

“CHINESE WAR TERMINATION”:
WHO BEGINS WITH THE END IN MIND?

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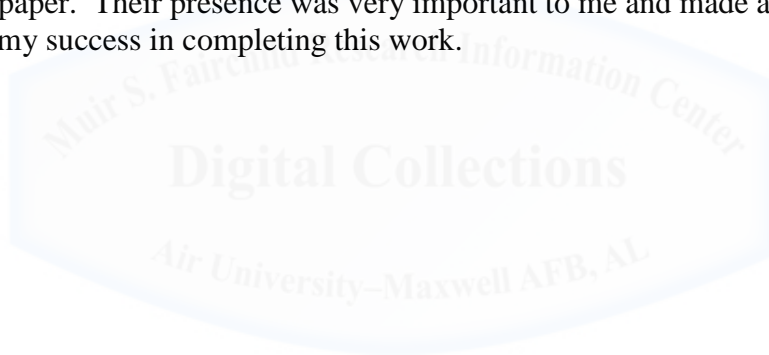


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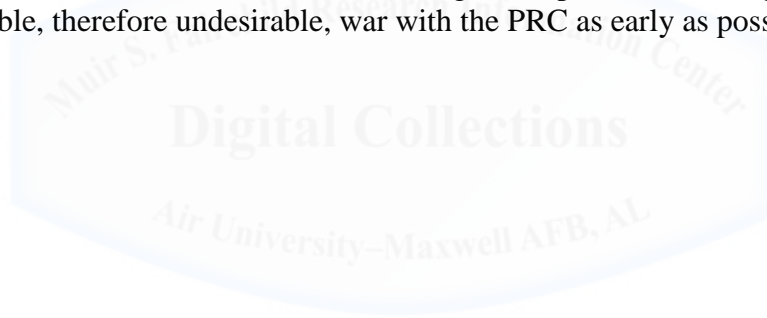


ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on when the People's Republic of China (PRC) has terminated war and international crises. By looking into China's conflicts, which were fought under the control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), this project seeks to discern patterns and characteristics of CCP decision-making. The research will examine a representative array of wars and crises from the establishment of the PRC in 1949 to the present.

The PRC's increasingly aggressive attitude has evoked concern for potential conflict and discussion over strategies in the region. However, until now not much attention has been paid to the conditions and circumstances that attend PRC's war termination. The author proposes two conditions when the PRC has terminated the war: when they faced the negative expectation of momentum of war, and when they achieved a favorable narrative both internally and externally.

A fuller understanding of PRC's decision-making calculus at the end of conflict can lead to a greater and broader sense of its strategy. It would be meaningful for the future strategists to have a better understanding of Chinese value and what would motivate them to terminate a war, considering the importance of bringing an end to an unprofitable, therefore undesirable, war with the PRC as early as possible.



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Introduction

Those who want peace must prepare for war.

Vegetius, Roman strategist

Every war must end.

Fred Iklé

Every state owes its prosperity to the international order in the current interdependent world. Therefore, in case of a conflict, every state pursues a prompt war termination to embrace mutual prosperity. However, history proves that ending a war is far more difficult than starting one, even when neither side benefits from the continuation of war. Moreover, many wars were more damaging than they would otherwise have been because the states involved did not know how to cease hostilities once they started. Thus, military strategists must pay profound insight on how to terminate a war while in peace. Adding to ancient Roman wisdom, those who want peace must prepare for war, and have an idea about how to end it.

Despite its deeply woven relationship with many countries, China's increasingly aggressive attitude has evoked concern for potential conflict. Accordingly, a vast array of research has been done regarding China's challenge to the international order, what China's strategy is, or how China might use its forces. Yet, not much attention has been paid to the conditions and circumstances that specifically attend China's war termination. The main contribution of this article is the theoretical argument and empirical evidence about when has the PRC terminated wars and international crises in the past. By understanding Chinese values in ending its wars, strategists can determine what a nation should do in conflict with China in the future.

This thesis hypothesizes that the PRC has terminated its wars when two conditions were met: when they faced the negative expectation for the momentum of war, and when they achieved a favorable narrative both internally and externally. Unlike the western way of thinking, the timing of war terminations has not been determined by an achievement of specific military objectives. Rather, these two conditions precede the military objectives.

The first condition—the loss of momentum—is based on the value of assessing strategic situations to determine which side has the dominant momentum of the war. Momentum is not strictly military but includes international and domestic political considerations. The other condition is the achievement of favorable narratives for international and domestic audiences. On the international stage, the inherent fear of encirclement and the tributary view make the narrative to regional countries crucial for China. Also, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) inherently needs a positive domestic narrative to claim its legitimacy.

Focusing on these two conditions reveals four characteristics of PRC strategy. First, the PRC is less prone to becoming mired in intractable war. Because of the direct impact of momentum on war termination, it is illogical for the PRC to continue a wearying war. Second, as long as the momentum continues, the PRC continues its aggression regardless of achieving original objectives. Third, the PRC does not always seek a clear-cut war termination, especially when continuing the war creates a favorable narrative. Fourth, the PRC does not expect more than what military power can do; objectives of the PLA (People's Liberation Army) is limited to physical destruction rather than compelling the enemy to do PRC's will. The concept of momentum prevents the military actions from being overextended while the value of narratives limits the objectives of PLA actions within militarily achievable issues, such as showing resolve by fighting back invading forces, occupying territories, and punishing small countries by a swift invasion.

The analysis of PRC's war termination leads to an implication of how a country should seek an exit strategy in a conflict with the PRC. The best way to bring a war with the PRC to a conclusion is to set two conditions: stall the momentum of the PLA militarily or diplomatically, and let the CCP have the room to claim victorious narrative internally and externally.

This article proceeds in four chapters. The first chapter reviews the current literature on war termination and why they are not sufficient to explain PRC war termination. The second chapter suggests a theory explaining when the PRC terminates wars. The third chapter evaluates the theory against empirical evidence. In order to discern patterns and characteristics of the CCP decision-making, this research looks into

China's conflicts which were fought under the control of the CCP from the establishment of PRC in 1949 to the present; namely, the Korean War (1950-53), the Sino-Indian War (1962), the Sino-Soviet border conflict (1969), and the Sino-Vietnamese War (1979). Fourth, potential counter-arguments are answered, including: the relevance of past war termination with the contemporary strategy; uniqueness of the PRC war termination; why does the PRC have such a decisive control over war termination.



CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

We know relatively little about how wars end, in contrast to the mountain ranges of ideas and scholarship we have about how wars start.

Dan Reiter

Among the existing literature regarding war termination, there are few theories that specifically address the PRC's war termination that reflect its war history and unique interest. The majority of their scope is a generalized concept of war terminations regardless of countries or culture. Moreover, most of them deal with the difficulty of terminating a war as the following examples show. For this reason, they do not serve as practical guides for strategists.

Fred Iklé sought to answer why many states find it difficult to get out of wars. He proposed the reasons for the difficulty as domestic and international calculi that drives a government to persist in continuing a war even when it is obvious it will lose the war. Once a war starts, a state tends to assume there is no substitute for victory. As a consequence, it refuses to negotiate and opt to continue fighting an unbeneficial war.¹ More specifically, H.E. Goemans focused on repressive and exclusionary regimes and found that they tend to refuse concessions and continue the war with no chance of winning.²

From another point of view, Dan Reiter points out a misconception about warfighting as the reason for the difficulty to terminate a war. In contrast to the common concept of the pursuit of victory to force the opponent to terminate the war, he found that battles are counter-effective to hasten war termination. He explains the reason; the longer a country fights, the more it becomes unsure of the enemy's commitment to the terms of conditions, reluctant to show concession, and blind to the disadvantageous outcomes of battles.³

¹ Fred Charles Iklé, *Every War Must End*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). 9

² H. E. Goemans, *War and Punishment : The Causes of War Termination and the First World War*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). 3

³ Dan Reiter, *How Wars End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). 220

From a civil-military relation perspective, Shawn Cochran examined political leaders' behaviors after the state is embroiled in wars that have proven longer, costlier, and more difficult than expected at the outset.⁴ He found that political leadership change does not matter as much for war termination as is generally thought.⁵

Despite the extensive literature on the difficulty of war termination, the PRC has exercised firm controls over past war terminations. In other words, PRC war termination history presents a dissonance in these generalized existing theoretical frameworks. As a reason for the dissonance, existing war termination theories seems to have three assumptions that do not match the PRC characteristics.

First, the existing war theories were drawn based on the relation between the winning side and the losing side. However, the PRC's warfighting has been oriented around long-term interest rather than the dichotomous result of winning or losing. Everett Dolman placed a caveat that historical analysis is apt to assume that battles and wars are won or lost, but one can no more achieve final victory than one can "win history."⁶ A victory cannot be measured by a single scale and there are several interpretations of winning or losing depending on which measure it is evaluated. Any side can determine victory because the declaration of victory depends on what one values. In fact, the PRC declared victory in all wars it fought, while some cases are judged as PRC's defeat by majority of audiences. Thus, the analysis based on victory and defeat in terms of various countries with various value and situations complicates the study of war termination and makes itself even meaningless.

The second shortfall of the existing literature is the assumption that war termination is a product of agreement. For example, Goemans' theory assumes there is a negotiation between belligerents, stating "wars can end only when the minimum terms of settlement of both sides become compatible, when both are asking no more than the other side is willing to give up."⁷ However, the past PRC wars were not necessarily terminated

⁴ Shawn T. Cochran, *War Termination as a Civil-Military Bargain : Soldiers, Statesmen, and the Politics of Protracted Armed Conflict* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 137

⁵ Ibid. 141

⁶ Everett C. Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age*, ed. Colin Gray and Williamson Murray, Cass Series: Strategy and History (New York: Routledge, 2011). 2

⁷ Goemans, *War and Punishment : The Causes of War Termination and the First World War*. 3

by mutual consensus. The PRC's unilateral withdrawals did not require an opponent's surrender or agreement for the termination as explained in the empirical section.

Third, the western war theories are oriented around goal-driven strategy. A French analyst Francois Jullien puts it as “a means-end relationship” in which strategists conceive an end, followed by the subsequent efforts to find the means whereby that end can be made to enter the realm of fact. For example, the US military Joint Planning states, “effective planning cannot occur without a clear understanding of the military end state and the conditions that must exist to end military operations.”⁸ This concept has been deeply rooted in the western concept since Aristotle pursued prudence through deliberating on means with a view to achieving a given end.⁹ Thus, Clausewitzian war supposes armed forces set military conditions for a political solution.¹⁰ What these western general war termination theories have in common is that they assume certain military objectives are the criteria for war termination and they must be achieved to terminate the war. However, as we see in the PRC war histories, PRC war termination does not seem to depend on the achievement of military objectives.

There are some theories specifically focusing on the PRC's war termination. Oriana Mastro found three tendencies in how the PRC has terminated wars. First, the PRC opens a communication channel to weaker opponents, while it refuses to talk to stronger ones to avoid the perception of a willingness to terminate the war sooner. She calls it “wartime diplomacy.” Second, the PRC demonstrates potential escalation to create a sense of urgency and hinder their opponent's sound judgment, what she calls “escalation.” Third, the PRC uses a third party to pressure an opponent on China's behalf, what she calls “mediation.”¹¹ Similarly, Mark Burles and Abram Shulsky speculates PRC's patterns of war termination are a combination of a surprise to create psychological shock, inflicting casualties to create political pressure, and forcing a choice between acquiescence and escalation. These actions also create international and

⁸ Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning*, 16 June 2017. IV-19

⁹ François Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy : Between Western and Chinese Thinking* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004). 32 and 34

¹⁰ Ibid. 13

¹¹ Oriana Mastro, “How China Ends Wars: Implications for East Asian and U.S. Security” In *Washington quarterly*, Volume 41, (26 March 2018): 46-48

domestic tensions to divide enemy's alliances and public opinion.¹² Also, Bruce Elleman introduces PRC's ambiguity between peacetime strategy and wartime strategy. Quoting Clausewitz' concept of war as a continuation of state policy by other means, he asserts that "to the Chinese... war is diplomacy."¹³ Chinese strategic culture does not differentiate between peacetime strategy and wartime strategy.

Yet, these researchers focus on "how" China handles war termination. It is true that they help strategists to expect what might happen, but they do not suggest what should be achieved to proactively bring an end to a war with the PRC. Reflecting these mismatches of the current war termination theories to the PRC values, this thesis explores another way to look at *when* the PRC had been motivated to terminate their wars. The following sections present a theory of *when* the PRC terminates its wars and empirical case studies to examine the validity of the argument.



¹² Mark Burles and Abram N. Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force : Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2000). 41

¹³ Bruce A. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*, Warfare and History (London ; New York: Routledge, 2001). xii

CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND WHY THE TWO CONDITIONS MATTER FOR THEM

The PRC has terminated wars when two conditions were met; when *the momentum* of military action started to shift from the PRC's side, and when *international and domestic narratives* were achieved to a desirable degree.

Condition 1: The decay of military momentum

Fight profitable decisive engagements and avoid unprofitable ones.
Mao Zedong

First, in every case, the timing of when PRC leaders started to move toward the termination of war or conflict coincided with the negative momentum of the war. In the Korean War, Stalin's death and subsequent political uncertainty in the Kremlin affected the PRC war-waging capability. In the Sino-Indian War, which was fought in the midst of domestic turmoil and international isolation, PRC leadership showed interest in a quick termination to evade an impending disadvantage. During the later negotiation for the settlement of the Sino-Soviet border conflict, the PRC did not stop claiming more territories after achieving the initial point of dispute, Zhenbao/Damansky island, as the diplomatic momentum persisted. In the Sino-Vietnamese War, the PLA occupied Vietnamese northern provinces on the border with its speedy aggression. But the return of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) from Cambodia, in addition to the tenacious opposition of Vietnamese militias, stalled the PLA momentum for aggression. It motivated the PLA to end the war and swiftly retreat from Vietnam.

A momentum of war can be understood as potential, the energy of the situation, or the expectations of strategic advantage. Sun-Tzu explains the concept precisely as the potential is that of a fully drawn crossbow.¹ Historically, Chinese strategists, including PRC leadership, have treated the momentum of war as an even more crucial element of

¹ Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy : Between Western and Chinese Thinking*. 139. Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War: The Definitive English Translation*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). 139 (Chapter V-16)

war than military power itself. Upon the belief of situations which can make the coward into the brave and vice-versa, quality and quantity of soldiers, technological advantage, logistics capability, or tactical superiority are second to military momentum.

Accordingly, strategies cannot be determined in advance because they take shape only based on the potential of the situation.² This value leads to the tendency of war termination based on the decay of the momentum rather than the achievement of predetermined military objectives.

The Characteristics of PRC's momentum-based war execution

Empirical studies show that the PRC has not expected military power per se to directly solve political problems in which others' will comes into play. Instead, the PRC has presented its extremely limited expectations for military powers: nothing more than physical destruction. For example, the PRC had exerted military power to show its resolution to fight back against the US and defend its tributary country in the Korean War, to oppose to the pressure of India and the Soviet Union over a disputed border area, and to punish Vietnam through invasion while highlighting the Soviets as a bystander. These objectives were achievable through physical destruction with military power, in contrast to changing an enemy's mind to its favor as western countries frequently attempt and fail; for example, forcing enemy to abandon terrorism, nuclear development, or ideology of communism.

Past military attempts to influence an adversary's decision making—which is more than a physical destruction—present an important lesson: “Decisive [military] victory... is hard to translate into desired political effect.”³ Military victory does not mean the victor have control over adversary's reaction, because it is still up to the adversary whether to follow the victor's demand or choose another way. States tend to dislike being told what to do by others, especially when the coercion is a matter of national security.⁴ Byman and Waxman summarized the limitation of the attempts to change a

² Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy : Between Western and Chinese Thinking*. 23

³ Colin S. Gray and Army War College (U.S.). Strategic Studies Institute., *Defining and Achieving Decisive Victory* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002). 18

⁴ Brandon Valeriano and Ryan C. Maness, *Cyber War Versus Cyber Realities : Cyber Conflict in the International System* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). 136

nation's behavior through coercion; "it [coercer] can determine only the level of pain it inflicts, not the adversary's willingness to accept that pain."⁵

In contrast to western way of setting goals on changing the enemy decision making and relating the achievement of the goals with war termination, PRC leaders did not set essential military objectives in order to proceed to war termination. In other words, the PRC leaders did not build a war plan or war termination plan on the assumption of military victory. It is true that it would be better to gain more. But winning, losing, or the level of military achievement depends on the situation and variables of both sides, much of which is outside human control. "Failure is not an option" is a popular set phrase in Western culture. However, drawing from its propensity, the PRC leaders would say "who knows whether our military never fails? Failure might happen depending on the situation of the battle since it is beyond human control. Of course, the military will do its best. But an able strategist must develop a promising strategy that does not rely on military victory." Aaron Friedberg profoundly analyzed the unique concept of successful strategist to Chinese value:

"He [successful strategist] will realize that it is fruitless to try to specify a precise objective and misleading to imagine that he can lay out in advance a series of specific steps that will lead him to it. The wise commander will define his goal as achieving a more favorable configuration of forces, albeit one that he recognizes to be transitory and continually evolving, rather than reacing an imaginary end point."⁶

Yet, the value of momentum, rather than an achievement of military objectives, as a determinant of war termination does not mean that the PRC wages wars disorderly or incoherently. Of course, it has war plans and coordination among elements. What is unique is that PRC's war-waging values plans at the operational and tactical level, while its strategy retains fluidity and flexibility. This concept makes sense if one considers Chinese value of "situations." Tactics and operations are relatively independent from variables of wars and the results can be more predictable. However, strategies are heavily influenced by situations and various factors as of enemy capability, domestic

⁵ Daniel Byman and Matthew C. Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion : American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might*, Rand Studies in Policy Analysis (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). 237

⁶ Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy : China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, 1st ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2011). 124

support, international relationship, and the like. It is almost impossible to predetermine actions at the strategy level where consequences of an action differ drastically depending on situations. Dolman associates tactics with science and strategy with art, stating tactics are about the answer and strategies are an unending process that can never lead to conclusion.⁷ Reflecting such impacts that dynamic situation casts on strategy, the value of momentum leaves fluidity and flexibility to PRC's war waging at the strategy level.

Mao's theory of war expounds this concept exquisitely. "A strategic plan based on the over-all situation of both belligerents is still more stable, but it too is applicable only in a given strategic stage and has to be changed when the war moves towards a new stage... In the great river of absolute fluidity throughout the war, there is relative stability at each particular stretch..."⁸ Thus, the PLA composes a war-plan based on desired targets to be attacked or tactical objective to be achieved. However, these predetermined objectives are valid only over tactical and operational realms while strategies retain fluidity and flexibility to variables such as enemy reactions, battlefield situations, international politics, and the like. Accordingly, the momentum-oriented strategy turns to terminate a war at the peak of the attack, regardless of the achievement of predetermined military objectives.

Why does military momentum matter for the PRC?

Potentially, this value of situation is influenced by its strategic culture. Taoism, a Chinese ancient philosophy and a religion contemporary to Sun-Tzu's era, seems to shed lingering influence on the Chinese strategic culture. It emphasizes achieving the envisaged goal only "by allowing fruit to grow by itself, not by force."⁹ Taoism holds a negative view on personal efforts to obtain or change something by forcefully pushing oneself forward to avoid exhausting and risking oneself. Instead, it recommends creating or waiting for the situation to fulfill what one wants by itself. Victory is to be expected not from the fighting men, but from the situation.¹⁰ A clever man manages things and

⁷ Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age*. 4 and 190

⁸ Zedong Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, 1st ed., 5 vols. (Oxford ; New York: Distributed throughout the world by Pergamon Press, 1961). Volume II, 169 and 170

⁹ Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy : Between Western and Chinese Thinking*. 121

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 189

situations by setting a facilitating conditions, whereas the foolish manages with difficulty and resistance.¹¹ That is why Sun-Tzu famously stated, "a victorious army wins its victories before seeking battle; an army destined to defeat fights in the hope of winning."¹² This cultural background consolidates into a strategy to "fight when you can win, move away when you can't."¹³

It is arguable that Chinese culture has been coherent throughout history, and that ancient culture is still inherited by current communist leadership. It would be preposterous to assume a direct correlation of ancient philosophy to the CCP regime. However, it is also true that PRC's strategy has presented a consistency reflecting cultural influence. For example, the value of assessing situations of war is also seen in common with Mao's directive to fight the Protracted War against Imperial Japanese Army. He emphasized the importance of waiting and creating the situation even if it meant suffering temporary defeat and retreat. "Whenever we are forced into a disadvantageous position which fundamentally endangers the preservation of our forces, we should have the courage to retreat, so as to preserve our forces and hit the enemy when new opportunities arise."¹⁴ It presents an interesting contrast to western value as "where there is a will, there is a way." Therefore, the most important ability of Chinese strategists is to sense the momentum of war and change in the tide to assess the timing to attack or retreat, which can be a direct clue to analyze the Chinese concept of war termination.

As another proof that PRC strategists still value the concept of the situation, a current PLA textbook for strategy, "The Science of Military Strategy," provides useful insight. In explaining a favorable war termination, it states "if beneficial to the national interests, the conclusion of war *even without fully attaining the expected aim* is favorable [emphasis added]."¹⁵ It asserts the importance of understanding national interests in the changing war situation, rather than treating the military objectives as an essential step to conclude a war. Even when short of achieving what one desired, the decline of

¹¹ Ibid. 194. Lao-Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 63

¹² Sun-Tzu, Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War: The Definitive English Translation*.131, (chapter IV-14)

¹³ Burles and Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force : Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings*. 23

¹⁴ Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*. 172

¹⁵ Guangqian Peng and Youzhi Yao, *The Science of Military Strategy*, 1st. ed. (Beijing: Military Science Pub. House, 2005). 390

momentum must be recognized as the cue for the war termination. That is the reason PRC's war waging is unique and has not shown interest in predetermining a desired end state prior to a war. It is a distinctively different stance from US military doctrine which emphasizes the importance of defining "the military end state and the conditions that must exist to end military operations."¹⁶

Such a momentum-oriented strategy requires strategists to assess the value of time, in other words, to foresee which side would benefit as time progresses. The PRC called off the wars in India and Vietnam even with unilateral withdrawals because the leaders assessed that the time would work for India and Vietnam. In fact, the tide of war was about to shift to India and Vietnam. India was increasingly receiving international support from the US, the UK, and, potentially, the Soviet Union. Vietnam was planning to launch a counter-offensive campaign by mounting their forces when the PLA retreated. The PLA kept fighting in the two years of stalemate in the Korean War because the time would benefit the PLA by modernizing its force posture with the Soviet support. All of these cases represent PRC leaders' ability to assess that which side benefits as time progresses.

In its war history, the PRC treated military operation as merely one of the tools paralleled with other means: for example, political pressure, punitive trade-control, manipulation of social instability, media control, and the like. The PRC did not necessarily pursue victory in the military realm because the enemy reaction, strength, military objectives, or even national interests were fluid and subject to changes. If a military objective turns out to be unattainable due to the fluidity of situations—that is to say the momentum starts to decay—the PRC simply stops military operations and applies another suitable means.

Does ancient Chinese strategic culture influence the CCP regime? The answer is not black or white; it lies in between them. Just as we do not understand how much we are influenced by our ancient cultures, even Chinese people themselves probably cannot tell how much Chinese ancient teachings influence their thought process. But at least it is certain that we see some commonalities between Chinese strategic culture and the CCP

¹⁶ Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning*, 16 June 2017. IV-19

strategies, and that serves as the foundation of PRC's propensity for momentum-oriented strategy.

Condition 2: favorable narratives to domestic and international audiences

Knowing the Chinese, I think it likely that they would regard the signing of an armistice under such military pressure as a loss of face.

An Asian delegate to the UN in Korean War¹⁷

When the PRC leadership talks about China's national security, there are two foci of efforts: internal and external. The most current version of the PLA textbook for strategy mentions the element of effective control of conflict as "creating a strategic situation advantageous for *internal stability* and *external expansion* [emphasis added]."¹⁸ For that purpose, narratives for external and internal audiences has been the core of the national security of the PRC.

Why does external narrative matters to the PRC?

Because of the geopolitical situation and necessity to protect vast borderline around China, it has been traditionally sensitive to its dominance and control of surrounding countries to prevent their attacks on China. Besides, during the Cold War, belligerence of any neighboring small countries meant a second front vis-a-vis a neighboring superpower that could be the most dangerous enemy: the Soviet Union. For better or worse, a war against one nation creates a perception and message to other countries. In other words, the narrative out of a war is a touchstone for other countries' future relations with the PRC. Therefore, the desirable narrative out of a war is a critical issue for the PRC in terms of national security and continuing advantage in the post-war regional relations. It is even more important than territorial gains or military victory in a war.

By fighting the US in the Korean War, the PRC could assert itself in international society with its strength and responsibility in the region. The Sino-India War was not just

¹⁷ Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000). 123

¹⁸ Joe McReynolds, *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, (Washington D.C.: The Jamestown Foundation, 2016). 62

a bilateral territorial dispute. The victory over India achieved the narrative to former tributary states that the PLA would be both willing and able to reassert Chinese influence abroad.¹⁹ A deliberately prolonged territorial dispute with the Soviet Union served to show the unwillingness of the PRC to bow before Soviets and sent another message to China's former tributaries not to try to challenge China's authority in Asia.²⁰ The degree of punishment Vietnam recognized in 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War is arguable. However, the successful completion of invasion without Soviet intervention served to spread the distrust of the USSR's reliability. Devaluing the mutual defense alliance with the Soviet Union would prevent other small countries in Asia from siding with the Soviets and encircling China.²¹

One of the unique traits of the external narrative is that the PRC's focus on the narrative is not limited to the opposing country itself but also to other countries in different disputes. In every case this research dealt with, the PRC had held a strong interest in sending warning messages to disobedience of other small countries in the region. China has an inherent sense of fear in showing its weak posture because it would have a ripple effect on other countries surrounding China. As the epigraph described, in the Korean War, UN forces failed to force Chinese leaders to sign the armistice, while US "air pressure" obliterated 18 of 22 cities in the theater.²² Reflecting Chinese value, this case indicates that spread of an unfavorable external narrative would make Chinese leaders even more unwilling to terminate the war.

The analysis of the past war termination reflects that the encirclement strategy against China would be counter-effective for war termination, considering the Chinese value of the external narrative. While diplomatic relations must be strengthened with countries in the region to promote co-prosperity, military encirclement would stimulate China's instinct to create an external narrative to enforce obedience in regional countries. The PRC's reaction would include punishing the 'traitorous' small countries, as seen in the Sino-Vietnam War. To apply the case of Sino-Vietnam War to the current situation, the PRC would seek to discredit US reliability by attacking US allies and precluding US

¹⁹ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 267

²⁰ Ibid. 280

²¹ Ibid. 288

²² Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953*. 168

intervention to defend them. Other possibilities are the economic punishment of regional small countries for not siding with China as seen in the cutting off the aid program for Vietnam and the prolonged military conflict with the US to boast PRC's capability to oppose to the US military power as seen in the Sino-Soviet conflict.

Encirclement by potential enemies is the life-threatening danger for China. George Kennan once pointed out the importance of confidence and security for a country; every human being has a sense of totalitarian somewhere deep inside, and only confidence and security keeps it down. If confidence and security were deprived, the totalitarian impulse would emerge.²³ Sun-Tzu illustrated it as death ground, "for it is the nature of soldiers to resist when surrounded; to fight to the death when there is no alternative, and when desperate to follow commands implicitly."²⁴ Encirclement with China's neighboring countries would be the worst option to put an end to a war with the PRC. One who wishes to terminate a conflict with China should not threaten China's confidence and security by a provocative encirclement.

Why does domestic narrative matter to the PRC?

Just as the external narrative was directly related to China's national security, domestic unification is the other wheel of PRC's vital interest. Throughout its wars, China's domestic circumstances have deteriorated by social instability and stagnation, mainly because of the Great Leap Policy and the Cultural Revolution. However, as the empirical chapter explains later, PRC leaders successfully created narratives out of each war to energize, uplift, and bring pride to domestic audiences.

The propensity for favorable domestic narrative stems from both CCP's needs of regimental legitimacy and the inherent trait of multi-ethnicity in a broad territory. China's history consists of repeating transitions to different regimes and governing systems. As much as the Manchurian-governed Qing dynasty was different from

²³ Campbell Craig, *Destroying the Village : Eisenhower and Thermonuclear War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). 7. March 28, 1947 Kennan Lecture, "Comments on the National Security Problem," in Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds., *Measures Short of War: the George F. Kennan Lectures at the national War College, 1946-47* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1990). 168

²⁴ Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War: The Definitive English Translation*. 212

Mongolian-governed Yuan dynasty, the CCP-governed China is an almost different country from other dynasties, which inclusively went by the name of “China.”

Throughout past wars and conflicts, the CCP acquired favorable narratives to domestic audiences. The way wars were terminated has created a convincing narrative for Chinese people that, under the CCP regime, China has finally begun to regain influence over small countries and is able to stand up against the western countries behind them. In this context, so-called "a century of humiliation" does not humiliate the CCP. Rather, it upraises and highlights the achievement of the CCP to salvage the declining Chinese empire from the daunting international situation. According to Richard McGregor, in the PRC, the primary purpose of any political achievement—state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and economic development— is to keep the Party in power.²⁵ Therefore, domestic narratives can be considered as an important agent for PRC leaders to solidify its position as a legitimate ruler who brought a revival of China to Chinese people.

Upon war termination, PRC leaders need to save face to domestic audiences. As a contemporary example, the territorial claim in East and South China Sea started from the desire for oil and gas reserves. However, after decades of using the territorial claims as a rallying flag of a nation, those claims have become the notions of national honor and regional strength.²⁶ Because of the enthusiasm that the Chinese populace nurtured about it and the fear of losing domestic support, those territorial claims became a matter that the PRC leaders cannot grant concessions. Thus, in cases of conflict over these territories, it is important for other countries to leave room for the PRC leaders to save face with their domestic audiences. A concession in the terms and conditions or acceptance of a humiliating deal for the PRC would put the leadership in the corner and make them even more resolved to retain its legitimacy by resorting to harder oppositions. The purpose of the war termination is not the overthrow of the CCP regime but should be the termination of its aggression. This is especially true for the US, which has a socially constructed ideology as the “beacon on the hill.” It is easy to imagine that cognitive bias comes into

²⁵ Richard McGregor, *The Party : The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers*, 1st U.S. ed. (New York, NY: Harper, 2010). xii

²⁶ Robert D. Blackwill and Jennifer M. Harris, *War by Other Means : Geoeconomics and Statecraft* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016). 106

play in Chinese mind to perceive US action as the threat to the communist regime.²⁷ Endangering the survival of the CCP, or even the perception of it, would create a situation driving the CCP toward continued aggression even though both sides wish to terminate the war.



²⁷ Thomas G. Mahnken, *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century : Theory, History, and Practice* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012). 303

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICS

The preceding chapter introduced the central hypothesis: the PRC terminates its conflicts when it meets two conditions; when they faced the negative expectation of momentum, and when they achieved favorable narratives both internally and externally. This chapter empirically tests the hypothesis.

1. The Korean War (1950-1953)

The Korean War ended when the two conditions were met. Stalin's death created a steep decline in war-waging momentum on China's side. Also, by that time, the PRC had already achieved favorable narratives domestically and internationally. Right after these conditions were met, the PRC became eager to terminate the war even with the concessions to give up the return of POWs. Domestically, the Korean War served as a stage for the CCP, the newly born regime out of the civil war against the Kuomintang, to claim the legitimate government of China by showing the capability to defend China from outside threats. At the same time, the PRC showed its reliability and responsibility as a superior country in the communist bloc.

Popular explanations for Korean war terminations

To understand the conditions that the PRC became inclined to terminate the war, this section first examines the national objective of the PRC in the Korean War, in other words, what PRC leaders tried to achieve in the war. Regarding the reasons for the intervention, the vast array of historical research can be categorized into three concerns: security, domestic, or ideological concerns.¹

First, elimination of security concern is widely supported as a reason for the PRC war termination. Past theories that fall in this strand would define the national objective as preserving North Korea to secure a buffer between China and the US force presence. Up to 1950, the imminent problem for the PRC were the intensifying sabotage of Kuomintang's forces and liberation of Taiwan. Considering this context, the PRC's

¹ Goemans, *War and Punishment : The Causes of War Termination and the First World War*. 4

concern was directed more toward Taiwan rather than the US presence in the southern half of the Korean peninsula. In such a situation, the mobilization of the PLA forces to Korea would create a vulnerability to the issues concerning Kuomintang. Therefore, at the early stage of the war, the intervention in the Korean War was a secondary focus of effort that the PRC wished to avoid if it were not an imminent threat to its nation. Its unwillingness for intervention is seen in its attempt to deter further US aggression; on September 30, 1950, Premier Zhou Enlai warned the US that "we would not sit idly by, we would definitely intervene" if US troops should cross the 38th parallel.²

Yet, despite explicit warning for its potential intervention, US forces made a quick advance through North Korea. Even though the PRC was wary of the war against the US in addition to the domestic turmoil against Kuomintang, the American advance was threatening enough for the PRC to make up its mind to fight in North Korea rather than on Chinese soil. MacArthur's aggressive pursuit of victory and occupation of North Korea cost the loss of a strategic buffer between them and forced the Chinese People's Volunteer Army (CPV) to intervene in the war. If this strand was the reason for the intervention, repelling the US from North Korea and regaining a sufficient buffer against the US would have eliminated the security concern and allowed the PRC to terminate the Korean War and focus on Kuomintang, which was the primary enemy.

As the second reason for the PRC intervention, it is also believed that the PRC needed the intervention to consolidate CCP's legitimacy. Only a year removed from the victory in Civil War, the position of the CCP in 1950 was still unstable. It required proving that the CCP was capable of governing China and providing security to the public. By fending off the external US threat and the domestic anti-communist movement by Kuomintang, it sought to stand the test of the domestic audience. If such a domestic concern was the reason for the intervention, PRC would have terminated the Korean War when it demonstrated the regime's capability and legitimacy to provide security to domestic audiences.

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, *Resist U.S. Aggression and Air Korea*
http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18022.shtml

The third strand places an ideological perspective as the reason for the intervention; the PRC had to defend North Korea, the smaller communist nation, against US forces. It would grant the PRC to solidify its position among other communist nations by defending its subordinate communist country. It was a clash of ideologies, and the PRC was urged by the necessity to protect communism in the region against the imperialist nemesis, the US. In this case, preserving the communist regime in North Korea would have been the objective of the intervention.

If the current war termination theories that are oriented around the achievement of predetermined goals were applicable to the PRC, the achievement of one of these potential national objectives or the elimination of the causes of war would have motivated the PRC to terminate the war. Besides, favorably to the CCP, all these three concerns would be solved only by achieving the prewar status; the 38th parallel. Securing the North Korean territory would provide sufficient buffer against the US, signaling CCP's ideological leadership in the communist bloc. It would also serve as a domestic narrative that the CCP is capable as a legitimate government of China. It would have been a chance for the PRC to settle the unwanted war quickly and shift its focus back to the primary issue of domestic stabilization and the stamp out of the Kuomintang.

Counterevidence to the conventional view

However, the chronological facts show that the achievement of these presupposed national objectives did not coincide with the timing of when the PRC became motivated to terminate the war. The security concerns were solved by December 1st, 1950, after regaining the 38th parallel and the original territory of North Korea.³ It assured the buffer between China and the US forces just as it had before the war. Also, domestic audiences perceived the CCP as a legitimate governor of China after it secured its soil from foreign invasion. After all, it was the first time that China had effectively stood up against the West since the Opium War"⁴ From the perspective of ideological concern, it successfully showed its responsibility and reliability as a major communist nation. Yet, the PRC did

³ Mark A. Ryan, David Michael Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting : The PLA Experience since 1949* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003). 130

⁴ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 251

not even show its interest in negotiation until June 1951, when the Soviet Union suggested it, and did not show sincere willingness to sign armistice for almost another 2 years.

Despite the initial unwillingness to be involved in the war and the imperative to deal with the Kuomintang in the south, Mao kept demanding General Peng DeHuai advance his army even after they successfully restored North Korean territory. There were repeated arguments during December 1950 between Mao and Peng. Peng requested a pause at the 38th parallel. His preference was logical and based on rational assessments of the situation. For example, on December 8, Peng advised Mao that his army had been overextended, lacked logistic support and experience against the fortified positions that they would encounter in the south of the 38th parallel.⁵ But it did not change Mao's demand, Mao ordered Peng to launch another attack on December 31, 1950. Even with reluctance, Peng strived to recapture Seoul and advanced to the 37th parallel in eight days. As a consequence of this third campaign and the overextension of battlefield, the CPV suffered from meager supplies of food and ammunition, extreme fatigue, poor rear-area security, and a delay of reinforcements.⁶ In a purely military perspective, it was the culminating point, "where their remaining strength is just enough to maintain a defense and wait for peace."⁷ Simply put, national objectives were already achieved, but PRC leaders were not motivated to stop the war. That means, in judging the timing of war termination, the PRC was following other criteria than the achievement of original national objectives. Even with the military exhaustion and desire to shift the focus to the primary threat of Kuomintang, the PRC's apathy for war termination remained the same even after the armistice talk began.

Examining the Hypothesis

In the end, the achievement of national objectives did not provide the PRC decision makers enough incentive to terminate the war and they went into a stalemate

⁵ Ryan, Finkelstein, and McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting : The PLA Experience since 1949*. 130. David Andrew Graff and Robin D. S. Higham, *A Military History of China*, Updated ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012). 273

⁶ Ibid. 132

⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984). 528

with occasional bloody fighting for another two years with no remarkable territorial gains. Instead, soon after the conditions proposed in the hypothesis were met, the PRC willingly accepted the armistice.

As explained above, the condition of the desirable narratives had already been achieved when the PRC took back North Korean territory, showing that it could fight US forces on equal footing. It validated PRC's domestic legitimacy and international leadership in the communist bloc. With the narratives in place, only the other condition was missing for the PRC to terminate the war.

The momentum quickly decayed when Stalin died on March 5, 1953, more than two years after the PRC regained the North Korean territory. Until then, the Soviet Union was more than eager to support PRC's continuation of the war which kept depleting US national power militarily, economically, and politically. In addition, the war provided abundant opportunities to collect intelligence on US military capabilities.⁸ However, on March 19, two weeks after Stalin's death, Moscow sent a telegraph to Mao that showed the sudden shift of the Soviet supportive posture:

an authoritative representative of the government of the PRC (best of all would be Zhou Enlai) should make a statement in Beijing in which is underscored a positive attitude toward the proposal on an exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war, and also to indicate that *the time has arrived to resolve the entire question of prisoners and, consequently, to secure the cessation of the war in Korea and the conclusion of an armistice* [emphasis added].⁹

Facing disorder in Moscow, Soviet interim leaders explicitly signaled their disinterest to continue support of the PRC and it was the time that PRC leadership recognized the sharp decline of war-waging momentum. On March 30, Zhou Enlai indicated China would accept the proposal entirely on UN terms,¹⁰ although there was no significant military campaign. Considering two years of negotiation deadlock in demanding the return of all defectors to China, Zhou's drastic shift in inclination on war termination indicates it was directly influenced by Stalin's death on three weeks before.

⁸ Reiter, *How Wars End*. 89

⁹ Telegraph from Moscow to Mao, March 19, 1953. *Resolution, USSR council of ministers with draft letters from Soviet government to Mao Zedong and Kim il Sung and directive to Soviet delegation at United Nations*. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113649>

¹⁰ Sydney Dawson Bailey, *The Korean Armistice* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992). 128

As Chinese military historian Zhang Xiaoming puts it, "the timing of the new Communist attitude toward the war... suggests it was Stalin's death... that finally brought a breakthrough in the armistice negotiations."¹¹

Some might perceive the deadlock of southward advance and Peng's reservation as the loss of military momentum. In a purely military sense, such an argument is viable. Yet, the loss of military momentum was not what Mao related to the timing of war termination. On the contrary, Mao saw national and political momentum as sustained even during the deadlock. No matter how protracted and resource-intensive the war was, it kept a massive influx of Soviet aid pouring into China and kept modernizing the PLA.¹² For example, the PLA, beforehand only a peasant guerrilla force, came out of the war with a highly advanced air force consisting more than 3,000 aircraft.¹³ As long as there was support from the Soviet Union, the war waging momentum could be sustained and the PRC benefited from continuing the war. To put it another way, Mao and Peng both valued momentum, but they were measuring momentum at different levels of strategy. Mao measured the momentum at the national level and insisted on continuing the war, while Peng demanded to halt the war based on the momentum of the military at the operational level.

Summary

On June 4th, 1953, The PRC and North Korea agreed to a UN armistice proposal. US leaders, especially air power advocates, believed the air pressure of consecutive air strikes and easing target limitations against North Korean industries as the primary reasons for the armistice¹⁴. However, throughout the Korean War, especially during the two years of the prolonged stalemate, the PRC did not show any interest in granting concessions or terminating the war. Therefore, this research argues that PRC leader perceived the uncertainty of the Soviet support due to Stalin's death and subsequent political confusion in Moscow as a stall in war waging momentum and it was the time

¹¹ Xiaoming Zhang, *Red Wings over the Yalu : China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea*, 1st ed., Texas a & M University Military History Series (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002). 197

¹² Ibid. 207

¹³ Ibid. 201

¹⁴ Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953*. 170

that both a favorable narrative and decayed momentum motivated them to put an end to the war.

Interestingly, Mao was reported to be even more confident, claiming the war should continue for another year to obtain more favorable borders.¹⁵ Even with Mao's willingness to continue the war, the negative expectation for the future momentum compelled the PRC to stop military actions. Thus, the Korean War provides a strong support for the hypothesis not just because the PRC terminated the war when the two conditions were met but also because the impact of the two conditions preceded the willingness of the PRC leadership to continue the war.

2. The Sino-Indian War (1962)

The Sino-Indian War in 1962 presents the case that the narrative was the key to the start and the end of the conflict. The momentum was expected to stall quickly, if not dead already, right after opening fire due to devastating domestic conditions and China's international isolation. The PRC wished to terminate the war as soon as it achieved the narrative that the PRC was committed to the protection of its border, and a country that challenges Chinese territory would face consequence.

Conventional view on the war termination and Counterevidence to it

On October 12, 1962, following the PRC construction of roads near its western border and the disputed area around Bhutan, president Nehru ordered Indian troops to "clear Indian territory in the NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency: a north-eastern sector of India) of Chinese invaders." Responding to the Indian invasion, the PLA launched offensive in two theaters on October 20. The negotiation over war termination started when the PRC issued the three-point proposal on October 24; (1) to withdraw 20 kilometers from the Line of Actual Control; (2) to stop patrols; (3) to disengage.¹⁶ But these negotiations did not come to a settlement and about a month later, on November 21, the PRC unilaterally implemented its proposal and withdrew its force.

¹⁵ Zhang, *Red Wings over the Yalu : China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea*. 198.

¹⁶ Letter from Premier Zhou Enlai to his excellency Ne Win. October 28. 1962
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121791>

Conventional knowledge attributes the reasons for Chinese war termination in the Sino-Indian War as the achievement of territorial gain sought by the PRC.¹⁷ If it was the territorial gain that satisfied the PRC and made it cease aggression, the PRC would have held on to the territory. The PRC showed, however, little persistency for the territorial gain in NEFA, and it unilaterally withdrew its forces based on its suggested terms of conditions. Also, retired Indian General Sandhu raises another explanation for the retreat. In his view, the PRC was concerned about creating the perception of itself as an aggressor by invading further than its claimed territory in order to avoid further isolation from the international community.¹⁸ Similarly, another conjecture holds that the PRC feared any further invasion would provoke US and UK involvement or a potential anti-China coalition between the US and the Soviet Union¹⁹. Yet, these arguments contradict with the fact that the PRC kept the occupation of the western front and its invasion of Indian territories in the first place. Above all, the timing of PRC's official proposal for settlement on October 24 negates these popular explanations based on the Chinese claimed borderline, as explained below. These popular explanations are misleading, as they attempt to understand PRC's intention behind war termination by assuming that every strategy is based on predetermined military goals—occupation of claimed territory in this case. This has caused confusion and perplexity about PRC's seemingly haphazard invasion and retreat.

Examining the Hypothesis

Instead, it would be more convincing to say that the invasion was a reluctant option, which turned out to be unexpectedly successful. At that time, the PRC was facing a severe situation after the failure of “the Great Leap Forward Policy.” The reckless attempt to increase agricultural and industrial production wrought economic panic and national famine from 1958 to 1961. Although there are various statistics, this policy reportedly caused 35 to 40 million Chinese deaths,²⁰ probably the worst mass-casualty

¹⁷ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 255

¹⁸ Vinay Shankar, P. J. S. Sandhu, and United Service Institution of India., *1962 : A View from the Other Side of the Hill* (New Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt Ltd, 2015). Sandhu, 89

¹⁹ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 266

²⁰ McGregor, *The Party : The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers*. 229

crises in history. Less than a year after the domestic crisis, coupled with its lack of international supports or friends, the PRC did not have enough national momentum to wage a war.

Military preparation also proves PRC's lack of momentum; the pace of the PLA amassing military force in the region was considerably slow. An Indian historian states that it took China six to eight months to gather the resources needed for the war.²¹ Facing India's forward policy and the skirmishes between April 1961 to September 1962, the PRC imposed heavy restraints on the PLA. The PLA was ordered not to open fire first and avert any armed conflict. At the same time, the CCP made multiple efforts to settle the dispute through negotiations, including premier Zhou's visit to India.²² Despite its traditional propensity for deception and surprise, these explicit military preparations and diplomatic efforts show PRC's reluctance and attempts to deter an armed conflict.

As a matter of fact, Mao had expressed his preparation for long-term skirmishes, rather than decisive armed conflict. Mao instructed the PLA, "try your best to avert bleeding... and prepare for long-time armed co-existence."²³ Note the instruction was made in July 1962, more than a year since the tension began and three months until Chinese attack. It is hard to believe that preparing for "long-time armed co-existence" meant only another three months.

Zhou's hastiness to terminate the war after launching offensive action also shows the lack of confidence in sustaining military operations. The memorandum between Premier Zhou Enlai and the Soviet ambassador shows that Zhou had been already "making efforts to eliminate conflict and settle disputes peacefully" by the third day of the campaign.²⁴ Zhou communicated his inclination toward the termination in the midst of the campaign when the prospect of the military action had not been clear yet. On the fifth day of the campaign, the PRC proposed its official three-point settlement to India. It was still during the PLA's offensive attack which would have gained, and did in fact,

²¹ Col (retired) Anil Athale "Special Series: 40 years after the Sino-Indian 1962 war." <http://m.rediff.com/news/2002/nov/07china.htm>

²² Ryan, Finkelstein, and McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting : The Pla Experience since 1949*. 180

²³ Ibid. 180

²⁴ Soviet reply to the memorandum of conversation between premier Zhou Enlai and the Soviet ambassador on the Sino-Indian border issue on 8 October 1962. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121788>

more territory.²⁵ Zhou continued to be interested in solving the territorial dispute with negotiation before and after the start of hostilities.

Interestingly, the PLA was restrictive in the use of airpower, although PLA Air Force after the Korean War was superior to India's both in quantity and quality.²⁶ This is explained by the awareness of the PLA leaders about the escalatory nature of airpower. As Zhang Xiaoming points out, Chinese leaders learned in Korea about the airpower's tendency to escalate a war.²⁷ By restricting the use of airpower, political leaders sought to avoid escalating the war and terminate it as early as possible.

Thus, for the PRC with its devastating domestic situation, a diplomatic solution would have been the best option to save its territory and face. However, since the diplomatic bluff did not curve off India's Forward Policy, Zhou reluctantly moved to the second option: a military blow to India in the shortest time as possible.

Applying the hypothesis, since the momentum was dead from the beginning of the conflict as explained above, war termination was a matter of the achievement of favorable narratives. Domestically, allowing an Indian invasion would have been perceived as CCP leaders' incapacity to protect Chinese territories, including Tibet, which had been an issue between the two countries after India granted sanctuary to the Dalai Lama in 1959. At the same time, the domestic audience would not appreciate a prolonged war due to the economic devastation caused by the Great Leap Forward Policy.²⁸ Externally, it needed to show the states in the region that the PRC was willing and able to protect its territories.²⁹ Because of its geographical position, historically China repeatedly had to fight against the invasion and protect its long borders from multiple outside enemies. A conflict in one region creates messages to other regions as by-products, whether positive or negative. The posture against India would impact disputes with other regional countries including the Soviet Union, which Mao judged as a betrayer for not taking communist brother's side.³⁰

²⁵ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 262

²⁶ Ryan, Finkelstein, and McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting : The PLA Experience since 1949*. 194

²⁷ Zhang, *Red Wings over the Yalu : China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea*. 210

²⁸ Shankar, Sandhu, and United Service Institution of India., *1962 : A View from the Other Side of the Hill*. 89

²⁹ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 267

³⁰ *Ibid.* 254

For the PRC winning the war was not what mattered. What mattered was a quick military action that would achieve the desired domestic and international narratives, as subsequent unilateral withdrawal from NEFA and its limited interest in territorial occupation prove. A RAND research paper supports this point. Analyzing the patterns in China's use of force in history, it points out the common practice of China is to use of "surprise to create a psychological shock." The objective of PLA offensive was to create a political shock to the Indian government, rather than to occupy a specific territory.³¹ This claim would sound more compelling by reflecting on the domestic situation, which would not be able to sustain a long war. To put it another way, the PRC was already starting the war termination process as soon as it exerted military force and showed its resolve and hard-line posture to India's arrogance and the Soviet's treachery.

Summary

To PRC political leaders, the achievement of extended territory during the Sino-India border conflict was merely a byproduct of the primary objective to inflict political shock to India. The unexpected territorial gain resulted from factors on both sides. The Indian military fell into complacency, believing that the PRC would not fight back, and thus made little preparation. Consequently, India placed merely two divisions of its army with summer clothes up on the Himalayans.³² On the Chinese side, although the armed conflict was a reluctant alternative for the PRC, the PLA had been methodically and carefully preparing for the potential larger conflict.³³ They had been enhancing logistics and command and control capability in the region from years before the Indian aggression started. Despite an internationally and domestically unfavorable situation for battle, a well-prepared PLA successfully seized more territory from complacent Indian forces than PRC leaders expected.

Since the PRC had to engage with the India despite unfavorable momentum of war, it attempted to terminate the Sino-Indian war right after the PLA offensive achieved

³¹ Burles and Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force : Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings*. viii and 41

³² Swaminathan, R., *Lessons of 1962: A stock taking after 40 years*, South Asia Analysis Group, <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/paper693>

³³ Ryan, Finkelstein, and McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting : The Pla Experience since 1949*. 194

the external and internal narrative. In the end, the PRC successfully eliminated the danger of being geopolitically pincered by the Soviet Union and India. As Elleman puts it, the PRC's military victory in the territorial dispute was "a clear signal to Moscow that unresolved territorial disagreements to the north would not be ignored forever."³⁴ This confrontation between two countries will come to the surface seven years later in a form of the Sino-Soviet border conflict.

3. The Sino-Soviet border conflict (1969)

For this case, the research examines why the PRC *did not* terminate a conflict. As the hypothesis proposes, the PRC left the conflict inconclusive and did not terminate the conflict because at least one of the conditions was not met; the continuation of the conflict kept producing preferable narratives to domestic and international audiences, even though there was no significant positive momentum to continue the conflict.

Overview of the conflict

The conflict between communist comrades happened in the middle of the Sino-Soviet split in which the two had been facing dissonance and belligerence since the mid-1950s. The border consists of the Ussuri river with 700 small islands, 600 of which were USSR controlled. There had been occasional violations of the borders by both sides, but they had been dealt with in short of resorting to violence until March 1, 1969, when 300 specially trained PLA troops secretly fortified Zhembao/Damanski island during the night. With prompt reinforcement, the USSR pushed the PLA off the island on the next day. The second clash was initiated by the USSR as a retaliation on March 14-15. After the battles, both sides claimed victory and initiated intense domestic movements against each other.

This conflict could have developed into the first case of a war between nuclear powers, with potential employment of nuclear weapons. On September 11, 1969, Soviet premier Kosygin made a visit to Zhou and both agreed to seek a peaceful solution. However, both sides kept reinforcing their military forces along the disputed borders

³⁴ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 255

including Xinjiang. Accordingly, the ensuing negotiations made little headway.³⁵ Such rejection regarding war termination contrasts sharply with the Sino-Indian border conflict where the PRC sought a quick termination of the conflict and withdrew the PLA even unilaterally.

Popular explanations for the termination of the conflict

It is often said that Kosygin's visit to Zhou brought a tentative truce. In fact, they officially agreed on: (1) status quo of the border; (2) no further confrontations; (3) forces would disengage and separate. This nominal truce, however, did not de-escalate the situation and the tensions remained high. Both sides reinforced militaries along the borders including nuclear weapons and first strike missile system. Skirmishes between the two countries persisted and they held their readiness throughout the 1970s.³⁶ Thus, this research treats neither the stoppage of the battles in March nor both premiers' meeting as the termination of the conflict. The termination of the conflict did not occur until the 'Sino-Soviet Border Agreement' in 1991.

Examining the Hypothesis

One condition was met; negative expectation of momentum

In a military sense, the PRC had lost the momentum to continue operations at the end of the battles in March. Even though their night ambush on the first day of the campaign caught the Soviets by surprise, the Soviet reinforcements repelled the PLA off the island. The Soviet's retaliatory second campaign painfully punished the PLA with more than 50 tanks, 36 aircraft, and 10,000 artillery rounds employed against PLA foot soldiers. Soviet claimed 800 Chinese killed, in contrast to the 60 Soviet casualties (the PLA claims it killed 260 Soviets). After the Soviets left the island with mines, the PLA did not even attempt to station troops on the island. Though victory cannot be determined by the number of casualties or occupation of territory, especially considering

³⁵ Ibid. 277-279

³⁶ Ibid. 279 and 280.

the strategic insignificance of the small island on a river, the only thing for sure is that the PLA invasion was completely stopped by the Soviet's modern military operations.³⁷

International and domestic situations did not provide the momentum for the PRC to continue the conflict, either. On the international scene, the PRC did not have any allies in the midst of isolation. Most of all, at the same time, the PRC was backing the North Vietnamese in their fight against the US in the Vietnam War. A two front quasi-war involving both superpowers would be the last thing any country wanted, especially for a country in the middle of the chaotic domestic power struggle called the Cultural Revolution. Such turmoil and division in the country severely limited momentum to continue the conflict against the Soviet Union.

The other condition was not met; the PRC sought a more favorable narrative

Despite the negative momentum to fight, the PRC saw favorable narratives to the domestic and international audiences in continuing the conflict with the Soviet Union. It is a common practice for some nations to point a finger at a foreign opponent as the scapegoat to distract their population from intrinsic problems and boost their enthusiasm. In line with this national propensity, a RAND study agrees that the PRC typically used force to create a crisis to consolidate domestic policy. It points to the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis as an example of the PRC accusing Taiwan in order to bolster the spirit of sacrifice and patriotism for the Great Leap Policy.³⁸ After the failure of the Great Leap Policy, Mao had yielded the position of national leader to Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, who would eventually come to antagonize and criticize Mao publicly. Led by Lin Biao, those who wished, or took advantage of, Mao's revival as a national leader, launched the Cultural Revolution to facilitate a power struggle by opposing Liu and Deng. This campaign for Mao's political revival plagued the PRC for 10 years with destruction and prosecution of the opposing factions including Liu, Deng, and Peng Dehuai, the war hero in the Korean War. Hundreds of thousands of deaths and economic stagnation continued from 1966 up through Mao's death in 1976. In its cultish national movement, the

³⁷ Ryan, Finkelstein, and McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting : The PLA Experience since 1949*. 212 and 213

³⁸ Burles and Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force : Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings*. 16

Cultural Revolution destroyed traditional religions and cultures and drove persecution of incumbent leaders, intellectuals, and minorities. According to Alfred D. Low, during the Cultural Revolution, Maoists used the Soviet threat as the source of a false hue and cry to justify the Chinese hardship and shortages of food and materials.³⁹ The 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis and the 1969 Sino-Soviet Border crisis present the same scheme: extrinsic threats of the US or the Soviet Union served as the rallying cry for the population and a red herring to distract them from the intrinsic problem. Therefore, the border crisis with the Soviet Union was meant to be prolonged and to keep providing the favorable domestic narrative for the PRC.

The continuation of a Sino-Soviet conflict also contributed to the power struggles among international communist blocs. Target audiences were not only the Soviet Union but also other communist countries, especially neighboring ones. Elleman analyzes the repercussion of the Sino-Soviet conflict as the following: the PRC showed socialist countries its unwillingness to bow before Soviets and challenged Soviet interventionism; bolstered the reputation of the PLA to fight somewhat evenly against the Red Army; sent message to former tributaries to admit China's authority in Asia.⁴⁰ Goldstein also agrees with this perspective, pointing out the PRC's ambition to take a leading role on the international stage.⁴¹ By leaving the conflict as inconclusive, these messages would be continuously perceived by other communist countries and enhance China's superiority in the communist bloc.

It should be noted that, for China, authority in international relationship is not merely a matter of fame. At that time, the Soviets were encroaching diplomatically on Southeast Asian countries as seen in the competition between China and the Soviets over the support to North Vietnam in the Vietnam War. Thus, for China, which placed the Soviet Union as the most dangerous enemy, enforcing China's authority to regional

³⁹ Alfred D. Low, *The Sino-Soviet Confrontation since Mao Zedong : Dispute, Detente or Conflict?* (Boulder

New York: Social Science Monographs ;
Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1987). 31

⁴⁰ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 279 and 280

⁴¹ Lyle J. Goldstein, "Return to Zhenbao Island: Who Started Shooting and Why it Matters." *The China Quarterly* 168 (December 2001): 985-97

countries—such as Vietnam, North Korea, Cambodia or Mongolia—was a key element of its national security to prevent the potential second front against the Soviet Union.

The PRC could also keep the US on its side by prolonging the conflict against the Soviet Union. The honeymoon with Soviet comrades ended right after the Korean War in the mid-1950s, when the erstwhile comradeship turned into a distrust and belligerence. Until the end of the Cold War, the PRC maintained its confrontation against the USSR. Instead, Deng Xiaoping sought to assure security and modernize China by aligning with the US. The conflict against the Soviet Union served to incentivize the US to provide support and cooperation to the PRC to fight the Cold War against the common enemy. In fact, two years later from the conflict National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger visited China for a secret meeting with Zhou Enlai, followed by Richard Nixon's historic visit to China seven months later which led to US-PRC rapprochement.

It was a win-win scenario for both the PRC and the US. To the US, the Soviet Union was, of course, the largest threat at the peak of the Cold War. Since the PRC had succeeded in their nuclear test in 1964, the rapprochement with the PRC meant that the US would successfully make the rest of four nuclear nations in the world side with the US against the Soviets. Also, the US needed to tame the PRC, which was supporting North Vietnam, in order to pull out US forces from the quagmire of Vietnam War. US eagerness to cope with the PRC was symbolized by the warning from Nixon to Brezhnev after the rapprochement with the PRC in 1972; "Any Soviet attack against China would be against American interests as well."⁴² To the PRC, rapprochement with the US would bring an advantage in terms of the defense against the existential Soviet threat. But more importantly, it meant a critical blow to its nemesis, Taiwan. Taiwan had been relying on the US for its survival, as seen in the first and second Taiwan crisis in 1955 and 1958, where the US played a significant deterrent role. By winning the affection of the US, the PRC successfully deprived the Kuomintang of its largest patron. In addition, the rapprochement with the US opened PRC's access to western economies and technology, which would develop its national power and wealth, as the current rise of China proves. "Renmin Ribao," the official newspaper of the CCP, in 1977 explicitly showed PRC's perception of the international situation at that time; it identified the USSR as China's

⁴² Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 280

“most dangerous enemy,” while the US as a “valued ally.”⁴³ As long as the PRC left the border conflict unsolved and keep the military tension with the Soviet, it served as the diplomatic sign of confrontation with the Soviet Union and assured its national defense and development with US support.

The conflict was a matter of narrative rather than a territorial gain of the small, strategically insignificant island. Throughout the 1970s, the PRC maintained the same attitude in the negotiation of the Sino-Soviet non-aggression treaty and it showed no hesitation for confrontation. The negotiation was continuously held to renew their "1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty" which was set to expire on February 16, 1979. It had served to ensure security for both countries. However, despite Moscow's repeated attempts for the renewal of the Sino-Soviet non-aggression treaty, Beijing continued to ignore Soviet proposals.⁴⁴ By rejecting Soviet's appeals to China for a non-aggression treaty, the PRC could achieve a narrative that signals PRC's superiority to the Soviet Union among communist bloc.

This proves the invalidity of common simplistic analyses of Chinese preference for short wars. For example, a US Pacific Fleet official alerted the PLA's readiness to conduct a "short-sharp war."⁴⁵ Another cliché is that "drawing from Sun-Tzu's practice, the PRC shies away prolonged war as it is a waste of resources." Such concepts of short-sharp war are, however, merely reflecting one side of the PRC strategy. The PRC does not necessarily pursue a short war. Rather, it would choose to pay the cost and the risk of prolonged war if it keeps creating a favorable narrative, reflecting PRC's value.

The PRC's long-term strategy

The Sino-Soviet border conflict presents a symbolic case to show the PRC's long-term strategy. It allowed the PRC to have the room to let the situation unfold and wait for an opponent to show a weakness, which the PRC could take advantage of. After enjoying the narrative of its belligerence against the Soviet Union, the PRC finally came to the negotiation table for the border agreement between 1987 and 1991. A reason for

⁴³ Ibid. 281

⁴⁴ Ibid. 280

⁴⁵ USNI News, "Navy Official: China Training for 'Short Sharp War' with Japan," 18 February, 2014. <https://news.usni.org/2014/02/18/navy-official-china-training-short-sharp-war-japan>

its willingness to negotiate after almost 20 years was that, by that point in time, the PRC no longer needed to boast its equality with the Soviet Union to international society. It had been doing so for around 20 years, and already achieved plenty of credit for it. Also, the Soviet Union's decline in power meant there was less reputation to gain from showing opposition to it. On the verge of its collapse, the Soviet Union was facing a cascade of declarations of independence in its territories (1985: Perestroika abolished Soviet's interventionism in Eastern Europe, 1989: communist parties lost elections in multiple countries in eastern Europe, fall of the Berlin Wall). Assuming the PRC leaders saw the national momentum as a key factor for the territorial negotiation, it is obvious that the Soviet Union was quickly losing the national power to negotiate territorial disputes. The PRC was already at the point that challenging the Soviet Union did not win the prestige of the communist bloc, where each country openly opposed Soviet's dominance. The terms of condition show the change of power balance between two countries. Even though Zhenbao island was under decades of de facto occupation of the Soviet Union, it was briefly handed over to the PRC. Within a month of the agreement, Boris Yeltsin won election against the Communist party, and the USSR dissolved at the end of the year.

More importantly, the PRC's further claims for more territory, in addition to Zhenbao island, shows that the PRC's aggression is not terminated by the achievement of predetermined objectives, but by the momentum of the situation. Even after acquiring Zhenbao island in the terms of the 1991, PRC leaders did not see the decline of their diplomatic momentum. The PRC kept claiming the ownership of Talabarov island, Abagaitu islet, and Bolshoi Ussuriysky island after the 1991 agreement. In 2004, despite the de facto occupation by the Russian Army, Russia agreed with the PRC-control of Talabarov island and Abagaitu islet, and the split of Bolshoi Ussuriysky island. In terms of strategic importance, these islands carry much more worth than Zhenbao island. They are located on the northeastern tip of China at the confluence of the Ussuri and the Amur river, with 470 times larger area than Zhenbao island. It formed part of Khabarovsk, the current administrative center of the Far Eastern Federal District of Russia. The PRC did not conclude the conflict when it achieved the original objectives. It maintained its demands as long as the momentum of the situation sided with it.

Summary

By leaving the conflict with the Soviet Union intact, the PRC enjoyed the favorable narrative internally and externally. As stated above, for the PRC, neither determining the victor nor distinct war termination is meaningless and needless. What matters for the PRC is a narrative that results from war signals, and how the audiences interpret the power balance in the process of negotiation. Upon the war termination, if the persistence of a conflict serves its national interest, the conflict does not have to come to a clear-cut ending. That was why the PRC did not set a clear termination for the Sino-Soviet border conflict. The PRC solved the border disputes in its favor with patience in a long-term strategy while maintaining status quo through military power.

4. The Sino-Vietnamese War (1979)

The Sino-Vietnamese War presents the typical example of the PRC war termination that met two conditions. By occupying the northern territories in Vietnam, the PRC achieved a favorable narrative to international and domestic audiences: punishment of Vietnam; discredit of the Soviet sponsorship; unified public opinion for economic development. Also, the return of Vietnamese main forces from Cambodia stalled the PLA momentum militarily and diplomatically. Publicly, the war is labeled as “one of the most meaningless wars.”⁴⁶ It is true that the PRC did not gain territory or compel Vietnam to do something in favor of the PRC. However, if one reflects upon the value of PRC leadership, it becomes clear that the war had a significant meaning for the PRC.

Overview of the conflict

The PRC started the invasion deliberately on Feb 17, 1979; it was the day after the above-mentioned "1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty" had expired. The invasion was meant to punish Vietnam for two reasons. First, Vietnam had invaded Cambodia to subvert the

⁴⁶ Chen Jian, “China, the Vietnam War, and the Sino-American Rapprochement, 1968-1973.” In *The Third Indochina War: Conflict between China, Vietnam, and Cambodia, 1972-1979*, ed. Odd Arne Westad and Sophie Quinn-Judge, 33-64. London: Routledge, 2006. 58

Khmer Rouge of Cambodia, which was supported by the PRC. For the PRC, which had helped the Vietnamese in the fight against the US, Vietnam's invasion of China's tributary was perceived as a treacherous act. Second, the PRC's distrust in Vietnam reached its peak with the establishment of the USSR-Vietnam Treaty on November 1978, which was three months before PRC invasion. The core of the treaty was a mutual defense agreement between Soviet Union and Vietnam—it meant that Vietnam had sided with the Soviet Union in the middle of the Sino-Soviet confrontation.

Since the main forces of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) were in Cambodia, the defense of Vietnam relied on militias—both citizen soldiers and reserve forces. Although these militias were well-experienced in guerrilla warfare after the war against the US, the PLA captured three out of nine northern provinces in three weeks with “people's war” tolerating enormous casualties.⁴⁷ However, as the PAVN main forces came back from Cambodia to reinforce the defense of Hanoi, the PRC unilaterally declared the completion of the punishment on March 5 and ordered the PLA to withdraw. Along the way home, the PLA conducted wanton acts of organized destruction and looting, which allegedly crippled Vietnam for the next fifteen years.⁴⁸

While both sides claimed victory, the majority of historians judge the war as a defeat of the PRC.⁴⁹ The PRC did not achieve a settlement of the territorial dispute, territorial gain, or reparations. At the same time, the war revealed many PRC shortfalls, including poor planning and intelligence, inefficient command and control, outdated operational tactics, and a backward logistical support.⁵⁰ While there is no reliable record about PAVN casualties to compare, the PLA, at least, suffered heavy casualties ranging from 20,000 to more than 31,000, depending on the source. Although the PLA damaged Vietnamese militias, it avoided fighting the main forces of the PAVN and could not damage Vietnam's military capability. However, these popular evaluations were measured by tangible factors, which were not the primary concerns of the PRC. As Zhang Xiaoming puts it, “the Chinese sense of what constituted military ‘victory’ lay

⁴⁷ Ryan, Finkelstein, and McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting : The PLA Experience since 1949*. 230

⁴⁸ Xiaoming Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping's Long War : The Military Conflict between China and Vietnam, 1979-1991*, *The New Cold War History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015). 112

⁴⁹ Ryan, Finkelstein, and McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting : The PLA Experience since 1949*. 231

⁵⁰ Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping's Long War : The Military Conflict between China and Vietnam, 1979-1991*. 114

more in anticipated geopolitical outcomes than in the PLA's operational battlefield performance."⁵¹

Examining Hypothesis

Narratives

The war served to create favorable narratives to three important audiences: former tributary countries, the Soviet Union, and domestic audiences. First, the punishment of Vietnam sent the clear message to former tributary countries including Vietnam that they would face consequences for disrespecting their benefactor and invading China's ally. In explaining PRC's perception of Vietnamese betrayal, the contextual background from the Vietnam war would elucidate PRC's deeper animosity to Vietnam. For the PRC and the USSR, the Vietnam War was a form of competition as both states vied to gain influence over the newborn communist country. The Sino-Soviet competition over North Vietnam created an internal power struggle in Hanoi: a conflict between a pro-Soviet camp and a pro-China camp. The former sought peaceful coexistence with the South and prioritized the industrialization of the North, while the latter emphasized the violent liberation and reunification of the South. Their strategies also differed; the former was oriented around Soviet technology while the latter pursued Mao's people's war. In the end, the pro-China camp prevailed after the power struggle and massive Chinese aid flowed into North Vietnam to support the fight against the US. It was led by Le Duan, who later took the position of the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party after Ho Chi Minh and, ironically became the leader who would oversee the fight against China in the Sino-Vietnamese War.

Thus, the PRC perceived Vietnam's attack on PRC-sponsored Khmer Rouge of Cambodia as multi-layered betrayals at the personal level and national level. Vietnam and Le Duan bit the PRC's hand that once fed Vietnam through support for an internal power struggle, position as a national leader, and victory against the US. Deng Xiaoping's frustration was symbolized in his comment to Jimmy Carter during his first visit to the US one month prior to the invasion: "The little Child is getting naughty, its

⁵¹ Ibid. 216

time he gets spanked."⁵² The punishment was also meant to be a lesson for other former tributary countries to solidify the position of the PRC. It was clear that being a communist regime does not provide immunity from the Chinese tributary order. More than anything, it was the obedience that the PRC demanded from regional countries in order to ensure its security.

Second, the PRC had successfully discredited the Soviet's alliance by controlling the time and scale to prevent the Soviet Union's intervention and protection for its allies. The core of the "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" between the Soviet Union and Vietnam was mutual defense; "in case either party is attacked or threatened with attack the two parties signatory to the treaty shall immediately consult each other with a view to eliminate the threat, and shall take appropriate and effective measures to safeguard the peace and security of the two countries."⁵³ Thus, the PLA invasion served as a test of the Soviet-Vietnam alliance. However, Deng's conduct of the war was not a gamble meant to bet on the Soviet's hesitation to go to war.

Deng's strategy was based on well-planned preventive measures taken against the Soviet Union beforehand. Leading up to the Sino-Vietnamese War, Deng had made an effort to promote the alliance with the US, Japan, and Europe as a united front against Soviet expansionism.⁵⁴ Prior to its invasion of Vietnam, the PRC had threatened the Soviets with total war should the Soviet Union have attacked the PRC, with the deployment of 1.5 million troops along the border, emergency war alert, the establishment of a new command in Xinjiang, and evacuation of civilians⁵⁵. Furthermore, its skillful conduct of the war in Vietnam precluded Soviet intervention. The PRC limited the time and scale of the invasion of Vietnam. The invasion took only less than three weeks before the PLA's unilateral withdrawal. Also as the same as the Sino-Indian border Conflict, it held down the 500 fighters and bombers that stood ready to be used in the area,⁵⁶ recognizing the danger of airpower to escalate a war. Both by

⁵² Franz-Stefan Gady, "War of the Dragons: Why North Korea Does Not Trust China," *The Diplomat*, 29 September, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/09/war-of-the-dragons-why-north-korea-does-not-trust-china/>

⁵³ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 288

⁵⁴ Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping's Long War : The Military Conflict between China and Vietnam, 1979-1991*. 214

⁵⁵ Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. 292

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 292

not allowing time and not raising the escalation ladder, the PRC left room for the Soviet Union to withhold its obligation to intervene. As a consequence, the Soviet Union did not provide any further support to Vietnam other than sending military advisors to Hanoi. The PRC achieved its narrative to spoil the Soviet's trustworthiness and precluded Soviet influences on small countries in Asia. These international narratives were matters of significance for the PRC, especially considering the fear of Soviet encirclement.⁵⁷

Third, the war created a narrative aligned with Deng's policy to domestic audiences. Two years after the national disturbance of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1977) preceded by the Great Leap policy (1958-1961), Deng was on his way to rebuild the PRC. On December 1978, two months prior to the invasion of Vietnam, Deng had begun the "reform and opening-up" policy which would lead to the current strong Chinese economy after 30 years of striving. Yet, the series of disobedience by its former tributary Vietnam was threatening China's central position in Asia and impeding its national pride. Thus, the punishment of "the little Child" turned out to be a catalyst for the domestic audience to push forward the national revival. In recognition of that, during his speech to declare victory, Deng showed his satisfaction and belief that the punitive war had boosted China's prestige and influence in the world⁵⁸.

Also, the deficiency and cost due to the persistence in classic doctrine of "people's war" conversely inspired the Chinese people to shift their focuses to economic development.⁵⁹ This national lesson was perfectly aligned with Deng's "reform and opening-up" policy. Reflecting on these positive outcomes of the war, it is understandable why Deng was satisfied with the war while international audiences viewed it as Chinese defeat. In sum, even though the battle result was unfavorable per se, the PRC leader saw the opportunity to obtain the favorable narrative domestically and internationally in order to advance his policies and enhance China's prestige in Asia.

Decay of Momentum

There were two factors for the PRC leaders to recognize the decay of its war-waging momentum: the return of the PAVN main forces from Cambodia, and impending

⁵⁷ Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping's Long War : The Military Conflict between China and Vietnam, 1979-1991*. 214

⁵⁸ Ibid. 120

⁵⁹ Ibid. 86 and 120

Soviet intervention in case the war prolonged or escalated. First, the return of the 30,000 PAVN soldiers marked a sharp shift in the momentum against the PLA. The PLA was estimated to have amassed 100,000 men at their peak. On the other hand, Vietnam had relied on militias with 75,000 to 100,000 men for their defense⁶⁰. Because of the operational deficiencies—lack of heavy equipment, transportation capability, radios, food, and ammunition—20 to 30% of PLA soldiers were killed and an additional 40% wounded even against the same or less number of militia troops.⁶¹ With the return of the PAVN from Cambodia, the PLA was facing an additional 30,000 PAVN soldiers at the end of February and several divisions in early March. In fact, Hanoi was allegedly planning a massive counter-attack.⁶² Since the PLA had lost more than half of its original combat capability, PAVN's reinforcement shifted the tide in both quantity and quality.

Second, to make matters worse, the raised scale and prolongation of the war risked inducing Soviet intervention. As seen in the massive PLA enforcement in the northern border of China, the fear of Soviet intervention kept haunting the PRC. Therefore, the PRC terminated the war by unilaterally declaring the completion of the punishment. One month prior to the war, Deng showed Carter his intention to punish Vietnam, citing the 1962 Sino-Indian war which was symbolically short and limited in scale.⁶³ Also, Deng reportedly stated; “we estimate that the Soviet Union will not take too big an action...I think our action is limited, and it will not give rise to a very big event.”⁶⁴ These Deng's words prove that he sought to and succeeded to deter the Soviet from intervening by limiting scale and duration of the war as noted above.

Summary

In contrast to the common difficulty of terminating a war as existing literature argues, the momentum-oriented strategy enabled the PRC to quickly terminate its war with unilateral withdrawal. The PRC did not apply and assess "achievement of military

⁶⁰ Ryan, Finkelstein, and McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting : The Pla Experience since 1949*. 230

⁶¹ Ellis Joffe, *The Chinese Army after Mao* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987). 95

⁶² Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping's Long War : The Military Conflict between China and Vietnam, 1979-1991*. 110

⁶³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle : Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983). 409 and 410

⁶⁴ Burles and Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force : Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings*.

objectives" as war termination criteria; for example, an occupation of a certain city or damaging a certain amount of enemy military capability. If they had done so, the PRC would have been mired by a protracted war in Vietnam, as it is impossible to know of a specific occupation line or level of destruction achieved that will serve as sufficient punishment to an enemy. Even worse, the prolonged war would bring increased risk of Soviet intervention that could have started the first war between nuclear powers. By assessing that the momentum of war was shifting against the PRC, Deng terminated the war thereby avoiding disastrous consequences while still securing the favorable narrative.



CHAPTER 4
POTENTIAL COUNTER-ARGUMENTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Peace-time plans are of no particular value, but peace-time planning is indispensable.

Dwight Eisenhower

1. Are past war terminations relevant to contemporary PRC strategy?

What matters for a strategist must be the relevance of past patterns of the PRC to its current decision-making processes. Some might argue the hypothesis as just a propensity of the leaders who led those wars. Considering there has not been a military conflict that provides a factual sample of war termination for more than thirty years, it is possible that contemporary PRC leaders have a different view on war termination strategy from decades-old war histories.

Still, these war histories are all we have as factual data to understand current PRC war termination and this research provides meaningful information for following reasons. First, these war terminations presented the similarity between different leaders: Mao and Deng. These men belonged in the opposing camps in the Communist party. Deng denounced Mao for the failure of his Great Leap Policy. For his opposition to Mao, Deng was kept in a labor camp during the Cultural Revolution for five years. Mao never changed his belief in the classic concept of people's war, while Deng brought a huge shift in the PLA toward "local high-tech war."¹ Even though these national leaders' preferences were utterly different, each leader's preference had little impact on PRC's war termination and its war-waging value remained coherent.

Second, PRC leaders pay profound attention to lessons from history. Scholars, analysts, and policymakers in the PRC themselves frequently assert that past and present policy and behavior are conditioned by a distinctive traditional Chinese philosophy of international relations.² Chinese leaders' persistence to the historical analogy is exemplified by Deng's attitude toward classic values. Deng is known as the progressive

¹ Ibid. viii

² Andrew Scobell and Army War College (U.S.). Strategic Studies Institute., *China and Strategic Culture* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002). 1

leader in the CCP who promoted the modernization of the PRC and the evolution of the PLA with the focus on technologies away from the classic strategy of ‘people’s war.’ Yet, such a progressive figure as Deng encouraged renewed attention to classical Chinese teachings on war and strategy.³ Thus, historical lessons have a significant meaning to PRC leaders.

Third, even still the current PLA textbook of strategy puts a premium on terminating war while in an advantageous situation. “The Science of Military Strategy” states “the war conductors should spare no effort to end the war under favorable conditions and avoid to end it when in a stalemate or under unfavorable conditions.”⁴ With close attention, one should find this statement as a unique characteristic of the PLA’s concept of war termination because it emphasizes to end the war under favorable conditions without mentioning how much military objectives should be achieved. In assessing whether the PRC is under these “favorable conditions” or not, Chinese strategists have weighed momentum and narrative as a scale and put premium on grasping these two factors correctly in constantly changing war situations. Of course, inclusion in a textbook does not equate to the implementation of the lesson by PLA or PRC leaders. However, at a minimum, the current strategy shows the coherent focus on grasping dynamic tides of the war as the determinant of war termination, rather than the achievement of predetermined military objectives.

It is true that the PLA has dramatically modernized and shifted its strategy to high-tech war. According to a RAND study, China had already started focusing on a limited war under high-tech conditions in the 1980s, discarding the concept of people’s war, which was the reactive strategy for a massive invasion by a militarily superior power. The way the PLA fights has experienced several transitions as the potential enemies of the PLA have changed. Therefore, there is no doubt about the change in how the PLA fights. Yet, even though the strategy changes in accordance with its circumstances, the value of the PLA and the CCP will not change much. To put it another way, the ways to achieve the desired outcome might change; but the desired outcome itself will not change because it is based on their values. Thus, understanding

³ Mahnken, *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century : Theory, History, and Practice*. 156

⁴ Peng and Yao, *The Science of Military Strategy*. 380 and 381

their values is the most important element to build a credible strategy to deal with the PRC. This research asserts the values of the PRC as “momentum” and “narrative.” No matter whether the PLA is equipped with fifth-generation fighters or multiple aircraft carriers, their value that these two factors are heavily related to the timing to terminate a war will not change.

2. Are these war termination conditions unique to the PRC, or universal?

Some might argue that any country would move to terminate the war if it faces the negative momentum of war and already achieved a positive narrative. While the hypothesis does not have to be exclusively applicable to the PRC or to differentiate the PRC from any other countries, it can be said that at least these conditions are a different way of thinking from the war terminations as seen in US history.

The US stopped the first Gulf War short of subverting the Saddam regime despite the huge momentum of war on their side. Once the military objectives were achieved, including the liberation of Kuwait, the US terminated the war. The US curtailed its extraordinarily one-sided military victory prematurely, such that it did not sufficiently weaken the Saddam regime or create a favorable order in Iraq ultimately meaning the US had to come back 12 years later.”

The war in Afghanistan and the 2003 Iraq War further illustrate the differences in US thinking on war termination. In both efforts, US momentum was quickly stalled because of the opposition from other countries and the mismatch of the US conventional forces to insurgency warfare. Also, the narrative was achieved immediately by starting the wars, externally as punishment and internally as showing the resolve to protect the US. Even though the momentum decayed and favorable narratives were achieved, the US was not motivated to terminate the war and kept fighting for 14 years in Afghanistan and 8 years in Iraq.

If the two conditions of the hypothesis are a universal value or a matter of course, the US would have taken different action in both cases. The first Gulf War would have continued further, until the momentum died; and the war on terror would have been terminated when the momentum started to decline. As the recent US cases presents

discord with it, these two conditions for war termination can be considered to be unique to the PRC.

3. Why does the PRC have such a decisive control over war termination?

If indeed war should break out, it would not be in our power to stop it...war ends when it has rolled through cities and villages, everywhere sowing death and destruction.

Nikita Khrushchev, on Cuban Missile Crisis

In general, countries have difficulties in war termination even when they are eager to do so. During WWI, which belligerents believed would end swiftly, Germany failed to terminate the war by refusing to cede its gain and lost more than it gained in four years of prolonged war. In WWII, knowing they were unable to endure a long war, both Germany and Japan had intended to secure their victories expediently “under the favorable conditions,” if borrow from PLA textbook. But they could not stop fighting at the desired point. Likewise, in the case of the US, it took more than four years in Vietnam to settle the war since they started the negotiations. As Khrushchev warned Kennedy, it is very hard to have a control over a war once it starts.

Fred Iklé raised the reasons for the difficulty of war termination as follows. First, both countries seek a greater and more lasting security than before. Even though they tolerate the risk in peacetime, it disappears once a war starts. Also, despite their willingness, national leaders don't want to be seen as the party pushing for negotiation since it might make them appear weak which would affect the negotiation itself, national morale, and relationships with allies. Lastly, even after starting negotiation, there are always actors within a country who oppose war termination in hope of obtaining a more advantageous position in the post-war power politics.⁵

Considering the difficulties of war terminations in Iklé's theory, the PRC's war termination seems exceptionally decisive. Yet, that does not mean the PRC's norms reveal the discrepancy of his theory, or that the system of the PRC is too unique to be comprehended in the theory. On the contrary, the PRC cases prove the validity of his

⁵ Iklé, *Every War Must End*. 9, 60 and 85

theory because the PRC could terminate a war by eliminating the above-mentioned reasons for the difficulty of termination.

First are PRC's unique objectives in war. Most countries wage a war to win it. In other words, they place a military victory as the objective of wars. However, in the war history of the PRC, it used military force to create a shock in enemy countries or to send warning messages to other countries.⁶ The difficulty of war termination, as Iklé argued, stems from the tendency that a nation persists in conflict for victory or to secure gain relative to its opponent. But under an objective focused on narratives, there are no specific military objectives to mire a nation in a futile military effort. The PLA does not have to win a war in a military sense to achieve its national interests. Therefore, the PRC can terminate its wars in a relatively quick and decisive manner. Mao asserted that defeat, as well as tactical victory, can support strategic success if the situation is correctly grasped.⁷ The PRC's apathy for military victory also explains the bold behavior the PRC has taken by risking clashes with global superpowers, the Soviet Union and the US.

Second, the CCP intricately maintains its influence on domestic actors. Richard McGregor analyzes the Chinese people's helplessness against CCP control; China is freer than it has ever been, but the CCP has made sure it retains firm control of the economy, the civil service, the military, police, education, social organizations and the media, essentially every sector of China. Many Chinese people ceased to voice opposition over political issues against the party as they do not sufficiently care about such issues anymore. They would not choose to attend a political demonstration because they can still become rich as long as they play by the CCP's rules. Fighting for ideals would only disturb their increasingly comfortable lives.⁸ McGregor quotes a professor from the People's University in Beijing, "The Party is like God. He is everywhere. You just can't see him."⁹

Third, the politburo has tight control of the military because the Central Military Commission (CMC), chaired by the General Secretary of the CCP, has direct control over conventional forces. In a typical western civilian-military relationship, civilian

⁶ Scobell and Army War College (U.S.). Strategic Studies Institute., *China and Strategic Culture*. 22

⁷ Zedong Mao, *Six Essays on Military Affairs* (Peking,: Foreign Languages Press, 1972). 9

⁸ McGregor, *The Party : The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers*. 13, 26 and 133

⁹ Ibid. 17

leadership set budgets and initiate wars, but the development of military capability is largely left to the military.¹⁰ Unlike the western system, the CMC is not merely a service representative, but it is a service shaping and direction institution.¹¹ Moreover, the CCP has a firm control of the military from the strategic level to tactical level, with the system of political commissars in each unit and Party committees within the PLA. The PLA is a “party army” to serve the CCP, not a national army to serve the state.¹² As a result, the PLA remains faithful to the Communist Party, no matter how much its size, force structure, doctrine, equipment and role in society has varied since the establishment of PRC in 1949.¹³ Since its foundation, the founding principle of the PLA—the Party commands the gun—has never been up for negotiation, and the PLA’s primary mission has been consistent: to keep the Party in power.¹⁴

Lastly, in some cases, China’s hubris to other countries enables unilateral claims of victory and decisive war termination. This propensity is not only based on its *realpolitik* diplomacy¹⁵ to regional countries, but also for its immunity to solitary. Sometimes alliances can cause shaky resolve or drive an unnecessary commitment to a war. In the case of the PRC, since the Sino-Soviet split, it has cooperated with no partners that would be considered allies except for its one-sided protection of North Korea and Cambodia.¹⁶ While embracing little support from other countries, the PRC’s conduct of war was not bound by foreign countries. There were no nagging allies to assert the continuation of war against India for more territory or to plea for more punishment against Vietnam for its disobedience to China. PRC’s coercive posture against super powers was not affected by a shaky resolve of small allies. Its isolation allowed the PRC to act on its own decision to declare unilateral victory and pull back the

¹⁰ Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War : Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca: Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1991). 255

¹¹ Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era : Regional Powers and International Conflict*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). 144

¹² Joe McReynolds, *China’s Evolving Military Strategy*, (Washington D.C.: The Jamestown Foundation, 2016). 8

¹³ Graff and Higham, *A Military History of China*. 265

¹⁴ McGregor, *The Party : The Secret World of China’s Communist Rulers*. 105

¹⁵ Andrew Scobell, *China’s Use of Military Force : Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March*, Cambridge Modern China Series (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 193

¹⁶ G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011). 239

PLA from India and Vietnam as well as continue military enforcement against the Soviet Union for decades. Thus, the PRC has constructed an identity of itself being less bothered by international repercussions. As a proof, neither domestic nor international audiences would regard its current unilateral hubristic actions as unusual.

These characteristics of the PRC brilliantly eliminate the factors that prevent timely war termination and has enabled the PRC to decisively terminate its wars.



CONCLUSION

It is a common mistake in going to war to begin at the wrong end, to act first, and wait for disaster to discuss the matter.

Thucydides

Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius—and a lot of courage—to move in the opposite direction.

Ernst Friedrich Schumacher


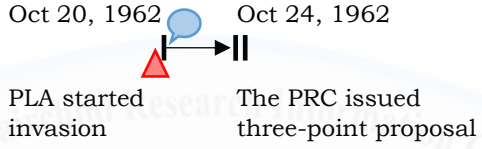

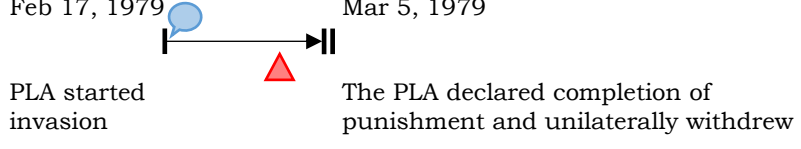
The empirical evidence provide support for the hypothesis. The PRC has terminated its conflicts when it fulfilled two conditions: when they faced the negative expectation of war waging momentum; and when they achieved favorable narratives for both internal and external audiences.

The Sino-Indian War and the Sino-Vietnam war presented straightforward examples to match the hypothesis; the PRC terminated the wars when the two conditions were met. In the Korean War, PRC national leaders were not convinced to terminate the war during the two years of negotiation until Stalin's death because Soviet support kept fueling the momentum of the war. Conversely, the Sino-Soviet border conflict presented the case where the PRC prolonged the conflict in order to maintain a favorable narrative signaling PRC's confrontation against the communist leader. The empirical analysis and timeline of these wars are summarized in the following table.

Table: The summary of conditions and timing of PRC's war terminations

🗨️ : (Achieving Internal and External Narrative)

⚠️ : (Decay of Momentum)

	Timing when the conditions were met
The Korean War	<p>🗨️ : Regained the 38th parallel (Dec 1, 1950)</p> <p>⚠️ : Shift in Soviet supportive posture (Mar 19, 1953)</p>
	<p>Oct 19, 1950 </p> <p>CPV crossed the Yalu River Zhou indicated to accept the proposal</p>
The Sino-Indian War	<p>🗨️ : Showed resolve to India's aggression (by starting the war)</p> <p>⚠️ : Domestic turmoil and diplomatic solitary (from the start)</p>
	<p>Oct 20, 1962 </p> <p>PLA started invasion The PRC issued three-point proposal</p>
The Sino-Soviet border conflict	<p>🗨️ : Opposing the USSR ceased to be prestigious (1988-1990)</p> <p>⚠️ : Red Army counterattack repelled PLA (Mar 15, 1969)</p>
	<p>Mar 1, 1969 </p> <p>PLA started invasion Sino-Soviet border agreement</p>
The Sino-Vietnamese War	<p>🗨️ : Punished Vietnam, discredited USSR (by starting the war)</p> <p>⚠️ : Return of PAVN, impending Soviet intervention (Feb 27)</p>
	<p>Feb 17, 1979 </p> <p>PLA started invasion The PLA declared completion of punishment and unilaterally withdrew</p>

Source: Author's original work

Examining the hypothesis regarding war termination reveals broader characteristics of PRC strategy. First, because of its momentum-oriented strategy, the PRC is less likely to be mired in unbeneficial wars. Its focus on the momentum of war enables PRC to terminate wars in a short period of time or choose to prolong wars only while they contribute to national interests.

Second, the PRC will not stop military operations as long as the momentum continues, because achievement of military objective has less impact on war termination. PRC strategy deals with the fluidity of the situation and moving goals. Upon terminating a war, its focus is on assessing the best timing to extract the most out of the situation rather than attempt to achieve a predetermined goal which would be indispensable in the western concept of war planning. For example, strategists must realize that PRC invasion would not be limited only within claimed territory, depending on its momentum.

Third, the PRC does not necessarily seek for a clear-cut war termination. What the PRC values is favorable strategic narratives, and not achievement of military objectives. That means the PRC does not necessarily pursue a decisive military victory. In that context, PRC leaders view leaving the conflict without a clear ending as a viable option if the PRC does not see the merit in expediently solving the situation.

Lastly, PRC leadership seems to hold limited expectations for military force. The narratives that PRC leadership sought in the past wars were achieved by starting the war or resorting to an armed conflict per se rather than striving to achieve objectives through military force. That means PRC leadership limits the use of the PLA to militarily achievable ends; for example, to show its belligerence to opposing nation, to signal its resolve in a territorial dispute, or to boast its commitment to protect its tributary. To put it another way, when fighting itself is the purpose of the fight, there cannot be any failure as long as strategists assess the proper timing to terminate the war. This resonates with Sun-Tzu's dictum; "a victorious army wins its victories before seeking battle; an army destined to defeat fights in the hope of winning."¹

Then, how can other nations facilitate war termination against the PRC? Drawing from the findings of this research, there are two possible implications for their contingency plans. The first implication is that one must stall PRC's war-waging

¹Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War: The Definitive English Translation*. 131, (chapter IV-14)

momentum, rather than focusing on preventing the achievement of its military objectives. To that end, the factors that PRC leaders consider as essential to continued momentum must be addressed. Although such an extensive subject should be left for further research, the commonality in the PRC wars covered in this paper suggests two potential factors. One is external support. The PRC perceived the change in external support to either PRC or its enemy as a shift in war momentum, rather than its military situation. The loss of international support would have a significant impact on PRC national leaders as a hindrance to their war waging momentum. The other factor is the effect of strategic surprise. As the effect of surprise was diminished, the PRC leaders recognized a loss in momentum. Failure to achieve the expected effect through surprise—for example, the opponent's national defense posture was so sturdy that the nation did not show much domestic disorder, or it was resilient enough to recover from initial surprise and show an effective defense posture—would have an impact on the PRC's strategic calculus and could be perceived as the stall in their war-waging momentum.

The second implication is that one must leave room for the PRC to claim domestic legitimacy and prestige in the region, considering Chinese value of narratives in terms of its survival. As explained above, the CCP has strong influence over the actors inside Chinese polity. However, its control is based on the leadership's legitimacy in the CCP. The leadership in the CCP continuously requires the narrative to prove its successful leadership in a war. Thus, in any armistice talks, one needs to leave room for PRC leaders to claim their competence to lead the CCP and CCP's legitimacy to rule the PRC. As Sun-Tzu says, one should not surround enemy leaving no way out since it would force the enemy to fight back for their lives.² A negotiation that would harm their narrative would leave them no way out and fail to bring an end to the war.

Some readers might find the hypothesis too assertive or overgeneralized to aid in understanding the conduct of war, which deals with the unpredictability of human factors. It is true that the limited number of samples preclude quantitative analysis. In particular, the lack of any data on recent PRC war termination strategy for almost forty years is challenging. However, it is notable that the available empirical facts showed the coherent patterns in the different leaders in the same regime with the same cultural value. Even

² Ibid. 168 (chapter VII-31)

for the skeptics, at least this thesis serves to introduce the PRC's unique value and preference for momentum and narrative on waging war regardless of personal preferences.

Ignorance of what the opponent values and treasures undermine strategy. In history, many wars have resulted in futile military actions and calamity because of the misplaced points of effort stemming from disoriented strategies that neglect *what would compel the enemy to terminate a war*. Many military strategists have made wars “bigger, more complex, and more violent.” To evade the disgrace of being “intelligent fools,” military strategists must deliberate “what an adversary treasures and what scares him,”³ and to align military actions toward a right direction. Poor tactics can be rescued by superior strategy; tactical superiority, however, is likely to be disastrous when the strategy is weak and ill-judged. As the history of wars proves, an effective military can be also very effective in conducting wrong things as well when it acts on a misplaced strategy.⁴

As Khrushchev wrote to Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis, once a war starts, it departs from human hands. But that does not mean human beings do not have control over what they do. Rather, in many wars, it is the human ignorance of how to terminate a war that has unnecessarily prolonged wars and increased their cost. It would be too numerous to mention examples of wars that were begun at the wrong end and created disasters, as Thucydides warned.⁵ Although a start of war might be due to an unfortunate coincidence or misunderstanding, failure to bring an end to a war should be largely attributed to strategists' ignorance of what compels the enemy to terminate it.

Strategists are apt to pay attention to PRC's rapid development of military capabilities and be swayed by simplistic comparisons such as numbers of aircraft or technological advantage. Such comparison, however, is pointless to an enemy with different strategy and goals, and even dangerous because it tends to lack the analysis of

³ Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). 3

⁴ Colin S. Gray, *The Strategy Bridge : Theory for Practice* (Oxford ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010). 19 and 20

⁵ Thucydides, Robert B. Strassler, and Richard Crawley, *The Landmark Thucydides : A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Free Press, 1996). 44

“to what end” the military capability should be used. In other words, too much attention to PRC’s tangible military capability distracts strategists from what should be achieved to compel the PRC to end its war. As Liddell-Hart pointed out, persistence to military victory can cloud dynamic judgements about national interest. “Whenever war has broken out, policy has too often been governed by the military aim—and this has been regarded as an end in itself, instead of as merely a means to the end.”⁶

Military strength is only a scale for how much destruction a country can inflict, and it should be directed correctly to achieve war aims. Unless military operations are not aligned toward a right direction, it would do no better than wreaking destructions. Therefore, those who want peace must begin with the end in mind and know what would bring an end to the war. If one pursues war termination with the PRC, more attention must be paid on what compels the PRC to end its wars.



⁶ Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Meridian, 1991). 338

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