] GAO (1995), 20.

[190] See Paul Beaver, "China will delay aircraft carrier," *JDW*, 3 June 1998, 26.

[191] Mi Zhenyu, "LGEN Mi Zhenyu on China's Geostrategy," *Beijing Junshi Kexue [China Military Science]*, No.1 (February 1998), translated in FBIS-CHI-98-208.

significant nuclear deterrent to those global powers that might be tempted to intervene."[192] Both conventional and nuclear missiles have been, or are in the process of being, upgraded. Improved accuracy, survivability, and MIRV (Multiple Independently targeted Reentry Vehicles) capabilities are all high priorities of the SRF. Conventional "short-range ballistic missiles hold the promise...of dramatically and forcefully curbing Taiwan's moves toward independence while avoiding real hostilities."[193]

5. Doctrine

Changing doctrine is an important bellwether of Chinese security interests. As David Shambaugh points out, it is how China "perceives the parameters of its national security interests and the concomitant shifts in PLA doctrine that underlie the potentialities for the use of force in the future."[194] The original Maoist doctrine of "people's war" has undergone two significant modifications since the late 1970s. The first was a modification to a "people's war under modern conditions." The second was a shift in 1985 "from fighting and winning an 'early war, major war and nuclear war' to fighting and winning local armed conflicts on the periphery of China."[195] The newest wrinkle is that of "active defense," which suggests a defensive policy with enough flexibility to allow for punitive and preemptive offensive operations designed to meet the enemy

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[192] "The People's Republic of China," 30.

[193] Ibid., 31.

[194] David Shambaugh, "The Insecurity of Security: The PLA's Evolving Doctrine and Threat Perceptions Towards 2000," 14.

[195] For a more detailed explanation of the distinctions between the "people's war" and "the people's war under modern conditions," the shift to fighting local wars on the periphery, and the concept of the "strategic frontier" see Nan Li's "The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine, Strategy and Tactics , 1985-1995: A Chinese Perspective" in *The China Quarterly* (June 1996): 443-463.

before he can get at Chinese vulnerabilities.[196] It is from this doctrinal perspective that the PLA embarked on its serious modernization effort.

C. ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC TRENDS

The difficulties in determining the implications of PLA modernization for the future use of force originate from two issues, both involving capability and intentions. First, though the PRC is committed to PLA modernization, there is no guarantee that an effective modern military will result. Indeed, their biggest security hurdle may be in translating modernization goals into actual capability. Past Chinese attempts at military modernization along Western lines, such as the late-19th century Self-Strengthening Movement, have been failures. Second, even if the PRC is successful at building a modern military by the year 2020 as one official PRC study has projected[197], more malign intentions are not necessarily inevitable.

Meanwhile, one should examine where the PRC perceives its realm of strategic interests to be. This brings us back to strategic frontiers. The data presented in this thesis agrees with David Shambaugh's critique on China's strategic frontiers:[198]

> China's claimed strategic frontiers since 1949 have stretched beyond its immediate borders to extend quite far into its regional periphery. The PRC has claimed territories in Mongolia, eastern Russia, central Asia, Taiwan and the offshore islands, South and East China Seas, Indochina border areas, and the Himalayan and Pamir mountain ranges. China has repeatedly

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[196] Lieutenant General Mi Zhenyu has also implied a corollary to this doctrine that would allow PRC to use force in order to protect interests in other states as well. He writes, "if nobody encroaches on anybody else, we will encroach on no one, but if someone else encroaches on someone else, we must encroach on that someone." This intimates the continued willingness of the Chinese to use force to protect regional interests in other countries against hegemonic, or otherwise, encroachments into its perceived sphere of influence. Again, just exactly where this strategic frontier may be is the most cogent question. See "LGEN Mi Zhenyu on China's Geostrategy," translated in FBIS-CHI-98-208.

[197] See Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "Hi-tech Military in Blueprint for 2020," 11 April 1998, *SCMP-IE*.

[198] Shambaugh, "The Insecurity of Security: The PLA's Evolving Doctrine and Threat Perceptions Towards 2000," 14-15.

> demonstrated a willingness to deploy forces across its borders to protect its perceived strategic frontiers and claimed territories.

Shambaugh has suggested, as it is asserted here, that the Chinese definition of strategic frontiers has been expanding from purely continental focus to become increasingly maritime oriented. He writes:[199]

> Today [1994] China's perceived strategic frontiers can be said to include the Indian Ocean and Malacca Straits to the southwest, the South China Sea, the East China Sea *in addition* to its current territorial boundaries and claimed jurisdiction over the aforementioned territories [listed above].

Shambaugh argues that the shift in strategic frontiers began in 1987 with a now famous *Liberation Army Daily* article that argued for Chinese *lebensraum* ("living space") and the establishment of three "national gateways" on land, the sea, and space. It suggested:[200]

> The "national gateway" concept of active defense that we are accustomed to using must be pushed outward from traditional geographic borders to strategic boundaries....For this purpose, we need to build a three-dimensional menacing force that is able to protect China's legitimate rights and *interests* [my emphasis], and is able to operate on a battlefield far removed from China. For example, it would be a force able to move rapidly over great distances, and able to carry out land warfare on a different scale and of different intensity in all-weather conditions, and it would use long-range detection, interception, and strategic defensive and offensive weapons systems for carrying out prompt counterattacks in space, on land and at sea.

More likely, this article represented only the publication of a decision reached by PRC elite as long ago as 1974—the year the Chinese expelled the Vietnamese from the Paracels and began atoll hopping southward. Subsequently, warming ties with the U.S. meant the dissipation of the seaborne threat while providing the Chinese the flexibility to act on some of its long-standing claims in the maritime region without facing too serious a reprisal from the U.S. or the

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[199] Ibid., 15.

[200] Xu Guangyu, "Pursuit of Equitable Three Dimensional Strategic Boundaries," *Jiefangjun Bao*, 3 April 1987. Cited in ibid., 16. Note, the inclusion of "interests" provides for virtually unlimited Chinese expansion based upon protection of these interests on "battlefield[s] far removed from China."

international community. Later in the 1980s and 1990s, as the Soviet threat degenerated and eventually dissolved into a hapless (but still volatile) Russian Federation, the Chinese were afforded more flexibility to pursue interests in the maritime sphere and shift almost completely away from their continental military focus. Thus, it is not hard to see how the new PLA doctrine of active defense fits almost seamlessly into the Chinese perception of strategic interests. The international strategic setting has changed to allow a post-Cold War PRC to shift from luring the enemy in deep to meeting the enemy at a distance.

For those who might doubt the validity of interpreting one article as a sign of a strategic shift in the way the PRC leadership perceives the territorial limits of their interests, there have been many others that confirm this initial eye-opening article. Another *Liberation Army Daily* article in 1995 discussed the continental shelf (at more than two hundred miles wide China has one of the broadest in the world) "as an extension of the land, assigning that portion of it that is a natural extension of a country's territory to that country." The author also wrote of defending this territory—which in China's case would account for an additional three million square kilometers of territory and an estimated ten billion tons of petroleum reserves— "for the sake of national interests."[201]

Another Chinese work is also concerned about living space. After spelling out the "three million square kilometers" of "lost territories" in the past, the author writes, "Our area of survival is shrinking.... Actually [we have to] reclaim sovereignty and sovereign interests in the oceans–territorial seas, continental shelf and exclusive economic zones–a total area of three

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[201] Ye Xinrong, "China's Continental Shelves Defined," *Jiefangjun Bao*, 22 August 1995; cited in FBIS-CHI-96-025.

million square kilometers."[202] Another work indicated two million square kilometers of continental shelf that are within the territorial waters of China and are "therefore within the scope of national defense."[203] One PLAN officer correctly interpreted the Western naval heritage of "showing the flag" into a concept with "Chinese characteristics." In the "new era, state security is more importantly expressed as economic security and environmental security." Therefore, the "navy with its unique characteristic of 'using non-combat forms' must patrol the blue water in a new guise as economic and diplomatic emissary....The enlightenment from historical experience today is: if you cannot occupy yours, it is someone else's."[204] The message of these writings is clear, the ocean territory adjacent to the PRC, including all the economic resources held therein, are the exclusive domain of the Chinese people and will be defended as part of the national territory as it comprises the national comprehensive strength.[205]

To demarcate their "active zones of defense" the Chinese have spoken of the first and

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[202] Allen S. Whiting, "The PLA and China's Threat Perceptions," *The China Quarterly*, No. 146 (June 1996): 600. Whiting was quoting here from a PLA authored book titled *A New Scramble for Soft Frontiers*. The author's name was not provided.

[203] Colonel Fang Ning, "Defense Policy in the New Era," *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, 46.

[204] Lieutenant Commander Yang Zhiqun, "Officer's Forum – Brown Water, Blue Water – Thoughts on Naval Theory," *Jianchuan Zhishi [Naval and Merchant Ships]*, No. 2 (8 February 1994), cited in Whiting, "The PLA and China's Threat Perceptions," 600.

[205] That being said, it is acknowledged that in August 1990 Premier Li Peng, while maintaining exclusive rights of sovereignty, agreed to pursue joint exploitation of the Spratlys with the other six claimants in the South China Sea. Notably, it did not apply to the Paracels. Ostensibly the Chinese maintained that their proposal for joint development and peaceful resolution of the Spratlys issue was designed to "prevent tension." Garver suggests the proposal was an attempt to stem the tide of diplomatic reversals Beijing had suffered since the Tiananmen massacre, the East European revolutions of 1989, and the collapse of the Soviet communist party. Equally important, he argues, was Beijing's motive of assuaging ASEAN fears of Chinese "expansionism." See Garver, "China's Push Through the South China Sea." 1015-1016.

Little has come of the Chinese proposal. Perhaps the gesture was PRC grandstanding; or, the PRC recognized that it was unlikely that any other country would agree to jointly develop because, in so doing, they would implicitly recognize Beijing's claim.

second island chains in which they could establish an effective defense commensurate with their capability (see Figure 8). The first island chain extends from the Kamchatka peninsula, the eastern edge of the Japanese islands, across the Ryukyus to Taiwan, through the Philippines, and then runs south along the eastern edge of Celebes down to the Indonesian Molucca chain.[206] "Within this 'zone of active defense,' China plans to be the dominant power."[207] The second island chain extends from the Aleutians westward to 150° East latitude where it leads south through the Bonin and Marianas groups to the eastern coast of Australia. Ultimately, the Chinese hope to include the territory within the second island chain within their orbit and, if PLA modernization fulfills expectations, within their power projection capabilities as well.[208] As James Lilley has pointed out, the geographic orientation to China's active defense strategy places it in the direct path of U.S. zones of strategic interests.[209] U.S. interests in Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, the South China Sea and its crucial sea lanes of communication are all within the first chain where China expects to be "dominant." The potential for conflicting U.S.-PRC interests in the second chain—anchored on Alaska and Australia and sitting astride U.S. possessions in Guam—where China expects to have considerable influence, is even more disconcerting.

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[206] "Introduction," *Strategic Trends in China*, 12-13. Note, the concept of first and second island chains is attributed to General Liu Huaqing, former PLAN and PLA commander.

[207] James Lilley and Richard Solomon, "Strategic Perspectives," *Strategic Trends in China*, 49.

[208] "Introduction," *Strategic Trends in China*, 13.

[209] James Lilley and Richard Solomon, "Strategic Perspectives," *Strategic Trends in China*, 51. Already, the U.S. is concerned about the PRC construction of a satellite tracking station on the South Pacific island nation of Kiribati, conveniently near the U.S. Kwajalein Missile Test Range in the Marshall Islands. One PRC publication has claimed this site has provided China "a strategic foothold in the South Pacific." See "Satellite Tracking Station in the South Pacific," *Beijing Jianchuan Zhishi [Naval and Merchant Ships]*, No. 4 (April 1998): 2, translated in FBIS-CHI-98-120.

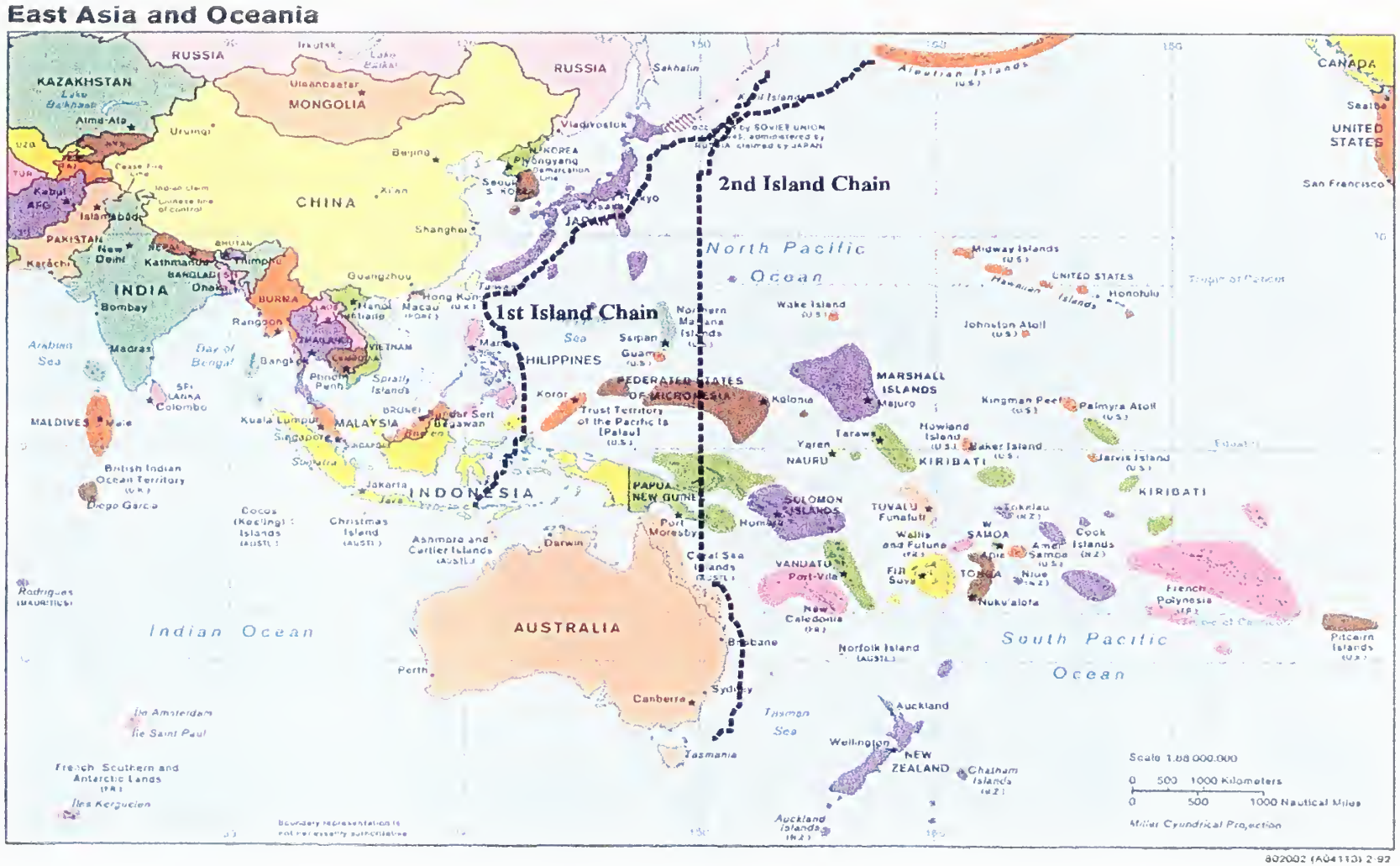

Figure 8. PRC 1st and 2nd Island Chains

Source: Map foreground obtained online at [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/ middle_east_and_asia/Easia_Oceania_92].

D. IMPLICATIONS FOR SINO-AMERICAN SECURITY RELATIONS

Sino-American relations are complicated and getting more so as the relationship deepens. To discuss their entirety in any detail is beyond the scope of this thesis. Some general points will be made, however, as germane to PRC security interests and where they may conflict with the U.S.

Despite the recent moves by China to free some well known dissidents, the ever-present lure of the Chinese market and the "New China Lobby"[210] may be winning out over the human rights activists in the shaping of U.S. foreign policy. This is not necessarily deleterious and is in fact good for continued amity between the two countries.

However, the U.S.-China relationship is tenuous, not because of Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, political freedoms, or even abutting zones of influence. Rather the overarching diametrically opposed national policies provide the biggest challenge to Sino-American relations. Perhaps the most fundamental U.S. national security strategy, as evidenced in the President's "National Security Strategy," is "to shape the international environment in ways favorable to U.S. interests." It also states that the U.S. "must be prepared and willing to use all appropriate instruments of national power to influence the action of other states and non-state actors."[211] American "engagement," "enlargement," or whatever the current parlance may be, is still nothing less than imparting U.S. influence into Chinese affairs. Even in its most benign form, U.S. engagement is inimical to the Chinese professed view of international relations. The Chinese are obsessed with avoiding as much as possible *any* influence by external actors in its decision-making-processes, or

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[210] See Bernstein's and Munro's chapter on this subject, 105-129.

[211] "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," October 1998, The White House, 12, 6.

in the decision-making-processes any other country within its perceived sphere of influence.

Thus, PRC hard-liners see the U.S. policy toward China as containment rather than engagement—containment of China's rightful power and influence in the Asia-Pacific region. On the surface this conflict may not be any different from relations between the U.S. and other countries struggling to maintain freedom of action in the globalized single-superpower system that dominates post-Cold War international relations. Yet, the hypersensitivity of the Chinese toward making decisions based on foreign pressures plus their traditional Middle Kingdom view, make the PRC-U.S. situation unique.

It is difficult to determine if the Chinese will choose to fight with the U.S. when their opposing views collide. Certainly, the imperative of economic development and domestic stability will preside over all but the most severe U.S. threats to PRC security. Even these two imperatives could become a flash point, however, as the CCP struggles to reconcile economic and ideational globalization with its desire to hold onto the reigns of power. "The perception that vital interests or national survival are involved will lead to a willingness to sacrifice whatever is necessary."[212] For now pragmatism is holding fast. Both countries are able to coexist with a cautious but warming relationship.

E. MOST LIKELY AREAS OF CONFLICT

If the case study data and analysis have provided specific areas in which the PRC has used force in the past, there are lessons which can be used to determine potential areas in which the PRC deems defensible in the future. The PRC's strategic frontier, as determined in this thesis,

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[212] Chas. W. Freeman, "An Interest-Based China Policy," *Strategic Trends in China*, 124. Note, PRC elites still consider CCP survival a prerequisite to national survival.

does not necessarily imply the PRC will seek conflict inside their zone of active defense. But it does mean that potential adversaries should be aware of Chinese interests within this sphere. Several regions stand out as prospective zones of conflict.

1. Taiwan

The threats of the PRC to use force to settle the Taiwan problem are real. Despite signs of increasing willingness to discuss the issue of unification, Taiwan remains the PRC's most likely area to engage in conflict. Taiwan, after Macao is returned in 1999, is regarded by many on the mainland as the last remaining scar of their century of humiliation. Indeed, the CCP has pointed to reunification of the motherland as its most important issue. There exist at least five thresholds which would impel the PRC to use force including: (1) Taiwanese declaration of independence, (2) Taiwanese refusal to negotiate over the issue, (3) social and political disorder on Taiwan, (4) interference of Taiwan's domestic affairs by another country, and (5) Taiwan's deployment of nuclear weapons.[213] The most volatile of these and one that would perhaps engulf the region in a larger conflict than just between the two Chinese "entities" is number four—the possibility of the U.S. getting involved and using the Japanese Islands as staging bases for operations against the People's Republic. Any Japanese involvement in a PRC-U.S.-Taiwan conflict would risk a regional conflagration.

An even more frightening scenario would be North Korea hoping to gain an advantage through military operations against a preoccupied United States. Albeit an attempt to assuage Taiwanese fears and justify their position, Beijing has stated that their threat of force against

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[213] Wen-Cheng Lin, "Will Beijing Use Force on Taiwan?," in *The Chinese PLA's Perception of an Invasion of Taiwan*, ed. Peter Kien-Hong Yu (New York: Contemporary U.S.-Asia Research Institute, 1996), 169-170.

Taiwan is "not directed against our compatriots in Taiwan but against the schemes of foreign forces to interfere with China's reunification...."[214] Whatever the reason, the People's Republic has made it clear with both past and present actions that they will not hesitate to use force "at all costs" to protect their territorial integrity and sovereignty over a Taiwan that has yet to see communist control.

The PRC recognizes the dilemma and danger of using force against Taiwan. The dilemma arises in the fact that the CCP has based much of its legitimacy on the reunification and eventual return of the island. The Party has, in effect, backed itself into a corner. Any activation of the above mentioned five tripwires compels the CCP to initiate conflict or lose legitimacy and perhaps their Mandate of Heaven as well. The party is still equated with the state and a diminution or fall of the Party means a similar fall of the PRC itself. However, to use force will probably result in the virtual destruction of Taiwan's economy. If it were included, Taiwan would be the PRC's wealthiest province. Destruction of Taiwan's economy would significantly set back the PRC's economic development. Sanctions, disruption of trade and investment, and capital flight would also hurt Beijing. The possibility of facing foreign intervention would give the PRC the choice of escalating the war or "losing" Taiwan altogether. Lastly, the PRC must consider the implications of letting Taiwan "get away" vis-à-vis its other provinces with separatist tendencies such as Xinjiang and Tibet. The first one to fall could result in a Chinese domino effect and virtual disintegration of the People's Republic.

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[214] Jiang Zemin, "Continue to Promote the Reunification of the Motherland," speech on 30 January 1995. Obtained online at [http://members.aol.com/mehampton/PRC/JZM.1.30.95.txt]. Note, this speech is Jiang's eight point proposal to Taiwan.

2. The Maritime Frontier

The chances of war within the Maritime Frontier are perhaps only second to that of Taiwan. With the shift from a continental focus, the PRC has placed a significant strategic interest in the maritime region. With interests come potential for conflicts. First is the South China Sea. The PRC has already demonstrated its willingness to use force in the Paracels and the Spratlys and will likely do so again. If the claims of establishment of a PRC dominant zone at the first island chain are to be believed, then PLAN presence in these waters should increase. Indeed, in January 1996 the Philippine Navy reported that Chinese vessels exchanged fire in a ninety minute gun battle with a Philippine gunboat twelve nautical miles off Campones Island, only seventy-two miles northwest of Manila. Beijing has denied that its vessels had strayed into Philippine waters or traded fire with the Philippine gunboat. Manila decided not to file a diplomatic protest, but the alleged skirmish was the first violent incident between the two countries since their navies confronted each other near Mischief Reef.[215] In a shrewd conciliatory move that was bound to be rejected, Beijing offered Filipino fisherman use of their "shelter and weather-tracking facilities" on Mischief Reef. Manila declined saying "we refuse to be tempted. We want it back, it's ours."[216]

In late October 1998, Manila protested PRC "reinforcing their structures in Mischief Reef." More than 100 Chinese are building large concrete barracks and possibly a pier capable of handling large vessels. PLAN escort of construction vessels plus the military utility which a large

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[215] Source online at [http://www.taiwandc.org/hst-9596.htm].

[216] See "Disputed reef 'to be opened,'" *SCMP-IE*, 31 July 1998, and "Manila turns down offer on Spratlys," *SCMP-IE*, 5 August 1998.

pier would provide, "showed 'there are other intentions on the part of the Chinese.'" The Philippine Defense Secretary described Chinese actions in the Spratlys as a "creeping invasion."[217] In response, Manila increased it naval patrols "to discourage...Chinese vessels" from entering the area.[218]

Vietnam protested Chinese research vessels operating in the Spratlys in April 1998. The Chinese countered with allegations of new Vietnamese "installations" in the Spratlys. However, both sides still claim they are committed to settling their land and sea border disputes through ongoing negotiations by 2000.[219]

The vast oil deposits projected to lie under the seabed have yet to be discovered, but it appears that natural gas is present in significant quantities. Thus, in addition to the Chinese claims of sovereignty and national space, the economic potential still has a luring appeal. If we are to believe Garver, the value of Chinese sovereignty in the South China Sea has shifted from geostrategic to economic.[220] The economic allure of the region has perhaps truncated Chinese assertive actions. Fear of economic retaliation and the inaccessibility of resources in a bellicose environment must be a concern for Beijing. However, as Garver noted even in 1992, "Because

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[217] See "Manila fury at new Spratly 'intrusion,'" *SCMP-IE*, 6 November 1998; "Memo on Spratlys mission delayed," *SCMP-IE*, 10 November 1998; and "Chinese Building on Disputed Reef," *The Associated Press*, 11 November 1998. Note, the second article indicated that the Chinese had notified the Philippine Embassy in Beijing of its intentions to repair the facilities two weeks in advance. Manila acknowledged, however, that due to a "computer glitch" within its embassy, it did not receive the notice until after construction had started.

[218] Oliver Teves, "Philippines Increasing Navy Patrols," *The Associated Press*, 10 November 1998.

[219] See "Vietnam claims Beijing ship violated territorial waters," *SCMP-IE*, 21 May 1998; "Hanoi denies troops seized Spratlys reef," *SCMP-IE*, 10 September 1998; and "Beijing, Hanoi 'still committed' to year 2000 deadlines for border disputes," *SCMP-IE*, 30 September 1998.

[220] Garver, "China's Push Through the South China Sea," 1000.

each individual step has been so small and the costs of opposing China have seemed so large, the inclination of both regional and extra-regional countries has been to acquiesce."[221] Nevertheless, the honeymoon is over for the Chinese in the South China Sea. They can no longer expect the world to be caught off guard over their actions in the Spratlys. However, this in itself will not deter further aggressive moves by the PRC. They will continue to have the PLA take advantage of other claimants' weaknesses and seize opportunities as they arise. More importantly, the significance of Chinese presence extending deep into Southeast Asia will, *ipso facto*, make them a Southeast Asian nation and further complicate the issue of overseas Chinese in states such as Malaysia, Indonesia and even Singapore.[222] Subsequently, the question of what really is Greater China may have to be addressed as well.

Another maritime issue, the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands dispute, is contentious but presently recognized by both parties as not necessarily worth instigating conflict.[223] The Japanese currently hold these small islands in the East China Sea, but this has not stopped nationalistic groups within each country from asserting their government's claim. Danger exists in belligerent individuals forcing their governments' hand in making the islands an issue.

The PRC will carefully regulate the chances for conflict that exist on China's Maritime Frontier. As long as they are credible and not overwhelmed by another country, PRC claims and postures of sovereignty will be incrementally acted upon and limited in strength. No real

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[221] Ibid., 1028.

[222] Ibid.

[223] In their 1978 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, both sides agreed to defer discussion indefinitely. See Whiting, "The PLA and China's Threat Perceptions," 604. For a Chinese perspective of the Diaoyutai dispute see their U.S. embassy's statement online at [http://www.china-embassy.org/Cgi-Bin/Press.pl?236].

enforcement of PRC sovereignty and territorial integrity can be acted upon until force projection capabilities significantly improve. The economic and strategic gains must outweigh the risks before any high profile claims are acted upon by force.

3. The Eastern Frontier

Senior Chinese security analysts see Japan as the PRC's most serious long-range military threat.[224] This perception is based on the assumption that Japan will be China's main rival to regional dominance in the next century. China has always resented Japan's relative success against the Western imperial powers and despised the Japanese for becoming a member of the imperial club partially at China's expense. However, in the near future, the main threat China sees in Japan is its alliance with the U.S. Japan serves as the double antagonist of first aiding and abetting attempted U.S. hegemony in the region; and second, containing the rise in Chinese power and influence in the region. Simply put, Japan is a base of operations for non-Asian influence in the region and a bulwark against spreading Chinese influence. The Chinese like neither.

In addition to the Diaoyutai Islands dispute, there are several areas of discord that could lead to conflict. These include Chinese apprehensions about an expanding role for the Japanese Self Defense Forces,[225] especially in the event of U.S. conflict in the region. Recent intimations of a joint U.S.-Japan development of a theater missile defense system also concerns Beijing.[226] The

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[224] Whiting, "The PLA and China's Threat Perceptions," 609.

[225] This shift toward an enhanced role of the Japanese military in promoting and preserving the regional stability stemmed largely from the April 1996 Clinton-Hashimoto summit and the subsequent Defense Guidelines Review completed by both nations in September 1997. For the specifics of the agreement, see "Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security – Alliance for the 21st Century," obtained online at [http://club.jpn.net/infomofa/ju/security/security.html]. The author is thankful to Dan Evans for this information.

[226] See "Beijing rains fury on defence umbrella," *SCMP-IE*, 30 October 1998.

Japanese are concerned with Chinese moves in the South China sea which could disrupt the flow of incoming oil from the Persian Gulf to Japan. U.S. involvement in a Sino-Japanese dispute, the relative weakness of the PLA compared to Japanese Self Defense Forces, and the disastrous economic impact, would all likely inhibit PRC initiation of conflict. However, if Japan somehow became involved in the Taiwan issue, PRC sensibilities might be too offended not to react with force. Ultimately, the possibility of a Sino-Japanese conflict is small but may grow as Chinese power and influence expand.

The Korean peninsula has been within China's strategic frontier for centuries, even millennia, and continues to be of vital national interest. The situation has not changed with the decline of North Korea and the concomitant decline in the PRC's partnership with that state. The Chinese are still concerned about a post-reunification scenario in which they have diminished influence on the peninsula. One analyst has observed that "China believes that the Republic of Korea has 'won' and China is now trying to implement policies that will protect its vital interests."[227] Subsequently, since the 1980s the PRC has been making friendly gestures toward the South Koreans who have been more than happy to reciprocate and drive a wedge between Pyongyang and its biggest (and only) ally. Beijing's aim is not only to increase their influence on the entire peninsula but also diminish and eventually, minimize U.S. presence. The chances of the PRC becoming involved in conflict on the peninsula are relatively low and is contingent upon a post-unification scenario in which their perceived influence is superceded by an overbearing U.S. presence.

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[227] Bonnie Glaser and Ronald N. Montaperto, "Northeast Asia," *Strategic Trends in China*, 118.

4. The Southern Frontier

The PRC's southern land borders are secure. The Aksai Chin and NEFA regions are still in dispute but have not led to any serious crises with the Indians. However, Indian and subsequent Pakistani nuclear tests have heightened tensions on the subcontinent. The Indian Defense Minister's declaration of China as India's number one threat[228] and the murky Sino-Pakistani weapons and nuclear technology relationship combine to bring China's influence into a region that it does not necessarily wish to become embroiled. India has begun to establish its own weapons procurement ties to Russia and is keeping close tabs on PRC military modernization and development—particularly PLA ties to Burma.[229] Just as they did in 1962, however, PRC strategists will be sure to avoid entanglement in a strategically less important area (compared to the maritime realm) unless the status-quo is interrupted.

Vietnam is still within the PRC strategic frontier. Soviet usurping influence is no longer a consideration but ironically Western influence may again eventually preside over the Chinese historical legacy. The Chinese will be careful not to press the Vietnamese too hard for fear of driving them into the not so open arms of the West. Like the maritime disputes, Sino-Vietnamese continental border disputes hope to be resolved by 2000. As long as Vietnam struggles with economic development, does not again seek a strategic ally other than China, or again seek regional hegemony, the Sino-Vietnamese relationship will remain civil. These are big conditions,

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[228] Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes comments created quite a stir, especially since they came just weeks prior to India's May 1998 nuclear tests. For somewhat of a backpedal but not retraction from his original statements, see "Critic seeks friendship with 'enemy No 1,'" *SCMP-IE*, 25 July 1998.

[229] See Rahul Bedi's two articles, "India and Russia to sign pact," and "China's modernisation is a 'great concern' for India." *JDW*, 14 October 1998, 6, 14.

however. Any attempt by Vietnam to upset the status-quo or challenge Beijing in the South China Sea could result in a deterioration of relations and perhaps even conflict.

5. The Northern Frontier

For the moment, the Chinese Northern Frontier is relatively stable. However, the Chinese amity toward Russia may not be as deep as some would suggest.[230] At the end of the 20th century there is a symbiotic relationship between the two powers founded on arms sales (Russia to PRC) and both state's preoccupation with, and anxiety over, separatist movements. When the PLA is no longer dependent upon Russian high-tech weaponry and the PRC can indigenously produce or find alternative weapon sources, there may well be a Chinese turn away from Russia and a PRC reassessment of the considerable irredentist claims against Russia in Northeast Asia. Traditional grievances dating from Russia's imperialist policies in Asia but also the ideological and emotional animosities that linger from the Sino-Soviet split serve to hinder any real deepening of the relationship. It is essentially a tactical rather than strategic relationship.

Continued Russian weakness may provide Beijing the opportunity to press irredentist claims in the Maritime Provinces (which constitute the largest remaining area of Chinese "lost territories") or elsewhere along the lengthy former Soviet borders shared with the PRC. The tempering factor to the PRC using force or the threat of force to assert such claims is Moscow's continued preponderance of nuclear capability and their 1993 defense doctrine which allows for the first use of nuclear weapons.[231] Nevertheless, historic PRC military opportunism, when

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[230] See as yet unpublished paper by C.G. Jacobsen, "Russia-China: the new 'strategic partnership,'" June 1998. Note, this paper will be published in a forthcoming *European Security*.

[231] Ibid., 4.

conditions are propitious, provides enough evidence to caution against ruling out any scenario in which the PRC might become more assertive vis-à-vis its irredentist claims against Russia.

VI. CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to discern patterns in PRC uses of force to attain foreign policy objectives. First, however, an attempt was made to determine if there was an essence within pre-communist Chinese history which favored or disdained the use of force to solve disputes. Conventional wisdom says that it is the latter. Scholars such as John Fairbank theorized, based on a Confucian and later Mencian tradition, that China had a pacifist tradition which eschewed the use of force. This Confucian-Mencian Paradigm holds that the Chinese perceived the use of force only as a last resort. Force was used primarily for defensive purposes with the occasional exception of punitive wars. When it was necessary, it was most often used defensively in a limited, controlled manner. Proponents of the Confucian-Mencian paradigm maintain that it prevails in Chinese thinking even today. The Chinese would like the world to believe this view as well.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, an alternative view began to emerge. Concurrent with the rise of the comprehensive national strength of the People's Republic, a reassessment of the conventional view toward the Chinese use of force led to the development of a *parabellum* strategic culture viewpoint. The *parabellum* paradigm asserts that Chinese culture was historically not averse to using force to solve disputes and in fact sought resolution via military means when conditions were favorable. It was argued that China was exceptionally flexible in its application of force and was willing to use accommodationist strategies until conditions were ripe for more assertive postures. This thesis argued that the pacifist-*parabellum* cultures coexisted and alternated predominance in a rhythmic manner as the strength of the Chinese nation ebbed and

flowed with the dynastic cycle. Today, embodied in the China Threat Theory, the fear exists that, as Chinese national strength grows, so too will its propensity to use force to bully any opposition and fulfill its aspirations of great power status.

While the literature is relatively sparse with respect to establishing patterns in PRC crisis and conflict behavior, several conclusions have stood the test of time. Alan Whiting's emphasis on timing and pauses in crisis and conflict has proven to be accurate. Incrementalism has been a recurrent theme of PRC crisis and conflict behavior. Likewise, his determination that the PRC is not averse to taking risks against a far superior military power, even in the face of war, has also endured. The 1995-1996 Taiwan Straits Crisis reiterated this point.

Gerald Segal stressed a PRC tradition of pragmatic, at times opportunistic, flexibility in the face of changing threats. Based on broad guidelines, he did not find any significant pattern of PRC crisis and conflict management. His examination of PRC uses of force leads one, though not necessarily Segal himself, to conclude the PLA has been used as an offensive tool more often than not. The case study analysis provided here confirms this view—none of the PRC uses of force to attain foreign policy objectives were within Core China.

Iain Alastair Johnston's use of MID data revealed the PRC had a greater propensity to use force, especially in territorial disputes, than other states. The data presented in this thesis confirms this view and carries the proposition one step further. Contrary to the theory that territorial disputes will abate as the state increases in age, there has been a fairly consistent, if not increasing tendency of the PRC to engage in territorial disputes as the Chinese have expanded their frontiers and asserted additional irredentist claims.

None of the works reviewed, however, sufficiently analyzed PRC perceptions of

sovereignty and their national strategic frontiers with their willingness to use force. China's national territory has always been in a state of flux, expanding and contracting with the strength of the nation. It was demonstrated that the Chinese, indeed Asian, view of spatial boundaries led to ambiguity over what in fact was the territorial extent of the Middle Kingdom. The collision of Western political theory and Asian political practices led to a blurring of the interrelationship of suzerainty and sovereignty vis-à-vis influence and control that, in the minds of the PRC elite, still exist today. Thus not only was Chinese and later PRC control expected within the recognized borders of China without foreign interference, but they also expected predominating Chinese influence in areas that have historically been under the suzerainty of the Chinese people. Moreover, areas that have traditionally only been strongly influenced by Chinese culture are also expected to fall within the PRC orbit. As the strength of the Chinese nation expands and contracts, so does its definition and application of its influence as well as its concomitant strategic frontier. This thesis demonstrated that the PRC has been willing to use force to ensure this primacy of influence.

But to the Chinese, PLA actions in these regions have been justified as reunification of the Motherland or fighting off imperialists and hegemonists. Their anxiety and mistrust of foreign intrusion and interference are predominantly based on the treatment China received from the imperial powers during their century of humiliation and are best exemplified by their obsession with sovereignty. This work identified three areas in which the Chinese asserted their sovereignty and influence: Core China, Greater China, and regionally. The case study pattern analysis demonstrated that the second and third areas have provided the impetus for conflict more than any other. Conflicts involving sovereignty within Greater China were essentially aimed at

reunification.[232] Conflicts involving influence were regional. Thus, it was demonstrated that a dual concept of PRC sovereignty exists that extends from territorial to influential. The latter concept implies an assertion of Chinese influence in regions *outside* the territorial borders of the PRC. Exactly where this perceived sphere of influence has been at any given time is difficult to establish. But as the strength of the nation allowed, regions such as Tibet, Chinese Turkestan, Korea, Vietnam, and elsewhere fell within the Chinese and later PRC orbit.

The analyses of PRC conflicts confirms these points, and alarmingly perhaps, signal a rising tide of expansion as the strength of the PRC grows and opportunities arise. The second research question determined if any lessons from previous uses of force by the PRC can aid in recognizing future uses of the PLA for foreign policy objectives. The second research question was analyzed vis-à-vis PLA modernization, which has received renewed emphasis. Technology and power projection are emphasized in the PLA's new force structure. Together with the doctrine of active defense, this bodes for a PLA which seeks to meet the enemy at a distance or on the periphery.

Aspirations for an advanced force capable of making this doctrine credible do not ensure success. Nevertheless, PRC military modernization remains a regional concern. This work identified where and how far PRC strategic interests might extend in the region. Certainly, there has been a shift in PRC focus from a continental to a maritime frontier. PRC official pronouncements and unofficial but sanctioned articles are clear in stating that a Chinese expansion within the maritime frontier is needed to secure living space and economic resources. Two

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[232] The Sino-Indian conflict was categorized as Greater China because it was essentially an attempt by India to seize previously "reunified" portions of Tibet and disrupt the status quo within the region.

defensive island chain perimeters have been proposed as a demarcation of Chinese control and interests. As the situation permits, Beijing will defend this territory as it is perceived to contribute to the national comprehensive strength.

As PRC strength grows, Sino-American interests are surely going to collide. The diametrically opposed national policies of PRC sovereignty versus American "shaping the international environment" will continue to plague the two countries' relations. As suggested, however, the Chinese will be pragmatic and will not upset economic development which, along with domestic stability, will remain the top priorities of the CCP.

Nevertheless, many sources of potential PRC conflict exist. Taiwan remains the most volatile and contentious issue. Most likely, the PRC will back up its threats of force should it perceive Taiwan as carrying its "splittist" activities too far. Only a slightly reduced chance for conflict exists on China's maritime frontier where the territorial disputes over the South China Sea continue. The PRC continental frontiers are relatively secure. As long as the Koreans, Indians, Vietnamese, and Russians do not attempt to upset the status quo, the PRC will likely not instigate conflict in these areas. Even the considerable irredentist claims against Russia in Northeast Asia will not be pressed as long as the PLA remains dependent upon Russian military technology.

Finally, it must be said that this work is not an attempt to validate the China Threat Theory. Quite the contrary, it is hoped that this thesis will help develop a greater understanding of the PRC's decision to use force based on national interests and trends in previous PRC crisis and conflict management. In that sense, this thesis' use of historical analysis was not for predictive value, but for its ability to provide insights into the strategic context in which the PRC functions. This may help our understanding of Chinese policies. Indeed, many PRC sovereignty

claims and territorial interests are legitimate and should not be viewed from an emotional or nationalist perspective. Rather, we should analyze PRC interests and their willingness to use force to protect those interests from a position of greater understanding of where they have been and where they intend to go as a country. If we know China's interests, we can better calculate when and where they will choose altercation over accommodation. If we understand the manifestations of their historic tendencies, we will be better able to gauge present and future actions.

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