

The Use of *Shih* in Chinese Operational Art

A Monograph

by

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

2016

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 26-05-2016 | 2. REPORT TYPE SAMS Monograph | 3. DATES COVERED (From - To) June 2015-May 2016 |
|--|---|---|

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Use of <i>Shih</i> in Chinese Operational Art | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER |
| | 5b. GRANT NUMBER |
| | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER |

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 6. AUTHOR(S) Major Timothy Iannacone | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER |
| | 5e. TASK NUMBER |
| | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER |

| | |
|--|--|
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) School of Advanced Military Studies 201 Reynolds Ave. Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301 | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT |
|--|--|

| | |
|---|---|
| 9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301 | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) |
| | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) |

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT As China's influence on international affairs has continued to grow, more and more people have become concerned about the intentions behind Chinese actions. Several theories offer potential insights into the reasons behind Chinese actions in places like the South China Sea. *Shih* is one of those concepts. *Shih* is a holistic idea that refers to the advantage gained from manipulation of context. This study seeks to determine whether or not the concept of *shih* influenced the operational art conducted by political leaders in the People's Republic of China and commanders in the People's Liberation Army. Four characteristics help determine whether or not *shih* was a factor in a given conflict. These include leaders seeking to manipulate context, build troop morale through context, use an indirect approach, and exploit propensity within a given situation. This study examined two case studies including the Chinese winter offensives in the Korean War and the Sino Indian War and concludes that *shih* did influence Chinese leaders as they conducted operational art. *Shih* offers a lens through which to interpret future Chinese actions. Additionally, *shih* provides a contextual approach to operational design that would be a useful addition to US military doctrine and education.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
People's Liberation Army, PLA, Operational Art, *Shih*, Sun Tzu, Propensity, Complexity, Korean War, Sino-Indian War, Peng Dehuai, Mao Tse-Tung.

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|--|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES 54 | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
| a. REPORT Unclassified | b. ABSTRACT Unclassified | c. THIS PAGE Unclassified | | | 19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 913-758-3300 |

Monograph Approval Page

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Abstract

The Use of *Shih* in Chinese Operational Art by MAJ Timothy Iannacone, 54 pages.

As China's influence on international affairs has continued to grow, more and more people have become concerned about the intentions behind Chinese actions. Several theories offer potential insights into the reasons behind Chinese actions in places like the South China Sea. *Shih* is one of those concepts. *Shih* is a holistic idea that refers to the advantage gained from manipulation of context. This study seeks to determine whether or not the concept of *shih* influenced the operational art conducted by political leaders in the People's Republic of China and commanders in the People's Liberation Army. Four characteristics help determine whether or not *shih* was a factor in a given conflict. These include leaders seeking to manipulate context, build troop morale through context, use an indirect approach, and exploit propensity within a given situation. This study examined two case studies including the Chinese winter offensives in the Korean War and the Sino Indian War and concludes that *shih* did influence Chinese leaders as they conducted operational art. *Shih* offers a lens through which to interpret future Chinese actions. Additionally, *shih* provides a contextual approach to operational design that would be a useful addition to US military doctrine and education.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my monograph director, Dr. Michael Mihalka, for taking me on as a student and for his patient mentorship during the writing process. Additionally, his knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture and history were invaluable. I would also like to thank my seminar leader, COL Walter Schulte, for his feedback and for his continual efforts to develop me into a better officer. Dr. Gary Bjorge and Timothy L. Thomas provided excellent advice and resources that helped to focus my research.

I am, as always, indebted to my incredible wife for her love and support. She is a continual source of encouragement, and I cannot imagine taking on a project such as this one without her alongside me. I am also grateful to my son, Caleb, and daughter, Emma, for the joy that they have brought me.

Finally, I would like to thank Christ, my Lord, for helping me be a better officer, father, husband, and follower of him.

Acronyms

| | |
|------|-----------------------------------|
| A2AD | Anti-Access Area Denial |
| COG | Center of Gravity |
| CMC | Central Military Commission (PRC) |
| MDMP | Military Decision Making Process |
| NEFA | North East Frontier Area |
| PLA | People's Liberation Army |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNC | United Nations Command |
| US | United States |

Introduction

He who exploits the strategic advantage (*shih*) sends his men into battle like rolling logs and boulders. It is the nature of logs and boulders that on flat ground, they are stationary, but on steep ground, they roll; the square in shape tends to stop but the round tends to roll.

—Sunzi

The Chinese mind, it appears, has been taught by its philosophical and cultural base to first locate the disposition or setting of reality before focusing on a solution to an actual problem at hand.

—Timothy L. Thomas

The rise of China to the role of regional hegemon has created serious concern over their intentions. The challenge of interpreting Chinese actions, such as land reclamation in the South China Sea, has exacerbated these concerns and created a great deal of consternation among neighboring countries and in the United States.¹ If the United States is to correctly interpret China's actions, it must first understand Chinese thought. The concept of *shih* provides a lens through which to view Chinese actions.² A concept with ancient origins including Sunzi, *shih* influences the way that one views strategy, tactics, and operational art. However, Sunzi lived over

¹ Simon Denyer, "By 2030, South China Sea Will Be 'virtually a Chinese Lake,' Study Warns," *Washington Post* (January 20, 2016), 1, accessed February 16, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/01/20/by-2030-south-china-sea-will-be-virtually-a-chinese-lake-u-s-study-warns/>; David Ignatius, "The U.S. Is Heading Toward a Dangerous Showdown with China," *The Washington Post* (March 15, 2016), accessed March 28, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-us-is-heading-toward-a-dangerous-showdown-with-china/2016/03/15/c835a1b4-eaf2-11e5-b0fd-073d5930a7b7_story.html; David Lai, *The United States and China in Power Transition*, Strategic Studies Institute Book (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011), ix-x; William H. Mott and Jae Chang Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture: Shih vs. Li* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1-2.

² There are two predominant spellings of *shih*, which are *shih* and *shi*. This study will use the "*shih*" spelling unless quoting directly from a source that spells it "*shi*."

2,500 years ago, and the question is whether or not this concept has influenced or will influence the way that the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) conducts operational art.³

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not the concept of *shih* is still a factor in operational art as conducted by the PLA. The hypothesis of this study is that *the concept of shih is an important factor that influences the PLA's operational art*. Since the beginning of the People's Republic of China, the PLA has fought in several large scale conflicts. While many of the PLA's actions during these conflicts would seem logical to any student of warfare, other behaviors seem strange. *Shih* could provide a possible explanation. This study seeks to determine whether or not the concept of *shih* influenced the way that Chinese political and military leaders conducted operational art during these conflicts.

It is important to point out that this study does not attempt to determine whether or not the PLA conducted operations using the concept of *shih* exactly according to Sunzi or any other Chinese military theorist or philosopher.⁴ In contrast, this study seeks to determine whether or not the broad concept had an influence on PLA operations. This study defines characteristics of *shih* and analyzes whether or not in Chinese political and military leaders exhibited those characteristics as they conducted operational art. The presence or absence of these characteristics indicates whether or not *shih* had an influence on PLA operations. A popular proverb captures this idea: "History never repeats itself, but it rhymes."⁵ Therefore, this study attempts to determine whether or not the concept of *shih* "rhymes" in PLA operations.

³ Sunzi, *Sun-Tzu: The Art of Warfare in Classics of Ancient China* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 118-122.

⁴ Ibid., 118-121.

⁵ Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred R. Shapiro, *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), accessed March 26, 2015, <https://books.google.com/>

The concept of *shih* is difficult to explain in a western context because it combines a “cluster of meanings” into one idea.⁶ According to Roger T. Ames, the meaning of *shih* falls into the into the following clusters: “1. ‘aspect,’ ‘situation,’ ‘circumstances,’ ‘conditions,’ 2. ‘disposition,’ ‘configuration,’ ‘outward shape,’ 3. ‘force,’ ‘influence,’ ‘momentum,’ ‘authority,’ 4. ‘strategic advantage,’ ‘purchase.’”⁷ In order to better understand the concept of *shih*, one must resist an oversimplified definition. William H. Mott IV and Jae Chang Kim point out that while military and political thinkers both considered *shih* to be a central idea in military affairs, they did not explicitly define the term. Instead they opted to explain the idea of *shih* through metaphor.⁸ One of the more famous of these metaphors is the ability of “cascading water” to move boulders.⁹

A way to conceive of *shih* is to use a general term while, at the same time, keeping the nuanced meanings in mind.¹⁰ in his translation of Sun Tzu, Ames translates *shih* as “strategic advantage.”¹¹ He also explains the more nuanced meanings of the term. *Shih* can refer to one’s own disposition in relation to context, viewed from an internal perspective. Viewed from an external perspective, it can refer to “that set of conditions that is defining one’s situation.”¹² From a temporal perspective, “*shih* is the tension of forces and the momentum that brings one position in immediate contact with another.”¹³ Finally, in order to synthesize these meanings, one must

⁶ Roger Ames, “Introduction” from *Sun-Tzu: The Art of Warfare in Classics of Ancient China* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 73.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁸ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 15.

⁹ Sunzi, *Sun-Tzu: The Art of Warfare*, 120.

¹⁰ Timothy L. Thomas, *The Dragon’s Quantum Leap* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2009), 253-262.

¹¹ Ames, “Introduction,” 71.

¹² *Ibid.*, 81-82.

¹³ *Ibid.*

understand that, to the Chinese, time must reference space and space must reference time in order to fully explain both space and time.¹⁴ Therefore one must understand the concept of *shih*, or strategic advantage, in terms of both spatial and temporal dispositions. This study provides a more detailed description of *shih* in the literature review.

The concept of *shih* is important for several reasons. First, it provides potential insight into the relationship between the United States and China as well as insight into China's strategic behavior. The National Security Strategy states, "We will closely monitor China's military modernization and expanding presence in Asia, while seeking ways to reduce the risk of misunderstanding or miscalculation."¹⁵ Our desire to avoid miscalculation make it imperative that we understand the true meaning and intention behind their actions. It is not enough to simply understand what they are doing or even how they are doing it. We must understand why they are conducting specific actions and how those actions relate to their broader strategy.

An understanding of the concept of *shih* also provides an explanation, albeit a partial one, of recent Chinese actions, specifically actions in cyberspace and in the South China Sea. Understanding how the Chinese tend to think about strategy provides an interpretive lens through which to view Chinese policies and actions. The United States can use this lens to develop likely interpretations of Chinese actions and to rule out incorrect interpretations. *Shih* is one key component of this interpretive lens. While obviously not the only component to this interpretive lens, it is an important factor in Chinese decision making. If the United States is to understand the elusive "why" behind Chinese actions, it must comprehend the unique way that the Chinese view strategy, specifically how they view the world in relation to *shih*.

¹⁴ Ames, "Introduction," 81-82.

¹⁵ Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), 24.

Another reason for the need to understand *shih* is to enhance our own strategic and operational capability. According to Dima Adamsky,

A national cognitive style is one element in the cultural mosaic that shapes a state's strategic behavior and constitutes the ideational foundation of its military innovation. Empirical evidence gives ground to assume that experts in the same profession from different cultures think differently about military innovation and produce various types of doctrinal outcomes from the same technological discontinuity.¹⁶

He states that the United States generally has a strong tendency toward the use of a “logical-analytical cognitive style.”¹⁷ The problem with this particular cognitive style is that it leads the observer to focus solely on the object of a phenomenon or on a future event while ignoring the larger context of that object or event.¹⁸ By understanding the concept of *shih* and how to employ it strategically and operationally, the United States will be able to better relate specific events and actions within their broader context instead of focusing only on the object or action.

This study explains the concept of *shih* and applies that concept to two historical cases studies to determine whether or not *shih* influenced the way that Chinese political and military leaders conducted operational art. This study contains four parts: a literature review, methodology, analysis of two case studies, and conclusions and recommendations. The review of available literature provides an examination of the literature pertaining to the idea of *shih* in reference to the operational art. The literature review also provides a detailed description of the concept of *shih* and how it applies to the Chinese understanding of the operational art. The study then uses this insight into *shih* to construct a methodology for qualitatively analyzing Chinese operations. Using this methodology, this study selects and analyzes two case studies in order to

¹⁶ Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors On the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

determine the importance of *shih* in Chinese operational art. Finally, this study provides conclusions on the concept of *shih*, its importance in Chinese operational art, recommendations for interpreting current and future Chinese operational actions, and recommendations for incorporating aspects of *shih* into the US military.

Literature Review

This study focuses on literature in three categories. The first category of literature is writings, both ancient and more recent, that provide a definition and an understanding of the concept of *shih* from cultural, philosophical, and military perspectives. The second category is PLA military history, which provides examples of how Chinese commanders conceived of and used operational art during various conflicts. The third category of literature used in this study includes writings that analyze the Chinese use of the concept of *shih* in operational art and strategy.

First, it is important to look at literature that helps define the concept of *shih*, specifically those that deal with the political and military uses of the concept. Sun Tzu's *The Art of Warfare* deals with the concept of *shih* in chapter five as well as in other places in the text. Sun Tzu uses several metaphors to convey the concept of *shih* including that the combination of musical notes, the release of a crossbow, rolling logs on steep ground, and boulders "rolling down a steep ravine."¹⁹ Sun Tzu also provides nuance to the nature of *shih*. He states that *shih* is not fixed and that one must use terrain to "make the most of strategic advantage (*shih*)."²⁰

Roger Ames' introduction to *The Art of Warfare* provides insight into the use of the concept of *shih* in Chinese thought in general and in Sun Tzu's *The Art of Warfare* in particular. In his translation of *The Art of Warfare*, Ames use the term "strategic disposition" to translate the

¹⁹ Sunzi, *Sun-Tzu*, 118-121.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 127, 200.

word *shih*.²¹ However, in his introduction he points out that one word in English cannot bring out the depth of meaning encapsulated in the term *shih*. Of particular relevance to this study is Ames' use of a "cluster of meanings" to help readers understand the concept of *shih*. However, it is important to note that Ames is describing *shih* in broad terms for the purpose of understanding Sun Tzu's use of the term in *The Art of Warfare*.²² Therefore, it is possible, even likely, that the PLA's use of the concept of *shih* will differ slightly from Sun Tzu's more ancient use of the concept.

Many other authors and military leaders have sought to define *shih*. Commenting on Sun Tzu's explanation of *shih*, Dr. Gary Bjorge describes *shih* as, "the sense of potential energy in a situation and the existence of momentum and force."²³ General Tao Hanzhang explains the positional aspect of *shih* stating that it is "the strategically advantageous posture before a battle that enables it to have a flexible, mobile, and changeable position during a campaign."²⁴ Ralph Sawyer states, "Thus it appears that two equally important factors are integrated by this concept, and they should therefore be expressed by any translation. First, the strategic advantage conveyed by superior position, and second, the power of the forces involved."²⁵ In his translation of Sun Tzu he uses the term "strategic configurations of power." Additionally, Sawyer points out that *shih* does not refer to absolute power but to comparative power.²⁶

²¹ Ames, "Introduction," 71.

²² *Ibid.*, 71-82.

²³ Gary J. Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy: Operational Art in the Chinese PLA's Huai Hai Campaign* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2003), 58.

²⁴ Hanzhang Tao, *Sun Tzu's Art of War: The Modern Chinese Interpretation*, trans. Shibing Yuan (New York: Sterling Innovation, 2000), 124.

²⁵ Ralph Sawyer, *The Art of War*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer and Mei-chün Sawyer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 146.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

Another important book is Francois Jullien's *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China*. This book is critical to gaining a broad understanding of the concept of *shih* in Chinese thought. Jullien's work is particularly important because it synthesizes concepts from multiple Chinese thinkers and disciplines; he uses the concept of *shih* to develop an understanding of Chinese thought regarding the concepts of disposition and movement. Jullien does this from the perspectives of military strategy, politics, literature, painting, and philosophy. Using these areas of study, he draws conclusions regarding a view of reality and way of thinking that is uniquely Chinese.²⁷

While Jullien's work is very important to this study, his book is not without limitations. The main problem with using *The Propensity of Things* to interpret PLA operations is that the book deals almost exclusively with pre-nineteenth century sources. Much has occurred in China in the last century with the integration of communism into Chinese society, and Jullien's book does not discuss the impact of this integration on the Chinese way of thinking. Therefore, while Jullien's work is integral to understanding the cultural and philosophical roots of *shih*, it falls short of explaining the more recent Chinese inclusion of communism into their political system. Specifically related to this study, *The Propensity of Things* will provide a lens through which to view PLA actions during the last 70 years with respect to the concept of *shih*. However, it cannot be the only tool in analyzing the PLA's use of *shih* in its operational art.²⁸

Another important book with regard to the concept of *shih* is *Military Orientalism* by Patrick Porter. While Porter does not deal with the specific concept of *shih*, he provides a framework for understanding the impact that culture has on individuals. Porter offers three cautions that are relevant to this study. The first is the caution against the idea that culture itself is

²⁷ François Jullien, *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 11-18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

a static phenomenon. He states, “Culture is an ambiguous repertoire of competing ideas that can be selected, instrumentalised, and manipulated, instead of a clear script for action.”²⁹ The second caution Porter provides has to do with the relationship between culture and warfare. He states that we must not view people as “prisoners of culture,” driven to decisions based almost solely on their cultural background.³⁰ In Porter’s view, when different cultures collide in war, they do not remain constant. As militaries fight each other, they change. He attributes this to the “reciprocal dynamic” of warfare. The third caution is the idea that everyone is the same and that “culture hardly matters.” In order to avoid misunderstanding the role of culture in war and warfare, Porter advocates the idea of “cultural realism.” He believes that “culture is malleable, giving actors greater choice.”³¹

Porter’s cautions are important to a study of the influence of *shih* because he provides boundaries on the study of culture and its relationship with war and warfare. To take the concept of *shih*, as described by Sun Tzu and other ancient Chinese writers, and use it to explain actions of commanders over two thousand years after the fact would be to ignore the evolution of Chinese society. It would also ignore the fact that as Chinese culture interacted with the enemies of China, both cultures changed. Therefore, this study strives to determine whether the broad concept of *shih* was a determining factor in PLA operational art while recognizing that the concept evolved over time.³²

The second category of literature pertinent to this study involves PLA military history. *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949* is a collection of essays edited by Mark A.

²⁹ Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War through Western Eyes*, Critical War Studies Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 13-19, 191-198.

³² Porter, *Military Orientalism*, 18-19, 191-198.

Ryan, David M. Finkelstein, and Michael McDevitt. This collection addresses several topics that are of relevance to a study on the impact of *shih* on the operational art in the PLA. One example of a topic of relevance is the relationship of fighting to politics in the PLA. Another example is the doctrinal changes in the PLA. A third area of importance is the role that Mao played in PLA actions. These topics interwoven with a commentary on Chinese military action since 1949 provide insights into the thinking and reasoning of Chinese political and military leaders.³³

Gerald Segal's *Defending China* provides additional perspective on PLA actions between 1950 and 1979. He analyzes military actions by the Chinese government through the lenses of geography, history, the Chinese communist ideology, and Chinese institutions. This book provides sound commentary on PLA activity during several important conflicts, analyzing various dimensions of each conflict.³⁴

Alan R. Millet's *The War for Korea 1950-1951: They Came from the North* is an extremely thorough and detailed account of the Korean War. Millet provides both a summary of actions taken by both sides in the conflict, as well as analysis of the events. Of particular interest to this study is the fact that Millet examines the conflict from both political and military points of view during the conflict. This study aims to determine if the participants in a conflict used the concept of *shih* when making operational decisions, and Millet's work provides detailed explanation of each actor's plans and decisions, which provides us the material to analyze with respect to *shih*.³⁵

The third group of literature that is of consequence to this study deals with the analysis of Chinese use of the concept of *shih* in strategy and operational art. The most extensive work in this

³³ Mark A. Ryan, David Michael Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 8-9, 14-16.

³⁴ Gerald Segal, *Defending China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 1-9.

³⁵ Allan Reed Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010).

category is *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture: Shih vs. Li* by William H. Mott IV and Jae Chang Kim. Mott and Kim explain the concept of *shih* and its relation to both strategic culture as well as the operational art. They then use the concept of *shih* to analyze Chinese conflicts from ancient times up to the present day. This book is extremely important to this study because it is one of the few works that offers analysis of recent Chinese operational art through the lens of *shih*.³⁶

Mott and Kim explain several important concepts in relation to *shih*. One of these concepts is the relationship of *shih* to the *Tao*. Mott and Kim explain how Chinese leaders use *shih* in warfare to achieve *Dao* for China. They write, “Within China’s proper *Tao*, generals’ applications of *Shih*-strategic principles in campaign plans, operational concepts, or tactical battle schemes fit smoothly into the national *Shih*-strategy.”³⁷ Another key component of Mott and Kim’s work is the idea that Chinese leaders use a direct approach (*Li*) as a means “to the ultimate end of building *Shih* within China’s proper *Tao*.”³⁸ They refer to these threat based approaches as a “functional, local, *Li*, not as a strategic aim.” Finally, Mott and Kim draw a stark contrast between a *shih*-strategy and a *li*-strategy. They hold that a *shih*-strategy is “circuitous and indirect,” targets the enemy commander’s “invisible intent,” and “prefers to win without fighting.”³⁹ A *Li*-strategy, on the other hand, uses a “direct approach,” “fights to destroy the enemy,” and “attempts to win by destruction.”⁴⁰

The work by Mott and Kim affirms this study’s hypothesis, pointing out the influence of *shih* on the PLA’s operational art in multiple ways. This study establishes parallels to Mott and

³⁶ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*. 32-33, 37-40, 215-232.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 39, 44.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 13, 39, 44.

Kim, referencing their work throughout the study. However, this study also draws differences from Mott and Kim's work in both scope, scale, and focus. While Mott and Kim have a very comprehensive scope, covering ancient Chinese wars as well as five modern conflicts, this study only examines two modern case studies. Mott and Kim examine the entire scale of Chinese warfare from the tactical all the way to the geo-political level. This study addresses primarily the operational level, examining the ways in which political leaders and military commanders used military actions to achieve their strategic purpose. Finally, Mott and Kim focus on the indirect nature of *shih*, the difference between *shih* and *li*, and the relationship between the Dao and *shih*. This study focuses on specific characteristics of *shih* including its emphasis on context, the morale of troops, an indirect approach, and the use of propensity.

There are also several important articles that analyze Chinese strategic actions using the concept of *shih*. One of the most extensive of these articles is David Lai's "Learning from the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China's Strategic Concept, *Shi*." He uses the Chinese game of Go to demonstrate differences in the strategic thinking between the Chinese and westerners. Lai provides analysis of Chinese strategic thought and the connection between the Chinese concept of *shih* and recent Chinese strategic behavior.⁴¹ The connection between Chinese historical cultural background and their actions in recent years is crucial to understanding the impact of the concept of *shih* on their operational art.

From these three categories of literature, a broad view of *shih* and its relationship to Chinese operational art emerges. As the introduction mentioned, the hypothesis for this study is: The concept of *shih* is an important factor that influences the PLA's operational art. This study defines *shih* using a synthesis of multiple sources. From this definition, this study presents a theory of the influence of *shih* on the operational art.

⁴¹ David Lai, *Learning from the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China's Strategic Concept, Shi*, Advancing Strategic Thought Series (Carlisle, PA: Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 22.

This study examines several key aspects of *shih* to develop a broad understanding of the concept and then uses those aspects to analyze the case studies. These aspects include an attempt to understand and manipulate one's context holistically, the morale of troops, an indirect approach, and propensity. This study uses the terms aspects or characteristics to refer to the properties of *shih* and not the terms parts or components. Parts and components can usually be separated out, whereas characteristics and aspects are inseparably interwoven. Such is the nature of *shih*. The characteristics are all woven together. As Ames points out, *shih* means several things at the same time.⁴²

The first, and possibly most important, aspect of the concept of *shih* is that it is holistic in nature, encompassing one's entire context.⁴³ As Ames points out, *shih* does have one meaning in one context and a different meaning in a different context. It combines a "cluster of meanings" into a single idea.⁴⁴ After cataloguing multiple definitions of *shih*, Timothy Thomas writes, "Thus, with so many explanations, after a while the analyst begins to question what is NOT *shi*."⁴⁵ *Shih* does not merely look at one aspect of context or power or disposition. It takes them all into account simultaneously and seeks power from the context itself.⁴⁶ If a general or political leader is using *shih*, there should be evidence of one's attempt to manipulate the context. Whereas *shih* values the context as a whole, United States military doctrine focuses on breaking the

⁴² Ames, "Introduction," 73.

⁴³ Ibid., 76; Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 14-15; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 18-19.

⁴⁴ Ames, "Introduction," 72-73.

⁴⁵ Thomas, *The Dragon's Quantum Leap*, 252-259.

⁴⁶ Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 27-29.

context into individual parts and relationships and then finding the “decisive point” or “center of gravity.”⁴⁷

The second aspect of *shih* for our consideration is the concept of morale of troops. The idea is that a general seeks to create a situation in which his troops feel as if victory is inevitable and therefore fight with excellent morale. Simultaneously, he uses that same situation to degrade the morale of the enemy troops to the extent that they believe that defeat is inevitable. While this could be considered a tactical matter, it can also have operational and strategic implications. This study will focus on the implications of building and degrading the morale of entire armies at the operational level of war.⁴⁸ US military doctrine shows similar concern for the morale of US troops and for the benefit of “degrading” the morale of the enemy.⁴⁹ However, the morale does not come from the context created by the commander in the same way that it does with respect to *shih*.

The third aspect of *shih* is the preference of the indirect over the direct approach. This is one of the major arguments that Mott and Kim put forth in their book on Chinese Military Culture, comparing the indirect approach (*shih*) with a direct approach (*li*).⁵⁰ They write, “*Shih*-strategy takes a circuitous, indirect approach to the final objective through *Tao* and *Shih*, and sometimes *Li*. *Li*-strategy takes a simple, direct approach to a final objective through several intermediate objectives.”⁵¹ In his description of “the western way of war,” Geoffrey Parker points

⁴⁷ Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), III-9 to III-11, III-15, III-22 to III-27.

⁴⁸ Jullien, *The Propensity of Things* 27-30; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 10-12, 25, 26, 41; Sunzi, *Sun-Tzu*, 120.

⁴⁹ Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), II-1, III-28, IV-4, V-50.

⁵⁰ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 32-44.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

out that “the overall aim of western strategy, whether by battle, siege or attrition, almost always remained the total defeat and destruction of the enemy, and this contrasted starkly with the military practice of many other societies.”⁵² In contrast, a leader using *shih* shows preference to an indirect approach which will defeat the enemy but may not destroy him.⁵³

US military doctrine addresses both direct and indirect approaches. However, there is a very important distinction between the indirect approach according to *shih* and the indirect approach according to US military doctrine. In US military doctrine, “An indirect approach attacks the enemy’s COG by applying combat power against a series of decisive points that lead to the defeat of the COG while avoiding enemy strength.”⁵⁴ This type of indirect approach aims to defeat the enemy center of gravity “while avoiding enemy strength.” Therefore it is still aimed at the center of gravity just as the direct approach is.⁵⁵ The indirect approach according to *shih* is much different. A *shih* approach is indirect because it takes advantage of context so that one does not need to counter the enemy center of gravity. Victory is inevitable because the commander has taken advantage of the potential energy within the situation before the battle begins.⁵⁶

The fourth aspect of the concept of *shih* is the management of what Jullien refers to as “‘propensity’ or ‘tendency.’”⁵⁷ He states, “Chinese strategy aimed to use every possible means to

⁵² Geoffrey Parker, ed., *The Cambridge History of Warfare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5.

⁵³ Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 59-60; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 2-3, 10, 39-44.

⁵⁴ Joint Publication 5-0, III-32.

⁵⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard, Peter Paret, and Bernard Brodie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 90-99, 595-600; Joseph L. Strange and Richard Iron, “Center of Gravity What Clausewitz Really Meant,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* no. 35 (October 2004): 20-27; Joint Publication 5-0, III-31 to III-33.

⁵⁶ Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 27-38; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 3-4.

⁵⁷ Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 17.

influence the potential inherent in the forces at play to its own advantage, even before the actual engagement, so that the engagement would never constitute the decisive moment, which always involves risk.”⁵⁸ Commanders and political leaders can use the “propensity” of situations and circumstances to derive victory. They can look at the way things tend to go, and then they manipulate this tendency or propensity to their own ends. Propensity has a momentum of its own, and leaders using *shih* will use this momentum within a given context to accomplish their purpose. US military doctrine states that “Momentum comes from seizing the initiative and executing high-tempo operations that overwhelm enemy resistance.”⁵⁹ The key difference here is the origin of momentum. According to US Army doctrine, momentum can and should be created. Using the concept of *shih*, it is already there within the propensity of a situation. Even when General Tao states that the commander “should also be good at creating momentum,” one could argue that the momentum he refers to is inherent in the context.⁶⁰ The commander is exploiting or influencing the context to create the momentum.⁶¹

The propensity aspect of *shih* encompasses both movement and position into the same concept.⁶² Sun Tzu states, “The army does not have fixed strategic advantage (*shih*).”⁶³ From Ames’ perspective, the concept of position and movement involves the fact that “the constantly shifting ‘disposition’ of any thing or event is constituted in tension with environing others where

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁹ Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 4-5; George W. Casey, Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004–February 2007* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2012), 173; Joint Publication 3-0, III-28.

⁶⁰ Tao, *Sun Tzu's Art of War*, 125.

⁶¹ ADRP 3-0, 4-5; Joint Publication 3-0, III-28; Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 17, 25-38; Tao, *Sun Tzu's Art of War*, 124-130.

⁶² Ames, “Introduction,” 76-79; Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 11-13.

⁶³ Sunzi, *Sun-Tzu*, 127.

their dispositions condition one's own."⁶⁴ As the combatant engages the enemy his disposition changes in relation to the enemy when each of them move.⁶⁵ Jullien states that "the term openly oscillates between the static and the dynamic."⁶⁶ *Shih* is not just a static position such as a fortress in defensible terrain. It also implies movement. The concept of a boxing match is helpful. At any one point in the match, the boxers have a specific position in relation to each other and in relation to the boxing ring. However, this "disposition" changes frequently, often continuously, throughout the duration of the match.⁶⁷

Methodology

This study attempts to determine whether or not the concept of *shih* was a determining factor in the political and military use of operational art. Because *shih* is a theoretical and intangible concept that individuals often use intuitively, this study will contain a degree of subjectivity. It is impossible to measure the exact amount of influence that a concept has on a commander while he or she makes a decision or develops a plan. It is even less possible to measure the exact influence that an intuitive concept has on an individual largely because he or she applies the concept automatically and possibly even subconsciously. However, one can examine a commander's actions and communication and determine whether or not it is likely that a concept is present in the commander's mind whether consciously or subconsciously. While analyzing a commander's actions and communication using the concept of *shih* will not completely explain that commander's action, it will provide a valuable perspective to enrich one's

⁶⁴ Ames, "Introduction," 76.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 12

⁶⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.

understanding of PLA actions.⁶⁸ Therefore this study analyzes each case study using some key aspects of *shih* including an attempt understand and manipulate one's context holistically, the morale of troops, an indirect approach, and propensity.⁶⁹

The first and potentially the most important aspect of *shih* for analyzing operational art is the understanding and manipulation of context to achieve one's goals and ultimately one's purpose. This is an attempt to first understand one's operational context in terms of the whole and "emergent properties" of the situation.⁷⁰ Second, there must be an attempt to manipulate all or part of the context to one's advantage over one's enemy. It is important to note that this is not a mere analysis of terrain, weather, political context, the civil situation, etc. Regardless of cultural background, all competent military commanders will take these into account. However, the difference between an operational artists using *shih* and one using a more direct approach is the amount of attention that they pay to context and what they do with that context. An operational artist using a direct approach would typically seek to understand context in order to *change* the context from its current form so that the artist could conduct the type of operation that he or she preferred. In contrast, an operational artist using *shih* would attempt to understand the context in order to take advantage of any and all opportunities within that context. The operational artist using *shih* would prefer to act in conjunction with and in harmony with his context.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 11-15.

⁶⁹ Ames, "Introduction," 71-72.

⁷⁰ Robert M. Axelrod and Michael D. Cohen, *Harnessing Complexity: Organizational Implications of a Scientific Frontier* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 15; Yaneer Bar-Yam, *Making Things Work: Solving Complex Problems in a Complex World* (Cambridge, MA: NECSI, Knowledge Press, 2004), 26-27; Jamshid Gharajedaghi, *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 45-48; Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 15-17.

⁷¹ Ames, "Introduction," 76-78; Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 27-31; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 25.

The second aspect is the consideration of morale of one's army and that of one's enemy. This is a component of the greater context that this study will consider individually. According to Sun Tzu, "The line between order and disorder lies in logistics (*shu*); between cowardice and courage in strategic advantage (*shih*); between weakness and strength in strategic positioning (*hsing*)."⁷² Jullien elaborates on this idea, pointing out that there is no reliance on the individual soldiers for morale. It is up to the commander to create conditions that make his own troops courageous and the enemies troops cowardly.⁷³ Therefore, this study examines PLA commanders and People's Republic of China (PRC) political leaders to determine whether or not they consciously attempted to understand and manipulate circumstances to affect the courage of soldiers.⁷⁴ Again, almost all good leaders understand the importance of morale. However, the operational artist using a direct approach will attempt to create good morale so the army can change its context. The operational artist using *shih* attempts to manipulate the context so that the army has good morale.

The third characteristic of *shih* that this study analyzes is the idea of the indirect versus the direct approach. Mott and Kim conclude that Chinese commanders prefer to use an indirect approach instead of a direct one. This study examines some of their conclusions regarding direct versus indirect approaches. The question is whether the commander had the option of an indirect versus direct approach and whether he, as Mott and Kim argue, used a direct approach as a component of a larger indirect approach.⁷⁵

It is important to note that a political leader or military commander could use a direct approach at the tactical and/or the operational level in support of an indirect approach (*shih*) at the

⁷² Sunzi, 120; Tao, *Sun Tzu's Art of War*, 124-125.

⁷³ Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 27-31; Sunzi, 120.

⁷⁴ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, ix.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 32-44.

strategic level. Mott and Kim point this out, stating that PLA commanders will use what they call “local *li*” in order to obtain a greater strategic advantage.⁷⁶ The point that Mott and Kim make is very important, because in order to determine whether or not *shih* is a determining factor in Chinese operational art, one must recognize when a commander is using a direct approach to achieve his goals, or whether he is using a direct approach as part of larger indirect approach.⁷⁷

The fourth characteristic deals with propensity and momentum. In order to use this aspect of the concept of *shih*, commanders and political leaders must seek to understand and manipulate the overall propensity (or tendency) in a situation to create momentum for the Chinese state as a whole and the PLA in particular. Like the first criteria, the commander does not try to completely change the situation, but instead, he exploits the propensity within the situation to his advantage. One example of this manipulation is a political leader’s use of the propensity of diplomatic relationships between the following:

1. the leader’s state and the enemy state;
2. the leader’s state and friendly states
3. the leader’s state and neutral states
4. the enemy state and states friendly to it
5. the enemy state and state’s neutral to it.

The key is that the political leader understands the holistic propensity of diplomatic relationships and uses these relationships to his or her advantage. Another example is a military commander taking into account the interaction of the terrain, his forces, the enemy’s forces, morale of troops on both sides, the strategic objectives on both sides, logistics, and deception. From these interactions the commander determines what propensity emerges from the entire situation. He

⁷⁶ Ibid., 35-36, 133, 226, 227.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 35-36, 133, 226, 227.

then determines what opportunities he can exploit to his advantage.⁷⁸ An indicator of an operational artist using propensity is his attempt to manipulate momentum but not necessarily to create it.

As this study mentioned, it is impossible to determine whether or not a leader is using an intuitive concept. However, one can determine whether there is a high probability that the concept was one of several factors influencing that leader's behavior. In the case of the concept of *shih*, one must examine each of the aspects individually and together. Looking at whether or not a leader used a direct or indirect approach only provides a single data point. *Shih* is a holistic concept and therefore one must look at the whole as well as the parts. If a leader demonstrates intentional manipulation of his whole context, sensitivity to creating courage in his troops, an indirect approach, and exploits the propensity in a situation, there is a high probability that the concept of *shih* is affecting his plans and decision. A leader using one aspect of *shih* is inconclusive at best.⁷⁹

Case Studies

This study analyzes two case studies to ascertain whether or not *shih* is a determining factor in PLA operational art. This study selects from campaigns that the PLA has conducted since the formation of the PRC in 1949.⁸⁰ The PLA has conducted many campaigns, all of which would provide material to analyze according to the characteristics of *shih*. The major conflicts include the Korean War, the Sino-Indian War, the Sino-Soviet War, and the Sino-Vietnamese

⁷⁸ Ames, "Introduction," 71, 73, 76-82; Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 31-34, 59-61, 69-71; Sunzi, 118-121.

⁷⁹ Ames, "Introduction," 71-82; Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 25-38; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 10-14, 43-44; Sawyer, *The Art of War*, 143-147; Sunzi, 118-121.

⁸⁰ Bruce A. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*, Warfare and History (London: Routledge, 2001), xii.

War.⁸¹ All of these wars provide insight as to whether or not PLA commanders used the concept of *shih* when conducting operational art.

The criteria for selecting these case studies is twofold. For one, the case study must present strategic context for commanders and political leaders to manipulate. Conflicts that only had the potential for a small impact (good or bad) on the strategic position of China will likely show little indication of whether or not *shih* had any influence on the outcome. Another criterion for selecting case studies is that they must have enough information to provide this study with the material to analyze. While it would be interesting to study the Chinese use of cyber-activity over the last ten years, the only material available comes from reports and analysis of the attacks. There is no available material related to the actual communications between Chinese political leaders and operational commanders. It is difficult enough to define the concept of *shih* and analyze whether or not it was a determining factor in a given conflict. If there is limited material on the event in question, it becomes even more difficult to determine the role, if any, that the concept of *shih* played in the conflict in question. Given the problematic nature of defining *shih* and limited information on a conflict, the conclusions would be highly speculative. Therefore, this study selected case studies that have sufficient historical record from which to gain insight into the use of the concept of *shih*.⁸²

The first case study that this study analyzes is the Chinese winter offensives during the Korean War. This case study meets the first criteria in that there was a great deal of strategic context both driving and being affected by Chinese involvement in the war. In particular, Mao was using Chinese involvement as part of larger strategic maneuvering.⁸³ This case study also

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Thomas, *The Dragon's Quantum Leap*, 184-188.

⁸³ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 251-253; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 294-295; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 108-109; Shu Guang

meets the second criteria owing to the fact that there has been a great deal of research done on the conflict itself. Additionally, during the last twenty-five years, China has released official documents that provide a clearer picture of “the Communist perspective on the war.”⁸⁴

The second case study that this study will analyze is the Sino-Indian War. This case study meets the first criteria because, although short in duration, had a large strategic impact. By going to war with India, China was able to shape its border disputes with the other nations with whom China had border disagreements. China also used this conflict to re-shape its relationship with the Soviet Union.⁸⁵ This study meets the second criteria because, like the Korean War, there is a large historical record providing the data to analyze the conflict with respect to the concept of *shih*.

This study does not analyze the other major conflicts because they do not provide the same broad strategic context that the selected case studies provide. The Sino-Soviet War does meet both criteria. However, because most of the fighting amounted to no more than several sequential border clashes, there is less of the operational art to analyze.⁸⁶ This case also provides less material than the Sino-Indian War because it was a direct contest between two combatants whereas the Sino-Indian War had a larger impact outside the conflict itself. The Sino-Vietnamese war also meets both criteria, but, like the Sino-Soviet war, this conflict provides much less in the way of operational art to analyze. During the Sino-Vietnamese War, the political leaders set the strategy and in many ways determined which tactics the PLA would use. Therefore, there is less

Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 81.

⁸⁴ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 588.

⁸⁵ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 254, 268; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 149-151, 154-155.

⁸⁶ Segal, *Defending China*, 183.

material to analyze concerning the commander's use of operational art because the political leaders determined so much.⁸⁷

Finally, there are other possible case studies that one could use to analyze the PLA's use of the concept of *shih*. However, many of these conflicts and military actions were of a rather small scale and provide less material to analyze. An example of this type of actions is the PLA's seizure of the Xisha (Paracel) Islands in 1974. The PLA conducted an amphibious landing and seized three islands from the Vietnamese.⁸⁸ While this operation holds historical interest, its limited scope holds very little in the way of military activity to analyze with regard to the concept of *shih*. Therefore, this study does not deal with these smaller scale actions.

Case Study: The Chinese Winter Offensives in the Korean War

The strategic situation, as the Chinese viewed it, leading up to and during the Korean War is important to understand if one is to analyze the influence of *shih* on Chinese operational art during the war. The Chinese had only recently overcome the Chinese Nationalist government on the mainland and strongly desired to complete their victory by seizing Taiwan.⁸⁹ At the same time, China was attempting to strengthen ties to the Soviet Union, particularly to gain Soviet aid. On February 14, 1950, Stalin and Mao signed the Sino-Soviet Military alliance, which included "\$300 million in credit and a promise to provide military and industry advisers."⁹⁰ From the North Korean perspective, Kim Il Sung believed that the time had come to "liberate" South

⁸⁷ Christopher Gin, "How China Wins: A Case Study of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War" (master's thesis, Command and General Staff College, 2015), 54-63; Segal, *Defending China*, 218.

⁸⁸ Segal, *Defending China*, 199.

⁸⁹ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 232, 240; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 111-113.

⁹⁰ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 238; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 47; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 104.

Korea. He misinterpreted the intent of the United States in the region, believing that the United States would not fight to retain South Korea.⁹¹ Mao committed to assisting the North Koreans if they experienced trouble, but Stalin made no such commitment. The alliance between China and the Soviet Union as well as the North Korean plan to unite the peninsula factored into the way that each of these states approached the war.⁹²

In June 1950, the Korean People's Army (KPA) crossed the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea. They quickly overcame the South Korean Army and the United States' armed forces, pushing all the way to what became known as the Pusan Perimeter. Up to this point, Kim Il Sung's predictions had come true. However, this is when Kim's miscalculation became apparent for the United States did not abandon the peninsula as he had anticipated. Both South Korea and American forces held the Pusan Perimeter, and continued to receive logistical support and reinforcements. General Douglas MacArthur made his famous landing at Inchon and the tide in the war began to turn.⁹³

At this point in time, however, China had not decided to involve itself in the conflict. The United Nations Command had beaten the North Korean People's Army back, but it still did not threaten China. China became concerned only when it was apparent that the United Nations Command planned on uniting the peninsula under South Korean rule. Zhou Enlai conducted an emergency midnight meeting with the Indian ambassador as an attempt to communicate with the

⁹¹ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare* 235, 238-239; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 46-48.

⁹² John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 68-70; Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, American ed. (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 423-425; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare* 238-239; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 49-50, 292, 294-295.

⁹³ Larry M. Wortzel, "China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949" in *A Military History of China* eds. David A. Graff and Robin Higham (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2002), 271; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare* 238-246; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 46, 48, 85-267; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 105-106; Short, *Mao: A Life*, 425-427.

United States. He stated very clearly that China would enter the war only if United Nation troops crossed the 38th parallel.⁹⁴

MacArthur assured President Truman that the Chinese would not enter the war and moved into North Korea with the support of the president. Both South Korean and US forces moved into North Korea and captured Pyongyang on October 19. There was a great deal of debate within the PRC as to whether or not to enter the war. One of the key points of contention was the economy. Some leaders wished to remain outside the conflict and focus on rebuilding the Chinese economy. Those in Mao's camp wanted to rebuild the economy but also believed that security was a prerequisite to economic growth. Mao especially did not want an ally of the United States on the Chinese border, much less a border that was close to the industrial factories in Manchuria. Mao won the debate within the PRC and preparations for the invasion began.⁹⁵

Because Lin Biao declined to command the Chinese People's Volunteer Force (CPVF) in Korea, Mao selected Peng Dehuai to command the CPVF. Peng's strategy at the outset of the war was an open one. The objective in the first phase of the war was to prevent the US Eighth Army from continuing to advance north. Mao and Peng prepared for two different situations in the future. If the UNC continued to advance, the CPVF would destroy between one and three ROK divisions. According to Mao, destroying these divisions would "greatly change the situation."⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 239-244; Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 78-79; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 291-293; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 109; Wortzel, "China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949," 272.

⁹⁵ Yu Bin, "What China Learned from its 'Forgotten War'" in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience Since 1949* ed. Ryan, Mark A., David Michael Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 124; Jürgen Domes, *Peng Te-Huai: The Man and the Image* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), 60; Jonathan D. Spence, *Mao Zedong*, A Penguin Life (New York: Viking, 1999), 117-18; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 243-247; Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 81-82; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 283-285, 292-297; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 109, 113-114, 224-225; Short, *Mao: A Life*, 427-431; Wortzel, "China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949," 272-273.

⁹⁶ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 295.

If, however, the UNC stopped south of the line between Wonsan and Pyongyang, the CPVF would use this time to reequip and train through the winter. It was a flexible plan that allowed for future contingencies.⁹⁷

Within the broad strategic plan, Peng developed his campaign plan with a great deal of input from Mao. In Millet's view, Mao gave Peng very little room for initiative. Millet believed that this was owing in large part to Mao's "way of war, micromanaging by 'war on the map.'"⁹⁸ Peng would place an army on each coast, the 42nd Army on the east coast and the 39th Army on the west coast. Between these two "anchors" would be the 38th and 40th Armies. These would attack to destroy the 6th, 7th, and 8th ROK divisions.⁹⁹ If the attack went well, the 39th Army would move from the west coast in order to achieve a double envelopment.¹⁰⁰

While the first offensive did not go as planned, it did have a devastating effect on the 8th Army. Three "of the four ROK divisions required major replacements in men and equipment."¹⁰¹ Additionally, it was their traditional enemy, China that had severely defeated these South Korean forces, which ruined their morale. While the 19th Infantry Regiment and the 8th Cavalry regiment were the only units within Commonwealth and American divisions to suffer a serious defeat, there was a lack of capable replacements to fill their losses. As a result of defeating multiple UNC forces, the CPVF believed that "they had a formula for defeating the firepower-rich Americans: attack at night; seek out weakly defended tanks and artillery positions by stealth; avoid roads; and

⁹⁷ Domes, *Peng Te-Huai*, 60-61; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 294-297, 299-301; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 114-117.

⁹⁸ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 301.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 300.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 298-299, 300-301; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 114-117.

¹⁰¹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 305.

employ surprise and concealed positions.”¹⁰² Millet also states that “Chinese infantry would shape battles they would win by tactical cleverness and willpower.”¹⁰³

In the second offensive, Peng chose to mass his best units against weak opponents and accept a disadvantage in manpower between his other units and the best UNC units. As in the first offensive, Peng’s plan focused on destroying enemy divisions. According to Millet, “he believed that the CPVF could change the war if it destroyed two or three U.S. or ROK divisions, at least driving MacArthur’s ground forces back to the Pyongyang-Wonsan line in 1950.”¹⁰⁴ On November 23, 1950 Peng accepted a recommendation from the Central Military Commission to shift more of his forces to the east. The plan was now to have the 40th Army attack the 2nd Infantry division at the same time that the 38th Army attacked the 7th ROK division and the 42nd Army attacked the 8th ROK division and then the 6th ROK division.¹⁰⁵

Like the first, the second offensive, which lasted from November 24 to December 24, 1950, produced great results for the CPVF. Specifically, this offensive “ensured the survival of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea for decades to come.”¹⁰⁶ From a territorial perspective, the CPVF forced UNC forces to retreat to a line just north of Chunchon. From the perspective of enemy losses, the offensive decimated the ROK II Corps and caused severe damage to the 2nd Infantry division as well as the Turkish brigade. At this point in the conflict

¹⁰² Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 304.

¹⁰³ Bin, “What China Learned from its ‘Forgotten War,’”¹²⁷; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 247-248; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 301-305; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 114-117.

¹⁰⁴ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 318.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 317-320, 336; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 117-119.

¹⁰⁶ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 335.

the CPVF had caused 50,000 UNC casualties. By all accounts, the second offensive was a success, but at a high cost of up to a third of the CPVF's combat troops.¹⁰⁷

Given his own losses during the second offensive, Peng desired to train and equip his army. Specifically, he wanted to “adopt a common family of Russian weapons; absorb replacements; train; and heal the sick, starved, and exhausted veterans of the CPVF.”¹⁰⁸ From a strategic perspective, Mao saw the benefits of continuing with another offensive. These benefits included accelerated Soviet military aid and a turning of the tide in the United Nations to oppose the United States. Additionally, Mao understood the intangible context surrounding the war. “Mao told Peng, ‘It would be a tremendous positive influence to the democratic nations and peoples at the capitalist countries. It would be a new heavy blow to the imperialists which would deepen its [*sic*] mood of pessimism and defeatism.’”¹⁰⁹ Finally, the KPA was now ready to enter the war. The addition of these troops meant that the communist forces now outnumbered the UNC forces. Peng agreed to the offensive and Mao accepted that the results could be limited.¹¹⁰

Peng's plan for the third offensive campaign coordinated attacks across almost the entire width of the peninsula. The main attack would be made by the CPVF's 38th, 39th, and 40th armies moving directly south against the 1st and 6th ROK Divisions. The 42nd and 66th Armies would attack the 2nd ROK division. The II and V KPA Corp would “attack the three ROK

¹⁰⁷ Bin, “What China Learned from its ‘Forgotten War,’” 128-130; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 248; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 335, 347, 350, 355; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 117-119; Wortzel, “China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949,” 272-273.

¹⁰⁸ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 356.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 381

¹¹⁰ Bin, “What China Learned from its ‘Forgotten War,’” 130-132; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 356-357, 381; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 119-121; Wortzel, “China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949,” 273.

divisions that held the boundary between the ROK II and I Corps.”¹¹¹ Peng also paid specific attention to the timing of the attack. He ordered the attack to begin “in the early evening after UNC artillery spotter aircraft headed for home and when close air support was unlikely to be called in time to ruin the assault.”¹¹² As Peng had anticipated, the third offensive did not produce results comparable to the first two offensives. However, Peng had met Mao’s minimal objective of capturing Seoul and forcing the ROK divisions and the Eighth army “out of the Han River valley.”¹¹³

Following the third offensive, Peng desperately wanted to reequip and refit his units in preparation for an offensive that would take place no earlier than March 15. As Peng prepared the CPVF for the coming offensive, no one expected an attack from the Eighth Army. In Millet’s words, “For all their painstaking intelligence work, the Chinese did not understand Matthew B. Ridgway. If they thought his army would sulk along Line D and remain passive, they were wrong.”¹¹⁴ The Chinese could not conceive of why an Army would attack after it had been severely beaten with the first two offensives and pushed further back with the third offensive. Operations Wolfhound and Thunderbolt therefore came as a surprise to Peng. Peng wanted to give up the Han River valley as well as Seoul so that he could prepare his army for a large spring counteroffensive. Mao not only denied Peng’s approach but instead ordered him to conduct a fourth offensive, arguing that, if there was another offensive, the United States and the United

¹¹¹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 382.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 383.

¹¹³ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 249; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 382-383, 388; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 117-119; Short, *Mao: A Life*, 431-432.

¹¹⁴ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 389.

Nations might engage in peace talks that would be favorable to China. Peng did not agree and only reluctantly planned the fourth offensive.¹¹⁵

Peng, several other Chinese commanders, and Mao debated on the approach to the fourth offensive. The final decision was to attack salient created by the 5th and 8th ROK divisions in the vicinity of Hoengsong. The communists also conducted attacks at Chipyeong-ni and Wonju but these actions were secondary operations. The offensive began on February 11, 1951 and lived up to Peng's misgivings, lasting only ten days and producing marginal results. Following the fourth Chinese offensive, UNC forces drove the communists back through a series of counter offensives.¹¹⁶ The Chinese later conducted a fifth and a sixth offensive, both of which failed, and the Korean War devolved into a stalemate.¹¹⁷

The first area to consider is whether or not Chinese political leaders sought to both understand and manipulate their context in order to gain *shih*. Mao Tse Tung had a keen sense for the strategic environment within which China was operating and was able to maneuver within that environment. When viewing Mao's actions from MacArthur's Inchon landing to the culmination of the fourth offensive, it is clear that Mao was strategically flexible. Gerald Segal points out the Mao was opposed to "mechanicalism," preferring to remain flexible in the face of changing strategic circumstances.¹¹⁸ Segal references a quote from Mao in September 1950. Mao stated, "Different war situations determine the different guiding laws of war according to the

¹¹⁵ Bin, "What China Learned from its 'Forgotten War,'" 133-134; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 249; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 388-39; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 121-122; Short, *Mao: A Life*, 431-432.

¹¹⁶ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 250; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 403-416; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 121-122.

¹¹⁷ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 250-251; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 426, 429-434, 441-448, 452; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 123-125.

¹¹⁸ Segal, *Defending China*, 95, 247.

differences in time, locality and character War and the guiding laws are developmental.”¹¹⁹ Segal points out the China’s first objective was to retake Taiwan. China was unable to do this and so they developed a second objective which was to deter the United States from encroaching on China’s border. China also failed to achieve this objective and settle on a third objective to defend China and secure the North Korean regime. The success of the CPVF in attaining this third objective led China to pursue an objective of complete victory. This fourth objective, like the first two, proved out of reach to the CPVF. The fact that China changed its objectives as the strategic environment changed is evidence of Mao’s flexibility.¹²⁰

Flexibility in strategy is not in itself evidence of the use of the concept of *shih*. However, what one does with that flexibility is evidence with regard to the use of *shih*. Mao did not attempt to completely alter the strategic context of China in order to pursue Chinese interests. Instead he manipulated China’s context in order to pursue his goals. One of the ways that he manipulated his context was his use of Sino-Soviet relations. Mao accepted China’s position in 1949 as subservient to the Soviet Union. He even accepted insults from Stalin when negotiating with him. During the negotiations in late 1949 early 1950, Mao secured a credit of \$300 million, a Sino-Soviet alliance, and a commitment to provide industry and military advisors.¹²¹ As China entered the Korean War, Mao continued to manipulate this relationship. In the short term, Mao used China’s intervention to obtain more Soviet military aid and saw Chinese military action as a means for obtaining more military support. In fact, China’s involvement in the Korean War ensured that the Soviet Union “embedded” itself in China future “on China’s terms.”¹²²

¹¹⁹ Segal, *Defending China*, 95.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 95-98.

¹²¹ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 236-238; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 47.

¹²² Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 296.

According to Millet, Stalin's "limited commitment of arms and airpower also played into Mao's hands because Mao could either go to war as the selfless hero of Asian Communism or postpone operations because Stalin had 'betrayed' his promise of support."¹²³ Mao's relationship to the Soviet Union in general and Stalin in particular indicate both a keen understanding of the strategic context as well as a manipulation of that context.

Peng also sought to manipulate rather than completely change the CPVF's context. Before the commencement of operations, Peng recognized that he could not logistically support the CPVF with its equipment requirements. Instead of trying to invent a way to carry more supplies, Peng altered the logistical context by altering the task organization of the CPVF so that it required less equipment.¹²⁴ Peng used the tactical context to gain an operational advantage. He repeatedly used tactics and timing that favored the CPVF and put the ROK and UNC forces at a disadvantage. One example of timing was Peng's start of the third offensive. He attacked at a time when the UN forces would have to wait to receive air support. The value that Peng placed on context is also evident in his failed attempts to alter the operational situation. One example of this is his continued concern over UN air superiority.¹²⁵

The second aspect of *shih* that this study analyzes is the use of context to create courage in one's soldiers and degrade the courage of the enemy's soldiers.¹²⁶ Mao seemed to consider this at the outset of the Chinese intervention but not during the later offensives. During the first offensive Mao wanted Peng primarily to attack ROK forces instead of UN forces because of the difference in skill and morale. It is likely that he was attempting to create experience and build

¹²³ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 247; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 14-16, 294, 296; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 126-129.

¹²⁴ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 300.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 296, 356; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 114-119, 127.

¹²⁶ Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 27-29; Sunzi, 120.

morale within the CPVF. However, this changed later in the conflict. He ignored Peng's reluctance to attacking with troops that were in poor condition. In effect, Mao was placing degraded troops in a situation that would further degrade them both physically and with regard to their morale. In these later offensives, Mao seems to disregard this aspect of *shih*.¹²⁷

Peng, on the other hand, kept this concept in his mind throughout the duration of the first four offensives. He willingly pursued Mao's objectives during the first two offensives when the context favored his troops' morale. When the context changed, he became very reluctant to conduct offensive operations and petitioned Mao on multiple occasions not to order offensive operations. He sensed that his *shih* was slipping away and therefore his troops' morale was also slipping. One can interpret his continual desire to reequip and train his units as attempts to alter their context and regain *shih*. Beyond equipping his army, Peng also attempted to personally inspire his soldiers through trips to the front.¹²⁸ Additionally, Peng's failure to understand and anticipate Ridgway's counterattack is also evidence of Peng's view of context and morale. One could argue that the reason that Peng and Mao failed to anticipate Ridgway's attack was that both men were using the concept of *shih* to analyze the UN situation. A large offensive after having been severely beaten by two Chinese offensives seemed highly unlikely given Sun Tzu's idea of *shih* creating courage. The context of the UN forces in late January 1951 provided little strategic advantage (*shih*). Therefore, UN forces should have had low morale and, according to *shih*, ample reason not to attack.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Bin, "What China Learned from its 'Forgotten War,'" 127; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 300-301, 380-382, 401-403; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 116, 119-122; Wortzel, "China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949," 273.

¹²⁸ Gerard H. Corr, *The Chinese Red Army: Campaigns and Politics Since 1949* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 79; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 380-383, 401-402; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 119-122; Wortzel, "China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949," 273.

¹²⁹ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 249; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 389.

The third aspect of *shih* to analyze in the Korean War is the use of the indirect versus the direct approach to operations. Mao used the Korean War indirectly to shape China's position within the international community.¹³⁰ Instead of trying to change the Soviet Union's unequal treaties through direct confrontation, Mao used the Korean War to "embed" the Soviet Union in Chinese affairs on China's terms for years to come.¹³¹ In the broader international community, Mao used the conflict to reestablish China as a state that would not be manipulated. One of Mao's goals was to defeat a western power, something that he accomplished with the first two offensives. It is interesting, though, that Mao used a very direct and costly operational approach as a means within his broader indirect strategic approach. Destroying ROK and 8th Army divisions was a rather direct method. Also, Mao did not stop the offensives when it first became clear that the operational returns were diminishing. While it is true that Mao (and his fellow PRC leaders) may have had become "intoxicated" with the victories, he understood the indirect effects that the Korean War was having on China's future.¹³²

Likewise, Peng favored an indirect approach. Mott and Kim argue that Mao's (and Peng's) strategy of seeking to destroy weaker ROK divisions early in the war was in itself an indirect approach and part of a *shih* strategy.¹³³ The problem with this argument is most commanders in Peng's situation would have wanted to destroy ROK divisions rather than fight against the better trained and equipped UN forces. While this in itself does not demonstrate a

¹³⁰ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 252-253; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 292-297, 317; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 126.

¹³¹ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 296.

¹³² Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 121; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 252-253; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 14-16, 381; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 108, 119-122, 126; Wortzel, "China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949," 273.

¹³³ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 246-253; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 300-301; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 116.

desire for an indirect approach, other aspects of Peng's plans do illustrate his favor of the indirect approach. Peng understood Mao's indirect strategic approach. While he did not always agree with Mao, the strategy of using the Korean War to advance China diplomatically and militarily made sense to him. Additionally, even when Peng argued against the third and fourth offensives, he was arguing based on the lack of efficacy of the offensive to obtain the desired results. He was not arguing against the indirect strategic approach itself. Therefore, while using some very direct methods to attain Mao's political objectives, Peng supported Mao's indirect approach.¹³⁴

The fourth area for analysis is that of propensity and momentum. Mao assessed that the momentum in the Sino-Soviet relationship was not in China's favor in 1949. As the Chinese involvement in the Korean War became a possibility, Mao saw the opportunity to take advantage of the momentum within the situation. One example is the potential he saw from Chinese involvement combined with Soviet reluctance. The propensity would be for China to gain credibility and for the Soviets to lose it. This provided him with reason to become involved in Korea. However, his "intoxication" with victory led him to ignore the fact that the CPVF was losing momentum against the technologically superior and increasingly competent UN forces.¹³⁵

Peng paid close attention to the propensity and momentum within a given situation. In the early stages of the conflict, one can see the way Peng used the momentum of his forces to overwhelm the ROK divisions. Additionally, Peng quickly adjusted his forces based on the CMC's recommendation because he recognized the potential for greater momentum. While Peng's attention to propensity and momentum is apparent in his victories during the first two

¹³⁴ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 292-297, 300-301, 381; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 246-250; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 114-122, 126.

¹³⁵ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 249-250; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 14-16, 47, 292-297, 381-383; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 113-114, 126; Wortzel, "China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949," 273; Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 121.

offensives, it is even more obvious in his resistance to Mao's desire to conduct the third and fourth offensives. In an operational sense, Peng correctly ascertained that he had lost momentum in the conflict. He wanted to retrain and reequip his forces in order to regain the momentum within the situation. In addition to the momentum, Peng saw the propensity of the situation leading up to the third, and even more so, the fourth offensives. Propensity led Peng to believe that he might not accomplish the objectives that Mao had set for the CPVF.¹³⁶

In order to discover whether or not the concept of *shih* was a determining factor in Mao and Peng's use of operational art, one must analyze the four aspects of *shih* together. In examining Mao's actions, it is clear that he attempted to manipulate China's context in the international community through intervention in the Korean War. He used a direct operational approach during the first four offensives as part of an indirect strategic approach. However, he seemed to ignore the use of strategic advantage (*shih*) to create courage within the CPVF. Additionally, Mao saw the utility in creating momentum within the international community through the propensity of the Sino-Soviet relationship, yet he appeared to have lost touch with the momentum of the situation of the CPVF on the peninsula. Aside from his rather direct operational approach, Peng's actions, or at least his desired actions, were in line with all four aspects of *shih*.¹³⁷

Case Study: The Sino-Indian War

While the Sino-Indian War was much smaller in scope than the Korean War, like the Korean War, it had far reaching international repercussions. In order to understand the origin of

¹³⁶ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 292-297, 299-305, 318, 336, 381-383, 401-402; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 249-250; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 114-122; Wortzel, "China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949," 273.

¹³⁷ Ames, "Introduction," 73, 76-77; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 242-253; Jullien, *The Propensity for Things*, 11-13, 25-31, 50-51; Sunzi, 118-122; Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 14-16, 292-297, 299-305, 318, 336, 381-383, 401-402; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 104, 107-129, 224-225.

both the conflict and the result of the conflict, one must examine the global environment at the time, the regional territorial disputes, and China-India relationship. From a global perspective, the strategic relationships between China, India, the United States, and the Soviet Union had important implications on the dispute. Sino-Soviet relations had soured in 1960. Additionally, the Soviet Union began to strengthen their relationship with India, providing both credit and military aid. Specifically, they provided aircraft to India to counter aircraft provided by the United States to Pakistan. At the same time that the Soviet Union was providing aid to India, Khrushchev was ignoring China's territorial claims. In short, Cold War politics were effecting the relationship between China and India.¹³⁸

At the regional level, China had border disputes with its neighbors. As Mott and Kim put it, "Sharing borders with Vietnam, Burma, Nepal, India, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, and Korea, China's border issue involved disputes with each country."¹³⁹ This particular aspect of the context was extremely important because China would use the Sino-Indian War to shape its relationship with other states with whom it had border disputes. Particularly important was its disputes with the Soviet Union. China pursued a strong relationship with the Soviet Union in the 1940s because China felt itself to be weak. However, by the early 1960s, China felt very confident and believed that Soviet policy was bankrupt. Simply put, China no longer felt the need to keep a close relationship with the Soviet Union and wanted to reengage the border concerns it had ignored during the Korean War.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 131-133, 135-139, 148-151; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 254-255, 261, 267-268; Segal, *Defending China*, 140, 149-150.

¹³⁹ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 132.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 148-151, 154-155, 157-158; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 261, 267-268; Segal, *Defending China*, 147-150.

The relationship between China and India was mutually supportive in the early 1950s but soured by the end of the decade. China and India signed the Sino-Indian Treaty on Tibet in April 1954. The talks that produced this treaty also produced the “Panch Shila policy, which presented five principles—mutual respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality, and peaceful coexistence—that would govern Sino-Indian relations.”¹⁴¹ It is important to note that in order for these talks to produce both the treaty and the policy, India overlooked China’s 1950 occupation of Tibet. In 1955 India invited “China to attend the Bandung Conference,” giving “the PRC a platform on which to expound its views.”¹⁴² Shortly after both parties signed the treaty there were actions by both Indian and Chinese troops along the border that drew protests from both nations. By 1958, there was a border clash between PLA and Indian patrols.¹⁴³

The border dispute remained unresolved and clashes continued. There were a “brief series of patrol skirmishes in eastern and western Tibet” in the fall of 1959.¹⁴⁴ As these clashes continued Zhou Enlai “continued to propose to abandon China’s claims to disputed territory—125,000 sq km—in the eastern sector if India would recognize Chinese sovereignty in the Aksai Chin.”¹⁴⁵ Nehru continued to reject these offers and would not negotiate over the disputed territory. In 1961, Nehru made an overt change in policy, moving from neutralism to a “Forward Policy” aimed at asserting India’s claims along the Sino-Indian border. This policy included the

¹⁴¹ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 259.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 258.

¹⁴³ Bhim Singh Sandhu, “Sino-Indian War of 1962: A Framework and Case Study of International Conflict Resolution” (PhD diss., University of Missouri, Columbia, 1972), 101-103; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 254-255, 258-259; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 137-138, 140-141; Segal, *Defending China*, 140.

¹⁴⁴ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 141.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

creation of small outposts in the NEFA (North East Frontier Area). Near the end of the summer of 1961, there were fifty new outposts in the NEFA. By February 1962, India was conducting frequent well-armed incursions across the border. Both China and India deployed more troops to the disputed areas. However, Chinese troops were using modern weapons, were on good terrain, and had very good logistics.¹⁴⁶

Given these events, Mao began to further prepare for conflict with India. He issued guidance aimed at countering the “nibbling policy” of India: ““Never make a concession. But try your best to avert bleeding; form a jagged, interlocking pattern to secure the border; and prepare for long-time armed coexistence.””¹⁴⁷ From Mao’s guidance the Chinese General Staff developed rules of engagement, which they immediately issued to the PLA:

If Indian troops do not fire, Chinese should not fire.
If Indian troops threaten a Chinese sentry from one direction. Chinese should threaten the Indians from another direction.
If Indian troops encircle Chinese frontier guards, another Chinese force should encircle the Indian force.
If Indian troops cut a Chinese withdrawal route, Chinese forces should cut the Indians' withdrawal route.
Chinese forces should always keep away from Indian troops, leave them freedom to maneuver, and withdraw if Indian forces permit disengagement.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Cheng Feng and Larry M. Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience Since 1949* ed. Ryan, Mark A., David Michael Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003) 177-179; Te-bien Allen Yeh, “The Frontiers of China: A Study of the Boundary Policy of the People’s Republic of China” (PhD diss., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1977), 74; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 260-261; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 142-143; Segal, *Defending China*, 141; Wortzel, “China’s Foreign Conflicts Since 1949,” 275-276.

¹⁴⁷ Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 180-181; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 143.

¹⁴⁸ Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 180-181; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 143.

In the eastern sector, a small Chinese patrol fought with an Indian outpost that was within Chinese territory. India exaggerated the size of the Chinese patrol tenfold and went beyond the McMahon line.¹⁴⁹

India then initiated Operation Leghorn led by General B. M. Kaul. On October 10, 1962, Indian forces attacked the Chinese north of the McMahon line inflicting casualties on the Chinese. However, the Chinese fought well and “forced the Indians to retreat.”¹⁵⁰ At this point, Mao decided to use force to resolve the conflict because Nehru continued to reject both Zhou’s offers to negotiate as well as his protests at Indian military action. “On October 16, the Central Military Commission (CMC) directed a defensive counterattack against Indian troops that had violated the McMahon Line.”¹⁵¹

The PLA conducted simultaneous defensive counterattacks on October 20, 1962 in both the eastern and western disputed territories. The main attack was in the east, destroying an Indian brigade and capturing its commander. The next day, October 21, the PLA moved across the McMahon line, threatening the Tawang area. In the west, PLA forces destroyed the Forward Policy posts. At the end of this first “phase” of operations the PLA were in a very advantageous position relative to the Indian forces. According to Mott and Kim, “By October 29, Chinese forces had sequentially surrounded and annihilated each western Indian position and garrison...In

¹⁴⁹ Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 180-181; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 141-145; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 260-262.

¹⁵⁰ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 146.

¹⁵¹ Corr, *The Chinese Red Army*, 99-103; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 262-263; Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 182; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 145-146; Sandhu, “Sino-Indian War of 1962,” 212-213; Segal, *Defending China*, 141-142; Wortzel, “China’s Foreign Conflicts Since 1949,” 276.

the east, China had fortified positions north of the Tawang River."¹⁵² Nehru remained unwilling to negotiate.¹⁵³

Given the India's unwillingness to handle the situation diplomatically, the CMC planned and conducted further operations. The plan was focused on the destruction of Indian brigades in each of the disputed regions and the occupation of "all territory claimed by China."¹⁵⁴ In the eastern sector, the PLA would destroy the one brigade located at Walong near the border with Burma, three to four brigades in the Tawang area. In the western sector, the attack would destroy Indian forces near the Spangur and Pangong lakes. Before the operation began, India conducted an attack on November 15, 1962, which the PLA defeated. The PLA operation began on November 16, 1962 and destroyed India's ability to resist in the disputed regions. By the end of this second phase, "China's offensive had crushed Indian resistance in both disputed border sectors. The PLA had turned both Indian strategic flanks, seized the NEFA rear areas, and occupied the Aksai Chin against little resistance. China was well positioned and fully able to establish and enforce the boundaries that Beijing claimed."¹⁵⁵

Upon completion of these operations, "China declared a unilateral cease fire."¹⁵⁶ On December 1, 1962, the PLA withdrew 20 kilometers from the 1959 Line of Actual Control (LAC)

¹⁵² Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 146.

¹⁵³ Corr, *The Chinese Red Army*, 103-105; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 262-263; Feng and Wortzel, "PLA Operational Principles and Limited War," 181-186; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 145-147; Sandhu, "Sino-Indian War of 1962," 213-214; Segal, *Defending China*, 141-142.

¹⁵⁴ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 147.

¹⁵⁵ Corr, *The Chinese Red Army*, 106-110; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 263-264; Feng and Wortzel, "PLA Operational Principles and Limited War," 186-187; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 147-148; Sandhu, "Sino-Indian War of 1962," 214; Wortzel, "China's Foreign Conflicts Since 1949," 276-277.

¹⁵⁶ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 148.

in the western sector and the McMahon Line in the eastern sector.¹⁵⁷ The PLA cleaned the captured Indian equipment and returned it with 3,000 Indian prisoners of war. China did not place conditions on the release of the prisoners and did not conduct negotiations with India prior to their release. Nehru let go of his Forward Policy, but still would not negotiate with China regarding the disputed areas. At the conclusion of the conflict, it was “as if the war had never happened.”¹⁵⁸

Regarding the first characteristic of *shih*, there was a clear effort on the part of both political and military leaders to manipulate the context of the conflict in their favor. From a diplomatic standpoint, Zhou repeatedly attempted to change the context in China’s favor. Despite clashes with India, Zhou did not become focused on the border itself. He was concerned with maintaining access to the Tibetan region through Aksai Chin. On an even broader contextual level, China was shaping not only the context of this border dispute, but the context of all of their border disputes. The PRC effectively sent a message to all of the nations with whom they shared territorial claims that China would defend its claims using force if necessary.¹⁵⁹

Mao’s guidance to the military and the CMC’s rules of engagement point to a keen understanding of the military context in the situation. The PLA soldiers were not to fire unless fired upon. The PLA was also to avoid Indian troops when possible, even withdrawing if Indian forces permitted it. Mao did not want the situation to escalate into something that he could not control. Therefore, he kept the context below the offensive threshold. Additionally, the PLA modernization following the Korean War also changed the context of this conflict. While Chinese

¹⁵⁷ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 148.

¹⁵⁸ Corr, *The Chinese Red Army*, 110-111; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 264-267; Feng and Wortzel, “PLA Operational Principles and Limited War,” 187; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 145-148; Sandhu, “Sino-Indian War of 1962,” 215; Wortzel, “China’s Foreign Conflicts Since 1949,” 276-277; Yeh, “The Frontiers of China,” 76.

¹⁵⁹ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 254-255; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 145-147; Wortzel, “China’s Foreign Conflicts Since 1949,” 275-277.

leadership did not modernize the PLA in preparation for this particular context only, the PRC prepared itself for a conflict in which they would be successful through military means.¹⁶⁰

Developing troop morale, the second aspect of *shih* was less of a factor during the conflict and more important before the conflict even began. Similar to the effect on the context as a whole, the PLA modernization between the Korean War and the Sino-Indian War had an effect on troop morale during the Sino Indian War. This is most apparent when comparing the ill-equipped and starving PLA troops of the Korean War with the well trained and equipped PLA soldiers of the Sino-Indian War. PLA troops in the Sino-Indian war had modern weapons and strong lines of communication. Before the conflict even began, the PRC had created conditions favorable to the morale of its troops.¹⁶¹

The third characteristic of *shih*, the indirect approach, was also evident during the Sino-Indian War. From a diplomatic perspective, China used the conflict to demonstrate to India that the Soviet Union, while marginally helpful, would not come to India's aid in an actual war. In effect, China used the conflict to shape India's relationship with the Soviet Union. From a territorial perspective, China used the conflict to influence India directly while simultaneously indirectly influencing all of its other neighbors with whom it shared territorial claims. One positive result for China was a treaty with Pakistan shortly after the conflict ended. The PRC was able to influence Pakistan indirectly through the PLA's actions along the border. From a military perspective, operational approach itself was, to a large degree, indirect. The PLA's main attacks on October 20 and November 16 were both in the eastern sectors, with smaller attacks occurring to the west. In effect, the PLA attacked in an area that it had been willing to concede to India

¹⁶⁰ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 255-258; Feng and Wortzel, "PLA Operational Principles and Limited War," 180-181; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 143-144, 151, 156.

¹⁶¹ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 255-258; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 151, 156.

from the beginning. By attacking so forcefully in the east, combined with success in the west, China sent the message that it could take all of the disputed territory, but only wanted to keep what Zhou had been trying to negotiate from the beginning. Finally, the Chinese treatment of Indian prisoners of war and their equipment was equally indirect. In a way, the PLA treated the Indian forces like a younger, less mature brother. This placed China in a superior diplomatic position.¹⁶²

Lastly, both Chinese political leaders and commanders manipulated the propensity inherent in the situation to create a momentum that led them to victory against the Indian forces. Following the stalemated Korean War, China understood that the propensity of modern conflict favored forces based on a western model. Therefore, the PLA went through a rigorous modernization that included modernization in equipment, training, and tactics. China exploited this propensity in twentieth century warfare, which favored westernized forces. Through this exploitation, China had already created momentum years before the conflict with India took place. China also used the conflict to exploit the propensity of the Soviet Union to provide military equipment to allies but no direct support. China used this propensity to demonstrate to India that China could dominate them while the Soviet Union did nothing about it. Another area of propensity that China exploited was the ability of one conflict to have ripple effects into other conflicts. China used a war that lasted a little over a month to impact territorial disputes with multiple other countries for years to come.¹⁶³

Taking all of these aspects into consideration, there is a strong probability that the concept of *shih* influenced the way the Chinese political and military leaders planned and made decisions in the events leading up to and during the Sino-Indian war. Chinese leaders manipulated

¹⁶² Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 262-265, 267-268; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 148-152, 225-226.

¹⁶³ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 254-258, 262-263, 265-268; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 145-147.

the overall context of the conflict, created a situation for strong troop morale, showed preference for an indirect approach, and exploited propensity to create momentum. Through the interaction of all of these aspects China created strategic advantage (*shih*), which it used to achieve its goals in the conflict.

Conclusions and Recommendations

During the both the Korean War and the Sino-Indian War the concept of *shih* influenced the way that both political and military leaders conducted operational art. Evidence shows that leaders sought to understand and manipulate their context, bolster the morale of their troops while degrading the enemy's morale, favored an indirect approach, and exploited the propensity in their situation. However, *shih* is a cultural concept that leaders apply intuitively, and it is not a force that somehow determines actions. Regardless of their cultural context, people still have autonomy, as Porter points out, and can choose to apply *shih* or not apply it.¹⁶⁴ An example of this is Mao's "un-*shih* like" decisions during the third and fourth Chinese offensives.¹⁶⁵

The concept of *shih*, while intuitive and therefore elusive, provides several insights into the behavior of the PLA, the plans of Chinese commanders, the objectives and decisions of Chinese political leaders, and operational art in general. The first insight from this study is that the concept itself contains primary and secondary characteristics. The primary characteristics are the use of context and propensity to gain an advantage. The indirect approach and development of the morale of the army are secondary, and possibly optional. Mao's actions during the third and fourth offensives of the Korean War illustrate this point. Mao used a direct approach in Korea, ignoring the decreasing morale of the CPVF, in order to gain an advantage in the strategic context. He saw the propensity of various international relationships and used the Korean War to

¹⁶⁴ Porter, *Military Orientalism*, 19.

¹⁶⁵ Millet, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951*, 380-381, 401-402; Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 119-122.

advance China's interests. The indirect approach and morale of troops became subservient to the broader strategic advantage.¹⁶⁶

The second insight that *shih* provides is an explanation on past behavior of the PLA. While *shih* is not the only factor that directly influences PLA's operational art, it is an important one. By understanding *shih*, one can explain why the PLA behaves in ways that are very odd to westerners. The PLA's withdraw to the previous boundaries following the Sino-Indian border dispute is an example of such behavior. When one views this incident from a western perspective, it can be near inexplicable. When viewed through the lens of *shih*, this behavior is completely rational. *Shih* helps place historical PLA operations into their proper context.¹⁶⁷

A third insight that the concept of *shih* provides is in regard to current and future Chinese strategic and operational behavior. While *shih* will not provide a "silver bullet," enabling the US to suddenly predict Chinese behavior, it does provide a lens through which the US can better interpret current Chinese action and anticipate future action. The fact that Mao, Peng, and other leaders were successfully using *shih* over two millennia after Sun Tzu wrote the *Art of War* indicates the relevance of *shih* as a military theory.

However, *shih* is not a static concept and not the only factor influencing Chinese thinking and behavior. Mao studied Sun Tzu along with Marx and Clausewitz and his strategy reflected influences from all three.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, one should use *shih* alongside other concepts when interpreting and predicting Chinese actions and communications.¹⁶⁹ *Shih* has evolved over time and will continue to evolve. If one is to understand current and future uses of *shih*, one must

¹⁶⁶ Mott and Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, 224-225.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 131, 152.

¹⁶⁸ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 10.

¹⁶⁹ Timothy L. Thomas, "China's Concept of Military Strategy," *Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2014-2015): 47-48.

understand the way that *shih* in particular, and Chinese culture as a whole, have interacted with other theories and ideas.

Recommendation 1

Examine present Chinese actions using *shih* in combination with international relations theories in order to gain a holistic understanding of Chinese intentions. Two topics provide excellent material for future study with regard to understanding of current Chinese actions using *shih* as an interpretive lens. One is Chinese actions in and around the South China Sea. China is using A2AD systems, land reclamation, territorial claims, and diplomatic relationships to advance their interests in the South China Sea.¹⁷⁰ Another area of further study is the so called “string of pearls” strategy that many believe China is using to expand their naval presence.¹⁷¹ Analyzing both of these situations using *shih* alongside other concepts and theories could prevent misinterpretation and miscalculation.

The danger of viewing Chinese actions without using *shih* is the potential to “project” American concepts onto Chinese actions.¹⁷² By projecting American thinking onto Chinese actions, leaders could run the risk of a complete misinterpretation of Chinese intentions. On the one hand, this could lead to escalation of tensions between the United States and China. On the other hand, this could enable China to more easily deceive the US leaders. In either situation, the United States would lose out. The fact that *shih* is different, in many ways, from US military doctrine makes the danger that much more likely.

¹⁷⁰ Malcolm Davis, “China’s militarisation of the South China Sea and Australian defence policy,” *The Strategist* (November 15, 2015): 1, accessed March 28, 2015, <http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/chinas-militarisation-of-the-south-china-sea-and-australian-defence-policy/>.

¹⁷¹ Benjamin David Baker, “Where Is the 'string of Pearls' in 2015?,” *The Diplomat* (October 5, 2015), accessed March 28, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/where-is-the-string-of-pearls-in-2015/>

¹⁷² Adamsky, 91-92.

Recommendation 2

Include the concept of *shih* (probably using a different name) into US military doctrine, training, and education. As operational artists from various cultures and backgrounds attempt to mediate between strategic purpose and tactical actions, they need to view problems from multiple perspectives. *Shih* provides another perspective on that mediation. By viewing problems through the holistic lens of *shih*, operational artists can examine solutions that may not have been apparent from their operational background. An example of this is Mao and Peng's approach to the first two Chinese offensives of the Korean War. By using *shih*, Peng was able to create a momentum that ensured the CPVF would meet the political objectives set by Mao. While *shih* will not always provide the best solution, using it will ensure the operational artists have as many options as possible at their disposal. *Shih* will not only help us understand Chinese operational art but operational art itself.

There are several potential places to insert the concept of *shih* into US military doctrine. Operational Design one area. By including the concept of *shih* of as one of the elements of operational design, the US military would gain an excellent tool for understanding and exploiting potential within a given context. The idea of Operational Design is difficult to grasp, and *shih* offers an excellent framework for understanding Operational Context and the potential within it. *Shih* would also provide a useful addition to the Mission Analysis step of the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP). *Shih* could be a way to get staff sections to see the Operational environment holistically, instead of merely from their own particular Warfighting Function.¹⁷³

Shih also provides a way to better train and educate military leaders. Due to cultural factors, US military leaders will tend to want to reduce a problem into its parts in order to develop a solution. There are dangers to this approach, namely that a leader will not take the holistic

¹⁷³ Field Manual 6-0, 9-6 to 9-16; Joint Publication 5-0, IV-4 to IV-16.

context into consideration.¹⁷⁴ *Shih* offers a hedge against these dangers. US military education could introduce *shih* to junior officers and non-commissioned officers early in their careers, and over time build on the concept. For example, a junior officer might receive a brief introduction to *shih* during entry level training. The military would continue to build on the concept of *shih* throughout the rest of the officer's career. In order to ensure that officers were implementing the concept, it could be incorporated into their evaluations.

* * *

Shih is a concept that has been in use for millennia. Chinese political leaders and generals have gained an advantage over their adversaries by applying *shih* to their activities. These leaders unlocked the momentum that they found within their circumstances. While the possible applications of the concept are many, the essence of the *shih* remains constant. If a military and political leaders are to fully understand and utilize opportunities within their circumstances, they would do well to study and implement *shih*. The advantage that comes from exploiting the momentum found within context is too powerful to ignore.

¹⁷⁴ Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation*, 88-91.

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