



# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

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## THESIS

**PEACEFUL CONSENSUS: HOW CHINA'S CHANGING  
GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE HAS AFFECTED ITS USE  
OF MILITARY FORCE**

by

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June 2017

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STRUCTURE HAS AFFECTED ITS USE OF MILITARY FORCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since Mao Zedong founded the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, it has fought in one major war and several skirmishes, and has frequently used military force in the form of coercive diplomacy. The pattern of China's use of force, however, has steadily declined over time. At the same time, China's domestic politics have reformed from allowing one person high amounts of consolidated policy-making power to more institutionalized consensus-based governance. Do the changes in domestic political structure have a pacifying effect on China's foreign policy? In other words, is it a cause of China's declining use of force? Through analyzing China's responses to the Korean War, the three Taiwan Strait Crises (1954–1955, 1958, and 1995–1996), and the period of cross-strait relations in 1999–2002, this thesis finds that China's reactions to similar types of threats have become more pacific over time, in part because of its shift to consensus-based governance, but that another major explaining factor is China's increased economic interdependence with the United States. The relationship that this thesis describes between China's domestic political-power consolidation and the aggressiveness of its foreign policy is especially relevant as the current leader of China, Xi Jinping, has more centralized political power than any PRC leader since Mao. American China watchers and policy makers should be cognizant to whether Xi accumulates more power, or shows signs of diverging from the institutionalized reforms, as it may have an effect on the PRC's foreign policy assertiveness.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ARATS	Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CWIHPB	Cold War International History Project Bulletin
CMC	Central Military Commission
CPV	Chinese People's Volunteers
DPP	Democratic People's Party
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EI	Economic Interdependence
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KMT	Kuomintang
KPA	Korean People's Army
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MID	Militarized Interstate Dispute
NEBDA	Northeast Border Defense Army
OSE	Open Source Enterprise
PRC	People's Republic of China
PLA	People's Liberation Army
ROK	Republic of Korea
SEF	Strait Exchange Forum
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
TALSG	Taiwan Affairs Leading Small Group
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act
TSC	Taiwan Strait Crisis
UN	United Nations

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. RESEARCH QUESTION

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, it has participated in a major multinational war, multiple territorial conflicts, and several lower uses of force. The PRC was involved in 27 interstate wars or clashes (as defined by the Correlates of War) from 1949–1976, under the leadership of Mao Zedong. Deng Xiaoping, Mao's successor, presided over 11 interstate wars or clashes during his rule from 1978 to 1989. Deng stepped down as the chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1989, and from then until 2010, China has not been in a single interstate war and has had only two clashes.<sup>1</sup> The evidence demonstrates a clear pattern of reduced aggressiveness over time.

What has caused this pattern in China's use of force? Some of the explanations include increased economic interdependence, the resolution of most of its territorial disputes, and the Chinese Communist Party's political and economic reforms that shifted China away from Communist ideology.<sup>2</sup> For Mao's China, there is also significant scholarship work about him as an individual leader having significant influence over the PRC's decisions to use force, but scholarship on the importance of the individual leader is entirely absent for any of China's post-1989 clashes. This trend in the literature is no mistake: as David Lampton notes, "The PRC has gone from leaders who had personal and experiential credibility to leaders who are constrained by collective decision making, by term limits, by evolving norms, by the boundaries of the permissible partially defined

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<sup>1</sup> Glenn Palmer et al., "The MID4 Data Set: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*. The current limit on the Correlates of War database is 2010.

<sup>2</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 314–15; Avery Goldstein, "Great Expectations: Interpreting China's Arrival," *International Security* 22, no. 3 (Winter 1997–1998): 36–73; Charles Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War?" *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (March/April 2011): 80–91; Zbigniew Brzezinski and John J. Mearsheimer, "Clash of the Titans," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 1 (January/February 2005): 46–50; Thomas G. Moore and Yang Dixia, "Empowered and Restrained: Chinese Foreign Policy in the Age of Economic Interdependence," in *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform*, ed. David M. Lampton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 191–229; John Garver, *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4–5.

by ‘public opinion,’ and, in part, by their own technocratic and relatively educated characters.”<sup>3</sup> Over time, the role of the individual leader has become less powerful and more constrained within the CCP. These domestic political changes correlate with the decreasing trend in the PRC’s uses of force. Is there a cause and effect?

For the purposes of this thesis, Mao’s period of rule from 1949 to 1976 is deemed the paramount leader period, as he enjoyed unparalleled prestige, policy-making power, and influence while serving as the leader of the PRC.<sup>4</sup> Deng Xiaoping was a transitional leader who exhibited some strongman characteristics, but was not nearly as paramount as Mao, so this thesis is not considering conflicts during his time. After Jiang Zemin became the CMC and General Secretary of the CCP in 1989, the supreme leaders of the PRC have had distinctively less prestige and political strength, and have governed more through consensus with other CCP elites and the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).<sup>5</sup> Some of these changes in leader strength have been a function of the leaders themselves - Jiang Zemin and his successors not having been among the revolutionary founders of the PRC like Mao or Deng- but most of the difference seems to be from deliberate reforms within the CCP to prevent Mao-level control where policy is entirely captured by one person.

This thesis considers 1989 until the present as the consensus period. In order to isolate changes in the role of leaders and exclude changes in leaders during the consensus period, the thesis will only look at Jiang Zemin’s tenure as the CMC and CCP chair from 1989–2002 and not Hu Jintao or Xi Jinping’s rule.

The Correlates of War Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) database lends more insight into the differences in China’s uses of force between the paramount leader and consensus periods: from 1949–1976, China was involved in an average of 3.63 MIDs/year, while China in 1989–2010 had 2.57 MIDs/year.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, when including only

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<sup>3</sup> David M. Lampton, *Following the Leader: Ruling China from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 73.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 40–41, 70–72.

<sup>5</sup> Linda Jakobsen and Dean Knox, *New Foreign Policy Actors in China*, SIPRI Policy Paper no. 26, page 27. <http://books.sipri.org/files/PP/SIPRI26.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Palmer et al., “The MID4 Data Set.”

MIDs that escalated beyond just threats to use force, the 1949–1976 experienced 2.33 MIDs/year, and 1989–2010 only 0.86 MIDs/year. These two sets of numbers demonstrate that the China in the later period was both less prone to be involved in MIDs, and the MIDs that it did participate in ended with less aggressive or escalatory actions. The consensus period has correlated with both fewer and lower uses of military force compared to the paramount leader period.

This thesis will compare the 1950–1953 Korean War and 1954 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises (TSC) with the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis and cross-strait relations from 1999–2002<sup>7</sup> to answer the question: Did the difference in the role of the individual leader in China between 1950–1958 and 1989–2002 have an effect on its use of military force? In addition, has China’s increased economic interdependence, especially with the United States, had an effect on its use of military force? I argue that China’s foreign policy during paramount leader period was subject to the perceptions of Mao, who strongly favored military force as a solution to political problems, and as a result were larger and more frequent than they would have been otherwise. Under Mao, China’s EI was quite low, especially with non-Communist countries, and would not likely have been a check on aggressiveness. On the other hand, from 1989 to 2002, consensus-based governing restrained China’s foreign policy in times when it might have acted more assertively otherwise. In addition, economic interdependence, especially with the United States and Taiwan, also had a pacifying effect on Beijing’s decision making, serving to constrain both when and how China used force in challenging situations. Had the consensus period case studies occurred in lower EI or more paramount leader circumstances, they might have resulted in China using more military force more often.

## **B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

China has experienced a meteoric economic rise since the 1990s, thrusting it into the realm of great powers and significant influence in world affairs. China’s economic boom has also been accompanied with a substantial military modernization and reform

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<sup>7</sup> This was a period of significant pro-independence rhetoric from Taiwan that bore similarities to the conditions that catalyzed the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis.

program. The rise of China has caused significant debate in academic, policy, and military circles within the United States on whether it will ascend to world power status peacefully or become more assertive as it grows in strength. Starting in the 2010s, U.S. strategy documents began to consistently mention China as a potential economic and military competitor.

Many scholars and experts, however, optimistically argue that China's rise so far has been peaceful and cooperative vis-à-vis the United States and the international order, and will continue to do so.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, several analysts pessimistically argue that China is growing aggressive and more revisionist towards the world order as it gains strength and status as a great power.<sup>9</sup> As China's role in the world grows stronger and more complex, it will be increasingly imperative for U.S. policy makers, strategists, and military leaders to understand the conditions and causes for China to use military force. A better understanding of these conditions and causes will help inform U.S. leaders how best to deter potential Chinese assertiveness, encourage cooperative behavior between the two powers, and avoid destructive conflict. The PRC has undergone significant domestic political changes in the seven decades since its creation, and it is important to understand how those domestic changes have affected how the PRC uses military force as an element of its foreign policy. This thesis demonstrates a link between the changing role of the individual leader in the PRC and its use of force, which may have predictive power on the likelihood of future Chinese military aggressiveness as the PRC's domestic politics continue to evolve. This is especially relevant as the current Chinese president, Xi Jinping has become the most powerful top leader of the PRC since Mao.<sup>10</sup> This development suggests a possible increase in China's foreign policy aggressiveness.

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<sup>8</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 8–9; Goldstein, "Great Expectations," 36–39; Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War?" 80–81; Brzezinski and Mearsheimer, "Clash of the Titans," 46–47.

<sup>9</sup> Goldstein, "Parsing China's Rise: International Circumstances and National Attributes," in *China's Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics*, ed. Robert S. Ross and Zhu Feng (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 86–87; Aaron L. Friedberg and Robert S. Ross, "Here Be Dragons: Is China a Military Threat?" *The National Interest* 103 (September/October 2009): 19–34; Mearsheimer, "China's Unpeaceful Rise," *Current History* 105 (April 2006): 160–62.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Buckley, "Xi Jinping, Seeking to Extend Power, May Bend Retirement Rules," *New York Times*, March 2, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/02/world/asia/xi-jinping-china-retirement-rules.html>.

However, this thesis also illustrates that economic interdependence has had a restraining effect on China's use of force. If China's trade ties continue to remain high, this effect may outweigh the influence of one man consolidated political power.

## **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review will first cover works on China's patterns of uses of force. As an alternative explanation to the trend in China's uses of force, the next section looks at economic interdependence theory and how it applies to the decreased aggressiveness China's foreign policy. Following that, the review looks at theoretical frameworks for the focus of this thesis, mostly centered on the importance of individual leaders and how to evaluate or determine their role in their nations' foreign policies. The last section is on the changes in PRC politics, decision-making structures, and leaders.

### **1. Patterns in China's Use of Force**

Many scholars contend China has shown a high willingness to use force, and that China's rise portends a likely clash with the United States.<sup>11</sup> The works on China's strategic culture suggest that it is just as willing to use force as another other nation, or purport aggressive actions as defensive. Burles, Shulsky, and Christensen (in his earlier works) argue that China has shown a propensity to use force even in militarily unfavorable situations to achieve a longer term political goal. I group them as an opportunist family of theories about China's use of force.

On the other hand, Whiting, Johnston, and Fravel generally claim that the PRC has settled most of its territorial disputes, and therefore most of its likely sources of conflict.<sup>12</sup> They can be categorized as a group of cooperative theories about China's military foreign policy. Another group of analysts explains China's behavior with the

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas J. Christensen, "Windows and War: Trend Analysis and Beijing's Use of Force," in *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, ed. Alastair I. Johnston and Robert S. Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 52; Mark Burles and Abram Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force: Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2000), 10–14.

<sup>12</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 8–9; Allen Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 3–15; Alastair I. Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949–1992: A First Cut at the Data," *The China Quarterly*, no. 153 (March 1998): 1–30.

lens of ideology, portraying China's increasingly cooperative foreign policy as a product of Mao, Deng, and the CCP's changing application of Communist ideology. There is also a smaller selection of scholarship on Mao's influence as an individual leader in the PRC, but post-Mao individual leader analysis is fairly sparse. The works on ideology are closely linked with changes in individual leaders and the domestic political changes in the CCP after Deng Xiaoping, so I group the ideology and leader focused work together. All of the scholars reviewed here agree that Taiwan is the most probable hotspot for PRC military force.

This body of work demonstrates a significant gap: as the MID data shows, China has become less likely to use military force over time, yet almost all of the literature take examples of the PRC's uses of force and analyze why they happened. Fravel and Johnston aside, there has not been any work that looks at situations where the PRC was likely to use force, but did not, or situations where the PRC was more restrained in its use of force than before. For example, the political conditions of the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1995–1996 were similar in some aspects to the 1954 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises, but the PRC did not shell any islands or kill any Taiwanese soldiers in 1996 like it did in 1954 and 1958.

There is another gap in the analyses of China's use of force. Most analysis on PRC conflicts during the paramount leader period focus on Mao's role as a leader and his clout in determining China's foreign policy. On the other hand, the reviews covering the conflicts in consensus period generally look at the domestic interplay between the PLA, CCP elites, and the rise of nationalist ideology. There does not seem to be much literature, however, linking how China's usage of military force has changed as its governance has changed between Mao's rule and the consensus period. This thesis will attempt to fill some of that gap through establishing a relationship between the changing governance structure in the PRC and its decreased uses of force. If the findings of this thesis do establish a causal relationship between consensus-based governing and fewer and lower uses of force in the PRC, the conclusion will side with the cooperative theorists that China will be peaceful even as it grows in power, unless the current or future PRC presidents can consolidate enough political power to become paramount leaders.

## 2. China as a Potentially Aggressive Opportunist

Thomas Christensen stresses that the PRC has used force when it “perceived an opening window of vulnerability or a closing window of opportunity.”<sup>13</sup> Christensen analyzes China’s decisions to use military force during Mao’s reign as a product of his policies. In the post-Mao period, he examines China’s use of force more monolithically. A significant observation from “Windows at War” is that because the PRC has shown a willingness to use force even when facing more powerful adversaries, U.S. deterrence of Chinese assertiveness will require more complex strategies than pure military superiority. Another important point is that China is willing to use force to “shape long-term trends...rather than to resolve a security problem once and for all.”<sup>14</sup> Put in different terms, China, at times, has been willing to use force as a signal even if it knows that it cannot achieve a military victory. Christensen includes the Korean War and the 1954 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises as examples of using force in windows of opportunity, despite military inferiority. Once again, Taiwan is highlighted as the potential hotspot for China-U.S. relations. Of note is that seven of the eight case studies in Christensen’s piece were from Mao’s period, and one was from Deng Xiaoping’s reign. None were from the consensus governance period, potentially highlighting the pattern that this thesis is exploring. Did consensus governance reduce the propensity for China to seize closing political windows of opportunity with military force?

Mark Burles and Abram Shulsky look at China’s doctrinal writings and history and have findings consistent with Christensen’s analysis.<sup>15</sup> Burles and Shulsky argue that even when facing a stronger opponent, China has demonstrated willingness to use military force for political effect, especially with regards to the Taiwan issue, which has potentially troubling implications for China’s future behavior.

Continuing in a mostly unitary state lens, Gerald Segal explores multiple factors in China’s use of force as an element of its foreign policy, including geography, history,

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<sup>13</sup> Christensen, “Windows and War,” 52.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>15</sup> Burles and Shulsky, *Patterns in China’s Use of Force*, 10–14.

ideology, and institutions.<sup>16</sup> While not coming to a clear conclusion on the most important factor for China's use of force, Segal generally argues that China has used force defensively to deter foreign aggression on its territory.<sup>17</sup> While Segal examines China briefly at the domestic politics level in each case study, he rarely ventures inside the state and treats China as a monolithic decision-making entity.

Johnston looks at the Ming dynasty and argues that China's historical experience up to that point has shaped Chinese strategic culture into an offensive realist one that is largely similar to Western realpolitik paradigms.<sup>18</sup> Johnston is mostly projecting China's behavior based on old Chinese writings, however, and he wrote this book before his quantitative analysis on China's MIDs, which found China to be less aggressive despite its growing power. In his later work, he does not address the difference in findings between his two pieces.

### **3. Leaders and Ideology in China**

John Garver's narrative uses the rise and fall of Communist ideology as the driving force for China's foreign policy decisions.<sup>19</sup> Garver's categorizes the history of the PRC's foreign policy in three different periods. The first era was Mao's reign from 1949–1976, where China's foreign relations were shaped by the CCP's quest to consolidate communism. Garver interprets the early conflicts with the United States as a product of shoring up domestic and Soviet support for the revolution, and the later U.S. rapprochement after Mao came to believe that the Soviet brand of communism was going in the wrong direction. The second, Deng Xiaoping's tenure from 1978–1989, by China's drift away from communist economic principles which led to genuine cooperation with the United States. In the third period, from 1990 on, Garver argues that the PRC has begun to experience growing domestic and international tensions as it has reformed economically, become more interconnected with the world, yet refused to institute liberal

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<sup>16</sup> Gerald Segal, *Defending China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Alastair I. Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 1–15.

<sup>19</sup> Garver, *China's Quest*, 1–2.



political changes. These challenges have led the CCP to turn to nationalist ideology as its source of legitimacy and power. Garver predicts future tensions between China and powerful liberal democracies such as the United States or Japan because they represent ideological threats to the survival of the CCP.<sup>20</sup> While Garver does not explicitly state it, his periods of analysis suggest that changes in individual leaders, and potentially the changes in the strength of the individual leaders affected the CCP's different applications of Communist ideology over time, which implicitly supports this thesis's argument.

Bridging domestic politics and ideology as factors in China's foreign policy, Chen Jian examines China during the rule of Mao, and makes the argument that Mao as an individual leader mattered in shaping China's decisions but also that his foreign policy decisions often had a domestic mobilization component.<sup>21</sup> Chen also asserts that Communist ideology was an important explanation for the PRC's foreign policy through 1976.<sup>22</sup>

Zhang Shuguang, Chen Jian, and Andrew Kennedy provide three important sources on analyzing China's decisions to use military force from an individual leader perspective.<sup>23</sup> Both Zhang and Kennedy argue that Mao's experience as a military leader through the Chinese Civil War and the Long March gave him a strong sense of romanticism about using military force to solve national problems. The technological asymmetry of the conflict between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Chinese Nationalists imbued in Mao the belief that manpower, rather than advanced weaponry, was the source of military strength. Chen argues that the PRC's role in the Korean War was primarily a result of Mao's martial tendencies combined with the CCP's need to mobilize its support among the Chinese people after the Chinese Civil War. These books

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<sup>20</sup> Garver, *China's Quest*, 18–26.

<sup>21</sup> Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 10–14.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6–7.

<sup>23</sup> Shuguang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950–1953* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 1–20; Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 5–25; Andrew Kennedy, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru: National Efficacy Beliefs and the Making of Foreign Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2–14.

focus mostly on Mao's decision making during the Korean War. Closely related, Xiaobing Li, Allan R. Millett, and Bin Yu edited a volume of the individual perspectives of PLA generals and the debates among the PRC's leadership before and during the Korean War.<sup>24</sup> Li, Millett, and Yu's compilation demonstrate the differing views on Chinese intervention in contrast to Mao's predisposition to go to war.

#### **4. A Cooperative China**

He Kai summarizes China's foreign policy decisions as a product of the international system and balancing against perceived threats.<sup>25</sup> In a bipolar world, from 1949–1991, the PRC first externally balanced with the Soviet Union against the United States and then reversed its balancing when it perceived the Soviet threat to be greater. While billed as a realist structural argument, the article still attributes much of Sino-Soviet split and the U.S.-China rapprochement to Mao and his decision making.<sup>26</sup> From 1991–1999, He argues that the PRC saw a potentially multipolar world where China would be a pole, and both sought alliances to externally balance as well as building up its capability to internally balance.<sup>27</sup> After the U.S. demonstrated its combat power in the Kosovo War, He asserts that China saw the world as unipolar, and began to internally balance more against U.S. capabilities. He makes no explicit predictions on whether China will be more aggressive towards the United States as it grows in strength, and suggests that China's future attitude depends on the strategic interactions between the two countries. Absent U.S. strategic missteps, He's theory more aligns with the cooperative family. He's article presents the international structure changes as a potential alternative explanation for the differences in China's use of force between the consensus period and the paramount leader period. However, given that multipolar systems are generally the

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<sup>24</sup> Xiaobing Li, Allan R. Millett, and Yu Bin, eds., *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 1–12.

<sup>25</sup> He Kai, "Dynamic Balancing: China's Balancing Strategies Towards the United States, 1949–2005," *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 58 (Dec 2008): 114–115.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 123–24.

<sup>27</sup> He defines internal balancing as increasing one's own military capability to balance against a potential threat, and external balancing as seeking alliances or partnerships with other nations in response to a potential threat.

least stable systems,<sup>28</sup> He's argument suggests that 1991–1999 should have seen a China more fearful of uncertain threats and thus more aggressive. The evidence from MID data referenced earlier demonstrates otherwise, suggesting that just the changes in the international system (or the PRC's perception of the international system) do not explain China's changing behavior.

Generally looking at China as a rational actor and its foreign policy as a product of international and domestic security concerns, M. Taylor Fravel argues that China is more likely to cooperate on territorial disputes when it is facing political instability or internal threats such as ethnic unrest.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, when China senses that its claim or bargaining power over a territorial dispute is weakening, it is more likely to escalate and use force. Fravel's findings are that despite its increased economic and military strength, China has been less likely to use force in territorial disputes than power transition theory or offensive realism would predict. Fravel notes that the PRC's claims over Taiwan is the most likely source of conflict and escalation.<sup>30</sup> He asserts both that China's behavior towards Taiwan should not serve as a general indicator of how it will behave in other territorial disputes, and conversely that China's historical pattern of compromising and cooperating in non-Taiwan disputes should not be used to model its policy towards Taiwan.

Alastair Iain Johnston did one of the first quantitative analyses of China's use of force, using MID data up to 1992. Noting that most of China's disputes have been territorial in nature, Johnston asserts that as China has settled most of its contested territorial claims, its frequency of use of force has decreased.<sup>31</sup> Addressing realist concerns about the rise of China, Johnston argues that China's increased economic and military capabilities have not led to a proportional increase in aggressive behavior

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<sup>28</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 160–63.

<sup>29</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 69.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 317–9.

<sup>31</sup> Alastair I. Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949–1992: A First Cut at the Data," *The China Quarterly*, no. 153 (March 1998): 1–30.

because China's gap between "desired and ascribed [international] status" has closed as it has gained a larger share of power in international organizations.<sup>32</sup>

Allen Whiting, writing in 1975, also outlines that the main source of Chinese aggressiveness comes from territorial issues.<sup>33</sup> Territorial conflicts aside, Whiting argues that despite a reputation for bellicose and extreme behavior, the PRC has actually demonstrated restraint, rationality and stability in its foreign policy decisions. Fravel and Johnston's assessments are consistent with Whiting's on both the importance of territory for China, and its willingness to cooperate or restrain its use of force, but Whiting's analysis is limited by the time in which it was written. Johnston and Fravel have the benefit of writing in a later time with more variation in the PRC's behavior and are better able to depict the patterns in its use of force.

Andrew Scobell examines the international and domestic conditions surrounding several instances of China's use of force spanning from 1949 through 2000. Specifically, he analyzes the interplay between PRC civilian leadership and PLA military leadership, and asserts that civilian leadership has generally been more predisposed to use force than military leadership in China.<sup>34</sup> He also addresses Chinese defensive strategic culture as an influential factor on Chinese uses of force, and how that culture shapes the paradigm of Chinese leaders to consider any of China's military actions as defensive, even if they are objectively considered aggressive by other nations.

## **5. Economic Interdependence and China's Peaceful Rise**

Bruce Russett and John O'Neal establish that economic interdependence (EI) has a statistically significant effect on reducing MIDs.<sup>35</sup> They first point out that in any bilateral trade situation, the partner less dependent on the dyadic trade is less constrained

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<sup>32</sup> Johnston, "China's MID Behaviour," 29.

<sup>33</sup> Allen Whiting, *Chinese Calculus of Deterrence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 3–15.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> Bruce Russett and John O'Neal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 154.

in using force. Then they compare bilateral trade-to-GDP (Gross Domestic Product) ratios of the less trade-dependent partner to the frequency of MIDs between the two trading partners, and find that by increasing trade-to-GDP by one standard deviation (34.1%), the incidence of MIDs decreases by 44%. Russett and O'Neal also find a slightly weaker, but still important relationship between overall trade openness and reduced military assertiveness.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, Keohane and Nye argue that asymmetric trade ties, i.e., economic dependence, can be used as a form of state-to-state coercion.<sup>37</sup> This is illustrative for last several years of cross-strait relations, as Taiwan's trade dependence on China has increased massively. Keohane and Nye's theory predicts that China would use its economic wherewithal as leverage over Taiwan, possibly obviating the need for military force.

In his most recent book, Christensen takes a more optimistic tone than his previous work on China's uses of military force, and asserts that while historical examples of rising great powers predict bloody conflicts, China's rise is different because of its EI with the United States and U.S. allies.<sup>38</sup> Christensen notes that with the unparalleled increase of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and transnational production in the world economy, the nature of interdependence goes beyond the basic measure of trade-to-GDP that Russett and O'Neal use to measure EI.<sup>39</sup> As Russett and O'Neal point out, FDI and transnational production tends to correlate with trade-to-GDP, so this thesis will retain that simpler measure of EI to measure the effect of interdependence on China's aggressiveness.

Thomas Moore and Yang Dixia argue that interdependence has influenced China in being more cooperative.<sup>40</sup> Moore and Yang note that during the 1997 Asian Financial

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<sup>36</sup> Russett and O'Neal, *Triangulating Peace*, 143–46.

<sup>37</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Power and Interdependence revisited," *International Organization* 41, no. 4 (Autumn 1987): 728.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), 37–62.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 42–43.

<sup>40</sup> Moore and Yang, "Empowered and Restrained," 191–229.

Crisis, the PRC imposed economic and financial policies that were costly to itself (such as declining to devalue its currency despite the potential trade advantages) in order to aid the beleaguered region, especially Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea. Not entirely convinced, however, they cite other examples of the PRC's obstinacy in the international realm (e.g., mixed responses to arms proliferation agreements and refusal to abide by international law in South China Sea disputes) as proof that the effect of EI on China's behavior is limited, and that China's cooperative behavior represents "a country accommodating itself to the realities of international power rather than one that embraces the constraints of EI with palpable enthusiasm."<sup>41</sup> Moore and Yang's assessment suggests that in issues of significant national interest and potential conflict, such as Taiwan, EI would not be enough to restrain PRC aggressiveness.

## **6. Theories on Leaders and Decision Making**

There is a significant foundation of international relations theories analyzing the importance of individual leaders in national decision making.<sup>42</sup> These are challenging arguments to make, as there is an implicit counterfactual in every assertion about the role of the individual leader. In other words, if one argues that Leader A lead to national decision B, then the converse is that if Leader A was not present, national decision B would not have happened. Structuralists would likely argue that national decision B would have happened regardless of who was in power, hence national decision B was a product of non-individual forces. As Jack Levy notes, herein lies the tension between contingent and determinist explanations.<sup>43</sup> Determinist explanations generally mean that the international structure or domestic political dynamics are the cause of foreign policy decisions, whereas contingent causes mean that individual decisions were key in influencing policy. To use Levy's language, this thesis will argue that China's use of force during paramount leader period was more subject to contingent factors, while

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<sup>41</sup> Moore and Yang, "Empowered and Restrained," 229.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 29–32; Michael Horowitz, Allan Stam, and Cali Ellis, *Why Leaders Fight* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 13–25.

<sup>43</sup> Jack S. Levy, "Counterfactuals, Causal Inference, and Historical Analysis," *Security Studies* 24, no. 3 (September 2015): 386–387.

military force decisions during the consensus period were more influenced by determinist causes.

Robert Jervis identifies four levels of analysis to describe state behavior: individual decision making, domestic politics, domestic bureaucracy, and the international structure. Jervis argues that except in the most extreme examples, individual leaders and their threat perceptions matter in determining foreign policy.<sup>44</sup> Specifically, within individual decision making, he focuses on the tension between perception and reality and how that shapes the decisions that nations' leaders make.<sup>45</sup> Jervis' theory of perception and misperception is especially useful in analyzing PRC foreign policy behavior in the Cold War period since China's central leaders had disproportionate roles in determining when and how to use military force. Understanding the perceptions of Mao Zedong will lend valuable insight into why China made certain foreign policy decisions during the paramount leader period.

Elizabeth Saunders's method of evaluating the role of leaders is to keep domestic institutions, great-power status, and the international system structure the same.<sup>46</sup> Saunders's framework will be useful for evaluating Mao's role between the Korean War and the 1954 Taiwan Strait Crisis, but unfortunately, all the non-individual conditions change between the paramount leader period and the consensus period, so this thesis will have to use a different method to determine causal factors.

Jervis may provide a potential solution, who suggests comparing different leaders in similar circumstances and to compare the same or similar leader over time or across different contexts. Another method is to contrast differing viewpoints between leaders and their advisers; comparing Mao's rhetoric with those of his advisers will be a useful framework for determining his role during the paramount leader period.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the research question of this thesis implies that the perceptions and predispositions of

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<sup>44</sup> Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions*, 19–20.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 28–29.

<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 10.

<sup>47</sup> Jervis, "Do Leaders Matter and How Would We Know?" *Security Studies* 22, no. 2: 158.

Jiang Zemin in the consensus period were not more important factors than domestic or international pressures in shaping China's decisions to use military force.

Levy and William Thompson outline an institutional constraints model to explain why democracies go to war less than totalitarian states. Despite the PRC not being a democracy, the model may provide a potential explanation for fewer and lower uses of force in the consensus governance period.<sup>48</sup> The model describes checks and balances and dispersion of power within democracies as a mechanism to restraining national decisions to use force. Levy writes that these changes “preclude political leaders from taking unilateral military action...and require leaders to secure a broad base of public support before adopting risky policies.” While not a democracy and not required to directly appeal to voters, the CCP has made political reforms to disperse power since 1989, and the presidents of China from Jiang Zemin on have had to govern more as “first among equals” instead of “core leaders.”<sup>49</sup>

Horowitz et al., study national leaders and their predispositions to use military force, and conclude is that the military experiences of national leaders matters in shaping their decision making on using military force. Specifically, leaders that have military combat experience are more likely to be cautious when using force, and those that have non-combat military experience more likely to be aggressive in their uses of force.<sup>50</sup> Horowitz et al.'s observations may yield important insight into China's uses of force, as Mao Zedong had significant revolutionary and military experience, but Jiang Zemin and the leaders of the PRC since then have represented a “transition of Chinese political leadership from a generation of revolutionary politicians to a generation of technocratic politicians.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Levy and William Thompson, *Causes of War* (Malden, MA: Wiley and Blackwell, 2010), 33–37.

<sup>49</sup> Lampton, *Following the Leader*, 73.

<sup>50</sup> Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis, *Why Leaders Fight*, 34–40.

<sup>51</sup> Lu Ning, “The Central Leadership, Supraministry Coordinating Bodies, State Council Ministries, and Party Departments” in *Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy*, 58.



## 7. Leaders and Decision Making in the PRC

David Lampton continues the review of Chinese foreign policy after 1978 from a mostly domestic politics analysis.<sup>52</sup> The book argues that four key modernizations have been shaping Chinese foreign policy changes post-Mao: globalization, professionalization, decentralization, and corporate pluralization.<sup>53</sup> The main takeaway from the four modernizations is that more of China's political elite is now involved in the decision making and policy making, and "the paramount leader has become less paramount and has been forced to consult more broadly."<sup>54</sup> Within Lampton's edited volume, Lu Ning, Tai Ming Cheung, and Michael D. Swaine's chapters are of particular importance. Lu examines the political reforms that have affected the central leadership structures since 1978; most importantly, the "gradual erosion of the preponderant role of the paramount leader in favor of the leading nuclear circle in the making of foreign policy decisions."<sup>55</sup> Tai Ming Cheung looks at the CMC, its shifting role vis-à-vis the central leadership organizations, and how Jiang Zemin (having come from a non-military background) managed his relationship with the military during his rule as the Chairman of the CMC.<sup>56</sup> Tai's piece argues that the CMC has professionalized and become more institutionalized in the era of reform, and has retained significant influence in China's foreign policy decision making, especially with respect to Taiwan policy. The overall assessment of Lampton's volume is that bureaucratic organizations and governmental roles have become more codified post-1978, which makes the PRC's foreign policy more predictable and less subject to the whims of a paramount leader.

Lu Ning also outlines the changes in the governance structures of the CCP in the consensus period.<sup>57</sup> Lu addresses concerns about PLA "capturing" the foreign policy

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<sup>52</sup> Lampton, *Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy*, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>55</sup> Lu, "The Central Leadership," 57.

<sup>56</sup> Tai Ming Cheung, "China's Central Military Commission," in *Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy*, 64–66.

<sup>57</sup> Lu Ning, *The Dynamics of Foreign-policy Decisionmaking in China* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 10–25.

decision-making process, and states that it has greater policy influence but is still subordinate to civilian CCP leadership. Overall, Lu argues that the institutionalization and pluralization of decision making in the PRC has led to less personalized, more predictable, and more stable foreign policy.

Phillip Saunders and Andrew Scobell's edited volume on the PLA's role in China's security policy decision making has similar findings to both Lampton and Lu's work.<sup>58</sup> Saunders and Scobell assert that the PLA has more clout in determining military issues in the consensus period, but far less influence in political issues. Saunders and Scobell conclude that the PLA is still very much under the control of the CCP. Increased PLA influence in the foreign policy decision-making process, combined with Scobell's earlier findings of PRC civilian leaders being more prone than PLA military leaders to use force, suggests another related cause for fewer and lower uses of force in the consensus period.

#### **D. MAIN FINDINGS**

The MID data referenced in the beginning of the introduction show that China has been involved in fewer disputes in the consensus period (2.57/year) than the paramount leader period (3.63/year). As previously mentioned, when excluding MIDs that did not escalate above threats to use force, the consensus period only had 0.86 MIDs a year compared to 2.33 MIDs a year for the paramount leader period.

This thesis analyzes two potential explanations for this pattern in China's uses of force: economic interdependence and changes in domestic political structure.

China's EI with the world has increased dramatically in the same timeframe that its domestic political structures shifted from paramount leadership to consensus governance. The PRC went from an average of 7% trade-to-GDP in 1960–1976 to 39% in 1989–2015.<sup>59</sup> As noted in the literature review, as a country's EI increases,

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<sup>58</sup> Philip Saunders and Andrew Scobell, eds., *PLA Influence on China's National Security Policymaking* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 3–17.

<sup>59</sup> World Bank, 2015, "Merchandise Trade (% of GDP), China," <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/TG.VAL.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=CN>.

aggressiveness and incidences of military conflict should decrease.<sup>60</sup> The difference in China's interdependence between the paramount leader and consensus period is convincing evidence that increased EI has decreased China's military assertiveness. In addition, China's behavior towards Taiwan in 1999–2002 compared to 1995–1996 suggests an economic leverage dynamic also exists. China-US and China-Taiwan EI was not significantly different in these two periods, but Beijing's behavior was more restrained in the later period. I argue that Taiwan's increased trade dependence on China gave Beijing a sense of confidence that it could inflict economic pain on Taipei if needed, and that Taiwan's reliance on the mainland meant that a declaration of independence was highly unlikely.

My main finding is that, in addition to economic interdependence, the changes in the domestic political structures in the PRC has been a cause for its reduced uses of force over time. Lampton has outlined the changes as the PRC has shifted away from powerful individual leaders to a consensus-based governance process. Levy and Thompson's work explain why this domestic decision-making structure change has had an effect on making China less aggressive: the consensus governance has placed checks and balances one person having overwhelming influence on national foreign policy. As the work on Mao's role in China's conflicts outlines, during the paramount leader period, the PRC's foreign policy was extremely subject to his particular threat perceptions and political goals. These findings contribute to my argument that as China has transitioned from a strong paramount leader political structure to one of consensus-based governance, it has become significantly less likely to use military force, and when it does, it uses that force in a far more restrained fashion.

## **E. CASE STUDIES**

This thesis uses multiple comparative case studies to analyze the patterns of China's use of military force. The case studies will be the decision to join the Korean War in 1950, the TSCs of 1954 and 1958, the TSC of 1995–1996, and the period of cross-strait relations from 1999–2002 when Taiwanese Presidents Lee Teng-Hui and

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<sup>60</sup> Russett and O'Neal, *Triangulating Peace*, 128–129.

Chen Shui-bian made overt attempts to establish international recognition for Taiwan and speeches proclaiming *de facto* independence.

These case studies are chosen for three reasons. One, these case studies keep international variables constant, such as the potential for U.S. involvement and the geographic target of Chinese military force (except Korea). Two, the Taiwan issue was a major concern of territorial integrity and sovereignty for China in the paramount leader period, and the Taiwanese independence movement since the late 1980s has represented a significant threat to CCP legitimacy in the consensus period. China has consistently demonstrated that acute threats to reunification of Taiwan is a major national concern. Maintaining Taiwan in the case studies across the paramount leader and consensus periods ensures that the level of strategic interest to China is similar. Three, the time periods of the case studies allow for analysis on how China's use of force has changed as its political governance structure has shifted from strong paramount leaders to consensus governing. While a different geographic area than Taiwan, the Korean War case study is selected because it remains the one conflict where U.S. and Chinese ground forces saw significant combat with each other. By comparing the 1954 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises with the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis and 1999–2002 period of Taiwan-China relations, the thesis will attempt to demonstrate that under similar conditions, the PRC acted in a much more constrained fashion in the consensus period than the paramount leader period. Considering the importance of Taiwan to China, measuring the PRC's different responses to similar conditions in the strait will demonstrate that something other than the immediate threat is shaping the difference in reaction.

For the paramount leader period, I establish that Mao's perceptions and predispositions had significant influence in shaping China's decisions to use military force. The indicators include contradictions between Mao and his advisers leading up to conflicts, Mao's ability to sway opposition towards his viewpoints, and the political nature of the conflicts highlight Mao's propensity to use military force as a policy option. Especially for the Korean War decision, I also highlight how his life experiences shaped his perceptions compared to those of his advisers, and how that likely made his role as the paramount leader pivotal in Chinese foreign policy decision making. In the consensus

period, I demonstrate that there were powerful voices within Beijing's foreign policy decision-making bodies advocating for more aggressive responses towards Taiwan and the United States, but that consensus-based governing restrained China's actions. I also highlight how China's economic interdependence with the United States and later on, Taiwan's trade dependence on China had a pacifying effect on Beijing's decision making.

## **F. THESIS ORGANIZATION**

Chapter II of the thesis is broken into two major sections. First it examines how the PRC decided to intervene in the Korean War. Then it will analyze why China initiated the 1954–1955 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises. Specifically, the chapter argues that Mao had an irreplaceable role in the decisions to join each conflict, especially the Korean War and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis.

Chapter III explores the PRC's decision to conduct the missile and amphibious exercises that created the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1995–1996 as well as China's response to other periods of Taiwanese separatism such as the statements that Lee Teng-hui made in 1999 and during Chen Shui-bian's first presidency from 2000–2002.<sup>61</sup> This chapter argues that the PRC's response to Taiwanese separatist rhetoric and actions in 1995–1996 and 1999–2002 were shaped by consensus governing restraining the policy preferences of hawkish elements within the CCP. In addition, the chapter argues that economic interdependence with the United States and Taiwan's trade dependence on the mainland both served to reduce China's likelihood to use military force.

The conclusion briefly explores whether these dynamics hold up during Hu Jintao's era and discusses Xi Jinping's reign. Xi is consolidating personal political power to levels not seen since Mao, which suggests that China may become more assertive in its foreign policy. Understanding Xi's policy preferences will be important for American policy makers and strategists, as his predispositions will play a bigger role than his three predecessors' did. Some exploration into his theories on warfare and politics is probably

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<sup>61</sup> Chen Shui-bian's first term was until 2004, but Jiang Zemin stepped down as the PRC's leader in 2002.

worthwhile for additional study. However, since EI remains high and Taiwan continues to be economically bound to the PRC, the potential effect of his consolidated power on China's likelihood to use force may be tamped down by its deep trade ties with the United States and the world.

## II. MAO AS THE PARAMOUNT LEADER IN THE 1950S

In the 1950s, the People's Republic of China (PRC) used military force as an element of its foreign policy in several instances, most prominently in Korea from 1950 to 1953 and against the Kuomintang (KMT) in the 1954 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises (TSC). In all three cases, Beijing acted with significant military force against an entity supported or allied with the United States. Mao Zedong was also the paramount leader of the PRC during this period, with highly consolidated political power over national policy.<sup>62</sup> For these reasons, the Korean War and two TSCs serve as good case studies for this thesis, which is examining whether the amount of power vested in the PRC's top leader shapes when and how China uses military force. As an alternate factor, this thesis is also analyzing the effect of China's economic interdependence (EI) on its military behavior. In the 1950s, China had very weak trade ties with the United States, South Korea, or Taiwan (really, anyone other than the Soviet Union) so it is not likely that EI played much of a role in Beijing's decisions to intervene in the Korean War or initiate either of the 1950s TSCs. However, China's EI with the United States and Taiwan was far greater in the 1990s and early 2000s (the second time period that this thesis is comparing) when another series of crises raised tensions in the Taiwan Strait, and Beijing's responses were more muted than in the 1950s. With this in mind, it is salient to consider whether the change in EI affected Beijing's actions in the two periods. Also important is that today, both Taiwan and Korea represent some of the region's highest potential for conflict (while recognizing that the likelihood is still quite low).<sup>63</sup> The Korean peninsula is still in an active state of war, although it is questionable whether how the PRC would respond if combat were to resume. The continued sovereignty dispute over Taiwan is one of China's core interests, and even if conflict does not occur, it will persist as a driver of tensions between Beijing and Washington.

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<sup>62</sup> Fredrick Teiwes, "The Paradoxical Post-Mao Transition," in *The Nature of Chinese Politics: From Mao to Jiang*, ed. Jonathan Unger (Armonk, NY: East Gate, 2002), 61.

<sup>63</sup> Goldstein, "First Things First: The Pressing Danger of Crisis Instability in U.S.-China Relations," *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013): 54; David Shambaugh, "China and the Korean Peninsula: Playing for the Long Term," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 44–45.

This chapter argues that Mao Zedong, the paramount leader of the PRC, played a pivotal role in determining China's responses to the Korean War and the two 1950s Taiwan Strait Crises. First, the chapter briefly explores the thesis's two independent variables in the 1950s: China's EI and the PRC's leader's power and the domestic political structure within China. The next section analyzes the Beijing's decision-making process leading to intervention in the Korean War in 1950 and demonstrates that Mao was absolutely critical in determining how the PRC responded to the war on the peninsula. The last section examines the two TSCs and concludes that Mao had a strong role (although less definitively than in Korea) in shaping China's actions towards the KMT and its U.S. ally. For each case study, the section briefly discusses international and domestic events leading up to the war or crisis, highlighting the conditions that the PRC was responding to, before presenting analysis in how much the PRC's actions were influenced by the paramount leader.

#### **A. ONE MAN RULE: CHINA'S CONSOLIDATED DOMESTIC POLITICAL STRUCTURE IN THE 1950S**

In this time period, Mao had the power to decisively guide national policy due to his immense prestige, political skill, and the structure of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) governance.<sup>64</sup> Chen Jian notes, "by the late 1940s, Mao Zedong had established himself as the CCP's indisputable leader. His comrades became increasingly accustomed to echo his judgment, rather than challenge his wisdom."<sup>65</sup> Most scholarship on Mao-era Chinese foreign policy depicts him as a dominant leader, especially in the 1950s before the political turmoil of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution unseated his absolute dominance. Zhao Quansheng describes China under Mao as a vertically authoritarian state, "where the paramount leader dominates through a vertical command

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<sup>64</sup> Teiwes, "Post-Mao Transition," 61; Tang Tsou, "Chinese Politics at the Top: Factionalism or Informal Politics? Balance-of-Power Politics or a Game to Win All?" in *Nature of Chinese Politics*, 145; Zhao Quansheng, "Domestic Factors of Chinese Foreign Policy: From Vertical to Horizontal Authoritarianism," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 519, no. 1 (1992): 161.

<sup>65</sup> Chen, *China's Road*, 27.



system.”<sup>66</sup> By Zhao’s description, Mao enjoyed virtually unchecked policy making power, was generally able to impose his views on CCP leadership, and suppress dissenting opinions or political rivals. Tang Tsou provides a slightly different analysis, depicting Chinese politics under Mao as made up of informal factions of CCP elites. He notes, however, that Mao was at the top of these groups, and was exceptionally skilled at keeping the various blocs off-balance. By dividing and conquering, he was able to maintain his absolute power and promote his goals.<sup>67</sup> Fredrick Teiwes observes that Mao was “the ultimate source of major new departures and the final arbiter of political conflict” within the CCP, had a fiery personality that intimidated and dominated his fellow leaders, and enjoyed prestige that “engendered considerable blind faith.”<sup>68</sup> All these interpretations of early PRC politics vary slightly, but they align in showing the clout that Mao had in influencing national policy because of the political power that was consolidated at the paramount leader level.

Furthermore, his policy preferences and threat perceptions were frequently in contravention with the rest of the CCP and People’s Liberation Army (PLA) leadership when deciding how to respond to these three foreign policy crises. In the first decade of the PRC’s existence, its national interests were very much a product of Mao’s interests.<sup>69</sup> The Korean War is the strongest case, with the timing and scale of China’s intervention most clearly demonstrating Mao’s influence in contrast with his compatriots. Indicators of this influence include Mao’s beliefs in military force as a means to solve national problems (often called his military romanticism), his desire to intervene in the war despite other CCP leaders’ reluctance or hesitance, and most importantly, his ability to drive the decision to join the conflict in the face of opposition from other members of the Politburo.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Zhao, “Domestic Factors of Chinese Foreign Policy: From Vertical to Horizontal Authoritarianism,” 161.

<sup>67</sup> Tang, “Chinese Politics at the Top: Factionalism or Informal Politics,” 145.

<sup>68</sup> Teiwes, “The Paradoxical Post-Mao Transition,” 61.

<sup>69</sup> Kennedy, *International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru*, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Zhang, *Mao’s Military Romanticism*, 11.

Beijing's actions during the first TSC does not highlight Mao's specific impact on its foreign policy as definitively as in the Korean War, since reunifying Taiwan and defeating the KMT was a common and agreed-upon position within most of the CCP leadership. However, the timing and political nature of the crisis is suggestive of Mao's role in shaping the PRC's decisions to shell KMT garrisons in the strait in 1954. In the second TSC in 1958, Mao's influence in Beijing's decision making is once again much more prominent. In each of the three incidents in this chapter, Mao prevailed in driving China's foreign policy, his preferences being apparent in the details of China's decision making and actions for each episode. Most importantly, in fitting with this thesis's main question, he was able to do so because of the consolidated power and influence he wielded within China's domestic politics. Considering Mao's higher predisposition for military action compared to other CCP leaders, it is quite plausible that, had Mao not enjoyed as much policy-making power and had been required to seek consensus in driving national action, China's responses to the three crises in the 1950s would have been more pacific.

## **B. SELF-RELIANT AND ISOLATED: CHINA'S MINIMAL ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE 1950S**

Until after Mao's death in 1976 and the beginning of economic reforms in 1979, China was mostly autarkic in its economic policy. However, it did seek trade ties in the 1950s with the rest of the world for the purposes of money and investment to rebuild its war-torn country. Trade data from China during that period is largely unavailable, but some economists have indirectly calculated China's trade from the archives of its trading partners.

For this examination of the Korean War, the most important bilateral trade ties were China-US and China-South Korea. The PRC's total trade in 1950, when it entered the Korean War, was approximately \$1.2 billion. South Korean with the PRC was essentially non-existent for this year. Sino-Soviet trade accounted for \$320 million or 26% of that total, while Sino-American trade represented another 25% of China's trade

that year.<sup>71</sup> China's total GDP, however, was roughly \$71 billion in 1950, so the \$1.2 billion in trade was only about 1.6% of its GDP.<sup>72</sup> This makes China's 1950 trade with the United States and the USSR both around 0.4% of its GDP. While the numbers are small, they are not insignificant. The U.S. and Soviet Union were both important partners of China in 1950. According to one scholar, the United States was, in fact, China's largest trading partner until December 1950.<sup>73</sup> Considering that the Chinese decision to intervene in Korea was made in October 1950, this means that despite having some EI with Washington, Beijing was still willing to go to war in a massive fashion. Notably, by mid-1949, the PRC was already preparing for U.S.-led economic sanctions and began pivoting its trade strategy towards Communist governments.<sup>74</sup> After December 1950, the U.S. economic embargo against the PRC took full force as a response to China's entry into the war, which slashed bilateral trade to almost zero.<sup>75</sup>

In 1954 and 1958, Sino-American trade was still minimal, as Washington's economic embargo remained. China's EI with the United States during the first and second TSC was essentially zero.<sup>76</sup> However, it is relevant to briefly examine China's trade with Japan and Western Europe. They had closely followed the U.S.'s lead in implementing a total embargo of China during the Korean War. Crippled by these sanctions, after the Korean War, China was desperately seeking to convince U.S. allies to break the embargo and re-establish trade ties.

For the first TSC in 1954, the U.S.-led restrictions were still largely enforced by Western Europe and Japan, so EI would not have played an important role in that crisis.

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<sup>71</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Research and Reports, *Economic Relations of Communist China with the USSR since 1950*, May 1959, 3 (Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room). <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79R01141A001400040002-9.pdf>; Bernhard Grossman, "International Economic Relations of the People's Republic of China," *Asian Survey* 10, no.9: 789. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2643030>.

<sup>72</sup> All numbers are in 1970 U.S. dollars.

<sup>73</sup> Amy King, *China-Japan Relations After World War II: Empire, Industry and War, 1949–1971* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 66.

<sup>74</sup> Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft During the Cold War, 1949–1991* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2014), 22–23.

<sup>75</sup> Zhang, *Economic Cold War: America's Embargo Against China and the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949–1963* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001), 31.

<sup>76</sup> Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft*, 56.

However, the PRC's desire to increase EI lends some insight into its decision making for the first TSC. Chinese diplomats used the 1954 Geneva Conference, right before the start of the strait crisis, as an opportunity to strike trade deals most of Western Europe.<sup>77</sup> China's efforts to increase its EI with Western Europe then seems to contrast its sudden heightening of tensions by shelling KMT islands. This highlights the different policy preferences between Zhou Enlai and Mao: while Zhou and his diplomatic delegation were seeking trade ties with U.S. allies and trying to ease international tensions, Mao sought to use military force to highlight the Taiwan issue.

After the first TSC, Beijing appears to have specifically focused on inducing Great Britain to re-establish ties with the hopes that if the U.S.'s closest ally broke from the pack, the rest of the non-Communist world would follow. This strategy actually worked, with London actually lobbying Washington in 1956 to relax some of the trade restrictions. By 1957, Japan, UK, France, and West Germany had all reduced their China trade barriers to the same level as their Soviet trade barriers, a significant reduction from the U.S.-led total embargo against China. While China seems to have given up on establishing trade ties with the United States in the 1950s, it did seek economic relations with American allies and was able to do so successfully starting in 1954 despite U.S. guidance otherwise. The willingness of these allies, such as the U.K. and Japan, to deviate from the U.S.-led embargo in the mid-1950s might have actually emboldened the PRC leading up to the second TSC, having recognized that raising tensions with Washington or Taipei would not necessarily put trade with U.S. allies at risk.<sup>78</sup> In other words, despite China's objective of increasing its international trade ties, in 1958, it may not have been concerned that using military force in the Taiwan Strait would affect its economic relations.

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<sup>77</sup> Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft*, 52–53.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 53–57.

### **C. THE KOREAN WAR**

The Korean War, waged between 1950 and 1953, remains the one instance of direct combat between the United States and the PRC. While the PRC did supply anti-aircraft troops to North Vietnam that shot down U.S. planes during the Vietnam-American War, the Korean War is the only example of U.S. and PRC ground forces exchanging fire and fighting over territory. The legacy of the conflict continues today, as the Korean Peninsula is technically still in a state of war. North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea or DPRK) has become an international pariah, and South Korea (Republic of Korea or ROK) an economic powerhouse. U.S. forces are still stationed in South Korea as a deterrent against North Korean aggression.

The nature and timing of the intervention were products of Mao Zedong's predispositions and immense power in shaping Beijing's foreign policy decisions. Compared to his CCP compatriots, Mao exhibited a stronger affinity to using military force and fighting the United States. He had the means to implement his policy preferences because of his outsized influence and the structure of the PRC's governance, as noted earlier. Since Mao had so much influence in determining national policy and action, his perceptions and decisions essentially became China's perceptions and decisions.

It is probable that China would have stepped into the Korean War at some point as the United Nations (UN) offensive drew closer to the Yalu River, regardless of whether Mao was in charge or not. However, this chapter will demonstrate the contrast in policy preferences between Mao and the rest of the CCP leadership, and that China ultimately acted in a manner that matched Mao's preferences. This means that he was a key driver of why China intervened when it did and why it did so on such a massive scale. Mao's role in China's initial involvement in the Korean War supports this thesis's argument that more consolidated leadership power in Beijing increases the likelihood that it uses military force.

Before diving into analysis, this section briefly outlines key events and meetings in the United States, Soviet Union, DPRK, and PRC that led up to the war and the PRC

intervention. The core of this section argues that Mao was critical to shaping the PRC's decision to join the Korean War. His ability to influence national policy was largely enabled by his supreme role as China's national leader. The paramount nature of Mao's position in turn allowed his perceptions about threats to China, his sense of optimism about the PLA's capabilities against a technologically superior enemy, and his perspective on the use of military force to determine national action.

### **1. The Path to War: January–October 1950**

Throughout 1949, Kim Il-Sung, the leader of North Korea, had been lobbying the Soviet Union's leader, Joseph Stalin, to support a unification effort of the Korean peninsula. Stalin, wary of starting a global war with the United States, refused to support Kim's requests. Stalin's calculus changed in early 1950 when the U.S. secretary of state, Dean Acheson, made his famous National Press Club speech on January 12. Acheson proclaimed that the defense perimeter of the United States extended to Japan and the Philippines. A week prior, on January 5, President Harry Truman had declared that the United States would not intervene in the issue of Taiwan and China.<sup>79</sup> Implicit in both announcements was Korea's exclusion from U.S. defense considerations. Observing both these policy announcements and the U.S.'s prioritization of Western Europe, Stalin concluded that East Asia was more of an opportunity for the Soviet Union to increase its influence.<sup>80</sup> The PRC similarly had serious doubts about U.S. resolve to aid South Korea in the event of a North Korean invasion, and also were likely emboldened by Washington's January 1950 policy declarations.<sup>81</sup>

Around February 2, Stalin began discussions with Kim the prospect of a military offensive to unify the Korean Peninsula. On April 10, Kim met with Stalin and received conditional approval to begin preparation, but was also warned that the Soviet Union would not intervene in the conflict and that Kim would need to secure support from

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<sup>79</sup> Chen, *China's Road*, 102.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas J. Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 52–53.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 58–62.

Mao.<sup>82</sup> Since the end of the Chinese Civil War on October 1, 1949, the PRC had been repatriating to North Korea ethnically Korean troops that had served in the PLA, but otherwise, China had not been providing any support to the DPRK. After meeting with Stalin in April, Kim met with Mao in Beijing on May 13 to ask for China's diplomatic and political support in the Korean War. At that time, Mao offered Chinese troops to Kim, who (arrogantly, according to Mao's interpreter Shi Zhe) turned down the offer.<sup>83</sup> Through the rest of May and June, without much coordination with the PRC, Kim prepared his forces for the invasion of South Korea. Using blitzkrieg tactics, Korean People's Army (KPA) rolled across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel with 75,000 soldiers on June 25, 1950, and began the Korean War. Immediately, the United States reacted and requested an emergency UN Security Council meeting. By June 27, the United States had deployed its 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet to the Taiwan Strait and was preparing its ground forces in Japan for movement to the Korean Peninsula. Meanwhile, ROK forces continued to be pushed south. Within three days of the invasion, the KPA had captured Seoul.

The first U.S. forces arrived from Japan on July 3 and established a defensive perimeter around Pusan, with thousands of more troops on the way. Shocked by the rapid and unexpected U.S. response to the war, Mao and the rest of the CCP leadership shifted their focus from the invasion of Taiwan to the U.S. forces on the peninsula.<sup>84</sup> With the U.S. fleet in the Taiwan Strait and American troops on the peninsula, the PRC postponed its planned summer operation to unify Taiwan under Communist rule.<sup>85</sup> On July 7<sup>th</sup>, CCP leadership, at Mao's order, formed the Northeast Border Defense Army (NEBDA) and began stationing PLA troops along the Yalu River, the border between North Korea and China.<sup>86</sup> By mid-July, NEBDA had grown to approximately 260,000 troops.

In August, U.S. air power began to inflict major losses on KPA logistics lines and DPRK infrastructure. The KPA advance bogged down as the U.S. and UN forces

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<sup>82</sup> Wada Haruki, *The Korean War: An International History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 58–59.

<sup>83</sup> Chen, *China's Road*, 112.

<sup>84</sup> Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 56.

<sup>85</sup> Chen, *China's Road*, 131.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

continued to reinforce its defensive perimeter around Pusan. General Douglas MacArthur, the commander of the UN forces, executed a daring and successful amphibious landing at Inchon on September 15 (seen in Figure 1), which cut off the forward KPA units from their support lines and allowed the Pusan perimeter forces to break out and begin rolling back the North Korean advance. While the original UN mandate had been to counter North Korean aggression, in light of the stunning success of Inchon, the United States began discussing whether or not to continue on the attack and unify the peninsula under the UN command.<sup>87</sup>



Figure 1. The Korean War, Showing the U.N. Offensive into North Korea and the Subsequent PRC Intervention.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Chen, *China's Road*, 164–67.

<sup>88</sup> Charles Scott Kimball, “Korean War Maps,” *The Xenohistorian Weblog* (blog), August 8, 2009, <https://xenohistorian.wordpress.com/2009/08/08/korean-war-maps/>.



By September 27, U.S. and ROK forces recaptured Seoul and continued to advance north to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The same day, President Truman gave his approval to continue the offensive and “seek destruction of the North Korean armed forces.”<sup>89</sup> On October 1, ROK forces crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and MacArthur demanded Kim Il-Sung’s surrender. In the meantime, the PRC had begun preparations to intervene in Korea but gave two final diplomatic warnings to the U.S.: on September 30 and October 2, PRC Premier Zhou Enlai proclaimed that the PRC would consider the U.S. crossing the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as a threat to China, and would be forced to act if that happened. While MacArthur’s troops did not cross the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel until October 9, it was evident beforehand to the PRC that the U.S. would not heed the warnings, and issued its order on October 8 to form the Chinese People’s Volunteers (CPV) and begin deployment into Korea. 260,000 Chinese troops crossed the Yalu starting October 19 and 20, and were actively engaged in combat with UN forces by mid-November. The speed and size of the CPV offensive took the UN forces by surprise, and before long, found themselves battling a hasty retreat to prevent envelopment. By December 6, the CPV had recaptured Pyongyang and forced MacArthur’s forces back across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The war would continue on for over two more years before the DPRK, PRC, and UN command agreed to an armistice that ended hostilities near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel where the war had started. The PRC’s intervention saved the North Korean regime from certain destruction and established the conditions on the peninsula that exist today.

## **2. Mao’s Role in the Korean War**

Mao Zedong played an irreplaceable role in determining Beijing’s response to the Korean War. As noted in the beginning of this chapter, Mao had significant power to influence national policy, which made his perceptions and predispositions very important to shaping China’s actions. This section will demonstrate how Mao’s perceptions and policy preferences differed from his comrades in the CCP leadership, and how those differences manifested in the PRC’s actions on the Korean Peninsula. Mao had two main characteristics that set him apart from the rest of the CCP leadership: a stronger belief in

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<sup>89</sup> Haruki, *Korean War*, 125–26.

the PLA's ability to prevail over technologically superior adversaries and a higher propensity to resort to military force as a policy preference.

Mao's beliefs on warfare, formed during the Chinese Civil War, favored mass infantry-centric strategy (People's War) over technological combined-arms doctrine.<sup>90</sup> Because the PLA defeated the KMT on the mainland despite chronic materiel disadvantages, he was deeply convinced of the PLA's ability to prevail over any better-equipped adversary.<sup>91</sup> In addition, Mao regularly demonstrated military action as his preferred tool for political goals. This worldview is evident both broadly in Mao's political writings (famously, "political power grows from the barrel of a gun") and specifically in his statements and letters leading up to China's entry into the war.<sup>92</sup> As the crisis on the peninsula loomed larger for Beijing, Mao was generally the first to decisively suggest military options while most of his CCP colleagues dithered on a military response to the war.

*a. An Eagerness for War*

Well before October 1950, when PLA forces actually began combat operations on the Korean Peninsula, Mao showed preference for an interventionist approach to the war. In contrast with almost all other CCP leaders, Mao consistently advocated for more aggressive action. Some of this eagerness stemmed from his Communist beliefs, where he sought a glorious victory against a Western imperialist power to demonstrate the strength of socialist ideology to both the Chinese people and the world.<sup>93</sup> In addition to his ideological drive, Mao had a general propensity for military action as means to solve political problems.

As early as August, when the North Korean advance began to slow down and take casualties from U.S. air operations, Mao showed signs of leaning towards intervention.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Christopher Twomey, *The Military Lens: Doctrinal Difference and Deterrence Failure in Sino-American Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 67–70.

<sup>91</sup> Kennedy, *International Ambitions*, 64.

<sup>92</sup> Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 17.

<sup>93</sup> Chen, *China's Road*, 129–30.

<sup>94</sup> Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force*, 82.

In an August 4 Politburo meeting, Mao commented, “If the American imperialists are victorious, they will become dizzy with success, and then be in a position to threaten us. We have to help [North] Korea; we have to assist them. This can be in the form [of] a volunteer force, and be at a time of our choosing, but we must start to prepare.”<sup>95</sup> Beyond Mao and Zhou Enlai, however, there was ambivalence and significant opposition towards intervention among the Politburo and PLA leadership.<sup>96</sup> With few exceptions, this resistance to a peninsular operation remained through October, but Mao’s views ultimately won out.

Robert Jervis provides an analogy that is helpful in measuring how much a national policy is driven by one person. Using the analogy of a house being on fire in the context of international relations, between different individuals there might be a debate on when the house is burning. In the case of German aggression in World War II, “For Churchill, the house was burning soon after Hitler took power in Germany; for Chamberlain, this was the case only after March 1939; and for others, there was never a fire at all.”<sup>97</sup> By comparing rhetoric and statements of different decision-makers within a government during a time of crisis and indecision, we can estimate their individual propensities for assertive policies. In the case of Mao and Korea, the house was on fire in August 1950 when the North Koreans began losing ground against U.S. and ROK reinforcements, but many of the CCP leadership such as Marshal Lin Biao (a revered hero from the Chinese Civil War), Gao Gang (another influential PLA Marshal, NEBDA commander, and eventual logistics officer for the CPV) and Liu Shaoqi (third-in-charge in the Politburo) were still unsure in October 1950 as the United States neared crossing the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. Lin was Mao’s first pick to lead the CPV into Korea, but Lin turned it down, citing illness as the official cause. Many scholars suggest that, considering Lin’s opposition to intervention, the illness was probably a convenient excuse to turn down an assignment that he did not believe in.<sup>98</sup> Marshal Peng Dehuai, the eventual commander

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<sup>95</sup> Shen Zhihua and Neil Silver, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War: Trilateral Communist Relations in the 1950s* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 140.

<sup>96</sup> Scobell, *China’s Use of Military Force*, 83.

<sup>97</sup> Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 20.

<sup>98</sup> Zhang, *Mao’s Military Romanticism*, 80–81.

of the CPV, also demonstrated early ambivalence to military action in Korea. In August, when Mao was exhorting the creation of a volunteer force to help Kim Il-Sung, Peng tepidly mentioned that “the [Korean] problem is relatively complicated...this possibly creates a problem, and our country also ought to be prepared.”<sup>99</sup>

Kim’s official request to Mao for military assistance arrived in Beijing on October 1. As soon as Mao received the plea, he immediately began discussions for action: “On the evening of October 1, Mao convened a meeting with Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and PLA Chief of Staff Zhu De to consider China’s course of action. The meeting lasted late into the night. Consistent with the stance he had taken up to this point, Mao argued that the PRC should intervene. In this, he appears to have been supported by Zhou. Zhu, however, was ambivalent, and Liu was more or less opposed.”<sup>100</sup> Even with prospect of the U.S. military occupying North Korea, Zhu was conflicted and Liu opposed intervention. This small top-level meeting does not appear to have agreed on a course of action vis-à-vis Korea. However, Mao wrote two telegrams immediately after the meeting that suggest that his mind was set and was going to order a PLA deployment regardless of Zhu or Liu’s opposition. Both were address to Stalin, but only one appears in Moscow’s archives, and the other only in Beijing’s archives. Most likely, one went to the Soviet Union, and the other was a draft that never left Beijing.<sup>101</sup> Much analysis has been done on the language of both telegrams. Most scholarship on the Korean War published in the 1990s or before cite the version from Beijing’s records, which paint a clear decision to intervene in Korea along with some concerns about escalation of the conflict and the threat of U.S. air and sea bombardment on China’s coastal and border cities:<sup>102</sup>

(1) *We have decided to send a portion of our troops, under the name of [Chinese People’s] Volunteers, to Korea, assisting the Korean comrades in fighting the troops of the United States and its running dog Syngman*

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<sup>99</sup> Scobell, *China’s Use of Military Force*, 84–85.

<sup>100</sup> Kennedy, *International Ambitions*, 78–79.

<sup>101</sup> Shen and Silver, *Mao, Stalin and the Korean War*, 156.

<sup>102</sup> Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 177.

Rhee. We regarded the mission as necessary. If Korea were completely occupied by the Americans and the Korean revolutionary forces were substantially destroyed, the American invaders would be more rampant, and such a situation would be very unfavorable to the whole East (Emphasis added).

(2) We realize that since we have decided to send Chinese troops to Korea to fight the Americans, we must first be able to solve the problem, that is, that we are prepared to annihilate the invaders from the United States and from other countries, and to drive them out [of Korea]; second, since Chinese troops will fight American troops in Korea (although we will use the name the Chinese Volunteers), we must be prepared for an American declaration of war on China. *We must be prepared for the possible bombardments by American air forces of many Chinese cities and industrial bases, and for attacks by American naval forces on China's coastal areas* (Emphasis added).<sup>103</sup>

The telegram continues with confidence and decisiveness in action despite acknowledgement of American air superiority:

(5) ... *The enemy would control the air while our air force, which has just started its training, will not be able to enter the war with some 300 planes until February 1951. Therefore, at present, we are not assured that our troops will be able to annihilate an entire U. S. army once and for all. But since we have decided to go into the war against the Americans, we should be prepared that, when the U.S. high command musters up one complete army to fight us in a campaign, we should be able to concentrate our forces four times greater than those of the enemy...so that we can guarantee a complete and thorough destruction of one enemy army* (Emphasis added).<sup>104</sup>

The above telegram, however, is not present in Soviet archives. The one in Soviet records depict a much less decisive CCP leadership and focuses exclusively on the difficulties of intervening in Korea:

I received your telegram of 1 October 1950. We *originally* planned to move several volunteer divisions to North Korea to render assistance to the Korean comrades when the enemy advanced north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. *However, having thought this over thoroughly, we now consider that such*

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<sup>103</sup> Shen Zhihua, "The Discrepancy Between the Russian and Chinese Versions of Mao's 2 October 1950 Message to Stalin on Chinese Entry into the Korean War: A Chinese Scholar's Reply," trans. Chen, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* (CWIHPB) 8–9 (Winter 1996–97): 237.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

*actions may entail extremely serious consequences.* In the first place, it is very difficult to resolve the Korean question with a few divisions (our troops are extremely poorly equipped, there is no confidence in the success of military operations against American troops), the enemy can force us to retreat. In the second place, it is most likely that this will provoke an open conflict between the USA and China, as a consequence of which the Soviet Union can also be dragged into war, and the question would thus become extremely large. *Many comrades in the [Central Committee Communist Party of China] judge that it is necessary to show caution here* (Emphasis added).<sup>105</sup>

Comparing the two telegrams lends a few insights. The draft telegram clearly demonstrates Mao's belief in the PLA's ability to prevail over U.S. forces. It also shows that Mao was concerned about U.S. air and sea power, yet still supported intervention. Lastly, the actual telegram sent to Moscow indicates that the rest of the CCP leadership was probably far less optimistic about intervention. As some scholars have suggested, Mao probably felt pressured to dispatch the less aggressive note to Stalin, both to foster consensus within the Politburo and also as a tactic to pressure Stalin into providing more materiel and air support for the CPV.<sup>106</sup>

The next day, another Politburo meeting convened to discuss the intervention. Despite the opposition that Mao had faced the day before, he started the meeting with the statement that "the question now is not whether or not but how fast we should send troops to Korea."<sup>107</sup> He skipped any discussion about whether or not Beijing should act, and moved straight to how and when. At this point, Mao had already decided to intervene, and was working to convince his colleagues and ensure their support.

At an expanded Politburo meeting on October 4, Mao asked the attendees to voice any concerns or disadvantages to intervening in Korea. The opposition to intervention in this meeting was fierce, listing domestic economic concerns, the recent ending of the Chinese Civil War, the need for consolidation of Communist control of China, and U.S.

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<sup>105</sup> Shen, "Discrepancy Between the Russian and Chinese Versions of Mao's 2 October 1950 Message," 238.

<sup>106</sup> Shen, "Discrepancy Between the Russian and Chinese Versions of Mao's 2 October 1950 Message," 240–41; Shen and Silver, *Mao, Stalin, and the Korean War*, 156–57; Haruki, *Korean War*, 129–30.

<sup>107</sup> Goncharov, Lewis, and Litai, *Uncertain Partners*, 173.

military technological superiority.<sup>108</sup> Peng Dehuai arrived late, having been summoned from Xian, and quietly observed the rest of the meeting that day. In his memoirs, Peng writes that he could not sleep that night and continued to dwell on the war situation in Korea. The following day, October 5, the meeting reconvened, where Peng declared his support for the intervention and asserted that “the tiger (the United States) wanted to eat human beings; when it would do so would depend on its appetite. No concession could stop it...we should dispatch troops to Korea.”<sup>109</sup> While Chen Jian argues that Peng’s declaration of support was pivotal to changing the nature of the October 4–5 meetings, the meetings were likely for Mao to build internal political support for the decision he had already made.<sup>110</sup> At the October 4–5 meeting, Peng was also appointed as the commander of the CPV and Gao Gang as the chief logistician for the CPV. Peng’s support for the intervention was unwavering after this point, but as some scholars observe, he spent an entire day in self-reflection and deliberation before declaring his support, likely due to his ambivalence towards the mission.<sup>111</sup>

Mao established the CPV on October 8, issued its deployment orders, and announced to Kim that China would support North Korea. At the same time, Zhou Enlai and Lin Biao departed Beijing for the Soviet Union to meet with Stalin. The trip was an attempt to secure additional support from Stalin, especially air assets to defend China’s cities and the CPV advance into Korea. While meeting with Stalin, Zhou and Lin painted a pessimistic picture about China’s domestic economic and political concerns as well as the challenges that the PLA would face against the technically superior U.S. forces.<sup>112</sup> Considering that Mao had already ordered the CPV to move into Korea, this pessimism was more likely a tactic that Zhou was using to obtain more support from the Soviet Union, especially air support. Zhou and Lin’s efforts were largely unsuccessful, however, and the CPV would deploy without any Soviet air cover. As noted earlier, the telegrams

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<sup>108</sup> Goncharov, Lewis, and Litai, *Uncertain Partners*, 180.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>110</sup> Chen, *China’s Road*, 184.

<sup>111</sup> Zhang, *Mao’s Military Romanticism*, 82; Scobell, *China’s Use of Military Force*, 84–85.

<sup>112</sup> Haruki, *Korean War*, 132.

to Stalin demonstrate that Mao considered U.S. air power a major concern. Despite the lack of Soviet aerial coverage, Mao pushed forward with the operation. The following section will cover this in more detail.

Mao seems to have decided that Chinese entry into the Korean War was inevitable by August 1950, but was not entirely set on how or when until the first week of October, as the U.S. offensive approached the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel and Kim requested Mao's assistance. However, most of Mao's compatriots were not on the same, considering that even in October, the majority were either against or on the fence about taking action on the peninsula. Despite this resistance, China deployed its forces as Mao directed.

***b. A Long Marcher's View of the PLA***

Mao's experience as leader of the CCP fighting the KMT in the Civil War and Japan in World War II imbued him with a strong sense of martial efficacy towards the PLA and a romantic notion about using military force to solve national political problems.<sup>113</sup> In this context, martial efficacy is the belief in one's military ability to prevail, even when facing disadvantages in capability.<sup>114</sup> Throughout the Civil War, the PLA's ability to survive demonstrated to Mao the strength of humans over technological superiority.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, Mao believed in a deterministic notion of a weak power challenging a strong power and transitioning to become stronger through the conflict.<sup>116</sup> In his study of warfare, Mao found that "under certain conditions, the initially weak power often managed to survive the outbreak of war, gradually enhanced its strength, became relatively or even absolutely stronger than its adversary, and eventually won the war."<sup>117</sup>

This is not to say that Mao was the only CCP leader convinced of the efficacy of people's war and the PLA. Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, and Lin Biao were all Long

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<sup>113</sup> Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 12–30; Chen, *China's Road*, 128–29; Kennedy, *International Ambitions*, 53.

<sup>114</sup> Kennedy, *International Ambitions*, 4.

<sup>115</sup> Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 25–26.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–29.

<sup>117</sup> Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 19



Marchers and contributed significantly to CCP political and military thought.<sup>118</sup> Having fought alongside Mao in the Civil War, they also understood the strengths of People's War against better equipped adversaries. However, they all diverged from Mao in their eagerness to pit the PLA against a military as advanced as the United States.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, as Zhang notes, "No single CCP leader had written as extensively on warfare as Mao did," which likely strengthened his position as the premier strategist and policy decision-maker in the early PRC's timeframe.<sup>120</sup>

Kennedy's analysis of Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao provide some additional detail on the differences between Mao and his comrades: "This divergence between Mao and Liu does not seem surprising in light of their very different backgrounds. Unlike Mao, Liu only began to consider military issues seriously in 1937. Although he seems to have gained a healthy respect for the resilience of the CCP forces, Liu never approached Mao's level of experience in military matters."<sup>121</sup> Unlike Liu, Lin Biao did have significant experience leading the PLA during the Civil War and might have had a similar perspective on mass infantry tactics beating better-equipped forces. Yet, he considered the PLA adventure into Korea to be a mistake. What is likely here is Lin's international experience. From 1939 to 1942, he was in Moscow for medical treatments, and there had witnessed the capabilities of mechanized Western militaries firsthand during World War II: "Lin was therefore better positioned to see how much more advanced Western militaries were than the nationalists [KMT], and thus to appreciate the limits of what the PLA had accomplished in the civil war."<sup>122</sup> Mao's exposure to combat up to that point, while robust, was exclusively the PLA fighting and prevailing over better-equipped militaries.<sup>123</sup> This experience deeply informed Mao's outlook on fighting the United States on the Korean peninsula.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>119</sup> Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force*, 82–88.

<sup>120</sup> Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 27.

<sup>121</sup> Kennedy, *International Ambitions*, 64.

<sup>122</sup> Kennedy, *International Ambitions*, 85.

<sup>123</sup> Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 25–27.

Notably, despite U.S. nuclear superiority, Beijing went to war with United States. Mao's views toward nuclear weapons explains some of this brazenness. In August, Mao commented that even if the U.S. decided to use atomic weapons against China, "we cannot but allow them to use it because we do not have [the bomb] and thus we are in no position to stop them...we are not afraid [of the atomic bomb] and we just have to get prepared."<sup>124</sup> Later, in October, Mao called nuclear weapons "paper tigers."

In September, before MacArthur's Inchon landing, the divisions in opinions about Korea were apparent in the CCP leadership. As noted earlier, by August, Mao had essentially decided on taking action on the peninsula. Chai Chengwen, the PRC's political counsellor in Pyongyang, met with Lin Biao on September 7 to discuss intervention in Korea. During the meeting with Chai, Lin expressed "strong reservations about sending Chinese troops to Korea."<sup>125</sup> According to Chai, "at one point, Lin even asked [him] if the North Koreans had the determination to fight a guerrilla war if the situation reversed."<sup>126</sup> Mao, on the other hand, was much more optimistic about facing the United States in Korea. In a speech to the Central People's Government Council on September 5, Mao asserted that the United States "was waging an unjust war of aggression and lacking people's support."<sup>127</sup> He went on to challenge notions of U.S. military superiority by highlighting its extended responsibilities from Western Europe to East Asia, long supply lines, and low combat ability.<sup>128</sup> In this speech, Mao once again addressed the threat of U.S. nuclear weapons and dismissed it as a non-concern. As the conflict developed, Mao continued to shape the decision-making process of the CCP leadership by dismissing U.S. strengths and emphasizing superior Chinese military morale as an equalizing factor.

The Inchon landing and the subsequent rollback of the KPA in late September sped up Mao's preparations for war. In a letter to Gao Gang (NEBDA commander) after

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>125</sup> Chen, *China's Road*, 153.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 153–54.

Inchon, Mao wrote, “Apparently, it won’t do for us not to intervene in the war. You must accelerate preparations.”<sup>129</sup> Meanwhile, the UN forces continued to rolled the KPA back to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Given the lack of coordination and communication between the PRC and the DPRK, it is likely that up until October 1, Mao and the PLA leadership were aware of the dire nature of the war, but not the degree of direness.<sup>130</sup> That changed on October 1 when Kim Il-Sung officially requested PRC assistance. Kim’s plea forced the question of intervention for CCP leadership, but most Mao’s colleagues still expressed strong concerns with taking military action on the peninsula. Despite their hesitance, by October 8, Mao had signed his order to establish the CPV and deploy onto the peninsula en masse.

As highlighted earlier in the telegrams to Stalin, Mao considered U.S. air and sea power an operational threat and recognized American superiority in those domains, yet he continued to advocate for intervention. Once again, his experiences in warfare informed his sense of martial efficacy and military romanticism. He was extremely confident in the tenets of mobile infantry-based land warfare, and did not consider air or sea power to be crucial for victory.<sup>131</sup> Kennedy notes that “Mao’s martial confidence was focused on the prosecution of land warfare. Whereas Mao wrote prolifically about combat on land, he devoted virtually no attention to air or naval combat.”<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Zhang writes that “although [Mao] was well aware of US/UN firepower and air superiority, the CCP chairman was not at all intimidated. Indeed, he even believed that the Chinese ground forces, if they maneuvered well, could wipe out the U.S. Eighth Army...in one fell swoop.”<sup>133</sup> In his meeting with Peng on October 4, Mao said, ‘We have experienced decades of wars...didn’t we beat enemies with superior equipment in all of them?’<sup>134</sup> Given the population-centric nature of the Chinese Civil War and the

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<sup>129</sup> Goncharov, Lewis, and Litai, *Uncertain Partners*, 174.

<sup>130</sup> Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith*, 77–81.

<sup>131</sup> Twomey, *Military Lens*, 67–72.

<sup>132</sup> Kennedy, *International Ambitions*, 53.

<sup>133</sup> Zhang, *Mao’s Military Romanticism*, 85.

<sup>134</sup> Kennedy, *International Ambitions*, 83.

costly and grueling but successful Long March, Mao's military romanticism and confidence about the Korean War makes sense.

Further highlighting Mao's thoughts on air power was Zhou Enlai and Lin Biao's mission to Moscow. They departed Beijing on October 8, the day that Mao signed the order to form the CPV. Zhou and Lin's assignment was to lobby Stalin for air support for the Chinese operation on the peninsula. They were unable to secure immediate air support from the Soviets, however: Stalin told him that it would take two to three months to provide air support for the CPV. When he received the cable on October 12, Mao halted the movement of troops to the Yalu River and recalled Peng from the front to Beijing to discuss a way forward.<sup>135</sup> Mao met with Peng and the rest of the Politburo on October 13, once again discussing the advantages and disadvantages of intervention. Despite the lack of air support, Mao's optimism won out and the PRC leadership decided to press on with the plan.<sup>136</sup> On October 17, Stalin once again backpedaled on air support, complicating the Chinese plans further: "[Stalin] stated that, even if the Soviet air force was sent out, it could only operate north of the Yalu River and would not enter Korea to cooperate in military operations with the Chinese volunteers...on 17 October, Mao sent urgent telegrams to Peng Dehuai and Gao Gang to ask them to come to Beijing for consultation and to postpone the date of sending troops. As a result of the meeting on 18 October, it was decided that troops would still be sent into Korea on 19 October."<sup>137</sup> The fact that Mao issued stop orders and recalled Peng on October 12 and October 18 after receiving Stalin's telegrams demonstrates that, as mentioned before, he was cognizant and concerned with U.S. air power. However, his sense of martial efficacy with the PLA and overall military optimism won out over those concerns. Similar to his attitude towards nuclear weapons, Mao demonstrated concerns with U.S. air power, yet insisted that the CPV would be victorious regardless if they had Soviet air support or not.

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<sup>135</sup> Shen Zhihua and Xia Yafeng, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945–1959: A New History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 78.

<sup>136</sup> Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 84–85.

<sup>137</sup> Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership*, 81.

China faced a far technologically superior adversary in Korea. The United States also had nuclear superiority and controlled the air. Stalin eventually provided significant air support, but for the initial foray, the CPV fought without any cover in the skies. Mao's belief in people's war and the ability of the PLA to succeed against more advanced forces explain the PRC's decisive intervention despite facing such a well-equipped opponent. Almost all of Mao's colleagues in the CCP were at least ambivalent if not clearly resistant to PLA operations in Korea. From political thinkers like Liu Shaoqi to seasoned military leaders like Zhu De and Lin Biao, the prospect of diving into war against the United States was extremely unpalatable. Mao, on the other hand, was undeterred in his beliefs about the PLA's efficacy, even when facing the powerful United States. Against all the political inertia within the CCP, Mao prevailed in asserting his vision on the PRC's policy and action towards the Korean War.

#### **D. THE 1954–1955 TAIWAN STRAIT CRISIS**

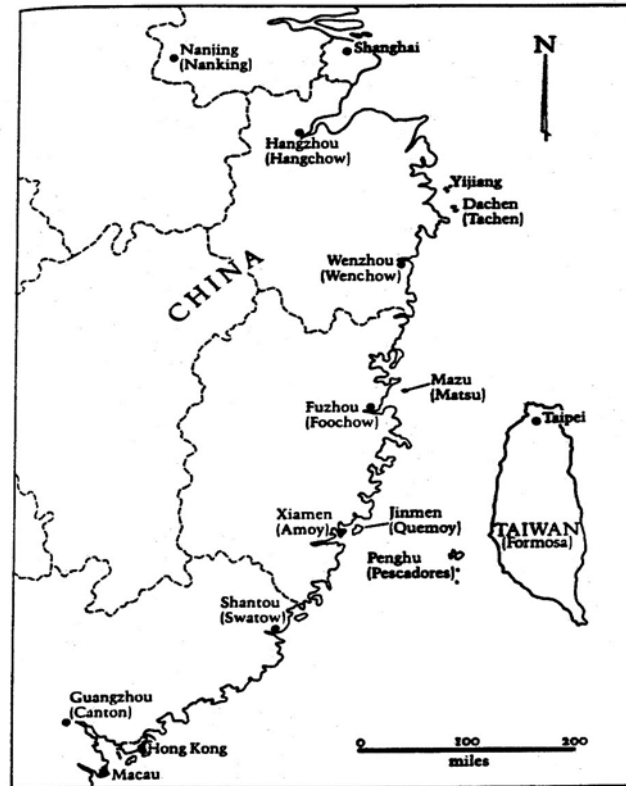
In 1954, the PRC initiated a series of intense artillery shelling, maritime interdiction, and aerial raids on offshore islands held by the KMT. Most of the conflict was centered around Jinmen and Mazu, two heavily fortified KMT islands off the coast of Fujian province, as seen in Figure 2. Between both the KMT and PLA, over 1,000 casualties were sustained.<sup>138</sup> In early 1955, PLA forces conducted seizures of the Dachens and Yijiangshan, a group of smaller KMT-held islands further north near Shanghai. In the one-day battle over Yijiangshan, the two sides suffered over 900 killed and 1,500 wounded or captured. In February, the United States assisted the KMT in evacuating 32,000 troops and civilians from the Dachens, and the PLA occupied the islands afterwards.<sup>139</sup> This incident was the first of three Taiwan Strait Crises (TSC) that raised tensions between Washington and Beijing over Taiwan. It accelerated the signing of the U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty that codified American support of the KMT and spurred American discussions about using nuclear weapons in the case of war in

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<sup>138</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 233

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

Asia.<sup>140</sup> The treaty, although since abrogated, remains in a lesser form in the Taiwan Relations Act, still informs relations between Washington, Taipei, and Beijing.



Offshore islands in the Taiwan Strait. Copyright Stanford University Press.

Figure 2. KMT-Held Offshore Islands Yijiang and Dachen (Near Zhejiang Province) and Mazu and Jinmen (Near Fujian Province).<sup>141</sup>

During the first TSC, Mao was still very much the paramount leader within the CCP as during the Korean War. The CCP began to experience domestic political shakeups in the late 50s and 60s, some of which challenged Mao's supremacy at times, but in 1954, he was the indisputable leader as noted in the beginning of this chapter.

<sup>140</sup> Robert Suettinger, "U.S. 'Management' of Three Taiwan Strait 'Crises,'" in *Managing Sino-American Crises: Case Studies and Analysis*, eds. Michael Swaine, Zhang Tuosheng and Danielle Cohen, (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), 254–57.

<sup>141</sup> Gordon Chang and He Di, "The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954–1955: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence?" *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 5 (December 1993): 1503.

This section does not argue that the first TSC was exclusively a product of Mao's predispositions, certainly not to the extent that Korea was. Reunifying Taiwan and defeating the KMT were such high priorities for all of CCP that any leader would likely have resumed military operations to fulfill those objectives once the Korean War was over. Before Mao redirected the PLA to support Kim Il-Sung on the Korean peninsula, it had been waging fierce campaigns to seize offshore KMT holdings like Hainan Island. At the same time, it was defending the mainland from incursions by both KMT guerrillas and regulars.<sup>142</sup> The Korean War and the U.S. deployment of the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet to the Taiwan Strait put most of these operations on hold. After Korean War hostilities ended in 1953, Beijing was eager to return its attention to finishing its Civil War. Reunification of Taiwan with the mainland was and continues to be a core objective for the PRC. The unwavering strategic importance of Taiwan makes parsing out Mao's role more challenging, since during his tenure, there was little evidence of dissension about Beijing's cross-strait policies amongst CCP leadership.<sup>143</sup>

However, it does appear that Mao's influence was important specifically in the decision to shell Jinmen and Mazu as a political statement to a worsening cross-strait situation. The shelling of the KMT garrisons was intended to center international attention on U.S. meddling in China's domestic affairs, signal Beijing's disapproval of the pending U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty, and mobilize the Chinese population around building a Communist society.<sup>144</sup> The episode of "artillery diplomacy," as Taylor Fravel calls it, bears many similarities to Mao's well-documented predisposition to use of military force for political purposes.<sup>145</sup> On the other hand, the assaults on Yijiangshan and Dachen islands had mostly military goals of securing the Chinese coastline and

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<sup>142</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 229–31.

<sup>143</sup> Niu Jun, Chinese Decision Making in the Three Military Actions Across the Strait," in *Managing Sino-American Crises*, 295.

<sup>144</sup> Allen Whiting, "China's Use of Force 1950–96, and Taiwan," *International Security* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 108–9; Michael Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950s: A New Look at the Taiwan Strait Crises and the Sino-Soviet Split," *Modern China* 34, no. 4 (October 2008): 481–83; He Di, "The Evolution of the People's Republic of China's Policy Towards the Offshore Islands," in *The Great Powers in East Asia 1953–1960*, eds. Warren Cohen and Akira Iriye (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 224–26; Chang and He, "Absence of War," 1507–8.

<sup>145</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 237.

continuing the campaign to defeat the KMT.<sup>146</sup> With this military purpose in mind, CCP leadership would have likely have had a stronger consensus towards supporting the Yijiangshan and Dachen island operations. As such, compared to the Korean War, the first TSC is not as strong of a case of Mao's perceptions or predispositions overriding his compatriots' policy preferences. The first TSC, especially the small island seizures, arose in this context of the CCP wanting to defeat the KMT militarily, end the Civil War, and reunify Taiwan with the mainland. Mao's role in the decision making for the first TSC appears mostly in the artillery bombardments of Jinmen and Mazu, and the evidence is much more inferential.

This section first describes the key events that set the scene for the first TSC. It follows with an analysis of the evidence that suggests Mao's influence in determining the PRC's actions to the cross-strait situation in 1954–1955, specifically the artillery shelling of Jinmen and Mazu.

### **1. Restarting the Civil War**

The Korean War armistice was signed in July 1953, bringing three years of bloody combat to an end. CCP leadership welcomed this easing of international tensions that would allow them to turn their attention back to ending the Civil War, consolidating control over China, and focus on socialist economic development.<sup>147</sup>

The CCP wasted little time in restarting its campaign to reunify Taiwan. In December 1953, PLA general Chen Yi, commander of the East China Military Region, submitted a plan to Mao that involved a major military and infrastructure build-up in Fujian Province with the eventual intent of attacking Jinmen, the strongest of the KMT garrisons along the coast. Mao initially approved of this plan. Chen Yi established a joint headquarters for operations and throughout the first few months of 1954, made preparations for the campaign against Jinmen.<sup>148</sup> Around May or June, Mao and other

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<sup>146</sup> Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations," 481; Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 238; Chang and He, "Absence of War," 1510.

<sup>147</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 167.

<sup>148</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 167–68.



military strategists in Beijing decided that focusing on the smaller islands across from Zhejiang Province (Dachen and Yijiangshan) would make more tactical sense, both because they were weaker garrisons and a more present threat to Shanghai, the PRC's main industrial center.<sup>149</sup> In this new plan, there was no mention of attacking Jinmen.<sup>150</sup>

Both the Soviet Union and PRC started discussing the idea of peaceful co-existence with the capitalist world around this time, as well, moderating their approaches to spreading Communism.<sup>151</sup> China began earnest efforts to help settle post-colonial conflicts peacefully, most notably at the Geneva Conference in July 1954. Zhou Enlai played a major role in the negotiations that ended the First Indochina War and established Laos, Cambodia, and the two Vietnams.<sup>152</sup> Most CCP leaders, including Mao, heralded China's role in Geneva as a major diplomatic success that reduced the likelihood of another direct Sino-American confrontation and elevated the PRC's image in international affairs as a broker for peace and responsible world power.<sup>153</sup>

Meanwhile, the United States began discussions with Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the KMT, on establishing a mutual defense treaty. Most meetings between Washington and KMT officials were secret, but Beijing caught wind of the deliberations in mid-1954.<sup>154</sup> The prospect of a treaty was extremely concerning for the CCP and Mao, as it represented foreign meddling in what they considered an internal affair, complicated the PRC's plans of finishing the Civil War, and threatened to concretize the division of the country. Concurrent with the proposed US-Taiwan treaty, Washington was pursuing a regional alliance construct with several Asian and European states called the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO).<sup>155</sup> The United States aspired to make SEATO a

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<sup>149</sup> He, "PRC Policy Towards the Offshore Islands," 224.

<sup>150</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 168.

<sup>151</sup> Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations," 481.

<sup>152</sup> Chen Jian and Shen Zhihua, "The Geneva Conference of 1954: New Evidence from the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China," *CWIHPB* 16 (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 7-8.

<sup>153</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 206; Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations," 482.

<sup>154</sup> Chang and He, "Absence of War," 1508.

<sup>155</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 236.

Southeast Asian equivalent of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which to the CCP appeared as an attempt to contain China with a network of alliances. In addition, Beijing feared that Washington would incorporate its KMT treaty into the SEATO network, which would increase Chiang Kai-shek's international support and legitimacy.<sup>156</sup>

After the successful conclusion of the Geneva Conference, Mao sent Zhou Enlai a memo, dated July 23, that criticized China's failure to bring attention to the Taiwan issue and exhorted further action:

After the end of the Korean War, we failed to highlight the task [the liberation of Taiwan] to the people throughout the entire country in a timely manner (we were late by about six months). We failed to take necessary measures and make effective efforts in military affairs, on the diplomatic front, and also in our propaganda to serve this task. If we do not highlight this task now, and if we do not work for it [in the future], we are committing a serious political mistake.<sup>157</sup>

Immediately, the CCP began a propaganda campaign titled "We Must Liberate Taiwan." A revised campaign plan for the assault on the Dachen and Yijiangshan Islands also circulated PLA headquarters at the same time. Notably, the new plan included Fujian-based PLA shore batteries bombarding Jinmen.<sup>158</sup> On September 3, the PLA began the first Taiwan Strait Crisis with several days of intense shelling of Jinmen and Mazu and continued its preparations to take the KMT-held offshore islands.

## **2. Mao and the CCP Confront Taiwan and the U.S.**

Reinitiating hostilities against the KMT was not necessarily a decision specific or unique to Mao, as the CCP saw the operations mostly in the context of continuing the civil war that had been mostly paused during the Korean War.<sup>159</sup> However, three characteristics of the September artillery exchanges establish Mao's role in that decision. First, the timing and international context of attacks suggest that they were more political than military. As shown in Korea, Mao had well-documented inclinations to use military

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Chang and He, "Absence of War," 1508.

<sup>158</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 168.

<sup>159</sup> Chang and He, "Absence of War," 1504.

force for political goals, which supports the likelihood that the bout of artillery diplomacy in the Taiwan Strait was also driven by Mao. Second, the CCP's rhetoric and internal communications leading up to the attacks establish that Mao was key to the decision to shell Jinmen and Mazu.<sup>160</sup> Lastly, while more inferential, Beijing demonstrated a very cautious approach to engaging the KMT when U.S. forces were around, and generally sought to avoid open confrontation with the Americans. This is likely an indicator of Mao's evolution as a leader after the Korean War experience, after which he better understood the disadvantages that the PRC faced against the United States militarily.

As noted previously, the PLA assaults on Yijiangshan and Dachen islands in early 1955 were mostly military objectives to weaken KMT positions and reduce their ability to interdict shipping in and out of Shanghai.<sup>161</sup> The two KMT garrisons on these islands were also the weakest out of all their offshore islands, and the PLA determined that going after the smallest posts would be most feasible while providing its nascent amphibious forces experience for eventual attacks on Mazu, Jinmen, and Taiwan itself.<sup>162</sup> Distinguishing the September shelling from the January and February island seizures is important as it contrasts the political nature of the former against the operational focus of the latter.

The shelling of the larger islands had largely political objectives, and were part of a greater propaganda campaign to raise international and domestic awareness about the Taiwan issue. In July 1954, Beijing began heavily broadcasting the importance of "Liberating Taiwan" both domestically and to the international community. Primarily, the artillery campaign was intended to center international and domestic attention on what Beijing saw as foreign intervention in a civil war. Indeed, Ye Fei, the military commander assigned to execute the shelling seems to have grasped the political nature of his operation and its linkage with the "Liberate Taiwan" information campaign.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 168.

<sup>161</sup> Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations," 481.

<sup>162</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 238; Chang and He, "Absence of War," 1510.

<sup>163</sup> Xiaobing Li, "PLA Attacks and Amphibious Operations During the Taiwan Strait Crises of 1954–55 and 1958," in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience Since 1949*, eds. Mark Ryan, David Finkelstein, and Michael McDevitt (New York: East Gate, 2003), 148.

Relatedly, the PRC was intent on demonstrating its claim over Taiwan and highlighting the cross-strait issue as distinct from the settlements of the Geneva Conference. The third impetus was to challenge Washington in its efforts to construct a regional security network to contain China and sign the defense treaty with Taiwan.<sup>164</sup>

These political objectives are products of Mao's perceptions and influence in the PRC's foreign policy. It is possible that Beijing would have attacked Jinmen and Mazu at some point as a part of its military campaign to unify Taiwan, even if Mao had not been in charge. However, the PLA was in no position to invade Jinmen and Mazu when it initiated the barrages.<sup>165</sup> It shelled the islands while preparing for operations on the much smaller northern garrisons at Yijiangshan and Dachen, but there is no indicator that PLA forces were poised to conduct landings on either Jinmen or Mazu at that time. Politburo plans reveal that the ultimate goal was an invasion of Taiwan, but that offensives against Jinmen, Mazu, or Taiwan would have to come much later after the PLA had built up more robust amphibious capabilities.<sup>166</sup> This means that the artillery strikes, while deadly, probably did not have military goals. What seems more likely is that Mao suddenly became concerned about the Taiwan issue after the Geneva Conference and decided on military force as a solution. There is also some evidence that Mao sought to use heightened cross-strait tensions to mobilize the domestic population as a way of revitalizing the Communist revolution. On July 23, Mao sent a telegram to Zhou Enlai that highlights his thinking:

The Central Committee recently discussed the situation related to the Geneva Conference, and it believes that after the agreements in Korea and Indochina, the United States is unwilling to accept its failure at the Geneva Conference, and will inevitably continue to carry out the policy of creating international tension...the United States will surely continue to use Taiwan to carry out pirate-style robberies of ships from various countries coming to our country...

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<sup>164</sup> Chang and He, "Absence of War," 1510; Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 236; Christensen, "Windows and War," 59; Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations," 484; Chen, *Mao's China*, 168.

<sup>165</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 167–68.

<sup>166</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 238; Chang and He, "Absence of War," 1510.

In order to break up the collaboration between the United States and Chiang and to keep them from joining military and political forces, we must announce to our country and the world the slogan of the Liberation of Taiwan. It was improper of us not to raise the slogan in a timely manner after the cease-fire in Korea. If we were to continue dragging our heels now, we would be making a serious political mistake.<sup>167</sup>

Right before this telegram and the start of the “Liberate Taiwan” campaign, China had just scored a public diplomacy victory at the Geneva Conference when Zhou Enlai helped successfully negotiate an end to the roiling conflict in Indochina.<sup>168</sup> Why, then, would the PRC immediately stoke up regional tensions after such a diplomatic achievement? Just two weeks before, on July 7, the CCP Central Committee had sent Zhou another telegram boasting that “in Geneva, we grabbed the peace slogan...on the other hand, the Americans did not grab the peace slogan; they want to fight...looking at the general international situation, the U.S. is quite isolated.” He Di notes Beijing welcomed the period of regional calmness with the Korean War armistice and the Geneva Conference.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, while the July 23 telegram was extremely pessimistic about U.S. attitudes towards the outcome of the Geneva Conference, on July 19, Zhou Enlai wrote optimistically to Beijing that “We do not necessarily need to put any pressure on the conference since the United States made their position clear [that it would abide by any honorable settlement], Britain and France began showing a true spirit of conciliation...”<sup>170</sup> The change in tone between Beijing’s memos on July 7 and 23, combined with Zhou’s note on July 19, indicates that something must have quickly changed the Central Committee’s policy direction vis-à-vis the KMT in those couple of weeks. There is little evidence to clarify what caused the change specifically, but what seems possible is Mao’s impulse to maintain the revolution: a combination of what Michael Sheng calls “Mao’s erratic policy behavior” and what Chen Jian asserts was

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<sup>167</sup> Zhang Sulin, “The Declassification of Chinese Foreign Ministry Archival Documents,” trans. Chen Zhihong and Zhao Han, *CWIHPB* 16, 83; Chang and He, “Absence of War,” 1508.

<sup>168</sup> Sheng, “Mao and China’s Relations,” 482.

<sup>169</sup> He, “PRC Policy Towards the Offshore Islands,” 224.

<sup>170</sup> Zhang, “Declassification of Chinese Foreign Ministry,” 73.

“Mao’s aspiration for creating new momentum for his continuous revolution.”<sup>171</sup> A later paragraph of the July 23 telegram confirms the domestic mobilization objectives:

The introduction of the task [highlighting the liberation of Taiwan] is not just for the purpose of undermining the American-Jiang plot to sign a military treaty; rather, and more importantly, by highlighting the task we mean to raise the political consciousness and political alertness of the people of the whole country; we mean to stir up our people’s revolutionary enthusiasm, thus promotion our nation’s socialist reconstruction.<sup>172</sup>

It seems that the Mao suddenly became fearful that the Korean armistice and Geneva Conference’s solidification of two governments in both Korea and Vietnam might lead to a similar international agreement that permanently separated Taiwan from the mainland.<sup>173</sup> Mao saw an opportunity to challenge this trend and he approached the problem with his propensity for using force for political objectives. With no known U.S. forces in vicinity, attacking Jinmen had low risk of escalation with the United States while drawing international attention to the situation and demonstrating China’s discontent with the situation while also mobilizing the Chinese people.

Around the same time, the Central Committee promulgated a confidential instruction related to the “Liberate Taiwan” campaign that directed the military focus to KMT, not the United States. The memo continued on to say that the United States should not be the direct target and that challenges to Washington should be solely in the diplomatic sphere.<sup>174</sup> The PRC’s cautiousness in engaging the United States militarily during the first TSC reflects some of changes in Mao’s perspective after the Korean War. While he typically exhorted Beijing’s Korea foray as a success, it seems that both he and his CCP compatriots learned that the PLA faced significant disadvantages against the U.S. military.<sup>175</sup> In both 1950s TSCs, Mao demonstrated far greater restraint against U.S. forces compared to Korea, generally concurring with PLA recommendations to limit

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<sup>171</sup> Sheng, “Mao and China’s Relations,” 483; Chen, *Mao’s China*, 169.

<sup>172</sup> Zhang, “Declassification of Chinese Foreign Ministry,” 84.

<sup>173</sup> Christensen, “Windows and War,” 59.

<sup>174</sup> Chang and He, “Absence of War,” 1510.

<sup>175</sup> Chen, *Mao’s China*, 116–17.

operations when the risk of striking American vessels or troops was high. In some instances, Mao appears to have provided even stricter rules of engagement than the PLA commanders desired.<sup>176</sup> PLA forces were given strict instructions to avoid targeting any U.S. vessels or aircraft, even in Chinese air space, unless they were under direct attack. An order from Beijing even forbade bombing the KMT forces on Dachen Island while U.S. ships were in the area.<sup>177</sup>

Beijing's increasing of political and military pressure against the KMT during the first TSC was not exclusively a product of Mao's perceptions or policy preferences. All of China's leaders considered unification of Taiwan a top priority and were extremely concerned about U.S. attempts to prevent those efforts. Most civilian and military leadership were eager to resume the campaign against the KMT after the conclusion of the Korean War. The capture of Yijiangshan and Dachen islands in early 1955 was a military operation as a part of that larger campaign, intended to erode KMT positions and make incremental steps towards an eventual invasion of Taiwan. However, the manner in which China used artillery diplomacy to address its political cross-strait concerns was distinctly characteristic of Mao's influence. There is also some evidence that Mao sought to mobilize the Chinese people through the instigation of a cross-strait crisis. The shelling of Jinmen and Mazu in September 1954 was almost entirely political in nature. There are no indicators that the PLA planned to seize the islands after the bombardment, minimizing the likelihood that the shelling had a military objective. The timing of the attacks and domestic conversations in China highlights the more likely goal of using the barrages to make a political statement in the context of a worsening cross-strait and regional situation. The PRC was especially concerned with the proposition of a U.S.-KMT defense treaty, the inclusion of the offshore islands in the treaty, U.S. efforts to build a regional security network that encircled China, and the risk that the diplomatic developments for Korea and Vietnam would lead to a similar outcome for Taiwan, permanently separating the islands from the mainland. China's manner in dealing with these challenges were to use artillery diplomacy against KMT positions. Interestingly,

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>177</sup> Whiting, "China's Use of Force," 109.

Mao and the rest of the CCP welcomed the easing of international tension that Zhou Enlai had achieved at the Geneva Conference in July 1954. Yet, immediately after the conference, Mao appeared to change his mind and criticized the Zhou's failure to properly highlight Taiwan issue internationally. Around the same time, the CCP began its "Liberate Taiwan" propaganda campaign. Up to that point, the PLA's military plans against the KMT had only included the smaller offshore islands, without any mention of bombarding Jinmen or Mazu. Suddenly, after July, the new plans included the larger islands. The sudden reintroduction of Jinmen and Mazu in the PLA's plans, combined with Mao's telegram and the propaganda campaign, demonstrates Mao's influence in deciding to shell the islands and the political nature of those attacks.

#### **E. THE 1958 TAIWAN STRAIT CRISIS**

On August 23, 1958, the Taiwan Strait again erupted in conflict when PLA artillery batteries unleashed barrages on Jinmen. The bombardment lasted two months, until October 25 when Beijing announced that it would reduce its shelling to every other day. During the conflict, known as the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, CCP and KMT aircraft and ships also exchanged fire with a few losses. Overall, both sides suffered almost 3,000 troops killed. The United States also clarified its stance vis-à-vis the PRC and Taiwan, declaring that it would use force to defend Jinmen, deploying six aircraft carriers to the vicinity, and escorting KMT resupply convoys to the embattled Jinmen garrison.<sup>178</sup> During the second TSC, Washington also deliberately gave Beijing the impression that it was prepared to use nuclear weapons.<sup>179</sup> Notably, this confirmed to Mao the wisdom in his plan (first proposed after the first TSC) to develop a nuclear weapons capability, which the PRC first tested in 1964.<sup>180</sup>

Mao was more instrumental in driving the second TSC than he was in the first TSC. Mao's statements highlight that the shelling was initiated for political reasons,

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<sup>178</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 241–42.

<sup>179</sup> Shuguang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949–1958* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 248–55.

<sup>180</sup> William Burr and Jeffrey Richelson, "Whether to 'Strangle the Baby in the Cradle': The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960–64," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000–1): 57–58.



specifically in response to the U.S. and British intervention in Lebanon and as a mobilization tool for the Great Leap Forward.<sup>181</sup> Once again, the use of military action for political purposes is indicative of Mao's policy preferences. Actions and comments by Zhou Enlai around the time of the crisis, while not concretely contradictory to Mao, also hint at how he might have preferred to handle cross-strait relations and Sino-American relations vis-à-vis Taiwan more peacefully than Mao. In the intermediary years between the first and second TSC, the PRC had made earnest efforts to reducing international tensions, increasing its trade ties with Japan and Western Europe, and reaching a peaceful settlement with the KMT. Zhou had been at the forefront of most of these efforts, suggesting his inclinations to diplomacy over military solutions to national problems.<sup>182</sup> In this context, the sudden reversal in late 1958 to artillery diplomacy as a political strategy bears the traits of Mao's propensity for military force.

There is also evidence of a security-based explanation for the second TSC, that the PRC initiated the attacks as a response to a perceived worsening cross-strait situation with KMT military build-up on Jinmen and Mazu and increased U.S. assistance to Taiwan (including Matador tactical nuclear missiles).<sup>183</sup> While these developments likely contributed to a general sense of concern about Taiwan within the CCP leading up to the second TSC, they were not the main factor in China's decision to use force against the KMT in 1958. Most of the security-related events happened in 1957 and very early 1958, but the artillery strikes did not commence until the end of August 1958, after the Lebanon intervention and Mao's decision to begin the Great Leap Forward. The timing of the crisis supports the political explanation more than the security explanation, and further suggests Mao's influence in determining national action.

As with the previous two case studies, this section first outlines the historical context and key events of the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis. The second portion then analyzes the paramount leader's role in deciding to initiate the conflict.

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<sup>181</sup> Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations," 488–89.

<sup>182</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 170–71.

<sup>183</sup> Tang Tsou, "Embroidment over Quemoy," 15–16; He, "PRC Policy Towards the Offshore Islands," 232.

## 1. Resurgent Tensions across the Strait

After the first TSC ended in early 1955, the CCP shifted away from using artillery diplomacy and tried achieving a peaceful settlement with the KMT. Zhou Enlai first announced Beijing's willing to discuss the reduction of cross-strait tensions with the United States at the Bandung summit in Indonesia in April 1955.<sup>184</sup> Through 1957, Zhou headed up the PRC's diplomatic attempts to reunify Taiwan. In addition, he achieved significant success in prying U.S. allies away from the total economic embargo of China by established economic trade with Western Europe and Japan in 1956 and 1957.<sup>185</sup>

Meanwhile, both the United States and KMT increased their military positions across the strait. In 1957, the U.S. deployed Matador tactical nuclear missiles, capable of striking mainland China, to Taiwan.<sup>186</sup> Between 1954 and 1958, Chiang Kai-shek had also expanded his garrisons on Jinmen and Mazu from 40,000 to 100,000, which constituted about a third of his total available troops. Washington had also doubled American forces deployed to Taiwan to approximately 20,000.<sup>187</sup> The United States also had begun the construction of an airport that could service its new B-52 bombers.<sup>188</sup> These developments both signified an increased threat to Beijing's eventual goal of unifying Taiwan and an immediate security threat to the coastal mainland across the strait.

The beginnings of the Sino-Soviet split began in the mid-1950s as well. Nikita Khrushchev succeeded Joseph Stalin as the leader of the Soviet Union after Stalin's death in 1953. While Mao had immense respect for Stalin, his opinion of Khrushchev soured within a few years of the latter's tenure.<sup>189</sup> 1956 marked a turning point when Khrushchev delivered his de-Stalinization speech in February (notably, without having

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<sup>184</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 170.

<sup>185</sup> Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft*, 53–57.

<sup>186</sup> Melvin Gurtov, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis Revisited: Politics and Foreign Policy in Chinese Motives," *Modern China* 2, no. 1 (January 1976): 68.

<sup>187</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 245.

<sup>188</sup> He, "PRC Policy Towards the Offshore Islands," 232.

<sup>189</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 61–63.

invited a CCP delegation) and then sent Soviet troops into Hungary in October to quell anti-Moscow protests. Both deeply troubled Mao and led him to believe that the PRC was deserving of a more central role in world affairs than the Soviet Union and should lead the Communist revolutionary cause.<sup>190</sup> Relatedly, because Mao felt less and less trusting of Khrushchev and the Soviet Union, he began to formulate ideas for China to be less economically dependent on its northern neighbor. Part of this new strategy was the Great Leap Forward industrialization and modernization initiative that Mao started in 1958. The second TSC served as a mobilizing and rallying tool for that program.<sup>191</sup>

In July 1958, the United States and Great Britain sent military forces to Lebanon and Jordan to quell political and social tensions that were sweeping through the Middle East (specifically, a coup in Iraq). The coup was orchestrated by socialist and Arab nationalist military officers that overthrew the monarchy. Three days after the coup and interventions, he ordered the PLA to move aircraft to Fujian and prepare for artillery barrages against Jinmen, set to commence at the end of July.<sup>192</sup> PLA preparations for the shelling commenced in earnest and reported on July 23 its readiness to begin shelling the KMT island positions. Mao then postponed the bombardment multiple times, seeming to hesitate on the execution of the plan.<sup>193</sup>

Finally, on August 22, Mao issued the order to start the attacks, noting that the PLA should “take one step first, and look carefully before taking another step.”<sup>194</sup> The next day, over 400 artillery pieces opened fire on Jinmen, raining more than 30,000 shells onto the island and killing 600 KMT troops and 2 American military advisers.<sup>195</sup> The heavy barrage would continue for two more months, with KMT and PLA aircraft and ships also engaging in combat. In October, China reduced its pressure on Taiwan to light alternate day shellings of Jinmen, thereby ending the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. This

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 64–69.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 175–76.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 176–77.

<sup>194</sup> Li, “PLA Attacks,” 161.

<sup>195</sup> Sheng, “Mao and China’s Relations,” 490.

regular but less frequent pattern of artillery fire continued from 1958 until 1979, when the United States officially switched its diplomatic recognition of China to the PRC.<sup>196</sup>

## **2. Mao's Revolutionary Outburst**

Unlike in the 1954–1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis, where some of the crisis was mostly a continuation of the Chinese Civil War and only partially a product of his specific influence, Mao was far more pivotal to the decision making in the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis. The second TSC was political in nature, highlighted by its connection to the U.S.-UK intervention in the Middle East and China's commencement of the Great Leap Forward.<sup>197</sup> The second TSC and Great Leap Forward should also be viewed in the context of nascent Sino-Soviet split and Mao's desire to demonstrate China's independence while lifting it out of the shadow of the Soviet Union. Some of his other remarks also suggest that by early 1958, he had gained a sense of frustration or impatience with diplomatic approaches to foreign policy, and specifically Zhou Enlai's efforts to seek a peaceful solution to reunifying Taiwan.<sup>198</sup> Chen Jian calls this "Mao's postrevolutionary anxiety," describing the attacks on Jinmen a "revolutionary outburst."<sup>199</sup> Juxtaposed with China's approach to cross-strait relations in the intermediary years between the first and second Taiwan Strait Crises, the second TSC appeared as a sudden reversal in the PRC's strategy. Combined with his remarks, this is indicative of Mao's role in driving Beijing's decisions in the second TSC, considering his propensity to use militarized conflict for political purposes.

Starting in early 1958, Mao began to express his impatience with the PRC's conciliatory approach to international affairs. In a March senior CCP leadership meeting in Chengdu, Mao pressured Zhou Enlai to self-criticize his role in China's foreign policy after 1954, essentially accusing Zhou of making China's foreign policy too pacifist, especially in dealing with capitalist countries. This was likely also a repudiation of the

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<sup>196</sup> Li, "PLA Attacks," 167.

<sup>197</sup> Xiaobing Li, Chen Jian, and David Wilson, "Mao Zedong's Handling of the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958: Chinese Recollections and Documents," *CWIHPB* 6/7 (Winter 1995): 209.

<sup>198</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 172–73.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 171–74.

PRC's more peaceful approach towards the KMT between the first and second TSCs, which Zhou had been a champion of. Soon after this meeting, Zhou resigned as the foreign minister. PLA Marshal Chen Yi took the post, immediately executing Mao's orders to fix the diplomatic service. At the same meeting, Mao lamented that he had not commanded any military campaigns for some time, and that "this year, I will come back to do some military work."<sup>200</sup> The events at the Chengdu summit in March 1958 show Mao reasserting his authority over China's policy making while simultaneously criticizing the PRC's relatively quietest approach to foreign relations since 1955.<sup>201</sup> His remarks about longing to command an operation also highlights the same romanticism about military affairs that shaped Mao's decision making in Korea in 1950.

The U.S. and British troop deployments to Lebanon and Jordan in July 1958 deeply concerned Mao and stoked his revolutionist and anti-imperialist proclivities. Even before the British and American intervention, in November 1957, Mao had proclaimed that "U.S. imperialism is directing its spearhead of aggression and war toward Arab nations...This kind of aggression will lead to the danger of another world war."<sup>202</sup> Soon after the Americans and Brits landed in the Levant, Mao issued orders to the PLA to prepare aircraft and artillery in Fujian to bombard Jinmen. Mao argued that this operation would both show political solidarity with the Arab revolutionary movement while also drawing American resources away from the Middle East.<sup>203</sup> He asserted that China needed to demonstrate its solidarity for the Arab people through both moral support as well as tangible actions. The PLA began organizing for the attacks, slated to begin at the end of July. Suddenly, the day before the barrages were set to start, Mao expressed hesitance to Defense Minister Peng Dehuai:

[I] could not sleep [last night], but thought about it again. It seems more appropriate to hold our [plans] to attack Jinmen for several days. While holding our operations, [we will] observe the situational development there. We will not attack whether or not the other side relieves a garrison.

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<sup>200</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 172.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 172–73.

<sup>202</sup> Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations," 488.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 488–489.

Until they launch a provocative attack, [we will] then respond with a counterattack. The solution of the problem in the Middle East takes time...To make a plan too quickly usually results in an unthoughtful consideration. I did such things quite often and sometimes had unavoidable miscalculations.<sup>204</sup>

The PLA quickly halted the pending operation and waited for further instruction. Notably, when the order to initiate bombardment finally came in on August 20, PLA leadership had just lowered the Fujian forces' readiness condition, returning them to a normal non-combat posture. Mao's abruptness seems to have taken his military leaders by surprise.<sup>205</sup> While the reasons for Mao's sudden introspective moment of indecision are unclear, the letter demonstrates that Mao was in total control of the military's actions and that China's use of military force in this context was subject to his whims and feelings.

By August 23, when the shelling of Jinmen actually started, the crisis in the Levant had subsided, but Mao seemed intent on sending a political message through military action. Two days after the shelling started, Mao confirmed the political link between the second TSC and the Lebanon situation at a CCP senior leadership meeting:

The bombardment of Jinmen was an opportunity we seized when American armed forces landed in Lebanon [on 15 July 1958]. Our action therefore not only allowed us to test the Americans, but also to support the Arab people.<sup>206</sup>

Furthermore, with the military already prepared to shell Jinmen, Mao likely saw an opportunity to rally the Chinese people for the Great Leap Forward. He sought to energize Chinese industry to better compete with other world powers, even claiming that in 15 years, China's industrial output would rival Britain's.<sup>207</sup> The Middle East tensions had galvanized millions of Chinese people to openly demonstrate against the "imperialist behavior" of the United States and Great Britain, and Mao sought to capitalize on that

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<sup>204</sup> "Mao Zedong's Handling of the Taiwan Straits Crisis," 214.

<sup>205</sup> Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations," 490.

<sup>206</sup> "Mao Zedong's Handling of the Taiwan Straits Crisis," 209.

<sup>207</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 242.

fervor.<sup>208</sup> Combined with his desire to jump start Chinese industrialization, generating a crisis on the strait was a convenient mobilizing event for Mao.<sup>209</sup>

There is also evidence that Mao used the shelling of Jinmen to establish the PRC's independence from the Soviet Union. In early August, Khrushchev visited China. Most accounts describe the trip as a tense episode between Beijing and Moscow, with Mao apparently even making efforts to personally embarrass Khrushchev by highlighting his athletic ineptitude.<sup>210</sup> Mao did not once mention the plan to shell Jinmen during the four-day visit. In the context of the beginnings of the Sino-Soviet split and Mao's growing sensitivity to Soviet chauvinism, what seems likely is that Mao did not want to give the Soviets the opportunity to influence his foreign policy while they were in Beijing.<sup>211</sup> Mao also started the Great Leap Forward soon after the Khrushchev visit, supporting the idea that Mao wanted make China more independent from the Soviet Union. Attacking Jinmen served Mao's desires to both mobilize the Chinese people and highlight his autonomy from Khrushchev.

The U.S. and KMT military developments did also increase the PRC's sense of threat and contributed to overall heightened cross-strait tensions leading up to the second TSC. Had they been the only catalysts for the crisis, it would be harder to argue that Mao had a key role in the decision to attack the KMT positions. They represented a fairly standard security concern, and it is possible that any other CCP leader would have reacted similarly. However, in late 1957, Mao dismissed any threats from United States, claiming that "the east wind is prevailing over the west wind" and calling American nuclear power a "paper tiger."<sup>212</sup> Furthermore, the timing of shelling does not support the strictly security-based explanation. In February 1958, the PLA proposed plans to field aircraft in Fujian and initiate an artillery blockade of Jinmen. Had Beijing acted then,

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<sup>208</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 175.

<sup>209</sup> He, "PRC Policy Towards the Offshore Islands," 233.

<sup>210</sup> Mike Dash, "Khrushchev in Water Wings: On Mao, Humiliation, and the Sino-Soviet Split," *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 4, 2012. <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/khrushchev-in-water-wings-on-mao-humiliation-and-the-sino-soviet-split-80852370/>.

<sup>211</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 178–79.

<sup>212</sup> Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations," 487.

with the KMT and U.S. developments in Taiwan in late 1957 and early 1958, it would have seemed more like a response to a clear security threat, but the Jinmen shelling started much later and only after the American intervention in Lebanon and Chinese decision to begin the Great Leap Forward.

The 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis was driven almost entirely by Mao. After a few years of relative international and domestic stability, Mao seemed to have gained a sense of restlessness.<sup>213</sup> He had complained about American imperialism in the Middle East in late 1957, and was also likely sensitive to the growing U.S. and KMT military developments in Taiwan (despite his bluster otherwise). He was also increasingly frustrated with the Khrushchev and was seeking ways to reduce China's dependence on the Soviet Union. Having grown tired of Zhou Enlai's peaceful approach to foreign policy after 1955, he first made efforts to undermine Zhou's authority and power in early 1958. Washington and London's intervention in the Middle East in July triggered Mao's decision to re-initiate artillery diplomacy against the KMT. After a month of hesitation, Mao gave the order for the PLA to commence its barrage of Jinmen. Notably, the Levant crisis had already subsided, but Mao confirmed in a CCP leadership meeting after the start of the shelling that the attacks on Jinmen were linked to the events in the Middle East. In addition, Mao's behavior during Khrushchev's visit to Beijing in August suggests that the second TSC was linked to the Sino-Soviet split and the Great Leap Forward. Mao's rising frustration with Khrushchev seems to have come to a head during this visit, and confirmed his already strong suspicions that China needed to distance itself from the Soviet Union. The second TSC served to both rally the Chinese people for the Great Leap Forward, which was intended to help China develop domestic industry and be less dependent on Moscow, and demonstrate Mao's foreign policy independence from Khrushchev. All of these causes for the second TSC highlight that Mao's perceptions and preferences were instrumental in Beijing's decision to bombard Jinmen in 1958.

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<sup>213</sup> Chen, *Mao's China*, 174.



## **F. CONCLUSION**

In the 1950s, Mao was unequivocally in charge of China's policy-making process. Leading up to China's entry into the Korean War, Mao displayed his predisposition to use military force and belief in the PLA's ability to prevail over superior foes. Despite the reservations of most PLA and CCP leaders, Mao continually pressed for a massive intervention against the U.S.-led forces, and ultimately prevailed in determining Beijing's response to the Korean peninsula situation. In 1954–1955, Mao was also key to shaping how China responded to a worsening cross-strait situation, albeit less so than he was in Korea. The first TSC was broadly in the context of the Chinese Civil War (especially the 1955 island seizures) which the CCP and PLA leadership all agreed on continuing. The artillery bombardment of Jinmen and Mazu in September 1954, however, appears to have been a more political use of military force, designed to draw international attention to the Taiwan issue. Because the shelling occurred suddenly after China (and specifically Zhou Enlai) had made considerable efforts to reduce international tensions at the Geneva Conference, it suggests that Mao's propensity to use military action was at play in the decision to initiate the conflict. Similarly, in 1958, Mao seems to have grown impatient at China's diplomatic and economic foreign policy. He was increasingly disillusioned with Moscow, especially after its 1956 invasion of Hungary, and sought to distance China from the Soviet Union. The Great Leap Forward was part of how Mao planned to establish Beijing's independence from Moscow, and the second TSC served to mobilize the Chinese people for the massive industrialization and modernization program. Furthermore, it allowed Mao to demonstrate his freedom of action from Khrushchev in setting China's foreign policy. He also felt the need to make a political statement against U.S. imperialism in the Middle East, and linked the second TSC to the July 1958 deployment of American troops to Lebanon. Notably, before each Taiwan Strait Crisis, Mao criticized Zhou Enlai for his handling of foreign policy. In 1954, it was Zhou's failure to properly highlight the Taiwan issue in the Geneva Conference. In 1958, it was Zhou's overall accommodating posture towards the KMT and capitalist countries. In the latter case, it resulted in Zhou's resignation as the foreign minister. More inferentially, the restraint that the PLA demonstrated in the two TSCs also demonstrates Mao's role in

the conflicts. In each Taiwan Strait Crisis, PLA forces were extremely cautious against attacking U.S. forces, suggesting that Mao had gained a sense of respect for American military prowess after the bloody Korean War. He consistently directed the PLA to avoid or minimize attacks when the risk of striking Americans was present, often restricting their rules of engagement to the point of frustrating his military commanders.<sup>214</sup> Overall, these three case studies demonstrate that China was fairly aggressive and militaristic in its foreign policy in the 1950s when its national decision-making processes was subject to the perceptions and preferences of one person.

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<sup>214</sup> Whiting, "China's Use of Force," 109; Li, "PLA Attacks," 163.

### III. CONSENSUS GOVERNING UNDER JIANG ZEMIN

1990s and early 2000s ushered in a dynamic period for China, specifically for cross-strait relations. This chapter will examine two episodes from this time period, the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis (TSC), also known as the Third TSC, and the period of tense cross-strait relations from 1999 to 2002 (when Jiang Zemin stepped down as the top leader of China). In 1989, Jiang Zemin became the General Secretary for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and began taking over leadership of the PRC from Deng Xiaoping.<sup>215</sup> Leading the country until September 2002, Jiang’s tenure was marked by definitively less consolidated political power than Mao. Starting with Deng and continuing with Jiang, the CCP made political reforms towards deeper institutionalization of governance and dispersion of political power. In contrast the 1950s case studies, where policy-making power was concentrated heavily in one person, in the 1990s and 2000s, the CCP governed much more by consensus amongst Party elites with Jiang serving as a first-among-equals.<sup>216</sup> At the same time, China experienced massive sustained economic growth and became deeply integrated with world trade, especially the United States.<sup>217</sup> The two case studies that this chapter is analyzing, then, provide opportunities for comparison with the 1950s cases in the previous chapter. Both periods had one leader in charge for the entire time. Both feature Chinese military uses of force against the United States or a U.S.-supported entity. Apart from Korea, they all involve Taiwan, which has remained a key issue for the PRC. Two major differences between the time periods are the factors that this thesis is examining: political power concentration and economic interdependence (EI). In the Mao period, political power was highly concentrated in one leader and China’s EI was quite low. In the Jiang period, power was diluted amongst CCP elites, while EI was high and growing. Analyzing the difference between the

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<sup>215</sup> Lyman Miller and Liu Xiaohong, “The Foreign Policy Outlook of China’s ‘Third Generation’ Elite,” in *Making of Chinese Foreign Policy*, 139.

<sup>216</sup> Lucian Pye, “Jiang Zemin’s Style of Rule: Go For Stability, Monopolize Power and Settle for Limited Effectiveness,” in *Nature of Chinese Politics*, 211.

<sup>217</sup> Christensen, *China Challenge*, 43–44.

incidents of the Mao and Jiang periods may lend insight into whether changes in China's EI and leadership power concentration affects its use of military force.

This chapter argues that the overall shift to consensus-based governing in the CCP has led to a more peaceful foreign policy, especially in cross-strait relations, even when China was faced with threats to reunification. In addition, trade also appears to have a pacifying effect on the PRC's approach to Taiwan. Specifically, China's trade interdependence with the United States and Taiwan's trade dependence on the PRC were important to CCP decision making in this time period. Similar to the Mao era chapter, I first lay out this thesis's two independent variables during Jiang's rule: China's EI (overall, with Taiwan, and the United States) and its leader's concentration of power. The following section examines the events of the Third TSC and demonstrates that Beijing's decision to initiate coercive diplomacy was a consensus decision between hawkish PLA leaders, Jiang, and other moderates within the CCP. The last section looks at the period of Taiwanese independence-oriented rhetoric in 1999–2002. Unlike 1995–1996, China protested the statements but did not use military force. The PRC's restrained response was due to many factors, including domestic politics and EI, which this section will be focusing on. After the third TSC, the United States seems to have taken the PRC's concerns more seriously and was more proactive about voicing opposition to Taiwanese separatism.<sup>218</sup> The hawks within the CCP also seem to have lost some favor because their coercive strategy in 1995–1996 did not work as well as planned. One main objective was to undermine political support for Lee Teng-hui leading up to the March 1996 presidential election, but the tensions of the third TSC actually boosted Lee's voter support.<sup>219</sup> Importantly, Beijing did not resort to military force in 1999–2002 in part due to Jiang's more secure political position, compared to during the Third TSC.<sup>220</sup> The political legitimacy of China's top leader in the eyes of the military seems to be important. While related to consensus governing and power concentration, the political

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<sup>218</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 262–64.

<sup>219</sup> Michael D. Swaine, "Chinese Decision-Making Regarding Taiwan, 1979–2000," in *Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy*, 327.

<sup>220</sup> Suisheng Zhao, "Military Coercion and Peaceful Offence: Beijing's Strategy of National Reunification with Taiwan," *Pacific Affairs* 72, no. 4 (Winter 1999–2000): 507.

legitimacy of China's leader is slightly out of the scope of this thesis. Additionally, it appears that CCP leadership did not resort to coercive diplomacy because they knew that Taipei's actions would be constrained by Taiwan's increased economic dependence on the PRC.<sup>221</sup> Overall, Beijing's relatively restrained responses to provocative rhetoric from Taiwan during Jiang Zemin's tenure seems to have been a product of both consensus-based policy making and China's increased EI.

#### **A. CONSENSUS GOVERNING: CHINA'S REFORMING DOMESTIC POLITICAL STRUCTURE IN THE 1990S AND 2000S**

In response to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Tiananmen Square incident, the CCP began implementing significant leadership changes. The massive and spontaneous 1989 protests especially shook the party at its core, and ushered in a period of political self-reflection. The party began to transition away from Communist ideology and personalized, charismatic forms of leadership, and emphasize technocracy and economic growth. In this context, Jiang Zemin took over as the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and the General Secretary of the CCP in 1989. Jiang also was the first leader of China that had joined the CCP after the formation of the PRC, unlike Mao or Deng. He did not have the pedigree that his predecessors did as revolutionary fighters and founders of the PRC, and therefore did not enjoy the same level of prestige with other CCP elites or the PLA.<sup>222</sup> As such, he took extraordinary efforts in the early years of his rule to engender himself with the military.<sup>223</sup> Most accounts from this tumultuous period depict Jiang as a safe pick that would foster consensus and move Chinese politics away from leadership personality cult.<sup>224</sup> This emphasis on consensus-based governance would have significant implications on many of China's most important foreign policy issues in the 1990s, especially cross-strait relations. It should be noted, however, that while Jiang Zemin did not have the policy-

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<sup>221</sup> Thomas J. Christensen, "PRC Security Relations with the United States: Why Things Are Going So Well," *China Leadership Monitor* No. 8 (Fall 2003), 3.

<sup>222</sup> John Garver, *Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan's Democratization* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 50.

<sup>223</sup> Miller and Liu, "Foreign Policy Outlook of China's 'Third Generation' Elite," 125–27.

<sup>224</sup> You Ji, "Jiang Zemin's Command of the Military," *The China Journal* 45 (January 2001): 132.

making power as Mao or Deng, he still gave final approval to all foreign policy decisions.<sup>225</sup> He also chaired the Taiwan Affairs Leading Small Group (TALSG), Beijing's most significant policy-making body for Taiwan policy, meaning that Jiang was almost certainly party to any PRC escalations towards Taiwan.<sup>226</sup>

As this leadership transition was happening, the CCP and PLA was becoming more divided into hardline (or hawkish) and moderate camps regarding Taiwan.<sup>227</sup> Reacting to Taiwan's democratization and increase in domestic political support for independence, the hardliners felt that Beijing needed to apply more acute pressure to Taiwan before it strayed further. In this period, the hawks were generally represented by the PLA and their statements.<sup>228</sup> A significant driver of the PLA's hawkishness was the trauma of the Tiananmen Square massacre. The PLA had just turned its guns on its own people at Deng Xiaoping's orders. After Tiananmen, military leaders realized the fallibility of CCP leadership, which led them to question their conciliatory approach to Taiwan.<sup>229</sup> PLA leaders also felt that after Tiananmen, the military needed to reprove its worth to the country and doubled down on Chinese nationalism. Taking a tough stance and even possibly conducting operations against Taiwan appealed to many PLA officers as just such an opportunity.<sup>230</sup> On the other hand, CCP moderates advocated for more strategic patience and gradual economic integration to promote eventual unification. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and its head, Qian Qichen, was representative of the moderate approach to cross-strait relations, and its rhetoric and policy recommendations are used here as indicators of the moderates' policy preferences. Notably, Qian was also the Vice Chairman of the TALSG, so he had considerable involvement in developing

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<sup>225</sup> Chien-kai Chen, "Comparing Jiang Zemin's Impatience with Hu Jintao's Patience Regarding the Taiwan Issue, 1989–2012," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 78 (2012): 959.

<sup>226</sup> You Ji, "Taiwan in the Political Calculations of the Chinese Leadership," *The China Journal*, no. 36 (July 1996): 120–22.

<sup>227</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 48.

<sup>228</sup> While there certainly were non-military hawks within the CCP, evidence of their positions is less available, so I will be using the PLA as the primary indicator of hardliner policy preferences.

<sup>229</sup> Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force*, 187.

<sup>230</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 51.

Beijing's Taiwan policy.<sup>231</sup> These two factions became most evident during the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995–1996, but had also been in play in cross-strait events leading up to the crisis. Because of the distribution of power and divergence of policy opinions within Chinese leadership, this chapter will illustrate the differences between the factions by juxtaposing statements and policy proposals by the PLA and MFA with actual government policy decisions. As such, the chapter delves into considerable background events in order to illustrate the differences in preferences by the different factions within the CCP and determine exactly when policy changes were decided. The sharp contrast between the two factions means that there was a significant portion of PLA leadership during Jiang Zemin's tenure that continually sought harsher actions towards Taiwan. Based on the mostly peaceful approach that Beijing adopted towards Taiwan during Jiang's tenure, however, the hawkish faction only seems to have briefly been able realize their desired Taiwan policy in 1995–1996. Moderates were generally able to control China's cross-strait policy from 1989 to 1995 and from 1996 on. By 1997, Jiang Zemin was more secure in his position as the PRC's leader. He had earned better support from the military through deliberate efforts to build a healthy relationship by supporting military budget increases, quality of life improvements for PLA troops, and stay relatively hands-off from more mundane affairs.<sup>232</sup> Most importantly, however, in 1997, the top two PLA generals, who were extremely powerful and hawkish towards Taiwan, retired.<sup>233</sup> Jiang enjoyed a better and much more peer-like relationship with their successors, and thus was able to exert more control over Taiwan policy.<sup>234</sup> This allowed him to keep a steadier hand on the CCP consensus vis-à-vis cross-strait relations, even when Taiwan exhibited more indicators of separatism in 1999–2002.

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<sup>231</sup> Scobell, "Show of Force: Chinese Soldiers, Statesmen, and the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis," *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 231.

<sup>232</sup> You Ji, "Supreme Leader and the Military," in *Nature of Chinese Politics*, 276–80.

<sup>233</sup> Swaine, "Decision-making Regarding Taiwan," 331.

<sup>234</sup> You, "Supreme Leader and Military," 279.

## B. WORLD MERCHANT: CHINA'S GROWING ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE 1990S AND 2000S

Starting with Deng Xiaoping's rule in the 1980s, the PRC began reforms towards a more open and market-oriented economy. Growth picked up almost immediately and continued to accelerate throughout the 1990s. In the two decades under Deng and Jiang, the PRC averaged a whopping nine percent annual GDP growth.<sup>235</sup> By the end of the century, the country was on the trajectory to overtake Germany as the third largest economy in the world, and soon after that, Japan as the second largest. China's massive economic growth spurt was accompanied (and largely fueled by) an expansion of trade as seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3. China's Growing Trade to GDP Ratio in the 1990s and Early 2000s.<sup>236</sup>

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the PRC's economic interdependence with the rest of the world, and especially the United States, increased significantly. In 1989, when

<sup>235</sup> Yingyi Qian, "How Reform Worked in China," in *In Search of Prosperity: Analytic Narratives on Economic Growth*, ed. Dani Rodrik (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 297.

<sup>236</sup> World Bank, 2015, "Trade (% of GDP), China," <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.TRD.GNFS.ZS?locations=CN>.



Jiang took power, China's trade-to-GDP ratio was 25%. In 1995, during the third TSC, EI had grown to 35%. In 2002, trade-to-GDP was 45%.<sup>237</sup> Similarly, Figure 4 highlights the increase in China's trade interdependence with the United States and Taiwan. China's bilateral trade with the United States, as a percentage of GDP, went from 3.5% (1989) to 5.5% (1995) to 6.6% (2002).<sup>238</sup> China-Taiwan trade ties depict a very similar picture. In comparison, China's trade was 1.6% of its GDP, and China's trade with the United States was 0.4% of its GDP.

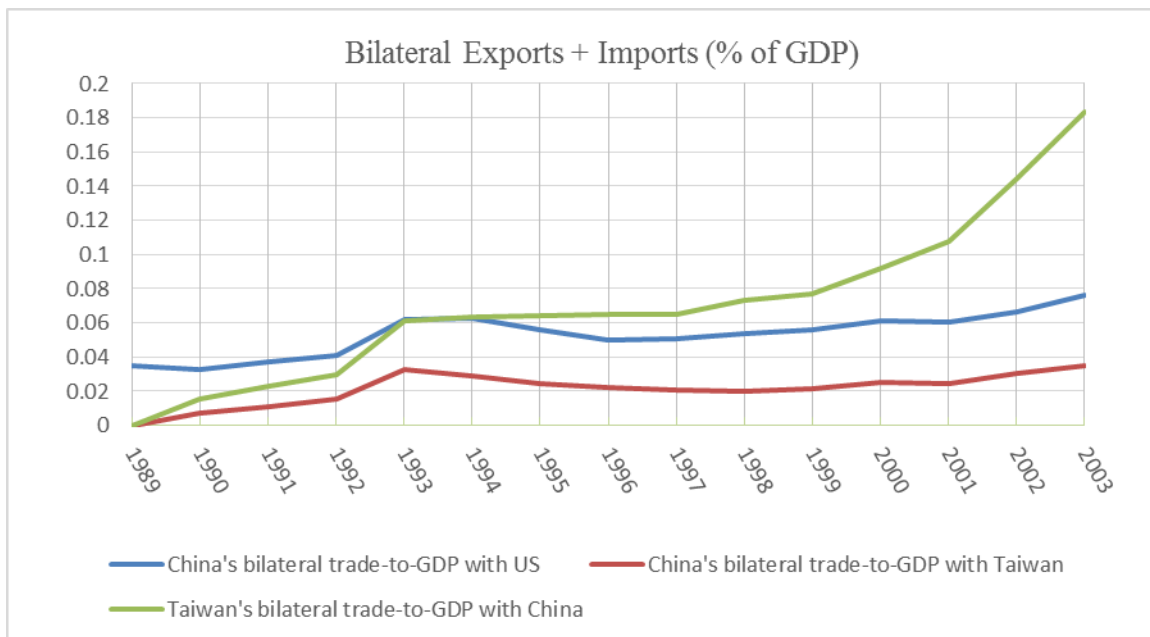


Figure 4. Bilateral Trade to GDP, China-U.S., China-Taiwan, and Taiwan-China.<sup>239</sup>

Considering the differences in EI and Beijing's responses to threats to Taiwanese reunification between Jiang's rule with Mao's reign seems to strongly support the theory

<sup>237</sup> World Bank, "Trade (% of GDP), China."

<sup>238</sup> World Bank, 2015, "GDP (current US\$)," <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CN>; International Monetary Fund, 2017, "Direction of Trade Statistics," <http://data.imf.org/?sk=9D6028D4-F14A-464C-A2F2-59B2CD424B85&ss=1390030109571>. Figures are in current U.S. dollars. Total trade is exports + imports.

<sup>239</sup> World Bank, "GDP (current US\$), China"; IMF, "Direction of Trade Statistics."; Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 2016, "Key Indicators Database, Chinese Taipei," [http://statistics.apec.org/index.php/key\\_indicator/kid\\_result\\_flash/18](http://statistics.apec.org/index.php/key_indicator/kid_result_flash/18).

that high EI reduces the likelihood of conflict. When a fairly isolated China was faced with a worsening cross-strait situation in the 1950s, it initiated artillery strikes and aerial operations resulting in hundreds of combat deaths on both sides. From 1992 to 1995, when managing deteriorating cross-strait relations once again while also being tied to increasing trade relations with the United States, Taiwan, and the rest of the world, the PRC decided to maintain a conciliatory position. In 1995–1996, when it finally decided to use military force, it limited its response to missile tests and military exercises as a form of coercive diplomacy. China’s increased EI with the United States and Taiwan seems to have affected both when it uses force, and after it decides to do so, how much force to employ.

The dynamics of EI’s pacific effect on conflict outlined in most international relations theory, however, does not seem to explain the difference in China’s response to Taiwanese separatism in 1995 and 1999–2002. China’s EI with the United States, which was the most important bilateral trade relationship affecting the third TSC, did not increase appreciably between these two periods, yet Beijing’s behavior did. As Figure 4 shows, China’s trade dependence on Taiwan or the United States did not change significantly between 1995–1996 and 1999–2002. Taiwan’s trade dependence on China, however, doubled between the two time periods. In this case, a different dynamic is at play: In the later period of Taiwanese separatism, CCP leaders recognized that Taiwan had become vastly more dependent on trade with the mainland, and knew they could pressure Taipei purely with economic and political measures.<sup>240</sup> This is consistent with the recommendations of some of Beijing’s leadership, even before the third TSC, that the gradual economic binding of Taiwan through trade was a preferable reunification strategy to using military force. During the third TSC, too, there were calls within the CCP to isolate Lee Teng-hui politically and economically.<sup>241</sup> While Beijing ultimately decided to use force in 1995, in 1999–2002, it chose not to knowing that it had economic power over Taiwan. Contrary to Russett and O’Neal’s EI theory and more aligned with Keohane and

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<sup>240</sup> Christensen, “PRC Security Relations with the United States,” 3.

<sup>241</sup> “Jiang Zemin Annoyed by U.S. Meddling in Sovereignty Issue; Beijing To Make Concrete Retaliation at the End of Li Teng-hui’s Visit,” *Lien Ho Pao* (Hong Kong), June 11, 1995. Open Source Enterprise (OSE) Translated Text, FTS19950611000073.

Nye's *Power and Interdependence* theory, China (the less trade dependent partner with Taiwan) seems less likely to use force not because of its own trade interdependence, but because of Taiwan's dependence on China. Beijing knows that it can inflict enough economic pain so it feels confident enough not to use military force. So far, China has appeared content enough with just knowing that it has economic leverage over Taiwan without actually using it. In addition, because Taiwan is so dependent on the mainland, Beijing seems confident that a declaration of independence by Taipei is unlikely.

### **C. THE 1995–1996 TAIWAN STRAIT CRISIS**

From July 1995 to March 1996, the People's Republic of China (PRC) conducted multiple missile and amphibious landing exercises in the vicinity of Taiwan. The first series of tests were missile exercises in July and August 1995, as highlighted in Figure 5. The second round was a series of increasingly complex and prominent amphibious maneuvers in November 1995. The last and largest set was a combination of amphibious and missile exercises in March 1996. The United States responded to the March demonstrations by deploying two carrier battle groups around Taiwan, escalating tensions between Washington, Taipei, and Beijing. This episode between the PRC, Taiwan, and the United States is known as the third Taiwan Strait Crisis. One of the more escalatory post-Cold War military interactions between the PRC and the U.S., the third TSC remains an important period of Sino-American and cross-strait relations.

This section argues that Beijing's military actions were determined by a consensus decision between hawkish and moderate CCP leaders in response to growing signs that Taiwan was seeking independence and the perception that the United States was tacitly supporting those pro-independence leanings. EI (especially China-U.S trade) also factored into China's decision making, specifically from 1992 to 1995 when the CCP debated how to manage worsening cross-strait relations.<sup>242</sup> More inferentially, China's deeper trade ties appears to have shaped China's decision to limit its 1995–1996 actions to coercive diplomacy, despite its concerns about a U.S.-Taiwan plot to permanently split the island from the mainland. The reunification of Taiwan with the mainland has always

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<sup>242</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 52–54.

been a top priority for the CCP.<sup>243</sup> Considering Beijing's overarching objective of reunification, the conditions leading to the third TSC bears some similarities to the first and second TSCs in the 1950s. The big difference is that instead of shelling Jinmen and Mazu and actually exchanging casualties, the PRC restrained itself to shows of force.

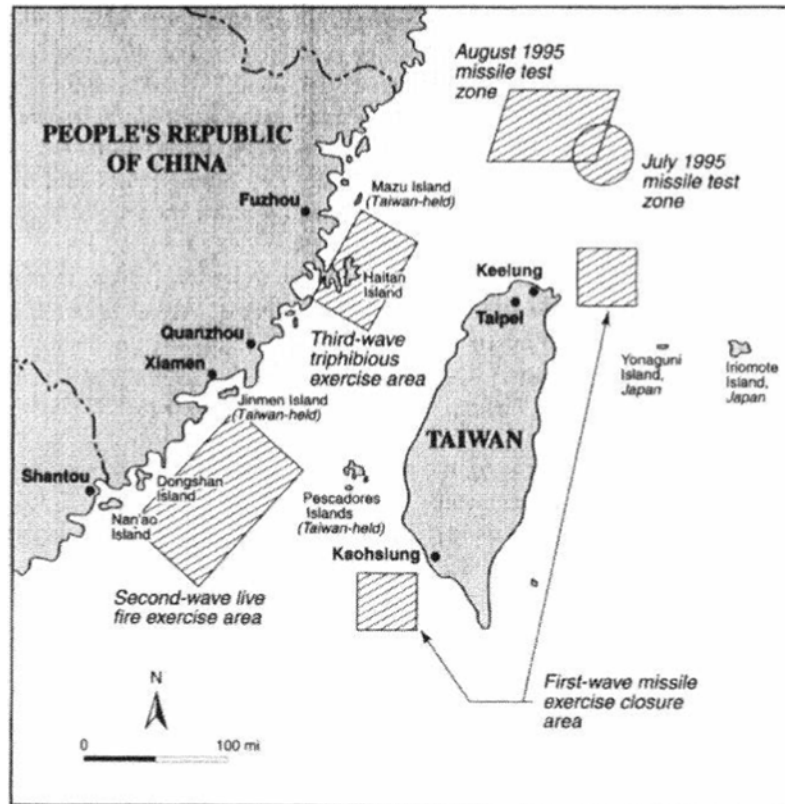


Figure 5. PLA Exercise Sites during the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis.<sup>244</sup>

First, this section will present the historical context for the third TSC, including relevant international events, policy changes by the PRC, United States, and Taiwan, and actions and statements by all three parties that shaped the confrontation. The main part of the section analyzes the PRC's decision making starting around 1992, when the hawkish and moderate factions of the CCP are first noticeable, up through the third TSC. The period from 1992 to 1995 is illustrative of the domestic debates within the CCP vis-à-vis

<sup>243</sup> Chen, "Comparing Jiang Zemin's Impatience," 960.

<sup>244</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 75.

cross-strait relations, as it features frequent attempts by hardliners to implement harsher policies against Taiwanese separatism, and the moderates' ability to temper those recommendations until the onset of the crisis in mid-1995. Unlike Mao during the Korean War or the 1950s TSCs, there is scant evidence that Jiang Zemin sought more aggressive policies towards Taiwan than the rest of the CCP leadership. If anything, Jiang seems to have generally preferred a reconciliatory approach to cross-strait relations, but was pressured by PLA leadership to take a more assertive stance against Taiwan during the Third TSC.<sup>245</sup> Jiang and the moderates seem to have made the decision to use coercive diplomacy both out of frustration that their approach was not working, in addition to acceding to political pressure from the hawkish factions.<sup>246</sup> As the 1999–2002 section will explain in more detail, Beijing's responses to Taiwanese provocations were far more muted and did not utilize military force at all.<sup>247</sup> All of these dynamics should be noted in the context that even when Jiang and the moderate factions felt the need to take a harsher position against Taiwan in 1995–1996, the shows of force in the consensus period were still far less aggressive than the shellings of Jinmen and Mazu during Mao's reign. This seems to be in part due to Beijing's civilian and military leadership determining policy via consensus.<sup>248</sup>

### **1. Rising Tensions Across the Strait**

After the first and second TSCs in the 1950s, cross-strait relations remained mostly calm, although PLA and KMT batteries in Fujian and Jinmen continued regular artillery exchanges from 1958 until 1979.<sup>249</sup> Starting with the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué, affirming that there is "one China and that Taiwan is a part of China," the United States changed its official policy towards Taiwan.<sup>250</sup> In 1979, the United States

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<sup>245</sup> Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force*, 148.

<sup>246</sup> You, "Taiwan in the Political Calculations of the Chinese Leadership," 120–21.

<sup>247</sup> You, "The Supreme Leader and the Military," 279–294.

<sup>248</sup> You, "The Supreme Leader and the Military," 290.

<sup>249</sup> *The Taiwan Straits Crises: 1954–1955 and 1958*, U.S. State Department, Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/taiwan-strait-crises>.

<sup>250</sup> *Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People's Republic of China*, February 27, 1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d203>.

severed official diplomatic ties with the Republic of China and established relations with the PRC. Concurrently, the United States abrogated its defense treaty with Taiwan, but shortly afterwards, Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) which obligated the United States to continue to provide military equipment to Taiwan. To assuage PRC concerns that the TRA constituted a continuation of the U.S.-Taiwan defense treaty, Washington signed a joint communique with Beijing in 1982 that ensured that the United States does not “recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state, only recognizes one China, and considers Taiwan a part of China.”<sup>251</sup> This is known as the “one China” policy and has remained the official U.S. stance vis-à-vis Taiwan. Furthermore, in the 1982 communique, Washington affirmed that it “would not seek a long-term weapons sales program to Taiwan, or exceed previous levels of arms sales.”<sup>252</sup> The 1979 switch in diplomatic recognition, the TRA, and the 1982 communique ushered in a period of strategic ambiguity for the United States, in which it only officially recognizes the PRC, but continues to provide significant materiel support to Taiwan.

Adding to the complexity of the issue, in the 1980s, Taiwan began to democratize. The KMT supporters who had fled mainland China began to develop a sense of their own identity over time. Taiwan’s industry had flourished, with economic growth rates of over 8% between 1952 and 1982. This economic boom strengthened the Taiwanese national identity and expanded the island’s global importance. The economic growth and rise of a middle-class society contributed to increased calls for political representation under the KMT military dictatorship. As authoritarian rule relaxed, the Taiwanese native Chinese, who had lived on the island before the KMT occupation and had suffered repression under the KMT, formed an opposition party, called the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) that was based on Taiwanese independence from China. The DPP’s platform contrasted with the KMT stance of eventually reuniting China, and appealed to many

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<sup>251</sup> *Joint Communique of the United States of America and the People’s Republic of China*, August 17, 1982, <https://www.ait.org.tw/en/us-joint-communique-1982.html>.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

younger Taiwanese people.<sup>253</sup> For Beijing, the prospect of Taiwanese independence threatened its long-term goal of reunification.

As the 1980s ended, the Cold War came to a close, creating a challenging and dynamic environment for the PRC. By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union had collapsed and United States became essentially an unchallenged superpower, having just demonstrated its military supremacy in the First Gulf War. Domestically, the CCP had also begun instituting political reforms intended to decentralize power and minimize any chance of Mao-esque personality cults.<sup>254</sup> The PRC's economic rise was in its early stages. In this context, Deng Xiaoping stepped down as China's leader and handed the reins to Jiang Zemin. In cross-strait relations, the PRC formed the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) and Taiwan created the Strait Exchange Forum (SEF) at the end of 1991. Both were semi-official organizations designed to facilitate dialogue between the two governments, and the development was seen as a breakthrough development in improving relations.<sup>255</sup>

Despite Taiwan's democratization, Beijing's domestic challenges, and the dynamic geopolitical situation, at the end of 1991, cross-strait relations seemed to be steadily improving. The PRC seemed to feel more confident about eventual reunification. This would soon change, with the path to the third TSC confrontation starting in 1992 when the United States approved a major weapons sale to Taiwan.

## **2. The Consensus to Apply Pressure**

Beijing's decision to use military force as a form of coercive diplomacy in the third TSC was made by consensus between hawkish and moderate elements within the CCP, responding to what they perceived as worsening conditions across the strait. The hawks had regularly advocated increased pressure towards Taiwan and the United States since 1992, when the Bush Administration decided to sell 150 F-16s to Taipei, and in 1995, they finally got their way. There is no evidence, however, that hawkish PLA

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<sup>253</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 17–20.

<sup>254</sup> Pye, "Jiang Zemin's Style of Rule," 211.

<sup>255</sup> Zhao, "Military Coercion and Peaceful Offence, 496–97.

leaders hijacked the decision-making process or overruled Jiang. What is more likely is starting in mid-1995, Jiang Zemin and the other moderates of the CCP also began to feel more pessimistic about cross-strait relations because of Taipei and Washington's actions. They recognized that their conciliatory approach towards Taiwan did not seem to be working. Since the early 1990s, the moderates had faced accusations from the hawkish faction that they were encouraging Taiwanese separatism, and Lee's actions in 1995 only invited further attacks from the hardliners. Developments across the strait led them to be more open to stronger approaches to Taiwan. In the face of mounting pressure from the hawks, the moderates concurred in advocating for demonstrative military force.

The 1992 F-16 sale deeply concerned PLA leaders and other hardliners, as the acquisition significantly balanced Taipei's air capabilities with that of Beijing's and gave it a capable deterrent if hostilities were ever to arise in the strait, while signaling increased U.S. support for Taiwan.<sup>256</sup> The PRC asserted the arms sale as a violation of the 1982 communique. However, its response was tepid and less assertive than the PLA would have liked, consisting of an official statement to the United States warning it of its "erroneous decision" that "seriously jeopardize" Sino-American relations.<sup>257</sup> In the months following the F-16 sale, several PLA units submitted reports stating their readiness for war and proposing tougher actions against Taiwan and the United States, but nothing arose from these suggestions.<sup>258</sup> Likely informed by PLA's technological and materiel disadvantage to the United States, it did not advocate for open military action against Taiwan or the United States, but kept its recommendations to mostly coercive economic measures such as raising tariffs on U.S. goods or reducing purchases of American agricultural exports. Beijing did not enact any of these retaliatory economic policies, however, demonstrating how much it values maintain trade ties.<sup>259</sup> Four senior PLA officials penned a memo arguing that "defending national sovereignty and independence should take precedence over all others and over transient economic

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<sup>256</sup> Nancy Tucker, *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 185–89.

<sup>257</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 36

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 51–53.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.



interests,” implying that the CCP leadership was subverting national interests to trade ties with the United States.<sup>260</sup> Despite these complaints, the PRC continued developing cross-strait dialogue through the ARATS-SEF channel, with the inaugural meeting of the chairmen of the two organizations occurring in Singapore in April 1993.<sup>261</sup>

Lee Teng-Hui, the President of Taiwan, added to the provocations in 1993 and 1994. First, he initiated efforts to obtain a seat for Taiwan in the United Nations General Assembly, separate from the PRC.<sup>262</sup> In April 1994, Lee Teng-Hui openly claimed in an interview that Taiwan belonged to the “Taiwanese people” and even evoked the image of Moses leading the Jews out of Egypt, possible as an analogue of himself leading the “Taiwanese people” out from under the shadow of China.<sup>263</sup> Both Lee and his Premier Lien Chan also took a series of trips through Southeast Asia to strengthen Taiwan’s economic ties with the region.<sup>264</sup> This form of diplomacy by Taipei was quite limited in scope, but the endeavor stoked Chinese sensitivities about Taiwan’s drift away from the mainland. The PRC’s response to all of these actions, however, was once again mild. Beijing prevented the UN General Assembly from considering Taiwanese membership, and issued condemnations of Lee’s regional efforts through CCP propaganda publications. Nevertheless, Beijing kept its disapproval mostly at a pro forma level.<sup>265</sup> Internally, the hawks continued to seethe, lobbying the CCP to adopt stronger positions towards both the United States and Taiwan. They also began to attack Minister Qian and the MFA for misguiding Chinese foreign policy and encouraging Taiwanese separatism through weakness.<sup>266</sup>

Starting late 1994, Jiang Zemin took a stronger role in shaping Beijing’s Taiwan policy. He began developing his “Eight Points” proposal and delivered the speech in

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<sup>260</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 54.

<sup>261</sup> Zhao, “Military Coercion and Peaceful Offence,” 497.

<sup>262</sup> Swaine, “Decision-Making Regarding Taiwan,” 315.

<sup>263</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 24.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 31–33.

<sup>266</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 56–60.

January 1995. The “Eight Points” reaffirmed Deng Xiaoping’s calls for “peaceful reunification” and “one country, two systems” while further offering conciliatory gestures, exhorting that “Chinese should not fight Chinese.” However, Jiang also warned against Taiwanese efforts towards independence and asserted that the PRC reserved the right to use force in reunification efforts (adding that force would be directed against foreign interventionists).<sup>267</sup> Jiang’s speech represented a renewed attempt to reach across the strait, with the nuanced warnings likely intended to signal Taipei where Beijing’s line was. It also seems designed to assuage the hawks that Jiang and the moderates understood their concerns. In April, Lee Teng-hui responded to Jiang’s proposal with a reiteration of Taipei’s previous insistence that negotiations must begin with the acknowledgement of two separate governments.<sup>268</sup> Beijing saw this as a flagrant rejection of Jiang’s extremely generous and conciliatory proposal. Lee’s response was deeply embarrassing for CCP moderates. To the hawks, Lee’s reply was a repudiation of Jiang and Qian’s efforts at peaceful reunification and demonstrated the fallacies of conciliatory approaches to Taiwan.<sup>269</sup>

The final straw was when Lee received a visa in May 1995 to visit the United States and speak at his alma mater, Cornell. In April, the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher had assured the MFA Minister Qian Qichen that Lee would not get the visa. When the United States changed course and announced its issuance of Lee’s visa, Qian and the MFA (both already under fire for being ‘weak’ and encouraging Taiwanese splittism) were sorely embarrassed.<sup>270</sup> In addition, in the last week of May, Taiwan initiated a series of military exercises geared towards counter-offensives against the mainland.<sup>271</sup> Lastly, at Cornell, Lee made 13 mentions of “the Republic of China on Taiwan,” confirming to Beijing both his ambitions for independence, and Washington’s

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<sup>267</sup> Scobell, “Show of Force,” 231.

<sup>268</sup> Richard Bush, “Lee Teng-Hui and ‘Separatism,’” in *Dangerous Strait: the U.S.-Taiwan-China Crisis*, ed. Nancy Tucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 83.

<sup>269</sup> Zhao, “Military Coercion and Peaceful Offence,” 502.

<sup>270</sup> Scobell, “Show of Force,” 231.

<sup>271</sup> Ting Chen-wu, “Hawks Dominate China’s Policy Toward Taiwan,” *Hsin Pao* (Hong Kong), March 14, 1996. OSE Translated Text, FTS19960314000157.

implicit support of such a move.<sup>272</sup> Hardliners increased their calls for retaliation against Taiwan, and appeared to get the upper hand in shaping policy.<sup>273</sup> In mid-June, after Lee returned from his U.S. tour, the TALSG convened an emergency meeting. Normally convening with only one military member, this session had three in attendance, including the two most senior PLA generals. Jiang expressed his increasing concerns about the cross-strait situation. Confronted by “three irate military men insisting it was time for harsher action,” the rest of the TALSG concurred and decided to increase pressure on Taiwan, including military demonstrations.<sup>274</sup> The MFA began exploring harsher diplomatic measures against both Taipei and Washington to signal Beijing’s discontent.<sup>275</sup> In Qian Qichen’s memoirs, he affirms that most CCP leaders at this point believed that the United States was testing China on Taiwan, and that they agreed that a sharper, more acute response with limited military force was necessary to prevent the situation from worsening.<sup>276</sup> The MFA recalled its U.S. ambassador and refused to accept Clinton’s newly appointed PRC ambassador. Several Sino-American dialogues were canceled. In addition, Beijing canceled an upcoming chairmen level ARATS-SEF meeting and issued a series of harsh diatribes against Lee (Garver notes, with a stridency not seen since 1979).<sup>277</sup> Finally, after three years of equivocation on Taiwan’s separatism, the CCP’s consensus had shifted to a hardlined position.<sup>278</sup>

After providing advance notice of its exercises, the PLA began the first phase of the third TSC on July 21, launching six unarmed ballistic missiles into international waters approximately 100 miles north of Taiwan. At the end of August, Beijing followed

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<sup>272</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 259.

<sup>273</sup> Wang Yu-yen, “Irritated by Li Teng-hui’s Words and Deeds and Provoked by Taiwan’s Military Exercises, Hardliners in China’s Taiwan Affairs Departments Get the Upper Hand,” *Lien Ho Pao*, June 11, 1995. OSE Translated Text, FTS19950611000103.

<sup>274</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 61; Ting Chen-wu, “Hawks Dominate China’s Policy Toward Taiwan.”

<sup>275</sup> “Jiang Zemin Annoyed by U.S. Meddling in Sovereignty Issue,” *Lien Ho Pao*, June 11, 1995.

<sup>276</sup> Niu Jun, “Chinese Decision Making in the Three Military Actions Across the Strait,” 315.

<sup>277</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 72–74.

<sup>278</sup> You Ji, “Changing Leadership Consensus: The Domestic Context of War Games,” in *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the 1995–1996 Crisis*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (New York: Routledge, 1999), 93.

up with six more missile tests.<sup>279</sup> By deliberately choosing impact areas near Taiwan, the PRC was signaling its discontent towards Lee Teng-hui's efforts to gain independence and continued U.S. support for Taiwanese separatism while exhibiting its capability to strike Taiwan if needed.<sup>280</sup>

Despite the years of internal debate on pressure versus conciliation towards Taiwan, once the CCP had decided on stronger actions, it acted in unison. In a Hong Kong newspaper dated 12 August 1995, an "authoritative Beijing source" said that the PRC was already planning on conducting military exercises in March 1996, right before Taiwan's first ever presidential election, to "spark economic and financial panic, as well as fear among the people in Taiwan" in the hopes that Lee Teng-hui would lose votes.<sup>281</sup>

After the military demonstrations in July and August, Beijing and Washington held two high-level bilateral meetings, one between Presidents Clinton and Jiang in October and another between Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye and senior PLA leaders in November.<sup>282</sup> In these meetings, the U.S. gave commitments to China that it would uphold the one China policy and would limit Taiwanese leaders from visiting the United States in the future.<sup>283</sup> Sino-American relations improved. Regardless, the PRC continued its coercive diplomacy. In November 1995, Beijing initiated another round of military exercises as a signal to Taiwan. Held between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, the PLA's maneuvers coincided with the two week campaigning period before Taiwan's legislative elections on December 2.<sup>284</sup> The operation simulated the amphibious invasion of Dongshan Island in Fujian Province, directly across the strait from Taiwan. These demonstrations were, at the time, the largest and most complex that the PLA had ever attempted, with a never-before-seen joint service element that highlighted the integrated

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<sup>279</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 74.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>281</sup> Wang Yu-yen, "Range Practice Aims at Pressing Li Teng-Hui To Give Up Presidential Election," *Lien Ho Pao*, August 12, 1995. OSE Translated Text, FTS19950812000314.

<sup>282</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 84–85.

<sup>283</sup> Swaine, "Decision-making Regarding Taiwan," 325.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

capabilities of the PLA ground, air, and maritime components.<sup>285</sup> The timing of the operations suggests the intended audience. As mentioned previously, in Taiwanese politics, the new pro-independence party DPP had emerged as a contender to the traditional KMT party. As the KMT pivoted towards a pro-independence platform, a portion of the KMT splintered off to form the New Party, a pro-reunification party. The DPP, KMT, and New Party were all contending for seats in the December 2 legislative elections, and the PRC timed the exercises to signal to Taiwanese voters its disapproval of the DPP and KMT's separatism. On December 1, the day before the legislative elections, Beijing confirmed it would hold another round of even larger exercises in March, during the Taiwanese presidential election.

The results of the legislative elections demonstrated the viability of China's limited force strategy towards Taiwan. The most pro-independence DPP gained three seats for a total of 54 in the assembly, which were far less than previously anticipated considering the DPP's gain of 30 seats in the 1992 elections. The KMT, also leaning pro-independence under Lee Teng-Hui, lost five seats for a total of 85. The reunification-oriented New Party gained 21 seats, a significant headway for the party's first election. The November exercises had caused a 2.6% drop in Taiwan's stock exchange and a rapid buy up of foreign currencies, and Taiwanese voters appeared to be repudiating the pro-independence policies of the KMT and DPP.<sup>286</sup> While China did not specifically state how it had intended the maneuvers to affect Taiwanese politics, the limited nature of its demonstrations allowed any kind of perceived difference in the legislative elections to be considered a success for Beijing's coercive diplomacy. Its increased pressure on Taiwan was achieving the desired political effect.

The final set of exercises occurred from March 8 to 25, 1996, and were the largest and most dangerous of the entire Taiwan Strait Crisis. The operations involved missile tests targeted much closer to the Taiwanese ports of Kaohsiung and Keelung, as well as larger joint-service live ammunition simulated amphibious invasions.<sup>287</sup> The March

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<sup>285</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 93.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 94–95.

<sup>287</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 261.

exercises coincided with campaign period for Taiwan's presidential election on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and were intended to signal its disapproval of Lee Teng-Hui and intimidate Taiwanese voters from supporting his separatism.<sup>288</sup> At the same time, the CCP took steps to ensure that its limited force would not be misinterpreted. As the exercises were kicking off, China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Liu Huaqiu, traveled to Washington to reassure the Clinton Administration did not intend to invade Taiwan.<sup>289</sup> The PLA did not mobilize close to the amount of landing craft that would have been needed for an actual attack on Taiwan, nor did it utilize the level of air capabilities that an invasion would have necessitated.<sup>290</sup>

The United States responded to these expanded exercises with the deployment of two carrier battle groups. Washington announced on March 7 that it was dispatching the USS Independence group to the vicinity of Taiwan. Four days later, the Pentagon announced the redeployment of the USS Nimitz battle group from the Persian Gulf. While cross-strait and Sino-American tensions had already been high since the summer of 1995, the carrier deployments represented a significant escalation. Washington's response to the PLA demonstrations in 1995 had been exclusively diplomatic, so the Clinton Administration's decision to move naval assets into the region constituted a major signal to Beijing. China responded to the U.S. deployment with accusations of interference in Chinese domestic affairs and supporting Taiwanese separatism, but also curtailed its missile launchings and amphibious maneuvers near the end of March.<sup>291</sup> For the following three weeks, U.S. and PRC forces remained in a mildly tense stand-off. Two days after the Taiwanese polls concluded on March 23, China concluded its exercises as scheduled and stood down its forces. Lee Teng-Hui won the election over the DPP candidate Peng Ming-min. Beijing immediately reduced its rhetoric and actions after the election and the crisis subsided.

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<sup>288</sup> Scobell, "Show of Force," 232.

<sup>289</sup> Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force*, 181.

<sup>290</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 109.

<sup>291</sup> Swaine, "Decision-making Regarding Taiwan," 326–27.

Beijing's muscular approach to cross-strait relations had mixed results. China had made its diplomatic displeasure known to Taiwan. The DPP, the most pro-independence party, earned 21% of the vote, which was down from 33% in the December 1995 legislative election.<sup>292</sup> By appreciably affecting Taiwan's politics and economics during the crisis, the PRC demonstrated control over its cross-strait neighbor.<sup>293</sup> However, the coercive diplomacy did not deter Taiwanese voters from supporting Lee; to the contrary, his base seemed to strengthen amidst the tension of the crisis.<sup>294</sup> The U.S. response demonstrated that Washington was still willing to involve itself in cross-strait relations, and that further calls by CCP hardliners for coercive measures might backfire on China.<sup>295</sup> Domestically, the third TSC relieved the hardliners' pressure on the moderates, and enabled Jiang to re-emphasize peaceful reunification.<sup>296</sup> By ordering the military demonstrations and adopting a stronger position towards Taiwan, Jiang had addressed the hawks' concerns about China appearing weak while maintaining a consensus within the CCP leadership.

The CCP's transition to consensus-based governing restrained the hawkish faction from driving China's foreign policy from 1992 to 1995, despite Taiwan's drift towards independence and perceived U.S. support. However, once the moderates within the CCP, especially Jiang Zemin, became convinced that their conciliatory and patient approach to reunification was not working, they acceded to the hawks' recommendations to use military force as a demonstration of Beijing's resolve. In addition, there is some evidence that Jiang and the moderates felt the need to maintain leadership consensus and assuage the hawks when their pressure for harsher actions reached a certain point, especially after moderate approach to cross-strait relations seemed to be encouraging further Taiwanese separatism. The CCP's shift away from concentrated power in a paramount leader does seem to have reduced China's likelihood to use military force when comparing the third

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<sup>292</sup> You, "Taiwan in the Political Calculations of the Chinese Leadership," 124.

<sup>293</sup> Swaine, "Decision-making Regarding Taiwan," 326–27.

<sup>294</sup> Garver, *Face Off*, 153–54.

<sup>295</sup> Swaine, "Decision-making Regarding Taiwan," 327.

<sup>296</sup> You, "Supreme Leader and the Military," 290.

TSC with the first and second. However, considering that Jiang's decision to initiate coercive diplomacy in 1995 and 1996 was in part because of hawkish pressures within the CCP, it appears that because the PRC leader was in a less secure political position, consensus-based governing also enabled militarized actions in response to a worsening cross-strait situation. It should also be noted that even when Beijing did decide to use military force in 1995–1996, the actions were restrained. China was careful to clarify that its exercises were not a lead-up to an actual military conflict. This measured military response to the worsening cross-strait situation is at least in part due to the PRC's desires to maintain strong economic relations with the United States and the rest of the world. In other words, consensus governing caused China to be more conciliatory from 1992–1995 despite Taiwanese and U.S. challenges to reunification; when Beijing finally decided to use more coercive actions, EI played a role in how it applied pressure.

#### **D. AVOIDED CONFLICTS IN 1999 AND 2002**

##### **1. Fluctuating Cross-Strait Relations**

Between 1996 and 1999, cross-strait and Sino-American relations remained stable with some improvement. Beijing and Taipei made overtures to restart cross-strait exchanges through the ARATS-SEF channel. Initially, the PRC required agreement to the “one China” principle, but then by the end of 1997, MFA Minister Qian Qichen had dropped the requirement as a precondition for reinitiating dialogue. In 1998, President Clinton traveled to China, where he made the “three Nos” speech, affirming that the United States did not support Taiwanese independence, a two China solution, or Taiwan's admission to any international organizations.<sup>297</sup> By the end of 1998, China and Taiwan had officially agreed to the resumption of ARATS-SEF dialogues, and the two chairmen of their respective organizations met in October 1998, their first since the inaugural 1993 summit in Singapore.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Jim Mann, “Clinton 1st to OK China, Taiwan ‘3 No’s,’” Los Angeles Times, July 8, 1998, <http://articles.latimes.com/1998/jul/08/news/mn-1834>.

<sup>298</sup> Swaine, “Decision-making Regarding Taiwan,” 330.



Lee Teng-hui threw a wrench into the budding cross-strait communications in July 1999. Publicly, he described the cross-strait relationship as a “special state-to-state” one. Beijing immediately cancelled the upcoming ARATS-SEF meeting, planned for fall 1999 in Taipei, and issued a series of official condemnations of Taiwan’s behavior, including hints at using military force. The PRC and U.S. began exchanging heated rhetoric over the growing cross-strait tensions.<sup>299</sup> At the same time, Sino-American relations were souring for other reasons. NATO had just concluded its U.S.-led air campaign in Kosovo, which the PRC considered an international intervention in a domestic affair and stoked China’s sensitivities about external violations of its own sovereignty. Making matters worse, during the operation, the United States bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese journalists.<sup>300</sup> Regardless of all these sources of friction, however, Beijing kept its response mild. Its statements were harsh, but there does not seem to have been any discussion of military action.

Taiwan had its second presidential election in March 2000, with Chen Shui-bian running for the DPP, the unabashedly pro-independence party. Leading up to the vote, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji strenuously warned Taiwanese voters to “make the right historical choice,” and that if not, they “won’t get another opportunity to regret.” A month prior, Zhu had obliquely threatened military force against Taiwan if it continued to prolong reunification talks.<sup>301</sup> Beijing also released a white paper around the same time that suggested impatience with Taiwan’s delay and China’s willingness to increase pressure for reunification.<sup>302</sup> While Chen was soft spoken on Taiwanese independence for most of his campaign, three days before the election, he proclaimed at a rally that “Taiwan is an independent, sovereign country” and that Taiwan would never reunify under “one country, two systems.”<sup>303</sup> Chen’s victory was a further cause for concern for

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<sup>299</sup> Swaine, “Decision-making Regarding Taiwan,” 330.

<sup>300</sup> Christensen, “PRC Security Relations with the United States,” 2.

<sup>301</sup> “China Ups Pressure on Taiwan,” British Broadcasting Company, March 15, 2000. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/678155.stm>.

<sup>302</sup> *The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue*, February 21, 2000, Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC. [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/Special/WhitePapers/201103/t20110316\\_1789217.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/Special/WhitePapers/201103/t20110316_1789217.htm).

<sup>303</sup> Dennis Hickey and Yitan Li, “Cross-Strait Relations in the Aftermath of the Election of Chen Shui-bian,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 28, no. 4 (2002): 202.

the mainland. It was the first election of a non-KMT president, and an indicator of the Taiwanese population's increasing sense of self-identity. Once again, despite these heightened tensions and concerns, the PRC remained relatively restrained in its response. Most importantly, unlike the 1996 election, it refrained from any kind of military signals to Taiwanese voters.

In 2002, Chen Shui-bian threatened to catalyze another crisis in cross-strait relations. In August, Chen proclaimed in a speech that Taiwan and China were two countries on each side of the strait, Taiwan did not belong to any other country and that it had always been an independent entity. China, like in 1999, responded with vehement objections to this new exhibition of Taiwanese separatism. Sino-American relations had also suffered a low point the year before, after the EP-3 collision and the subsequent detention of the American aircrew. However, apart from terse statements like in 1999 and 2000, the PRC did not resort to military actions to increase pressure on Taiwan.

### **1. Beijing's Steady Hand**

The PRC's relatively calm responses to Taiwanese separatism from 1999–2002 stand in contrast with its coercive diplomacy in 1995–1996. Because tensions remained fairly low, data on this period of cross-strait relations is sparse compared to that of the third TSC. However, the research that is available points to several factors that shaped China's actions. One cause is Washington's alacrity in disavowing support for Taiwanese independence and its harsh criticism of Lee and Chen's comments.<sup>304</sup> Another factor is China's far stronger economic and military position and growth in 1999–2002 compared to 1995. By 1999, China had increased its GDP by about 25% from where it was in 1995.<sup>305</sup> China's economic interdependence (EI) also appears to have affected China's decision making, but not in the manner that the EI theory predicts. China's trade-to-GDP with the world had increased from around 35% to 40%, but its trade with the United States and Taiwan had not changed appreciably between 1995 and 1999 or 2002. More telling is Taiwan's trade dependence on China. Between 1995 and 1999, Taiwan's trade-

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<sup>304</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 262–65.

<sup>305</sup> World Bank, "GDP (current US\$), China."

to-GDP ratio with China went from 6% to 8%. In 2002, it was almost 15%.<sup>306</sup> The CCP seems to have recognized that Taiwan was becoming increasingly tied to the mainland through deepening economic ties, and that Beijing could apply pressure through non-military means if needed. Notably, China did not use economic retaliation, but was content merely having the ability to exact economic pain on Taiwan. Furthermore, Taiwan's economic dependence on China was an indicator to CCP leadership that eventual reunification was more likely, or at the very least, outright independence was very unlikely.<sup>307</sup> The last factors were Jiang Zemin's political position and the CCP consensus on cross-strait relations. By 1999, Jiang had developed a better relationship with the PLA, especially its top leadership. Notably, two of the most powerful generals that had been the strongest advocates for increased military pressure against Taiwan during the third TSC retired in 1997. With their successors, who were much more of peers to Jiang, the PRC leader was better able to control policy and maintain a steady hand on the helm.<sup>308</sup> Furthermore, in this later period of cross-strait relations, CCP elites seem to have come to a consensus that economic and political approaches to reunification were preferable to military options.<sup>309</sup> This is likely both because of Jiang's more secure political position as well as Chinese leadership reflections on its coercive diplomacy during the third TSC, recognizing that its militarized actions to undermine political support for Lee Teng-hui backfired. Also, some scholars have observed that the CCP underwent generational shift around the turn of the decade in both top leaders and foreign policy advisers to the MFA and PLA. The new cohort of leaders and advisers exhibited more open-mindedness and worldliness, and specifically deeper understandings of democratic systems and societies.<sup>310</sup> This paradigm change likely informed Beijing how better to manage relations with its democratic cross-strait neighbor.

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<sup>306</sup> World Bank, "GDP (current US\$), China"; IMF, "Direction of Trade Statistics."; Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, "Key Indicators Database, Chinese Taipei."

<sup>307</sup> Qian Qimao, "China's New Approaches to a Peaceful Solution of the Taiwan Issue," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 25 (2003): 515–16; Chen-Yuan Tung, "An Assessment of China's Taiwan Policy under the Third Generation Leadership," *Asian Survey* 45, no. 3 (May/June 2005): 353–55.

<sup>308</sup> You, "Supreme Leader and the Military" 276–80.

<sup>309</sup> Chen, "Assessment of China's Taiwan Policy," 344–46.

<sup>310</sup> Christensen, "PRC Security Relations with the United States," 4–5.

The United States also played a role in shaping the PRC's response in this period by quickly denying any support for Taiwanese independence and criticizing both Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian for their remarks.<sup>311</sup> This helped to reassure the CCP that reunification was not being threatened by a U.S.-Taiwan plot. The CCP was also better at interpreting U.S. statements and actions, having learned through increase interactions with Washington.<sup>312</sup>

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Compared to the 1950s, China in the 1990s and 2000s was distinctly more peaceful. The PRC faced challenges to its claim over Taiwan in 1995–1996 and 1999–2002, yet did not resort to artillery bombardment as it did under Mao. China's transformation into an economic powerhouse with deep trade ties to the United States and the world definitely played a role in shaping Beijing's reactions to concerning cross-strait situations. CCP leaders, especially Jiang Zemin and other moderates, regularly demonstrated that economic growth through trade was an important consideration when deciding how to manage the threat of Taiwanese independence. Interestingly, in the later period of Jiang's tenure, Beijing became more confident about cross-strait relations despite separatist rhetoric in Taipei because Taiwan had become so economically dependent on the mainland. China's economic interdependence with the United States clearly mattered to Beijing's decision making, especially leading up to and during the third TSC. China's EI seems to have played less of a role in the differences in action between 1995–1996 and 1999–2002 since it was largely the same between the two periods. Taiwan's economic dependence, on the other hand, did factor into China's calculus, as it gave Beijing a sense of confidence of its economic leverage over Taipei while also reducing the short-term possibility of Taiwanese independence.

However, it also appears that the CCP's shift to consensus-based governing also mattered. Throughout most of the 1990s, the hawkish faction of the CCP consistently pressed for harsh actions against Taiwanese separatism, yet the PRC only used military

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<sup>311</sup> Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 262–65.

<sup>312</sup> Christensen, "PRC Security Relations with the United States," 4–7.

force during the third TSC. Even then, the bout of coercive diplomacy appears to have been decided after Jiang and other CCP moderates became convinced that their conciliatory approach to Taiwan was not working. At all other times during Jiang's rule, the moderate view towards cross-strait relations won out, restraining hawkish voices from driving China's policy. Comparing 1995–1996 with 1999–2002, however, the relationship between consensus governing and China's foreign policy aggressiveness becomes more complicated. The transition to dispersed political power did lead to an overall less assertive approach to cross-strait relations. However, another dynamic also comes into play when China's leader does not have a secure political position that might lead to more hawkish foreign policies. It should be noted that politically insecure leaders are more likely in a consensus-governance paradigm, since there is an aversion to consolidated political power. The more the PRC's top leader has to foster consensus, the more he will need to accommodate other CCP and PLA elites' desires and policy preferences, including calls for more muscular policies towards Taiwan (or other points of conflict). On the other hand, the more secure the Chinese leader's position, the less susceptible he is to hawkish pressures.<sup>313</sup>

Related to the CCP's transition to consensus-based governing and more institutionalized politics, it seems that Deng Xiaoping's shift to peaceful reunification vis-à-vis Taiwan set a policy baseline for all future PRC leaders. Much like Deng's deliberate efforts to transform the CCP away from personality cults and one-man consolidated power has left a lasting legacy on Chinese politics, his approach to cross-strait relations seems to persist. Peaceful reunification appears to be the default policy from which more coercive and militarized actions towards Taiwan are evaluated. Compared to China's Taiwan policy under Mao, who much preferred to use military force and frequently advocated for the "Liberation of Taiwan," Jiang's China seems to have considered using military force as a move *away* from the norm. Analysis on Deng's leadership era is outside of the scope of this thesis, but it definitely seems to have affected the 1990s and 2000s, so it bears mentioning.

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<sup>313</sup> Michael Swaine, "Understanding the Historical Record," in *Managing Sino-American Crises*, 38–39.

Overall, the shift within the CCP from consolidated reign to consensus-based governing was important in determining Beijing's approach to cross-strait relations in the 1990s and 2000s. Despite facing threats to reunification on several instances, the mainland for the most part maintained a peaceful approach to Taiwan. Only during the third TSC did China opt to use military force as coercive diplomacy. Even then, in contrast with Mao's artillery diplomacy of the 1950s, the 1995–1996 demonstrations were calculated for political effect and to minimize the risk of causing actual damage. Beijing also took deliberate steps to reassure the United States that the exercises were not a precursor to war. Outside of the third TSC, the PRC kept its responses to Taiwanese separatism on the political and economic levels and refrained from using military force.

## IV. THESIS CONCLUSION

The differences in China's foreign policy in the 1950s, 1990s, and early 2000s are stark, especially vis-à-vis core interests such as the unification of Taiwan. While many factors have caused this change in China's behavior, this thesis has identified two that are key: China's domestic political structure and its economic interdependence (specifically with the United States and Taiwan). As the PRC has shift from paramount leader rule to consensus-based governance, it has become more restrained in how it responds to foreign policy challenges. In the 1990s, the CCP's norm of maintaining policy consensus served to check hawkish policy-makers' preferences. When China has chosen to use military force such as in the third Taiwan Strait Crisis, it did so in a very limited fashion in part because of its priority to maintain trade ties with the United States. Furthermore, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, China did not respond to Taiwanese provocations with military force partially because of Taiwan's increased economic dependence on the mainland.

Chapter II established that under the rule of a paramount leader, China was willing to quickly use deadly military force to address its political and security concerns. In 1950, China deployed massive forces to the Korean peninsula to rebuff the American-led invasion of North Korea. In 1954, Beijing used artillery strikes on KMT-held islands Jinmen and Mazu to express its frustration at U.S. meddling in its domestic affairs and remind the world that it was serious about unifying Taiwan under CCP control, causing approximately 1,000 KMT and PLA casualties in the process. In 1958, the PRC fiercely bombarded Jinmen once again for two months with almost 3,000 killed in action on both sides. All three of these military actions undoubtedly had security and structural elements to them. The prospect of U.S. forces on the Yalu River would have been deeply concerning for the PRC regardless of who was in power in Beijing. Similarly, U.S. security assistance for the KMT represented a threat to reunification with Taiwan, and as such played a role in shaping China's behavior in the 1950s Taiwan Strait Crises. However, how and when China responded to the challenges in these three situations, especially the Korean War and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, were driven by the PRC's

paramount leader, Mao Zedong. He regularly demonstrated a propensity to use military force for political purposes, whether it be to demonstrate solidarity with the Middle East and mobilize people for Great Leap Forward in 1958 or to highlight China's displeasure at U.S. assistance of the KMT in 1954. In Korea in 1950, Mao eagerly encouraged military intervention despite facing a far stronger opponent, exhibiting confidence in the PLA's ability to prevail over American forces and sense of idealism about using military force. Most importantly, in all three cases, China's actions closely matched Mao's preferences despite being other CCP leaders' disagreement. In 1950, in the face of vehement resistance from most of his colleagues and Chinese military leaders, Mao was successful in implementing a massive military operation on the Korean peninsula. In 1954, soon after China had eased international tensions and gained positive recognition through Zhou Enlai's work at the Geneva Conference, it agitated the Taiwan issue by initiating a round of artillery diplomacy against KMT islands. In 1958, after a period of relatively peaceful foreign policy led by Zhou, Mao recommenced shelling attacks on KMT offshore positions.

After the 1958 crisis subsided, the PLA maintained steady but light artillery fire on Jinmen until 1979, when the United States switched its diplomatic recognition from the Republic of China to the PRC. Chapter III illustrated that China's approach towards cross-strait relations has been largely peaceful. Deng Xiaoping, Mao's successor as the paramount leader, was largely responsible for this initial shift in foreign policy by championing the idea of seeking peaceful reunification with Taiwan. He oversaw China's economic opening with the world and set the PRC on its trajectory of growth. Deng also critically transitioned Chinese politics away from personalized rule, despite having almost Mao-like authority. By setting the CCP on the path to institutionalized and formalized politics, Deng reduced the likelihood of China's foreign policy being dictated by one person in the future. This is the political context in which Jiang Zemin took power in 1989. Because of both the political changes implemented under Deng and Jiang's own background as later generation CCP member, he was in a far less powerful position to unilaterally influence policy than either of his predecessors. In particular, Jiang had to



make efforts to maintain the support of the PLA, which was generally more hawkish towards cross-strait relations.

As the PRC felt its way through a post-Cold War world, it sought amicable relations with the United States and increased trade ties to boost its own economy. China's overall trade-to-GDP ratio steadily increased in this period, as did its bilateral economic interdependence (EI) with the United States and Taiwan. China strongly valued these trade ties, especially with the United States, as a source of economic prosperity. The rise of Taiwanese separatism and what China perceived as U.S. support for Taiwan's independence in early 1990s began to threaten regional stability. Just as U.S. assistance of the KMT in the 1950s challenged the PRC's claim over Taiwan and contributed to the first two TSCs, China considered the prospect of Taiwanese independence a significant threat to reunification. What appeared as U.S. support for Taiwan's separatist streak exacerbated the issue. Starting with Washington's sale of 150 F-16s to Taiwan in 1992, the CCP and PLA began to split in opinions on how to respond to these concerns. Loosely, Beijing's leadership coalesced around hawkish and moderate positions, with the PLA generally advocating for harsher action and Jiang and the MFA championing diplomatic responses while focusing on regional stability and promoting economic growth. After the F-16 sale, several PLA generals admonished the CCP for subverting sovereignty issues to economic goals. This highlights that the moderates were at least in part driven by EI in their policy making. Until mid-1995 when the Taiwan Strait Crisis began, the moderate approach won out in shaping the PRC's cross-strait policy. Despite a trend of concerning Taiwanese behavior from 1993–1995, such as Lee Teng-hui's attempts to earn U.N. recognition for Taiwan, his efforts at tradecraft with Southeast Asia, and Lee's public implication that Taiwan was a separate nation, Beijing remained conciliatory. Notably, after all of Washington and Taipei's problematic actions up to that point, in January 1995, Jiang Zemin announced his conciliatory "Eight Points" proposal for reunification negotiations. Lee's response and his subsequent visit to the United States later that year demonstrated to Jiang and the moderates that their approach was not working, while encouraging PLA hawks of their position.

In face of increased pressure from the PLA to take more drastic action against Taiwan and the apparent failure of the moderate stance, the consensus within Beijing shifted to a hawkish position, leading Jiang to direct the military to begin demonstrative missile tests in June 1995. The crisis continued to escalate for the next several months until the end of Taiwan's presidential election in March 1996. Importantly, while cross-strait relations were tense and there were increased military forces in the region, China was conspicuously restrained in its use of military force to prevent any physical damage or harm to Taiwan. There was no evidence that the PLA was planning an amphibious invasion. Beijing also took deliberate steps to reassure the United States that the exercises were not a precursor to actual military operations. Even when facing a threat to Taiwan's reunification, China was measured in its military response, likely in part because of Beijing's overriding priority to maintain strong economic ties with the United States and the rest of the world. The CCP's shift to consensus governance had a restraining effect on the PRC's cross-strait policy in the years leading up to the third TSC. When China ultimately decided on using military force, economic interdependence considerations limited those actions to demonstrative exercises that carried low risks of causing physical damage or harm.

From 1999–2002, Taiwan's leaders' actions once again threatened to destabilize the region with a series of public announcements that alluded to Taiwanese independence. China's response was limited to harsh statements and no military action resulted. At this point, Jiang Zemin was more established in his political position and less vulnerable to PLA pressure. This was in part because two of the most hawkish and powerful generals had retired in 1997, but also because Jiang had made earnest efforts during his tenure to develop a rapport with PLA leadership. EI also shaped the PRC response, not in the manner that Russett and O'Neal describe in *Triangulating Peace*, but more in the style of Keohane and Nye in *Power and Interdependence*.<sup>314</sup> China's trade-to-GDP with Taiwan or the United States had not changed significantly between 1995–1996 and 1999–2002, as noted in the first section of Chapter III, but Taiwan's economic dependence on China had increased massively between the two periods. Part of why the

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<sup>314</sup> Keohane and Nye, "Power and Interdependence revisited," 728.

PRC responded relatively conciliatorily was because it felt confident in its ability to inflict economic pain on Taiwan if needed. Taiwan's increased dependence on China also made CCP leaders more confident that reunification would be possible eventually and at least in the short-term, independence was highly unlikely. Lastly, the United States was far quicker in condemning Taipei's separatist rhetoric compared to before the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. By disavowing support for Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian's comments, Washington helped dispel any fears that it was working with Taipei to deepen its separation from the mainland.

While this thesis did not examine Hu Jintao's rule, the ten years of peaceful cross-strait relations during his tenure bears some mention. Taiwan's economic dependence on China continued to increase during this time period, strengthening Beijing's confidence about eventual reunification.<sup>315</sup> While EI does seem to play a role, it is less clear whether consensus-governing constrained Beijing's behavior. This is in large part because there were less overt challenges to reunification, negating the need for any response. Taiwan's independence-oriented streak had petered out, as demonstrated by the KMT's shift away from the Lee-era separatism, and flagging voter popularity for the pro-independence DPP.<sup>316</sup> In 2008, anti-independence KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou won the presidency promising an improvement in cross-strait relations, which was very reassuring to Beijing. Notably, China seems to have learned that any assertive actions during Taiwanese elections could backfire and increase voter support for pro-independence candidates.<sup>317</sup> In addition, the United States continued to reassure China that it did not support Taiwanese independence while mostly strengthening Sino-American relations.<sup>318</sup>

Xi Jinping's rule challenges this thesis' argument more. He has consolidated more power than any Chinese leader since Mao, yet cross-strait relations have remained mostly

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<sup>315</sup> Chang Wu-ueh and Chien-min Chao, "Managing Stability in the Taiwan Strait: Non-Military Policy Towards Taiwan Under Hu Jintao," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 38, no. 3: 115–16.

<sup>316</sup> Chen, "Comparing Jiang Zemin's Impatience with Hu Jintao's Patience," 965–67.

<sup>317</sup> Lampton, *Following the Leader*, 167.

<sup>318</sup> Chen, "Comparing Jiang Zemin's Impatience of Hu Jintao's Patience," 967–69.

calm.<sup>319</sup> Some of that is a carryover from the Hu period, as Ma held the Taiwanese presidency until March 2016. The CCP also continues to see economic growth and trade ties as priority, which might explain why China has maintained a steady and calm approach to Taiwan. However, Tsai Ing-wen's more pro-independence administration since March 2016 has presented concerns, and Beijing has consequently increased its diplomatic pressure on Taipei.<sup>320</sup> Tsai has refused to confirm Taiwan's adherence the 1992 Consensus<sup>321</sup> an affirmation that all her predecessors since Lee Teng-hui had made, prompting the PRC to sever all cross-strait communications. Beijing has made it clear that it will not reopen any official communication channels with Taipei until Tsai endorses the 1992 Consensus.<sup>322</sup> While this not the same level as the coercive diplomacy of 1995–1996, this does represent a tenser period of cross-strait relations than Jiang Zemin post-1996 or during Hu Jintao's rule. Additional research that could yield insight into how Xi's China will manage cross-strait relations going forward is Xi's formative professional experiences. Mao's experiences as a military and revolutionary leader were critical in shaping his perceptions and predispositions that were in turn pivotal to shaping China's policies in the paramount leader period. Studies on Xi's background and theories of warfare and politics might similarly help explain and predict Beijing's behavior in the coming years.

The U.S.-China relationship is extremely important for both countries, and ultimately the rest of the world. They represent the two largest economies and militaries (by defense spending dollars) in the world. The two powers are intertwined in terms of economic growth, while many opportunities for strategic competition and cooperation between Beijing and Washington exist simultaneously. It is in both countries' interests to maintain stability in the region. Conflict, whether economic or military, would carry

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<sup>319</sup> Chris Buckley, "Xi Jinping, Seeking to Extend Power, May Bend Retirement Rules," *New York Times*, March 2, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/02/world/asia/xi-jinping-china-retirement-rules.html>.

<sup>320</sup> Shannon Tiezzi, "Did China Just Kill Cross-Strait Relations?" *The Diplomat*, June 26, 2016. <http://thediplomat.com/2016/06/did-china-just-kill-cross-strait-relations/>.

<sup>321</sup> The agreement that both Taiwan and China were committed to "One China."

<sup>322</sup> Maeve Whelan-Wuest, "Former Taiwan President Ma on One China, the 1992 Consensus, and Taiwan's Future," *Order from Chaos* (blog), March 16, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/03/16/former-taiwan-president-ma-on-one-china-the-1992-consensus-and-taiwans-future/>.

immense costs for the United States, China, and the entire world. As such, it is relevant for American policy-makers and strategists to both understand the most likely points of tension, such as cross-strait relations, and the factors that shape China's responses to core national interests, including threats to reunification. China's increased economic interdependence has played a role in its more pacific foreign policy, which should encourage U.S. policy-makers to maintain strong trade ties with the PRC. In addition, seeing as the CCP's shift from consolidated reign to consensus-based rule also had a restraining effect on Beijing's foreign policy, American China watchers should be cognizant of indicators that the consensus-governance norm is being eroded. Xi Jinping is showing some signs of chipping away at this baseline, which, dependent on his policy preferences, may portend an increase in foreign policy assertiveness. If so, the United States needs to be prepared to respond firmly but carefully to deter aggression while avoiding unnecessary escalation of tensions in such an important strategic relationship.

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