The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru

National Efficacy Beliefs and the Making of Foreign Policy

Andrew Bingham Kennedy

CAMBRIDGE

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Why do leaders sometimes challenge, rather than accept, the international structures that surround their states? In *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru*, Andrew Bingham Kennedy answers this question through in-depth studies of Chinese foreign policy under Mao Zedong and Indian foreign policy under Jawaharlal Nehru. Drawing on international relations theory and psychological research, Kennedy offers a new theoretical explanation for bold leadership in foreign policy, one that stresses the beliefs that leaders develop about the "national efficacy" of their states. He shows how this approach illuminates several of Mao's and Nehru's most important military and diplomatic decisions by drawing on archival evidence and primary source materials from China, India, the United States, and the United Kingdom. A rare blend of theoretical innovation and historical scholarship, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru* is a fascinating portrait of how foreign policy decisions are made.

Andrew Bingham Kennedy teaches international politics at the Crawford School of Economics and Government at the Australian National University. He received his Ph.D. in 2007 from Harvard University, where his dissertation received the Edward M. Chase Award for the best dissertation on a subject related to world peace. He holds a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and a B.S. summa cum laude in Psychology from Duke University. He has also held postdoctoral appointments at Princeton University and Harvard University. His work has appeared in *International Security, Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, the *China Quarterly*, *Asian Survey*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

"An insightful, well-argued, and solidly documented reinterpretation of the psychology and foreign policy choices of Mao Zedong and Jawaharlal Nehru. Kennedy convincingly links the historical experience of India's independence movement and China's revolutionary upheaval to differing belief systems of Mao and Nehru, and then links those beliefs to the foreign policy choices of the two leaders. He argues convincingly that India's long and successful nonviolent struggle for independence, and the victory of the Chinese revolution against seemingly overwhelming odds, gave rise to different beliefs about the efficacy of moral suasion and war, and that Nehru's and Mao's embrace of these varying worldviews deeply influenced those leaders' management of their nation's foreign relations. An important contribution to the study of the psychology of political leadership and comparative foreign policy."

– John Garver, Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Georgia Institute of Technology

For my parents,
Bingham and Elizabeth Kennedy

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ANDREW BINGHAM KENNEDY
The Australian National University

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1

Introduction

The year 331 B.C. was a remarkable moment in history. It was then that Alexander confronted the Persian king Darius III at Gaugamela, an encounter that sealed the fate of one empire and heralded the rise of another. Yet it might have been otherwise. Darius had offered generous terms before the battle, including territorial concessions and a treaty of friendship and alliance. Darius also commanded a vast army, including much more cavalry than Alexander could field. Because Darius's terms were so generous, and his forces so forbidding, Alexander's most senior general, Parmenion, urged him to accept the offer. Alexander, however, refused to compromise. Confident of success, he rejected Darius's terms and laid claim to the entire Persian Empire. Subsequently, in the wake of his stunning victory at Gaugamela, Alexander pronounced himself the king of Asia.[1]

In the study of international relations, we often assume that leaders are hemmed in by broad international structures that lie beyond their control. More specifically, scholars frequently tout the balance of power, as well as international norms and institutions, as powerful constraints on the options that leaders have.[2] In this view, leaders themselves lack much agency or importance; they merely respond to the incentives provided by the environment. Nonetheless, leaders sometimes choose remarkably ambitious courses in foreign policy, as Alexander did, even when the international environment offers reasons for restraint. When these ambitious efforts succeed, they can have revolutionary effects, giving rise to new distributions of power and new forms of

[1] A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 76–85.

[2] I am referring here to structural theories that take the existence of states as given and posit international structures as constraints on the agency of these states, rather than theories that are concerned with how international structures actually generate states. On the distinction, see Alexander Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (1987): 342.

cooperation. Even when these efforts fail, they can still have important consequences, providing cautionary tales to others and reinforcing the status quo. In short, international structures still leave much room for leaders to matter in international politics. If structures "shape and shove," as Kenneth Waltz suggests, leaders are quite capable of shoving back.[3]

This book focuses on two twentieth-century leaders who "shoved back" in very different ways: Mao Zedong and Jawaharlal Nehru. Both Mao and Nehru came to power in the early years of the Cold War, confronting an international system dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. Under Mao, China challenged this system through military action. In fact, Mao ordered attacks on the armed forces of both superpowers during his time in power, and in doing so he inflamed and reshaped military conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and on the Sino-Soviet border. Nehru, in contrast, launched a diplomatic challenge to the Cold War system. Calling for nonalignment and disarmament, Nehru's India sought to reshape the international order through a combination of self-restraint and vigorous diplomacy. In different ways, both Mao and Nehru made concerted efforts to remake their worlds rather than simply accepting them as they were.

Such assertiveness is puzzling because the international structures that Mao and Nehru faced offered them good reasons to proceed more cautiously. Mao's military assertiveness, for example, flouted the bipolar distribution of power in the Cold War. Notwithstanding its large population, Maoist China was never a match for the superpowers in terms of material power, either in economic or military terms. In 1950, for example, China's gross domestic product (GDP) represented only 4.5 percent of the world total, compared with 27.3 percent for the United States and 9.6 percent for the Soviet Union.[4] Although Mao's China could field an impressively large army, it was technologically backward and remained severely deficient in terms of firepower, armor, transport, and air and naval support, as described in the chapters that follow. China also lagged behind the superpowers by a wide margin in the nuclear sphere: it conducted its first nuclear test only after Mao had been in power for 15 years, and it lacked any kind of intercontinental delivery system until after Mao's death. From the standpoint of material power, Maoist China had excellent reasons to bide its time and build up its strength rather than challenging superpowers on the battlefield.[5]

Nehru's bold diplomacy, in turn, is puzzling if one examines the normative and institutional context in which it was conducted. That is, Nehru's India

[3] Kenneth Waltz, "Reflections on *Theory of International Politics*: A Response to My Critics," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 343.

[4] Angus Maddison, *The World Economy* (Paris: OECD, 2006), vol. 1, 263.

[5] Note that even "offensive realist" theories that conceive of states as fundamentally expansionist depict leaders as highly sensitive to the balance of power, seeking to expand only when material conditions are favorable. See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 37.

proved willing to cooperate even when the relevant international norms and institutions offered little assurance that other states would reciprocate. After war broke out between India and Pakistan over Kashmir in 1947, for example, Nehru agreed to bring the conflict before the nascent United Nations Security Council, even though India was considerably stronger than Pakistan at that point and even though there was no assurance that the council would take India's side in the conflict. Subsequently, Nehru became an enthusiastic proponent of nuclear disarmament and deliberately restrained India's own efforts in the nuclear sphere, even as other states forged ahead with nuclear weapons programs and resisted meaningful restraints on their own capabilities. In short, rather than simply relying on extant patterns of cooperation, Nehru's India cooperated proactively in an effort to build new ones.[6]

What inspired Mao and Nehru to chart such strikingly ambitious courses in foreign policy? It is tempting to treat these two leaders as singular historical figures and to attribute their policies to unique aspects of their personalities and circumstances. This book, however, takes a different approach. It develops a theory that explains the varying willingness of leaders to challenge international structures and then assesses how well that theory can explain some of the most crucial choices that Mao and Nehru made. By employing a theoretical approach, this book situates Mao and Nehru's decisions within a common conceptual framework and facilitates direct comparison of two leaders who have traditionally been studied in isolation. At the same time, the theoretical concepts developed in this study may also be applied to additional cases in the future, allowing broader claims to be made about the theory's explanatory power.[7] Indeed, if the theory developed here sheds light on some of Mao and Nehru's most important decisions, it is worth asking whether it can also illuminate the choices made by other leaders who have sought to overcome structural constraints. I return to this point in the conclusion.

THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF

This book argues that both bold and conservative foreign policies can be explained by what I call the "national efficacy beliefs" of individual leaders.

[6] Note that even theories that stress the role of state preferences (as opposed to international institutions) in international cooperation contend that states are constrained by the preferences of other states and, in particular, that states will not cooperate unless they perceive convergent interests with others. See Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 520–21.

[7] In this respect, this study resembles several books that have sought to explain Chinese foreign policy in theoretical terms and then suggested additional cases to which the theory could be applied. See Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 248–52; Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 301–5; Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 263–64.

As explained in the next chapter, these beliefs are convictions about the ability of one's state to accomplish specific military and diplomatic tasks, as opposed to estimates of the material power it possesses. In a sense, these beliefs are perceptions of national proficiency in different areas of foreign policy. My focus on efficacy beliefs builds on decades of research in psychology and comparative politics, which has produced a vast body of literature demonstrating the impact of such beliefs on human behavior in a wide variety of domains. My goal in this book is to show how the concept of efficacy beliefs can illuminate the making of foreign policy as well.

I identify two kinds of national efficacy in particular. *Martial efficacy* refers to the ability to overcome material disadvantages on the battlefield, whereas *moral efficacy* denotes the ability to elicit cooperation from other states through diplomacy. The beliefs that leaders hold about their states' martial and moral efficacy, in turn, shape how they approach structural constraints in the international system. Martial efficacy beliefs influence how leaders approach the distribution of material power and, more specifically, the challenge of military conflict with a stronger opponent. Whereas weak martial efficacy beliefs counsel restraint in such situations, more robust beliefs convince leaders that they can prevail even when the balance of power is unfavorable. Moral efficacy beliefs, similarly, shape how leaders approach costly commitments when international norms and institutions that could support cooperation are weak or nonexistent. Leaders with weak senses of moral efficacy shy away from such commitments for fear of being exploited. In contrast, those with stronger beliefs are more confident that cooperation on their part can induce comparable or greater restraint from other states. They are thus more likely to cooperate, even when the international environment offers little assurance that other states will reciprocate.

This theoretical framework does much to explain the very different courses charted by China under Mao and India under Nehru. As subsequent chapters will make clear, Mao and Nehru held very different senses of national efficacy, differences that correspond to the contrasting means through which they came to power. Having led the Chinese communists to victory over more powerful enemies in the revolution, Mao took power with a great sense of martial efficacy but a much weaker sense of moral efficacy. Having helped topple the British Raj through nonviolent resistance and remonstration, Nehru took office imbued with a strong sense of moral efficacy but much less confidence in the military sphere. These very different senses of national efficacy, in turn, played important roles in the courses that Mao and Nehru charted in foreign policy. Mao's great sense of martial efficacy was instrumental in the decisions he made to challenge the United States in Korea and Vietnam, whereas his weak sense of moral efficacy made him much more cautious in the diplomatic sphere. Nehru's strong sense of moral efficacy helped inspire his decision to approach the United Nations during the first Kashmir war and his ambitious campaign for nuclear disarmament, but his weaker sense of martial efficacy made him much less assertive in the military realm.

CASE SELECTION: WHY MAO AND NEHRU?

This book focuses on Mao and Nehru not only because their foreign policies are puzzling but also for reasons of methodology and research design. There are four points that I wish to highlight in this regard. First, because this study represents the first attempt to investigate the effect of efficacy beliefs on foreign policy, it is useful to focus on two relatively dominant leaders as a means of simplifying the analysis.[8] Most of the time, Mao and Nehru's policy preferences powerfully shaped the foreign policies that their states adopted, albeit with a few exceptions that I note in the chapters that follow. It thus should be relatively easy to assess whether their efficacy beliefs actually mattered in the development of policy. If we can demonstrate that efficacy beliefs shape the policies adopted by states with predominant leaders, then the next step is to ask whether and how they exert an influence when authority over foreign policy is more fragmented. I discuss how we might take this next step in the next chapter and in the conclusion.

Second, comparing Mao and Nehru allows for wide variation in the independent variable of interest in this study: national efficacy beliefs. As explained earlier, both Mao and Nehru played important parts in the stunning successes that brought them to power, and these experiences instilled strong, but very different, senses of national efficacy in them. Whereas Mao came to power with a great sense of martial efficacy and a weak sense of moral efficacy, Nehru was just the reverse. This wide variation, in turn, implies widely varying policy choices, as explained in the next chapter, which may be observed empirically.

Third, because Mao's China and Nehru's India were quite similar in a number of respects, this study compares choices that were made under broadly comparable conditions. Perhaps most importantly, both states were highly populous but decidedly poor when Mao and Nehru took office. They were thus quite similar in terms of latent material power. Although China led India in total population (547 million to 359 million) in 1950, China's per capita GDP was only 70 percent of the Indian figure at that time.[9] As a result, China and India's shares of global GDP at midcentury were roughly equal at 4.5 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively. In fact, India actually led China in nuclear technology in the early 1950s, constructing in 1956 the first nuclear reactor to go critical in Asia outside the Soviet Union. In short, it is difficult to argue that material resources by themselves can account for the very different foreign policies adopted by Mao's China and Nehru's India.

Mao and Nehru also shared similar predicaments in other respects. Both men were nationalist icons of new states, speaking for peoples who had suffered

[8] On predominant leaders as foreign policy decision-making units, see Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany, and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 83–131.

[9] Maddison, *World Economy*, vol. 1, 213, 263–64.

under foreign domination while nursing proud memories of former glory. As such, both leaders sought to modernize their countries and to revive some semblance of their earlier prominence. At the same time, both India and China endured problematic births as modern nation-states, creating vexing territorial conflicts with Pakistan and Taiwan, respectively, that endure to this day. Lastly, because both states were established in the wake of World War II, Mao and Nehru confronted the same international system – the same Cold War world – after taking power. In a variety of respects, Mao and Nehru faced comparable challenges on taking power.

Of course, there were many important differences in the contexts in which Mao and Nehru operated, and some of these were important influences on the foreign policies that they adopted. At the global level, India was a founding member of the United Nations, whereas mainland China was excluded from that body until the early 1970s. Regionally, East Asia became a Cold War battleground much earlier than South Asia, particularly with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Domestically, Mao presided over a communist state that was relatively insulated from popular pressure, whereas Nehru led a parliamentary system (albeit one that his party dominated) that held regular elections. In addition, the Chinese military under Mao was considerably larger than the Indian military under Nehru, a legacy of the armed struggle through which the Chinese communists came to power. One could also point to cultural dissimilarities between China and India as informing the very different foreign policies that they chose.

The presence of potentially confounding variables such as these is a common problem for studies that rely on a limited number of case studies. This book, however, offers a compelling means of addressing this problem and approximating a "controlled comparison."[10] Specifically, because my focus is individual leaders, I compare Mao and Nehru not only with each other but also with their own colleagues. The most important individuals in this respect are Liu Shaoqi and Vallabhbhai Patel, respectively. As Mao's heir apparent, Liu participated in important foreign policy decisions before he was purged in the Cultural Revolution. As Nehru's deputy prime minister, Patel was involved in some of the seminal decisions in Indian foreign policy before his death in 1950. Liu and Patel thus faced many of the same foreign policy challenges that Mao and Nehru did, but they did so with national efficacy beliefs that differed in crucial respects. Although Liu participated in the Chinese Revolution, he played only a limited military role in it, and he did not derive the same level of martial confidence from this experience as Mao did. Patel helped lead the Indian independence struggle, but he did not emerge from it with Nehru's powerful sense of moral efficacy. By comparing Mao with Liu, and Nehru with Patel, we can assess how varying efficacy beliefs influence the policy preferences

[10] On the elusive ideal of a controlled comparison in qualitative research, see Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 151–79.

of political leaders while controlling for all of the differences between Mao's China and Nehru's India.[11]

Lastly, the relative abundance of primary and secondary source material on Maoist China and Nehruvian India means that there is ample opportunity for careful process tracing in the case studies that follow. In this way, we can ascertain whether and how Mao and Nehru's national efficacy beliefs played a role in policymaking, testing not only predictions about foreign policy decisions but also about how those decisions were actually made.[12] The primary sources that I have drawn on most heavily for this purpose include *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao* (*The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Founding of the Nation*) and the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* series. In addition, this book draws on new documentary evidence gathered through my own archival research. In China, I visited both the Foreign Ministry Archive in Beijing and the Jiangsu Provincial Archive in Nanjing, both of which have made new historical documents available to foreign scholars in recent years.[13] In India, I visited both the National Archives and the Nehru Memorial Library in New Delhi, focusing on files transferred from the Ministry of External Affairs at the former and on Nehru's personal correspondence at the latter.[14] My research on India also benefited enormously from visits to the British National Archives and the British Library in London, which were extremely helpful for gaining insight into Indian foreign policy in the years immediately following independence, as well as to the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, which contained materials that shed light on Nehru's policies and U.S.-Indian relations in the early 1960s. My research has also benefited greatly from interviews and conversations with retired officials and academics in both China and India, a number of which are cited in the pages that follow.

[11] One might also compare Mao with Zhou Enlai, but this comparison would be less illuminating because Zhou's military experience in the revolution was extensive and because Zhou was much less willing than Liu to question Mao's judgment. As Roderick MacFarquhar has written, Mao "always felt able to count on [Zhou's] obedient acceptance of his directives, even when they went against the grain." See Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution: Contradictions among the People, 1956–57* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 9. Mao's personal doctor even called Zhou "absolutely, obsequiously obedient" to Mao. See Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York: Random House, 1994), 258.

[12] On the utility of process tracing for testing causal mechanisms, see George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 205–32.

[13] On the recent opening of Chinese archives, see Christian Ostermann, "Archival Thaw in China," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* no. 16 (Fall 2007/Winter 2008), 1–6. I am indebted to Wang Dong for calling my attention to documents now available at the Jiangsu Provincial Archive in particular. For a list of the relevant files, see Wang Dong, "The Quarrelling Brothers: New Chinese Archives and a Reappraisal of the Sino-Soviet Split, 1959–1962," Cold War International History Project, Working Paper #49 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005), 75–77.

[14] Note that the complete collection of Nehru's personal papers after 1947 remains generally unavailable to scholars at this time. Even so, the Nehru Memorial Library does make available many files of correspondence between Nehru and a wide range of officials, family members, and friends while he was prime minister.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Following this introduction, this book begins in Chapter 2 with a more extended presentation of the theoretical argument. As explained earlier, the goal here is to develop a common framework that may be used to compare Mao and Nehru with each other, as well as with their colleagues, and that may also be applied to additional cases in the future. The chapter begins by explaining the concept of national efficacy beliefs in more detail, drawing on previous work on efficacy beliefs in both psychology and political science. It then identifies the specific kinds of national efficacy of interest in this study, introducing the concepts of martial and moral efficacy in particular. Next, the chapter outlines the methodology that I employ to measure leaders' perceptions of martial and moral efficacy, building on the preceding discussion. The chapter then sets forth a set of hypotheses concerning how such perceptions should influence the making of foreign policy, focusing on specific types of military and diplomatic decisions. It concludes by describing how these hypotheses will be tested in subsequent chapters and noting important alternative explanations to be considered.

Chapters 3 through 5 (Part I) focus on Maoist China and proceed chronologically through history. The point here is not to narrate Mao's life and times; instead, each chapter represents a distinct analytical step in testing the theoretical argument outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 is devoted to measuring the independent variable, documenting the national efficacy beliefs that Mao and Liu developed as they rose to power through the Chinese Revolution. In a lengthy exploration of his revolutionary works, I find that Mao's martial confidence developed gradually over time, reaching its apex only in the latter half of the 1940s. Liu, in contrast, never developed a comparable level of martial confidence, which accords with his much more circumscribed role in the military side of the revolution. Neither Mao nor Liu evinced a strong sense of moral efficacy, and Mao in particular lacked much faith in his state's ability to elicit cooperation from its adversaries.

Chapters 4 and 5 then test the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2 by asking whether Mao and Liu's national efficacy beliefs shaped their approaches to foreign policy after they came to power. Chapter 4 focuses on military and diplomatic decisions made shortly after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, considering Mao's approach to the Korean War in particular. On the military side, the chapter assesses the role of Mao's martial efficacy beliefs in China's decision to intervene in the conflict in the fall of 1950. On the diplomatic side, it explores the impact of Mao's moral efficacy beliefs on China's wartime diplomacy and, in particular, its decision to reject cease-fire negotiations in early 1951. Chapter 5 then demonstrates that Mao's military boldness and diplomatic conservatism extended well beyond the Korean conflict. In the military realm, it focuses on Mao's decision to involve China's armed forces in the Vietnam War. The analysis here draws on evidence from Chinese archives that offers new insight into Mao's thinking

about this conflict while also calling attention to Liu's greater reluctance to deploy Chinese forces to Vietnam. The second half of the chapter, in turn, focuses on diplomatic decision making during the same period, examining Mao's conservative approach to nuclear arms control in the mid-1960s. The analysis here illuminates a particularly puzzling but understudied decision in PRC foreign policy: the decision to back away from one of China's central disarmament proposals after the outside world began to show some interest in it in 1965.

Chapters 6 through 8 (Part II) focus on Nehru's India and rely on a similar analytical division of labor. Chapter 6 documents the national efficacy beliefs that Nehru and Patel developed over the course of the Indian independence struggle. Starting with an in-depth exploration of Nehru's pre-independence writings, it finds that he took office with a strong sense that India could play an important role in shaping the emerging international order. Patel, in contrast, took less interest in diplomacy, and he never exhibited Nehru's degree of confidence in India's diplomatic capabilities. Neither leader possessed a particularly strong sense of martial efficacy upon taking power, as one would expect given their total lack of military experience at that point.

Chapters 7 and 8 then return to hypothesis testing and assess whether Nehru and Patel's different national efficacy beliefs influenced their approaches to foreign policy following Indian independence. Chapter 7 explores how Nehru and Patel handled the military and diplomatic challenges that accompanied the 1947–1948 war with Pakistan over Kashmir, drawing on archival evidence from the British Library and the U.K. National Archives. On the diplomatic side, it assesses the role of Nehru's moral efficacy beliefs in India's bold decision to approach the UN Security Council in late 1947. On the military side, it assesses the impact of Nehru's martial efficacy beliefs on India's cautious prosecution of the war as it unfolded in 1948. Chapter 8 then explores how well this pattern of diplomatic boldness and military restraint was sustained after the Kashmir conflict. In the diplomatic sphere, it considers how Nehru's moral efficacy beliefs inspired his ambitious approach to nuclear disarmament, relying on evidence from Indian archives and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. In the military realm, the chapter explores Nehru's efforts to secure India's interests in Tibet and on the Sino-Indian border. The discussion here analyzes both Nehru's long-standing military restraint vis-à-vis China and his decision to adopt a more forceful approach in September 1962.

Chapter 9 concludes the book by summarizing the findings and then exploring their broader implications. The latter discussion begins by explaining how the findings comport with a number of recent studies that have explored the psychology and ideas that informed Mao and Nehru's foreign policy choices. It then considers possible directions for future research and highlights several distinct questions in this regard. Lastly, the chapter considers the implications of this book's findings for several distinct bodies of literature in the study of international relations, as well as our understanding of foreign policy decision making more generally.

2

National Efficacy Beliefs and Foreign Policy

It is popular in the study of international relations to assume that individual leaders possess little agency in the face of international constraints. Like many assumptions, this one is an obvious oversimplification, but it can be useful and often seems justified. Nonetheless, assuming away the agency of leaders leaves us poorly positioned to understand why they sometimes *do* choose to go against the grain of the international system. Or, as Richard Samuels has succinctly put it, "[W]e know too much about constraints and not enough about choices."[1] To redress this gap, this chapter assumes that political elites do possess some freedom to choose in foreign policy and develops a theoretical framework to explain how they perceive and relate to systemic constraints.[2]

More specifically, the focus here is on two basic ways in which leaders try to improve their state's position despite unpropitious international circumstances. When I use words like "ambitious" and "bold," or "restrained" and "conservative," in the pages that follow, I am referring to whether or not leaders are engaging in these kinds of behaviors. First, leaders may defy the distribution of power by challenging stronger states or coalitions on the battlefield. Such behavior, although not the norm, is hardly a rarity. In fact, states have launched wars against significantly stronger adversaries at least 11 times since World War II alone.[3] When successful, these challenges can alter material balances or geographical advantages, sometimes only incrementally but sometimes more dramatically.

[1] Richard J. Samuels, *Machiavelli's Children: Leaders and Their Legacies in Italy and Japan* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), x.

[2] For a more extended critique of the tendency to assume away the agency of leaders, see Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollock, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (Spring 2001): 107–33.

[3] T. V. Paul identifies ten such cases between 1945 and 1993. See T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3–4. Since 1993, Pakistan's attack on India in the Kargil War of 1999 represents another case.

Second, leaders may adopt boldly cooperative positions in diplomacy. That is, they may engage in costly forms of cooperation when extant norms and institutions offer no assurance that other states will reciprocate. From an institutional perspective, states would seem most likely to cooperate in the context of a robust international regime.[4] Such regimes reassure their members that costly commitments will be reciprocated in several ways: by creating shared expectations about what constitutes cooperation, by sharing information about compliance, and by making noncompliance more costly.[5] When cooperation is encouraged by deeply internalized norms, uncooperative behavior can even become "unthinkable."[6] Nonetheless, some leaders engage in costly forms of cooperation even when such structures are absent. Once again, such swimming against the structural tide is not the norm, but it does occur, and it can be enormously important. The Cold War might have ended rather differently, for example, had it not been for the bold concessions that Mikhail Gorbachev made to induce U.S. cooperation in arms control.

When do leaders choose such ambitious approaches to the outside world? In the past, scholars have often sought to explain surprisingly daring foreign policies by highlighting the risk tolerance of individual leaders.[7] In this view, certain leaders are inherently more willing to accept high levels of risk; that is, they are more willing to undertake ventures that promise relatively great rewards if they succeed and relatively great losses if they fail. Nonetheless, the "risk-tolerant leader" approach is of limited utility in this study for two reasons. First, risk tolerance does not explain why a leader would believe that his state can overcome substantial military or diplomatic challenges. After all, even the most risk-acceptant individuals take risks not as ends in themselves but because they perceive some chance to make great gains by doing so. They are not heedless, but hopeful. Yet without further explanation it remains unclear why a leader would hope to succeed when faced with daunting structural impediments. Second, risk tolerance has insufficiently specific implications for foreign policy. Positing that a given leader has a high tolerance for risk cannot tell us whether that leader is more likely to take military risks, diplomatic risks,

[4] When states have convergent preferences, cooperation can sometimes be secured with "thinner" institutions. See Lisa L. Martin, "Interests, Power, and Multilateralism," *International Organization* 46, no. 4 (1992).

[5] For a classic rationalist formulation of regime theory, see Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[6] Scholars of security communities, for example, argue that "dependable expectations of peaceful change" within such groups mean that "there is the expectation that states will practice self-restraint." See Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, "A Framework for the Study of Security Communities," in *Security Communities*, ed. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55.

[7] For examples of this approach, see Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981), 122–25; Byman and Pollock, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men," 137; Paul A. Kowert and Margaret G. Hermann, "Who Takes Risks? Daring and Caution in Foreign Policy Making," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 5 (October 1997): 611–37.

or both. Because these questions are central to this study, the risk-tolerance explanation is of limited value here.

This chapter thus offers a new explanation for bold leadership in foreign affairs. It starts from a simple premise: to understand how leaders relate to the international system, one must know not only what kinds of challenges they face but also what kinds of challenges they believe their state can surmount. As explained in the introduction, I refer to beliefs about the ability of one's state to accomplish specific tasks in foreign policy as "national efficacy beliefs." When sufficiently strong in a given sphere, these beliefs inspire leaders to act assertively, even when the relevant international structures offer incentives for restraint. Weaker beliefs, in contrast, produce policies that are much more sensitive to systemic constraints. By focusing on beliefs that can vary across different areas of foreign policy, the approach taken here can explain not only which leaders are most likely to strive against systemic constraints but also what kinds of constraints they will try to overcome.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. The first section develops the concept of national efficacy beliefs by building on previous work in political science and psychology. The second section then introduces the specific kinds of national efficacy beliefs of interest in this study: what I call "martial" and "moral" efficacy beliefs. In the third section, I outline a strategy for assessing the martial and moral efficacy beliefs of individual leaders. The fourth section then considers how these beliefs shape foreign policy decisions and proposes specific hypotheses to be tested subsequently. The chapter concludes by explaining how the theory will be tested in the chapters that follow.

NATIONAL EFFICACY BELIEFS

Political scientists have been studying efficacy beliefs for more than half a century. In 1954, Campbell, Gurin, and Miller defined "political efficacy" as the "feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, that is, that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties."[8] The term political efficacy thus originally referred to how individual citizens perceived their ability to shape political outcomes. Subsequently, scholars distinguished between "internal" and "external" political efficacy.[9] The former refers to "beliefs about one's competence to understand, and participate effectively in, politics," whereas the latter denotes "beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands."[10] Internal

[8] Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin, and Warren Miller, *The Voter Decides* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson and Co., 1954), 187.

[9] George Balch, "Multiple Indicators in Survey Research: The Concept of 'Sense of Political Efficacy'," *Political Methodology* 1 (1974); R. E. Lane, *Political Life* (New York: Free Press, 1959).

[10] Richard G. Niemi, Stephen C. Craig, and Franco Mattei, "Measuring Internal Political Efficacy in the 1988 National Election Study," *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 4 (1991): 1407–8.

efficacy is usually associated with higher levels of psychological involvement and participation in politics, whereas external efficacy is more related to the issue of trust in government.[11] Today, the concept of political efficacy remains a rich area of research in social science.[12]

If people can hold beliefs about their ability to participate in politics, they can hold beliefs about other kinds of abilities as well. Nonetheless, the study of efficacy beliefs more broadly did not take off until psychologists began to focus on the issue in the late 1970s. The idea first emerged in the writings of Albert Bandura, who coined the term "self-efficacy beliefs." As he has defined them, these are "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments."[13] Self-efficacy beliefs should thus not be confused with general self-confidence or self-esteem. Instead, they are estimates of one's capability in specific behavioral arenas.[14] Naturally, the kinds of capabilities subject to these estimates can vary widely, ranging from mental talents to physical capabilities to capacities that require some combination of the two.[15]

Since the 1970s, Bandura's work has sparked a vast body of psychological research on efficacy beliefs and their role in shaping human behavior. In fact, according to the Social Sciences Citation Index, Bandura's first article on the subject had been cited more than 6,000 times by 2007, the thirtieth anniversary of its publication.[16] The concept remains an active area of research today and has been applied to a wide array of behavioral domains, from education to business to athletics.[17] In addition, although there are a few wrinkles, efficacy beliefs have been found to shape human behavior across a variety of cultural contexts, suggesting that the concept is not merely a product of American individualism.[18]

[11] Michael Morrell, "Survey and Experimental Evidence for a Reliable and Valid Measure of Internal Political Efficacy," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67 (2003): 589–602.

[12] According to the Social Sciences Citation Index, 9 of the top 10 years for articles related to the topic of "political efficacy" were published between 2000 and 2010.

[13] Albert Bandura, *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1997), 3.

[14] Some scholars have sought to develop global measures of self-efficacy that may be applied across many different kinds of tasks, but Bandura points out that these all-purpose measures have much less predictive power than more focused assessments of self-efficacy. See ibid., 47–50.

[15] It should be apparent from the preceding discussion that the construct of external efficacy employed in political science lies beyond what is meant by efficacy in psychology. Beliefs about the responsiveness of a particular political system are beliefs about one's environment rather than perceptions of personal competence in a certain domain. In contrast, the concept of internal efficacy is more consistent with the psychological literature on efficacy beliefs, though Bandura has criticized the concept as too broad. See ibid., 484.

[16] Albert Bandura, "Self-Efficacy – Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change," *Psychological Review* 84, no. 2 (1977): 191–215.

[17] For a general introduction to the concept of self-efficacy and to gain a sense of how widely it has been applied, see www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/self-efficacy.html.

[18] See Christopher Earley, "East Meets West Meets Mideast: Further Explorations of Collectivistic and Individualistic Work Groups," *Academy of Management Journal* 36, no. 2 (1993);

The literature on efficacy beliefs makes it clear that they are not randomly assigned to people; instead, they are rooted in an individual's prior experience. More specifically, psychological research has traced perceptions of efficacy to four different types of sources.[19] First, individuals can be persuaded by others that they possess the capacity to accomplish certain tasks. Second, people may acquire efficacy beliefs by observing individuals whom they consider their peers succeed at a given task. Third, individuals also monitor their own physiological and emotional states during the execution of a task and tend to interpret physical or mental strain as an indicator of low ability for the task in question. Lastly, and most importantly, individuals may derive a strong sense of efficacy from past experience of success at the task in question.[20] Such "enactive mastery experiences," as they are called, provide the most direct evidence of one's ability. As a result, the confidence they instill is greater, more durable, and more generalized than that generated by other means.

Of particular interest for this study, Bandura and others have found that people hold beliefs not only about their own abilities but also about the abilities of groups to which they belong. That is, individuals possess both self-efficacy beliefs and collective efficacy beliefs. Although self-efficacy and collective efficacy beliefs differ in terms of the type of agency imagined, research indicates that they have similar sources and influence behavior in similar ways.[21] In a sense, perceptions of collective efficacy are beliefs about the capabilities of a larger self, whether the collective in question is a two-person team or a national army. The capabilities of this "larger self" naturally include one's own personal capabilities, as well as those of the other individuals who belong to the group. In fact, when an individual plays an important role in a group, their sense of self-efficacy at the task in question and their sense of the group's collective efficacy are often highly correlated.[22] Even so, self-efficacy and collective efficacy are distinct concepts, and it is beliefs about the latter that are the central focus of this study.

More specifically, I am interested in beliefs that leaders hold about the capabilities of the states over which they preside. The idea that leaders possess beliefs about the capabilities of such a potentially large social group is fully consistent

Christopher Earley, "Self or Group? Cultural Effects of Training on Self-Efficacy and Performance," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1994); Robert Klassen, "Optimism and Realism: A Review of Self-Efficacy from a Cross-Cultural Perspective," *International Journal of Psychology* 39, no. 3 (2004).

[19] Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*, 79–115.

[20] Ibid., 80–86. Although Bandura was not writing about political leaders here, political scientists have made similar points. In his classic study of U.S. presidents, James David Barber stresses the importance of early formative experiences in shaping how "active" and "positive" individual leaders are. See James David Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 6–8.

[21] Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*, 478. See also Albert Bandura, "Exercise of Human Agency Through Collective Efficacy," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 9, no. 3 (2000): 75–78.

[22] Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*, 478.

with the literature on efficacy beliefs. Bandura has written that collective efficacy beliefs can be held about "families, communities, school systems, business organizations, social institutions, and even nations."[23] In addition, numerous scholars have documented strongly held beliefs about the abilities of national governments or national populations previously.[24] Perhaps most relevant for our purposes here, Jacques Hymans has argued that leaders hold beliefs about the "international efficacy" of their states, a term that refers to general feelings of superiority (or inferiority) vis-à-vis specific national outgroups.[25] Although this is an intriguing perspective, I take a different approach in this study. In particular, rather than imagining national competency as a single dimension, I propose that leaders can possess very different senses of national efficacy in different areas of foreign policy. Efficacy beliefs are, after all, task-specific. In addition, rather than focusing on perceptions of capability vis-à-vis a certain outgroup, I am interested in beliefs about national capabilities that transcend specific relationships. The next section outlines in more detail the specific kinds of beliefs in which I am interested.

NATIONAL EFFICACY BELIEFS IN FOREIGN POLICY: MARTIAL AND MORAL EFFICACY

What kinds of national efficacy beliefs will shape whether leaders challenge or accept international constraints? To answer this question, I break it into two parts. I focus first on the military side. The discussion here identifies the specific kinds of efficacy beliefs that should influence how leaders approach the prospect of conflict with more powerful opponents. I then consider the diplomatic side. In this case, the discussion describes the kinds of efficacy beliefs that should influence how leaders approach the problem of international cooperation, particularly when the relevant international norms and institutions are weak.

Martial Efficacy

What kinds of efficacy beliefs could inspire leaders to attack more powerful adversaries? "When the weak challenge the strong," James Morrow has

[23] Albert Bandura, "Social Cognitive Theory for Personal and Social Change by Enabling Media," in *Entertainment-Education and Social Change: History, Research, and Practice*, ed. Arvind Singhal, Michael J. Cody, Everett M. Rogers, and Miguel Sabido (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), 80. Bandura has also encouraged me, in my own conversations with him, to think in terms of efficacy beliefs at the national level.

[24] For examples, see Francis L. F. Lee, "Collective Efficacy, Support for Democratization, and Political Participation in Hong Kong," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 18, no. 3 (2005); Janusz Reykowski, "Belief Systems and Collective Action: Changes in Poland from the Psychological Perspective," *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 47, no. 1 (1998); Glen Whyte, "Recasting Janis's Groupthink Model: The Key Role of Collective Efficacy in Decision Fiascoes," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 73, nos. 2/3 (1998). See also Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*, 520–21.

[25] Jacques E. C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23–24.

written, "they must have unseen advantages to compensate for their weakness."[26] As it turns out, a number of intangible variables can compensate for material weakness on the battlefield, even when the disparity in power is great. The importance of these factors is suggested by the fact that popular indices of material power predict the outcomes of interstate wars in the twentieth century about as well as a coin flip.[27] Although some of these intangible factors (such as weather and disease) are beyond the control of military commanders, not all of them are. In particular, the martial prowess of one's own forces represents a collective capability at the disposal of the state, one that can be reliably exploited to overcome material shortcomings on the battlefield. In this study, I refer to the beliefs that leaders hold about the ability of their military to overcome material disadvantages as "martial efficacy beliefs."

The notion that states vary in terms of martial prowess is an old one. Sun Zi's *The Art of War* repeatedly extols those "skilled" at military conflict, and ancient Sparta was renowned for its dedication to martial excellence. Yet if this much is clear, martial prowess can still encompass a wide range of abilities. In this section I explore two key aspects of martial prowess to define the concept more precisely and to understand why leaders might attribute a high level of martial efficacy to their state. The first is a question of skill: Does the leader believe that his military can consistently generate advantages for itself in battle, even against stronger adversaries? The second is a question of will: Does the leader perceive his troops as sufficiently motivated to persevere against a stronger foe? The point here is not to suggest that other abilities are irrelevant to military outcomes. Instead, I seek to highlight two key, complementary aspects of martial prowess that together should shape how leaders imagine their states will fare in military conflicts with stronger opponents.

Let us first take the question of skill. In general, military commanders (at least those worth their salt) seek to prevail by pitting strength against weakness. In land warfare, for example, commanders typically engage in "differential concentration" – massing superior forces at a particular point in order to overwhelm the adversary at that location.[28] Local successes achieved in this way can then be replicated elsewhere, weakening the adversary gradually, or they may be exploited to break through the enemy's lines, leading to more dramatic successes. Weaker states – whether they are deficient in troops, weaponry, transport systems, or all of these – can still attempt such concentrations, but their task is obviously more difficult given their resource limitations. As Clausewitz noted, "[T]he forces available must be employed with *such skill* [emphasis

[26] James D. Morrow, "The Strategic Setting of Choices: Signaling, Commitment, and Negotiation in International Politics," in *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, ed. David Lake and Robert Powell (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 91.

[27] Stephen D. Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 21.

[28] Biddle stresses the role of differential concentration in contemporary warfare, but he notes that it has been central to military operations on land since at least the sixteenth century. See ibid., 41.

added] that even in the absence of absolute superiority, relative superiority is achieved at the decisive point."[29] Napoleon, too, noted that this endeavor required a certain "genius":

> The art of war consists, with an inferior army, of always having more forces than your enemy at the point where you attack, or at the point which is attacked; but this art cannot be learned from books, nor through practice; it is an intuitive feel for command which properly constitutes the genius for war.[30]

In short, the ability to pit strength against weakness at the right place and the right time is important for all militaries, but it is a particularly tough challenge for those facing a more powerful state or coalition. So why would a leader believe that his forces were particularly skilled in this regard?

I wish to highlight three possible answers to this question. First, a leader may believe that his military excels at integrating its different parts into a cohesive entity.[31] Integration increases combat power not through technology but through organization that facilitates concerted action by different military units. It thus allows militaries to generate greater force with fewer numbers, making the task of producing local superiority considerably easier. Nazi Germany's prowess at blitzkrieg offers one obvious example of how effective integration can dramatically boost combat performance in this way. Second, a leader may perceive his military as exceptionally flexible and responsive to new information.[32] Such responsiveness need not reflect superior communications and transport technology. Instead, it can also reflect organizational agility: the German Army in World War II excelled in this regard, even when the Allied forces were more numerous and enjoyed greater physical mobility.[33] By allowing militaries to exploit opportunities as they appear, superior flexibility facilitates the task of achieving local preponderance. Third, a leader may believe that his military is particularly proficient at concealing itself and misleading the adversary – in other words, denial and deception. As other scholars have noted, these practices have obvious appeal to weaker combatants.[34] Denial makes one

[29] Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 196.

[30] Napoleon I, *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1858–1869), vol. 3, no. 1976, 216.

[31] For a comparable conception of integration, see Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth H. Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," in *Military Effectiveness*, ed. Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1988), vol. 1, 13–14. For a somewhat broader conception, see Risa Brooks, "Introduction: The Impact of Culture, Society, Institutions, and International Forces on Military Effectiveness," in *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*, ed. Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 10–11.

[32] Again, for a similar conception of flexibility, see Millett, Murray, and Watman, "Effectiveness of Military Organizations," 15. For a broader conception, see Brooks, "Introduction," 11–12.

[33] Millett, Murray, and Watman, "Effectiveness of Military Organizations," 15.

[34] Rod Thornton, *Asymmetric Warfare: Threat and Response in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 66–68.

harder to attack, and deception can cause the opponent to make itself more vulnerable, creating opportunities for surprise attacks on weaker points. Guerrilla warfare, with its emphasis on concealment of one's own forces and taking the adversary by surprise, obviously relies heavily on such practices.[35] At the same time, based on their varying levels of familiarity with such practices, leaders could vary considerably in how sanguine they are about their force's capabilities in this regard.[36]

In short, there are a number of reasons why a leader might believe that his military excels at generating advantages for itself in battle. To possess a strong sense of martial prowess, it is not necessary for a leader to perceive his military as exceptional in all of these facets; the list that I have presented may not even exhaust all of the possibilities. Instead, the question is whether a leader believes that his military can consistently create local advantages by relying on some capability (or combination of capabilities) that it possesses.

If skill is vital in combat, will is no less important. I thus argue that only leaders who see their troops as highly motivated should qualify as possessing a high level of martial confidence. Although it is difficult to define this key attribute of martial excellence precisely, Martin Van Creveld describes it as "discipline and cohesion, morale and initiative, courage and toughness, the readiness to fight and the willingness, if necessary, to die."[37] To be sure, such volitional qualities may fluctuate from one battle to the next, but fighting spirit can also be viewed as an enduring attribute of particular military forces. The Athenian statesman Pericles, for example, famously celebrated the valor with which his fellow citizens regularly fought for their city, "gain(ing) easy victories over men defending their homes."[38] More recently, scholars have explored the sources of consistently superior troop performance in militaries ranging from the Nazi *Wehrmacht* to the British Indian Army.[39]

As with skill, the volitional aspect of martial prowess is important for all militaries, but it is particularly crucial for those that confront stronger adversaries. In particular, weaker states face the danger that their troops will be intimidated

[35] On the popularity of guerrilla warfare as a strategy for weaker combatants, see Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37.

[36] Jon Latimer suggests, for example, that the British had an "unrivalled mastery" in the art of deception by the end of World War II compared with other European powers. See Jon Latimer, *Deception in War* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 2001), 4.

[37] Martin L. Van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939–1945* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), 3.

[38] Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Walter Blanco (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 73.

[39] Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Morris Janowitz and Edward Shils, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht," in *Center and Periphery*, ed. Edward Shils (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); Van Creveld, *Fighting Power*.

by the adversary's superiority. For a leader to be confident in such a situation, he must believe that his soldiers will persevere despite the disadvantages that they face. There is more than one reason why leaders might be confident in this regard. Some scholars have stressed the importance of small-unit cohesion in generating superior combat performance.[40] Others cite the importance of broader beliefs among the rank and file about the worthiness of the national cause and the honor of dying for it.[41] It is also possible that high levels of commitment can be generated by adherence to a shared ideology, such as intense nationalism or communism.[42] In short, there are a range of considerations that might prompt a leader to see his troops as possessing consistently excellent fighting spirit.

To sum up the discussion thus far, I have argued that leaders hold beliefs about the martial efficacy of their armed forces and that these beliefs reflect the skill and will that they attribute to their military. As such, martial efficacy does not refer to how much "military power" a state has, defined as the quantity and technological sophistication of the material resources at its disposal. Instead, it refers to qualities that could enable the state to overcome shortcomings in such power.[43] Nor is martial efficacy as broad a concept as "military effectiveness," because this latter term often includes the ability of the military to procure high-tech weaponry.[44] Instead, martial efficacy refers to how well a military can wield the resources that it already has.

Moral Efficacy

What kinds of efficacy beliefs could inspire leaders to engage in costly forms of cooperation when the diplomatic environment offers no assurance of reciprocation? Assuming these leaders do not want their cooperation to be exploited, they must be confident about their government's ability to induce comparable restraint from others. That is, they must believe in their state's ability to create new patterns of cooperation – to build new institutions and norms – where none existed before. Just as "norm entrepreneurs" reshape conceptions of what is appropriate conduct, these leaders and their states must make new patterns

[40] Janowitz and Shils, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht."

[41] Bartov, *Hitler's Army*.

[42] On nationalism in particular, see Dan Reiter, "Nationalism and Military Effectiveness: Post-Meiji Japan," in Brooks and Stanley, *Creating Military Power*, 27–54.

[43] To be sure, if skill and will are imagined as enduring attributes that states can possess, they might simply be considered ingredients of "military power" broadly defined. Recent analyses of this problem have rejected this solution, however, because endlessly broadening the definition of "power" to include every factor that can influence victory or defeat ultimately leads to circular explanations of military outcomes. See Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 57–60. Moreover, this semantic question is not of interest in this study because my purpose is not to assess the impact of "power," however this concept is defined. Instead, the question here is why some leaders make strategic choices that disregard disadvantages in material power.

[44] Brooks, "Introduction," 1–26; Millett, Murray, and Watman, "Effectiveness of Military Organizations," 1–30.

of behavior seem legitimate and desirable while making existing forms appear odious and self-defeating.[45]

In this book, I refer to the ability of a state to elicit cooperation from other states as "moral efficacy" because this ability connotes a certain moral authority in the international system.[46] Like martial efficacy, moral efficacy is a new term, but the underlying concept builds on considerable previous work in international relations. E. H. Carr wrote of "power over opinion" alongside military and economic power, noting that the Bolsheviks believed they could halt an invading army simply by distributing subversive leaflets.[47] Ian Manners has described the European Union as a "normative power" with unique capacities for shaping international standards of behavior.[48] Joseph Nye has coined the term "soft power" to describe the ability of a state to shape the preferences of other states in accordance with its own.[49] In different ways, each of these scholars was writing about the varying abilities of states to shape the behavior of other actors through diplomacy.

What specific kinds of capabilities underpin a high degree of moral efficacy? Nye argues that soft power flows from the ability of a state to "attract" others. As he puts it, "soft power in behavioral terms is attractive power."[50] Nye further suggests that such attractiveness flows partly from the possession of values that accord with prevailing global norms.[51] This attractiveness then enhances the legitimacy of the state's leadership, as long as its actions do not contradict the established normative framework. The focus here, however, is on the ability of a state to establish new international norms – not the extent to which it benefits from existing ones. Moreover, Nye's preoccupation with attraction means that his conception of diplomatic influence neglects other capabilities that are more widely cited in the broader literature on international cooperation. I thus take a different approach to diplomatic influence in this study.

More specifically, building on previous studies that have explored how states try to elicit cooperation through diplomacy, I argue that moral efficacy reflects

[45] The concept of the "moral entrepreneur" in international relations was initially articulated in Ethan A. Nadelman, "Global Prohibition Regimes: The Evolution of Norms in International Society," *International Organization* 44, no. 4 (1990): 482. For an earlier and more general discussion of moral entrepreneurs, see Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 147–63.

[46] On moral authority as a national resource in international politics, see Rodney Bruce Hall, "Moral Authority as a Power Resource," *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997).

[47] Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper, 1964), 132–45.

[48] Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002).

[49] Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5.

[50] Ibid., 6.

[51] Ibid., 31–32.

two different kinds of capabilities. The first is the ability to put one's own initiatives on the diplomatic agenda. Agenda-setting, or "policy initiation" as it is sometimes called, is a crucial capability for those who seek to craft new forms of international cooperation.[52] This holds true for national leaders, transnational activists, and supranational executives alike. After all, without the ability to attract the attention of powerful actors, one's proposals will likely be ignored. This agenda-setting ability, in turn, would seem to rest on a more fundamental sense of prominence or status in international society. As scholars of political efficacy have noted, high levels of self-ascribed social status strongly predict confidence in one's ability to elicit attention from public authorities.[53] Similarly, a strong sense of status in the international system should increase confidence in one's ability to command the attention of other states. Although this sense of status might simply reflect the perception that one represents a powerful state, it could also reflect the possession of a leading position in international institutions or historical or cultural considerations that have little to do with material power.

Once one's proposal is on the agenda, the second critical task is to convince other states to accept it. In a word, the problem is one of persuasion.[54] As other scholars have noted, when leaders or diplomats try to persuade others to adopt some kind of restraint, they typically "frame" the targeted behavior in a way that devalues it.[55] They may vilify a new practice or technology by linking it to existing taboos, as critics of humanitarian intervention do when they label it "neo-imperialism."[56] Alternatively, they may seek to delegitimize well-established behavior by portraying it as "uncivilized" or otherwise out of step with contemporary norms, as the critics of slavery and colonialism succeeded in doing. Either way, the critics must succeed in persuading other states that the targeted behavior is somehow illegitimate or self-defeating.

[52] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), 25. See also Neta Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 36, 112; Andrew Moravcsik, "A New Statecraft? Supranational Entrepreneurs and International Cooperation," *International Organization* 53, no. 2 (1999): 272.

[53] Peter J. Steinberger, "Social Context and Political Efficacy," *Sociology and Social Research* 65, no. 2 (1981).

[54] The importance of persuasion in this respect is widely recognized. See Crawford, *Argument and Change*, 100; Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998); Alastair Iain Johnston, "Treating International Institutions as Social Environments," *International Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (2001).

[55] Rodger A. Payne, "Persuasion, Frames and Norm Construction," *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (2001): 38–39, 43–47. See also Crawford, *Argument and Change*, 113.

[56] On this particular approach to persuasion, see Darren Hawkins, "Explaining Costly International Institutions: Persuasion and Enforceable Human Rights Norms," *International Studies Quarterly* 48 (2004): 784–87 in particular.

Therefore, to possess a strong sense of moral efficacy, leaders must believe deeply in their powers of persuasion. Although they need not win over the entire international system, these leaders must be able to influence the preferences of political elites or publics in specific target states. There are two aspects to this particular persuasion problem. First, the targets are states with interests that differ from one's own, and they may even be one's adversaries. Although this makes matters more difficult, individuals do sometimes try to change the opinions of their enemies, albeit not as frequently as they try to persuade their friends.[57] In international politics, diplomats attempt to alter the opinions of individuals from rival states on a regular basis. Even in wartime, states actively make use of propaganda and other means to shape the opinions of individuals on the opposing side in hopes of terminating the conflict on more favorable terms. Second, because the target audience is invariably foreign, the persuader must believe in his state's ability to succeed at *transnational* persuasion. As recent explorations of the subject have pointed out, new international norms are not simply accepted at face value by local audiences but are contested, reconstructed, and made to fit with local values.[58] When the fit with local norms is poor, they may be resisted and rejected. Moral efficacy thus requires the ability to speak across national and cultural borders.

In sum, moral efficacy is not the ability to conduct oneself morally but the ability to elicit cooperation from other states. This capability, in turn, rests on two more specific components. First, it requires the ability to put diplomatic proposals on the international agenda. Second, once the proposal has attracted attention, one must be able to persuade targeted foreign audiences of its desirability.

Although the terms martial efficacy and moral efficacy are new, the underlying concepts developed in the preceding discussion reflect well-established modes of thinking about international relations. Martial efficacy is rooted in the idea of martial prowess, which dates to the ancient world. The concept of moral efficacy builds on previous constructs that have sought to highlight the varying diplomatic capabilities of states, such as "power over opinion" and "soft power." The point of this discussion is thus not to invent completely new concepts but to make clear how existing concepts can be thought of as specific kinds of national efficacy, albeit with some modifications. At the same time, this study differs from past scholarship that has examined military and diplomatic proficiency in that it focuses on leadership beliefs. Because I seek to explain how leaders make foreign policy decisions, I am not concerned with how much martial or moral efficacy a given state possesses but with how much its leaders *believe* it possesses. The next section sets forth my strategy for measuring these beliefs.

[57] Brendan Gail Rule, Gay L. Bisanz, and Melinda Kohn, "Anatomy of the Persuasion Schema: Targets, Goals, and Strategies," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 48, no. 5 (1985).

[58] Amitav Acharya, "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism," *International Organization* 58, no. 2 (2004).

MEASURING NATIONAL EFFICACY BELIEFS

Measuring the national efficacy beliefs of political leaders is no simple challenge. In that respect, the explanatory variable of interest in this study is not so different from many other variables employed in international relations.[59] The first step, of course, is to determine which leaders within a given political system are of interest. As noted in the introduction, the political systems to be explored in this study featured predominant leaders whose authority was particularly strong in the realm of foreign policy. The proper focus in this case is thus those individual leaders (as well as the specific colleagues with whom I compare them). Yet power is not always so concentrated, and sometimes the appropriate unit of analysis is not a single leader but a small group of elite policymakers (such as the members of a particular politburo or cabinet) or a set of multiple autonomous actors (such as leaders of the executive and legislative branches).[60] In these cases, one would naturally need to assess the views of a wider group of individuals, while also considering the nuances of the particular decision-making process involved, in order to make useful predictions about foreign policy. I return to this issue in the conclusion.

Having identified the specific leaders that are of interest, the next step is to assess their individual senses of national efficacy. For purposes of this study, I sort martial and moral efficacy beliefs into two broad categories: "strong" and "weak." I adopt this simple two-tiered approach because I am interested in one key question here: Is a leader's sense of martial or moral efficacy strong enough to inspire action on their part even when the international environment is unfavorable? In this context, a more complicated coding system would not be more useful, as its implications for behavior would be unclear. This basic distinction between strong and weak beliefs, in turn, implies that leaders can be sorted into four different categories, as indicated in Figure 2.1.

There remains the question of how we determine whether a leader's beliefs in a given domain are strong or weak. Traditionally, psychologists have assessed efficacy beliefs by using questionnaires that ask subjects to rate their ability, or the ability of their group, with respect to various tasks. Because this technique is obviously not feasible here, I employ a different approach. Specifically, I assess leaders' beliefs on the basis of their collected speeches and

[59] For an overview of the many challenges inherent in attempting to measure "national power," for example, see David Baldwin, "Power and International Relations," in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse-Kappen, and Beth Simmons (London: Sage, 2002), 177–91. On the complexities of measuring "national preferences," see Jeffry Frieden, "Actors and Preferences in International Relations," in *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, ed. David Lake and Robert Powell (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), especially 53–66.

[60] On the distinction between predominant leaders, small groups, and multiple autonomous decision makers, see Margaret Hermann and Charles Hermann, "Who Makes Foreign Policy Decisions and How – An Empirical Inquiry," *International Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1989): 365–69.

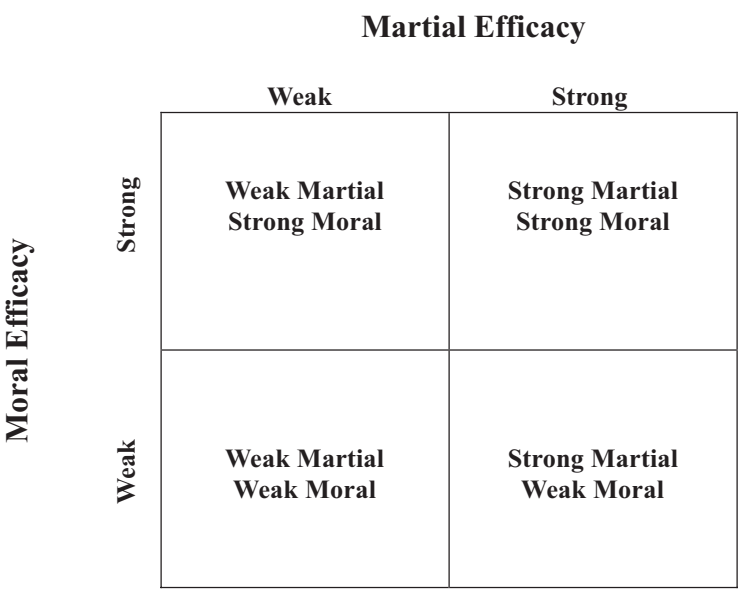


FIGURE 2.1. A Typology of National Efficacy Beliefs

writings. In the past, scholars have sought to divine leadership beliefs from such materials using computer-aided content analysis techniques that provide quantitative summaries of textual data.[61] For at least two reasons, however, such an approach would be inappropriate here. First, as Gary King and others have noted, individual words and set phrases do not adequately represent complex concepts like "efficacy."[62] In this context, it is not surprising that one recent study that looked for correlations between efficacy beliefs and specific words and phrases in written materials did not find any.[63] Second, even if efficacy beliefs could be conveyed through relatively simple language, it is entirely possible that leaders would express great confidence about their armed forces or their diplomatic influence simply for instrumental reasons rather than because they genuinely possess strong martial or moral efficacy beliefs. Leaders may even have incentives to exaggerate their confidence at times, either

[61] For example, see Mark Schafer and Steven G. Walker, "Operational Code Analysis at a Distance: The Verbs in Context System of Content Analysis," in *Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics: Methods and Applications of Operational Code Analysis*, ed. Mark Schafer and Steven G. Walker (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 25–51.

[62] Gary King, Christopher J. L. Murray, Joshua A. Salomon, and Ajay Tandon, "Enhancing the Validity and Cross-Cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (2003): 191–92.

[63] Justine Cassell, David Huffaker, Dona Tversky, and Kim Ferriman, "The Language of Online Leadership: Gender and Youth Engagement on the Internet," *Developmental Psychology* 42, no. 3 (2006). This particular point was conveyed to me by Dona Tversky.

to appeal to nationalistic domestic constituencies or to improve their international bargaining position.[64] It is thus imperative that we employ a more nuanced methodology that will be more likely to produce valid measurements.

For these reasons, I take a qualitative approach to measurement that relies on in-depth exploration of individual leaders' collected works. In doing so, I am building on a long-standing tradition of profiling individual leaders on the part of political psychologists.[65] At the same time, the goal here is more modest than that adopted in such psychological profiles because I am interested in a specific kind of belief, not the individual's entire personality or worldview. Of course, inferring efficacy beliefs from textual materials remains a considerable challenge: first, we must decide where to look for efficacy beliefs within a given leader's collected works, and then we must determine how to identify martial and moral efficacy beliefs using the texts that we choose to scrutinize. The remainder of this discussion outlines my strategy for surmounting these hurdles.

To begin, where does it make sense to look for efficacy beliefs? It might seem reasonable to focus just on documents from the policymaking process when the leader in question was in power. There are serious problems with this approach, however. Such documents might express a strong sense of national ability merely to justify decisions that were made (or that were about to be made) without any real confidence in the state's ability to execute them. Alternatively, these documents might merely reflect shifting calculations of ability based on current conditions rather than more enduring efficacy beliefs. In this study, I guard against these dangers by focusing first on speeches and writings that predate the leader's time in power. In this way, we can ask whether a given leader holds enduring beliefs about the abilities of his state, as opposed to ephemeral estimates that merely reflect current conditions. When evidence permits, it may even be possible to document the emergence of particular national efficacy beliefs over time as the individual gains experience in armed conflict or diplomacy. After focusing on earlier periods, we can then turn to more contemporary evidence to determine whether any beliefs that have been documented actually endured after the leader in question came to power.

Considering documents that predate a leader's time in power naturally increases the amount of material that must be considered. In some cases, the sheer volume of speeches and writings may make it necessary to focus on a subset of the individual's collected works. Naturally, this must be done with care so as to avoid selection bias. In general, I seek to avoid such bias in this study by employing three different criteria. First, I examine a broad sample of documents so as to gauge the individual's thinking at different points in time and in different contexts. Second, I make sure to include those documents that

[64] On the latter possibility in particular, see James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 395–401.

[65] For an overview and an extension of this tradition, see Jerrold M. Post, ed., *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

other scholars have highlighted as particularly noteworthy or representative of the individual's thinking on military and diplomatic issues. Third, I weigh public pronouncements in the light of private or confidential writings that were produced at the same time. As subsequent chapters will make clear, these private writings often reveal whether public statements were sincere or merely instrumental.

Once we know where to look, the next question is how to evaluate the texts themselves. In this study, I assess the strength of martial and moral efficacy beliefs through a series of four analytical questions. First, where does the leader focus his attention? It would seem only natural for a leader with strong martial efficacy beliefs to devote considerable attention to military matters in his speeches and writings. More specifically, we should expect that such leaders will not simply invoke the topic of "war" from time to time but also engage with more substantive questions of armed conflict, including military strategy and tactics. Similarly, we should expect that leaders with strong moral efficacy beliefs will have produced a substantial body of writing on diplomatic matters and international politics. Again, such texts should not merely invoke the topic of diplomacy but also delve into the nuances of particular issues, such as the contents of particular treaties or the workings of particular international organizations. Of course, the fact that a leader has paid attention to a certain area of foreign policy need not imply that they possess great confidence about national capabilities in that realm. Instead, such attention should be seen as a necessary but not sufficient indicator of strong efficacy beliefs.

Second, how much confidence does the leader express about executing the military or diplomatic task in question? Leaders with strong senses of martial efficacy should express confidence about their military's ability to outfight opponents that are larger in size, more technologically advanced, or both. Leaders with strong senses of moral efficacy, in turn, should tout their government's ability to induce cooperation or restraint from national outgroups. The question here is not whether we can identify a single expression of confidence in a given leader's writings but whether or not they have made a series of confident statements over time that could signify a strongly held belief. In addition, such confidence should be evident not only in public but also in more private settings, where leaders are more likely to reveal sincerely held beliefs. To be sure, leaders may not express confidence in terms that are as abstract as those that I use here. They may simply express belief in their military's ability to defeat one particular more powerful opponent or in their government's ability to elicit cooperation from one particular state. The question of whether such confidence can be generalized to other situations is the focus of the next analytical step.

Third, when leaders express confidence about what their states can accomplish militarily or diplomatically, it is important to ask *why* they are confident. Does their confidence rest primarily on situational considerations? Or does it reflect a belief that their state possesses the specific competencies that underpin

martial or moral efficacy – attributes that may be relied on in other contexts? Only in the latter case should the leader be understood to possess a strong sense of national efficacy, as that term is defined in this study. Or, to put it in more social scientific terms, only in the latter case does the measurement entail a high degree of "content validity," understood as "the degree to which an indicator represents the universe of content entailed in the systematized concept being measured."[66] On the military side, we should ask whether a given leader believes that his forces possess the skill and the will needed to defeat stronger adversaries. Because these are complementary capabilities, only leaders who are confident in both of these respects should be seen as possessing a strong sense of martial efficacy; confidence in only one respect still leaves room for doubt. On the diplomatic side, we should ask whether leaders express confidence in their state's ability to set the diplomatic agenda and in its ability to persuade its interlocutors. Once again, because these are complementary capabilities, only leaders who are confident in both of these respects should be seen as possessing a strong sense of moral efficacy.

It is possible, of course, that leaders will possess a strong sense of national efficacy that is limited to specific military or diplomatic settings. A second component of this third analytical step is thus to ask how far a given leader's confidence extends. On the military side, do they see their military as equally proficient across different forms of combat? Or is their sense of martial prowess limited to specific kinds of warfare? A leader might express great confidence about his military's skill in naval combat, for example, but not land warfare. On the diplomatic side, is the leader's confidence limited to specific institutions, regions, or issue areas? A leader might believe that his state has great capacity for shaping the agenda of regional institutions, for instance, while being less confident at the global level. These nuances are important to discern whenever possible because they have obvious implications for the kind of boldness we should expect from a given leader.

Lastly, it is important to ask how plausible a leader's beliefs are in light of what we know about efficacy beliefs more generally. Or, to put it in more social scientific terms again, it is important to assess the "construct validity" of our measurements (i.e., the degree to which they are "associated with other indicators in a way that conforms to theoretical expectations about their interrelationship").[67] In this study, I ask whether a given leader's expressed beliefs are plausible in light of what is known about how such beliefs are acquired. As noted earlier in this chapter, psychological research indicates that efficacy beliefs are rooted in specific kinds of experiences and, in particular, prior experience of success at the task in question. This is not only true of self-efficacy beliefs; scholars have also demonstrated the importance of past

[66] Robert Adcock and David Collier, "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research," *American Political Science Review* 95, no. 3 (2001): 537.

[67] Ibid. See also Edward G. Carmines and Richard A. Zeller, *Reliability and Validity Assessment* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1979), 22–27.

success for the development of collective efficacy beliefs.[68] This suggests that leaders who evince strong senses of martial and moral efficacy will have had prior experience of success in the military and diplomatic spheres, respectively. In addition, it suggests that the nuances of leaders' martial and moral efficacy beliefs will correlate with the particular kinds of successes that they have experienced. For example, we should expect that leaders who possess a strong sense of martial efficacy, but one that is centered on naval warfare in particular, will have enjoyed past military successes at sea rather than on land. Similarly, we can expect that leaders who have a strong sense of moral efficacy, but only within regional institutions, will have had past diplomatic successes at the regional rather than global level. In addition, it may be the case that positive personal experience is supplemented by other sources of efficacy beliefs, such as strong encouragement from others. If we can document these kinds of connections between belief and past experience, we can be more confident that we are actually measuring sincerely held efficacy beliefs as opposed to instrumental expressions of confidence.

Before we proceed, it is important to note that strong efficacy beliefs do not flow automatically from past successes. Success may be attributed to one's own inherent ability or to more circumstantial factors, such as outside assistance, extreme effort, or simple luck.[69] Only when leaders attribute past successes to their state's inherent abilities will they develop a strong sense of national efficacy. In addition, because leaders may err in making these attributional judgments, it is entirely possible that they will underestimate or overestimate their state's actual level of ability. For example, a leader may conclude that past military successes were the result of his military leadership and the toughness of his troops when in reality the shortcomings of the other side were more important. If so, the leader in question is likely to overestimate his own state's level of martial efficacy.

To sum up this discussion as a whole, measuring national efficacy beliefs is no simple task and must be done carefully. First, scholars must identify the particular leader or leaders of interest within a given political system. As explained earlier, that is a relatively straightforward task in this study. Next, scholars must decide where to look for expressions of national efficacy in those leaders' collected works, focusing on documents that would seem likely to reflect genuinely held convictions. In this study, I make a point of evaluating the writings of leaders before they came to power, and I also compare

[68] Albert Bandura, "Perceived Self-Efficacy in Cognitive Development and Functioning," *Educational Psychologist* 28, no. 2 (1993): 140–43; Cynthia Lee and Jiing-Lih Farh, "Joint Effects of Group Efficacy and Gender Diversity on Group Cohesion and Performance," *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 53, no. 1 (2004); Gregory Prussia and Angelo Kinicki, "A Motivational Investigation of Group Effectiveness Using Social-Cognitive Theory," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 81, no. 2 (1996).

[69] Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*, 81, 123. See also Bernard Weiner, "An Attributional Theory of Achievement-Motivation and Emotion," *Psychological Review* 92, no. 4 (October 1985).

their public statements with more private and confidential documents. Lastly, scholars should ask a series of analytical questions to assess the strength of a leader's sense of national efficacy in a given area. These questions include:

1. Has the leader devoted significant attention to this area of foreign policy?
2. Has the leader expressed confidence about executing the military or diplomatic task in question?
3. Does such confidence reflect a conviction that his state possesses the specific competencies needed to succeed at the task in question? If so, how widely does this perceived competence extend?
4. Are the leader's beliefs plausible in light of what is known about how efficacy beliefs are acquired?

For a leader to qualify as possessing a strong sense of national efficacy in a given domain, the answer to each of these four basic questions should be affirmative. Using this discussion as a foundation, I consider in the next section how martial and moral efficacy beliefs shape foreign policy decisions.

HOW NATIONAL EFFICACY BELIEFS SHAPE FOREIGN POLICY

How will martial and moral efficacy beliefs influence the way in which leaders make foreign policy? One might take the view that such beliefs – as opposed to the state's actual level of national efficacy – would only have a passing impact on foreign policy. In this view, leaders' perceptions of national efficacy will quickly converge with reality because leaders will adjust their beliefs in response to feedback from the environment. Leaders who refuse to update their beliefs, in turn, will be replaced by individuals with more realistic views. Nonetheless, these are both questionable assertions. On the first point, there is good evidence that strong efficacy beliefs (including collective efficacy beliefs) are remarkably durable in the face of negative feedback.[70] Rather than losing faith in their abilities, individuals with strong efficacy beliefs tend to attribute unsatisfactory outcomes to insufficient effort or situation-specific factors. As a result, we should not assume that leaders with excessively strong efficacy beliefs will quickly and completely revise their beliefs in response to

[70] On the resilience of self-efficacy beliefs, see Albert Bandura and Dale Schunk, "Cultivating Competence, Self-Efficacy, and Intrinsic Interest through Proximal Motivation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 41 (1981); Beth Jacobs, Steven Prentice-Dunn, and Ronald W. Rogers, "Understanding Persistence: An Interface of Control Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 5, no. 4 (1984). On the resilience of collective efficacy beliefs, see Dawn R. DeTienne, Dean A. Shepherd, and Julio O. De Castro, "The Fallacy of 'Only the Strong Survive': The Effects of Extrinsic Motivation on the Persistence Decisions for Under-performing Firms," *Journal of Business Venturing* 23, no. 5 (2008); I. A. Greenlees, J. K. Graydon, and I. W. Maynard, "The Impact of Collective Efficacy Beliefs on Effort and Persistence in a Group Task," *Journal of Sports Sciences* 17 (1999); L. Hodges and A. V. Carron, "Collective Efficacy and Group Performance," *International Journal of Sport Psychology* 23 (1992).

setbacks. On the second point, it is not at all clear that leaders who misperceive their state's capabilities in foreign policy are more likely to be removed from office. Recent research on leadership tenure, for example, indicates that leaders who suffer military defeat – leaders who presumably overestimated what their armed forces could accomplish – are no more likely to be removed from office than those who are not involved in a war, at least under most conditions.[71] It is thus essential to take leaders' perceptions of national efficacy seriously because there is no guarantee that such perceptions will converge quickly with reality.

To understand how perceptions of martial and moral efficacy exert an effect on foreign policy decisions, it is helpful to delve a bit more deeply into the psychological literature on efficacy beliefs. In the work most relevant to this study, scholars have found that self-efficacy beliefs powerfully shape how people respond to environments that pose inherently difficult challenges.[72] Not surprisingly, people avoid challenges that they believe exceed their capabilities, but they readily undertake challenges that they think they can surmount. This effect has been demonstrated across a wide range of contexts: self-efficacy beliefs can predict which individuals will select more difficult careers, engage in more dangerous sports, and make chancier business decisions.[73] In the lexicon of this study, efficacy beliefs shape how "bold" people are when confronting an environment that is inherently challenging.

Efficacy beliefs do not inspire bold action that is heedless of the consequences. Instead, these beliefs shape the outcomes that people anticipate when they have to decide whether or not to undertake a given task. More precisely, as long as the outcome of undertaking the task depends at least partly on how well one performs it, efficacy beliefs will influence the outcomes that people anticipate.[74] Once again, this effect has been documented across a wide range of human behavior. As Bandura puts it, "[I]n most social, intellectual, and physical pursuits, those who judge themselves highly efficacious will expect favorable outcomes, whereas those who expect poor performances of themselves will conjure up negative outcomes."[75] In this light, it is easy to see why efficacy beliefs powerfully affect how people approach difficult challenges: only those with a strong sense of efficacy expect positive results from taking on the challenge.

[71] Hein Goemans and Giacomo Chiozza, "International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War Still Ex Post Inefficient?" *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 3 (2004): 615.

[72] Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*, 160–61.

[73] On career choices, see Hao Zhao, Scott E. Siebert, and Gerald E. Hills, "The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy in the Development of Entrepreneurial Intentions," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 90, no. 6 (2005). On participation in more dangerous sports, see Elissa Slanger and Kjell Erik Rudestam, "Motivation and Disinhibition in High Risk Sports: Sensation Seeking and Self-Efficacy," *Journal of Research in Personality* 31, no. 3 (1997). On business decisions, see Norris Krueger, Jr. and Peter R. Dickson, "How Believing in Ourselves Increases Risk-Taking: Perceived Self-Efficacy and Opportunity Recognition," *Decision Sciences* 25 (1994).

[74] Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*, 21–24, 126.

[75] Ibid., 24.

If self-efficacy beliefs shape how boldly individuals live their own lives, will national efficacy beliefs influence how boldly leaders act in foreign policy? That is the question this book seeks to answer. Presumably, leaders who are confident about their state's abilities in a given sphere of foreign policy will be more likely to expect positive outcomes when their state takes on a difficult challenge in that sphere. It seems quite plausible, then, that national efficacy beliefs will influence how leaders respond to challenging environments in foreign policy. Previous research focusing on domestic politics is suggestive on this point as well. This research has shown how perceptions of collective efficacy on the part of individual citizens can inspire them to challenge the state through political protest, even in undemocratic contexts.[76] If perceptions of collective efficacy can move unarmed citizens to confront autocratic regimes, it seems all the more plausible that they will shape how leaders confront challenges in foreign policy.

To generate more specific hypotheses, it is helpful to recall the question posed at the outset of this chapter: Why do leaders sometimes adopt assertive military and diplomatic policies when international structures offer reasons for restraint? The following discussion first considers the military side of this question and then turns to the diplomatic side.

Martial Efficacy Beliefs and the Use of Force

Based on the foregoing discussion, martial efficacy beliefs should shape how leaders approach military confrontations with stronger opponents. Confident in the skill and will of their military, leaders with strong senses of martial efficacy should anticipate more positive outcomes in the event that such confrontations lead to armed conflict. That is, they should anticipate more positive best-case scenarios and less objectionable worst-case scenarios. These leaders should thus prove more willing to initiate or escalate the use of force in such confrontations. In contrast, leaders with weaker senses of martial efficacy should be less confident in confrontations with more powerful adversaries. Without a strong sense of their own state's martial prowess, there is less reason for them to see opportunities for gain in such situations and more reason for them to focus on the dangers that such conflicts would pose. Accordingly, although these leaders might well support the use of force against weaker rivals, they should prove much less willing to attack stronger opponents.

A few definitions are in order here. By "use of force" I am not referring to small-scale border clashes and the like but larger operations (involving at least one battalion or its naval equivalent) approved by the political leadership. To the extent that the leader's sense of martial efficacy is focused on a particular form of warfare, these operations should fall within that particular domain. By "stronger opponents" I mean opposing states or coalitions that possess greater overall military and economic resources than one's own state. I focus on this kind of overall disparity in power because I am interested in conflicts that are

[76] Lee, "Collective Efficacy, Support for Democratization, and Political Participation in Hong Kong."

puzzling from a broad structural perspective. Naturally, a weaker state may still enjoy local superiority at the site of conflict, and its leaders may decide to take military action because of such considerations. I return to this possibility in the discussion of alternative explanations at the end of this chapter.

In addition, I should also say a word about the scope of the argument being made here. I am not suggesting that strong martial efficacy beliefs will inspire leaders to initiate conflict at every opportunity, regardless of context. Instead, such beliefs should be most relevant when there is sufficient conflict of interest between states for military action to be considered as a foreign policy option. For that reason, in this study I focus on the use of force in crisis situations. By definition, crises are situations in which states perceive some kind of threat to their "basic values" and the use of force is considered an option for eliminating that threat.[77] At the same time, the use of force is not a foregone conclusion in crises, and there is ample room for variation in the way that leaders respond.

Of course, it takes two states to fight, and this raises a question: Will the stronger opponent simply back down when facing a leader with great martial confidence? If so, these confident leaders may not need to fight to secure their goals. Nonetheless, this possibility seems quite unlikely because perceptions of martial efficacy are subjective estimates based on private information about one's own military. Leaders will not necessarily share what they truly believe about their own state's martial prowess with other governments. Even if a leader *does* share a sincere assessment with the outside world, there is no guarantee that other states will share this view, and such skepticism may in fact be justified. In fact, even a leader's own colleagues may not agree with his assessment of the state's martial prowess, as this study will demonstrate. As a result, because opposing states are likely to assess the situation quite differently, they are unlikely to offer sufficient concessions to appease leaders with great martial confidence.[78]

To sum up this discussion, I propose the following hypotheses:

- First, martial efficacy beliefs should shape leaders' policy preferences in crises with stronger states or coalitions. Leaders with strong martial efficacy

[77] The International Crisis Behavior Project defines a "foreign policy crisis" as a situation in which the highest-level decision makers of the state perceive "*a threat to basic values*, along with the awareness of *finite time for response* to the external value threat, and a *high probability of involvement in military hostilities*" [emphasis in the original]. See Michael Brecher, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Sheila Moser, *Crises in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1988), vol. 1, 3.

[78] James Fearon has suggested that leaders with encouraging private information about their own military will not necessarily prove more belligerent if they are perfectly rational. In particular, he argues that such leaders should recognize that their estimates of military outcomes are suspect because they do not know what private information the other side has. See Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," 393. Yet would it be rational for a leader who believes that his state is highly proficient at warfare to assume that his opponent is equally proficient, or that it has some other, equally encouraging secret? Such an assumption would seem to be erring on the side of pessimism rather than strictly rational.

beliefs should be more willing to initiate or escalate the use of force in such situations than those without such confidence.
- Second, martial efficacy beliefs should shape the outcomes that leaders anticipate as they consider their options in such crises. Leaders with strong martial efficacy beliefs should expect more positive outcomes compared with leaders who lack such confidence.

Moral Efficacy Beliefs and Costly Cooperation

Moral efficacy beliefs should influence how leaders approach the problem of international cooperation when the diplomatic environment is unfavorable. More specifically, they should inform how willing leaders are to make costly gestures to elicit cooperation from others when international norms and institutions offer no assurance that such gestures will be reciprocated. Presumably, leaders with strong senses of moral efficacy will be more willing to make such gestures than leaders with less confidence in this regard. Once again, moral efficacy beliefs should exert this effect by influencing the kinds of outcomes that leaders anticipate. Leaders with strong moral efficacy beliefs should see such gestures as helping to induce equal or greater restraint on the part of other states. At the same time, they may play down the danger that their own cooperation will be exploited. In other words, strong perceptions of moral efficacy should impel leaders to give more in diplomacy because they expect to get more in return. Leaders with weaker moral efficacy beliefs, in contrast, should be more likely to dwell on the danger that their cooperation will be exploited.

Once again, a few definitions are necessary here. First, let me explain more precisely what I mean by "costly gestures." Leaders could make such gestures unilaterally, or they could conclude agreements in which their state absorbs most or all of the costs. To qualify as "costly," the gesture should result in a significant and identifiable loss for one's state if it fails to elicit comparable generosity from the other side down the road.[79] Such gestures could entail physical restrictions on the behavior of one's state, such as limits on its military armament or its economic activities. Such gestures could also include binding political commitments that reduce one's freedom of action in the future, particularly when they will be policed by third parties. Lastly, these could entail diplomatic moves that impose substantial "audience costs," either at home or abroad, if they are not reciprocated.

A second key point here is that the costly gesture in question must be part of an effort to change the preferences of other states. I am not trying to explain variations in leaders' willingness to make costly gestures that are merely attempts at appeasement. In such cases, leaders are simply making a compromise or concession in hopes of removing the source of discord between

[79] Writing of costly signaling in particular, Andrew Kydd defines such signaling as "at least somewhat costly gestures that benefit the other side and expose one to some risk of defection on their part." See Andrew Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 187.

the two sides, rather than using persuasion to shape the other side's perceptions or preferences.[80] When the gesture itself is doing all of the diplomatic work, the relevance of leaders' moral efficacy beliefs is obviously limited. Similarly, I am not trying to explain costly gestures that are only intended to reassure other status quo states about one's own willingness to cooperate.[81] In these cases, there is no interest in changing the other side's preferences, merely in revealing one's own. For moral efficacy beliefs to matter, one's ability to persuade must be important. Of course, it may be that some costly gestures are designed both to reassure and persuade at the same time. Gorbachev's generous diplomacy, for example, was not only intended to convey the Soviet Union's willingness to cooperate in the reduction of armaments but also to persuade the United States to help integrate it into the global economy.[82]

Let me also explain what I mean by an "unfavorable" diplomatic environment. From an institutional perspective, this refers to the absence of any agreement in which one's interlocutor has committed in advance to reciprocate a particular form of cooperation. Ideally, such an agreement would be public and be made in the context of a formal international regime. More specifically, such an understanding should: (1) make clear what kind of reciprocation is expected; (2) make clear that nonreciprocation will be exposed; and (3) make clear that nonreciprocation will be costly. In practice, of course, this ideal is not always attained. Nonetheless, even secret, informal, or incomplete understandings can provide some basis for cooperation, as other scholars have noted.[83] When even these are lacking, it would seem safe to say that the environment is not favorable to cooperation.

From a normative perspective, the key question is whether the noncooperation of one's interlocutor has become unimaginable. If it has, leaders may adopt generous postures in diplomacy simply because it is hard to imagine that such behavior would be exploited. Canada, for example, may forswear any interest in nuclear weapons and make commitments to this effect, but it does so in part because it is so hard to imagine the United States attacking its northern neighbor. This perception is easy to understand because U.S.-Canadian peace is so well established. This is far different from an individual leader playing down the dangers of a costly gesture because he believes his state can induce cooperation from others. In this latter case, the leader is trying to change an existing pattern of noncooperation rather than relying on an established pattern of mutual restraint.

[80] For a similar conception of appeasement, see Stephen R. Rock, *Appeasement in International Politics* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 12.

[81] On costly signaling as a means of reassurance, see Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, 184–88.

[82] Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 402–3.

[83] If leaders suspect the other side prefers mutual cooperation to exploitation, for example, they may not see the need for a formal agreement or institution. However, the typical leader should want some arrangement that provides information about the other state's preferences. See Martin, "Interests, Power, and Multilateralism," 780–83.

As with martial efficacy beliefs, I do not wish to suggest that moral efficacy beliefs will prompt leaders to launch diplomatic initiatives at every opportunity, without regard for context. Instead, such beliefs should affect policymaking when leaders seek to elicit some kind of restraint from others. In other words, they are relevant when a leader prefers mutual cooperation to mutual defection on a specific issue. When this condition does not obtain, leaders obviously have little reason to make sacrifices in pursuit of cooperation. At first glance, this condition might seem to rule out all revisionist leaders, but in fact it does not. Revisionist leaders may seek mutual restraint either because they hope to constrain their status quo rivals in a specific respect or to buy time in which they can accumulate other forms of power.[84] American skeptics of Gorbachev's overtures, for example, worried that his real goal was to gain access to Western technology in order to strengthen the Soviet Union's long-term bid for primacy.[85] Whether or not this perception was accurate, the point is that such behavior is conceivable.

With the preceding discussion in mind, I propose the following hypotheses:

- First, moral efficacy beliefs should shape leaders' policy preferences when they desire cooperation from other states, but international norms and institutions offer no assurances that these states will reciprocate a cooperative gesture. Leaders with strong moral efficacy beliefs should be more likely to favor costly gestures in such situations compared with their less confident counterparts.
- Second, moral efficacy beliefs should shape the outcomes that leaders anticipate in such situations. Leaders with strong moral efficacy beliefs should anticipate more positive outcomes as a result of their generous diplomacy compared with leaders who lack such confidence.

Before proceeding, two points of clarification are in order. First, it is theoretically possible that a leader will possess both a strong sense of martial efficacy and a strong sense of moral efficacy, as suggested by Figure 2.1. Such leaders will presumably prefer bold policies in both spheres, even though this may prove difficult to execute in practice. After all, it is not hard to see how military assertiveness could conflict with diplomatic initiatives designed to elicit restraint from others. With sufficient creativity, however, leaders who are inclined to be bold in both areas should be able to find outlets for both their military and diplomatic ambitions. They may favor a military approach with one rival and a diplomatic approach with another, or they may try to sequence their initiatives to avoid conflict. In any case, this type of leader is likely to be quite rare, given the very different kinds of capabilities involved. Indeed,

[84] Andrew Kydd, for example, argues that expansionist states can (in certain contexts) send costly signals to elicit cooperation that they can then exploit later. See Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, 192–94.

[85] Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1993), 48.

none of the leaders considered in this study qualify for this category, as will be discussed in the chapters that follow.

Second, I wish to emphasize that the preceding discussion makes no assumptions concerning the accuracy of leaders' national efficacy beliefs. Whether accurate or not, the beliefs that leaders hold about their state's national efficacy should inform the decisions that they make in foreign policy. To be sure, the accuracy of a leader's efficacy beliefs should have important implications for the *results* of the policies that are chosen: bold policies that are based on overly optimistic perceptions are virtually certain to produce disappointing, and perhaps disastrous, outcomes. The point of this study is not to explain the outcomes of bold policies, however, but merely to explain why they are chosen in the first place.

TESTING THE THEORY

As explained in the introduction, this study tests the theory outlined earlier through in-depth studies of Chinese foreign policy under Mao Zedong and Indian foreign policy under Jawaharlal Nehru, each of which consists of three chapters. Each of these chapters represents a distinct analytical step in testing the theory. The first chapter in each sequence assesses the independent variable by documenting the national efficacy beliefs that the leaders in question developed in the course of coming to power. More specifically, I focus on Mao and Liu Shaoqi's experiences in the Chinese Revolution, and Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel's experiences in the Indian independence struggle. These analyses draw on the framework for measuring martial and moral efficacy beliefs that was developed earlier in this chapter.

The second chapter in each sequence then makes causal inferences about the impact of national efficacy beliefs on foreign policy. In particular, these chapters ask whether the efficacy beliefs that Mao and Nehru developed before coming to power shaped their government's responses to major foreign policy challenges that emerged immediately after they took office. For China, I focus on Mao's reaction to U.S. intervention in the Korean War in 1950. For India, I focus on Nehru's response to the outbreak of war in Kashmir in 1947. In each case, the chapter begins by assessing the overall congruence between the leader's national efficacy beliefs and the military and diplomatic policies adopted by his state. The bulk of the chapter then assesses the causal role of the leader's efficacy beliefs in the making of these policies through more detailed case studies of the decision-making process, exploring military and diplomatic decision making in separate sections.

The third chapter in each sequence asks whether Mao and Nehru's initial approaches persisted beyond their early years in power. To the extent that we can document a consistent policy pattern over time, we can be more confident that their initial policy choices were not merely products of circumstance. Although one might imagine that the intensity of Mao and Nehru's efficacy beliefs would have faded as the Chinese Revolution and the Indian

independence struggle receded into history, these chapters indicate that Mao and Nehru's national efficacy beliefs were remarkably resilient. This finding accords with the psychological research noted earlier that has documented the durability of strong efficacy beliefs. To be sure, the broader historical scope involved in these post-Korea and post-Kashmir chapters does not allow us to consider all of Mao and Nehru's decisions in great detail. These chapters thus begin with a broad survey that assesses the congruence between Mao and Nehru's efficacy beliefs and their military and diplomatic policies, after which they delve into a few key cases to assess the causal role of these beliefs in policy-making. For China, I explore Mao's reaction to the escalating Vietnam War in the mid-1960s and his approach to nuclear arms control during that same period. For India, I consider Nehru's campaign for nuclear disarmament and his approach to China's military presence in Tibet. These chapters, like those before, explore military and diplomatic decision making in separate sections.

In the second and third chapters of each sequence, the specific analytical strategy employed to make causal inferences within the case studies varies depending on the kind of policy to be explained. Let us first take cases in which we have documented both strong efficacy beliefs on the part of the national leader and bold behavior on the part of his government. In these cases, I employ process tracing to determine whether the leader's sense of national efficacy helped produce ambitious policy preferences and optimistic outcome expectations on his part that supported the bold behavior, in keeping with the hypotheses outlined earlier. In addition, I also take advantage of the detailed historical discussion to explicitly address the counterfactual question at the heart of the analysis: Would a leader with weaker efficacy beliefs have taken a more conservative approach? To address this question, I examine the policy preferences of Liu and Patel and, insofar as evidence permits, their outcome expectations as well. To the extent that these less confident colleagues preferred more conservative approaches, we have good reason to believe that a leader with weaker efficacy beliefs would have acted differently.

For cases in which I have documented weak efficacy beliefs on the part of the national leader and conservative behavior on the part of his state, the analytical approach is somewhat different. In these cases, my goal is to explain behavior that was consistent with structural perspectives: structural realist theories generally expect states to shy away from conflict with stronger opponents, and theories of international cooperation typically predict little cooperation in the absence of supportive norms or regimes. How do we know that the beliefs of an individual leader actually mattered when their state's behavior seems congruent with the international environment? Or, to put it differently, how can we know whether a leader with a stronger sense of national efficacy would have acted more boldly? It is less useful to compare Mao and Nehru with their own colleagues in these cases because Mao and Nehru's weaker efficacy beliefs were shared by Liu and Patel. But we can ask whether Mao and Nehru ever faced situations in which the systemic incentives were more ambiguous. Were there opportunities, however limited, that a leader with stronger efficacy beliefs

almost certainly would have seized? On the military side, for example, were there instances when the balance of power was not so unfavorable? On the diplomatic side, were there instances in which the leader could have adopted a more cooperative posture with little risk to the state? If we can identify such cases, we can then ask why a more assertive approach was not taken. Did the leader personally disapprove of assertive policies out of fear that they would produce negative outcomes, even when the international environment was ambiguous? If so, it seems more likely that efficacy beliefs played a role in shaping policy, and that the national stance was not simply dictated by external circumstances.

The case studies in the second and third chapters also consider alternative explanations for Mao and Nehru's choices in foreign policy. There are a variety of reasons why a leader might act boldly in foreign affairs, regardless of his sense of national efficacy. First, leaders may undertake ambitious military or diplomatic initiatives with great confidence, but this confidence may stem more from the specific circumstances surrounding the decision than from a great sense of national efficacy. On the diplomatic side, for example, a leader may cooperate proactively because his state is so much more powerful than its interlocutors that it can compel reciprocation if persuasion falls short.[86] On the military side, scholars have identified several reasons why leaders may believe that their state can defeat a stronger opponent. They may have very limited aims that they hope to achieve quickly, they may expect support from powerful allies, and they may possess short-term offensive capabilities.[87] They may even enjoy local superiority at the site of the conflict.[88] Alternatively, leaders may discount a particular foe's greater material power if they see it as lacking resolve or even as "culturally inferior."[89]

A second type of alternative explanation for bold choices in foreign policy is that leaders may feel compelled to take action even though they have little hope of success. There are several distinct possibilities here. First, leaders may feel that they have no choice but to act boldly because of external pressure. On the military side, they may perceive an attack from a stronger state as imminent and attack preemptively – not out of confidence in the state's offensive capabilities but out of a conviction that striking first offers the only hope of victory.[90] On the diplomatic side, they may be put under great pressure by other states to take

[86] Proponents of hegemonic stability theory, for example, see dominant powers as engaging in this kind of behavior. See Stephen D. Krasner, "State Power and the Structure of International Trade," *World Politics* 28, no. 3 (1976): 322–23.

[87] Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*.

[88] T. V. Paul, "Why Has the India-Pakistan Rivalry Been So Enduring? Power Asymmetry and an Intractable Conflict," *Security Studies* 15, no. 4 (2006): 606–7.

[89] On "cultural discounting" of a stronger rival's capabilities, see Michael P. Fischerkeller, *David versus Goliath: The Influence of Cultural Judgments on Strategic Preference* (PhD dissertation, Department of Political Science, The Ohio State University, 1997).

[90] Preemptive attacks are arguably quite rare, however. See Dan Reiter, "Exploding the Powder Keg Myth: Preemptive Wars Almost Never Happen," *International Security* 20, no. 2 (1995).

a cooperative stance, even though the prospects for reciprocal cooperation are dim. Second, leaders may come under great pressure domestically to take bold action. In this case, the point is not to succeed abroad but merely to fend off or "divert" domestic criticism and hold onto power.[91] Lastly, a leader may act boldly because it seems "appropriate" given their sense of identity or their own personal morality.[92] They may feel morally compelled to assist an ideological ally, or to become proactive in diplomacy in pursuit of peace and cooperation.

Conservative policies may also be explained in alternative ways. The most important alternative explanation for such policies is simply that leaders are responding to the international environment as structural realist and institutionalist theories predict they will. I have already outlined my strategy for assessing this kind of alternative account: I will look for instances in which a leader with stronger efficacy beliefs would almost certainly have taken a more assertive approach – cases in which the relevant international structures were more ambiguous – and ask why a bolder policy was not adopted. It remains possible, of course, that a bolder course was not adopted in such cases for reasons that have little to do with the leader's efficacy beliefs. On the military side, for example, leaders may refrain from using force even when the balance of power might permit it simply because doing so would arouse too much domestic opposition, either because the use of force promised to be costly or because it would violate popular notions of national identity. On the diplomatic side, leaders may not be able to make a cooperative gesture, even one that poses little risk to the state, because they lack the necessary domestic political support for such a move. I thus consider these alternative perspectives on conservative policymaking in the chapters that follow.

[91] For a recent articulation of diversionary war theory in particular, see Amy Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands," *Security Studies* 15, no. 3 (2006).

[92] Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott, "Identity as a Variable," *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no. 4 (2006): 697.

PART I

MAO'S CHINA

3

Same Revolution, Different Dreams

> Revolution is not like inviting people to dinner, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery. . . . A revolution is an uprising, an act of violence whereby one class overthrows the power of another.
>
> Mao Zedong, February 1927

On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) while standing atop the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing. Feverish and feeling ill, China's new leader did not try too hard to inspire his listeners with impressive oratory. Instead, he devoted most of his speech to reciting a long list of appointments in the forthcoming government. Yet if the rhetoric did not quite live up to the moment, Mao's announcement formally concluded four decades of political chaos and civil war following the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911.[1]

Mao's path to power through this complex history had been tortuous in the extreme. He was born in 1893 in the remote Shaoshan Valley of Hunan province, nearly 1,000 miles from Beijing. Despite his rural upbringing, Mao acquired a taste for books and history as a boy, and in 1911 he moved to the provincial capital of Changsha to pursue his studies. A decade later, Mao joined the fledgling Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and attended its first congress in Shanghai in 1921. In the mid-1920s, Mao took part in the first "united front" between the CCP and the larger Nationalist Party, or Guomindang (GMD). When the two parties split violently in 1927, Mao took refuge in the Jinggang Mountains on the Hunan-Jiangxi border and later in the small soviet that the

[1] Mao Zedong, "Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Zhongyang Renmin Zhengfu Gonggao [Proclamation of the Central People's Government of the PRC]," October 1, 1949, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao* [The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Founding of the Nation] (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 1987–), vol. 1, 14–15. On Mao's health, see Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946–1950* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 271. Note that the phrase "The Chinese people have stood up!" was uttered by Mao not in this speech but 10 days earlier.

communists established in Jiangxi. In the mid-1930s, Mao and his comrades fled Jiangxi for northern China, settling in Yan'an at the end of the fabled "Long March." Mao remained in Yan'an until 1947, surviving the war with Japan and consolidating his supremacy within the party. In the late 1940s, Mao led the CCP to a dramatic nationwide victory over Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists to take control of China.[2]

If Mao was the CCP's top leader in October 1949, Liu Shaoqi was his second-in-command. Like Mao, Liu was born and raised in rural Hunan. Unlike Mao, Liu traveled abroad to study Marxist theory in Moscow, where he joined the CCP in 1921. Liu returned to China in 1922 and proceeded to chart his own course within the communist movement, earning a reputation as a labor organizer in Wuhan and Shanghai. After the CCP fled to Yan'an, Liu gradually became a vital political ally for Mao, who lacked Liu's Comintern credentials and background in Marxist theory. Subsequently, when Mao traveled to Chongqing for negotiations with the GMD after World War II, he left Liu in charge in Yan'an. In late 1949, Mao left Liu in charge once again when he traveled to Moscow. Although Liu ranked third in the CCP behind Mao and Zhu De at that point, he was clearly positioned as Mao's heir apparent.[3]

This chapter assesses the distinct senses of national efficacy that Mao and Liu developed in the course of the Chinese Revolution. In doing so, it measures the independent variable of interest in this study and serves as a foundation for the next two chapters. The analysis begins with Mao, focusing first on his sense of martial efficacy and then on his sense of moral efficacy. The chapter then turns to Liu. As explained in the preceding chapters, I assess Liu's beliefs not because he rivaled Mao's authority in foreign affairs – he did not – but to enable a more robust counterfactual analysis in subsequent chapters. To the extent that Liu's beliefs differ from those of Mao, we can gain a clearer sense of the policies that a leader with a different sense of national efficacy would have chosen. As it turns out, the following analysis finds that Mao and Liu both had weak senses of moral efficacy but that Mao's sense of martial efficacy was markedly stronger.

Before we proceed, a brief review of my strategy for measuring national efficacy beliefs is in order. As outlined in the preceding chapter, I begin each analysis by asking whether the leader in question has devoted significant attention to the relevant domain of foreign policy. Then, insofar as the leader has devoted attention to it, I ask whether the leader has expressed confidence about surmounting the military or diplomatic challenge in question. When a leader

[2] For a concise summary of Mao's life and career before 1949, see Donald W. Klein and Anne B. Clark, *Biographic Dictionary of Chinese Communism, 1921–1965* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 676–88.

[3] On Liu's early career, see Lowell Dittmer, *Liu Shao-ch'i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Politics of Mass Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 9–26. On the development of his alliance with Mao in particular, see Stuart Schram, "Mao Tse-Tung and Liu Shao-Ch'i, 1939–1969," *Asian Survey* 12, no. 4 (1972): 278–82.

has expressed such confidence, I ask whether this confidence reflects situational considerations or a belief that the leader can call on the specific competencies needed to succeed. These include skill and will on the military side and agenda-setting and persuasion on the diplomatic side. Lastly, I ask whether the beliefs expressed by a given leader are plausible in light of his past experience and personal background.

MAO

Mao's revolutionary writings cover thousands of pages and offer insight into his views on subjects ranging from ancient Chinese history to contemporary philosophy. The following analysis does not attempt to survey this vast body of writing but instead focuses on Mao's writings about military and diplomatic topics. It begins with the military side. Because Mao's writings on military subjects are both numerous and extensive, the analysis here is relatively lengthy. I then turn to Mao's less numerous writings on diplomatic subjects to assess his sense of moral efficacy.

The Emergence of Mao's Martial Confidence

It is no secret that Mao wrote prolifically about military conflict during the revolution. In fact, between 1927 – when the CCP's "Red Army" was founded – and 1949, Mao wrote enough about military conflict to fill five substantial volumes.[4] The focus of these writings naturally evolved in keeping with the military challenge that the CCP faced. From the late 1920s to the mid-1930s, Mao focused on fighting or eluding GMD forces, first in the neighborhood of Hunan and Jiangxi and later on the Long March. Starting in 1937, his attention shifted to contending with Japan's invading forces, even as rivalry with the GMD continued. Between 1945 and 1949, Mao refocused on the challenge of fighting the GMD, but now on a nationwide scale.

If Mao was well versed in military affairs before he came to power, how confident was he that his forces could overcome material disadvantages on the battlefield? It is tempting to see Mao as exceptionally confident in this regard as early as the late 1920s, thanks to his radically "leftist" ideology.[5] There is little doubt that Mao believed that revolutionary zeal could amplify the combat power of communist forces, particularly after he witnessed the peasant uprisings in Hunan in early 1927. As he wrote at the time, the peasants represented "a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be

[4] See *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji* [Mao Zedong's Collected Military Writings] (Beijing: Military Science Press, 1993), vols. 1–5.

[5] In fact, one study has suggested that Mao was "often too emotionally impulsive and politically radical to be strategically cautious and tactful." See Michael Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin, and the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 31.

able to suppress it."[6] Although Mao soon saw a need for the communists to develop a regular standing army, he continued to dream of winning a speedy, nationwide victory into the early 1930s.[7]

If we scrutinize Mao's subsequent writings, however, it becomes clear that his martial confidence did not spring fully formed from his ideological fervor. In fact, there were times in the 1930s when Mao was more conservative in his military outlook than many of his colleagues. In the first half of 1932, for example, Mao resisted ambitious efforts to break out of Jiangxi and "achieve an initial victory in one or more provinces."[8] Whereas this approach would have entailed ambitious assaults on enemy-held cities, Mao preferred to focus on guerrilla-style defense and expanding into weakly defended rural areas. In April, the CCP central committee criticized this emphasis on guerrilla tactics as "vulgar conservatism," and more broadly as a symptom of "right opportunism."[9] At the Ningdu Conference that October, Mao was even singled out as a "right opportunist," and he was marginalized in the Jiangxi soviet thereafter.[10] The point here is not to suggest that Mao consistently erred on the side of caution against the more powerful nationalists in the 1930s; there were moments, particularly when the GMD was in disarray, when he was more ambitious.[11] Instead, my point is to make it clear that Mao's leftism did not inspire a consistently ambitious military line.

After war broke out with Japan in the summer of 1937, Mao stood out once again for his relative pessimism. Although he initially supported sending all CCP troops in northern China to the front against the Japanese, he quickly backed away from this plan as Japan's might became apparent. On August 1, he wrote Zhou Enlai and others that the communist forces should carry out "dispersed guerrilla warfare" against the Japanese invaders and not "concentrate our forces for a campaign."[12] Mao's tentativeness soon sparked resistance from other CCP leaders, who favored greater cooperation with the GMD and greater reliance on "mobile warfare." The latter represented a more

[6] Mao Zedong, "Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan," February 1927, in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949*, ed. Stuart R. Schram (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1992–), vol. 2, 430.

[7] For example, see Mao Zedong, "Telegram of the Chinese Revolutionary Commission on Attacking Nanchang and Regrouping at Wuhan," June 25, 1930, in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 3, 457–59.

[8] Stuart R. Schram, "Introduction," in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 4, liv.

[9] China Central Archives, *Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenjian Xuanji* [Selected Documents of the CCP Central Committee] (Beijing: Central Party School Press, 1991), vol. 8, 201.

[10] Schram, "Introduction," lix–lxiii.

[11] In particular, Mao sought to exploit the GMD's disarray during the Fujian and Xian incidents in 1934 and 1936, respectively, but was unable to do so. On his preferred approach during the former, see Pang Xianzhi, ed., *Mao Zedong Nianpu, 1893–1949* [Chronology of Mao Zedong, 1893–1949] (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 2002), vol. 1, 415–16. On his approach to the Xian incident, see Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism*, 35–40.

[12] Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Hongjun Zuozhan de Yuanze [On the Operational Principles of the Red Army]," August 1, 1937, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 2, 20.

ambitious form of combat, as it involved greater concentrations of troops ranging over larger territories, making it possible to inflict greater punishment on enemy forces. The debate came to a head at the Luochuan Conference toward the end of the month. Mao reportedly argued that Japan's superior armament meant that its forces could do much more damage to the communists than those of the GMD. He thus strongly advocated staying away from the front, focusing instead on dispersed guerrilla attacks and building up strength by developing base areas in the enemy's rear. Although Mao did support the use of mobile warfare for a few weeks in the fall, by late October he was focusing on guerrilla-style resistance once again.[13]

In the first half of 1938, Mao seemed to become much more confident about confronting Japan as he talked up mobile warfare in a series of interviews, lectures, and essays.[14] Was he gaining confidence as the war progressed? It appears not. As I have argued elsewhere, Mao's rhetorical shift at this time was not an indication of his actual thinking but a response to pressure from Moscow to confront Japan more actively.[15] Soviet leader Joseph Stalin was keen to see both the CCP and the GMD fighting hard against Japan, and his wishes were made abundantly clear after the Comintern-credentialed Wang Ming arrived in Yan'an in December 1937. Feeling threatened and eclipsed by Wang, Mao was evidently afraid to openly defy Stalin. In the fall of 1938, after lobbying by Ren Bishi and Wang Jiaxiang had improved Mao's standing in Moscow, and after Wang Ming's more ambitious approach to fighting Japan had been discredited, Mao revived his emphasis on guerrilla warfare.

In 1940, the CCP unleashed more aggressive attacks against the Japanese in what became known as the Hundred Regiments Campaign. Although this campaign was launched by Peng Dehuai without Mao's approval, Mao was apparently excited by its early successes and asked Peng to expand it after it began. Yet Mao soured on the enterprise soon after it became a major campaign, and by mid-1941 he was telling Peng not to "fight too fiercely (as in the Hundred Regiments clashes)."[16] In 1944, CCP commanders began to experiment with mobile warfare once again, but this trend was not sanctioned by the party until the Seventh Party Congress in June 1945, when the war was

[13] Except as noted, this paragraph and the next three paragraphs are based on a more extended analysis of Mao's approach to the war against Japan that I have published previously. See Andrew Bingham Kennedy, "Can the Weak Defeat the Strong? Mao's Evolving Approach to Asymmetric Warfare in Yan'an," *The China Quarterly*, no. 196 (2008): 4–10.

[14] This tone even crept into some of Mao's more extended military works at this time, including "On Protracted War" and "Problems of Strategy in the Guerrilla War against Japan." See Kennedy, "Can the Weak Defeat the Strong?" 7.

[15] Ibid., 7–9.

[16] Mao Zedong, "Yu Youjun Peihe Zuozhan Jianjue Pohuai Di zhi Jingong [Cooperate with Friendly Armies in Battle, Resolutely Crush the Enemy's Attack]," June 6, 1941, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 2, 646. Three years later, Mao presided over much harsher criticism of Peng. See Frederick Teiwes, "Peng Dehuai and Mao Zedong," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 16 (1986): 86.

essentially over. Mao later confirmed that dispersed guerrilla warfare had been primary, and mobile warfare supplementary, during the war against Japan.[17]

Mao's conservative approach to the war against Japan was not simply the result of military considerations. Political calculations were at work as well.[18] By focusing on low-key guerrilla attacks, Mao sought to avoid ambitious operations that would deplete communist strength, making the CCP vulnerable to the GMD later on. In addition, guerrilla warfare allowed the CCP to focus on the development of base areas behind Japanese lines, which would allow the CCP to improve its long-term position vis-à-vis the GMD. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to conclude that Mao's interest in guerrilla warfare was purely the result of such political calculations. As the preceding narrative makes clear, Mao was reluctant to confront Japan for both military and political reasons.

In the end, it was not until after World War II had concluded that Mao's martial confidence finally reached its zenith.[19] The impetus was the CCP's victory over the nationalists for control of China – a remarkable achievement given the disparity in power between the two sides. As of mid-1946, the communist forces (now renamed the People's Liberation Army, or PLA) had grown to more than one million troops, though 400,000 of these were not regular combatants.[20] In contrast, the GMD regular army now had roughly three million troops at its disposal, and Mao later estimated total GMD strength at that point at 4.3 million troops.[21] In addition, the nationalists were much better equipped with vehicles and heavy weapons, and they also had 1,000 aircraft in their inventory at the time of Japan's surrender.[22] The postwar nationalist regime was also backed by Washington and recognized by Moscow. As a result of the latter, Mao expected little material assistance from the Soviet Union in the event of war, though he did hope for diplomatic support.[23] More broadly,

[17] Mao Zedong, "Jizhong Youshi Bingli, Gege Jianmie Diren [Concentrate a Superior Force to Destroy Enemy Forces One by One]," September 16, 1946, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 3, 484.

[18] Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism*, 49–50.

[19] The following discussion builds on Kennedy, "Can the Weak Defeat the Strong?" 10–15.

[20] U.S. Department of State, *China White Paper* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1967), vol. 1, 313–14.

[21] Mao Zedong, "Zhongguo Junshi Xingshi de Zhongda Bianhua [The Momentous Change in China's Military Situation]," November 14, 1948, in *Mao Zedong Xuanji* [Selected Works of Mao Zedong] (Beijing: People's Press, 1960), vol. 4, 1363.

[22] Problems with supply and maintenance would reduce the number of effective aircraft considerably during the course of the war. See E. R. Hooton, *The Greatest Tumult: The Chinese Civil War, 1936–49* (London: Brassey's, 1991), 75.

[23] Mao Zedong, "Zan Wu Heping Xiwang Zhunbei Quanguo Dada [With No Hope for Peace at the Moment, Prepare for Major Fighting Nationwide]," June 25, 1946, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 3, 295. See also Mao Zedong, "Yi Zhanzheng de Shengli Qu Qude Heping [Using Victory in War to Obtain Peace]," July 11, 1946, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenxuan (Neibuben)* [Selected Military Writings of Mao Zedong (Internal Edition)] (Beijing: PLA Soldiers' Press, 1981), 288.

CCP-held areas in mid-1946 contained only 130 million people, roughly one-quarter of China's total population, with the nationalists controlling most of the rest.[24]

At the outset of the conflict in mid-1946, Mao was not sufficiently confident about his forces' martial prowess to seek Chiang's overthrow. Instead, he merely hoped to fend off the nationalist onslaught, which would allow the CCP to negotiate peace on more favorable terms. On June 19, he had written to Liu Bocheng, Deng Xiaoping, and others:

> Today, it looks as if Chiang Kai-shek is preparing for war; this will be difficult to avoid. After the major fighting, which I estimate will take roughly six months, if we have won big victories, then we will be able to bargain for peace; if our victories have equaled our defeats, then it will still be possible to bargain for peace; if they [the GMD] have prevailed, there will be no chance to negotiate peace.[25]

Notably, the most optimistic scenario that Mao entertained here was military success followed by a negotiated settlement. There was not even a hint of hope for total victory. In addition, he was quite willing to concede that the CCP might lose.

Mao's goal throughout the first few months of the war remained a negotiated settlement. As the conflict progressed, however, Mao became increasingly confident, and before the year was out he had set his sights on total victory. In a directive he sent to regional bureaus of the central committee on November 18, Mao referred to the conflict for the first time as "the people's war of liberation" (*renmin jiefang zhanzheng*) rather than a "war of self-defense" (*ziwei zhanzheng*). Also for the first time, he argued that Chiang Kai-shek would be "destroyed" (*miewang*) as a result of the conflict. On November 21, Mao spelled out his thinking more clearly at a meeting of top party leaders. Speaking last, he argued that Chiang's current offensive could be defeated, after which the disparity in military power between the two parties could be eliminated. Then, Mao argued, the CCP could surpass the GMD and "overthrow" (*dadao*) the nationalist regime. This was the first time he had proposed overthrowing the regime as the driving purpose of the conflict.[26]

Was Mao simply trying to boost his side's morale at a difficult moment? If so, it would have been understandable: in retreat throughout China, in the second half of 1946 the CCP lost more than 174,000 square kilometers of territory and 165 towns.[27] Nonetheless, Mao's new interest in total victory

[24] Pang, *Mao Zedong Nianpu*, vol. 3, 100. See also He Long, "Guanyu Muqian Shiju he Renwu de Baogao" [Report on the Present Political Situation and Our Tasks]," June 19, 1946, in *He Long Junshi Wenxuan* [Selected Military Writings of He Long] (Beijing: PLA Press, 1989), 233–34.

[25] Mao Zedong, "Zhunbei Duifu Jiang Jieshi Dada de Zuozhan Bushu [Prepare to Counter Chiang Kai-shek's Deployments for Large-Scale Fighting]," June 19, 1946, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 3, 277.

[26] Pang, *Mao Zedong Nianpu*, vol. 3, 150–51.

[27] Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 61.

was genuine. First, he told his fellow CCP leaders not to make the goal public for the moment – a puzzling decision if he mainly sought to boost morale within the communist ranks. As Mao said at the meeting on November 21: "Should we now propose overthrowing Chiang Kai-shek? We will work toward this end, but we will not make it a slogan. Our slogan will still be re-establishing the positions held at the cease-fire of January 13 and the resolutions of the Political Consultative Conference [PCC]."[28]

By keeping his real hopes secret, Mao presumably hoped to avoid provoking anxiety in Washington and Nanjing. In keeping with this approach, when speaking with Western reporters on December 9, Mao made no mention of overthrowing the nationalist regime.[29] Subsequently, an inner-party directive released on February 1, 1947, referred to nationwide revolution, but not "overthrow" of the GMD.[30] Mao's remarks at a politburo meeting the same day made it clear that this was no accident: "We still have not proposed overthrowing U.S. imperialism and Chiang Kai-shek, but in actuality we will overthrow them."[31] In the end, Mao waited until October 10, 1947 – the GMD's National Day – to propose publicly the overthrow of Chiang's regime.[32]

Moreover, Mao's growing confidence did not emerge out of the blue. Instead, it reflected his ongoing assessment of what his forces were accomplishing in the conflict. In August and early September, the communists had suffered 30,000 casualties while trying to hold cities in eastern China, with 10,000 soldiers surrendering.[33] Mao quickly emphasized to his commanders that it was more important to deplete the enemy's forces than to hold territory.[34] With this metric for measuring success, Mao was encouraged by subsequent developments that fall, despite the CCP's retreat. A three-month review released on October 1 noted that communist forces had shown themselves capable of wiping out 10,000 nationalist troops with only 2,000 to 3,000 casualties of their own.[35] By November 21, Mao estimated that communist forces had eliminated 38 nationalist brigades. He calculated that if they could destroy a total of

[28] Pang, *Mao Zedong Nianpu*, vol. 3, 151. The PCC had been established on January 10, 1946, in preparation for the formation of a new national government, with representatives from the GMD, the CCP, and other popular organizations. In November, the GMD rendered the PCC obsolete by convening a "National Assembly," which the CCP did not join.

[29] Pang, *Mao Zedong Nianpu*, vol. 3, 152.

[30] Mao Zedong, "Huanying Zhongguo Geming de Xin Gaochao [Greet the New High Tide of the Chinese Revolution]," February 1, 1947, in *Mao Zedong Xuanji*, vol. 4, 1209–16.

[31] Pang, *Mao Zedong Nianpu*, vol. 3, 167–68.

[32] Mao Zedong, "Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Xuanyan [Manifesto of the People's Liberation Army]," October 10, 1947, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 4, 290. See also Pang, *Mao Zedong Nianpu*, vol. 3, 242.

[33] Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 47.

[34] Mao Zedong, "Jizhong Youshi Bingli, Gege Jianmie Diren [Concentrate a Superior Force to Destroy Enemy Forces One by One]," September 16, 1946, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 3, 482–86.

[35] Mao Zedong, "Sange Yue Zongjie [Summary of the Past Three Months]," October 1, 1946, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 3, 505.

70 to 80 brigades in 6 to 12 months of fighting, the nationalist offensive would crumble and the CCP could go on the attack. In short, there were hardheaded calculations behind Mao's growing confidence in November 1946.

Mao's confident forecast at the end of 1946 was validated as the tide of the war turned against the nationalists over the course of the next year. By March 1948, Mao was predicting that it would be possible to eliminate the entire GMD Army by mid-1951.[36] In November 1948, he realized that his earlier prediction had been too pessimistic, and he forecast that the CCP would need only "another year or so" to vanquish its opponent.[37] This latter prediction would be borne out by events.

The communists' stunning victory, and the speed with which they had prevailed, convinced Mao that the PLA was an exceptional fighting force. As he summed up its achievements before the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in September 1949: "In a little more than three years, the heroic People's Liberation Army, [an army] such as the world has rarely seen, has defeated the offensive of the several million troops of the U.S.-aided Guomindang reactionary government and shifted to [launching] its own counteroffensive and offensive."[38]

Mao also sounded highly confident in the PLA in less public situations. In June of that year, after the communists crossed the Yangtze, Mao wrote Stalin that, "[T]he battle capacity of our army has reached an unheard of level. . . . [It has] accomplished a great military march unheard of in Chinese history."[39] At other times, Mao stressed that his army's prowess had developed only after considerable hardship. In early October, for example, Mao told a group of visiting Soviet writers that it was only in Yan'an that "we *finally* [emphasis added] mastered the strategy and tactics of war," and he detailed many of the difficulties that they had encountered along the way.[40] After taking power, Mao continued to extol the PLA's martial prowess while noting that such expertise had been acquired only after much trial and tribulation.[41]

[36] Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Qingkuang de Tongbao [A Circular on the Situation]," March 20, 1948, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 4, 439.

[37] Mao Zedong, "Zhongguo Junshi Xingshi de Zhongda Bianhua [The Momentous Change in China's Military Situation]," November 14, 1948, in *Mao Zedong Xuanji*, vol. 4, 1364.

[38] Mao Zedong, "Zhongguo Renmin Zhengxie Diyijie Huiyishang Mao Zhuxi Kaimuci [Chairman Mao's Opening Address at the First Plenary Session of the CPPCC]," September 21, 1949, in *Mao Zedong Ji* [Collected Writings of Mao Zedong] (Hong Kong: Modern Historical Materials Supply Press, 1975), vol. 10, 355.

[39] Mao Zedong [via Kovalev] to Joseph Stalin, June 14, 1949, Document no. 45, in Sergey Radchenko and David Wolff, "To the Summit via Proxy Summits: New Evidence from Soviet and Chinese Archives on Mao's Long March to Moscow, 1949," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 16 (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 168.

[40] Shi Zhe, *Zai Lishi Juren de Shenbian: Shi Zhe Huiyilu* [At the Side of History's Giants: The Memoirs of Shi Zhe] (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 1991), 428.

[41] For example, see Mao Zedong, "Zai Kuoda de Zhongyang Gongzuo Huiyi Jianghua [Speech at the Expanded Central Work Conference]," January 30, 1962, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 10, 30.

It is also clear that Mao had become confident in both aspects of martial efficacy: he believed in both the skill and will of the PLA. In terms of skill, Mao had become quite confident in his forces' ability to produce local advantages against superior opponents. He made this clear in a report to the party's central committee in late 1947, in which he sought to explain the CCP's impending triumph over the nationalists: "Although we are inferior as a whole (in terms of numbers), we are absolutely superior *in every part and every specific campaign* [emphasis added], and this ensures our victory in the campaign."[42] In Mao's view, such consistent success reflected "the tempering of the People's Liberation Army in long years of fighting against domestic and foreign enemies."

Mao's confidence in his forces' ability to generate local advantages probably reflected more than one consideration. First, he had striven for decades to make the CCP's forces exceptionally flexible and responsive to battlefield conditions. Mao consistently put a premium on evaluating the other side's disposition and reacting accordingly – if conditions were unfavorable, there was no shame in retreating. He famously summed up this point of view in a textbook for the Red Army University in 1936: "[T]he enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue."[43] By early 1949, Mao believed that his pedagogy had paid off, and his pride in the flexibility and initiative of his forces was evident in remarks he made to visiting Soviet officials: "Our soldiers and commanders are all relatively young, lively, with abundant energy and strong combat capacity. They can not only bear hardships and stand hard work but are also good at exploiting their own strengths, initiative, and flexibility."[44]

Mao also developed clear confidence in his forces' capacity for surprise and deception. In fact, he was virtually obsessed with the role of deception in war, and he was particularly enamored with a tactic he called "luring the enemy in deep." First articulated in 1930, this practice essentially entailed retreating before stronger forces, which would then become fatigued and less concentrated as they pursued, creating opportunities for the communists to launch surprise counterattacks.[45] Mao relied heavily on such "luring" to defeat the GMD's first few encirclement campaigns in Jiangxi.[46] After war broke out with Japan, Mao continued to stress the importance of deception and surprise attacks, even as he remained wary of larger engagements.[47] Following World War II, Mao was

[42] Mao Zedong, "Muqian Xingshi he Women de Renwu [The Present Situation and Our Tasks]," December 25, 1947, in *Mao Zedong Ji*, vol. 10, 101–2.

[43] Mao Zedong, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War," December 1936, in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 5, 499.

[44] Shi, *Zai Lishi Juren de Shenbian*, 375.

[45] For the first articulation, see Mao Zedong, "Xingguo Investigation," October 1930, in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 3, 595.

[46] Mao, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War," 495–508.

[47] Mao Zedong, "On the Basic Tactic of Anti-Japanese Warfare – The Surprise Attack," January 11, 1938, in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 6, 179–92.

further inspired by the success of surprise attacks used to defeat the nationalist offensives in 1946 and 1947.[48]

Mao was also clearly impressed with the "will" of the communist troops. As noted earlier, he had been impressed by the revolutionary fervor of China's peasants as early as the late 1920s, prompting him to imagine a rapid overthrow of the existing order. Over time, however, Mao learned not to take such dedication for granted, and he came to see the CCP as playing a crucial role in generating revolutionary fervor through political indoctrination. In fact, Mao became personally involved in training his officers how to conduct such indoctrination, which suggests how important he viewed this task.[49] The result of these efforts was to turn the CCP into an impressive ideological mobilization machine that produced soldiers of surpassing dedication. This dedication, in Mao's view, was a key element in the communists' ultimate victory in the revolution. On more than one occasion in 1947, the CCP leader attributed the communists' mounting successes to his troops' "style of fighting," which he summed up as "courage in battle, no fear of sacrifice, no fear of fatigue, and continuous fighting (that is, fighting successive battles in a short time without rest)."[50] These remarks were not just for public consumption; Mao also used such language in high-level meetings.[51] Even in private, Mao was fiercely proud of the fighters that his party's mobilization efforts had produced.

It seems clear, then, that Mao came to power in October 1949 imbued with a strong sense of martial efficacy, a finding that resonates with previous studies that have touted his "military romanticism."[52] More specifically, Mao's martial confidence was focused on the prosecution of land warfare. Whereas Mao wrote prolifically about combat on land, he devoted virtually no attention to air or naval combat. This emphasis on land combat was not surprising because the CCP had no air force or navy to speak of before 1949. Within the realm of land warfare, Mao was particularly confident when employing unconventional forms of combat. As late as late 1947, he was exhorting his commanders to "wipe out the enemy through mobile warfare," as he recognized that the PLA was still "learning the tactics of positional attack."[53] By the end of 1948, of course, the PLA had gained more experience in positional warfare, and Mao publicly praised the alacrity with which his forces had

[48] Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 153–54.

[49] Zhang Shuguang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950–1953* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 13–16.

[50] For example, see Mao Zedong, "Strategy for the Second Year of the War of Liberation," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1961–), vol. 4, 145.

[51] Mao, "Muqian Xingshi he Women de Renwu," 101.

[52] Stuart R. Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 55; Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*.

[53] For the first quotation, see Mao, "Muqian Xingshi he Women de Renwu," 101. For the second, see Mao, "Strategy for the Second Year of the War of Liberation."

mastered a new form of combat.[54] Even so, the bulk of Mao's military writings concerned unconventional warfare, and it is telling that he only turned to more positional tactics once his forces were approaching numerical parity with the nationalists.

The idea that Mao emerged from the revolution with a strong sense of martial efficacy focused on ground combat is quite plausible given what we know about how efficacy beliefs are acquired. In a sense, the Chinese Revolution was what a psychologist might call an "enactive mastery experience" in land warfare for Mao. As argued earlier, the final stage of the revolution was particularly important in this regard. In the second half of 1946, Mao went from anxiously hoping to survive a war with the GMD to confidently predicting a total victory – before any other CCP leader dared hope for such an outcome. When this prediction was realized even faster than Mao had hoped, he interpreted the communists' success not simply as evidence of nationalist incompetence but more fundamentally as a sign of the PLA's exceptional martial prowess. In addition, some of Mao's writings suggest that he also drew inspiration from other examples of inferior forces defeating stronger ones and from the Chinese strategic classics.[55] Mao also cited passages from Sun Zi to argue that strategic retreats could allow the Red Army to weaken and eventually defeat a stronger opponent.[56] It is unclear from Mao's writing, however, whether such references mainly served to illustrate his points or whether they actually inspired greater confidence in him as well.

In retrospect, Mao may well have been predisposed to interpret the outcome of the Chinese Revolution as a sign of his own military's exceptional ability. As other scholars have documented, the CCP leader exhibited strong signs of narcissism and a corresponding infatuation with grandiose fantasies of power.[57] In this light, it is not too surprising that Mao interpreted the communists' victory as evidence that *his* army was an exceptional fighting force. He had organized, taught, and commanded the PLA; even more than the CCP itself, the PLA was an institution that Mao personally had built. He was thus bound to see it as extraordinary in the aftermath of victory. This is not to say that Mao's sense of martial efficacy was merely a symptom of his broader narcissistic worldview. After all, he showed clear signs of narcissism and grandiose preoccupations in the 1920s, but his martial confidence did not reach its apex until after

[54] Mao Zedong, "Carry the Revolution Through to the End," December 30, 1948, in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, vol. 4, 300.

[55] Mao, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War," 496–98.

[56] Ibid., 503. On the influence of China's military classics on Mao more generally, see Alastair Iain Johnston, "Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 216–68.

[57] Lucian Pye, "Rethinking the Man in the Leader," *The China Journal*, no. 35 (1996): 108–12; Michael Sheng, "Mao Zedong's Narcissistic Personality Disorder and China's Road to Disaster," in *Profiling Political Leaders: Cross-Cultural Studies of Personality and Behavior*, ed. Ofer Feldman and Linda O. Valenty (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), 111–27.

World War II, as the preceding analysis has emphasized.[58] Instead, it seems more likely that Mao's narcissism shaped how he interpreted the revolution: as a clear sign of his own military's prowess.

A Weak Sense of Moral Efficacy

As befits a rebel leader, Mao spent much more time writing about the military challenges that his party faced in the revolution than he did mulling over the nuances of international cooperation. For much of the revolution, in fact, his party's isolation deep within China limited the kinds of opportunities that Mao had to actually practice diplomacy. Even so, the CCP's increasing political and military importance starting in the mid-1940s brought new opportunities to engage with the outside world. In particular, between 1944 and 1949, the CCP engaged with a series of American delegations and envoys, including the Dixie Mission, General George Marshall, and ambassadors Patrick Hurley and Leighton Stuart. It is thus not surprising that Mao wrote about diplomatic matters much more frequently during this period. The official *Selected Works of Mao Zedong on Diplomacy*, for example, includes 35 texts written before the founding of the PRC, 24 of which were produced between 1945 and 1949.[59]

Mao was quite interested in the possibility of eliciting cooperation from the United States during this time – or at least he was in the immediate aftermath of World War II. As noted earlier, Mao was not eager to begin an all-out fight with the GMD at this time. The CCP leader thus concluded a peace agreement with the nationalists on October 10, 1945, even though he doubted that it would hold.[60] It was against this backdrop that Mao welcomed the arrival of George Marshall's mediation mission in China in late 1945. Whereas the CCP had only limited contacts with the United States during World War II, the Marshall mission now offered the communists an opportunity to stave off a nationwide war with the more powerful GMD. Subsequently, in April 1946, Mao authored a memo for other party leaders that elaborated more broadly on the possibility of cooperation with the United States and its allies. Mao critiqued the notion that another world war was imminent, and he suggested that the United States would be open to compromise with the Soviet Union and other "democratic forces" going forward, at least in the short term.[61]

Nonetheless, there is little evidence that Mao became confident about the CCP's ability to elicit the desired cooperation from the United States through diplomacy. Instead, as the CCP's diplomacy ran into trouble, Mao increasingly

[58] On Mao's early narcissism and grandiosity, see Sheng, "Mao Zedong's Narcissistic Personality Disorder and China's Road to Disaster," 113–16.

[59] *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan* [Selected Works of Mao Zedong on Diplomacy] (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 1995).

[60] Shi, *Zai Lishi Juren de Shenbian*, 313.

[61] Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Muqian Guoji Xingshi de Jidian Guji [Some Points in Appraisal of the Present International Situation]," April 1946, in *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan*, 55–56.

came to believe that his party could only "seek peace through fighting."[62] On April 21, he stressed to Lin Biao that "everything is decided by victory or defeat on the battlefield, do not put any hope in negotiations."[63] On the verge of all-out war in June, Mao once again seemed to hope that the CCP could change U.S. popular attitudes toward the conflict, and thus U.S. policy, after noticing that American media in China were criticizing GMD bellicosity.[64] By August, however, he pessimistically concluded that the CCP was being duped by the U.S. efforts to mediate the conflict. In Mao's view, the United States had been facilitating the GMD offensive by "luring" Chinese military commanders away from the front for protracted negotiations. "In the past eight months," he summed up for Zhou, "we have been cheated by the GMD and the Americans many times and in very big ways; we must be more alert now."[65] By October 10, Mao saw no reason to discourage Marshall from leaving.[66] Less than a year after welcoming Marshall to China, Mao had given up on trying to shape American policy through diplomacy.

Mao gingerly renewed diplomatic contacts with the United States once again as the war wound to a close, only to be frustrated a second time. In particular, with the nationalist regime fleeing the mainland in the spring of 1949, he approved discussions with the U.S. ambassador in Nanjing, Leighton Stuart, to explore the possibility of diplomatic recognition. On April 28, he noted that the CCP "could consider" diplomatic relations with Washington if it broke relations with the GMD. Twelve days later, he specified that if the United States was interested in establishing diplomatic relations, it simply needed to cease its recognition of and support for the GMD while also refraining from interference in the PRC's internal affairs.[67] In the end, of course, the furtive contacts that ensued came to naught. Although the Truman administration was interested in luring Beijing away from Moscow, it could not cut its ties to the nationalists without endangering domestic support for its grand strategy of containment.[68] Spurned by the Americans, Mao once again concluded that trying to win them over was a pointless endeavor. As he put it in mid-August:

[62] He Di, "Mao Zedong and the Marshall Mission," in *George C. Marshall's Mediation Mission to China, December 1945–January 1947*, ed. Larry Bland (Lexington, Va.: George C. Marshall Foundation, 1998), 190–95.

[63] Mao Zedong, "Yi Duo Diao Budui Beishang Baowei Changchu Haerbin [We Should Transfer Troops North to Protect Changchun and Harbin]," April 21, 1946, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 3, 180.

[64] Pang, *Mao Zedong Nianpu*, vol. 3, 94–95.

[65] Ibid., vol. 3, 125.

[66] He, "Mao Zedong and the Marshall Mission," 197.

[67] On Mao's conditions, see Mao Zedong, "Ruguo Mei Ying Duanjue Tong Guomindang de Guanxi Ke Kaolu he Tamen Jianli Waijiao Guanxi [We May Consider Establishing Diplomatic Relations with the U.S. and Britain If They Sever Ties with the Guomindang]," April 28, 1949, and Mao Zedong, "Huang Hua Tong Sidu Leideng Tanhua Ying Zhuyi de Jige Wenti [Several Matters Huang Hua Should Pay Attention to When Talking with Leighton Stuart]," May 10, 1949, in *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan*, 83 and 87, respectively.

[68] Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 77–137.

"It is impossible to persuade the imperialists and the Chinese reactionaries to show kindness of heart and turn from their evil ways. The only course is to organize forces and struggle against them."[69] Once again, Mao had given up on trying to elicit cooperation from the Americans.

To sum up, Mao did not derive a great sense of moral efficacy from his party's diplomatic engagement with the United States in the wake of World War II. The CCP's failure to reach an understanding with the Americans on recognition, in turn, meant that communist China would be diplomatically isolated for a long time after the revolution. Only the Soviet Union and its satellites recognized the PRC when it was first established in 1949, although India and Britain established ties in 1950. In contrast, most of the rest of the world did not recognize Mao's regime until the 1970s. In the meantime, nationalist China retained China's membership in the United Nations and its seat on the UN Security Council. As a result, except within the communist bloc, the PRC's voice in international institutions would remain quite limited for the first two decades of the Cold War.

If we consider Mao's revolutionary experience more broadly, there is little evidence that he developed great confidence in the diplomatic sphere in some other way. It is true that the CCP did employ self-promoting propaganda quite avidly and effectively within China during the course of the revolution. In the mid-1930s, the CCP even sought to convince the GMD to cease its operations against the communists and redirect its military efforts against Japan. There was clearly some role for persuasion in this effort. As Mao argued in November 1936:

> We must approach this from both the military and the non-military aspect. In terms of non-military means, we must persuade those who are unwilling to stop the civil war, and use propaganda to educate the people of the whole country to unite and resist Japan. If literary and artistic methods cannot persuade those unwilling to stop the civil war, then we will use military means to force them to stop it.[70]

Nine days later, Mao wrote a long letter to Chiang calling for a united front against Japan, arguing that China's continued existence hung in the balance and suggesting that "one must put down the butcher's knife to become a Buddha."[71] Nonetheless, as the preceding passage suggests, Mao was not overly optimistic about persuading Chiang. In fact, when Chiang was taken hostage by a rogue GMD general in Xian that December, Mao did not seize the opportunity to win him over. Instead, his initial impulse was to "proclaim to all officers and soldiers Mr. Chiang's crimes in selling out the country and harming the

[69] Mao Zedong, "Diudiao Huanxiang, Zhunbei Douzheng [Cast Away Illusions, Prepare for Struggle]," August 14, 1949, in *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan*, 102.

[70] Mao Zedong, "If We Want to Resist Japan, the Civil War Must Be Stopped; If the Civil War Is to Be Stopped, Both Military and Non-military Means Must Be Used," November 22, 1936, in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 5, 450–51.

[71] Mao Zedong, "To Chiang Kai-shek," December 1, 1936, in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 5, 459.

people."[72] In fact, at one point during the incident, Mao even argued that the CCP should exploit the opportunity to prepare a secret military strike on Nanjing.[73] His subsequent interest in negotiations and a more peaceful approach was a dramatic turnaround that reflected Soviet pressure.[74]

Subsequently, after the united front with the nationalists had been established, Mao did not attribute this success to his party's capacity for moral suasion or diplomatic skills. Instead, he emphasized the increasingly pressing "contradiction" between China and Japan as driving this process forward. Indeed, the CCP and the GMD did not conclude a formal agreement until August 1937, shortly after the Japanese had begun making their concerted push out of Manchuria. It was against this backdrop that Mao wrote in April 1938:

> How is it that the Guomindang and the Communist Party are able to cooperate once again? It is because, at present, the national contradiction ranks higher than the class contradiction. The China-Japan contradiction surpasses the Guomindang-Communist party contradiction; it surpasses the contradiction between capitalists and workers, and between landlords and peasants. Because of this, the Guomindang and the Communist party are cooperating again.[75]

In retrospect, it seems odd that Mao would fail to mention the CCP's own efforts to win over the GMD, even if only for propaganda purposes. As Mao himself had noted previously, the CCP had been lobbying the GMD to cooperate in the struggle against Japan since 1932.[76]

More generally, it is worth noting here that Mao's international experience during the revolution was severely limited. In fact, Mao did not set foot outside of China even once before taking power in 1949. Subsequently, Mao left China on only two occasions, visiting Moscow in the winter of 1949–1950 and again in 1957. Although Mao's opportunities to travel were limited by the PRC's diplomatic isolation, his failure to circulate more widely within the communist bloc was still rather remarkable. Of course, Mao could and did rely on other leaders within his party who were much more comfortable in international circles, particularly Zhou Enlai. Nonetheless, Zhou's diplomatic accomplishments before 1949 remained limited. He had helped keep the second united front together during the war against Japan, and he succeeded in attracting considerable support for the CCP in urban China during the postwar

[72] Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, "Telegram from Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai to Zhang Xueliang," December 13, 1936, in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 5, 539.

[73] Mao Zedong, "A Grand Strategy Must Be Adopted to Strike at the Enemy's Key Positions," December 15, 1936, in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 5, 550.

[74] Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism*, 35–40.

[75] Mao Zedong, "On the Problem of Cooperation between the Guomindang and the Communist Party," April 5, 1938, in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 6, 281.

[76] Mao Zedong, "Urgent Tasks of the Chinese Revolution Following the Establishment of Guomindang-Communist Cooperation," September 29, 1937, in Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, vol. 6, 66.

negotiations.[77] Yet, despite Zhou's efforts, the CCP did not succeed in establishing a lasting peace with the GMD after World War II, and it did not elicit sufficient cooperation from the Americans.

The finding that Mao possessed only a weak sense of moral efficacy accords with his experience in the revolution. He had sought cooperation from the United States in the wake of World War II, but he had come away disappointed. Subsequently, after the United States opted not to recognize the PRC, Mao's regime became an international outcast, shunned by most of the world community. Although the CCP had achieved a modicum of success in cooperating with the GMD against Japan, Mao attributed this accomplishment not to the CCP's diplomatic talents but to Japan's pressure on the nationalist regime. In short, the Chinese Revolution afforded little opportunity for the CCP leader to develop a great sense of moral efficacy in the years before he came to power.

LIU

Whereas Mao was renowned as a military commander when he came to power, Liu was known for his accomplishments in building and organizing the CCP. Whether recruiting new members in GMD-controlled cities or developing base areas in Japanese-occupied regions, Liu was a critical architect of the party's organizational strength in enemy territory. More generally, Liu was a rather reserved and austere Marxist theoretician who was famous for putting the organization before the individual. It is hard to improve on Roderick MacFarquhar's description in this respect: "[Liu was] reserved to the point of shyness, modest to the point of self-effacement, a man perhaps so schooled in the principle of the primacy of the organization over the individual that his own personality died somewhere along the way."[78]

Like many other CCP leaders, Liu did acquire some military experience during the revolution, but he never came close to rivaling Mao in this respect. In the end, although the two men became political allies during the Yan'an years, they came to power with rather different senses of national efficacy.

Liu's Limited Sense of Martial Efficacy

Given the rather different nature of his responsibilities in the revolution, it is not surprising that Liu wrote much less about the military challenges that the CCP faced than Mao did. In fact, Liu was virtually silent on military questions for nearly a decade after the CCP-GMD split in 1927, focusing instead on his underground work in Shanghai and on labor policy in Jiangxi. As William Whitson and Huang Zhenxia note, "Liu had very little contact with the military before the Sino-Japanese war."[79] After 1937, however, Liu became

[77] Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 59.

[78] MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution: Contradictions Among the People*, 5.

[79] William W. Whitson and Huang Zhenxia, *The Chinese High Command: A History of Communist Military Politics, 1927–71* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 77.

more involved in the military side of the revolution. As will be discussed, he played a role in the war against Japan, and for a brief period after World War II he oversaw the CCP's military operations while standing in for Mao. As a result, Liu did produce a limited body of writings on military issues in the late 1930s and mid-1940s that may be analyzed.

Generally speaking, Liu's writings show little confidence in the CCP's ability to defeat more powerful adversaries. After war broke out with Japan in 1937, for example, Liu supported Mao's relatively conservative approach to the conflict. Although Liu apparently did not attend the Luochuan Conference that August, he supported Mao's emphasis on guerrilla warfare over the course of the next year. In an essay he wrote in October, Liu expressed pessimism about conducting regular warfare against the Japanese and argued that guerrilla warfare should be the "major form of struggle" in northern China.[80] Liu argued that a guerrilla war against Japan could at least serve to disrupt Japan's transportation and communications. Whether Liu believed such tactics would bring the invading force to its knees, or whether he sought to counter criticism that guerrilla warfare was insufficiently aggressive, remains unclear. In any case, he continued to support Mao's cautious emphasis on guerrilla warfare that fall and throughout 1938.[81]

Liu's October 1937 essay on the war also revealed his lack of experience in military matters. He declined to discuss specific aspects of guerrilla war strategy and tactics, saying that "[t]here have been many books written on the subject. . . . I am not going into details here."[82] In addition, Liu did not seem attuned to the distinction between guerrilla and mobile warfare, dividing conflict in general into "(1) regular warfare, (2) guerrilla warfare and (3) armed uprising."[83] As noted earlier, Mao had been careful to distinguish between mobile and guerrilla warfare at this time, arguing in favor of the latter in particular. Liu's lack of attention to this question suggests he was either dodging a controversial issue or simply unfamiliar with the pressing military questions of the time. Returning to more familiar ground, Liu devoted the bulk of his analysis to organizational matters, mass movements, labor policy, and economic issues.

[80] Liu Shaoqi, "Various Questions Concerning Fundamental Policies in Anti-Japanese Guerrilla Warfare," October 16, 1937, in *Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i* (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1968), vol. 1, 28.

[81] See Liu Shaoqi, "The Question of Policy Concerning the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla War," February 5, 1938, and Liu Shaoqi, "The Armed Forces Persisting in the War of Resistance in North China," July 1, 1938, in *Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i*, vol. 1, 53–63 and 65–80, respectively. See also Gao Hua, *Hong Taiyang Shi Zenyang Shengqide: Yan'an Zhengfeng Yundong de Lai Long Qu Mai* [How the Red Sun Rose: The Origins and Development of the Yan'an Rectification Movement] (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2000), 131, 133–34.

[82] Liu, "Various Questions Concerning Fundamental Policies in Anti-Japanese Guerrilla Warfare," 31.

[83] Ibid., 28.

Although it is possible that Liu's endorsement of Mao's conservative line on the war was simply a political move, it seems more likely that his stance was informed by his own judgment. As Stuart Schram has written, Liu was not known for "abandoning his critical faculties," even after he aligned with Mao more decisively in the 1940s.[84] Furthermore, in 1939, Liu had almost seemed to disparage the Chinese communists' military capabilities while delivering a series of lectures in Yan'an that would later be compiled to form his best-known work, "How to Be a Good Communist." In one revealing passage, Liu complained that "at present we really have far too few revolutionary heroes and leaders with prestige."[85] It is little wonder, then, that Liu was not eager to confront the much more advanced Japanese military more directly.

Following Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in mid-1941, Liu briefly seemed to diverge from Mao's conservative approach. On July 9, the Comintern had cabled communist parties around the world and called for them to support the Soviet Union's struggle against fascism. For the CCP leadership, the key question was how it would respond in the event that Japan now attacked the Soviet Union as well. On July 12, Liu and Chen Yi wrote to Mao to suggest that the CCP should launch a counteroffensive against Japanese forces if the latter attacked the Soviet Union, even if the GMD refused to participate. Liu did not seem to believe that the communists could actually defeat the Japanese forces; instead, he seemed to hope that the communists would "divert" the Japanese, and he was resigned to the CCP sacrificing some of its bases behind enemy lines.[86] In any case, Liu's initial reaction, which other scholars have characterized as "emotional," did not convince Mao.[87] On July 18, Mao wrote to Liu and maintained that a counteroffensive was only feasible in the long run; CCP forces were not yet strong enough for a large-scale campaign against Japan.[88] Mao also argued that the GMD would be the main beneficiary if fighting intensified between the CCP and Japanese forces in the near future. On July 21, the CCP politburo endorsed Mao's approach. Although it appears that Moscow subsequently pressured Mao into taking a stiffer line on this issue, the Japanese attack on the Soviet Union never did materialize, so this commitment was never put to the test.[89]

This exception aside, Mao and Liu were typically on the same page during the war against Japan. In the wake of World War II, however, their sense of what the CCP's forces could accomplish diverged. This was most evident in the fall of 1945, when Liu filled in for Mao in Yan'an while the CCP leader was in Chongqing for negotiations with Chiang Kai-shek. At that point, both

[84] Schram, "Mao Tse-Tung and Liu Shao-Ch'i, 1939–1969," 280.
[85] Liu Shaoqi, "How to Be a Good Communist," July 1939, in *Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i*, vol. 1, 193.
[86] Liu Chongwen and Chen Shaochou, eds., *Liu Shaoqi Nianpu* [Chronology of Liu Shaoqi] (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 1996), vol. 1, 362.
[87] Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism*, 51.
[88] Pang, *Mao Zedong Nianpu*, 312–13.
[89] Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism*, 51–52.

the CCP and the GMD were eager to fill the vacuum left by Japan's departing forces, particularly in Manchuria. Japan had occupied China's northeast since 1931, and neither the GMD nor the CCP had much of a local power base in the region. The communists thus began infiltrating troops into Manchuria within weeks of Japan's surrender.[90] The CCP leadership subsequently authorized deployments that would bring nearly 100,000 communist troops to areas in and around Manchuria over the next few months.[91]

Once CCP forces began to arrive in the region, however, Liu quickly became extremely careful. On September 24, he ordered CCP forces to disperse guerrilla-style into the countryside to conserve strength and take up positions near the borders with Mongolia, Korea, and the Soviet Union.[92] Because it was difficult for newly arrived troops to subsist in such inhospitable areas, local commanders apparently never implemented this order, stationing the soldiers near cities instead.[93] On October 9, a presumably frustrated Liu repeated his order to disperse troops. To underline his point, he made clear his pessimism about fighting the GMD in decisive engagements: "At present we should definitely not concentrate our deployments, do not be afraid of being ridiculed for having not thrown off guerrilla warfare concepts. Because we lack planes and artillery, we definitely cannot forsake guerrilla warfare, *otherwise we will be wiped out*" [emphasis added].[94] Liu argued instead that the CCP forces should build up their strength by incorporating troops from the defunct Japanese puppet regime. Only if the CCP could lure GMD troops "50 to 100 miles into the hinterland" could they attempt decisive engagements.

Mao returned from Chongqing on October 11 and quickly overruled Liu's order. He opted instead to confront the GMD in a quick and decisive campaign in hopes of taking control of the northeast's cities as well as its countryside.[95] Mao apparently believed he could concentrate up to 70,000 troops at that point for a decisive engagement, in his view enough to prevail over a comparable number of GMD soldiers. When CCP commanders complained to Mao that their troops were poorly clothed, underequipped, and underfed, Mao insisted on proceeding with the campaign.[96]

Mao's plans for Manchuria suffered a sharp setback on November 15, when nationalist troops routed CCP forces at Shanhaiguan. Mao was hospitalized

[90] Victor Shiu Chiang Cheng, "China's Madrid in Manchuria: The Communist Military Strategy at the Onset of the Chinese Civil War, 1945–1946," *Modern China* 31, no. 1 (2005): 78.

[91] Steven I. Levine, *Anvil of Victory: The Communist Revolution in Manchuria, 1945–1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 103.

[92] Liu and Chen, *Liu Shaoqi Nianpu*, vol. 1, 502.

[93] Cheng, "China's Madrid in Manchuria," 81.

[94] Liu and Chen, *Liu Shaoqi Nianpu*, vol. 1, 510.

[95] Pang, *Mao Zedong Nianpu*, vol. 3, 33, 37–39. See also Cheng, "China's Madrid in Manchuria," 82.

[96] On the troop figures and Mao's awareness of the many difficulties his troops had encountered, see Cheng, "China's Madrid in Manchuria," 82–84.

soon after, apparently for malaria, leaving Liu in charge once again.[97] Liu ordered communist forces to evacuate the big cities in the northeast and to focus once again on more conservative, guerrilla-style tactics.[98] After Mao's return in the spring, the communists once again made a play for some of Manchuria's cities, but in the end they could hold only Harbin, in the far north.

Liu's stint as Mao's stand-in in the fall of 1945 makes it clear that he lacked Mao's degree of confidence in what communist forces could accomplish at that point in time. Facing the same situation in Manchuria, the two men clearly disagreed as to how effectively the communists could compete with the stronger nationalist forces on the battlefield. Nor was this simply an isolated disagreement: Mao and Liu continued to differ over the wisdom of confronting the GMD. In June 1946, the CCP leadership held a series of meetings in Yan'an during which they actively debated whether to make concessions in an effort to avert a nationwide conflict with the nationalists. Whereas Liu favored such concessions, Mao and several military commanders opposed them, preferring to fight instead.[99] To be sure, Mao's goal at this point was not the overthrow of the nationalists but a negotiated settlement, as noted earlier. Even so, he once again proved more willing than Liu to fight the stronger GMD forces that they faced.

After mid-1946, Liu devoted less attention to military matters and returned to more familiar policy arenas, such as party affairs and economic issues. Following the CCP's victory over the GMD, of course, Liu did extol the PLA's remarkable accomplishment in his public speeches, as one would expect.[100] Unlike Mao, however, Liu did not delve into the specific military strategies and tactics that had allowed the communists to prevail. Also unlike Mao, there is little sign that Liu exalted the prowess of the CCP's forces in less scripted situations. In fact, in a talk to party journalists in October 1948, Liu actually sounded fearful of confronting the U.S. military when he stated: "To claim that we have already established adequate ties with the masses and that we have done our work perfectly well would be more dangerous than confronting 10,000 armed U.S. troops."[101] Although Liu was clearly arguing that some things were even more threatening to the CCP's continued existence than the U.S. military, his evident anxiety at the prospect of confronting a single American division was striking.

In sum, at the close of the Chinese Revolution, Liu's sense of martial efficacy seems to have been weaker than Mao's. In the 12 years leading up to the CCP's

[97] Michael Lynch, *Mao* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 133.
[98] Liu and Chen, *Liu Shaoqi Nianpu*, vol. 1, 530–31.
[99] Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 44.
[100] For example, see Liu Shaoqi, "Strengthen the Great Revolutionary Unity of the Chinese People," September 21, 1949, in *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), vol. 1, 429–32.
[101] Liu Shaoqi, "A Talk to the North China Press Corps," October 2, 1948, in *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi*, vol. 1, 394.

final victory, Liu had typically favored a cautious approach to military conflict whether the opponent was Japan or the GMD. In contrast, although Mao had favored a conservative approach to fighting Japan, he grew increasingly confident in the aftermath of World War II. As a result, Liu and Mao began to have divergent assessments of what their forces could accomplish, even before Mao sensed that a nationwide victory was within their grasp. In the wake of the CCP's triumph, Mao reveled in the prowess of the PLA, both publicly and privately, whereas Liu was considerably more circumspect, at least in private.

This divergence between Mao and Liu does not seem surprising in light of their very different backgrounds. Unlike Mao, Liu only began to consider military issues seriously in 1937. Although he seems to have gained a healthy respect for the resilience of the CCP forces, Liu never approached Mao's level of experience in military matters. Lowell Dittmer sums up the different formative experiences of the two men as follows: "Mao was the leader of a revolutionary movement and later a nation at war who could mobilize the populace against the threat of a common enemy; Liu was the leader of underground party organizations."[102] Of course, Liu did serve as political commissar of the New Fourth Army in the early 1940s, but these forces operated behind enemy lines in Jiangsu and engaged primarily in guerrilla warfare. In any case, Liu's primary task in this position was the expansion of the forces under his authority, not the formulation of military strategy. Following World War II, Liu did gain some experience commanding large numbers of CCP forces while Mao was in Chongqing, as noted earlier. Yet this episode only served to underscore Liu's more conservative approach to military conflict. After mid-1946, Liu returned to matters in which he had greater expertise, and he was not even working in close physical proximity to Mao, having moved from Yan'an to southern Hebei with a group of other CCP leaders.[103] In short, given the division of labor between Mao and Liu during the revolution, it is not too surprising that they developed different senses of martial efficacy.

A Weak Sense of Moral Efficacy

If Liu wrote relatively little about military matters before 1949, he spoke and wrote even less about diplomacy. The official, two-volume *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi* includes 38 texts from the revolutionary period, and virtually none of them address diplomatic matters at any significant length. Toward the end of the revolution, to be sure, Liu took on a higher international profile as he became involved in the CCP's relations with the wider communist world. In the fall of 1948, for example, he published an extended essay titled "Internationalism and Nationalism," which was by far his most extended analysis of

[102] Dittmer, *Liu Shao-ch'i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, 187.

[103] This step was taken as a precautionary measure: Liu's group was designed to take over in the event that the CCP's leadership in Yan'an was wiped out. See ibid., 22.

international issues before 1949.[104] Written after the Communist Information Bureau expelled Yugoslavia in the summer of 1948, the essay sharply criticized "the Tito clique" and made it clear that the CCP supported Moscow. Most important for our purposes here, the article evinced little interest in international institutions or in fostering international cooperation. Instead, it emphasized the growing conflict between the socialist and capitalist worlds and the need for struggle against "exploitation and oppression" by American "imperialism."[105] In short, Liu did not pay great attention to challenges of diplomacy and international cooperation during the revolution, so it is hard to see how he could have developed a strong sense of moral efficacy during this time.

Although Liu did not evince a broad sense of moral efficacy in his revolutionary writings, a few qualifications are in order. He was very interested in the development of communist ideology, and he clearly saw the Chinese Revolution as an event of global import in this regard, one that illuminated "the road that the peoples of many colonial and semi-colonial areas should traverse in their struggle for national independence and people's democracy."[106] Yet Liu was also careful to recognize and support Soviet ideological leadership, and his earlier education in Moscow was evident in his writings and speeches.[107] As a result, it would be a stretch to suggest that Liu saw the PRC as being poised to shape the international agenda after it took power.

Liu was also very interested in the role of persuasion in politics, though mainly within the realm of intraparty affairs. In his signature essay, "How to Be a Good Communist," Liu noted that party members would inevitably differ in terms of "ideology, viewpoint, custom, habit, and mood," not to mention "in philosophy of life, their world outlook, and their concept of ethics."[108] The solution, in Liu's view, was not simply to tolerate these differences but rather to sort out which ideas were beneficial to the long-term interests of the party (and thus "correct") and which were detrimental (and therefore "incorrect"). Once this was determined, party members should use persuasion to forge a consensus around the "correct" ideas. As Liu put it, "[W]e combine irreconcilability and clarity in principle with flexibility in the methods of struggle and with the spirit of patient persuasion."[109] In making his case, Liu seemed relatively confident

[104] Liu Shaoqi, "Internationalism and Nationalism," November 1, 1948, in *Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i*, vol. 2, 123–51. Because this article was apparently written in collaboration with other CCP leaders, it probably represented a consensus of the party leadership, not merely Liu's own views.

[105] Ibid., 137.

[106] Liu Shaoqi, "Opening Speech at the Asian and Australian Trade Union Delegates' Meeting," November 16, 1949, in *Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i*, vol. 2, 178.

[107] See, for example, Liu Shaoqi, "Speech Delivered to the First Class of Students of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism," December 14, 1948, in *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi*, vol. 1, 412–14.

[108] Liu Shaoqi, "How to Be a Good Communist," July 1939, in *Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i*, vol. 1, 204–5.

[109] Ibid., 208.

that the CCP could achieve such consensus. Although ideological "defects" still existed within the party, he stated that "we can and shall certainly eliminate these things."[110]

Two years later, Liu sounded considerably less optimistic about the party's ability to resolve its internal differences. In "On Inner Party Struggle," a lengthy lecture delivered to the Party School in July 1941, Liu reiterated the need for party cadres to resolve their differences through dialogue and persuasion. To a greater degree than before, Liu conceded that forging ideological consensus within the party was difficult. "This cannot be done simply in a few words or in a simple 'struggle meeting,'" he observed. Instead, it could "only be achieved through painstaking persuasion and education, through various kinds of complicated struggles and through a considerable period of education, struggle and practice in revolution."[111] In a moment of candor, Liu even complained that "in the long historical development of our party . . . in many cases inner-party struggle was not conducted in a correct manner."[112] In short, although Liu clearly saw persuasion as playing a critical role in intraparty affairs, he sounded quite sober in assessing his party's ability to forge an ideological consensus.

Liu wrote much less about the possibility of using persuasion to win over the CCP's rivals, and it seems unlikely that he possessed any great confidence in this regard. Like Mao, Liu did not attribute the party's success in forging a second united front with the GMD to the CCP's persistent propaganda and diplomatic efforts. Instead, like Mao, he credited Japan's military assertiveness. Referring to progress in relations with the GMD, in May 1937, for example, Liu argued: "Why has it been possible to bring about this internal peace? The basic reason is that the Japanese imperialists are pursuing a continental policy designed to subjugate China."[113] Liu proceeded to note the CCP's promotion of the united front in a list of "other reasons," but the Japanese threat was his primary emphasis. Subsequently, following World War II, Liu did not become a major player in the CCP's efforts to elicit cooperation from the United States, and, in any case, the party's meager accomplishments in this endeavor would seem unlikely to have inspired him.

Taking these various elements together, it is clear that Liu did not possess a strong sense of moral efficacy. In 1949, he did not see the PRC as being well positioned to strike out on its own in international diplomacy but instead preferred to follow Moscow's lead. Liu's views on the CCP's prowess at persuasion seem to have been more complicated. His rich experience in dealing with party affairs and ideological issues made him very interested in the role of persuasion in resolving the CCP's internal differences. At the same time, there is little evidence that he believed in the CCP's ability to win over its political

[110] Ibid., 215.
[111] Liu Shaoqi, *On Inner Party Struggle* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1951), 30.
[112] Ibid., 54.
[113] Liu Shaoqi, "Win Democracy and Unity Nationwide and Leadership by the Party in the United Front," May 1937, in *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi*, vol. 1, 83.

adversaries. Of course, it is difficult to generalize based on Liu's limited writings on international affairs before 1949, but the very paucity of this material is in itself suggestive. Had Liu possessed a high level of confidence in diplomacy, one would imagine that his writings on the subject would have been more copious.

Mao and Liu came to power in 1949 with different senses of what their new state would be able to accomplish in foreign affairs. Whereas Mao believed deeply in the martial prowess of the PLA, Liu had a more measured view. At the same time, there is little indication that either leader was confident in China's ability to elicit cooperation from other states through diplomacy. The next chapter explores how these different senses of national efficacy informed the stances that Mao and Liu adopted after war broke out on the Korean Peninsula in 1950.

4

Mao's Adventure in Korea

> We have experienced decades of wars. Didn't we beat enemies with superior equipment in all of them?
>
> Mao Zedong, October 5, 1950

In 1949, the CCP took charge of a country reeling from decades of war and political chaos. Unemployment and inflation were rampant. Agricultural production, the mainstay of the economy, had fallen well below pre–World War II levels. Between 1936 and 1949, the grain and cotton harvests fell by 22 percent and 48 percent, respectively. Industry was hit even harder. Total industrial production fell by 50 percent, and heavy industry by 70 percent, over the same period. Years of conflict had also left the main railroads severely damaged. Making matters worse, Mao estimated that more than 400,000 "bandits" still roamed the country as late as mid-1950. With so much in disarray, China's share of the world economy had fallen to 4.5 percent by midcentury, down from nearly 9 percent in 1913.[1]

Faced with these daunting problems, Mao and his colleagues had no illusions that China was a power on a par with the United States or the Soviet Union. On the contrary, CCP leaders understood that China lagged behind, and they believed that their new regime needed outside help in order to modernize. Accordingly, in the winter of 1949–1950, Mao made an extended visit to Moscow to negotiate a new relationship. In discussions with Stalin, he suggested that the two sides conclude a treaty that addressed "political, economic, cultural, and military cooperation," adding that "of most importance will be the question of economic cooperation."[2] The two sides eventually concluded a

[1] Guo Binwei and Tan Zongji, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jianshi* [A Brief History of the People's Republic of China] (Changchun: Jilin Humanities Press, 1988), 6; Maddison, *World Economy*, vol. 1, 263.

[2] "Conversation between Stalin and Mao, Moscow, 22 January 1950," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, nos. 6–7 (Winter 1995–1996): 8.

treaty of "Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance" in February 1950. At the same time, the Soviet Union offered China a five-year loan of $300 million.[3]

It was against this backdrop that North Korea invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950. Mao had consented to the invasion in May when North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung visited Beijing, but Kim subsequently kept Mao in the dark, and Chinese leaders apparently learned of the attack from foreign news services.[4] On June 27, U.S. president Harry Truman announced that American forces would intervene in the conflict under the auspices of the United Nations, and that the U.S. Seventh Fleet would commence policing the Taiwan Strait. Truman's announcement turned the new war into a crisis for China's leaders, and Mao was particularly aggrieved by the U.S. decision to neutralize the Taiwan Strait, which reversed an American pledge made in January to stay out of the Chinese civil war.[5] China's sense of threat would grow over the next few months as UN forces streamed into Korea, and especially after they reversed the tide of the war in September and approached the 38th parallel (see Map 4.1).[6]

In contemplating a response to these American actions, the CCP leadership was forced to confront the huge disparity in national power between the PRC and the United States. The PLA's demobilization plans then under way would still leave the army with roughly three million soldiers, but these troops were poorly equipped, traveled on foot, and lacked air and naval support.[7] Moreover, the PLA had never fought beyond China's borders before, and it lacked the logistics system to supply such an effort. During the revolution, communist forces relied heavily on sympathetic locals for intelligence, supplies, and concealment. In Korea, however, the Chinese soldiers would be foreigners, making communication and cooperation with the local population vastly more difficult. Simply supplying China's forces would be a formidable challenge.

[3] On the Sino-Soviet negotiations, see Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 76–129.

[4] Li Haiwen, "Zhonggong Zhongyang Jiujing Heshi Jueding Zhiyuanjun Chuguo Zuozhan? [When Did the CCP Center Decide to Send the Volunteer Army to Fight beyond China's Borders After All?]," *Dang de Wenxian* [Party Documents], no. 5 (1993): 85.

[5] For Mao's reaction to Truman's announcement, see Mao Zedong, "Zai Zhongyang Renmin Zhengfu Weiyuanhui Di Baci Huiyishang de Jianghua [Speech at the Eighth Meeting of the Central People's Government Committee]," June 28, 1950, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 1, 423. On Truman's pledge and the reversal, see Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 105–37.

[6] The International Crisis Behavior Project treats the outbreak of the Korean War and the U.S. crossing of the 38th parallel as separate crises, but, as the following analysis demonstrates, they were closely connected, and China's military reaction to the latter would not have been possible without the mobilization that was set in motion by the outbreak of the war.

[7] On the demobilization plan, see Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 94–96; Lei Yingfu, "Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Jige Zhongda Juece de Huiyi [Recalling Several Major Decisions in the War to Resist America and Aid Korea]," *Dang de Wenxian* [Party Documents], no. 6 (1993): 76.

MAP 4.1. The Korean Peninsula

In contrast, the United States possessed the most modern military in the world. As of 1950, the U.S. military had already amassed 299 atomic warheads and research on the hydrogen bomb had publicly commenced.[8] On the ground, the U.S. Army consisted of 10 combat divisions, a figure that would double during the course of the war in Korea.[9] Its inventory included more than 3,000 tanks, 27,000 motor vehicles, and an abundance of towed artillery. American ground operations also benefited from tactical air support and the mobility afforded by the world's most powerful navy. On top of all this, the U.S. military was getting stronger fast: U.S. defense spending jumped from $14 billion to $25 billion after North Korea's invasion, and it would soon climb by another $17 billion.[10] Backing up this rapid rise in military spending was the U.S. economy: U.S. GDP was 27 percent of the world total in 1950, twice that of the Chinese and Soviet economies *combined*.[11]

In the end, Mao's government chose to challenge the United States in Korea, while deferring plans to conquer Taiwan. This combination of policies was entirely congruent with Mao's sense of martial efficacy. As noted in Chapter 3, Mao had extensive experience fighting more powerful opponents on land but very little familiarity with naval and amphibious operations. In this light, it is not surprising that his government chose to confront the United States on land but not at sea. To be sure, the decision to defer an attack on Taiwan was probably overdetermined: Taiwan and the mainland are separated by 100 miles of water, and the PRC had no real air force or navy in 1950 with which it could attempt a crossing against concerted resistance.[12] The decision to fight in Korea, in contrast, was a much harder one for China's leaders to make, as will be explained in the pages that follow.

Unlike Mao's approach to military matters, his conduct of diplomacy during the war was consistently conservative, in keeping with his weaker sense of moral efficacy. As William Stueck has written, "[N]o evidence indicates . . . that Chinese troops in Korea ever gave up ground for other than military reasons."[13]

[8] Information made available to the author by the Office of Public Affairs, National Nuclear Security Administration, U.S. Department of Energy, May 15, 2006. Note that the size of the U.S. arsenal was increasing rapidly at the time, from 170 warheads in 1949 to 299 in 1950 to 438 in 1951.

[9] On the state of the U.S. Army at the time, see James Schnabel, *Policy and Direction: The First Year*, The United States Army and the Korean War (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1972), 43–46.

[10] Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 169.

[11] Maddison, *World Economy*, vol. 1, 263.

[12] In addition, Chris Twomey argues that the PRC was deterred from attacking Taiwan because its doctrine for amphibious operations closely paralleled that of the United States, facilitating strategic communication. See Christopher P. Twomey, *The Military Lens: Doctrinal Difference and Deterrence Failure in Sino-American Relations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010), 169–96.

[13] William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 159.

Mao's government ultimately agreed to join cease-fire negotiations in mid-1951, of course, talks that ultimately led to the armistice agreement of July 1953. Yet this was hardly an example of boldly cooperative diplomacy. On the contrary, Mao agreed to talk only after concluding that China would not be able to achieve a total victory in Korea. At that point, there was little reason not to seek an end to hostilities. In fact, as the following analysis will show, the most striking aspect of Mao's stance is not how quickly he agreed to negotiate but how long it took him to conclude that negotiations would be worth pursuing. Subsequently, after the cease-fire was concluded, China did not withdraw its forces from Korea, even though it continued to call for a removal of all foreign troops.[14] In short, Mao did not take any cooperative steps in Korea that could have been exploited by the other side.

If Mao's militarily bold but diplomatically cautious approach to the Korean War was broadly congruent with his national efficacy beliefs, it remains to be seen whether his beliefs actually helped to generate this pattern of policy. The remainder of this chapter thus focuses on this question. In doing so, it executes the second analytical step outlined at the end of Chapter 2: testing the hypotheses in the period immediately after the leader in question came to power. The analysis focuses first on the military side. The discussion here finds that Mao's sense of martial efficacy played an important role in inspiring China's assertive approach to the Korean conflict. As hypothesized, Mao's martial confidence inspired him to play up the opportunities and play down the dangers posed by the intervention, prompting him to discount the reservations of less confident colleagues such as Liu. The chapter then turns to China's conduct of wartime diplomacy. This discussion begins by noting that Mao's conservative diplomacy did not reflect a lack of interest in extracting concessions from the United States. On the contrary, there were a range of issues on which Beijing would have welcomed a more cooperative posture from Washington, but Mao was not prepared to take any chances toward that end, in keeping with his limited confidence in the diplomatic sphere. In fact, Mao turned out to be *too* cautious in his diplomacy, missing an opportunity to end the war sooner and on better terms than he ultimately did.

THE DECISION TO FIGHT IN KOREA

Traditionally, scholars have explained China's intervention in Korea by highlighting what Mao believed was at stake for China in the conflict, touting either

[14] Substantial Chinese forces were maintained in Korea until 1958. The withdrawal at that point does not appear to have been designed to have diplomatic impact but rather reflected tensions between Pyongyang and Beijing. See Chen Jian, "Limits of the 'Lips and Teeth' Alliance: An Historical Review of Chinese–North Korean Relations," in *Uneasy Allies: Fifty Years of China–North Korea Relations*, Asia Program Special Report no. 115 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, September 2003), 6.

his security concerns or his ideological commitments.[15] In contrast, the equally crucial question of why Mao believed that China could succeed in Korea has received less scrutiny.[16] This latter question is all the more important because it was the feasibility of standing up to the United States that generated the most debate within the Chinese leadership leading up to the intervention. The following analysis begins by tracing the decision-making process that led to China's initial decision to intervene, focusing first on Mao's policy preferences (and those of Liu Shaoqi as well) and then on the kinds of outcomes that Mao anticipated in Korea. It then explores Mao's decision to persist with the intervention despite disappointing news from Moscow in mid-October. The analysis concludes by considering alternative explanations for China's intervention.

The Initial Decision to Intervene

The question of whether and how China should intervene in the Korean War was taken up only days after the United States announced that it would join the conflict. On July 2, Zhou Enlai met with Soviet ambassador N. V. Roshchin and laid out China's assessment of the developing situation. Zhou stressed that North Korea should take stronger measures to prevent the influx of American troops: the drive south should be accelerated, southern harbors should be attacked and occupied, and landing points such as Inchon should be guarded to prevent amphibious landings. In fact, Zhou's remarks made it clear that China's leaders were already worrying about a possible reversal of the conflict. Zhou indicated that China was prepared to send "volunteer" forces to Korea if American forces crossed the 38th parallel, and he stated that China had begun organizing a force of 120,000 troops in the northeast for such a contingency. Zhou concluded by asking that the Soviet Union provide air cover for these troops. On July 5, Stalin replied affirmatively. His note read: "We believe that immediately concentrating nine Chinese divisions near the China-Korea border for the purpose of entering North Korea and fighting if the enemy

[15] Allen Whiting's classic study originally emphasized China's security concerns. See Allen Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York: Macmillan, 1960). Chen Jian's subsequent landmark study, *China's Road to the Korean War*, stressed the importance of Mao's revolutionary ideology. Tom Christensen has more recently renewed the emphasis on Mao's security concerns. See Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 149–76, and Thomas J. Christensen, "Windows and War: Trend Analysis and Beijing's Use of Force," in *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, ed. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert Ross (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 54–58. For an impressive Chinese account, see Shen Zhihua, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng* [Mao Zedong, Stalin, and the Korean War] (Guangzhou: Guangdong People's Press, 2003).

[16] There are a few exceptions here: T. V. Paul, Michael Sheng, and Chris Twomey have explored why Mao believed that China could succeed in Korea, as noted in my discussion of alternative explanations later in this chapter. Another intriguing study in this regard is Zhang Shuguang's *Mao's Military Romanticism*, cited earlier. Zhang begins his book by exploring the "military romanticism" expressed in Mao's revolutionary writings, but his account of the Korean War moves away from this focus in favor of a more comprehensive narrative.

crosses the 38th parallel is correct. We will do our best to provide air cover for these troops." At this point, it seems clear that both Beijing and Moscow were contemplating Chinese intervention as a reaction to enemy forces crossing the 38th parallel.[17]

China's formal efforts to organize its forces began shortly thereafter. On July 7, Mao ordered the creation of the "Northeast Border Defense Army" (NEBDA) so that "in case we needed to enter the war we would be prepared." On July 13, the Central Military Commission (CMC) formally issued the "Orders to Defend the Northeast Borders." These orders directed NEBDA "to defend the borders of the Northeast and to prepare to support war operations of the Korean People's Army if necessary." The orders further specified that four army corps, three artillery divisions, and three air force groups (a total of 255,000 troops) would comprise NEBDA initially. Also at this time, Zhou Enlai asked Kim Il-Sung to provide China with detailed maps of the peninsula as well as sample uniforms from the North Korean Army, which China would presumably replicate for its own soldiers. The PRC was preparing in earnest.[18]

Mao soon began to signal his willingness to enter the war more clearly, according to new evidence from Russian archives. In particular, on July 19, Kim Il-Sung reported to the Soviet ambassador in Pyongyang, Terentii Shtykov, on a recent conversation between Mao and North Korea's representative in Beijing. Mao apparently believed that the United States was preparing for a protracted conflict and that it would continue to increase its forces in Korea. Accordingly, the CCP leader advised Kim to stop offensive operations and to conserve his main force for a drawn-out fight. Mao also promised to ship new supplies to Korea by July 25, including 30,000 rifles, 2,000 portable machine guns, 200 heavy machine guns, 300 81-mm mortars, and 1,000 mules. Most importantly, Mao indicated that the PRC was prepared to send its own forces to North Korea if its assistance was needed, and he noted that China was already preparing a large force for this purpose. It is worth noting here that Mao does not seem to have mentioned in this conversation the 38th parallel as a trigger for Chinese intervention. Instead, he seemed more concerned with helping Kim to counter the anticipated American buildup, although it remained unclear where China's forces would be deployed and what role they would

[17] Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 208–9. For Stalin's note, see Joseph Stalin, "Shidalin Guanyu Zhongguo zai Zhong Chao Bianjing Jijie Budui Wenti zhi Luoshen Dian [Telegram from Stalin to Roshchin on China Massing Troops on the China-Korea Border]," July 5, 1950, in *Chaoxian Zhanzheng: Eguo Danganguan de Jiemi Wenjian* [The Korean War: Top Secret Documents from the Russian Archives], ed. Shen Zhihua (Taipei: Central Research Institute Modern History Center, 2003), vol. 1, 431.

[18] For the quotations in this paragraph, see Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 136–41. On the composition of NEBDA, see Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 211–12. On Zhou's requests, see Shen Zhihua, "China and the Dispatch of the Soviet Air Force: The Formation of the Chinese-Soviet-Korean Alliance in the Early Stage of the Korean War," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 2 (2010): 215.

play in the overall war effort. Mao asked Kim to reply to his suggestion by August 10.[19]

Mao's mid-July proposal was destined to go nowhere. When Kim asked the Soviet ambassador for Moscow's views on China entering the conflict, he was surprised to learn that Shtykov knew nothing of Mao's suggestion. Shtykov proceeded to ask Moscow for instructions, but Stalin apparently never replied. This silence, combined with the language of Stalin's note on July 5, suggests that the Soviet leader was reluctant to endorse Chinese intervention unless enemy forces had actually crossed the 38th parallel.[20]

Even as Mao's proposal languished, he continued to focus on war preparations at home. On August 4, he convened a meeting of the CCP politburo and made the case for joining the war. Mao worried that the United States would become increasingly aggressive should it prevail in Korea. As a result, he argued, "[W]e cannot fail to assist the Koreans, we must help by sending our military volunteers there."[21] Although Mao recognized that the war might escalate, he remained undaunted. As he told his colleagues at the meeting:

> The Korean War may be a short war, a long war, a wide-ranging war, a nuclear war, and so on. If the U.S. attacks with atomic bombs, we have no choice but to let them strike since we do not have them; this is something that we cannot control. But we are not afraid. We can still respond with our hand grenades, and we must be prepared.[22]

On August 5, Mao wrote Gao Gang, who was then overseeing NEBDA, that "the troops must complete their preparations within this month and be ready for orders to carry out war operations."[23] On August 15, Gao informed Mao that the preparations could not be completed so quickly.[24] Mao then extended the deadline to the end of September.[25] In late August, the preparations became more complicated as CCP leaders became increasingly worried about

[19] Shen Zhihua, "Sulian Kongjun Chudong: Chaozhan Chuqi Zhong Su Chao Tongmeng de Neizai Guanxi [The Soviet Air Force Goes into Action: Relations within the Chinese-Soviet-Korean Alliance in the Early Stages of the Korean War]," paper presented at "The Cold War and East Asia," Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Japan, June 24–27, 2008, 3–4.

[20] Ibid., 4.

[21] Bo Yibo, *Ruogan Zhongda Juece yu Shijian de Huigu* [Recollections of Certain Important Decisions and Events] (Beijing: CCP Central Party School Press, 1991), vol. 1, 43.

[22] Quoted in Yin Xiong and Huang Xuemei, *Shiji Huimou: Shijie Yuanzidan Fengyunlu* [Looking Back at the Century: A Stormy Record of the Atomic Bomb in the World] (Beijing: Xinhua, 1999), 258. See also Qi Dexue, *Kangmei Yuanchao Jishi* [*On the Spot Record of the War to Resist America and Aid Korea*] (Beijing: Huaxia Press, 1996), 15.

[23] "Junwei Guanyu Dongbei Bianfangjun Yuenei Wancheng Yiqie Zuozhan Zhunbei Gei Gao Gang de Dianbao [Telegram to Gao Gang from the Central Military Commission on NEBDA Completing All of Its War Preparations within the Month]," August 5, 1950, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 1, 454.

[24] Academy of Military Science Military History Research Department, *Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Shi* [History of the War to Resist America and Aid Korea] (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2000), vol. 1, 94.

[25] Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Bianfangjun Wubi zai Jiuyuedi Yiqian Wancheng Yiqie Zuozhan Zhunbei Gei Gao Gang de Dianbao [Telegram to Gao Gang Indicating that the Border Defense Force

U.S. amphibious attacks at points behind North Korean lines.[26] The threat of a reversal on the battlefield prompted Mao to order that NEBDA be strengthened. In a cable to General Peng Dehuai on August 27, he argued that the four corps then assembled in the northeast were inadequate and that a total of 12 corps would be needed.[27]

Late August also saw Mao indicate to Moscow that he was thinking seriously about an intervention. On August 19 and 28, he spoke with Pavel Yudin, a Soviet scholar who was in Beijing to assist in the editing of Mao's *Selected Works* (and who would later become Moscow's ambassador to the PRC). Mao foresaw two scenarios for the war. First, if the United States did not increase its force levels in Korea, it could be driven off the peninsula relatively soon. Alternatively, if the United States was determined to prevail in Korea, Mao believed it would increase its forces on the peninsula up to a total of 30 to 40 divisions. In this case, China's direct assistance would be needed if the communists were to prevail. Mao argued that China could defeat even this much larger American force, which would weaken the United States considerably and thereby postpone the outbreak of another world war. The CCP leader presumably understood that his proposal would be passed on to the Soviet leadership.[28]

Once again, Stalin seems to have been unenthusiastic about Mao's plan. On August 26, Kim Il-Sung indicated to Ambassador Shtykov in Pyongyang that he was in favor of China dispatching troops to Korea because his forces were having great difficulty at the front.[29] On August 28, Stalin wrote Kim and did not mention China at all. Instead, Stalin assured Kim that "the foreign invaders will soon be forced out of Korea," although it might not be easy. As Stalin told Kim, "[V]ictory is sometimes accompanied by setbacks, even local defeats." The Soviet leader then reminded Kim that North Korea was not alone, unlike the Soviet Union in 1919. To drive home his point, Stalin closed the letter by suggesting that the Soviet Union could provide North Korea with additional fighter planes "if they are needed."[30] As long as North Korea itself was not

Must Complete All Its War Preparations by the end of September]," August 18, 1950, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 1, 469.

[26] These worries are summarized in Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 146–54.

[27] Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Jizhong Shierge Jun Yi Yingfu Shiju Wenti Gei Peng Dehuai de Dianbao [Telegram to Peng Dehuai Concerning Concentrating 12 Corps to Handle the Current Political Situation]," August 27, 1950, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 1, 485. Four days later, a conference chaired by Zhou appears to have settled on a total of 11 corps. See Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 151.

[28] Shen, "Sulian Kongjun Chudong," 4–5. See also Shen, "China and the Dispatch of the Soviet Air Force," 217.

[29] Shen, "Sulian Kongjun Chudong," 5. See also Shen, "China and the Dispatch of the Soviet Air Force," 218.

[30] Joseph Stalin, "Shidalin Guanyu dui Chao Renmin Jun Zuozhan de Jianyi zhi Shentekefu Dian [Telegram from Stalin to Shtykov Concerning Warfighting Recommendations for the Korean People's Army]," August 28, 1950, in Shen, *Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, vol. 2, 515.

in danger, Stalin apparently wanted Pyongyang to depend on Moscow rather than Beijing.

Although Stalin hesitated to endorse Chinese intervention, Mao continued to build support at home for joining the war. On September 5, he began an address to the Ninth Session of the Central People's Government Council by celebrating the past achievements of the revolution.[31] "Even though in our struggle we sometimes encountered difficulties," he recalled, "we did not look to [the gods] to rescue us, we used our own two hands to overcome our difficulties." Mao then attempted to puncture the myth of American invincibility, noting the difficulties that the United States would have sustaining a war effort so far from its shores. Mao concluded his remarks by celebrating China's tradition of military excellence. As he put it:

> We Chinese are used to fighting. We do not wish to fight, but if you are definitely going to fight, then we will let you. You fight your way, and I will fight my way. You can use your atomic bombs, and I will use my hand grenades. I will grab your weak point, fight with you, and finally defeat you.

A more confident statement of martial efficacy would be difficult to find. Although these remarks were probably intended in part to boost morale, they also resonated with the martial confidence evident in Mao's writings going back to the revolution. Indeed, Mao was preparing to wager the security of China's northeast on his country's fighting ability; this was no time for hollow rhetoric. As we will see, Mao's confidence would influence his estimate of how the war would proceed as he weighed the decision to intervene one month later.

After the U.S. landing at Inchon on September 15, the tide of the war turned against the North Koreans. By September 30, UN forces had retaken Seoul, and the first South Korean forces were crossing the 38th parallel. Increasingly desperate, Kim-Il Sung issued appeals for direct Soviet and Chinese intervention on September 29 and October 1, respectively.[32] With North Korea's survival in the balance, and unwilling to send Soviet forces into the conflict, Stalin quickly became much more enthusiastic about the idea of China joining the war. Accordingly, on October 1, the Soviet leader sent Mao a note urging him to dispatch troops to Korea, even if only five or six divisions.[33]

On the evening of October 1, Mao convened a meeting of the politburo secretariat to consider China's course of action. Besides Mao, those attending

[31] For the full text of Mao's remarks, see Mao Zedong, "Chaoxian Zhanju he Women de Fangzhen [The War Situation in Korea and Our Guiding Principles]," in *Mao Zedong Wenji* [Mao Zedong's Collected Works] (Beijing: People's Press, 1993), vol. 6, 92–94.

[32] Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 171–72.

[33] Joseph Stalin, "Shidalin Guanyu Jianyi Zhongguo Pai Budui Yuanzhu Chaoxian Wenti zhi Luoshen Dian [Telegram from Stalin to Roshchin on China Sending Troops to Help with the Korea Problem]," October 1, 1950, in Shen, *Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, vol. 2, 571.

included Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhu De.[34] The meeting lasted late into the night. Consistent with the stance he had taken up to this point, Mao argued that the PRC should intervene. In this, he appears to have been supported by Zhou. Zhu, however, was ambivalent, and Liu was more or less opposed.[35] The meeting concluded with a decision to hold an enlarged meeting of the secretariat the next day, attended by military planners.

Liu's opposition at this key moment is worth noting. On September 21, he had sounded positive about intervention while talking with Roshchin, the Soviet ambassador.[36] Although the reason for Liu's turnabout remains unclear, Roshchin later speculated that the sharp deterioration of North Korea's position had prompted many Chinese leaders to get cold feet.[37] This seems plausible. As of September 21, U.S. forces were breaking out of Pusan and moving north, but neither U.S. nor South Korean troops had approached the 38th parallel. In fact, only one day earlier, Zhou had written to Kim and urged North Korea to hold the territory north of the parallel.[38] Although North Korean forces were in disarray, Pyongyang had kept Beijing in the dark about developments on the battlefield.[39] By October 1, however, the extent of North Korea's distress was obvious. Kim's letter requesting Chinese assistance on that day described the situation as "most grave."[40] Stalin's letter had also stressed Pyongyang's difficulties. It thus became clear that the PRC faced a more challenging situation than it had just 10 days earlier. China would not be helping North Korea resist the United States but would essentially be taking over the war.[41] In this context, Liu's change of heart is easy to understand. Although his confidence in China's military capabilities was not negligible, Liu's sense of martial efficacy did not approach Mao's level. As a result, his hesitation at this

[34] The secretariat (*shujichu*) would later be called the politburo standing committee (*zhengzhiju changwei*). Although he was a member at that time, Ren Bishi apparently did not attend owing to poor health.

[35] Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 228. My understanding of Liu's stance at this meeting has also benefited from conversations with Shen Zhihua.

[36] Shen Zhihua, "Sino-North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution during the Korean War," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, nos. 14/15 (Winter 2003–Spring 2004): 11.

[37] N. V. Roshchin, "Luoshen Zhuancheng Mao Zedong Guanyu Zan Bu Chubing de Yijian zhi Shidalin Dian [Telegram from Roshchin to Stalin Transmitting Mao Zedong's Opinion on Not Sending Troops for the Moment]," October 3, 1950, in Shen, *Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, vol. 2, 577. Roshchin also speculated that the United States and Britain had used Nehru to elicit self-restraint on the part of the PRC.

[38] See Li Jie, "Cong Chubing Juece dao Wuci Zhanyi [From the Decision to Send Troops to the Fifth Campaign]," *Dangshi Yanjiu Ziliao* [Party History Research Materials], no. 2 (2001): 3.

[39] Shen, "Sino–North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution during the Korean War," 10–11. In fact, Soviet deputy foreign minister Andrey Gromyko had written Zhou on September 20 noting Kim's failure to share information with Beijing and calling it "incorrect." See Andrey Gromyko, "Geluomike Guanyu dui Zhou Enlai de Dafu zhi Luoshen Dian [Telegram from Gromyko to Roshchin on Responding to Zhou Enlai]," September 20, 1950, in Shen, *Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, vol. 2, 542.

[40] Quoted in Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 172.

[41] Li, "Cong Chubing Juece dao Wuci Zhanyi," 4.

crucial moment is not surprising. As for Zhou and Zhu, although they are not the focus of this study, it is worth noting that both of them had acquired more military experience in the revolution than Liu. This may help to explain their somewhat greater support for intervention at this point.

Mao began drafting a note to Stalin the following day. Having won support from Zhou the night before, he declared his intention to send troops to Korea: "We have decided to send a part of our armed forces into Korea, under the name of Volunteer Army, to do combat with the forces of America and its running dog Syngman Rhee and to assist our Korean comrades."[42] Mao envisioned Chinese forces relying on mobile warfare to surround and eliminate large numbers of the enemy, just as they had in the revolution. He also made it clear that his goal was not to restore the status quo ante but to demolish the U.S. presence on the peninsula: "[Our troops] must be able to solve the problem; that is, they must be prepared to destroy and expel, within the borders of Korea, the invading armies of America and other countries." Mao was thus focused on total victory as he contemplated intervention at this time, notwithstanding the marked disparity in power between China and the United States.

Curiously, it appears that Mao never sent this telegram to Stalin. No corresponding copy has been located in the Russian archives, and there is no time of transmission or transmitter's stamp on the original document, as is the case for other telegrams Mao sent that day. This mystery is not hard to understand, however, if we consider what transpired among the Chinese leadership later that day, as well as the content of the response that *was* eventually sent to Stalin.[43]

On the afternoon of October 2, the enlarged meeting of the secretariat took place around 3:00 as planned. In setting the agenda, Mao attempted to skip the question of intervention entirely and move directly to implementation. As he reportedly stated in his opening remarks:

> The situation in Korea is already so serious, the question now is not whether or not we should send troops, but of sending them right away. Sending them one day early or one day late can affect the entire situation. Today we will first discuss two urgent questions: the first is when we should send our troops and the second is who should be the commander.[44]

[42] Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Jueding Pai Jundui Ru Chao Zuozhan Gei Sidalin de Dianbao [Telegram to Stalin on the Decision to Send Troops to Fight in Korea]," October 2, 1950, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 1, 539–41.

[43] The following argument builds on Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 227–29.

[44] Zhang Xi, "Peng Dehuai Shouming Shuaishi Kangmei Yuanchao de Qianqian Houhou [Before and after Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command Troops in Korea]," *Zhonggong Dangshi Ziliao* [Materials on Chinese Communist Party History], no. 31 (1989): 125. Zhang served as a senior officer on the staff of Peng Dehuai and later was on the editorial group of his official biography. In this latter capacity, Zhang was given access to classified archival materials and allowed to interview senior CCP and PLA officials.

At this point, Gao Gang interjected to ask why Lin Biao would not be the commander. As commander of the Fourth Field Army, Lin had led communist forces to victory in Manchuria during the revolution, making him the natural choice to lead NEBDA. Mao responded that originally Su Yu had been chosen but that Su was now quite ill. Mao then explained why Lin had not been chosen. He first noted that Lin worried that the Chinese forces would be overmatched. Lin had cited U.S. industrial strength, the superior firepower of its army, and its vastly more advanced naval and air forces. As a result, taking on the United States was "asking for a lot of trouble" (*yin huo shao shen*). Mao then informed his colleagues that he had spoken with Lin in the past few days to persuade him to take command, notwithstanding these concerns. In response, Lin stressed that he could not accept the responsibility because of his poor health. After more discussion, the participants decided to ask Peng Dehuai to take command.

We do not know precisely how the participants in the October 2 meeting reacted to Mao's attempt to bypass the broader question of intervention. Yet we do know that Mao produced a second response to Stalin that day, apparently after the meeting concluded. This second telegram makes it clear that Mao encountered considerable resistance.[45] The reply began by noting that the PRC had been planning to send volunteer forces to Korea after the enemy had crossed the 38th parallel. However, the PRC leadership now believed, "having thought this over thoroughly," that "such actions may entail extremely serious consequences." In particular, Mao noted that:

> In the first place, it is very difficult to resolve the Korean question with a few divisions (our troops are extremely poorly equipped, there is no confidence in the success of military operations against American troops), the enemy can force us to retreat. In the second place, it is most likely that this will provoke an open conflict between the USA and China, as a consequence of which the Soviet Union can also be dragged into war, and the question would thus become extremely large. Many comrades in the central committee of the CCP judge that it is necessary to show caution here.[46]

As a result, Mao argued, "it is better to show patience now" and "refrain from sending troops" in order to better prepare China's forces for conflict down the road. At the same time, he emphasized that this decision was not final.

Based on Mao's consistent support for intervention up to this point, it is hard to imagine that the negative tone of this note emanated from him. Instead, Mao's comment that "many comrades" were concerned about intervention makes it clear that he had encountered considerable resistance from

[45] Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 229. This second response was apparently given (perhaps spoken) to Roshchin on October 2 and was then transmitted by Roshchin to Stalin on October 3.

[46] For an English translation of this telegram, see Shen Zhihua, "The Discrepancy between the Russian and Chinese Versions of Mao's 2 October 1950 Message to Stalin on China's Entry into the Korean War: A Chinese Scholar's Reply," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, nos. 8–9 (Winter 1996–1997): 238.

his colleagues at the October 2 meeting. Although the decision was Mao's to make, he presumably was reluctant to intervene without the support of his closest colleagues (and potential rivals). Based on Liu's opposition the night before, it is reasonable to infer that he was also among those at the meeting who resisted Mao's push for intervention. In response, Mao appears to have shelved his upbeat draft and given Stalin a much more guarded response.

On the afternoon of October 4, the Chinese leadership convened an expanded politburo meeting to discuss the Korea question further. Opposition to intervention at this meeting has been clearly documented in the memoirs of Peng Dehuai, as well as in numerous secondary accounts.[47] Chen Jian suggests that almost all members of the politburo except for Mao expressed reservations in different degrees at this meeting.[48] Shu Ken'ei suggests that the most fervent opposition came from Lin Biao and Gao Gang.[49] Lin's opposition here seems plausible in light of the reservations he had expressed already. Most importantly for this study, Shu notes that Liu Shaoqi's attitude on October 4 was "negative." This finding accords with the reservations Liu had expressed as early as October 1, and also with other studies that have examined China's debate over intervention.[50]

Peng Dehuai did not speak at the meeting on October 4, having arrived late after flying in from Xian, but he would later recall opposing intervention when Mao first asked for his opinion.[51] In his view, Moscow had "completely washed its hands" (*wanquan xishou*) of the war, leaving China free to stay out as well. In addition, China's armament was "greatly inferior" (*cha de hen yuan*), so it would be an extremely difficult war to prosecute without Soviet support. There was thus no alternative to losing North Korea, as painful as that was. Former aides to Peng believe this conversation probably took place following the meeting on October 4.[52]

The politburo met again in enlarged session on the afternoon of October 5. As they had the day before, many of the participants continued to stress the dangers and difficulties of intervention. The mood changed, however, after Peng and Mao spoke. Peng had wrestled with the question of intervention during the night, and he had come to see it as both feasible and necessary. Mao followed up by repeating his view that intervention was imperative and by

47 Peng Dehuai, *Peng Dehuai Zishu* [The Autobiography of Peng Dehuai] (Beijing: People's Press, 1981), 257. See also Yu Yongbo et al., *Peng Dehuai Zhuan* [The Biography of Peng Dehuai] (Beijing: Modern China Press, 1993), 401–2. Several relevant secondary accounts are cited later.

48 Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 281n78.

49 Shu Ken'ei, *Mo Takuto no Chosen Senso: Chugoku ga Oryokko o Wataru Made* [Mao Zedong's Korean War: Up to China's Crossing of the Yalu] (Tokyo: Iwanami Bookstore, 1991), 201–2.

50 Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 84.

51 Wang Yazhi, "Mao Zedong Juexin Chubing Chaoxian Qian Hou de Yixie Qingkuang [Some Circumstances before and after Mao Zedong Determined to Send Troops to Korea]," *Dang de Wenxian* [Party Documents], no. 6 (1995): 87.

52 Author's interview with Wang Yazhi, Beijing, April 21, 2006.

making it clear that Peng would take command of the Chinese troops. Following this pair of presentations, the group's opinion apparently shifted in favor of intervention, Peng's appointment was confirmed, and a decision was made to proceed. In keeping with this decision, Mao issued an order on October 8 establishing "the Chinese People's Volunteers" (CPV) and dispatching this force to Korea.[53]

The evidence presented thus far makes it clear that Mao developed a clear preference for intervening in the Korean conflict soon after the United States announced its intention to join the war. More precisely, starting in mid-July, Mao made it clear that he was willing to intervene in the conflict if North Korea needed China's assistance against the U.S.-led forces, which Mao clearly worried was the case. Mao subsequently maintained this pro-intervention position following the reversal of the war in the second half of September, which had prompted many of his colleagues to get cold feet. Mao's policy preferences therefore are entirely consistent with his strong sense of martial efficacy. In addition, the evidence strongly suggests that China would have ultimately stayed out of the war had its leader not possessed such strong beliefs. Liu Shaoqi apparently supported the idea of intervening in September, when North Korea still appeared a viable ally. Yet at the moment of truth in October, Liu turned much more negative. As noted earlier, he appears to have resisted intervention at three vital meetings on October 1, 2, and 4. Of course, Liu seems to have supported Mao on October 5, but this is not totally surprising. Mao had by that point invested many hours in attempting to persuade Liu, and Liu may have calculated that continued resistance would create a dangerous split in the PRC's leadership. Had he been in Mao's place, however, it is hard to see Liu leading the charge into Korea.

Why was Mao so determined to intervene? If we look more closely at the debate over intervention, it is clear that Mao was not only concerned about North Korea's ability to fend off the United States but also remarkably optimistic about what the CPV could accomplish in Korea. The telegram that Mao drafted for Stalin on October 2 (but apparently did not send) is particularly revealing in this regard. Ideally, Mao believed, Chinese forces would be able to destroy the American forces on the peninsula, and the "Korea problem" would be "finished." If so, "the scope of the war will not be very great, and the duration will not be very long." In other words, Mao's best-case scenario if China entered the war was a total victory that would not be very costly to achieve. In contrast, the "least favorable" outcome that Mao foresaw was certainly not the worst that could be imagined. In particular, if Chinese forces were not able to eliminate U.S. troops in large numbers, Mao feared that a prolonged stalemate would ensue. This would likely disrupt China's economic plans and arouse popular discontent with the regime. Although this was certainly not an outcome to be welcomed, it was far from the "greatest slaughter" of Chinese

[53] Zhang Xi, "Peng Dehuai and China's Entry into the Korean War," *Chinese Historians* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 14.

forces that General Douglas MacArthur had forecast for Truman if the PRC intervened.[54] Mao thus seemed to dismiss the possibility of total defeat at this crucial moment, even as many of his colleagues feared just such an outcome.

These optimistic assessments were supported by the martial confidence that Mao had derived from the revolution. Although Mao did not refer to the revolution directly in the October 2 draft telegram, both Chen Jian and Shen Zhihua have argued that the CCP's stunning success in the civil war helped to inspire his confident calculations at this moment.[55] This view is strongly reinforced by the content of a conversation Mao held with Peng Dehuai on the morning of October 5. Meeting privately in Mao's office, Mao told Peng that some of the PRC's leaders were "scared stiff by the planes and artillery of the US." Mao then explained why he himself remained unfazed, even as he recognized the seriousness of the challenge. "We have experienced decades of wars," Mao argued. "Didn't we beat enemies with superior equipment in all of them?" Mao's emphasis on the CCP's past military accomplishments at this key moment is worth noting. In response, Peng noted that the United States had difficulties of its own, and he then elaborated on Mao's point about the CCP's revolutionary experience. Peng recalled how the communists had survived when the nationalists overran Yan'an in 1947 with 240,000 soldiers armed with American weapons. The PLA forces in the area numbered only 25,000 and were armed with older guns that came with only a dozen bullets. Yet the communists had prevailed, Peng argued, thanks in part to their creative strategies and tactics. He thus concluded, "[I]f we can avoid committing serious mistakes in our strategy and tactics, we can be confident of beating the invading American troops." Mao completely concurred. "Your analysis is absolutely right," he told Peng. "Our minds are on the same track." In short, even in private discussions with his own commander, one can discern the influence of Mao's martial confidence on his calculations leading up to the intervention in Korea – and that this confidence had its roots in past military successes.[56]

There is also evidence that Mao's confidence in the specific components of China's martial proficiency influenced his judgment. In mid-August, Chinese military commanders convened in Shenyang to review war preparations, and the tone of the meeting was strikingly confident. Deng Hua, commander of the 13th Army Corps, reported on studies he and his staff had conducted concerning how to fight the United States. Deng argued that Chinese forces could rely on their "fine traditions" and "tactical specialties" to contend with superior U.S. firepower. More specifically, he was confident that China's forces would be able to generate local superiority despite the other side's greater firepower.

[54] William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880–1964* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1978), 592.

[55] Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 179; Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 351.

[56] Zhang, "Peng Dehuai Shouming Shuaishi Kangmei Yuanchao de Qianqian Houhou," 133–34. Zhang's account of this conversation is based on the notes and recollections of Peng's secretary, Zhang Yangwu.

In fact, the CPV could fight just as communist forces had in the revolution: by seeking out weak points in the adversary's lines, encircling them with numerically superior forces, and then destroying them before reinforcements could arrive. Deng also suggested that the CPV could catch the enemy off-guard with "sudden, speedy" (*turan, xunsu*) advances. These would minimize the opportunities for the United States to use its greater firepower, highlighting instead the importance of close-in combat, at which the Chinese forces excelled. In addition, Deng noted several times how the Chinese soldiers' ability to fight "bravely" (*yonggande*) and "boldly" (*dadande*) would allow them to conduct these types of operations against an opponent with much better arms. After Mao received the conference report on August 15, he pronounced its conclusions "correct."[57] In fact, Mao's October 2 draft telegram actually echoed Deng's calculations concerning the forces needed for encirclement operations. This was only fitting, because Deng's argument had echoed Mao's writings from the revolution.

How did Liu Shaoqi's outcome expectations compare with those of Mao? The evidence available strongly suggests that Liu's outcome expectations were comparatively pessimistic, as we would expect given his weaker sense of martial efficacy. In his in-depth study of the intervention decision, Zhang Xi, a former assistant to Peng Dehuai, has grouped the objections to intervention that were raised in early October into five different categories:

1. China's economic plight was too dire for the country to embark on a war.
2. The PRC needed to focus on eliminating the remaining nationalist troops and liberating outlying areas and offshore islands.
3. Land reform had yet to be implemented in newly liberated areas, so the new revolutionary regimes there still were not solid.
4. The armament of the Chinese military was far inferior to that of the United States, and the PLA lacked the capability to control the air and sea.
5. Many Chinese soldiers longed for peace after many years of fighting.[58]

A discernible theme running through these objections is concern that the PRC's relative weakness made it impossible to stop the U.S. advance. The weak Chinese economy, the new regime's lack of geographic control, and the PLA's inferior armament all spoke to the amount of resources that the regime could muster against the American forces. In addition, there was clearly concern that the morale of the PRC's troops was suffering after so many years of fighting.

As one of the most prominent dissenters, Liu must have shared some of these concerns. Although it is impossible to know at this point in history which of them was foremost in Liu's mind, it is no stretch to suggest that Liu was concerned about China's ability to compete with the United States militarily.

[57] Academy of Military Science Military History Research Department, *Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Shi*, vol. 1, 94–95.
[58] Zhang, "Peng Dehuai Shouming Shuaishi Kangmei Yuanchao de Qianqian Houhou," 132.

As other scholars have written, "[T]he majority opinion in [early October] was concern about China's capability to win a war against the United States in Korea."[59] As a prominent member of this majority, Liu seems to have been the mirror image of Mao at this point, dwelling on the possibility of defeat and pessimistic about the chance of victory.

Lin Biao's reluctance to intervene warrants consideration as well. Given Lin's impressive military accomplishments in the revolution, one would imagine that he would have been closer to Mao on this issue than to Liu. Yet, as other scholars have argued, Lin was apparently brooding and pessimistic by nature, which may have colored his views on this question.[60] In fact, Mao's doctor described Lin as "obviously mentally unsound" after the revolution – reclusive, erratic, and suffering from hypochondria and multiple neuroses.[61] This condition may have been serious enough to influence Lin's judgment as early as 1950; he apparently sought medical treatment in the Soviet Union following the early October debates.[62] Lastly, Lin may well have interpreted the CCP's success in the revolution differently than Mao did. Lin lived in the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1942 while receiving medical treatment, and during this time he received additional military training at the staff level in Moscow.[63] Although reports that Lin actually participated in the Battle of Stalingrad are probably hagiographic fabrications, it is clear that he interacted closely with the Soviet military around the time of the Nazi invasion. Lin was therefore better positioned to see how much more advanced Western militaries were than the nationalists, and thus to appreciate the limits of what the PLA had accomplished in the civil war.

Revisiting the Decision

Only days after Mao issued his order dispatching the CPV to Korea, China's leaders would reconsider their decision after disappointing news arrived from Moscow. Given Stalin's assurances in July, the CCP leadership had believed up to this point that the Soviet Union would provide air cover for Chinese forces in Korea if they entered the war. On October 12, however, Mao learned that Soviet air cover would not arrive for at least two months.[64] In response, he suspended plans to send troops across the border, summoned Gao Gang and Peng Dehuai back to Beijing, and moved to convene a politburo meeting the next day. This meeting reaffirmed the decision to intervene, but Peng Dehuai was apparently so upset that he threatened to resign.[65]

[59] Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited," *The China Quarterly*, no. 121 (1990): 105.
[60] Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force*, 87.
[61] Li, *Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 453–54.
[62] Shi, *Zai Lishi Juren de Shenbian*, 495.
[63] Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 37.
[64] Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 244.
[65] Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 201–2.

The news from Moscow soon got worse. In particular, the Soviets indicated that their air cover would only apply to Chinese territory.[66] In other words, the Chinese troops in Korea would receive no air support from the Soviet Union. Following this setback, Mao convened another politburo meeting on October 18. In the course of the meeting, Peng reported that his two vice-commanders, Deng Hua and Hong Xuezhi, had written him to suggest postponing intervention until the spring in light of the lack of air support and the difficulty of constructing fortifications in winter. In response, Mao insisted on proceeding as planned. Chinese troops began moving into Korea in large numbers after sunset on October 19.[67]

Did Mao's optimistic outcome expectations survive Stalin's refusal to provide air support in Korea? Stalin's decision certainly gave Mao reason to pause. In fact, one of Mao's secretaries later recalled that intervening in Korea became one of the most difficult strategic decisions that Mao ever had to make.[68] More specifically, after learning that Moscow would not provide air support, Mao appears to have considered the possibility that the CPV might be defeated in Korea.[69] Mao thus no longer dismissed the possibility of defeat, as he seems to have done earlier in the month.

Yet it would be a mistake to underestimate Mao's confidence at this point. Mao did not concede that China would not be able to compete with the United States; instead, he simply recognized that the possibility existed. This was actually a more optimistic point of view than that held by many of Mao's colleagues in early October, when they plainly doubted China's ability to stop the U.S. advance in Korea. In other words, Mao was more optimistic about China's chances in Korea *after* Stalin's refusal to provide air cover than some of his colleagues were *before* that decision had been made.

Moreover, Mao's subsequent correspondence with Peng makes it clear that the CCP leader still hoped to win a total victory in Korea, notwithstanding Stalin's decision. Upon learning that U.S. and South Korean forces were moving north faster than expected, Mao focused on the opportunity this presented. Writing to Peng on October 21, Mao noted that UN forces were advancing in two separate lines, which indicated that they remained unaware of the CPV's presence in Korea. Mao argued that they could exploit the situation to launch a surprise attack and begin changing the conflict in China's favor.[70]

[66] Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 247.

[67] Zhang, "Peng Dehuai Shouming Shuaishi Kangmei Yuanchao de Qianqian Houhou," 157–59.

[68] Liao Guoliang, Li Shishun, and Xu Yan, *Mao Zedong Junshi Sixiang Fazhanshi* [The Historical Development of Mao Zedong's Military Thought], 2nd ed. (Beijing: PLA Press, 2001), 380. Mao is said to have weighed the decision while pacing the floor for *sixty hours* in mid-October, but there is apparently no hard evidence to validate this presumably hyperbolic account. Author's interview with Shen Zhihua, May 29, 2005.

[69] Wang, "Mao Zedong Juexin Chubing Chaoxian Qian Hou de Yixie Qingkuang," 87.

[70] Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Dahao Zhiyuanjun Chuguo Diyi Zhang Gei Peng Dehuai Deng de Dianbao [Telegram on the Volunteer Army Fighting Its First Battle Abroad Well]," October 21, 1950, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 1, 575–76.

Peng sounded a more cautious note when responding to Mao on October 22. He suggested that the CPV should focus on establishing defensive positions in the northernmost parts of Korea over the next six months, making preparations for a large counteroffensive later. Peng also noted that the CPV had no hope of controlling coastal cities in light of the adversary's air and sea superiority. To placate Mao, Peng assured him that he still hoped to eliminate two or three South Korean divisions in the coming fighting.[71]

Writing back on October 23, Mao conceded that "we should not try to do things we cannot do."[72] He then argued that three questions in particular were critical:

1. whether the CPV could surprise the enemy;
2. whether the CPV could operate at night and thus mitigate the effects of the enemy's bombing; and
3. whether the CPV could eliminate several U.S. divisions through mobile (and some positional) warfare over the next few months before reinforcements arrived.

Mao recognized that these questions might not be answered in China's favor, making the situation "unfavorable to China" (*yu wo bu li*). Even so, he remained hopeful and focused on the opportunity before them. China, he argued, "must do all it can to ensure a satisfactory victory in this campaign." The CPV must do everything it could to maintain "exuberant morale" in the face of enemy bombing. It must also inflict substantial losses on the U.S. forces, so that "its reinforcements would not be able to keep up with its losses" (*shi qi zengbu ganbushang sunshi*). This last point clearly implied continuing preoccupation with the goal of total victory in Korea. If China could deplete American forces faster than the United States could replenish them, it is hard to see how the United States could continue to maintain a presence on the peninsula. In short, although he no longer dismissed the possibility of defeat, Mao continued to play up – and even overestimate – what China could accomplish in Korea.

Unlike Mao's October 2 draft, his telegram to Peng on October 23 noted a new kind of opportunity, namely "forcing the U.S. to start diplomatic negotiations with us." Nonetheless, Shen Zhihua has made it clear that Mao "did not place great hope" in negotiations in the fall of 1950, noting Mao's belief that the United States would talk only after Chinese forces had destroyed several American divisions.[73] Indeed, Mao's mention of "forcing" negotiations presumed that the CPV would be very successful in Korea; he sought to negotiate from strength, not weakness. In the wake of such success, Mao presumably would have sought a wide-ranging settlement that was extremely favorable

[71] *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenxuan (Neibuben)*, 686n4.

[72] Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Chaoxian Zhanju Wenti Gei Peng Dehuai, Gao Gang de Dianbao [Telegram to Peng Dehuai and Gao Gang on the War Situation in Korea]," October 23, 1950, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 1, 588–90.

[73] Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 352.

to the PRC (a point to which I shall return). As it turned out, Mao pursued negotiations with the United States only belatedly, squandering a brief chance to negotiate from strength, as described later in this chapter.

Alternative Explanations for China's Intervention

How well can alternative explanations make sense of Mao's decision to challenge the United States in Korea? Other scholars have claimed that Mao doubted that the United States would stop its advance at the Korean border, suggesting that the intervention was preemptive.[74] If so, one might argue that Mao believed he had no choice but to fight in 1950 – it was simply a question of who struck first. Nonetheless, the evidence indicates that Mao's goal was preventive rather than preemptive.[75] In particular, he sought to prevent the United States from controlling Korea, which would render China's northeast considerably more vulnerable to American pressure in the future. Mao and Peng stressed this broader concern – and not the threat of an imminent invasion – when speaking before the politburo on October 5.[76] Subsequently, Mao wrote to Zhou Enlai on October 13 and expressed concern about U.S. troops "pressing up to the Yalu river" (*yazhi yalu jiangbian*), which marked the border between China and North Korea.[77] He did not suggest that these troops were about to invade China, a curious omission if this danger had been driving his thinking. On October 14, Peng Dehuai told his division commanders that China had a choice between fighting now and fighting "three to five years from now."[78] Again, no fear of imminent attack was expressed. Under these conditions, it is hard to argue that Mao had no choice but to fight in 1950.[79]

To be sure, other scholars have stressed that Mao perceived a closing "window of opportunity" to evict the United States from Korea in 1950, as well

[74] For example, see Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 193–94.

[75] On the distinction between preemptive and preventive attacks, see Reiter, "Exploding the Powder Keg Myth," 6–7.

[76] Zhang, "Peng Dehuai Shouming Shuaishi Kangmei Yuanchao de Qianqian Houhou," 136–37.

[77] Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Wo Jun Yingdang Ru Chao Canzhan Gei Zhou Enlai de Dianbao [Telegram to Zhou Enlai Explaining that Our Troops Should Enter Korea and Take Part in the War]," October 13, 1950, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 1, 556.

[78] Peng Dehuai, "Zai Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuanjun Shiyishang Ganbu Dongyuan Dahuishang de Jianghua [Speech at the Meeting to Mobilize Chinese People's Volunteers Cadres of Division Commander Rank and Above]," October 14, 1950, in *Peng Dehuai Junshi Wenxuan* [Selected Military Writings of Peng Dehuai] (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 1988), 322.

[79] Note that on October 24, Zhou Enlai suggested while addressing the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference that the United States would attack China after unifying Korea. As he put it, "once the enemy has occupied Korea, it won't stop there." Yet Zhou, too, seems to have been more concerned about mid-term and long-term challenges than an imminent attack. He stressed how difficult and costly it would be for China to defend the border and suggested that the U.S. plan was to subjugate China's northeast in "four to five years." See Zhou Enlai, "Kangmei Yuanchao, Baowei Heping [Resist America, Aid Korea, Safeguard Peace]," October 24, 1950, in *Zhou Enlai Junshi Wenxuan* [Selected Military Writings of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: People's Press, 1997), vol. 4, 73–75.

as a growing "window of vulnerability" if the United States dominated the whole peninsula.[80] This helps to explain why Mao did not wish to defer a fight over Korea, but it cannot be the whole story. The window of opportunity logic does not tell us why Mao perceived as much opportunity in Korea as he did – or indeed any opportunity at all. Although Mao was eager to expel the Americans from Korea, desiring a certain outcome and believing that one can achieve that outcome are two separate questions. Similarly, the window of vulnerability logic does not tell us why Mao believed that China could reduce its vulnerability by intervening in the war. After all, it is hard to believe that China would have been safer if the CPV had been destroyed in Korea. In short, although the windows logic is persuasive, it is incomplete because it does not explain why Mao thought that China could compete with the United States in Korea.

One could argue that Mao believed that China could compete because of contextual considerations rather than his martial efficacy beliefs. Earlier studies, for example, have stressed that Mao had only limited goals in Korea and that he expected support from the Soviet Union, making the intervention appear feasible.[81] Nonetheless, Mao's goals were considerably more ambitious than this explanation recognizes. When deciding to intervene in early October, Mao did not simply seek a fait accompli that would prevent a total defeat of North Korea. Instead, his goals were expansionist: he hoped to drive the United States off the peninsula entirely. This difference is important because Mao's lofty ambitions shaped China's uncompromising approach to the war until it stalemated in mid-1951, as described later in this chapter.

The prospect of Soviet assistance was a more relevant factor in Mao's decision calculus. Mao worked hard to maximize Soviet support for the CPV, particularly air support, even playing up the technological backwardness of China's military in conversations with Ambassador Roshchin in October.[82] Nonetheless, the "Soviet backing" argument suffers from several fatal weaknesses. First, Mao ultimately proved willing to proceed with the intervention even after he was informed by Moscow that no air support in Korea would be forthcoming. Evidently, Mao saw Soviet air support for the CPV as highly desirable but not essential. Second, Mao perceived some risk that the Soviet Union would fail to deter the United States from using nuclear weapons in the conflict. Both Mao's remarks to the politburo on August 4 and his aforementioned speech on September 5 had acknowledged the possibility that the United States would use nuclear weapons.[83] Mao's doubts about the deterrent value of the Sino-Soviet alliance are not hard to understand: the Soviet Union had

[80] Christensen, "Windows and War," 54–58.

[81] Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 86–106.

[82] Shen, "China and the Dispatch of the Soviet Air Force," 223.

[83] Subsequently, on September 25, General Nie Rongzhen told the Indian ambassador that the CCP leadership understood that the United States might bomb China with nuclear weapons if it intervened in the conflict. See K. M. Pannikar, *In Two Chinas* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955), 108.

conducted its first nuclear test only in 1949, and it remained decidedly inferior in terms of nuclear armament in 1950, with only a handful of weapons compared with the hundreds possessed by the United States.[84] Even after the war, when the Soviet nuclear arsenal was more substantial, Mao would disparage the Soviet Union's umbrella as "unreliable" (*kao bu zhu de*).[85] Lastly, and most broadly, it is not clear how the prospect of Soviet assistance can explain the varying policy preferences within the PRC leadership. Liu was not only well aware of the Sino-Soviet alliance, he had personally traveled to Moscow and met with Stalin in the summer of 1949, setting the stage for Mao's trip a few months later. Moreover, Mao had every reason to tell Liu how much support he expected from Moscow during their late-night deliberations on October 1. Yet Liu resisted Mao's push to intervene nonetheless.[86]

What about other contextual variables? Mao's ambitions in Korea were undoubtedly bolstered by the sheer number of troops that China could deploy on the peninsula, as well as Korea's geographic proximity to China. In his October 2 draft telegram, Mao planned to dispatch 12 divisions to Korea by October 15, and he expected another 24 divisions to be ready by the summer of 1951. As it turned out, the PRC managed to send 30 infantry divisions and 3 artillery divisions, totaling more than 400,000 troops, by November 19.[87] By contrast, UN forces in Korea consisted of roughly 230,000 combat troops at that point, including 103,000 American and 101,000 South Korean soldiers.[88] Nonetheless, the prospect of numerical superiority and favorable geography by themselves cannot account for Mao's stance on the war. Liu Shaoqi and the rest of the Chinese politburo also knew how many soldiers China could field, and they presumably appreciated the importance of Korea's proximity as well. Yet whereas Mao believed in early October that China could drive the United States from Korea entirely, most of his colleagues were pessimistic that anything could be achieved by intervening. In short, China's numerical strength was undoubtedly an important consideration, but it cannot explain the varying perceptions and policy preferences within the Chinese leadership.

[84] Natural Resources Defense Council, "Archive of Nuclear Data." Accessed online at http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/nudb/datab19.asp.

[85] Quan Yanchi, *Mao Zedong yu Heluxiaofu* [Mao Zedong and Khrushchev] (Changchun: Jilin People's Press, 1989), 97.

[86] Alternatively, one could argue that Soviet pressure on China to intervene was a crucial factor in China's decision to join the war. The preceding narrative has documented, however, that Mao supported Chinese intervention in the conflict well before Stalin did. In addition, Stalin's most forceful note calling for Chinese intervention was not received by Mao until 10:30 P.M. on October 6 – *after* China's leadership had already made its initial decision to intervene. On Stalin's note, see James Hershberg and Vladislav Zubok, "Russian Documents on the Korean War," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, nos. 14/15 (Winter 2003–Spring 2004): 369–72, 375–78.

[87] Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 94, 110, 263.

[88] Roy Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1961), 606.

Recent scholarship maintains that China's intervention in Korea stemmed from the fact that American and Chinese commanders possessed very different ideas about how wars were won.[89] Whereas U.S. commanders believed in the importance of superior equipment and firepower, Mao and some of his colleagues believed that men – not weapons – were decisive in war. As a result, the United States relied on nuclear-capable bombers to signal its strength to the communist bloc, but Mao was more concerned with the quality and quantity of American forces on the ground. This is an important point, as it provides an elegant explanation for the overconfidence that both Chinese and American commanders brought to the conflict. Even so, it does not dispense with the need to consider Mao's martial efficacy beliefs. Mao recognized, after all, that China would face a formidable challenge in Korea. Although Mao had disparaged the combat power of American ground forces in early September, he changed his tune at the moment of truth in October.[90] In particular, his October 2 draft telegram described the U.S. Eighth Army – the mainstay of American ground forces in Korea – as "an old army with combat effectiveness." Mao was convinced that China could defeat these tested troops not simply because he believed in China's unconventional approach to land combat but also because he believed in the PLA's ability to *prosecute* unconventional land warfare. Said differently, Mao did not simply believe that an army that excelled at surprise, close combat, and political mobilization could defeat a better-armed opponent. He was also deeply confident that the PLA actually excelled in these areas – and that it could exploit these strengths against a more powerful opponent because it had done so before.

Recent scholarship has also traced the decision to intervene back to Mao's "grandiose personality," which inspired a "dictatorial leadership style" and "triumphalist/unrealistic personality traits."[91] As noted in the previous chapter, I agree with the notion that Mao possessed a narcissistic personality and a grandiose sense of self-importance. By themselves, however, these personality traits cannot readily account for Mao's great confidence in the military sphere because they were evident in the 1920s but his martial confidence only reached its zenith in the late 1940s. It seems more likely that Mao's grandiosity mattered in a more indirect fashion: by convincing him that the success of his forces in the revolution was evidence of their great martial prowess. In addition, nonspecific triumphalist tendencies cannot explain why Mao was so much more optimistic in the military sphere than in the diplomatic realm during the Korean conflict. As will be explained, Mao was too pessimistic about what the PRC could achieve through diplomacy during the Korean conflict and, as a result, China missed an important chance to end the war on relatively favorable terms.

[89] Twomey, *Military Lens*, 51–86, 134–68.

[90] On Mao's September remarks, see Mao, "Chaoxian Zhanju he Women de Fangzhen," 93.

[91] Michael Sheng, "Mao and the Korean War: A Personality Account," *New England Journal of History* 60, nos. 1–3 (2004): 214, 223.

THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT

When the CPV entered Korea, Mao had mentioned the possibility of "forcing the U.S. to negotiate with us." As argued earlier, Mao did not place great hope in negotiations at that point because he believed that talks would be possible only after the CPV had scored substantial military successes against the Americans. At the same time, Mao's interest in eventually holding such negotiations is understandable because he had important goals that went beyond the Korean Peninsula, some of which required American cooperation to achieve. To get a sense of his agenda at this time, it is helpful to consider the list of conditions for a "peaceful settlement" of the Korean conflict that Zhou Enlai outlined on July 12. These included

1. the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea;
2. the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from the Taiwan Strait;
3. the resolution of the Korea question by the Korean people themselves;
4. the PRC's assumption of China's seat at the United Nations, and the expulsion of nationalist China from that body; and
5. the calling of an international conference to discuss the signing of a peace treaty with Japan.[92]

These conditions were reiterated several times before China's intervention in Korea. Because there was little prospect of Sino-U.S. talks at that point, their primary function during this period was to mobilize China's populace around a coherent political agenda.[93] Subsequently, however, the PRC would list these points (with the exception of the fifth) as its demands when it was approached about the possibility of a cease-fire in late December.[94]

Although Mao clearly would have welcomed greater American cooperation, he was not prepared to make costly gestures in pursuit of this goal. As noted at the outset of this chapter, Mao only agreed to negotiate a cease-fire after concluding that no more gains on the battlefield were possible, and there is no evidence that China's forces yielded territory to facilitate a diplomatic settlement. This conservative approach was congruent with Mao's limited sense of moral efficacy, but it could also be explained by the forbidding diplomatic environment that he faced. Even the most basic institutions that might have supported Sino-American cooperation – formal diplomatic relations, shared UN membership – were absent in the early 1950s. Moreover, from China's perspective, the U.S. decision to neutralize the Taiwan Strait had violated an earlier commitment not to intervene in the Chinese civil war, undermining Washington's credibility as an interlocutor. It is thus important to ask whether

[92] Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 89.

[93] Ibid.

[94] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), vol. 7, 1595.

a leader with a stronger sense of moral efficacy would have acted more cooperatively in this situation. Although we cannot answer this question by comparing Mao's policy preferences with those of Liu – Liu's sense of moral efficacy was also weak – the hurdles to counterfactual inference here are not insurmountable. After all, the point here is not to ascertain what might have happened had China been bolder in its diplomacy. Instead, the question here is much simpler: Did chances arise during the war that a more confident leader could have plausibly taken?

The answer to this question is a clear "yes." To explain why, the following discussion explores China's diplomacy in early 1951, when cease-fire negotiations first became a real possibility. The analysis first documents the nature of the opportunity that existed for China at this moment, as well as Mao's decision not to seize it, after which it considers how Mao's efficacy beliefs contributed to this decision. It then considers alternative explanations for Mao's choice, focusing on domestic political factors. The discussion concludes by summarizing the course that the war took in the wake of Mao's decision.

A Missed Opportunity

After entering the war in late October 1950, the CPV took the UN forces in Korea by surprise and drove them back across the 38th parallel in three grueling campaigns, ending in early January 1951. Toward the end of the third campaign, communist forces had occupied Seoul and were approaching the 37th parallel. Even so, the fierce fighting and the Korean winter had taken a severe toll on the Chinese forces, and morale within the CPV had declined precipitously. Taking these factors into account, and concerned about being lured deeper into South Korea, Peng Dehuai called a halt to the CPV's third campaign on January 8.[95]

On January 11, the UN Cease-Fire Group proposed five principles for resolving the Korean conflict, which were then approved by the General Assembly's First Committee on January 13.[96] The UN proposal called for an immediate cease-fire, the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, and a meeting of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and China to settle outstanding problems in the Far East. The proposal made it clear that the four-power meeting was to consider the Taiwan question and communist China's representation in the United Nations. As then secretary of state Dean Acheson later recalled, this proposal presented the Truman administration with a "murderous" dilemma.[97] Accepting it would have invited the fury of Congress, the press, and South Korea, whereas rejecting it would have sacrificed the majority

[95] On Peng's decision and the suffering of Chinese soldiers, see Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 131–32.

[96] For the text of this proposal, see U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), vol. 7 (pt. 1), 64.

[97] Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), 513.

support enjoyed by the United States at the United Nations. In the end, the United States chose to support it, but it did so hoping that Beijing would not.

As prominent historians of the Korean War have argued, this was a "golden opportunity" for China to end the conflict on favorable terms.[98] A cease-fire at this moment would have redrawn the map of Korea, with Seoul in communist hands. North Korea would have been strengthened considerably, and China would have enjoyed a more substantial buffer between its own territory and South Korea. A cease-fire would also have led to discussions on the withdrawal of foreign forces from Korea, raising the possibility of evicting the United States from the peninsula without firing another shot. In addition, the negotiations that followed the cease-fire would have offered the PRC a chance to undermine Taiwan's diplomatic position and perhaps even enter the United Nations, though U.S. resistance here presumably would have been considerable. At the very least, the initiation of diplomatic discussions would have offered China a chance to rest its exhausted and overextended troops. In fact, worried about the CPV's increasing vulnerability to a counterattack, Peng had pulled most of his forces back to the 38th parallel following the end of the third campaign.

Pursuing a cease-fire at this point would not have been a costless move for Mao, but the costs would have been manageable. Most obviously, China would have had to put its plans for further offensives on hold. Yet Mao understood that the CPV had been depleted by the three offensives to date, and by January 14 he had strongly endorsed a plan put forward by Peng to postpone new offensives for two to three months so that the communist forces could regroup and recuperate.[99] If the cease-fire held, of course, Mao would have had to give up his original hope of driving the United States out of Korea by force of arms. Nonetheless, it was not self-evident that the CPV could accomplish this mission in early 1951: the element of surprise was now gone, and most of the UN forces had successfully retreated to South Korea. Turning to the diplomatic realm, Mao would certainly have angered the North Korean leadership by agreeing to a cease-fire because the latter was eager to conquer the entire peninsula.[100] Nonetheless, North Korea owed its existence to China at this point, and it was poorly positioned to punish Beijing. More important was the possibility that Mao would have upset Stalin by showing an interest in a cease-fire at this stage. In early December, Stalin had suggested that the PRC hold off on cease-fire talks until after communist forces had retaken Seoul.[101] By mid-January, however, Seoul had been in communist hands for more than a week. Subsequently, in

[98] The quotation is from Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 93. Shen Zhihua has devoted considerable attention to the opportunity that existed at this point as well. See Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 353–57, 360–61.

[99] Shen, "Sino–North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution during the Korean War," 16.

[100] On the difficulty Peng Dehuai had convincing North Korean leaders to accept even a two-month pause in the offensive, see ibid., 14–16.

[101] Andrey Gromyko, "Geluomike Guanyu Sulian Tongyi Zhongguo Zhengfu Tingzhi Junshi Xingdong de Tiaojian Zhi Luoshen Dian [Telegram to Roshchin from Gromyko Concerning

the wake of the third campaign, Stalin had endorsed Peng's proposal for a substantial pause in the communist advance.[102] In this light, it is not clear that Stalin would have objected to a CCP decision to commence cease-fire talks, which could have been presented to him as a means to buy time for communist forces to build up their strength.

Despite the limited costs involved, Beijing played into Washington's hands by rejecting the UN proposal. On January 17, Zhou Enlai issued a statement on behalf of the PRC that constituted its official response. The statement charged that an immediate cease-fire would only give the Americans much-needed "breathing space" and that follow-on negotiations after a cease-fire agreement would only produce "endless discussions." The statement then proposed a series of conditions that would have to be met for China to participate in negotiations. These included demands that negotiations focus first on the withdrawal of foreign forces from Korea and "the settlement of Korean domestic affairs by the Korean people themselves"; that the negotiations address "the withdrawal of United States armed forces from Taiwan, the Taiwan Strait, and Far Eastern related problems"; that the negotiations should include France, India, and Egypt in addition to the four powers mentioned in the UN proposal; that the PRC's assumption of China's seat at the United Nations should be "established as from the beginning of the seven-nation conference"; and that the negotiations be held in China.[103]

This series of demands was not so much a starting point for negotiations as an attempt to ensure that no negotiations took place. The transcript of a conversation between Zhou Enlai and Indian ambassador K. M. Pannikar on the evening of January 17 is particularly revealing in this regard.[104] After Zhou informed Pannikar of Beijing's position, the ambassador tried to reassure the Chinese premier about the timing of the cease-fire by stressing that it was his understanding, as well as the understanding of the British, Canadian, and Australian governments, that the two sides would merely agree to a cease-fire in principle before discussing its implementation in the negotiations. The self-restraint required of China at this stage was thus minimal. As for the location of the talks, Pannikar gently suggested some neutral possibilities: Hong Kong, Cairo, or perhaps somewhere in India. In response, Zhou remained unmoved, and he pointedly continued to insist that the talks take place in China – a condition that would obviously be too humiliating for the United States to accept. In a last-ditch effort, Pannikar informed Zhou that the United States

Soviet Agreement with Chinese Government Conditions for a Cessation of Military Operations]," December 7, 1950, in Shen, *Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, vol. 2, 641–42.

[102] Shen, "Sino-North Korean Conflict and Its Resolution during the Korean War," 16.

[103] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951*, vol. 7 (pt. 1), 91–92.

[104] For the transcript, see "Zhou Enlai Waizhang Guanyu Chaoxian 'Tingzhan' Wenti tong Lianda Diyi Weiyuanhui Laiwang Dianwen [Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai on the Korean Cease-Fire Question and the Telegram of the U.N. General Assembly First Committee]," January 13–18, 1951, PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, File no. 113–00068–01 (1).

had only accepted the proposal in the hope that China would reject it, but to no avail.

Why did the PRC fail to offer a more positive response to such a promising diplomatic opportunity? To understand China's decision, it is appropriate to consider both Mao's weak sense of moral efficacy and his strong sense of martial efficacy because both diplomatic and military questions were involved here. If Mao's weak sense of moral efficacy informed his decision, we should find that he personally opposed making a cooperative gesture and that this preference reflected a pessimistic appraisal of what China could achieve through the diplomatic process. Both of these expectations are borne out by the internal correspondence that preceded the decision. On January 14, Mao sent Peng a comprehensive telegram about the future of the war and did not mention the UN process at all, indicating his lack of interest in pursuing it.[105] Mao's views on the diplomatic process were made even more clear in another telegram written that day to explain the PRC stance on the emerging UN proposal to Kim Il-Sung. The note, which was written by Zhou and edited by Mao, argued that a cease-fire would only offer the United States a chance to "preserve its strength and allow Syngman Rhee to hold certain districts and arms and capital," and it noted that the follow-on negotiations could be "put off for an unlimited amount of time."[106] Therefore, unless the proposal was altered, the note read, "we should resolutely reject it." With Mao's approval, Zhou would continue to argue in his official reply on January 17 that a cease-fire would only benefit the United States and that the follow-on negotiations would be fruitless, as noted earlier. In sum, the internal correspondence leading up to China's announcement (as well as the announcement itself) indicates that Mao was personally opposed to accepting the UN proposal and that this opposition reflected a pessimistic appraisal of what negotiations had to offer China.

If Mao's strong sense of martial efficacy also informed his decision, we should find that he anticipated relatively positive outcomes if the PRC rejected the UN proposal and continued to press the offensive. This was clearly the case: whereas Mao was pessimistic that diplomacy would bear fruit, he was excited about China's prospects in the military sphere. Mao's soaring confidence was clear in the note he sent to Peng on January 14 laying out future scenarios for the war. Mao began by noting that it was important for communist forces to recuperate for two or three months, in keeping with Peng's own point of view.

[105] A copy of this telegram was sent by Mao to Stalin one day later. See Mao Zedong, "Mao Zedong Guanyu Xiayibu Zuozhan Jihua zhi Shidalin Dian [Telegram from Mao Zedong to Stalin on Plans for Upcoming War Fighting]," January 15, 1951, in Shen, *Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, vol. 2, 663–64.

[106] On the contents of the memorandum, see Li Ping and Ma Zhisun, eds., *Zhou Enlai Nianpu* [Chronology of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 1997), vol. 1, 117. Mao apparently reviewed the memo more than once. See Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Gaixie Gei Jin Richeng de Beiwanglu de Piyu [Remarks on Rewriting the Memorandum for Kim Il-Sung]," January 14, 1951, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 2, 28.

This respite, in turn, would allow the communists to "secure the final victory." Mao highlighted two possibilities in particular:

> One, under pressure from the Chinese and North Korean armed forces, the enemy forces will make a feeble attempt at resistance and then withdraw from Korea. . . .
>
> Two, the enemy forces will stubbornly resist in the Pusan-Taegu area until they are firmly convinced that resistance is futile, after which they will withdraw from South Korea.

After noting these two possibilities, Mao added a third. It was possible, he suggested, that conditions might force China to initiate another campaign in February, after which more "rest and reorganization" would be needed. This would then allow the CPV to make preparations for another, "final" campaign that would expel the enemy from Korea. In other words, it was no longer a question of whether the United States could be driven out of Korea but merely how quickly.

Mao's martial confidence at this moment was not simply a function of the successes that the CPV had recorded in its first three campaigns. To be sure, Mao did interpret these successes as evidence of his army's inherent superiority. Even before the third campaign, in fact, Mao had written to his commanders that "the combat experience of the CPV proves that our troops are definitely capable of defeating the U.S. forces, even with their excellent equipment and control of the air."[107] Nonetheless, this was not the only possible interpretation at this point: Mao could have stressed circumstantial factors, noting the importance of the CPV's surprise and the adversary's momentary disarray. Such an interpretation would have had considerable merit, and it would have implied more caution going forward. Yet Mao chose to stress the superiority of his own troops, which naturally impelled him toward a more ambitious policy. In retrospect, it was no coincidence that Mao interpreted his army's success in this way, given his preexisting belief in the prowess of his own forces.

In short, Mao and his colleagues seemed to believe in early 1951 that a cease-fire and negotiations had much to offer the United States but little to offer China. As events would soon reveal, the opposite was actually the case. Whereas China's troops were exhausted and overextended in mid-January, the more mobile UN forces were gathering for a counteroffensive that would exploit the CPV's plight. In retrospect, Mao's failure to seize the diplomatic opportunity that lay before him is not surprising given his limited confidence in the diplomatic sphere. As Shen Zhihua has noted while explaining Mao's intransigent stance, "[H]aving just left the mountains and the valleys for the cities, China's new leaders lacked diplomatic experience and knowledge on the

[107] Mao Zedong, "Junwei Zhuanfa Sanshiba Jun zai Dierci Zhanyizhong Zuozhan Jingyan Zongjie de Piyu [Central Military Commission Transmits Summary Remarks on the Combat Experience of the 38th Army in the Second Campaign]," December 18, 1950, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 1, 726.

international stage."[108] At the same time, Mao's highly optimistic assessment of what China could achieve if it rejected negotiations and focused on the battlefield clearly reflected his strong sense of martial efficacy.

Alternative Explanations

As an alternative to the preceding account, one could emphasize domestic political calculations as the driving force behind Mao's decision making in early 1951. One could argue, for example, that Mao was compelled to reject a cease-fire by the fear that domestic rivals would criticize him for compromising with the Americans. Yet it is hard to see who would have led such criticism. Mao had been the most hawkish member of the CCP leadership the previous fall, and he could have easily reminded his colleagues of any rival's earlier misgivings about confronting the United States. Although Peng Dehuai is an important exception in this regard, given his support for Mao the previous October, he was now more concerned with reining in China's overextended troops than with pressing the offensive, as noted earlier. In fact, after the United Nations launched its counteroffensive in late January, Peng suggested a retreat and a new cease-fire proposal to the CCP leader, but Mao rejected these suggestions and ordered Peng to attack.[109] In short, Mao was well positioned to confront any rival who might have criticized a more cooperative diplomatic stance.

Another possible objection to the preceding account is that Mao would not have been interested in negotiations with the United States even if he had been more optimistic about China's diplomatic prospects and less optimistic about its military prospects. Chen Jian, for example, suggests that Mao needed conflict with the United States in order to generate revolutionary nationalism at home, which would help the CCP to consolidate its control of China.[110] In this context, a cease-fire would have undermined Mao's domestic political agenda. Nonetheless, this argument still rests on certain assumptions about Mao's outcome expectations. After all, prolonging the war would only serve the CCP's political interests if the CPV continued to perform well; if the CPV were driven back, the continuing conflict would demoralize the CCP's supporters and embolden its enemies. Recognizing this point, Chen also highlights Mao's sanguine assessment of China's military prospects in early 1951, and he argues that Mao's optimism in this regard was inspired by "his experience in China's civil war," a point that resonates with the argument made here.[111] In sum, had Mao been more pessimistic on the military front, the domestic political rationale for avoiding negotiations would not have existed.

[108] Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 357.
[109] Wang Yan, ed., *Peng Dehuai Nianpu* [Chronology of Peng Dehuai] (Beijing: People's Press, 1998), 469.
[110] Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 95–96.
[111] Ibid., 93.

The Aftermath

Following China's rejection of the UN proposal on January 17, CCP leaders seemed to realize that their initial response had been excessively uncooperative. In particular, on January 22, China suggested the possibility of a cease-fire for a "limited period" while also noting that Beijing would take responsibility for the withdrawal of the Chinese "volunteers" if the principle that all foreign troops should be withdrawn from Korea were "accepted and put into practice."[112] The specific aims behind this move remain unclear: it may have been a genuine effort to secure a temporary cease-fire, or it may have been designed to complicate American efforts to pass a UN resolution labeling China as an "aggressor" in Korea, particularly because these efforts had been facilitated by China's rejection of the UN proposals on January 17.[113] In any case, and more importantly for our purposes here, the move did not represent a costly gesture for the PRC. Beijing had no reason *not* to propose a temporary cease-fire once it had decided to postpone further offensives, and the PRC was not offering to withdraw its troops before other foreign forces withdrew. Indeed, this modified position still fell short of accepting the UN proposal and, as such, it failed to keep the nascent diplomatic process alive – just when the PRC needed it most. On January 25, UN forces launched a determined counterattack against the communist forces. In the fighting that ensued, UN forces not only reclaimed Seoul but also pushed communist forces well north of the 38th parallel. The communist side suffered some 53,000 casualties in the process.[114]

In the end, Mao did not agree to cease-fire negotiations until June, after spring offensives by the communist forces had been decisively repulsed. Indeed, even as late as May 26 – after the spring offensives had faltered and another UN counteroffensive had begun – Mao still seemed to have been preoccupied with winning a total victory. Writing to Peng, Mao conceded that surrounding and eliminating an entire U.S. division was "difficult to achieve."[115] Nonetheless, he still believed that the CPV could prevail by focusing on individual battalions, at least when facing British or American troops. In other words, rather than trying to eliminate groups of 10,000 to 15,000 troops, the CPV should only aim for several hundred at a time. Over the course of three or four campaigns, Mao argued, these smaller but steady losses would sap the morale of the U.S. and British forces. At that point, the CPV could resume its efforts to surround and destroy entire U.S. divisions – perhaps as many as three at a time. Mao reminded Peng that the PLA had defeated stronger GMD forces in the revolution in just

[112] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951*, vol. 7 (pt. 1), 117.
[113] Stueck, *Korean War*, 154.
[114] Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 144.
[115] Mao Zedong, "Guanyu Muqian Wo Jun Tong Mei Ying Jun Zuozhan de Zhanlüe Zhanshu Wenti Gei Peng Dehuai de Dianbao [Telegram to Peng Dehuai on Strategy and Tactics for Fighting U.S. and British Troops]," May 26, 1951, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 2, 331–32.

this manner, a clear sign that earlier exploits continued to inspire the CCP leader.

Stalin received a copy of Mao's note to Peng one day later, on May 27, and the Soviet leader responded to it on May 29.[116] According to a Chinese translation, Stalin dismissed Mao's ideas as "rash" and "unconvincing." He argued that the United States and Britain would not allow their forces to be eroded as Mao had suggested because they were not as "foolish" as Chiang Kai-shek. Stalin also suggested that the CPV begin to construct fortifications that they might employ to wear down the enemy more effectively. In the wake of this rebuke, a chastened Mao wrote a more circumspect, defense-minded note to Peng on May 31.[117] On June 3, Mao and Zhou explained to Kim Il-Sung that they sought a "peaceful resolution of the Korean problem" and noted that they could address the withdrawal of foreign troops and Korea's future in negotiations.[118] By June 13, Mao had developed a list of guidelines for the Chinese negotiating team.[119]

The negotiations began on July 26. By this point, however, the opportunity available to the PRC six months earlier no longer existed. The UN forces had recovered their footing and now occupied territory north of the 38th parallel. Nor was there any question of addressing the PRC's place in the United Nations or Taiwan's international status. Instead, the United States was emboldened to take a hard line on the repatriation of prisoners of war, prolonging the negotiations for two more years. Although the Chinese negotiating team would attempt to make the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea part of the agenda, they would be rebuffed, and the issue would be papered over in the final armistice agreement. The PRC would raise the issue again at the Geneva Conference in 1954, but with no success. China's "golden opportunity" was gone.

CONCLUSION

Kenneth Waltz once argued that any Chinese government would have intervened in the Korean War in 1950 given the pressures on it at the time.[120] This now seems quite implausible. If not for Mao's insistence at the moment of truth

[116] Joseph Stalin, "Shidalin Guanyu Da Ying Mei Jun Zhanshu Wenti zhi Mao Zedong [Stalin to Mao Zedong on Tactics for Fighting the British and Americans]," May 29, 1951, in Shen, *Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, vol. 2, 774.

[117] Mao Zedong, "Wei Liaojie Wo Jun Zhendi Gouzhu he Fangshou Qingkuang Gei Peng Dehuai de Dianbao [Telegram to Peng Dehuai for Understanding the Battlefield Construction and Defense Situation]," May 31, 1951, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 2, 344.

[118] Chai Chengwen and Zhao Yongtian, *Banmendian Tanpan* [The Panmunjom Negotiations] (Beijing: PLA Press, 1989), 125.

[119] Mao Zedong, "Mao Zedong Guanyu Tingzhan Tanpan Wenti zhi Gao Gang, Ji Richeng Dian [Telegram from Mao Zedong to Gao Gang and Kim Il-Sung on the Problem of Cease-Fire Negotiations]," June 13, 1951, in Shen, *Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, vol. 2, 808–9.

[120] Waltz, "Reflections on *Theory of International Politics*," 332.

in early October, it is hard to imagine the PRC entering the war. Mao himself reportedly recalled later that the decision to intervene had been supported by "one man and a half" – he was the one and Zhou Enlai was the half.[121] This was clearly an exaggeration: Peng Dehuai's support was crucial at the fateful meeting on October 5. Even so, Mao was certainly the most determined and consistent advocate of intervention. Mao's policy preferences, in turn, stemmed not only from the threat that he perceived to China's interests but also from the strong sense of martial efficacy that he had developed in the revolution, which inspired him to envision relatively positive outcomes if China intervened. The notion that China would not have intervened had it been led by an individual with less martial confidence is strongly reinforced by Liu Shaoqi's more cautious approach to the conflict. Liu faced the same challenge with the same information and the same resources, but he lacked Mao's sense of martial efficacy, and he resisted Mao's push to intervene accordingly.

Mao's conduct of diplomacy during this period was decidedly conservative. As argued earlier, this was not simply because the PRC and the United States did not have diplomatic relations or because the PRC had not yet entered the United Nations. Although these factors clearly made communication more difficult, the international environment did provide a diplomatic opening in early 1951 that a leader with greater confidence in the diplomatic realm could have exploited to considerable advantage. As it turned out, Mao's skewed sense of national efficacy made him too pessimistic about what his government could achieve through diplomacy, and too confident about what his army could accomplish on the battlefield, to seize this opportunity. The result was that he missed an excellent chance to end the Korean War earlier and on better terms than he ultimately did.

In both the military and diplomatic spheres, then, Mao's sense of national efficacy left a clear imprint on the early foreign policy of the PRC. Military audacity went hand in hand with conservative diplomacy. This combination of policies, in turn, proved tremendously costly for China. Although Mao did prevent the unification of Korea under American leadership, his unrealistic military ambitions – and his failure to seize the diplomatic opportunity that emerged – meant that he paid too high a price for this accomplishment. According to Chinese estimates, roughly 148,400 Chinese soldiers died in Korea and total Chinese casualties reached 366,000. American estimates put Chinese casualties much higher: 577,000 by mid-1951 and close to one million by the war's end.[122] In economic terms, the war forced the PRC to increase

[121] Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 377.

[122] For the differing Chinese and American estimates of total CPV casualties, see Xu Yan, *Diyici Jiaoliang* [The First Trial of Strength] (Beijing: China Broadcast Television Press, 1990), 322. For the mid-1951 U.S. estimate, see U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1951, vol. 7 (pt. 2), 1741–42. Note that Peng Dehuai himself estimated that he had lost half his men by January 1951, a statement that implied 200,000 casualties just a few months into the war, which suggests that the American estimate is probably closer to the truth. See

military spending to nearly half of all central government expenditures in 1951 rather than lowering it to 30 percent as hoped. The war also compelled the PRC to postpone its first five-year economic plan (FYP). In the end, the first FYP (covering 1953 to 1957) was only approved in mid-1955.[123] In geopolitical terms, Mao's decision to keep fighting in January 1951 may have won applause in Moscow and Pyongyang, but it also made it easier for Washington to isolate Beijing. As a result, the nationalists would continue to represent "China" on the UN Security Council for two more decades, and the PRC's options would be limited when relations with the Soviet Union began to deteriorate later in the 1950s. In short, Mao's adventure in Korea left China with some gains but also considerable losses, many of which could have been avoided had he been less confident in his armed forces and more confident in his diplomats.

Peng Dehuai, "My Story of the Korean War," in *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, ed. Li Xiaobing, Allan Reed Millett, and Yu Bin (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 34n13 in particular. Lastly, MacFarquhar offers an explanation for the large discrepancy between Chinese and American estimates of CPV casualties: the PLA apparently counted CPV soldiers who died and were buried in Korea as "Korean deaths," thereby massively understating the war's toll. See Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961–1966* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 615–16n168.

[123] On the economic cost of the war, see Shen, *Mao Zedong, Sidalin, yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 358–59; Frederick Teiwes, "The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime, 1949–1957," in *The Politics of China, 1949–1989*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 40.

5

Persistent Pugnacity

> Have we not won all of our wars in the past?
>
> Mao Zedong, June 16, 1965

In the preceding chapter, we saw how Mao's strong sense of martial efficacy, and weak sense of moral efficacy, shaped his approach to foreign policy immediately after he took power. Faced with the outbreak of war in Korea, Mao responded predictably: with military boldness and diplomatic caution. Yet was this pattern of policy merely a passing tendency in the aftermath of the revolution? Or was it to prove a persistent feature of Chinese foreign policy under Mao?

If one takes a broad view of PRC foreign policy from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, it is clear that China's military assertiveness and diplomatic restraint persisted well after the Korean conflict. On the military side, China continued to take a forceful approach in foreign policy crises with the superpowers. This tendency was particularly evident on land. Indeed, while the PRC used force to instigate crises in the Taiwan Strait in 1954 and 1958, it was careful not to attack the U.S. Navy. Subsequently, China chose not to escalate conflict in the Strait after a third crisis developed in the spring of 1962, when Chiang Kai-shek launched a military mobilization drive and updated Taiwan's invasion plans.[1] In contrast, the crises that China faced with the United States and the Soviet Union in the mid- to late 1960s took place on the mainland of Asia, and in these cases the PRC *did* initiate direct conflict with its superpower opponents, notwithstanding its lack of comparable might. As the first half of this chapter will make clear, Mao's government chose to confront the United States in Vietnam following the Tonkin Gulf and Pleiku crises in 1964 and 1965.[2] Although the two sides avoided another Korea-style war, the large

[1] For recent summaries of these three crises, see Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 233–52.

[2] China is not listed as a participant in these two crises in the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) Dataset, but the narrative that follows makes it clear that China's leaders perceived a security

antiaircraft forces China deployed to North Vietnam took a considerable toll on U.S. bombing missions, while the Chinese suffered more than a thousand battle deaths of their own in the conflict. Subsequently, while the conflict in Vietnam continued, Mao ordered attacks on Soviet forces on the Sino-Soviet border in March 1969, setting off a tense standoff with the Soviet Union that endured for two decades.[3] The remarkable assertiveness evinced by China in these latter cases has been highlighted by John Garver: "When one considers China's very real weaknesses of the 1960s – the economic collapse following the Great Leap Forward and then the disruption and deep divisions of the Cultural Revolution – it is amazing that during this period China's leaders dared to confront the United States and the USSR simultaneously."[4] The PRC's military assertiveness in the 1960s was indeed amazing, but it was also consistent with the strong sense of martial efficacy that Mao had acquired in the Chinese Revolution.

On the diplomatic side, Mao's government continued to take a conservative approach. Although Beijing did adopt a more cooperative tone following the Korean War, particularly by supporting the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" in the Sino-Indian agreement of 1954 and in the Bandung Declaration in 1955, these rhetorical flourishes were not accompanied by costly gestures to elicit restraint from China's adversaries.[5] The compromises that China helped broker at the Geneva Conference in 1954, for example, were easy to make, as they involved minimal costs for the PRC.[6] The PRC subsequently adopted an increasingly unyielding approach to diplomacy, giving little ground at the Geneva Conference on Laos in 1961 and rejecting arms control and disarmament negotiations as a superpower conspiracy.[7] In the early 1970s, the PRC did seek to elicit U.S. cooperation on a variety of fronts as the two countries pursued rapprochement, but Beijing was very careful how it went about this task. The PRC did not compromise on the Taiwan issue, a stance that held up

threat from the U.S. escalation in Vietnam, a higher probability of military hostilities (particularly after Pleiku), and a finite time for a response. China was thus clearly a participant in the Pleiku crisis, and possibly in the Tonkin crisis as well, if one applies the definition employed by the ICB.

3 China's participation in the Vietnam War is discussed later in this chapter. For recent analyses of China's decision to use force in 1969, see Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 201–15; Lorenz Lüthi, "Sino-Soviet-American Relations, 1969" (McGill University, unpublished manuscript, 2008), 11–14.

4 John Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1993), 109.

5 The five principles include: (1) mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; (2) mutual nonaggression; (3) noninterference in each other's internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence.

6 As Chen Jian has written, "The real winner at the conference was Zhou [Enlai]. He left Geneva with nearly everything he could have anticipated." See Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 143. See also Zhai Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 49–63.

7 On the 1961 Geneva Conference, see Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 92–111. China's approach to nuclear diplomacy is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Sino-American normalization until the end of the decade. Although Chinese leaders did withdraw their troops from Vietnam and urged Hanoi to reach a cease-fire agreement with Washington, they did so anticipating that North Vietnam would resume its efforts to unify the country after the Americans had left, and they substantially increased China's military and economic aid to North Vietnam in the early 1970s.[8] In short, it is extremely difficult to find an example of boldly cooperative diplomacy on China's part during Mao's time.

If Maoist China's military and diplomatic policies after Korea were broadly congruent with the efficacy beliefs that Mao derived from the revolution, it remains to be seen whether these beliefs actually helped to produce these policies. The space available here does not allow us to scrutinize all of these policies with sufficient care for this purpose, but we can focus on a few key decisions to assess whether the beliefs that Mao acquired in the revolution were still in evidence after the Korean War and continued to shape PRC foreign policy in important ways. Toward this end, this chapter focuses on China's military and diplomatic policies in the mid-1960s. On the military side, it considers China's decision to become involved in the Vietnam War.[9] Starting with fateful decisions that Mao made in the watershed year of 1962, it explores how China became increasingly involved in the escalating conflict in the years that followed, leading up to the deployment of Chinese military forces to North Vietnam in 1965. Drawing on new archival evidence, the analysis indicates that Mao's martial confidence played an important role in the formulation of China's approach, convincing him that China could handle an escalation of the conflict should it occur, and that a leader with weaker beliefs would have acted with greater caution.

The second half of the chapter explores China's approach to disarmament and arms control following the PRC's emergence as a nuclear power in 1964. The analysis focuses on this particular case not only because of its intrinsic importance and its historical coincidence with the events described in the first half of the chapter but also because it also offers a particularly valuable opportunity to assess the effect of Mao's sense of moral efficacy on Chinese diplomacy. As will be explained, the international environment did not clearly mitigate against China taking a more cooperative approach to nuclear diplomacy in the mid-1960s. Instead, it appears that China backed away from one of its central disarmament proposals – the convening of a world disarmament conference – soon after the outside world began to show some interest in it, a puzzling decision that remains unexplored to date. The analysis here, drawing on archival evidence and other sources, finds that Mao supported China's

[8] Shen Zhihua, "Sino-U.S. Reconciliation and China's Vietnam Policy," in *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the World beyond Asia*, ed. Priscilla Roberts (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), 354–55, 362–63.

[9] China's attack on Soviet forces in 1969 represents another case in which Mao challenged a more powerful opponent, but the evidence concerning this latter episode remains too limited at this point to assess the role of Mao's efficacy beliefs in China's policymaking process.

FIGURE 5.1. Mao inspects a homemade semiautomatic rifle while visiting PLA units near Beijing in June 1964. First from left is PLA chief of staff Luo Ruiqing, second from left is Liu Shaoqi, and first from right is General Yang Yong. (Courtesy AFP/Getty Images)

pro-disarmament stance only cynically, and that he anticipated only negative outcomes for China if it did participate in disarmament discussions, in keeping with his weak sense of moral efficacy.

WAR REPRISED

In the early 1960s, China's security environment took a sharp turn for the worse. The economic calamity of the Great Leap Forward had weakened China dramatically, prompting Taiwan to make menacing moves in the first half of 1962, as noted earlier. That same year, Sino-Indian tensions escalated as Indian forces pressed into disputed territories along their Himalayan border. In the end, these threats proved to be short-lived: the United States refused to support a Taiwanese attack, and China demolished India's forces on the border in October and November.[10] Yet a more daunting challenge was looming on the horizon. In response to the growing insurgency in South Vietnam, the U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia was expanding rapidly: U.S. military assistance to South Vietnam more than doubled in 1962, and the American military presence grew from 3,205 to 9,000 personnel as a result of "Project

[10] The 1962 Sino-Indian War is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

Beefup."[11] That summer, Ho Chi Minh warned the Chinese leadership that the United States might soon attack the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) by air, land, or both. Ho's assessment got the Chinese leadership's attention. When DRV defense minister General Vo Nguyen Giap visited Beijing in October, Mao told his guest that "in the past several years we did not think much about whether the imperialists would attack us, and now we must think carefully about it."[12]

Over the next three years, the PRC opted to challenge the growing American military presence in Southeast Asia, even as China's relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated. By the spring of 1965, China had begun sending an impressive array of military forces to North Vietnam, to be described in more detail in the discussion that follows, and the United States and China commenced fighting an undeclared war, with both sides using deadly force against the other. To explain China's decision to confront the United States, the following discussion scrutinizes China's policymaking process between 1962 and 1965. If Mao's sense of martial efficacy was important, we should find that Mao favored a relatively combative approach, whereas Liu sought to avoid conflict. In addition, we should find that Mao's martial confidence informed his thinking by shaping the kinds of outcomes that he anticipated. The following discussion explores each of these questions, drawing on PRC archival documents, published primary source materials, and secondary accounts. It concludes by considering alternative explanations for China's decision to challenge the United States in Southeast Asia.

Mao's Push for War in Vietnam

As China's security environment deteriorated in the early 1960s, the proper strategy for remedying the situation became a point of controversy within the PRC leadership. The source of contention was a series of proposals made by Wang Jiaxiang, chief of the CCP's international liaison department. Wang was a veteran of the communist movement; he had studied in Moscow in the 1920s, supported Mao on the Long March, and served as the PRC's first ambassador to the Soviet Union after the revolution. Starting in early 1962, Wang authored a series of documents calling for a more restrained and conciliatory approach to foreign policy.[13] Most relevant for our purposes here, Wang

[11] George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950–1975*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 103–4.

[12] Quoted in Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 207.

[13] See *Wang Jiaxiang Xuanji* [Selected Works of Wang Jiaxiang] (Beijing: People's Press, 1989), 444–45, 446–60. There are apparently other writings by Wang from this period that have not been released. See Zhang Tuosheng, "Nanneng de Tansuo, Kegui de Nuli [Difficult Exploration, Praiseworthy Diligence]," in *Huanqiu Tongci Liang Re: Yidai Lingxiumen de Guoji Zhanlüe Sixiang* [It's the Same Temperature Around the World: The International Strategic Thought of a Generation of Leaders], ed. Zhang Tuosheng (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 1993), 171.

stressed that the PRC should avoid being drawn into another Korea-style war with the United States in Vietnam, which he already saw as a real danger.[14] More broadly, he argued that peaceful coexistence with U.S. "imperialism" was not impossible; it could be pursued effectively if the PRC united with all other "peace-loving forces" in the world.[15] In particular, Wang suggested that China seek common ground with the Soviet Union, even though Mao had already branded Moscow's leadership as "revisionist." Lastly, Wang stressed that China should be realistic in its foreign aid and "act in keeping with our capabilities."[16]

Mao did not weigh in on Wang's ideas in the first half of 1962. Instead, he left Beijing and retreated from the front line of decision making after the 7,000 Cadres Conference ended in February. The conference had attacked many of the Great Leap policies associated with Mao, prompting him to make a half-hearted self-criticism in response. In May, neither Mao nor his politburo allies Ke Qingshi and Li Jingquan attended a central work conference, which proceeded to set more realistic industrial targets. Momentum would subsequently build for fixing agricultural quotas to individual households (*baochan daohu*) rather than collectives, an idea antithetical to Mao's own preferences.[17]

In late summer of 1962, Mao staged an angry comeback that made clear his intense dissatisfaction with the drift of policy, including Wang's ideas.[18] In August, he took over a central work conference at Beidaihe, dismissing the original agenda and insisting that the PRC leadership discuss class struggle and the dangers of revisionism. Mao persisted with this antirevisionist tirade at the central committee's 10th plenum in September.[19] Sensing that the wind was not blowing his way, Wang sought out Mao and expressed contrition. Mao suggested that Wang organize a discussion on the dangers of revisionism with other foreign affairs cadres, which then became a forum for criticizing Wang. Following the plenum, Wang was exiled to the political wilderness, not to reemerge for several years. Kang Sheng later mocked Wang's views as the "three reconciliations and one reduction" (*san he yi shao*): reconciliation with the United States, the Soviet Union, and India, as well as reduced foreign aid.

[14] This point apparently was made in a report Wang published in June 1962 but was deleted from the version published in *Wang Jiaxiang Xuanji*. See Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 353n28.

[15] *Wang Jiaxiang Xuanji*, 455.

[16] Ibid., 445.

[17] On the 7,000 Cadres Conference and Mao's subsequent retreat, see MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 137–81, 199–208, 261–69.

[18] Mao had ample grounds for displeasure earlier than that, but he appears to have been moved to action by encouraging reports on that year's harvest. These ensured that the changes he had in mind would not coincide with – and be blamed for – continued economic stagnation. See ibid., 281–83.

[19] For Mao's speech at the plenum, see Mao Zedong, "Speech at the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee," in *Chairman Mao Talks to the People: Talks and Letters: 1956–1971*, ed. Stuart Schram (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 190–91.

Mao later adopted this derisive description himself and labeled Wang's line "revisionist."[20]

Scholars have recently suggested that Mao may not have been entirely hostile to Wang's ideas at first.[21] In the early 1960s, for example, Mao ordered that U.S. spy planes should generally not be attacked. His overall approach to the United States, however, could hardly be described as conciliatory. With conflict mounting in Vietnam, Mao could have sought to reduce tensions by curtailing support for the insurgency in the South. With time, as China recovered from the Great Leap and developed its own nuclear deterrent, there would be better opportunities to expand communist influence in Southeast Asia. Instead, Mao chose to escalate the conflict by encouraging Hanoi. Following Ho Chi Minh's visit to Beijing in the summer of 1962, the PRC offered 90,000 rifles and machine guns to the DRV, support that allowed Hanoi to intensify its efforts in South Vietnam. Subsequent Chinese assistance over the next several years provided the DRV with 270,000 guns; more than 700 tons of TNT; 5,400 cannon and artillery pieces; 200 million rounds of ammunition; 900,000 artillery shells; 200,000 military uniforms; and 4 million meters of cloth. China also offered direct military cooperation. In March 1963, PLA chief of staff Luo Ruiqing visited Hanoi to discuss how Chinese and North Vietnamese forces could collaborate should the United States invade North Vietnam. Confident of Beijing's support, Hanoi decided to intensify the military struggle in the South at the end of 1963. As Tom Christensen has argued, it is "very difficult to imagine" that Hanoi could have carried out its plans for revolution in the South at this time without Chinese help.[22]

As the war intensified in 1964, the CCP leadership began to grapple with the possibility that the United States would attack North Vietnam and perhaps China as well. The Tonkin Gulf crisis in August of that year was a key moment

[20] On Wang's contrition, see Xu Zehao, *Wang Jiaxiang Zhuan* [The Biography of Wang Jiaxiang] (Beijing: Modern China Press, 1996), 566. For Mao's suggestion to Wang, see Mao Zedong, "Dui Waishi Jianbao Diyisanqi Qi de Piyu [Remarks on Foreign Affairs Report no. 137]," September 29, 1962, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 10, 199. On the "three reconciliations and one reduction," see Li Jie, "Changes in China's Domestic Situation in the 1960s and Sino-U.S. Relations," in *Re-examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954–1973*, ed. Robert Ross and Jiang Changbin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 305.

[21] David Bachman, "Aspects of an Institutionalizing Political System: China, 1958–1965," *The China Quarterly*, no. 188 (2006): 951.

[22] Ang Cheng Guan, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956–1962* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1997), 229; Thomas J. Christensen, "Worse Than a Monolith: Disorganization and Rivalry within Asian Communist Alliances and U.S. Containment Challenges, 1949–69," *Asian Security* 1, no. 1 (January 2005): 102; Guo Ming, ed., *Zhongyue Guanxi Yanbian Sishi Nian* [The Evolution of Sino-Vietnamese Relations over 40 Years] (Nanning: Guangxi People's Press, 1992), 69; Han Nianlong and Xue Mouhong, eds., *Dangdai Zhongguo Waijiao* [Contemporary Chinese Diplomatic Relations] (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1987), 159; Qu Aiguo, Bao Mingrong, and Xiao Zuyue, *Yuan Yue Kang Mei: Zhongguo Zhiyuan Budui zai Yuenan* [Helping Vietnam and Resisting America: China's Volunteer Troops in Vietnam] (Beijing: Military Science Press, 1995), 8–9.

in this regard. Mao's initial reaction was to see the incident as a precursor to a wider conflict. On August 6, he wrote to his security chief, Wang Dongxing, that "war is coming now" (*yao da zhang le*).[23] Upon reflection, however, Mao seems to have become more sanguine. After exchanging intelligence information with Vietnamese leaders on August 13, Mao suggested that "it seems that the Americans do not want to fight a war, you do not want to fight a war, and we do not necessarily want to fight a war. As none of the three sides wants to fight a war, the war will not happen."[24] Mao's optimism seemed to reflect a belief that the PRC could deter Washington from escalating the conflict. When a member of the Vietnamese delegation noted that the United States was now threatening to attack North Vietnam, Mao answered: "If the United States attacks the North, they will have to remember that the Chinese also have legs, and that legs are used for walking." He added that China would make some visible deployments of 300,000 to 500,000 troops to southwestern China to underline its support for Hanoi. Although hoping that a wider war could be avoided, Mao at the same time also wanted to make sure that China would be ready to fight the United States if necessary. He thus dramatically accelerated construction of the Third Front – a program designed to shift China's industrial base to the interior, where it would be less vulnerable to attack.[25] By October, Mao was saying that the PRC must be prepared for the possibility of a wide-ranging, nuclear war.[26]

Mao seemed to relax somewhat in January 1965, after U.S. secretary of state Dean Rusk stated that the United States would not expand the conflict to North Vietnam.[27] Yet his perceptions changed after another crisis erupted in February. In response to a Vietcong raid on U.S. and South Vietnamese barracks at Pleiku, the United States began extensive bombing of North Vietnam in Operation Rolling Thunder. The first American combat troops (3,500 marines) then arrived in Vietnam in early March, landing at Danang. These moves apparently startled China's leaders, who had not expected such a high-profile U.S. commitment.[28] To reassure Beijing, the Johnson administration began signaling its limited intentions through ambassadorial talks in Warsaw starting in late February. In particular, American officials appear to have indicated that the United States had no designs on Vietnamese territory, that it did not intend

[23] Mao Zedong, "Dui Zhongguo Zhengfu Kangyi Meiguo Qinfan Yuenan de Shengming Gao di Piyu [Remarks on the Draft of the Chinese Government's Statement of Protest against the U.S. Encroachment upon Vietnam]," August 6, 1964, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 11, 120.

[24] Quoted in James G. Hershberg and Chen Jian, "Informing the Enemy: Sino-American Signaling and the Vietnam War, 1965," in Roberts, *Behind the Bamboo Curtain*, 215.

[25] For a comprehensive overview of the Third Front, see Barry Naughton, "The Third Front: Defence Industrialization in the Chinese Interior," *The China Quarterly*, no. 115 (1988).

[26] Yuan Dejin, "Lun Xin Zhongguo Chengli Hou Mao Zedong Zhanzheng yu Heping Lilun de Yanbian [The Evolution of Mao Zedong's Theory of War and Peace since the Founding of New China]," *Junshi Lishi* [Military History], no. 4 (1994): 36.

[27] Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 143.

[28] Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 215–16.

to overthrow the government of North Vietnam, and that it did not wish to threaten the security of China.[29]

Although a tacit understanding along these lines was eventually reached, Mao and his colleagues remained preoccupied with the possibility of war with the United States at least until mid-1965. On April 2, Zhou Enlai told Pakistani president Ayub Khan that the Chinese leadership was concerned about an expansion of the war to include China.[30] On April 12, several politburo members (including Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and Deng Xiaoping) developed draft instructions on war preparations that made clear that the PRC should prepare for a war on China itself and warned that the enemy might be "reckless" (*maoxian*). Mao approved the instructions the next day, and they were disseminated on April 14.[31] Subsequently, in a meeting with top military leaders on April 28, Mao ordered preparations for the landing of paratroopers inside China, an action that the United States might "combine with a frontal assault."[32] On June 2, Mao suggested that war might come quickly or might take up to three years, but China should prepare as if it were coming soon.[33] On June 16, Mao suggested that Chinese families begin digging caves under their homes, presumably as bomb shelters. He added that the PRC should avoid building large fertilizer plants because those would present easier targets for American bombers. Clearly, the CCP leadership was not prepared to take the Johnson administration at its word.

While the PRC was engaged in domestic war preparations in the spring of 1965, it was also preparing to insert its own forces into the conflict. In December 1964, China and North Vietnam had signed an agreement in which Beijing pledged to send 300,000 troops to the northern provinces of the DRV.[34] In April 1965, they moved to implement this understanding, concluding additional agreements and working out the details on the deployment of China's forces.[35] In May and June, the CMC under Mao and the PLA General Staff

[29] Kenneth T. Young, *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists: The United States Experience, 1953–1967* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 268–69.

[30] "Zhou Enlai and Pakistani President Ayub Khan," April 2, 1965, in *77 Conversations between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964–1977*, ed. Odd Arne Westad et al., Cold War International History Project Working Paper no. 22 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1998), 80–82.

[31] For both the instructions and Mao's approval, see Mao Zedong, "Dui Zhongyang Guanyu Jiaqiang Zhanbei Gongzuo de Zhishi Gao de Piyu [Remarks Regarding the Center's Draft Instructions on Increasing War Preparations Work]," April 13, 1965, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 11, 359–60. See also Li and Ma, *Zhou Enlai Nianpu*, vol. 2, 724.

[32] Mao Zedong, "Yao Fangzhi Diren Xiang Zongshen Kongjiang [We Must Prevent the Enemy From Making Airborne Landings to Penetrate Our Depth]," April 28, 1965, in *Mao Zedong Junshi Wenji*, vol. 6, 404.

[33] Mao Zedong, "Zai Guoji Guanxi Yanjiusuo Yifen Neibu Cailiaoshang de Piyu [Remarks on Internal Circulation Materials from the Research Institute on International Relations]," June 2, 1965, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 11, 381.

[34] Ilya V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 16.

[35] Han and Xue, *Dangdai Zhongguo Waijiao*, 161.

issued a series of orders mobilizing China's troops, and the first of these forces began moving into North Vietnam in early June.[36] Over the next four years, more than 320,000 Chinese soldiers served in Vietnam, reaching a high point of 170,000 in 1967.[37]

China's intervention in Vietnam was unlike its intervention in Korea. The PRC was not taking over a war that was going badly for its ally but supporting a viable war effort. For that reason, and also because of Vietnamese sensitivities, the PRC deployment did not include ground troops.[38] Nonetheless, the support troops that the PRC did send played an active and important role in the conflict. China sent 16 antiaircraft divisions, totaling 150,000 troops, that defended northern Vietnam (including areas around Hanoi) against U.S. bombing.[39] Conservative Chinese estimates claim that these forces shot down 597 planes and damaged 479 others; higher estimates suggest these figures should be 1,707 and 1,608 planes, respectively.[40] Although the accuracy of these figures remains debatable, it is clear that Chinese troops used deadly force against U.S. forces in Vietnam, even if they did not participate in the ground war. In addition, Chinese engineering and railroad troops built roads and repaired bomb damage, keeping communications open in the North despite repeated attack. While undertaking these operations, an estimated 1,070 Chinese soldiers lost their lives, but this total may only include those who died after returning to China for treatment. China's total dead and wounded in the war may have approached 20,000.[41]

Mao also made plans for more extensive intervention in the conflict should it prove necessary. In June and August 1964, Mao had told high-level Vietnamese delegations that Chinese ground troops would enter the DRV if the United States invaded North Vietnam.[42] The details remained unclear, however, so in June 1965 Luo Ruiqing met with DRV leaders to work out the specific conditions under which additional PRC forces would join the war. If the status quo persisted, the Vietnamese would continue to lead the fighting while being supported by China. If the United States supported a South Vietnamese invasion

[36] Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 223.

[37] Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 135.

[38] On Vietnamese sensitivities, see Hershberg and Chen, "Informing the Enemy," 229.

[39] Zhang Xiaomong, "The Vietnam War, 1964–1969: A Chinese Perspective," *The Journal of Military History* 60, no. 4 (1996): 757.

[40] For the lower estimate, see MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Coming of the Cataclysm*, 373. For the higher one, see Qu Aiguo, "Zhongguo Zhiyuan Budui Zai Yuenan Zhanchang de Junshi Xingdong [Military Operations of China's Volunteer Troops on the Vietnamese Battlefield]," in *Zhongguo yu Induzhina Zhanzheng*, ed. Li Danhui (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 2000), 96. On the difficulty of estimating how many planes Chinese forces actually shot down in Vietnam, see Zhang, "Vietnam War," 759.

[41] On Chinese casualties in Vietnam, see MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Coming of the Cataclysm*, 373, 616n168; John Garver, "The Chinese Threat in the Vietnam War," *Parameters* 22, no. 1 (1992): 78.

[42] On the June conversation, see Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 208–9. On the August conversation, see Yang Kuisong, "Mao Zedong and the Indochina Wars," in Roberts, *Behind the Bamboo Curtain*, 78.

of the North with air and naval forces, China would respond in kind. If U.S. ground forces participated in an invasion of North Vietnam, China's ground forces would serve as a strategic reserve for Hanoi, and they would undertake operational tasks against the invading forces whenever necessary.[43]

By sending sizable support forces to Vietnam, and by positioning China to send ground troops as well, Mao clearly hoped to deter the United States from escalating the conflict further. As Allen Whiting has noted, the Chinese forces in Vietnam were not concealed, and the United States easily detected them as a result.[44] Beijing also tried to inform Washington through intermediaries in 1965 that: (1) China did not wish to provoke a general war with the United States; (2) China would honor its international obligations; (3) China was prepared for war; and (4) China would not limit how it fought in response to U.S. bombing of the PRC. Although this message left unclear how China would respond to a U.S. invasion of the DRV, the ambiguity on this point was probably deliberate. Greater clarity would have given an implicit green light to actions that fell short of whatever threshold was specified. In addition, North Vietnamese leaders apparently preferred to wait for a concrete situation to develop before inviting in still more troops from their giant neighbor.[45]

Mao's goals, however, were not limited to deterrence. As John Garver has put it, he was also "rolling back U.S. containment in Asia."[46] If Mao had only been interested in avoiding war with the United States while maintaining the political status quo, he might have coupled China's deterrent measures with efforts to curb the military struggle in South Vietnam. Instead, Mao's goals were expansionist, and he readily supported Hanoi's fight in the South. While meeting with Ho Chi Minh in May 1965, Mao agreed to assist the DRV in building several roads running to South Vietnam. As Ho pointed out, the incoming influx of Chinese troops would free up 30,000 DRV personnel for operations in the South. The PRC also sharply increased its military supplies to the DRV from 1964 to 1965.[47] Mao even seemed to envision much broader expansion of communism in Southeast Asia. He supported Ho's plans to build

[43] Hershberg and Chen, "Informing the Enemy," 228. Lorenz Lüthi suggests that these commitments represented a retreat from Mao's position in the June conversation noted earlier. See Lorenz Lüthi, "Twenty-Four Soviet-Bloc Documents on Vietnam and the Sino-Soviet Split, 1964–1966," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 16 (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 368. Yet the vagueness of Mao's remarks at that time makes it hard to say whether this is the case. In addition, as discussed later in this chapter, Hanoi was quite apprehensive about the conditions under which Chinese troops were to enter North Vietnam, and this anxiety appears to have limited the kind of military commitment that the PRC ultimately made.

[44] Allen Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 186.

[45] Hershberg and Chen, "Informing the Enemy," 218–40.

[46] Garver, "Chinese Threat in the Vietnam War," 75.

[47] From 1964 to 1965, the PRC's supply of various kinds of artillery increased from 1,205 to 4,439, artillery shells from 335,000 to 1.8 million, and guns from 80,500 to 220,767. See Li Ke and Hao Shengzhang, *Wenhua Dageming Zhong de Renmin Jiefangjun* [The PLA in the Cultural Revolution] (Beijing: CCP Historical Materials Press, 1989), 416.

roads through Laos, and he recommended building roads to Thailand for "large-scale battles in the future."[48] In fact, citing Chinese archival documents, Yang Kuisong claims that Mao hoped to launch a revolution in Thailand in another 5 to 10 years.[49]

Although Mao's agenda was fundamentally expansionist, it must be noted that he also sought to limit the price that China had to pay for communist expansion in Southeast Asia. In particular, Mao preferred to let North Vietnam bear the brunt of the fighting and for the PRC to remain in the background and relatively unscathed by the war. As the following discussion will make clear, Mao did not believe that China would lose a wider conflict with the United States, but he did not see a wider war as necessary, and such a conflict would have been much more costly for his state. For this reason, China did not officially acknowledge the presence of its troops in North Vietnam, though as noted earlier neither did it hide them from American intelligence.[50] China also chose not to send its own pilots to assist the DRV Air Force after Hanoi requested such assistance.[51] In addition, China apparently declined to provide "volunteer" troops to fight in South Vietnam after Ho Chi Minh requested such assistance in late 1965.[52] In short, although China's military support for North Vietnam was robust and crucial for winning the war in the South, Mao sought to win without provoking a wider conflict, thereby limiting the cost of communist expansion for his state.[53]

Liu's Stance

How did Liu Shaoqi perceive the conflict in Vietnam, and to what extent did he concur with Mao's decision to intervene in it? To put Liu's later statements in context, it is helpful to return briefly to the crucial year of 1962. Unlike Mao, Liu appears to have backed Wang's conservative prescriptions in the first half of the year. Wang spoke with Liu at length before setting forth his views in writing, and Liu had encouraged him to proceed.[54] Subsequently, Liu continued to support Wang's approach into the summer of 1962. On June 27, Liu, Deng Xiaoping, and Peng Zhen met with an Albanian delegation, and Liu made it clear that he favored rapprochement with Moscow. Liu is recorded as saying: "We want to form an international united front against imperialism, which will include true communist party members, revolutionaries, revolutionary capitalist elements in colonial countries, *as well as revisionists*" [emphasis

[48] "Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh," May 16, 1965, in Westad et al., *77 Conversations between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina*, 84–85.
[49] Yang, "Mao Zedong and the Indochina Wars," 79.
[50] Garver, "Chinese Threat in the Vietnam War," 78.
[51] Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 134–35.
[52] Lüthi, "Twenty-Four Soviet-Bloc Documents on Vietnam and the Sino-Soviet Split," 386.
[53] I am grateful to Yang Kuisong for insight on this particular point.
[54] Wang Li, *Xianchang Lishi: Wenhua Da Geming Jishi* [On the Spot History: A Record of the Cultural Revolution] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1993), 21.

added].[55] Liu proceeded to elaborate on this point, calling for parties to accept the differences that existed within the communist world and suggesting that they avoid putting these differences in writing. Evidently, Liu was anxious about China's ability to oppose the United States without Soviet support.

When Mao staged his comeback and attacked Wang a few months later, it is understandable that Liu did not leap to Wang's defense. With Mao resurgent, Liu was in retreat. In response to Mao's attacks on revisionism, Liu made self-criticisms in August and September 1962. He endorsed Mao's line completely, perhaps because doing so helped him shelter the economy from Mao's ideological agenda. For his part, Deng Xiaoping was relieved of his role in agricultural matters. As Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong have put it, "[T]hose of Mao's colleagues who might have doubts about these ideas of the chairman's yielded to his argument without a fight."[56]

After Wang Jiaxiang's exit in late 1962, Liu seems to have fallen into line with Mao's agenda. On a state visit to the DRV in May 1963, Liu declared that "peaceful coexistence must not be used to abolish the socialist countries' duty of supporting the revolutionary struggles of the oppressed nations and peoples."[57] In June 1964, when Mao told a Vietnamese delegation that Chinese troops would cross the border if the United States took the war to North Vietnam, Liu appears to have supported him.[58] On April 8, 1965, Liu told a Vietnamese delegation that "if you do not invite us, we will not come, and if you invite one unit of our troops, we will send that unit to you."[59] On April 12, at the meeting that issued instructions for war preparations, Liu predicted that "if the fight comes to China, the world situation will change, and we will drag down the U.S. imperialists as the world experiences another upheaval."[60] In short, Liu seemed to support Mao's combative approach to the Vietnam conflict on several occasions in the mid-1960s.

[55] Xiao Donglian, *Qiusuo Zhongguo: Wen Ge Qian Shi Nian Shi* [In Search of China: A History of the Decade before the Cultural Revolution] (Beijing: Red Flag Press, 1999), 931.

[56] On Liu's self-criticism and support for Mao, see Jin Chongji, ed., *Liu Shaoqi Zhuan* [The Biography of Liu Shaoqi] (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 1998), 915–18. On sparing the economy and Deng's removal, see MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Coming of the Cataclysm*, 284–85. The last quotation is from Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong, "Chinese Politics and the Collapse of the Sino-Soviet Alliance," in *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945–1963*, ed. Odd Arne Westad, Cold War International History Project series (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), 276.

[57] Quoted in Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 124.

[58] Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 208–9.

[59] Quoted in Wang Xian'gen, *Yuanyue Kangmei Shilu* [A Faithful Recording of Helping Vietnam and Resisting America] (Beijing: International Culture Press, 1990), 44. See also Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 208–19.

[60] "Wang Wei Tongzhi Chuanda Zhengzhiju Taolun Zhanbei Zhishi Shi Zhongyang Jiwei Fuze Tongzhi de Jianghua [Remarks by Several Leading Comrades at the Politburo Meeting on War Preparations Transmitted by Comrade Wang Wei]," Jiangsu Provincial Archives (Nanjing PRC), Collection no. 3011, Series 1162 (long), 43–49.

Nonetheless, it seems unlikely that Liu would have openly contradicted Mao on Vietnam policy. As Zhai Qiang has written, "Mao completely dominated the decision making . . . whatever private opinions were held, the only viable option was to follow the course dictated by Mao."[61] It is thus crucial to look for more subtle indications that Liu preferred a more cautious course than the one Mao was charting. Liu made a number of statements that are revealing in this regard. During his May 1963 visit to the DRV, Liu told his hosts that they could count on China as a "strategic rear" in the event of war.[62] This promise came two months *after* PLA chief of staff Luo Ruiqing had told DRV leaders that Chinese forces would help fight off the United States should it invade North Vietnam, suggesting that Liu preferred less direct involvement. Subsequently, at the April 12, 1965, meeting on war preparations mentioned earlier, Liu again sounded more interested in having China serve as a strategic rear than in actually fighting in Vietnam:

> If the U.S. sends ground troops to the North, should we send troops? Should we support (the DRV)? We have consistently supported people's wars of liberation. If the U.S. occupies Haiphong and Hanoi, what will we do? Our Vietnamese comrades have told us, under these circumstances, they wish to involve us as little as possible, let us have a progressive rear area. This is a good way of thinking. The minute we go, the U.S. will start bombing us. [The U.S.] will say, "there can be no rear sanctuary."[63]

Following this, Liu added that "if Vietnam asks us to go, then we should go." Liu may have genuinely felt a sense of obligation, or he may have been worried about being labeled revisionist – as indeed he should have been, given the charges that would soon be made against him in the Cultural Revolution. Either way, the thrust of Liu's remarks betrayed a clear preference for staying out of the war even if the United States invaded North Vietnam and occupied Hanoi. This stance contradicted the position that Mao had taken in meetings with high-level Vietnamese visitors previously, when he had stated that China would enter the war under such conditions. Although Liu had seemed to support such a line previously, he may have felt he had little choice but to support Mao's line in conversations with foreign visitors, and it is telling that Liu grew less enthusiastic as the prospect of war with the United States became more and more real. In any case, Mao's position became China's policy in June 1965, when Luo Ruiqing worked out the specific conditions under which China's ground troops would enter the war.

After China's troops entered Vietnam, Liu seems to have become interested in improving the PRC's ties to the Soviet Union – certainly more interested than Mao was. As noted earlier, Liu had favored a "united front against imperialism" with the Soviets in 1962. In February and March 1966, Liu seemed interested in exploring this possibility once again when a high-ranking Japanese

[61] Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 145.
[62] Quoted in Qu, "Zhongguo Zhiyuan Budui Zai Yuenan Zhanchang de Junshi Xingdong," 82.
[63] "Wang Wei Tongzhi Chuanda Zhengzhiju Taolun Zhanbei Zhishi Shi Zhongyang Jiwei Fuze Tongzhi de Jianghua," 47.

Communist Party delegation visited China and North Vietnam to promote communist solidarity against the United States and its allies. Liu and Deng worked out an agreement under which China would eventually join this united front, but Mao intervened to nix the deal in the end. Mao later linked this event to his rejection of Wang Jiaxiang's ideas in 1962.[64]

In short, the evidence strongly suggests that Liu did not favor quite as confrontational a course as Mao. This was clearly the case in 1962, when Mao was absent from Beijing. Subsequently, Liu's reservations were more muted, but careful scrutiny of his statements reveals clear misgivings about sending Chinese troops to North Vietnam, and it is hard to believe that he would have openly contradicted Mao after the latter's political resurgence. In addition, once China was involved in the conflict, Liu seems to have been more interested in repairing relations with Moscow, a stance that suggests some anxiety about Mao's go it alone approach. It is thus difficult to argue that any Chinese leader would have acted as Mao did. In keeping with his weaker sense of martial efficacy, Liu Shaoqi likely would have charted a more conservative course in policy toward Southeast Asia in the first half of the 1960s had he been in a position to implement his own preferences.

Martial Confidence and Mao's Calculations

If Mao and Liu's policy preferences were as we would expect, given their divergent senses of martial efficacy, the question remains: Did Mao's martial confidence actually inform his policy preferences by shaping the kinds of outcomes that he anticipated in Vietnam? Let us first focus on his downside expectations. To begin, although Mao did not seek a general war with the United States, he also believed that China would prevail in such a war if it occurred. In this sense, the danger of intervening in Vietnam was manageable. To make this clear, a brief review of China's defense planning at this time is useful. In the early 1960s, China's defense strategy was summarized as "holding fast in the north, while retreating in the south" (*bei ding nan fang*). This strategy had been developed by Lin Biao after he replaced Peng Dehuai as defense minister in 1959, and Lin's emphasis on unyielding resistance in the north reflected the fact that China's political and economic centers were concentrated there. On June 16, 1964, Mao raised questions about this approach in an important speech to party leaders at the Shisanling Reservoir.[65] Noting that he had been

[64] Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 231. See also Masaru Kojima, ed., *The Record of the Talks between the Japanese Communist Party and the Communist Party of China: How Mao Zedong Scrapped the Joint Communiqué* (Tokyo: Central Committee of the Japanese Communist Party, 1980).

[65] I am indebted to Li Danhui for providing me with the full text of this speech. For an excerpt of the speech that omits Mao's comments on national defense, see Mao Zedong, "Mao Zedong zai Zhonggong Zhongyang Gongzuo Huiyishang de Jianghua [Mao's Speech at the Work Meeting of the CCP Central Committee]," June 16, 1964, in *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao*, vol. 11, 85–88. On the context of Mao's speech, see Huang Yao and Zhang Mingzhe, *Luo*

"thinking about this problem for a long time," he observed that the enemy might not attack northern China through Korea and Manchuria as Japan had done. Instead, he argued it would be more advantageous for the United States to land farther south – along Bohai Bay, at Qingdao, near Lianyungang in Jiangsu, or even at Shanghai. These invasion routes would offer easier access to China and would also allow the United States to cut off parts of the country once it began to penetrate the interior. In this context, Mao argued that focusing exclusively on holding territory was mistaken. China would have to adopt a more flexible approach, holding territory when possible but abandoning it when necessary. Over the next year, this line of thinking developed into a new approach, summarized as "luring the enemy in deep" – Mao's cherished concept from the revolution. The point here was to weaken the invader gradually as it moved deeper into the country. By June 1965, the moment when China's troops began entering North Vietnam, Mao was arguing forcefully for "luring the enemy in deep" as China's guiding defense plan.[66]

Mao believed that this more flexible approach would allow China to defeat a superior invading force. His speech to party leaders at the Shisanling Reservoir in June 1964 made this clear: "Wherever the enemy comes from, and however he tries to cut us off, occupying Jinan or Lianyungang, separating North and South, will our country be destroyed? I believe that we cannot be destroyed." In his next sentence, Mao explained the basis for his confidence:

> We will use our old methods, which can be summed up in just two words: retreating and fighting. Where we can fight successfully, we will fight; where we cannot fight successfully, we will retreat. Retreating when we can fight successfully is opportunism, fighting when we cannot fight successfully is adventurism. As to the specific modes of fighting, there are many articles [on this topic]. It is simply a matter of concentrating a superior force to wipe out the enemy through battles of annihilation.

Mao's "old methods" were the tactics that he had helped to develop during the revolution, and the "many articles" that he mentioned were those that he had authored at that time. Clearly, Mao was confident about defeating a more advanced adversary because he had solved this kind of problem before. Of course, Mao was not so rash as to believe that his forces could win every conceivable battle against a superior foe, as his speech made clear. They would prevail instead by picking their fights judiciously, as they had done when conquering China.

Mao's speech at the Shisanling Reservoir indicated no confidence that China's nascent nuclear program could deter the United States from attacking the PRC. This is not surprising, as China did not conduct its first nuclear test until four months later and the country had no real delivery system until its

Ruiqing Zhuan [The Biography of Luo Ruiqing] (Beijing: Modern China Press, 1996), 472, 478–79.

[66] Hu Zhefeng, "Jianguo Yilai Ruogan Junshi Zhanlüe Fangzhen Tanxi [An Exploration and Analysis of Several Military Strategic Guiding Principles since the Founding of the PRC]," *Dangdai Zhongguoshi Yanjiu* [Contemporary China History Studies] 7, no. 4 (2000): 24–27.

first nuclear-capable missile (the short-range Dongfeng 2A) became operational in October 1966.[67] Instead, Mao expressed hope that the United States would not use nuclear weapons against Chinese cities that it was trying to seize. Even if it did use nuclear weapons against China, Mao argued that the PRC could prevail if it kept its composure:

> No matter if it is fighting with firearms, artillery, or atomic bombs, you must not get flustered. If the atomic bomb is used, it means going to see Marx. "From ancient times, death has come to all men, but a people without confidence in its rulers will not stand." Death has always been unavoidable. If we die, we die – what is there to be afraid of? Whoever does not die will persevere. Eliminating all of the Chinese people, the imperialists will not do it. The imperialists want to exploit the Chinese people. Our cadres will not be completely eliminated, and those who live will persevere. Have we not already lost many people to death?

Mao proceeded to list the names of various cadres who had died in the course of the CCP's previous struggles, underscoring his point that the party could lose many of its members and still triumph in the end.

In high-level meetings a year later, Mao was still expressing confidence about defeating a U.S. invasion of China. While in Hangzhou on June 11, 1965, he met with political and military leaders from eastern China, suggesting that he still saw that region as the most likely point of attack. According to documents from provincial archives, Luo Ruiqing (who attended as well) reported Mao's statements from that meeting to other high-level CCP leaders on June 23:

> This time in Hangzhou, addressing eastern China cadres, besides discussing war preparations and people's air defense, [Chairman Mao] stressed luring the enemy in deep and fighting battles of annihilation. . . . At the Eastern China meeting, Xu Shiyou spoke, he wanted to stop the enemy in advance, not let him come in at all. Eliminate him along the coast. The Chairman said: if you don't give him some benefit, don't give him a little taste, that's no good, that way he won't come in, you have to let him have a little taste before he will come in. We have to prepare to give him Shanghai, Suzhou, Nanjing, Huangshi, and Wuhan, this way we can arrange the battlefield and win a great victory.[68]

Why did Mao believe that China could win "a great victory" at this time? Once again, he does not seem to have emphasized China's nuclear capabilities, which were still largely notional. Instead, Luo's record made it clear that the CCP's revolutionary experience was the basis for Mao's confidence: "We will stick with our proven guidelines, policies and principles. If we apply them well, they will be even more effective under current conditions. Current conditions are generally better than when we were at the Jinggang mountains or fighting

[67] John Lewis and Hua Di, "China's Ballistic Missile Programs: Technologies, Strategies, Goals," *International Security* 17, no. 2 (1992): 15.

[68] "Luo Ruiqing Tongzhi Jianghua Jilu [A Record of Comrade Luo Ruiqing's Talk]," Jiangsu Provincial Archive (Nanjing), Collection no. 3011, Series 1162 (long), 66–71. For the date of Mao's talk and a very brief summary, see Gu Longsheng, ed., *Mao Zedong Jingji Nianpu* [Economic Chronology of Mao Zedong] (Beijing: CCP Central Party School Press, 1993), 625–26.

the Japanese." In other words, Mao was arguing that if the CCP could survive its most difficult struggles in the revolution, it could survive a conflict with the United States at this time. Mao's reference to the Jinggangshan period in particular at this moment was not a coincidence; he had just made a historic visit to the area the month before, retracing his steps from the late 1920s.[69] Harking back to the revolution, it is little wonder that Mao was confident that the PLA could prevail by "luring the enemy in deep." According to Chinese military scholars, Mao soon became fond of reminding his colleagues, "luring the enemy in deep, we have been doing this for decades."[70] Or as he put it more simply on June 16 in another meeting, "Have we not won all of our wars in the past?"[71]

Although Mao was clearly inspired by the CCP's revolutionary accomplishments, his military estimates were also influenced by the PRC's experience in the Korean War. In particular, Luo Ruiqing's report attributed the following counsel to the CCP leader: "After he enters, we will concentrate our strength and fight battles of elimination, but do not surround too many of them. If you surround too many of them, it will be impossible to destroy them. . . . Three divisions, five divisions can wipe out one of his divisions. Only this way can we destroy them." Mao's evident concern that his commanders would try to surround too many U.S. troops almost certainly reflected the earlier experience in Korea. Before China's intervention in that conflict, he had hoped that his forces would be able to encircle and eliminate entire U.S. armies (i.e., three divisions). By May 1951, however, Mao had come to see this approach as overly ambitious, and he advised Peng Dehuai to focus on surrounding individual battalions instead. Notably, Mao seems to have regained some of his confidence by 1965, as evidenced by the fact that he could now envision efforts to destroy an entire division at once. At the same time, he clearly did not want his troops to attack concentrations that were larger than that.

Based on these pieces of evidence, Mao's martial confidence seems to have limited the dangers he perceived in 1964 and 1965, when he was deciding whether to send Chinese troops to Vietnam. Although intervening raised the specter of direct conflict between Chinese and U.S. forces, Mao was confident that China would prevail in a direct conflict with the United States should it occur. To be sure, such a war would have been quite costly for China, particularly if the United States bombed or occupied Chinese cities. For this reason, Mao preferred to let North Vietnam do the fighting and to avoid a direct conflict with the United States if possible, as noted earlier. Nonetheless, Mao's worst-case scenario here (a costly war that China would win) was not the worst

[69] Ma Shexiang, *Qian Zou: Mao Zedong 1965 Nian Chong Shang Jinggangshan* [The Prelude: Mao Zedong's 1965 Return to Jinggangshan] (Beijing: Modern China Press, 2006).
[70] Hu, "Jianguo Yilai Ruogan Junshi Zhanlüe Fangzhen Tanxi," 25.
[71] Gu, *Mao Zedong Jingji Nianpu*, 627.

imaginable (a costly war that China would lose). The dangers of supporting North Vietnam's conquest of the South were thus ultimately manageable in his view.

Did Mao's martial confidence also inform the upside scenarios that he envisioned at this time? This is a more difficult question to answer. He certainly saw considerable opportunity for gain in the Vietnam conflict. Not only did Mao expect to unify Vietnam under communist rule, he also seemed to harbor broader ambitions. His evident interest in promoting revolution in Thailand is noteworthy in this regard. Yet the relevance of China's own martial efficacy to these ambitions is not immediately apparent. In particular, because Chinese forces were not on the front lines, they were not in a position to drive U.S. forces out of Vietnam or other parts of Southeast Asia. Mao preferred to let the DRV and its allies in South Vietnam handle that task, limiting the war's costs for China, unless the United States were to invade the North.

Mao's perceptions of opportunity in Southeast Asia, then, rested mainly on his confidence in the *Vietnamese* communist forces. This confidence was considerable, given what the Vietnamese had already accomplished. As Mao told DRV premier Pham Van Dong in October 1965, "We will support you until your final victory. The confidence in victory comes from the fighting you have done and from the struggle you have made." Mao proceeded to note that the Vietnamese had rich experience fighting against other more powerful adversaries, including the French and the Japanese. Three years later, Mao reiterated the relevance of this experience to the Vietnamese premier. "It has been twenty-three years since Japan's surrender in 1945, and your country still exists," he observed. "Three imperialist countries have invaded you: Japan, France, and the United States. But your country has not only survived but also developed."[72]

Mao's confidence in the martial prowess of his Vietnamese allies was probably bolstered by the role that his own military had played in developing their forces. Starting with the war against the French, the PLA was heavily involved in instructing the Vietnamese communists in guerrilla warfare.[73] As Brantly Womack has written, "China's most capable generals provided military advice and training, and China's top leadership was intimately involved in discussions of strategy." Such support was "an extension of China's own revolutionary experience to a familiar neighbor."[74] Besides providing military advisors, Chinese troops may have actually participated in some of the fighting in

[72] For the quotations, see Mao Zedong, "Shengli de Xinnian Shi Douzheng Zhongjian Dechulaide [Confidence in Victory Comes from the Struggle]," October 20, 1965, and Mao Zedong, "Zancheng Yuenan you Da you Tan de Fangzheng [Approving Vietnam's Policy of Talking while Fighting]," November 17, 1968, in *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan*, 572 and 581, respectively.

[73] On the PRC's role in the first Indochina War, see Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 118–44; Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 1–64.

[74] Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 167, 174.

northern Vietnam in the summer of 1950, even as the PRC was preparing to confront the United States in Korea.[75] Chinese advisors subsequently helped plan and command the campaign to take northwest Vietnam in 1952. As military cooperation deepened once again in the mid-1960s, Mao sometimes personally tutored visiting North Vietnamese leaders in the nuances of military strategy and political mobilization for war.[76] In fact, Mao occasionally referred to "our troops in the South" in conversations with Vietnamese leaders – undiplomatically conflating the communist forces in the theater.[77] In this context of such intimate military cooperation, it is not surprising that Mao would transfer some of the confidence that he had in his own forces to those of the DRV.[78]

In sum, Mao was in a remarkably confident frame of mind as he sent Chinese soldiers into Vietnam in 1965. On the downside, he believed that the PRC could handle a direct conflict with the United States if such a conflict became unavoidable. This confidence, in turn, was clearly inspired by the strong sense of martial efficacy that Mao had derived from the revolution. Mao believed that his forces could prevail over a superior adversary by "luring the enemy in deep," as they had in the revolution, and he readily cited the PLA's past military accomplishments to justify this optimistic assessment. On the upside, Mao believed that the communist forces would prevail in South Vietnam, thanks to the prowess of the DRV's forces, which had benefited considerably from Chinese support and tutelage. This victory, in turn, would set the stage for further communist expansion throughout Southeast Asia. Taking these perceptions together, Mao's willingness to challenge the United States in the mid-1960s is not difficult to understand.

Alternative Explanations

How well can alternative perspectives make sense of Mao's decision to commit Chinese troops to Vietnam? There are several extant explanations for his combative approach that deemphasize his confidence in the military sphere. Chen Jian has argued that Mao's support for the DRV was guided by a desire to put China on a wartime footing, which would help him to mobilize the Chinese masses and radicalize Chinese society in advance of the Cultural Revolution.[79] There is little doubt that Mao exploited external tension for domestic purposes at this time. Nonetheless, it does not appear that the actual decision to send

[75] Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 318.

[76] "Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong, Hoang Van Hoan" and "Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong" in Westad et al., *77 Conversations between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina*, 73–74 and 137–52, respectively.

[77] Quoted in Womack, *China and Vietnam*, 176.

[78] It is apparent that Mao's confidence in the communist Vietnamese forces in the 1960s exceeded his confidence in the Korean communists at the outset of the Korean War. This is not surprising, however, if one considers the longer history of close military cooperation between the Chinese and Vietnamese communists at this point in time as well as the Vietnamese communists' victory over the French in the early 1950s – an accomplishment unmatched by the Korean communists.

[79] Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 236–37.

troops was driven primarily by Mao's interest in promoting a radical agenda within China. After all, the PRC was already on a wartime footing in the spring of 1965; there was no need to send troops to Vietnam in order to create a revolutionary atmosphere at home. In addition, if Mao's desire to radicalize the Chinese masses drove the decision to send troops, one would expect him to publicize the decision so that it would get as much attention as possible among the Chinese populace. Yet the PRC kept its deployment remarkably quiet, as noted earlier, suggesting that other considerations were more important. In short, although Mao's hard line on the Vietnam War may well have been stiffened by his radical domestic agenda, it is difficult to explain the decision to send troops across the border in these terms.

Tom Christensen has argued that the rivalry between Moscow and Beijing for leadership in the communist world in the 1960s prompted both governments to take tougher positions on the Vietnam War than they would have done otherwise.[80] This is an important point, and it is worth noting that Mao's stance on the possibility of negotiations between Hanoi and Washington in early 1965 became considerably more negative once it became clear that the Soviets would be involved.[81] We should not conclude, however, that Mao's desire to upstage the Soviets drove him to commit Chinese troops to Vietnam recklessly; the preceding narrative has demonstrated that Mao thought carefully about the military implications of Chinese involvement. In particular, he was sensitive to the risk of a wider war with the United States but undeterred by this risk because he was confident about China's prospects in the event of such a war. In this sense, Mao's martial confidence was an essential ingredient in his decision to intervene in Vietnam. More broadly, it should be noted that the emergence of ideological competition between Moscow and Beijing was not unrelated to Mao's confidence in the military sphere. Although Mao's criticism of Soviet policy reflected a number of considerations, one of these was the fact that Mao was more confident than Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev about confronting the Americans. In fact, as early as 1956, Mao had disparaged Khrushchev's emphasis on "peaceful coexistence" as an excessively timid posture, and this critique would become a central theme in Beijing's polemics against Moscow.[82] Accordingly, although it is important to recognize how ideological rivalry helped stiffen Mao's approach to the Vietnam War, it is also important to note that Mao's differences with Moscow were informed by real beliefs, including his belief in China's martial prowess.

One could also argue that Mao, as a committed revolutionary, felt morally bound to assist national liberation movements in Southeast Asia, and that this was the main reason that he dispatched troops to Vietnam.[83] Yet Mao was

[80] Christensen, "Worse Than a Monolith," 99–113.

[81] Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 313–18.

[82] Wu Lengxi, *Shi Nian Lun Zhan: 1956–1966 Zhong Su Guanxi Huiyilu* [Ten Years of Polemics: A Recollection of Sino-Soviet Relations from 1956 to 1966] (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 1999), vol. 1, 80.

[83] Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 146–48.

not above counseling restraint to the DRV when he believed that China's own interests called for it. Chinese diplomats pressured Hanoi to make concessions in pursuit of an agreement at the Geneva Peace Conference in 1954, a performance that helped the PRC begin to shed its diplomatic isolation in the mid-1950s.[84] Subsequently, after the process of Sino-American rapprochement began in the early 1970s, Beijing encouraged Hanoi to reach a settlement with Washington, although it also tried hard not to alienate the North Vietnamese leadership in the process, as noted at the outset of this chapter. Clearly, Mao did not put Vietnam's interests ahead of what he thought were his own.

Alternatively, one could argue that Mao's confidence about confronting the United States was important but that it rested on considerations other than his long-standing sense of martial efficacy. One could argue, for example, that Mao was emboldened by the development of China's nuclear capabilities. Yet, as the preceding discussion has made clear, China's nuclear arsenal was quite primitive in the mid-1960s, and Mao did not assume that this nascent capability would deter the United States from invading or attacking China. One might argue more plausibly that Mao was encouraged by the balance of military power within the region. Meeting with Vietnamese leaders in October 1964, for example, Mao estimated that the United States could only send nine army divisions abroad, and he noted that only half of these troops were in Asia.[85] Yet Mao also knew that the United States could rely on air force and naval power, and that it had allies in Asia that *could* concentrate their land forces in the region. In February 1963, Mao calculated that the United States would not be assisted by its European allies in the event of war with China but that it could be joined by Japan, Taiwan, and India.[86] More generally, if the regional balance of power was the crucial consideration for the PRC's leaders, one would expect Mao's colleagues to share his confrontational approach to the conflict. Yet, as we have seen, Liu was much less eager to escalate the conflict in 1962 and to intervene in the conflict thereafter, even though he faced the same military situation.

It is also clear that Mao was not counting on the estranged Soviets to support China if a general war broke out with the United States. In fact, when China first agreed to send troops to Vietnam – in December 1964 – the Soviets were barely even supporting the DRV. Between 1962 and the end of 1964, the Soviet Union offered a mere $100 million in military equipment to North Vietnam, a meager amount compared with what China was providing.[87] Although Soviet aid to the DRV increased starting in February 1965, Zhou Enlai made it clear that April that the PRC leadership did not expect Soviet assistance in the event

[84] Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 138–44.

[85] "Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong, Hoang Van Hoan," in Westad et al., *77 Conversations between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina*, 73.

[86] Chen Donglin, *Sanxian Jianshe: Beizhan Shiqi de Xibu Kaifa* [The Construction of the Third Front: Developing the West While Preparing for War] (Beijing: CCP Central Party School Press, 2003), 80.

[87] Gaiduk, *Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 3–21, 58–59.

that the United States attacked China.[88] Indeed, at this point, Mao had already begun to think of Moscow as more likely to coordinate with Washington against Beijing than to help defend the PRC against the Americans.[89]

One more potential objection remains: If Mao was so confident in China's armed forces in the mid-1960s, why did he see rapprochement with the United States as necessary at the end of the decade? This question is not hard to answer. Mao had come to power believing in the PRC's ability to fight *one* more powerful opponent at a time. After 1949, he was primarily concerned with fighting the United States, with or without support from the Soviet Union. Starting in the late 1960s, however, Mao was forced to confront the possibility of fighting *both* superpowers at the same time. Moscow concluded a defense agreement with Mongolia in January 1966, and, by late 1969, 22 Soviet divisions were stationed in the Far East and more were on the way.[90] The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968, followed by Leonid Brezhnev's articulation of "the doctrine of limited sovereignty of socialist states," made Moscow's buildup on China's border particularly ominous. Faced with the prospect of fighting the United States on one front and the Soviet Union on another, it is unsurprising that Mao maneuvered to reduce the level of threat to what he considered more manageable levels.

DEFENSIVE NUCLEAR DIPLOMACY

Even as China was moving to challenge the United States in Vietnam in the mid-1960s, it was also grappling with broader questions of global governance. The most pressing of these was the problem of nuclear arms control and disarmament. China had emerged as the world's fifth nuclear power in 1964, raising questions as to what kind of nuclear power it would be and how it would now approach global efforts to regulate nuclear weaponry. Mao's China was not opposed to such efforts in principle, but by the early 1960s it had developed its own distinct agenda. In particular, and not surprisingly, the PRC supported measures that promised to reduce the nuclear superiority of the superpowers, including prohibitions on the use of nuclear weapons, the removal of nuclear weapons from foreign bases, regional nuclear weapons free zones (NWFZ), and the ultimate destruction of extant nuclear arsenals.[91] At the same time, the

[88] "Zhou Enlai and Pakistani President Ayub Khan," in Westad et al., *77 Conversations between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina*, 81.

[89] Li Jie, "Changes in China's Domestic Situation," in Ross and Jiang, *Re-examining the Cold War*, 295n25 in particular.

[90] Thomas W. Robinson, "China Confronts the Soviet Union: Warfare and Diplomacy on China's Inner Asian Frontiers," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar and John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), vol. 15, pt. 2, 299.

[91] For prominent articulations of China's position during this period, see "Statement of the Chinese Government," *Peking Review*, August 2, 1963, 8; "Zhengqu Quanmian Jinzhi Hewuqi de Xin Qidian [New Starting Point for Efforts to Ban Nuclear Weapons Completely]," *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily], November 22, 1964. Note that the former also called for a cessation of all

PRC opposed measures that promised to constrain emerging nuclear powers like itself while leaving the superpower arsenals intact. China was particularly wary of the nuclear test ban negotiations, and it rejected the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) in 1963 as a joint superpower plot to "manacle" China.[92] In short, Mao's government did have an agenda in nuclear diplomacy, but it was one that diverged dramatically from the priorities of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Although the PRC did have a positive agenda in nuclear diplomacy, it did not make any costly gestures in order to advance this agenda. To be sure, China did articulate a nuclear doctrine of no first use (NFU) in 1964, following its first test, and it sought to elicit comparable pledges from the superpowers. Yet this was hardly a costly commitment for the PRC to make: as a purely rhetorical pledge, the NFU commitment was unverifiable, and it could have been revoked or simply ignored at any time.[93] Subsequently, China ensured that it did not make any costly commitments by remaining aloof from international arms control and disarmament negotiations, even after it entered the United Nations in 1971. Only in 1978, two years after Mao's death, did the Chinese leadership reconsider this position, and the PRC ultimately joined the UN Conference on Disarmament in 1980.[94]

China's highly cautious approach to nuclear diplomacy under Mao was certainly consistent with its leader's weak sense of moral efficacy. Yet one could also argue that key features of the international environment at the time left China with no alternative. The PRC had no representation in the United Nations in the 1960s, and it refused to participate in UN-sponsored negotiations as long as the government on Taiwan retained a seat in the institution. Simply finding a way for China to take part in arms control and disarmament negotiations was thus a problematic issue. In addition, the specific agreements that were negotiated in the 1960s offered little to interest the PRC. As noted earlier, China advocated measures designed to reduce the superpowers' nuclear superiority over the PRC. The PTBT, however, left the superpowers free to continue nuclear testing underground while making testing more difficult for countries (like China) that had yet to conduct tests of any kind. The Nuclear

nuclear testing, but the latter argued that a comprehensive test ban would only benefit the United States. In addition, whereas the former called for an NWFZ in Asia (which was defined to include both the United States and the Soviet Union), the latter deemphasized the NWFZ concept in favor of prohibitions on the use of nuclear weapons and their eventual destruction.

92 "Statement by Spokesman of the Chinese Government," *Peking Review*, August 16, 1963, 14.

93 Bates Gill, James Mulvenon, and Mark Stokes, "The Chinese Second Artillery Corps: Transition to Credible Deterrence," in *The People's Liberation Army as an Organization: Reference Volume v1.0*, ed. James Mulvenon and Andrew Yang (Santa Monica, Calif.: The RAND Corporation, 2002), 516.

94 The reasons behind this shift in policy remain somewhat unclear, but it seems to have been related to Deng Xiaoping's desire to support efforts to reduce international tensions, in keeping with his focus on economic development. See Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980–2000* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 52–53.

Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), in turn, was arguably more friendly to China's interests because it recognized the PRC as a nuclear power, but it asked virtually nothing from the superpowers on the disarmament question. In light of these contextual considerations, it is worth asking whether a leader with a stronger sense of moral efficacy would have acted any differently than Mao did.

The following analysis answers this question affirmatively. The PRC *did* have an opportunity in the mid-1960s to take a more active approach, one that a leader with more diplomatic confidence would have seized. In particular, following China's first nuclear test, the outside world showed strong interest in engaging China on arms control and disarmament, and it was willing to do so in a format that China itself had proposed: a global disarmament conference conducted outside of the UN system. Rather than embracing this opportunity, however, Mao rejected it. Starting in 1966, the PRC made it clear that it had no desire to attend a global disarmament conference even if the conference was not associated with the United Nations, notwithstanding its earlier support for such a meeting. The following analysis begins by outlining the nature of this diplomatic opportunity in more detail, making clear that the international environment did not preclude a more active diplomatic stance on China's part during this period. The discussion then explores the role played by Mao's sense of moral efficacy in producing the decision to avoid international negotiations on disarmament. It concludes by considering alternative explanations for China's behavior.

China and the World Disarmament Conference

When the PRC announced its first nuclear test on October 16, 1964, it also took the opportunity to stress its commitment to the long-term goal of disarmament. In fact, the Chinese announcement proposed that a "summit conference of all the countries of the world" be held to address the issue. According to the Chinese text, the conference should

> discuss the question of the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, and that as the first step, the summit conference should reach an agreement to the effect that the nuclear powers and those countries which will soon become nuclear powers undertake not to use nuclear weapons, neither to use them against non-nuclear countries and nuclear free zones, nor against each other.[95]

China's proposal resonated with a statement that it had made following the conclusion of the PTBT in 1963, which had also proposed a global conference as a first step toward disarmament.[96] Subsequently, the day after China's breakthrough test, Zhou Enlai reiterated China's call for the global conference in a letter to all foreign heads of government. On November 22, the *People's*

[95] U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Documents on Disarmament 1964* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 450.

[96] "Statement of the Chinese Government," 7–8.

Daily made it clear that China would not participate in the Eighteen-Nation disarmament talks, which were conducted under the UN aegis, because Beijing refused to participate in any UN process as long as the organization excluded the People's Republic of China and included the Republic of China (ROC).[97] The article also charged that the Eighteen-Nation talks were in fact "under the manipulation and control of the United States." It concluded by reaffirming China's interest in a global conference.

The United States was initially cool to the Chinese proposal. On February 25, 1965, at the Sino-American ambassadorial talks in Warsaw, U.S. ambassador John Cabot described the idea of a global disarmament conference as "impractical."[98] Nonetheless, the idea of a world disarmament conference had substantial support elsewhere. A similar idea had been advanced at the Second Summit Conference of Non-aligned Countries in Cairo in 1964, and China's proposal had created a means through which the outside world could engage the world's newest nuclear power on this issue. As a result, the UN General Assembly on November 29, 1965, passed a resolution in favor of such a conference by a vote of 112 to 0.[99] As the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency noted, the lopsided vote was driven by "strong feeling that some way had to be found to draw the Chinese communists into deliberations on disarmament, and that it would have to be done in a forum not associated with the United Nations."[100] Faced with such strong support for the conference, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Arthur Goldberg stated that Washington was willing to go along "in principle" with the decision to hold such a conference. At the same time, Goldberg suggested that a small "exploratory group" first ascertain whether some basis for constructive discussions existed, and he proposed that this group not be restricted to representatives of the five nuclear powers because Beijing had indicated that it would not meet with such a small elite group.[101] In short, the world was looking for a way to engage China on nuclear arms control and disarmament, and it was flexible about the venue in which this took place.

The movement to engage the PRC in 1965 was an opportunity that a leader with strong moral efficacy beliefs would certainly have embraced. Although the exploratory discussions proposed by the United States might not have led anywhere, the PRC still had an unprecedented opportunity to press its agenda and to put the superpowers on the defensive by calling for prohibitions on the use of nuclear weapons and for superpower disarmament. Mao's government, however, responded by backing away from the very idea that it had proposed. In April 1966, Zhou Enlai told Pakistan's *Dawn* newspaper that China did not

97 "Zhengqu Quanmian Jinzhi Hewuqi de Xin Qidian."

98 Quoted in Xia Yafeng, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949–1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 125.

99 U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Documents on Disarmament 1965* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 585.

100 Ibid., 648.

101 Ibid.

feel the time was right for a world disarmament conference.[102] This position was subsequently reiterated by Zhou in May and by an article in *The People's Daily* in June.[103] The latter categorically declared that "China will definitely not attend any world disarmament conference at the United Nations *or outside it*" [emphasis added].[104] In the end, the conference never took place, largely because of China's lack of interest in participating.[105]

Why did China propose a world disarmament conference only to back away from the proposal when the world showed some interest in the idea? The explanations offered by Zhou in public were unconvincing. In his April interview with *Dawn*, Zhou stated that it was "a mockery" to talk about disarmament while the United States was "intensifying its aggression against Vietnam and preparing to spread the flames of war to China." Yet, as noted earlier in this chapter, China's leaders had been very concerned about the war in Vietnam in the spring of 1965, but that had not prevented China from reiterating its call for a world disarmament conference on May 14 of that year, following the PRC's second nuclear test.[106] It also seems unlikely that China's leaders genuinely believed that the United States was preparing to attack China in the spring of 1966 because Washington and Beijing appear to have reached a tacit understanding on the scope of the Vietnam conflict by late 1965.[107] Indeed, Zhou subsequently failed to mention Vietnam when he outlined China's stance in May. Instead, he tried to suggest that it was the United States that was holding up the disarmament conference by rejecting China's proposal that both countries pledge not to initiate the use of nuclear weapons against the other.[108] This point was subsequently emphasized by the *People's Daily* in June, which argued that China had called for a bilateral NFU agreement with the United States in advance of a world disarmament conference.[109] Nonetheless, although China had proposed the bilateral NFU agreement to the United States during the Warsaw talks in 1964, it had not made the conclusion of such an agreement a precondition for convening a world disarmament conference.[110] In fact, China's proposals for the disarmament conference had not listed any

[102] U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Documents on Disarmament 1966* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 210–12.

[103] "Comrade Chou En-lai's Speech at Comrade Shehu's Farewell Banquet," *Peking Review*, May 20, 1966, 17.

[104] The article was subsequently reprinted in *Peking Review*. See Observer, "Exposing New U.S. Fraud Over Nuclear Weapons," *Peking Review*, June 24, 1966, 27.

[105] William Epstein, "The Outlook for Disarmament," in *The Dynamics of the Arms Race*, ed. David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 111.

[106] U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Documents on Disarmament 1965*, 169.

[107] Hershberg and Chen, "Informing the Enemy," 234–35.

[108] "Comrade Chou En-lai's Speech at Comrade Shehu's Farewell Banquet," 17.

[109] "Exposing New U.S. Fraud Over Nuclear Weapons," 27.

[110] "Telegram from the Embassy in Poland to the Department of State," November 25, 1964, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. 30, Document 70. Accessed online at http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_xxx/70_79.html.

preconditions but simply asserted that the meeting should be global in scope and that it should reach an agreement prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons as a "first step," as noted earlier. In retrospect, Zhou's shifting explanations, combined with their implausibility, make it clear that other calculations were at work in Beijing.

Mao's Preferences and Calculations

If Mao's weak sense of moral efficacy played a role in China's decision, we should find that he personally was averse to becoming involved in arms control and disarmament negotiations, notwithstanding the PRC's public position, and that he was pessimistic about what China could achieve in such negotiations. On the first point, it is clear that Mao did personally oppose conducting serious negotiations with the superpowers about nuclear weapons. In July 1962, PRC representatives took a relatively constructive stance at the World Congress for General Disarmament and Peace in Moscow, in keeping with Wang Jiaxiang's emphasis on international conciliation and apparently without Mao's knowledge.[111] Although China's stance was not particularly forthcoming, it did show interest in working with the Soviet Union and other countries toward the goal of nuclear disarmament.[112] After learning of the approach that the PRC had taken, Mao angrily disparaged it as "departing from the left wing and strengthening the right wing."[113] In keeping with Mao's views, the PRC subsequently downplayed diplomacy and stressed the importance of national independence struggles at an antinuclear conference in Tokyo in August.[114] Although Mao must have approved China's subsequent proposals to convene a world disarmament conference, he seems to have done so simply for public relations purposes rather than out of a sincere desire to engage in deliberative diplomacy. Mao made this clear in a conversation with Soviet premier Aleksei Kosygin in February 1965, the text of which is now available in the archives of the PRC Foreign Ministry. As Mao stated: "[W]e boast every day, you also boast, we also boast, saying that we strive for a reduction of international tensions, these are lies [*jiahua*]."[115] The idea that China proposed the disarmament conference insincerely is further reinforced by its behavior in the Warsaw ambassadorial talks in early 1965. The Chinese side was apparently far from displeased after the United States dismissed the idea of a global conference as

[111] Lüthi, *Sino-Soviet Split*, 213; MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Coming of the Cataclysm*, 271–72.

[112] For China's position on disarmament at the conference, see Mao Tun, "The Way to General Disarmament and World Peace," *Peking Review*, July 20, 1962, 6.

[113] Xu, *Wang Jiaxiang Zhuan*, 565.

[114] "Down with U.S. Nuclear War Threats," *Peking Review*, August 10, 1962, 16–17.

[115] "Mao Zedong Zhuxi, Liu Shaoqi Zhuxi deng tong Guojing Woguo de Sulian Zongli Kexijin Tanhua Jilu Qizhi Riqi: 1965.2.12 [Record of Conversation between Chairman Mao Zedong, Chairman Liu Shaoqi and Others with Transiting Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin on February 12, 1965]," PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, File 109–03957–07, 207.

"impractical," suggesting that this was the outcome that they had anticipated and sought.[116]

It is not hard to understand why Mao sought to avoid serious negotiations concerning nuclear disarmament if one considers the kinds of outcomes that he anticipated. First, the best-case scenarios he envisioned were hardly positive; he had little hope that China would be able to make gains through disarmament diplomacy. In early 1964, for example, Mao told a delegation of French legislators that he believed no real gains were possible through disarmament talks: "Comprehensive and thoroughgoing disarmament, do you believe in it? There is no such thing, now is a time of comprehensive and thoroughgoing arms expansion. Some reductions in infantry are possible, but the savings will be used to build more nuclear weapons."[117]

Mao sounded a similar note while speaking with the American journalist Edgar Snow in January 1965. As he stated:

> Aren't people now talking about disarmament? But in which year will it actually be carried out? Aren't they talking about universal and thoroughgoing disarmament? The Soviet Union talked about it in the past, and now the U.S. is talking about it. We have also agreed with universal disarmament. In reality, now is a time of universal and thoroughgoing arms expansion. Lip service is paid to universal disarmament, but actually it is universal arms expansion.[118]

Mao reaffirmed this point while speaking with Kosygin the following month in Beijing. As Mao stated, "[T]here are some comrades who hold a blind faith, they believe in comprehensive and thoroughgoing disarmament. . . . [O]n the contrary, now is a time of comprehensive and thoroughgoing arms expansion."[119] In this context, Zhou Enlai was undoubtedly speaking sincerely when he stated on behalf of the PRC in the spring of 1966 that "a world disarmament conference in the present circumstances will yield no useful, practical results."[120]

Mao was not merely pessimistic that China could improve its security or stature through nuclear diplomacy; he also worried that China would suffer should it become involved in such negotiations. While speaking with the French delegation in early 1964, Mao made it clear that he saw the superpowers as "bullying," "blackmailing," and "pressuring" China in an effort to maintain their nuclear dominance.[121] Whereas a confident leader would have believed that his government could counter such tactics in a global forum, Mao seemed

[116] Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy*, 125.
[117] Mao Zedong, "Zhong Fa Zhijian de Gongtongdian [Common Ground between China and France]," January 30, 1964, in *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan*, 524.
[118] Mao Zedong, "Tong Sinuo Tan Guoji Wenti [Discussing International Issues with Edgar Snow]," January 9, 1965, in *Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan*, 555.
[119] "Mao Zedong Zhuxi, Liu Shaoqi Zhuxi deng tong Guojing Woguo de Sulian Zongli Kexijin Tanhua Jilu Qizhi Riqi: 1965.2.12," 205.
[120] U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Documents on Disarmament 1966*, 211.
[121] Mao, "Zhong Fa Zhijian de Gongtongdian," 524.

worried that the PRC would end up isolated. In fact, Mao actually highlighted his diplomatic diffidence in a revealing digression earlier in the same conversation, noting that he (like French president Charles de Gaulle) was a "military man" who lacked "diplomatic finesse." Subsequently, after China backed away from the world disarmament conference idea in the spring of 1966, other PRC spokesmen echoed Mao's wariness and outlined in more specific terms what they saw as the dangers for China. In June, Li Chuwen, the head of the Chinese delegation at the World Peace Council, worried that other countries were "dragging China into the so-called disarmament conference under U.S.-Soviet collaboration in order to bind our hands and try to deprive us of the right to nuclear weapons necessary for self-defence."[122] In July, Zhou Enlai stated that the United States and the Soviet Union were actively trying to devise a new treaty that would "consolidate their nuclear monopoly" and "deprive peace-loving countries of their right to develop nuclear weapons and resist nuclear threats."[123] In short, Mao and his colleagues seemed to fear that disarmament talks could end up putting strict limits on China's nuclear program while leaving the superpowers comparatively unconstrained.

In retrospect, this latter expectation seems too pessimistic. To be sure, the superpowers would have welcomed the chance to constrain China's nascent nuclear program through international agreements given the opportunity to do so.[124] Yet there was also an emerging realization that the PRC was now a nuclear power, and nonproliferation hawks in the United States had begun to argue that Washington needed to rethink how it engaged Beijing over the long term in order to limit the spread of nuclear weapons.[125] It was in this context that the United States and the Soviet Union negotiated the NPT, which recognized the PRC as one of five "nuclear weapon states." The point here is not to suggest that the PRC could or should have supported this particular treaty; the *People's Daily* called it "a nuclear fraud jointly hatched by the United States and the Soviet Union," notwithstanding its recognition of China's special status.[126] Instead, the point is to note that Moscow and Washington were coming to accept the PRC's emergence as a nuclear power as a fait accompli

[122] "Speech of Head of Chinese Delegation at World Peace Council in Geneva," *Peking Review*, June 24, 1966, 31.

[123] "Zhiyao Jixu Gaoju Fandi Fanxiu de Douzheng Qizhi jiu Neng Wei Jinzhi he Xiaohui Hewuqi Zuochu Xin Gongxian [Making a New Contribution to the Prohibition and Destruction of Nuclear Weapons Is Possible So Long as We Hold Aloft the Banner of Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Revisionism]," *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily], July 31, 1966.

[124] In the spring of 1965, for example, the United States asked in the Warsaw talks whether the PRC would consider an agreement to ban nuclear tests if it were linked to an NFU agreement. The Chinese response was negative. See Xia Yafeng, *Negotiating with the Enemy*, 126.

[125] In particular, see "Report by the Committee on Nuclear Proliferation," January 21, 1965, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Vol. 11, Document 64. Accessed online at http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_xi/g.html.

[126] The article was reprinted in the *Peking Review*. See "A Nuclear Fraud Jointly Hatched by the United States and the Soviet Union," *Peking Review*, June 21, 1968.

and that their approach to China in the arms control arena was changing as a result.

Alternative Explanations

There are, of course, other ways one might try to explain China's decision to avoid disarmament diplomacy in the mid-1960s. Focusing on domestic politics, one could argue that Mao had no interest in concluding arms control agreements with Moscow and Washington in the mid-1960s while he was preparing for the Cultural Revolution. In other words, rather than reducing international tension, Mao sought to increase it in order to radicalize the Chinese populace. The question here, however, is not why China did not conclude an agreement but why it refused even to participate in disarmament negotiations. Had he chosen to participate, Mao could have advanced ambitious disarmament proposals that would not have run any risk of being accepted but could have been used to put the superpowers on the defensive politically. Moreover, Mao's government continued to avoid formal disarmament negotiations well after the mobilization phase of the Cultural Revolution had run its course and even after the PRC had entered the United Nations, as noted earlier. Indeed, throughout the first half of the 1970s, the PRC continued to scorn superpower nuclear diplomacy, and it even argued in 1973 that whereas disarmament was a question for the superpowers, the question for other countries was how to build up their defense capabilities.[127] The persistence of China's stance well beyond the mid-1960s makes it clear that domestic political considerations were not the dominant influence on Mao's thinking.

A different explanation might stress that Mao was not so much pessimistic about what China could accomplish through disarmament negotiations as he was pessimistic about what *any* state could achieve through such diplomatic efforts. In this view, Mao's outcome expectations reflected doubts about the efficacy of diplomacy as a means of resolving political conflict rather than doubts about China's own capabilities. This perspective could help to explain why Mao could not envision a positive best-case outcome as a result of disarmament talks. Yet it cannot explain the fear that China would be bullied, pressured, and ultimately isolated if it joined such talks. Diplomatic discussions might fail to resolve differences, but that does not mean that the blame for such failure will be laid at one's own feet. Doubts about one's own ability to set the agenda and to win support for one's positions, on the other hand, would very naturally inform such fears.

Lastly, let us consider a possible objection to the preceding account. In particular, one might ask why Mao was willing to engage the United States through diplomacy in the Warsaw ambassadorial talks, in the two Geneva conferences, and through high-level contacts in the early 1970s if he was so unsure of China's diplomatic capabilities. Yet each of these diplomatic encounters was

[127] Yu Chih, "Communist China's Position on Disarmament," *Issues and Studies* 19 (1983): 54.

considerably less daunting than a global disarmament conference would have been. The Warsaw talks and the high-level meetings in the 1970s were bilateral encounters. The PRC could thus easily shape the agenda in these cases, and it did not have to worry about winning over third parties to avoid being isolated. Neither of these conditions would have obtained at a global disarmament conference. Although the Geneva conferences of 1954 and 1961 were multilateral, China attended the first of these confident of Soviet support, and in neither case were China's own military capabilities a subject of negotiation. In short, a global disarmament conference was more daunting than the diplomatic activities that Mao did endorse because it was multilateral, because the PRC had no superpower backing when the conference was mooted, and because the PRC's own military capabilities would have been on the line. It is thus unsurprising that Mao opted not to attend such a conference, even though his own government had proposed it.

To sum up, international pressures did not consistently mitigate against China taking a more active approach to nuclear diplomacy in the 1960s. The world was eager to engage China on nuclear issues following its breakthrough test, and there was considerable willingness to do so on Beijing's terms. The PRC responded to this surge of interest by retreating, backing away from its own well-established proposal to convene a world disarmament conference. This reaction was not simply a function of Mao's increasingly radical domestic agenda or the view that diplomacy cannot resolve political conflict. Instead, Mao's lack of confidence in the diplomatic sphere played an important role in generating this about-face, making him pessimistic about what his government could accomplish at such a conference as well as fearful that it would be isolated if it did attend.

CONCLUSION

The introduction to this chapter noted that Mao's penchant for military boldness and diplomatic restraint extended well beyond the Korean War. The individual cases considered in this chapter, in turn, indicate that Mao's lopsided sense of national efficacy helped sustain this pattern. The study of China's intervention in Vietnam indicates that Mao's strong sense of martial efficacy shaped the kinds of outcomes that he anticipated as he assessed the escalating conflict in 1964 and 1965. On the downside, Mao was confident that his forces would ultimately prevail even if the war became a direct conflict between the United States and China, and he readily cited the PLA's past accomplishments to justify this confidence. On the upside, Mao believed that the communist forces would triumph in South Vietnam; the Vietnamese communists not only had an impressive record of success against more powerful opponents but also had received extensive tutelage and support from Mao's own army. In this context, Mao's willingness to insert Chinese forces into the conflict is easier to understand, as is his enthusiasm for an expansionist agenda in Southeast Asia. In addition, the analysis strongly suggests that a leader with less martial

confidence would have preferred a more cautious course. Liu Shaoqi clearly supported Wang Jiaxiang's proposal for restraint in Southeast Asia in 1962, and his statements in subsequent years often betrayed a more conservative attitude toward the conflict, even as he sought to avoid running afoul of Mao.

On the diplomatic side, this chapter's exploration of China's nuclear diplomacy in the mid-1960s reveals that the PRC's recalcitrant approach was not simply dictated by the international environment. On the contrary, the outside world was eager to engage China in the nuclear sphere after 1964, and it was willing to do so in a venue that China itself had proposed. Whereas a leader with a strong sense of moral efficacy would have seized this opportunity, Mao was not such a leader, and he chose to avoid global disarmament negotiations. This decision reflected Mao's weak sense of moral efficacy, which made him pessimistic about what China could achieve in such talks and worried that the PRC would be outmaneuvered if it did attend. In retrospect, China probably could have participated in disarmament negotiations during this period without undue risk.

In short, Mao's national efficacy beliefs continued to shape the foreign policy of the PRC well after the Korean War. Although a leader with less martial confidence would still have had great differences with the United States over the Vietnam War in the 1960s, it is less clear that they would have stoked the conflict to the extent that Mao did or that they would have become so intimately involved in the fighting as the war escalated. Similarly, although a leader with more diplomatic confidence would still have disagreed with the superpowers' approach to nuclear diplomacy, such a leader undoubtedly would have taken a more active approach to pressing China's agenda on the international stage. Instead, Mao chose to shy away from this diplomatic challenge. The mantle of leadership in the disarmament arena would thus be assumed by another large Asian country in the first two decades of the Cold War, one whose leader was vastly more confident in the diplomatic realm than the self-described "military man" at the helm of the People's Republic of China.

PART II

NEHRU'S INDIA

6

Gandhi's Dissimilar Disciples

> Jawahar is a thinker, Sardar a doer.
>
> Mohandas K. Gandhi, January 1948

Jawaharlal Nehru took office as India's first prime minister on August 15, 1947, a position he held until his death 17 years later. Although India would remain a British Dominion until January 1950, the era of the viceroys had ended. Moments before midnight on August 14, Nehru celebrated the occasion in one of the most famous speeches in modern Indian history: "Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom."[1] Nehru proceeded to make clear his hope that India's "awakening" would have repercussions far beyond its shores. "We have to labor and to work, and work hard, to give reality to our dreams," he stated. "Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world."

Nehru had been born almost 58 years earlier, on November 14, 1889, in the northern Indian city of Allahabad. His father, Motilal, was an affluent lawyer and a prominent member of the Indian National Congress. In 1905, the young Jawaharlal left India for Britain to study at the elite Harrow School. He went on to study natural science at Cambridge and then law at the Inner Temple in London. He returned to India in 1912 and soon thereafter joined his father's legal practice in Allahabad.

Following the massacre at Amritsar in 1919, Nehru immersed himself in the struggle against the British Raj. Showing a passion for the cause that he had never displayed in his legal work, he became increasingly close to the Congress's new leader, Mohandas Gandhi. Despite some disagreements, Nehru

[1] Jawaharlal Nehru, "A Tryst with Destiny," August 14, 1947, in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1984–), vol. 3, 135.

eventually became Gandhi's favored disciple, and it was at Gandhi's insistence that Nehru succeeded his father as president of the Congress Party in 1929. After spending much of the early 1930s in jail, Nehru returned to public life and led the Congress to victories in provincial elections all over India in 1936–1937. Although he returned to jail for much of World War II, Nehru reemerged in 1945 and played a central role in the postwar negotiations with the British. When an interim government was created in September 1946, he became vice president of the executive council, as well as minister for external affairs and Commonwealth relations. Less than 12 months later, he became India's first prime minister.

Nehru's most important partner in taking office was Vallabhbhai Patel. Patel was not only Nehru's deputy prime minister but also minister for home affairs, states, and information and broadcasting. Known as *Sardar* ("The Chief"), Patel was the archetypal party boss, often described as "India's Iron Man." If Nehru was the Congress's charismatic face to the outside world, Patel was its disciplinarian and organizational genius. As such, Patel was enormously powerful within the party, so much so that he would likely have become India's first prime minister if not for Gandhi's support for Nehru. Patel was also considerably more conservative than Nehru, whose advocacy of socialism became a point of friction between the two men in the 1930s.

Unlike Nehru's origins, Patel's were decidedly modest. He was born in 1875 in a small village in Gujarat. After attending school in his home province, Patel became a defense lawyer known for his toughness and pugnacity. He left India in 1910 to study law at the Middle Temple in London, graduating first in his class in 1913. In 1917, Gandhi's success representing indigo cultivators in Champaran inspired Patel to join the resistance to the Raj shortly thereafter. Patel rose to become an indispensable assistant to Gandhi, becoming particularly prominent after leading an antitax movement in Bardoli in 1928. As India moved toward independence after World War II, Patel earned renown for securing the integration of hundreds of princely states into the new republic. Nehru would famously call him "the strongest pillar of the Cabinet" when inviting him to join the government in August 1947.[2]

As these brief biographical sketches suggest, Nehru and Patel were two very different kinds of leaders, even though they both emerged from the same independence struggle. This chapter focuses on the distinct senses of national efficacy that Nehru and Patel developed in the course of coming to power. In doing so, it measures the independent variable of interest in this study and thereby sets the stage for the next two chapters. The analysis begins with Nehru, focusing first on his sense of moral efficacy and then on his sense of martial efficacy. The discussion then turns to Patel. As explained earlier, I am interested

[2] H. V. Hodson claims that Nehru's first list for his post-independence cabinet did not include Patel. See H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 389. Gopal disputes the point. See Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), vol. 1, 361.

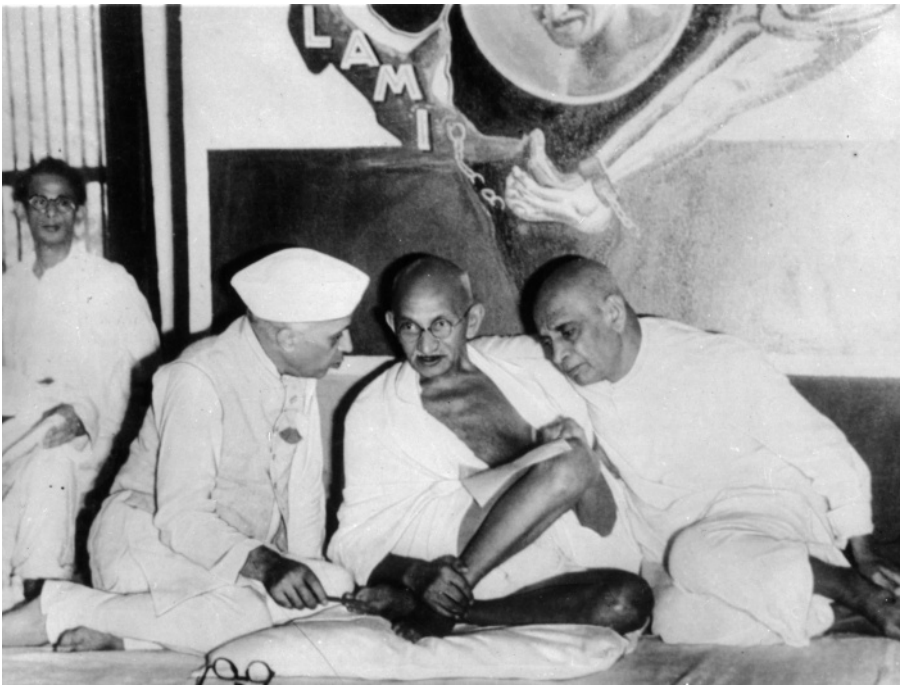


FIGURE 6.1. Gandhi confers with Nehru (left) and Patel (right) concerning the formation of India's interim government in Delhi in September 1946. (Courtesy of Dinodia Photos / Alamy)

in Patel for the sake of counterfactual analysis in subsequent chapters: where Patel's beliefs diverged from those of Nehru, it will be easier to discern how a leader with a different sense of national efficacy would have acted. As it turns out, the following analysis finds that Nehru's sense of moral efficacy was considerably stronger than Patel's, in keeping with the different roles that the two men played in the struggle with the Raj. In contrast, neither leader possessed a great sense of martial efficacy.

As in Chapter 3, I make these assessments by relying on the analytical framework outlined in Chapter 2. In each case, I begin by asking how much attention the leader has devoted to the relevant domain of foreign policy. Next, to the extent that there is some material that can be analyzed, I ask whether the leader has expressed confidence about surmounting the military or diplomatic challenge in question. When a leader does express such confidence, I ask whether this confidence reflects circumstantial considerations or a belief that he can call on the specific military or diplomatic competencies needed to succeed: skill and will on the military side, and agenda-setting and persuasion on the diplomatic side. Lastly, I ask whether the beliefs expressed by a given leader are plausible given his past experience and personal background.

NEHRU

Nehru spoke and wrote prolifically throughout the independence struggle, offering scholars more material to analyze than any single analysis could possibly comprehend. In keeping with the focus of this study, the following analysis is preoccupied with texts and passages that speak to his sense of India's military and diplomatic capabilities.[3] Given Nehru's deep interest in foreign affairs, the discussion on the diplomatic side is particularly lengthy. The analysis finds that Nehru developed a powerful sense of moral efficacy, but no strong sense of martial efficacy, in the course of coming to power. In other words, Nehru's national efficacy beliefs were a mirror image of those held by Mao.

A Strong Sense of Moral Efficacy

Over the course of the independence struggle, Nehru developed a zeal for diplomacy that would be difficult to overstate. This was perhaps only natural, given his thoroughly cosmopolitan life: besides being educated at Harrow and Cambridge, he traveled throughout Europe, toured the Soviet Union, and visited China in the 1920s and 1930s. With so much experience abroad, Nehru emerged as the Congress Party's unofficial spokesman on questions of foreign policy, and he created the party's foreign department while serving as president in 1936.[4] As the Congress's chief diplomat, Nehru's speeches and writings naturally focused first and foremost on the party's protracted struggle for independence from Britain. Yet he also sought to craft a more expansive vision for his party's approach to foreign affairs, one that would situate the Indian struggle within a broader context. As Nehru himself put it, after neglecting this task until the 1920s, "the Congress gradually developed a foreign policy that was based on the elimination of political and economic imperialism everywhere and the cooperation of free nations."[5] Within this broad commitment to progressive internationalism, Nehru took a particular interest in several more specific issues, including the progress of other anti-colonial movements, the workings of international organizations, and long-term prospects for

[3] To locate these texts, I have relied on the well-organized and extensively indexed *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* series. In addition, I have been guided in my analysis by the various biographies of Nehru, as well as his autobiography. These biographies include: Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959); Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003); Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*; Shashi Tharoor, *Nehru: The Invention of India* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003); Stanley Wolpert, *Nehru: A Tryst with Destiny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (New York: Routledge, 2004). For the autobiography, see Jawaharlal Nehru, *Toward Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958). I have also consulted other books that Nehru authored, including the following: Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Centenary ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (New York: The John Day Co., 1942).

[4] Brecher, *Nehru*, 219.

[5] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 416.

disarmament. To put it mildly, then, Nehru was keenly interested in the challenge of international cooperation long before he came to power.

Nehru's interest in international cooperation reflected a strong sense of India's own interests. In particular, because he anticipated that India would be a relatively weak power after it became independent, he believed that it would need to pacify its environment through an active diplomacy that promoted military restraint and disarmament. Nehru made these points with great clarity in a confidential memo on disarmament he authored in August 1940: "India cannot at present imaginably become a military power of first class importance. It can at best become a third rate power and that too at a cost which is almost unbearable for a poor country. It is therefore essential for India that world disarmament should take place."[6]

Nehru continued to stress India's need for military restraint and disarmament after World War II. In March 1946, he argued that the world's newly independent countries would need peace in order to develop and would wish to avoid war given their weakness. "Their weight will always be thrown on the side of world peace," he argued, "for any war would be disastrous to them."[7] In September, after taking office in the interim government, Nehru continued to stress India's need for international cooperation in the security sphere. As he put it, this was not only because war and arms races were abhorrent but also because India "needs all her resources for intended development."[8]

Nehru did not merely hope for international cooperation, however. Instead, as the independence struggle progressed, he became convinced that India had a unique ability to promote it. As J. N. Dixit once put it in retrospect: "Nehru was convinced that India had a catalytical role to play in establishing a just and moral world order, ensuring peace and cooperation all over the globe."[9] Or, as Sunil Khilnani has explained:

> In contrast to the sometimes narrowly domestic horizons of most in the nationalist movement . . . Nehru understood independence as an opportunity to establish India on the world stage. The international profile of states depended on their economic and military prowess, and India obviously could not make its mark in these domains. A new state like India, weak by international standards, would have to pursue its interests by creating its own opportunities and chances. By speaking the language of morality and justice, it might just be able to surprise and unbalance the more powerful, extracting concessions through their sheer embarrassment.[10]

[6] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Nonviolence and the State," August 25, 1940, in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972–), vol. 11, 126.

[7] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Colonialism Must Go," March 3, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 513.

[8] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Disarmament," December 12, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 1, 469.

[9] J. N. Dixit, "Jawaharlal Nehru – Architect of India's Foreign Policy," in *Nehru Revisited*, ed. M. V. Kamath (Mumbai: Nehru Centre, 2003), 63.

[10] Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 178.

To understand how Nehru came to believe in India's ability to catalyze cooperation by "surprising" and "embarrassing" the powerful, it is useful to take a closer look at the process through which he came to power. In particular, it is crucial to recognize that the Congress Party's campaign for independence was nothing less than a protracted effort to elicit cooperation from a much more powerful adversary. The Congress sought to eliminate the Raj not through force but through mutual agreement arrived at peacefully. Needless to say, this was a remarkably ambitious undertaking, one that envisioned Britain essentially making all of the concessions despite its greater material power.

Nehru recognized the difficulty of the challenge that the Congress faced. Under Gandhi's leadership, however, he came to believe that it could ultimately succeed by destroying the underlying legitimacy of the Raj. Within India, the Congress's approach entailed rallying domestic opinion against British rule and, in particular, inspiring fellow Indians to engage in nonviolent resistance movements (or *satyagraha*) such as work stoppages and boycotts.[11] At the same time, Nehru used the deliberately nonviolent character of the Congress's movement to win support for its cause abroad, putting pressure on the British government from other angles and even from within British society. In fact, Nehru even came to believe that the Congress was gradually demoralizing the very soldiers who served the Raj. As he wrote in March 1940: "[Nonviolence] made our hearts brave, we faced what we were afraid to face. The British soldier, whenever he was sent to deal violently with it, found it difficult, except in some cases, to fire at a quiet people. It demoralized him to shoot the people who, within their civil rights, acted without violence."[12] Ultimately, Nehru hoped, repeated nonviolent protests would "make the enemy liquidate his power and retire." In short, Nehru saw the Congress's moralistic movement as being capable of eliciting restraint even from its clearest enemies.

In the wake of World War II, Nehru became convinced that the end of India's long struggle for independence was in sight. Not only had Britain been weakened by the war, but there were also increasing signs of popular unrest with British rule in India, including a naval mutiny in Bombay. Although Nehru disparaged the violence of the latter incident, he also took credit for the intensity of the pro-independence sentiment now sweeping the country. "The Congress has been fighting for *swaraj* [self-rule] for the last 60 years," he proudly proclaimed to the press in March 1946. "Whatever strength you see with the people today has grown out of the struggle of the Congress."[13] The same day, he told a worker's rally that the Congress's "message has inspired everyone, from the land of the Pathans down to Rameshwaram, the southernmost part of this vast

[11] On the origins of the term satyagraha (literally, "truth firmness"), see Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Gandhi, an Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 318–19.

[12] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Power of Nonviolence," March 10, 1940, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 10, 351.

[13] Jawaharlal Nehru, "At the Door of Swaraj," March 10, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 31.

country."[14] In private, to be sure, Nehru could be much less effusive, and he was hardly averse to criticizing the Congress as an organization, as he did in a note for other party leaders in August. This same note, however, candidly observed that "the hold of the Congress on the public mind has never been so great as today."[15] It was in this triumphant frame of mind that Nehru entered the interim government in September of that year, with independence looming on the horizon.

It was also in this frame of mind that Nehru came to think of India as a catalyst for international cooperation in the postwar world. The Congress was now poised to win a stunning moral victory over the British Empire, extracting the ultimate in concessions through a nonviolent campaign. Even though Nehru eventually acquiesced in the partition of India into two states (about which more will be said later), he was confident that his government would make an important difference in international diplomacy. In March 1946, for example, Nehru called attention to India's role in promoting a peaceful international environment in the wake of World War II. "India in particular is wedded to peace," he wrote, "and *her powerful influence* [emphasis added] will make a difference."[16] Shortly afterward, he told students at Calcutta University that "I believe there is some kind of cycle and Asia is going to play a big part in world affairs. . . . I believe India will play a very big part, too." In February 1947, he confidently predicted while writing to *The New Republic* that India was "bound to play an increasing part in world affairs, and all her weight will be thrown on the side of peace and social progress."[17]

These remarks were not merely public bravado on the eve of taking power. If anything, Nehru was even more confident about India's diplomatic influence in private, both before and after independence. This was particularly evident as he ruminated about the influence that India would wield at the United Nations. In September 1946, while serving as minister of external affairs in the interim government, he suggested to the foreign secretary that India's UN delegation should function as "peacemakers" between the United States and the Soviet Union.[18] In 1948, he boasted in an internal memo that India had already become the fourth or fifth most influential country in the United Nations, after the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and perhaps France.[19] Subsequently, after the

[14] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Passing of the Raj," March 10, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 35.

[15] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Inner Weakness of the Congress," August 6, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 484.

[16] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Colonialism Must Go," March 3, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 513.

[17] Jawaharlal Nehru, "India's Peaceful Foreign Policy," February 10, 1947, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 2, 409.

[18] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Veto in the United Nations," September 7, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 1, 443.

[19] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Report on His Trip Abroad," November 6, 1948, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 8, 298.

outbreak of the Korean War, Nehru made it clear that he saw India's support as crucial for any kind of collective response. As he wrote in a secret note to India's UN representative:

> India's decision in this case is of far greater consequence, if I may say so, than that of most other countries, excepting the USA and the UK. Because we represent a different approach as well as a large section of Asian opinion. What we do influences a good part of Asia. *We give a certain moral tone and backing to the U.N. decision which neither the USA nor the UK can give it* [emphasis added]. That is far more important than the supply of a gunboat or a bomber.[20]

Nehru proceeded to note that there was little chance India could provide military support for the UN operations. Yet he saw this as less important than India's ability to legitimize them: "For a variety of reasons, we cannot send any military, naval or air help for the Korean operations. Our moral help is a big enough thing, which out-balances the petty military help of some other countries." In short, Nehru's confidence in the diplomatic arena was not simply contrived for public consumption on the eve of independence. On the contrary, Nehru's emerging sense of moral efficacy was quite apparent in private and after the transfer of power had taken place.

If we take a closer look at Nehru's pre-independence writings, it becomes clear that his broad sense of moral efficacy was backed by more specific beliefs about India's diplomatic prowess. Let us first consider Nehru's belief in India's capacity for agenda-setting. There is little question that Nehru saw India as possessing a preeminent status within Asia. This sense of stature was partly a result of India's sheer size, its cultural importance, and what he saw as its strategic location overlooking the Indian Ocean.[21] Yet it was also a result of Nehru's sense of the historical transformation under way in the region. In the wake of World War II, Nehru believed, Asia was poised for a modern renaissance after a long period of darkness, and India would lead that transformation. With its long history of struggle against imperialism, India was "the torch-bearer in the liberation movement of other Asiatic countries, which look to India for assistance and guidance."[22] Nehru's interest in pan-Asian cooperation soon found concrete expression in the Asian Relations Conference that he convened in New Delhi in March and April 1947, which became a forerunner to the Bandung Conference eight years later. In a moment of candor, Nehru told the participants that India was "the natural center and focal point of the

[20] Jawaharlal Nehru to B. N. Rau, July 1, 1950, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 14 (pt. 2), 312.

[21] For examples, see Jawaharlal Nehru, "The End of Domination," July 13, 1945, and Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Concept of Asian Unity," January 21, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 14, 40 and 473–74, respectively.

[22] Jawaharlal Nehru, "India's Lead in Asian Liberation," October 28, 1945, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 14, 459.

many forces at work in Asia."[23] The conference seemed to confirm this view by creating an Asian Relations Organization in New Delhi and making Nehru its first president.

India's stature within Asia, in Nehru's view, meant that it was well positioned to play a leadership role in global institutions. As early as August 1946, Nehru was predicting that "India is going to be the center of a very big federation."[24] Subsequently, as minister of external affairs in the interim government, he authored internal memos that envisioned a leadership role for India at the United Nations. In October 1946, for example, he suggested "our natural position in world assemblies is going to inevitably be one of the leadership of all the smaller countries of Asia."[25] In fact, he argued, it was "obvious" that India "by virtue of her geographical and strategical [*sic*] position, resources and latent power, should be a member of the UN Security Council." One month later, Nehru asserted that "India could not willingly be treated like a second-rate nation in spite of her dominant position which in every way qualifies her for the Security Council."[26] Although India did not ultimately gain a permanent seat on the council, that hardly prevented Nehru from rating India's overall influence within the United Nations quite highly, as noted earlier. In fact, Nehru subsequently turned down opportunities to gain a permanent seat on the council to protest communist China's exclusion from the United Nations in the 1950s.[27]

Given its leading position in "world assemblies," Nehru believed that India's voice would be difficult for the world's strongest powers to ignore, though he tried to be realistic on this score. Again, the internal memos he wrote as minister of external affairs in the interim government are illuminating. In a note on disarmament, Nehru noted that "this, like many other questions, depends on the Great Powers whose armaments count, and the opinion of India and other like countries is likely to be treated as somewhat academical [*sic*]."[28] Yet he remained undaunted. "Even so," Nehru concluded, "I think [our support for disarmament] should be clearly expressed when occasion for it arises." In fact, Nehru argued at the outset of the memo that "India should take up a more definite and positive line on the subject of disarmament." In short, Nehru did not intend to be ignored.

[23] Jawaharlal Nehru, "A United Asia for World Peace," March 23, 1947, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 2, 506.

[24] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Inter-Asian Relations," August 22, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 566.

[25] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The United Nations," September 5, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 1, 440.

[26] Jawaharlal Nehru, "India and the Membership of the Security Council," October 30, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 1, 464.

[27] Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Scars of Empire: Post-Imperial Ideology, Victimization and Foreign Policy* (PhD dissertation, Department of Government, Harvard University, 2007), 38; Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2, 248.

[28] Nehru, "Disarmament," 469.

Indeed, it would be a mistake to underestimate Nehru's belief in India's ability to make its voice heard among the great powers. In January 1947, Nehru conceded in an internal note that India was not yet "a power that counts" but countered that "potentially we are very much so." As a result, "[W]e are in no weak position to be bullied by any Power. . . . [W]e have something valuable to give in the present and our goodwill is even more valuable in the future, and therefore we are in a strong bargaining position." This was true even with respect to the world's most powerful state. As Nehru opined, "[I]f the attitude of America is important to India, the attitude of India is equally important to America." As discussed in the next chapter, Nehru's confidence in this regard would continue to grow after he took office.[29]

Nehru thus believed that India's voice would resonate abroad after it became independent, not just within Asia but also at the United Nations and among the great powers as well. Yet if India's voice would be hard to suppress, how effectively could it shape opinion overseas? Sensitive to this challenge, Nehru had high standards as he set about developing the Indian Foreign Service. "There is a tendency to think that a person who has traveled abroad or knows a foreign language is therefore peculiarly suited for the Foreign Service," he wrote while serving in the interim government. "That of course should be the least of his accomplishments."[30] Besides training in foreign languages, Nehru urged that new recruits not only study economics, world history, and international affairs but also spend part of their training period at a foreign university. Nonetheless, Nehru also recognized that his high standards would be impossible to meet when India first became independent, and he anticipated making compromises as a result.[31] In fact, Nehru took personal charge of the ministry of external affairs after independence, and from this post he proceeded to micromanage Indian diplomacy for much of his time in office, notwithstanding his many other responsibilities. In this light, it would seem hard to argue that Nehru was overly confident in the capabilities of the Indian diplomatic corps in the immediate aftermath of independence, albeit with a few noteworthy exceptions of course.[32]

If Nehru saw the nascent Indian Foreign Service as needing time to develop, he nonetheless believed strongly in his *own* ability to shape opinion abroad. Interestingly enough, this confidence did not come easily. He was the antithesis of a natural leader as a young man, and, by his own admission, painfully shy. While at Cambridge, Nehru participated in the "Majlis," a society of Indian students, but he rarely spoke at its meetings. As he later recalled, "I could not

[29] For the quotations in this paragraph, see Jawaharlal Nehru, "India and the United States at the United Nations," January 18, 1947, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 1, 472–75.

[30] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Training for the Indian Foreign Service," February 25, 1947, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 2, 423.

[31] Jawaharlal Nehru, "An Independent Foreign Policy," September 26, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 1, 494.

[32] One of these exceptions, G. S. Bajpai, is discussed in the next chapter.

get over my shyness and diffidence."[33] He also joined "Magpie and Stump," the debating society of Trinity College, but he spoke only once in three years, for a mere two minutes and thirty seconds.[34] His reticence at the latter is all the more striking because members who failed to speak in a given term were forced to pay a fine. As Nehru later recalled ruefully, "Often I paid the fine."[35] Surprisingly, Nehru evinced no more confidence in public speaking after completing law school and joining his father's legal practice. His first opportunity to give a public speech came around 1915 in Allahabad, when he issued a protest against wartime press restrictions. As he recalled, he had avoided speaking before large groups up to that point because he was still "diffident and terrified of public speaking."[36]

Nehru's confidence as a communicator would grow by leaps and bounds, however, as he became more deeply involved in the resistance to the Raj. The seeds of his confidence in this regard seem to have been planted in June 1920, when he became involved in agrarian agitation near Allahabad. Touring the countryside on behalf of the Congress Party, Nehru addressed large meetings of *kisans* (Indian peasants) in a bid to gain their confidence. As he later recalled, "These peasants took away the shyness from me and taught me to speak in public . . . until then I had hardly spoken at a public gathering."[37] He spoke in Hindustani, and there was no question of trying to impress his listeners with lofty Cambridge rhetoric. Instead, he opted for a much more informal approach:

> I did not know the arts of oratory, and so I spoke to them, man to man, and told them what I had in my mind and in my heart. Whether the gathering consisted of a few persons or of ten thousand or more, I stuck to my conversational and rather personal method of speaking, and I found that, whatever might be lacking in it, I could at least go on. I was fluent enough. Perhaps many of them could not understand a great deal of what I said . . . [but] all this did not matter much to them once they had given their confidence and faith to a person.[38]

Nehru's "conversational" style would remain a hallmark of his public speaking for the rest of his career. What it did not offer in terms of impressive rhetoric it made up by conveying sincerity. In fact, as early as 1923, the Indian press declared: "When he speaks, sincerity exudes from him as perspiration from the body in the month of May in Bombay."[39] It also made it easier for him to speak extemporaneously, a talent he would rely on heavily as prime minister.

[33] Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, 35.
[34] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, 22.
[35] Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, 35.
[36] Ibid., 43.
[37] Ibid., 60.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Quoted in Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, 73.

In fact, according to his secretariat, Nehru spoke from a prepared text fewer than a dozen times during his first decade in office.[40]

Although Nehru's confidence as a communicator grew enormously during the early 1920s, he did not truly come into his own until the following decade. As Congress president in 1936 and 1937, he led the party in provincial elections held throughout the country under the Government of India Act of 1935. During this period, Nehru traveled the length and breadth of India, speaking up to 12 times a day to audiences that sometimes exceeded 100,000 people. His popularity was such an asset for the party that he traveled roughly 50,000 miles in four months at one point, on conveyances ranging from planes and trains to the backs of elephants and camels. He later estimated that during this period he spoke directly to more than 10 million voters out of an electorate of 30 million at the time.[41] The Congress Party succeeded in dominating the elections, taking 711 seats out of the 1,161 it had contested. Of the 11 provinces in British India, it won an absolute majority in 5 and became the largest party in 3 others.[42]

In keeping with this accomplishment, Nehru's writings from this time reveal a striking confidence in his ability to shape opinion and forge solidarity among an extremely diverse populace. Indeed, although India was fragmented by language, caste, class, and religion, Nehru spoke across these divides. To be sure, India's capitalists often worried about his socialist sympathies, but Nehru was too popular to be challenged directly. As Sarvepalli Gopal once noted, "[T]he more intelligent among the businessmen realized that to promote a public debate with Jawaharlal was to invite humiliation."[43] Nehru's own growing sense of his persuasive powers was perhaps most evident in an essay he wrote in October 1937, later published under the pseudonym "Chanakya" in the *Modern Review*.[44] Titled "The Rashtrapati" (a Sanskrit word meaning "lord of the realm"), this fascinating essay was a self-critique that painted Gandhi's heir apparent as a potential demagogue:

> Steadily and persistently he goes on increasing his personal prestige and influence both with the masses and with all manner of groups and people. He goes to the peasant and the worker, to the zamindar and the capitalist, to the merchant and the peddler, to the Brahmin and the untouchable, to the Muslim, the Sikh, the Christian and the Jew, to all who make up the great variety of Indian life. To all these he speaks in a slightly different language, ever seeking to win them over to his side. With an energy that is astonishing at his age, he has rushed about across this vast land of India, and everywhere he has received the most extraordinary of popular welcomes.[45]

[40] Brecher, *Nehru*, 12.

[41] For Nehru's recollection of the campaign, see Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, 360.

[42] Brecher, *Nehru*, 229.

[43] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, 212.

[44] Chanakya (also known as Kautilya) was a famous minister in fourth century B.C. India and the author of *Arthashastra*, a text on politics and administration often compared to Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

[45] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Rashtrapati," October 5, 1937, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 8, 521.

Even as he celebrated his own talents, Nehru also pointed to the potential dangers his popularity raised: "Jawaharlal cannot become a fascist. And yet he has all the makings of a dictator in him – vast popularity, a strong will directed to a well-defined purpose, energy, pride, organizational capacity, ability, hardness, and, with all his love of the crowd, an intolerance of others and certain contempt for the weak and inefficient."[46] The essay concluded on an ominous note: "His conceit is already formidable. It must be checked. We want no Caesars."

Nehru's motives in publishing such a penetrating self-critique under a pseudonym remain unclear.[47] He was almost certainly trying to avoid becoming Congress president for a third year in a row, exhausted as he was from the campaign. Putting the essay in context years later, Nehru wrote that "there was some talk of my being elected for another term, but I was quite clear in my own mind that I should not stand."[48] In addition, he seems to have been intrigued with the idea of watching how others reacted to the critique. As he confided a few months after its publication to Krishna Kripalani, "[I]t was a low-down trick on my part to write anonymously thus in order to watch people's reactions."[49] Another possible motivation was a desire to undermine the appeal of fascism within the Indian independence movement. The rise of fascist regimes in Germany, Italy, and Japan in the 1930s, coupled with their growing animosity toward Britain, made fascism a potential source of inspiration to Indian nationalists.[50] But Nehru personally detested fascism and consistently sought to limit its influence in India. By denouncing those who would have exalted him as an "Indian Caesar," he may have hoped to nip any fascist tendencies in the bud.

If the essay was more instrumental than confessional, it was nonetheless enormously revealing. Most importantly, it betrayed Nehru's enormous confidence in his ability to speak to the very different groups within India and to unite them behind the Congress program. The writings of British observers from that time attest that Nehru was certainly not imagining his own sway over India's disparate populace. As one observer noted, "There is no doubt that his manliness, frankness and reputation for sacrifice attracts a large public."[51] Moreover, Nehru privately acknowledged his appeal during that time as well. As he confided to Padmaja Naidu a few weeks after he wrote the essay:

> The first thing you must remember is that I have a knack of imposing on people (you included, in spite of your insight and perception) and I produce in their minds

[46] Ibid., 522.

[47] I am indebted to Sunil Khilnani for insight into the possible motivations behind this essay.

[48] Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, 363. See also Brecher, *Nehru*, 9.

[49] Jawaharlal Nehru to Krishna Kripalani, June 2, 1938, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 8, 525.

[50] In fact, Nehru's successor as Congress Party president, Subhas Chandra Bose, would align with the fascists and lead an ill-fated military challenge against the Raj during World War II after being ousted from the party in 1939.

[51] Quoted in Tharoor, *Nehru*, 100.

exaggerated notions about myself. . . . [E]ven in examinations I usually did far better than others who were my superiors in knowledge. . . . But you are perfectly right in saying that I have little sense of intuitive perception. Conceited and self-centered people seldom have it.[52]

The confidence that shines through in "The Rashtrapati" thus seems genuine rather than merely contrived for purposes of the essay.

If Nehru believed in his ability to shape opinion within India, was he equally confident in his ability to do so abroad? As the Congress's leading spokesman on matters of foreign affairs, Nehru naturally took on the "role of persuading skeptical decision makers in foreign states," as A. K. Damodaran has put it.[53] Perhaps his most dramatic success in this respect was his conversion of Arthur Louis Johnson, President Franklin Roosevelt's personal representative in India, to the Congress cause. Johnson arrived in India in April 1942 at a crucial point in relations between the Raj and the independence movement. With Japanese forces moving into Southeast Asia and beginning to threaten India, the British sought to elicit the Congress's support for the war effort. Toward this end, London dispatched Labor luminary Stafford Cripps to India for negotiations. For his part, although Nehru was eager to support the war against Germany and Japan, he sought a more substantial role for Indians in leading this effort and a promise of independence following the war.

Johnson had arrived in India knowing almost nothing of the country save what he had read in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and G. A. Henty's *With Clive in India*.[54] In one of his initial encounters with Nehru in early April, he apparently stressed that the U.S. government was determined to support Great Britain "to the utmost" and to "preserve the integrity of the British empire" toward this end.[55] The viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, was quite pleased with the increased pressure this put on the Congress and said so.[56] The party nonetheless rejected Cripps's initial set of proposals, after which Nehru wrote to Johnson to explain why.[57] In response, Johnson personally intervened to save the negotiations but, despite considerable effort, was ultimately unsuccessful. Most importantly for our purposes here, by the end of this process Johnson had met with Nehru 16 times and had become highly critical of the British – his government's ally – and

[52] Jawaharlal Nehru to Padmaja Naidu, October 20, 1937, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 8, 524.

[53] A. K. Damodaran, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Communicator and Democratic Leader* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1997), 357.

[54] On Johnson's background and for a summary of his mission, see Kenton J. Clymer, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, Louis Johnson, India, and Anticolonialism: Another Look," *Pacific Historical Review* 57, no. 3 (1988): 261–84; M. S. Venkataramani and B. K. Shrivastava, *Quit India: The American Response to the 1942 Struggle* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1979), 103–36.

[55] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Interview with Arthur Louis Johnson," April 5, 1942, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 12, 194.

[56] Clymer, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, Louis Johnson, India, and Anticolonialism," 168.

[57] Jawaharlal Nehru to Arthur Louis Johnson, April 8, 1942, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 12, 197–99.

an unabashed admirer of Nehru. Writing to Roosevelt and Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles, Johnson praised Congress's rejection of the final British offer as "a masterpiece" that would "appeal to free men everywhere."[58] As for Nehru himself, Johnson remarked that he was "magnificent in his cooperation with me." In fact, Johnson suggested, "the President would like him and on most things they agree." Johnson then described his plans to visit Calcutta to help settle strikes and keep industry operating. Referring to Nehru's potential assistance in this endeavor, he noted, "I shall have his complete help; he is our hope here. I trust him."

A more dramatic conversion to the Congress's cause is hard to imagine. After the Cripps negotiations broke down, Johnson's support for the Congress position helped prompt Roosevelt to write one of the most critical notes he ever sent to Winston Churchill.[59] The president argued that the deadlock resulted from British intransigence and, in particular, its failure "to concede to the Indians the right of self-government."[60] In response, Churchill stood firm and retorted, "I did not feel I could take responsibility for the defense of India if everything has again to be thrown into the melting pot at this critical juncture."[61] Churchill apparently even threatened to resign, after which Roosevelt chose not to press him any further.[62] As a result, Nehru's attempt to play Washington against London came to an end. Nonetheless, speaking with the press shortly after the war ended, Nehru betrayed some sense of his ability to earn support overseas, noting that "I am respected not only in India but also abroad."[63]

The most skeptical decision makers that Nehru had to confront, of course, were the British themselves, and he was well aware of the challenge he faced in trying to change their views. He readily characterized the Raj and the Congress as "two irreconcilables" that were engaged in a "fierce life-and-death struggle."[64] With Churchill in particular, there could be no settlement; he was an "uncompromising opponent" who was bent on crushing the Congress.[65] To be sure, Nehru knew Britain well enough to perceive a range of views on India within Parliament and British society more generally. Even so, he worried that dominant "groups and classes" in Britain with a strong interest in the status quo would hinder Congress's efforts to reshape British opinion.[66]

In this context, it is remarkable that Nehru still saw persuasion as playing a role in causing the British to leave India, although he did not believe

[58] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), vol. 1, 631.
[59] Clymer, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, Louis Johnson, India, and Anticolonialism," 280.
[60] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, vol. 1, 633.
[61] Ibid., 635.
[62] Clymer, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, Louis Johnson, India, and Anticolonialism," 280–81.
[63] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Nation's Party," September 24, 1945, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 14, 93.
[64] Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, 215, 245.
[65] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 438.
[66] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Way to Peace," in *India and the World: Essays by Jawaharlal Nehru* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1936), 221.

that the Congress could accomplish its end through words alone. Instead, persuasion had to be combined with some kind of coercion. "The psychological approach," as he referred to persuasion in one essay, "though admirable and worth stressing, does not seem to be quite enough."[67] Instead, "something more is necessary . . . that something is pressure or some kind of coercion, and the bringing about of circumstances which make it more worthwhile for the vested interests to accept change than to suffer greater loss in an attempt to avoid it." In short, Nehru saw *both* persuasion and coercion as necessary to eject the British from India.

Nonetheless, Nehru realized that combining persuasion and coercion was no simple task. Whereas persuasion often involves the development of mutual trust and respect, coercion is more likely to engender recrimination and resentment. As Nehru put it: "The application of coercion immediately conflicts with the psychological approach . . . is there no way out? Cannot that coercion be applied in such a way as to minimize the fear and hatred and greed which accompany conflict and neutralize even the results of victory? Is it possible to have that psychological approach and yet have the coercion?" The answer, of course, lay in Gandhi's strategy of combining diplomacy and remonstration with nonviolent resistance. As Nehru argued, this approach put pressure on the opponent but "did all this with the least amount of ill will against the opposite party." Persuasion and coercion thus could be combined – indeed, had to be combined – in the struggle against the British. Although persuasion was insufficient by itself, it was important enough to shape the kind of coercion that could be employed. As Nehru put it, "[I]n no event can we get a move on unless we have converted a sufficient number of people."[68]

In Nehru's view, persuading the British was not simply a matter of wearing them down through repetitive pleading. Nor was it merely reassuring them that an independent India would be friendly to Britain. Instead, more subtle approaches were needed as well. On this point, Nehru cited Liddell Hart's "The Strategy of the Indirect Approach" with approval:

> Looking back on the stages by which fresh ideas gained acceptance, it can be seen that the process was eased when they could be presented, not as something radically new, but as the revival in modern terms of a time-honored principle or practice that had been forgotten. This required not deception but care to trace the connection – since "there is nothing new under the sun."[69]

In other words, an important part of persuasion was presenting one's own argument in terms that would resonate with more well-entrenched norms. If this approach sounds familiar, that is because it is essentially the same explanation political scientists have developed for how certain norms become established

[67] Ibid., 222.
[68] For the quotations in this paragraph, see ibid., 220–24.
[69] Quoted in Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 448–49.

in the international system.[70] Liddell Hart seems to have expressed this idea – and Nehru appreciated it – as early as the 1940s.

Nehru repeatedly employed this approach in trying to sway Western audiences. After Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, for example, Nehru drafted a formal Congress resolution in response. Noting that Britain's leaders claimed to be fighting for "democracy," Nehru asked them to be true to their word. "If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy," he argued, "then she must necessarily end imperialism in her possessions."[71] In return, London could count on India's active support in the war against fascism. "If the war is to defend the status quo of imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India can have no interest in it, for all this is the negation of democracy," Nehru wrote. "If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it."[72] Nehru subsequently used the same tactic when appealing to American readers in the magazine *Fortune* in March 1942. Noting that Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" had "found an echo in millions of hearts," he lamented Churchill's refusal to apply these same ideals to India. Months later, following the failure of the Cripps mission, Nehru would ask the British to leave India by quoting Oliver Cromwell: "You have sat here too long for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and have done with you. In the name of God, go!"[73] As Nehru well knew, Britain's secretary of state for India at the time, his fellow Harrovian Leopold Amery, had used the very same words in calling for Neville Chamberlain's resignation as prime minister just two years earlier.

It is important to note that Nehru's focus on persuasion and nonviolent coercion against the British did not reflect a belief that more forceful tactics would be unethical. Indeed, although he often employed morality-laden rhetoric, Nehru repeatedly emphasized the *expediency* of nonviolence in the independence struggle. In his presidential address to the Congress in 1929, he drove this point home:

> The great majority of us, I take it, judge the issue not on moral but on practical grounds, and if we reject the way of violence, it is because it promises no substantial results. But if this Congress or the nation at any future time comes to the conclusion that methods of violence will rid us of slavery, then I have no doubt that it will adopt them. Violence is bad, but slavery is far worse.[74]

[70] See Chapter 2's discussion of diplomatic persuasion on this point.

[71] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Congress Resolution on India and the War (Draft for Working Committee, Wardha), 11 September, 1939," in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 10, 129.

[72] Jawaharlal Nehru, "India's Day of Reckoning," in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 12, 171.

[73] Quoted in Tharoor, *Nehru*, 124–25.

[74] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Presidential Address," December 29, 1929, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 4, 195.

Nehru continued to justify nonviolence as more expedient up to the point he took office. In February 1946, he condemned the mutiny against the Royal Indian Navy as follows:

> I deprecate the mass violence in Bombay during the past four days. I have not been convinced that there is a need to employ violence for winning the freedom of India. If I am satisfied that violence is necessary to win freedom, I shall be the first to give the call, and I will come out openly with such a call.[75]

In short, although Nehru often wielded moralistic rhetoric against his opponents, he consistently defended the Congress's emphasis on nonviolent methods as the most *effective* strategy available. Nehru's belief in its effectiveness, in turn, reflected a strong confidence in Gandhi's – and his – ability to make it work.

There were, to be sure, moments in the independence struggle when Nehru gave up on persuasion entirely. Most important in this respect was his eventual willingness to accept the partition of India, after failing to convince Muhammad Ali Jinnah to work with the Congress within an all-India framework.[76] Jinnah had, starting in 1940, promulgated in South Asia the "two-nation" theory, a notion that Nehru found "medieval."[77] Although Jinnah's Muslim League was comparatively weak at the time, it expanded its base considerably during the war, especially after the Congress was banned and its leaders imprisoned in 1942. As the League became stronger, Jinnah grew more insistent. By January 1946, a frustrated Nehru was comparing the Muslim League to the Nazis and charging that its leaders "openly [say] that they base their appeal on hatred."[78] In July, Nehru struck an intransigent pose by disparaging regional autonomy arrangements under consideration at the time.[79] On August 16, the Muslim League would sponsor "Direct Action Day" for the achievement of Pakistan, which resulted in widespread communal violence throughout India.

Although prospects for a united India looked fairly bleak at this point, Nehru still sought to work out an arrangement with Jinnah. In retrospect, his perseverance in such unpromising circumstances is remarkable. After the interim government took office in September 1946, Nehru worked to bring the Muslim League into the government as a partner to the Congress. This was not simply a result of British pressure; Nehru genuinely hoped that his efforts would succeed.[80] The League did in fact enter the interim government in October,

[75] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Armed Forces and National Freedom," February 26, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 4.

[76] For a summary of the events that led to partition, see Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 165–89.

[77] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Absurdity of Partition," July 17, 1945, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 14, 51.

[78] Jawaharlal Nehru to Stafford Cripps, January 27, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 14, 140.

[79] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, 326–28.

[80] Jawaharlal Nehru to Krishna Menon, October 6, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 1, 168.

but from the list of ministers that Jinnah nominated, he seemed more intent on paralyzing the provisional authority than making it work.[81] Subsequently, relations between the Congress and League ministers in the interim government proved highly acrimonious. In December, when British prime minister Clement Attlee called for a meeting between the various parties in London, Nehru agreed to attend, but only because he believed a refusal would have been "discourteous."[82] Indeed, judging from his conversations in London, Nehru seems to have lost hope in eliciting constructive participation from Jinnah at this point.[83] By early March 1947, the Congress Working Committee had reconciled itself to at least a temporary partition of the subcontinent after independence.[84]

In addition to Jinnah's obstinacy, there seem to have been several reasons why Nehru chose to accept partition. Like many of his colleagues, he never expected the process to become so violent, nor did he really expect the sundering of Pakistan from India to endure.[85] Indeed, he hardly saw Pakistan as a viable entity on a long-term basis, and he believed that the Muslim League would weaken once the British withdrew.[86] Although these views proved naive, they were widely held at the time. In addition, he seems to have preferred a strong, centralized Indian state to the weak federal structure he would have had to accept in the event of a Congress-League partnership. This preference helps to shed some light on his dismissal of the regional autonomy framework in July 1946. As he explained to Michael Brecher 10 years later: "If we got India, with that background, it would be a very weak India, that is, a federal India with far too much power in the federating units. A larger India would have constant troubles, constant disintegrating pulls."[87] In short, a variety of considerations prompted Nehru to acquiesce to partition, of which Jinnah's obduracy was but one. Had Nehru foreseen the violence that would accompany partition, or the permanence of the outcome, it is hard to believe he would have accepted it as readily.

In sum, Nehru came to power with clear confidence in India's ability to promote international cooperation, notwithstanding his inability to prevent partition. This optimistic assessment reflected a strong sense that India would be able to shape the international diplomatic agenda, as well as Nehru's confidence in his own ability to shape opinion abroad. In addition, it is clear that Nehru saw India as exerting its influence through diplomacy not just at the regional level but also at the global level. In fact, it would be fair to say that Nehru was preoccupied with the latter. He almost seemed incapable of imagining India as

[81] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, 335.
[82] Ibid., 338.
[83] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Interviews with Lord Pethick-Lawrence and C. R. Attlee," December 3, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 1, 125.
[84] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, 343.
[85] Ibid., 355–56.
[86] Ibid., 327.
[87] Brecher, *Nehru*, 377.

merely a regional player; as he wrote in *The Discovery of India*, India "cannot play a secondary role in the world . . . she will either count for a great deal or not count at all."[88] Specifically, Nehru believed that India would become one of the most influential countries at the United Nations, and he was eager to play a peacemaking role between the superpowers as the Cold War took root. By promoting cooperation on the global stage, Nehru believed he would create an environment in which India could develop and flourish.

The idea that Nehru came to power with a strong sense of moral efficacy from the independence struggle is quite plausible if we consider his background. For decades before becoming prime minister, he had been engaged in a protracted effort to end British rule in South Asia, not by force but through nonviolent resistance and remonstration. This was a global effort, targeting opinion not only within India but also in Britain and the United States, and in the end it succeeded. Nehru personally played a critical role in this effort, forging solidarity within the Indian population and striving to win support overseas. Indeed, Nehru was central to the Congress's efforts to shape opinion abroad, and he was well used to wielding morality as a weapon toward this end. To be sure, one can attribute Britain's decision to leave India in 1947 to the fact that it had been severely weakened by World War II, and some Congress leaders took this point of view (as described later in this chapter). Nehru, however, saw Congress's efforts as crucial for bringing matters to that point. In fact, Nehru actually downplayed the role of the war in bringing about Indian independence, at least in retrospect. As he told Mao when the two leaders met in 1954: "Even without the war, India would have attained freedom. Actually, war provided a pick-axe in the hands of the British to hold on for a long time in India."[89] In short, Nehru did not see Indian independence simply as the result of British decline but even more fundamentally as the culmination of the Congress's protracted struggle.

In addition, Nehru's confidence in his own powers of persuasion almost certainly reflected the praise and support he received from Gandhi. Nehru had greatly admired Gandhi's ability to win over his listeners, even those who opposed him, for decades before independence. As Nehru recalled in his autobiography:

> It was the utter sincerity of the man and his personality that gripped; he gave the impression of tremendous inner reserves of power. . . . A stranger . . . would probably not have been touched by the spell, or, at any rate, not to the same extent. And yet one of the most remarkable things about Gandhiji was, and is, his ability to win over, or at least disarm, his opponents.[90]

More than 20 years later, Nehru was still praising Gandhi's powers of persuasion: "He had a remarkable capacity for winning over people, even opponents. If he could not win an opponent over, he somehow dulled his antagonism

[88] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 56.
[89] Jawaharlal Nehru, "War and Peace," October 23, 1954, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 27, 36.
[90] Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, 110.

and his hostility. . . . [H]e spotted the good points in a person and laid stress on them, and rather slurred over the bad points."[91] In this context, Gandhi's willingness to champion Nehru as his successor was bound to have an effect. Of course, the two men often disagreed; among other things, Nehru was a dedicated technophile and favored central planning, whereas Gandhi preferred local autonomy and agrarian simplicity. Even so, Gandhi consistently praised Nehru and promoted his career. Gandhi also praised his protégé's own abilities to influence others, referring to Nehru's "great gifts of organization and persuasion."[92] Even when noting their differences, Gandhi made his esteem clear: "[Nehru] says that he does not understand my language, and that he speaks a language foreign to me. This may or may not be true. But language is no bar to a union of hearts. And I know this – that when I am gone he will speak my language."[93] Shortly after Gandhi was assassinated in January 1948, Nehru delivered an address in Parliament that made it clear how much of an impression Gandhi had made on him. "That man with divine fire changed us also," he recalled, "and, such as we are, we have been molded by him."[94]

Martial Materialism

Nehru came to power in 1947 with no experience of military combat or command. As a result, it is not surprising that he did not devote nearly as much attention to military matters as he did to questions of diplomacy during the course of the independence struggle. Even so, Nehru was very interested in broader questions of grand strategy and India's national security.[95] Moreover, his writings are so voluminous that one can find more than a few discussions of military history and contemporary military conflicts in them. He was also clearly interested in how Indian soldiers were being employed by the Raj, as well as the kind of armed forces that independent India would inherit. The discussion that follows makes it clear that Nehru's writings on these issues are quite revealing.

To begin, it is safe to say that Nehru was no fan of using force to settle political conflicts. Yet it is also clear that he was no pacifist. In the years before independence, he repeatedly affirmed the need for a modern military in independent India.[96] Nor was Nehru morally opposed to employing these forces in

[91] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Interview with Michael Brecher," June 6, 1956, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 33, 518.

[92] Quoted in Brecher, *Nehru*, 123.

[93] Quoted in Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, 275.

[94] Jawaharlal Nehru, "A Glory Departed," in *Nehru on Gandhi: A Selection Arranged in the Order of Events from the Writings and Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New York: The John Day Co., 1948), 130.

[95] For one of his earlier writings on the security of independent India, see Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Defence of India," September 9, 1931, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 5, 555–60.

[96] See Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Proposal for a Plebiscite," April 6, 1946, and Jawaharlal Nehru, "Free India's Foreign Policy," March 15, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 131 and 525, respectively.

combat. Following the outbreak of World War II, he wholeheartedly supported the Congress Party's offer to fight alongside the British in exchange for independence, notwithstanding Gandhi's discomfort with the proposition.[97] When Japanese forces approached eastern India in 1942, Nehru favored organizing last-ditch guerrilla resistance in the event of an invasion. He later concluded that such a plan was infeasible without British support, however.[98]

If Nehru was willing to use force under the right circumstances, his writings reveal little belief that India was capable of defeating more powerful adversaries. On the contrary, they reveal something quite different: a preoccupation with the importance of material power in shaping military outcomes. Following the outbreak of World War II, Nehru asserted, "To defeat force through violence, a greater force is necessary.... The happenings in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and other places should be enough to prove this."[99] Nehru's martial materialism was particularly evident when he discussed confronting the Raj militarily. Following the naval mutiny in February 1946, for example, Nehru was asked about arming the Indian people with rifles so they might fight as "brave soldiers" against the Raj. In response, Nehru not only disparaged the utility of violence against the British but also categorically asserted that "when you match a gun with a gun, the big gun always succeeds."[100] Earlier in the same interview, he had stressed the "folly" of confronting the British with violence, as the latter would merely retaliate with superior force. Nehru also portrayed warfare as a contest of material power, rather than of strategy or will, when advising other anti-colonial leaders.[101] This strongly materialist outlook would seem to have left little space for Nehru to imagine success in military competitions with stronger powers.

Within this general preoccupation with material strength, Nehru was especially sensitive to the role of technology in warfare. As he put it in March 1946, "[M]ilitary power depends ultimately on the development of technical knowledge and science."[102] In his view, India needed scientific research "on the broadest scale" for this very reason.[103] Nehru was transfixed by nuclear weapons in particular. Although the prospect of nuclear warfare appalled him, he saw no chance of defeating a nuclear-armed opponent with less sophisticated weaponry. "A school boy can succeed in preparing a bomb in a school

[97] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 446–47.
[98] Ibid., 465–66.
[99] Jawaharlal Nehru, "On the Power of Nonviolence," March 10, 1940, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 10, 351.
[100] Jawaharlal Nehru, "No Room for Victimisation," February 27, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 12.
[101] Jawaharlal Nehru to Charles Onyeama, May 14, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 530.
[102] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Vision of a New Transformation," March 9, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 518.
[103] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Note on Defence," September 12, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 3, 491.

laboratory," he noted while speaking in Dacca in March 1946. "But of what avail would that bomb be before an atom bomb which can destroy a whole city?"[104] In fact, Nehru was so preoccupied with nuclear technology that he sometimes imagined that scientists would take over the enterprise of warfare in the atomic age. As he related to the press one month after his speech in Dacca: "Tomorrow's army may consist largely of technicians with scientists at their back. Those who want can play about with guns and revolvers. But the atom bomb will decide wars in the future."[105] While serving in the interim government, Nehru would continue in this vein, suggesting that "present methods of warfare may become completely out of date within 10 years or so owing to scientific research."[106] Clearly, Nehru was deeply concerned about military applications of nuclear technology very early on, downplaying the role of other means of applying force. After coming to power, he would worry a great deal about the problem of enhancing Indian security in the context of the superpowers' nuclear arms race.

In more reflective moments, Nehru sometimes showed greater sensitivity to the role of nonmaterial factors in warfare, as he did when writing about Britain's conquest of South Asia in *The Discovery of India*.[107] He certainly recognized that the British-led troops were better trained and more disciplined. Nehru also noted that Britain's primary rivals in northern India, the Marathas, feuded among themselves and with other groups when they should have been united. Perhaps most important in Nehru's view, the British proved to be masters of political intrigue and were much better informed than their Indian rivals. In fact, British officers posing as mercenaries would often join Indian armies, only to defect on the eve of battle. As a result, "[the British] won most of their battles before the actual fighting took place."[108]

Nonetheless, this sensitivity to nonmaterial factors could disappear when Nehru wrote about the subjugation of India in more sweeping terms. Indeed, it seems to have been easy for Nehru to revert to his material focus in such moments. India, he argued, simply "fell behind in the march of technique," a development he struggled to explain in light of the vitality and creativity he saw in earlier Indian history.[109] In contrast, Europe surged ahead in "technical progress." These "new techniques" – Nehru did not specify what they were – "gave military strength to the countries of Western Europe, and it was easy for them to spread out and dominate the East." Once again, Nehru's emphasis on the overriding importance of material power and technology shines through.

[104] Jawaharlal Nehru, "At the Door of Swaraj," March 10, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 31.
[105] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Independence the Immediate Issue," April 5, 1946, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, vol. 15, 121.
[106] Nehru, "Note on Defence," 491.
[107] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 276–81.
[108] Ibid., 279.
[109] Ibid., 54.

After Nehru joined the interim government in 1946, he continued to emphasize material power while contemplating the future of Indian defense. This is not to say he favored massive investments in the armed forces. On the contrary, he favored restraint in defense spending to allow investments in the Indian economy. Economic modernization, in turn, would provide the financial and technological wherewithal for India to compete in the military realm. "No country which is not industrialized can carry on war for long," he asserted in an early analysis of India's defense needs, "however good the army might be."[110] Whatever the merits of that point of view, it is hard to imagine Mao concurring with it at that moment in time. As of 1946, Mao's peasant army had been fighting off and on for nearly 20 years.

Nehru's limited sense of martial efficacy accords with the fact that he did not seem to see the Indian military as exceptional in terms of skill or will. With respect to the former, there is little sense in Nehru's writing of how India's armies might outmaneuver or deceive stronger enemies on the battlefield. To be sure, Nehru appreciated the writings of Chanakya, the ancient Indian strategist, as suggested by the pseudonym he adopted in writing "The Rashtrapati." In particular, Nehru noted that Chanakya had emphasized the importance of strategy and discipline, and downplayed the importance of numerical superiority, in military conflict.[111] Nehru also marveled at the exploits of Napoleon, calling him a "master of war on land."[112] Yet Nehru did not delve into the specific tactics that these strategists employed, nor did he consider how their strategic principles might relate to modern warfare. Nehru was also quick to point out that Chanakya preferred to rely on diplomacy and persuasion whenever possible. As he recalled, "[Chanakya] never forgot that it was better to win over an intelligent and high-minded adversary than to crush him."[113] In short, there is little evidence that Nehru was inspired by other strategic thinkers to believe that India could outmaneuver more powerful rivals on the battlefield.

Similarly, Nehru does not seem to have seen the Indian forces that he inherited as exceptionally cohesive or tenacious. He understood that the British had recruited soldiers from the "martial races" of northern India because of their alleged excellence in combat. Yet Nehru rejected such thinking upon coming to power. "We should give up the idea of some people of India belonging to martial races," he argued, "and therefore being particularly suited for the army, and others belonging to non-martial races." Unlike the British, then, Nehru did not believe that specific segments of the Indian population made particularly effective soldiers. More generally, he worried about the soldiers' sense of place in the new India. The army, he wrote in 1946, must "feel that it is a national army of India.... [T]hey must be made to feel proud of their country and to believe in its great future." At the same time, he was concerned about civil–military relations, particularly how the Indian people would relate

[110] Nehru, "Note on Defence," 491.
[111] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 124–25.
[112] Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, 383.
[113] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 124.

to the officers and soldiers who had so recently served the Raj. "It is equally necessary to make the Indian public feel that the army is theirs and is not some kind of hostile force imposed upon them." In short, although Nehru's worries should not be exaggerated, he clearly felt that independent India had work to do in generating a sense of nationalism and esprit de corps among its troops, as well as in fostering better relations between the army and the people it was to serve.[114]

To sum up, Nehru's sense of India's martial efficacy seems to have been fairly limited before he took power in 1947. This finding is quite plausible in light of his total lack of military experience up to that point. Unlike Mao, he never had the opportunity to work closely with the armed forces, let alone any experience of success against a more powerful adversary. Although Indian soldiers had fought with considerable effectiveness on many occasions under the Raj, the transition from British to Indian rule raised questions in Nehru's mind about the allegiance and identity of the armed forces. Moreover, because Nehru had viewed the British Indian Army as an adversary for most of his adult life, his relations with the officers of the Indian Army were far from easy after independence.[115] Nehru also rejected the theory of "martial races" that had gained currency under the Raj and thus the idea that India had a reservoir of particularly effective manpower that it could draw on.

From a more general standpoint, Nehru's emphasis on material – especially technological – strength left little room for a strong sense of martial efficacy. Nehru's strongly materialist views of military conflict were probably confirmed by the outcome of World War II. Globally, the combination of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Britain proved too much for Germany and Japan, despite the fearsome efficiency of the Nazi military machine. Within South Asia, Nehru witnessed the dismal failure of Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army (INA) against British-led forces. Poorly equipped and outnumbered, the INA was probably doomed from the outset for a variety of reasons. For his part, Nehru focused on its material weakness, noting that the INA had been "arrayed against greater forces in the world situation."[116] In other words, it never had a chance, no matter how courageously or cleverly it fought.

Despite the limitations in Nehru's sense of martial efficacy, he was clearly willing to use force in defense of Indian interests. Given the preoccupation with material power evident in his writings, it seems likely he would have been most confident using force against smaller or technologically inferior opponents. Under the right circumstances, Nehru might have had some degree of confidence against more comparable adversaries as well. Against more powerful opponents, however, it is hard to see how he could have expected to prevail.

[114] For the quotations in this paragraph, see Nehru, "Note on Defence," 489.

[115] On civil–military tensions in post-independence India, see Rosen, *Societies and Military Power*, 226–32. For a vivid example of such tensions involving Nehru, see D. K. Palit, *War in High Himalaya: The Indian Army in Crisis, 1962* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1991), 20–21.

[116] Nehru, "No Room for Victimisation," 10.

PATEL

As India's first deputy prime minister, Vallabhbhai Patel took power more as Nehru's partner than as his subordinate. As one biographer put it, Patel was the "shrewd organizational hand beneath Nehru's idealistic velvet glove."[117] Yet if these two leaders complemented each other in many respects, there were also real differences that divided them. The following analysis explores Patel's distinct sense of national efficacy, drawing particularly on his *Collected Works* as well as several biographies.[118] Although Patel was not as prolific an author as Nehru, his writings are sufficiently substantial, not to mention blunt, to be quite illuminating. The discussion makes it clear that Patel never developed Nehru's strong sense of moral efficacy, a finding that accords with the rather different role he played in the independence struggle. Patel's sense of martial efficacy, in contrast, seems to have been much more similar to that held by Nehru.

Limited Moral Efficacy

Although a keen observer of politics, Patel devoted relatively little attention in his speeches and writings to broad questions of international cooperation. To be sure, he did make vague references to the need for "world peace" on occasion, but he was generally no more specific than that.[119] Unlike Nehru, Patel did not probe into more specific questions such as disarmament or the workings of the United Nations. Instead, Patel seems to have deliberately deferred to Nehru on broad questions of diplomacy. At the Asian Relations Conference in March 1947, for example, Patel was asked whether the conference would take a formal stand on Indonesia's demand for independence. In response, Patel reportedly joked, "Indonesia, Indonesia, let me see – where is Indonesia? You'd better ask Jawaharlal about that."[120] At times, Patel even seemed to question the amount of attention that Nehru devoted to diplomacy. When Nehru visited the United States for the first time, shortly after independence, Patel was reported to ask, "[W]hat use is the fanfare of a trip through America with speeches and all?"[121] In short, although a sharp politician, Patel did not share Nehru's level of interest in diplomacy and problems of international cooperation.

[117] B. Krishna, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India's Iron Man* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 1997), 232.

[118] See P. N. Chopra, ed., *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1990–1999); Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel: A Life* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1991); Krishna, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*; P. U. Patel, *Sardar Patel: India's Man of Destiny* (Bombay: N. K. Bharucha, 1964). The various biographies of Nehru noted earlier often shed considerable light on Patel's life and career as well.

[119] For examples, see Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Patel's Rejoinder to Jinnah Truce Possible by Giving Up Use of Sword," April 4, 1947, and Vallabhbhai Patel, "Princes to Hand Over Power to People: Vallabhbhai," April 15, 1947, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 12, 25 and 43, respectively.

[120] Quoted in Brecher, *Nehru*, 342.

[121] Quoted in ibid., 392.

Patel did, however, share Nehru's passion for forging solidarity among India's diverse populace and winning independence from Britain. Did he also share Nehru's confidence that the Congress Party could accomplish these tasks through persuasion? He does seem to have had considerable faith in Congress's ability to shape opinion within India during the independence struggle. Although not prone to self-aggrandizement, Patel's speeches sometimes betrayed a clear confidence in this regard. While addressing the Congress as president in April 1931, Patel made a revealing remark as he warned the younger members of the party not to be impatient:

> Gandhiji is going to be 63. Now if we old men are not in a hurry, would the young men like you show any haste? We wish to see India free before we quit this world. We are in a greater hurry than you are. You talk of farmers and workers, but I will tell you I have grown old in the service of the *kisans*. Even so I am prepared to compete with you in this task. The type of sacrifices I have been able to persuade the farmers to make will not be matched by what you have been able to achieve.[122]

Patel's remarks were not baseless bravado but instead referred to past accomplishments. Three years earlier, Patel had convinced as many as 87,000 farmers in Bardoli to resist the government's tax increases by refusing payment and locking themselves inside their houses with their livestock.[123] This accomplishment was no mean feat, not only because the farmers had to endure such unsanitary conditions but also because the movement incorporated groups with widely different economic interests.[124] In the end, the authorities opted to lower the tax increase considerably. After Bardoli, the British would dub Patel "the Indian Lenin." His fellow Indians would simply call him "Sardar."

Although Patel's leadership at Bardoli was noteworthy, his most impressive accomplishment was winning the accession of more than 500 princely states to the Indian Union at the time of independence. Of course, he did not simply rely on persuasion in this task. Patel offered some of the princes inducements, including positions in the new government, and promised not to tamper with their hereditary privileges and private fortunes. In difficult cases, he even threatened the princes by refusing to promise Indian neutrality in the event of "disturbances" within their states. Nonetheless, Patel's accomplishment rested on more than force, threats, and bribes. As one biographer records, his "force of personality and persuasive tongue" were integral to the success.[125] Addressing an assembly of princes in April 1947, for example, Patel tried to put accession in a positive light by arguing that they could earn more renown as servants of the new India than by remaining in their "small pits": "Those amongst them who have ability, intelligence, and bravery can take up leadership of the Army.

[122] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Vallabhbhai Reiterates Congress Programme in His Presidential Address at Karachi," April 5, 1931, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 3, 179.

[123] For a summary of the Bardoli satyagraha, see Krishna, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, 107–36.

[124] Gandhi, *Patel*, 153.

[125] Patel, *Sardar Patel*, 187.

They can also enjoy the glory of serving India abroad as our Ambassadors. What for are you rotting in your small pits? Come out into the open ocean of national life."[126]

After securing the accession of the vast majority of the states, Patel did not boast about his accomplishment, but he was obviously cognizant of its import. Shortly afterward, he asked, "Had anyone dreamt a year or two ago that a third of India would be integrated in this fashion?"[127] The moment, in his view, marked the first time in centuries "that India (could) call itself an integrated whole in the real sense of the term."

From the materials available to us, it is difficult to determine just how much of this accomplishment Patel attributed to his own talents and, in particular, to his persuasive abilities. Given the central role that Patel played in this process, it would be surprising if it had not provided a significant boost to his own self-assessment. Yet, as described earlier, Patel used a variety of different tactics in dealing with the princes, of which persuasion was but one. Because this analysis stresses the limitations of Patel's sense of moral efficacy, it would seem most fair-minded here to concede that he well could have derived a considerable amount of confidence in his own powers of persuasion from this historic achievement, notwithstanding the absence of evidence on this point.

Nonetheless, the limits of Patel's confidence in this regard become apparent if one examines his approach to cooperation with Jinnah and the Muslim League. As explained in Chapter 2, individuals with a strong sense of efficacy are more persistent in the face of negative feedback than their less confident counterparts. The degree of persistence displayed by Nehru and Patel in trying to forge a sense of solidarity with Jinnah, despite the Congress Party's numerous failures in this regard, can thus shed some light on their respective senses of moral efficacy. How do the two men compare on this score?

As noted earlier in this chapter, Nehru had continued to try to win over Jinnah well into late 1946. His efforts had helped bring the League into the interim government in October, though their subsequent inability to cooperate had exhausted Nehru's patience by December. In contrast, Patel lost hope much earlier. After his release from jail in June 1945, Patel cautioned Gandhi against holding any talks with Jinnah, believing that the Congress should play "hard to get" instead.[128] A year later, Patel's attitude had gone from tough to unmovable. In May 1946, he told Viceroy Lord Wavell that the Congress and the League would be forced to fight it out eventually.[129] In September of that year, Patel insisted that it was impossible to negotiate with Jinnah.[130] After the Muslim League entered the interim government in October, Patel quickly became exasperated, even as Nehru kept trying to make the coalition

[126] Quoted in Krishna, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, 319.
[127] Quoted in ibid., 443.
[128] Ibid., 217.
[129] Penderel Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 261.
[130] Ibid., 347.

work.[131] As communal violence continued into November, Patel warned the League that "the sword will be met with the sword."[132] In December, Nehru complained to Gandhi that Patel's remarks were inflammatory, a charge Patel angrily rebutted.[133]

In short, although both Nehru and Patel were ultimately exhausted by Jinnah's intransigence, Patel came to see cooperation with the Muslim League as a lost cause well before Nehru did. The pessimism he expressed as early as May 1946 – three months before Direct Action Day – is particularly noteworthy. Notably, Patel's pessimism was not based merely on his estimate of what he personally could accomplish; he was skeptical that the Congress as a whole could convince the Muslim League to cooperate. Of course, given how events turned out, one might argue that Patel was simply more shrewd in judgment – as Patel's supporters often do. Yet Nehru can hardly be accused of seeing Jinnah through rose-colored glasses, particularly after he compared the Muslim League to the Nazis in January 1946. As a result, the most striking aspect of the Congress–League negotiations during this period is not so much Patel's hardheaded approach as Nehru's persistence in attempting to win over a recalcitrant rival.

Patel also seemed to see the struggle against the British differently from Nehru. As noted earlier, Nehru believed that persuasion could play some role in the struggle against the British, although he also saw nonviolent coercion as necessary. Patel, in contrast, gave little indication that he saw the Congress as *persuading* the British in any sense of the word. In one formulation, he argued that India could attain independence through one of three routes: through violence, as a "gift" from Britain, or through civil disobedience.[134] In his view, only the last route offered any hope of success, but his conception of this path seemed to omit any kind of persuasion. In fact, Patel would frequently describe the struggle as a "war," and he often referred to Congress activists as "soldiers" or "an army."[135] In short, Patel's conception of satyagraha seemed to emphasize coercion (albeit of the nonviolent variety) while giving short shrift to persuasion.

If Patel was so preoccupied with pressuring – as opposed to persuading – the British to leave India, why was he so committed to nonviolence? The answer

[131] N. V. Gadgil, *Government From Inside* (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1968), 18.

[132] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Patel Reiterates Conditions for League Joining Interim Government," November 25, 1946, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 10, 291. See also Gandhi, *Patel*, 383.

[133] Mohandas Gandhi, "Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel," December 30, 1946, in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1988), vol. 86, 288–89. For Patel's reply, see Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Patel to Gandhiji on Nehru's Threats to Relinquish Office," January 7, 1947, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 12, 4–5.

[134] Krishna, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, 91.

[135] For examples, see Vallabhbhai Patel, "Vallabhbhai Appeals to Marwaris to Donate Liberally for Success of Satyagraha," July 22, 1923, and Vallabhbhai Patel, "Non-Violent Non-Cooperation Only Alternative to Wrest Swaraj," September 1929, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 1, 196 and vol. 2, 358, respectively.

lies in the fact that he saw no viable military option in the face of British power. As discussed later, he doubted the ability of India's farmers and political activists to mount a serious armed struggle against the Raj. Of course, Nehru had also doubted the Congress Party's ability to challenge the Raj militarily, and he had supported nonviolent struggle accordingly. Yet Nehru had an additional reason to buy into nonviolence, namely his belief that violence would undermine efforts to change British opinion. Patel did not seem to focus on this latter point.

In sum, unlike Nehru, Patel did not develop a strong sense of moral efficacy in the Indian independence struggle. This finding accords with the different experiences that Patel and Nehru had in coming to power. Whereas Patel's work was largely confined to South Asia, Nehru had become the Congress's unofficial spokesman on foreign affairs. Indeed, when Gandhi intervened to ensure Nehru was chosen over Patel as Congress president in May 1946, he cited Nehru's greater international experience to justify the choice: "Jawaharlal cannot be replaced today, whilst the charge is being taken from Englishmen. He, a Harrow boy, a Cambridge graduate and a barrister, is wanted to carry on negotiations with the Englishmen."[136] In addition, it is not too surprising that Patel's level of confidence in persuasion did not approach that of Nehru. During the campaigning in 1936–1937, while Nehru was winning the support of South Asians of every variety, Patel was occupied with selecting and managing the Congress's candidates. To be sure, Patel campaigned for the party as well, but he did not approach Nehru's level of exertion and accomplishment in this regard. More generally, Patel did not interpret the successful conclusion of the independence struggle as evidence of the Congress's ability to shape Indian and world opinion. Instead, speaking in April 1947, he stressed Britain's weakness in the aftermath of World War II:

> Now they are ready to go, but it cannot be said that we have driven them out. The atmosphere in the world is such that they are forced to go. In world war they were victorious. [But] England also had to suffer many hardships and at last it thought that if it has to survive it should untie the knots of empire.[137]

Patel repeated this point of view subsequently, if a bit more vaguely, noting that "some will say that because of their efforts [India] has become free, but the world situation is such that Britishers have to grant us freedom."[138] Whatever the merits of this view, it was not shared by Nehru, who believed that World War II had actually served to extend British rule, as noted earlier. This is not to suggest that Patel was not fiercely proud of the Congress Party's protracted struggle against the Raj and all that had been accomplished along the way.

[136] Quoted in Dinanath Gopal Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi* (Bombay: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1951), vol. 8, 3.

[137] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Princes to Hand Over Power to People: Vallabhbhai," in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 12, 42.

[138] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Patel Urges Gujaratis in Delhi to Work for Welfare of People of Delhi," May 14, 1947, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 12, 94.

Yet, given the way in which he interpreted the struggle's final outcome, it is hard to see how Patel could have derived a great sense of moral efficacy from it.

Lastly, it is also important to note that Patel did not receive the same kind of support from Gandhi that Nehru did. Of course, Patel and Gandhi were very close, to the extent that Patel became known as Gandhi's "blind follower" in the 1920s. On several occasions starting in 1929, however, Gandhi intervened to help Nehru become president of the Congress Party. These interventions were often at Patel's expense, notwithstanding his seniority over Nehru. Gandhi also made it clear that Nehru would inherit his mantle and "speak his language" after he was gone, as noted earlier. When Nehru complained to Gandhi about Patel's "inflammatory" rhetoric against the Muslim League in late 1946, Gandhi passed the complaints on to Patel and expressed his own concerns. Finally, shortly before Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948, he met with Patel for the last time and urged him never to split with Nehru, notwithstanding their differences.[139] It seems unlikely, then, that Patel would have drawn the kind of inspiration from his relationship with Gandhi that Nehru did.

More Martial Materialism

Given his organizational talents, as well as his tough and decisive manner, Patel might have developed a strong sense of martial efficacy had he come to power in another fashion. Given the nonviolent nature of the Indian independence struggle, however, Patel devoted very little attention to military matters before 1947. In fact, simply by virtue of his more voluminous writings, Nehru actually seems to have given more thought to military questions than Patel did. Even so, Patel's speeches and writings make it clear that he thought carefully about the feasibility of military action against the Raj, as well as the question of communal violence within India. In addition, he sometimes speculated about the armed forces that India would need once it became independent. As argued in the discussion that follows, these limited excursions into the military sphere make it clear that Patel had no special confidence in this arena.

To begin, it is quite clear that Patel had strong doubts about India's ability to mount any kind of military challenge against the British. For Patel, it was a "physical impossibility" for India to win its independence through armed revolt.[140] This was simply a matter of India's lack of material power. Whereas other countries had "got their independence by using cannons and guns," as he put it, "we have no such weapons."[141] As a result, nonviolent resistance to the Raj was the only option available. In Patel's words, the Congress's approach

[139] Brecher, *Nehru*, 384–85.

[140] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Non-violent Non-cooperation Only Alternative to Wrest Swaraj," in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 2, 358.

[141] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Patel Exhorts People of Bharuch to Be Ready to Make Sacrifices to Win Swaraj by Non-violent Method," February 13, 1940, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 8, 225–26.

was "the nonviolence of the weak."[142] Patel remained pessimistic about using force even when Britain was relatively vulnerable. After the outbreak of World War II, for example, Patel disparaged the idea that the Congress could exploit the opportunity to launch an armed rebellion, even though it controlled the ministries of several Indian provinces.[143]

Like Nehru, Patel did not oppose the use of force against the British because he believed it would be immoral. On the contrary, Patel was quite willing to endorse violence in defense of Congress's or Indian interests. In response to the communal violence of 1946, Patel urged his followers to defend themselves by any means necessary, particularly when police protection was not available. "If anybody comes to hit you," he told his followers, "you have got every right to hit back."[144] Around the same time, Patel had also warned the Muslim League that "the sword will be met with the sword," as noted earlier. More generally, Patel agreed that the doctrine of nonviolence would not be applied to independent India's foreign policy, and he affirmed that India would require an army to defend itself.[145] In his view, Gandhi's doctrine applied "in a limited field" and could not be applied to external defense or internal disorder.[146]

If Patel saw a national military as necessary, how proficient did he expect India's armed forces to be? Although Patel did not seem to devote too much thought to this question, the few comments that he did make suggest a fairly weak sense of martial capability. Addressing the Karachi Congress as president in 1931, for example, Patel argued that India would need military assistance before it could aspire to full independence:

> The way India has been exploited during the last two centuries has placed her in a position where she would need outside help in many matters. That help we will get from Britain, provided she means well by us. For example, we would need persons with military knowledge, and there would not be any difficulty in getting that help from Britain. . . . Assurances with regard to the army mean that some British officers can be allowed to remain or some British forces can remain in India for the good of the country.[147]

[142] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Patel on His Differences with Gandhiji on Practice of Following Non-violence," March 19, 1940, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, 233.

[143] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Patel Deprecates Those Who Wanted to Use Violence to Free the Country," September 9, 1939, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, 152–53.

[144] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Patel Urges People to End Fratricidal Fight to Gain Political Objectives," December 2, 1946, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 10, 302.

[145] For example, see Vallabhbhai Patel, "Constituent Assembly to Be Final Authority Regarding Union Army, etc.," June 1, 1946, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 10, 235.

[146] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Patel Reaffirms Faith in Non-violence in a Limited Field but not to Meet Internal or External Aggression," July 20, 1940, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 9, 7.

[147] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Vallabhbhai Reiterates Congress Programme in His Presidential Address at Karachi," in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 3, 173–74.

In light of Patel's fervent nationalism, his willingness to prolong India's period of tutelage under Britain for the sake of national security is remarkable. Patel no doubt would have preferred a more rapid British exit, but he clearly lacked confidence in India's ability to defend itself under such circumstances. There was thus no choice but to ask the power that had run India's military to transfer some of its expertise on its way out the door.

In fact, Patel saw the Indian people as so reliant on outsiders for their security that he worried they could not even defend themselves against looters during the chaotic wartime years. As he warned an audience in his home province of Gujarat in March 1942: "It is possible that in such difficult times some people might take to looting. . . . Now Nepali [watchmen] and such outsiders do the work of protecting you, because if you appoint [watchmen] they will loot you. So try to learn to defend yourselves."[148] Of course, despite his worries about his fellow Gujaratis, Patel was aware that some Indians had served under the British flag quite effectively. Yet rather than being proud of this fact, he lamented the purposes to which they were put. As he argued shortly after World War II, "Gurkhas and other army regiments are used for snatching the independence of other countries and we are put to shame."[149] If Patel harbored any pride in the quality of the soldiers with which India had furnished the British Empire, he does not seem to have shown it.

To be sure, Patel was fond of using the imagery of war in the context of the independence struggle, as noted previously. Yet he was under no illusion that the campaigns he was overseeing compared with actual military conflict. If nothing else, his suggestion that India would need military assistance from the British before it could become fully independent makes this clear. There is additional evidence on this point as well. While addressing satyagraha activists in Maharashtra in May 1940, Patel stressed the differences between their "war" and the real thing. "Inaugurating a satyagraha camp does not mean preparation for a [violent] struggle," he observed, "because a non-violent struggle does not need such preparation as a violent struggle does."[150] In short, although Patel was prone to speaking in martial metaphors, he remained cognizant of the difference between nonviolent resistance and the prosecution of actual armed conflict.

In sum, Patel's sense of martial efficacy was no stronger than that possessed by Nehru. This finding comes as no great surprise in light of Patel's background. Like Nehru, he had no military experience of any kind before taking power in 1947. The closest exception to this rather categorical statement would seem to be his service as home minister in the interim government. Even here, however, Patel was in no position to oversee military matters, which remained under the control of the viceroy. Nor did he exhibit a great interest in military history, as

[148] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Feels People's Unity Is the Greatest Weapon against British Oppression," March 9, 1942, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 9, 107.

[149] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Sardar Patel's Call to Europeans to Quit Asia," October 21, 1945, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 10, 105.

[150] Vallabhbhai Patel, "Ahimsa Would Ultimately Be the Only Way of Lasting Benefit to World," May 17, 1940, in Chopra, *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, vol. 9, 2.

noted earlier. As a result, although there is no doubt that Patel emerged from the independence struggle a tough and tested politician, he did not have much chance to develop any special confidence in the military arena.

Nehru and Patel took power in August 1947 with different senses of what independent India would be able to accomplish in foreign affairs. Whereas Nehru saw India as a force for normative change in the international system, Patel's perceptions on this score were more modest. At the same time, neither man possessed a strong sense of martial efficacy. The next chapter explores how these differing senses of moral efficacy, and similar senses of martial efficacy, informed the approaches that Nehru and Patel favored after war broke out in Kashmir in October 1947.

8

Determined Diplomacy

> If we have attained some respect in the eyes of other countries in the world, it is because we have spoken with some sense of responsibility, with some sense of, not condemning but, trying to win over the other people.
>
> Jawaharlal Nehru, May 1957

The preceding chapter explored how Nehru's strong sense of moral efficacy, and limited sense of martial efficacy, shaped India's response to the first war over Kashmir. In keeping with Nehru's beliefs, India's approach was marked by an ambitious diplomatic strategy and relative restraint on the military side. Yet it remains to be seen how well this pattern of policy was sustained subsequently. Did Nehru continue to cooperate proactively, notwithstanding the difficulties India had before the UN Security Council in 1948? And did he continue to shy away from daunting military challenges?

There is no question that Nehru remained intensely interested in diplomacy as a tool of statecraft following the Kashmir conflict. Under Nehru's lead, India was actively involved in efforts to restore peace to the Korean Peninsula in 1953 and to defuse the Indochina crisis in 1954. Although these peacemaking efforts did not entail costly gestures on India's part, other initiatives did. Nehru's espousal of nonalignment, for example, was an act of political restraint that sought to inspire comparable restraint on the part of other states. This high-profile campaign against the Cold War alliance system, in turn, came with a price: it complicated New Delhi's relations with Washington in the 1950s, particularly as the latter worked to develop a network of alliances in Asia.[1] Nehru's boldest diplomatic effort, however, was his campaign for nuclear disarmament. Unlike Mao, Nehru did not simply call for the superpowers to disarm while quietly developing his own country's nuclear weaponry. Instead, the Indian prime minister constrained his own country's nuclear program both unilaterally and multilaterally in an effort to elicit comparable restraint from

[1] Kux, *India and the United States*, 128–31.

other states. In doing so, he could not have known whether India's restraint would be emulated or exploited.

On the military side, Nehru sought to steer a conservative course following the war in Kashmir, and he succeeded in this endeavor for more than a decade. This was far from easy. He came under great pressure to take military action against Pakistan during the crisis over Bengal in 1950, during which hundreds of thousands of Hindu refugees fled East Pakistan for India. The following year, Pakistani troop movements in Kashmir created another crisis, prompting Nehru to move India's armored division to the Punjab border. In the end, however, India managed to resolve both of these confrontations through diplomacy. Similarly, when the United States allied with Pakistan in the mid-1950s, Nehru did not protest by escalating tensions in Kashmir but through diplomatic channels. Stressing peace over military assertiveness, Nehru avoided military action that would have put India at odds with Britain and the United States once again.[2]

Nehru sought to take a similarly restrained approach toward China. Although the Chinese communists were initially quite unfriendly to India, the Indian prime minister adopted a conciliatory approach and worked hard to win over China's new rulers following the revolution. For a time, these efforts overcame tensions stemming from India's ties to the West and China's forceful assertion of its authority in Tibet. Even after a dispute emerged over the border in the late 1950s, Nehru sought to avoid military conflict with China. The "forward policy," under which Indian troops were deployed in contested areas, did not entail attacking Chinese forces but rather staking out positions that would help India to press its territorial claims. In September 1962, however, the Indian prime minister did approve an order to evict Chinese forces from a disputed locale in the eastern sector of the border, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Although Nehru did not expect war to break out, this optimistic outlook would be shattered the following month.

Generally speaking, then, Indian foreign policy between 1948 and 1964 was congruent with Nehru's sense of national efficacy. India continued to assert itself in the diplomatic sphere, cooperating proactively in an effort to elicit cooperation from others. On the military side, Nehru did sanction limited military action against Chinese forces in 1962, a surprising finding in light of his limited martial confidence. Nonetheless, this decision stands out against a larger pattern of restraint vis-à-vis both Pakistan and China. Indeed, Nehru had ample opportunity to challenge India's neighbors on several earlier occasions, as noted earlier, but he chose not to do so.

What role did Nehru's national efficacy beliefs play in generating this pattern of diplomatic boldness and military restraint? Because space does not permit

[2] Note that the ICB database did not include the Indo-Pak crisis over Bengal in 1950 at the time that this book was written. For a sense of how close India and Pakistan came to war at that moment, as well as Nehru's role in averting such a conflict, see Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2, 82–89.

us to scrutinize all of these decisions in detail, this chapter focuses on two key policy arenas in particular. On the diplomatic side, it considers Nehru's campaign for nuclear disarmament. As noted earlier, this was Nehru's boldest diplomatic initiative, one that had substantial implications for India's own security. Drawing on archival materials from India, Britain, and the United States, the first half of this chapter shows how Nehru's strong moral efficacy beliefs underpinned his proactive diplomacy in the nuclear sphere. On the military side, the chapter focuses on the evolution of Nehru's approach to China and, in particular, on his efforts to secure India's interests in Tibet and on the Sino-Indian border. The discussion here begins by exploring how Nehru initially approached this challenge. It documents Nehru's caution in this regard and shows how his weak martial efficacy beliefs informed this approach. It then considers India's approach to the border dispute in the early 1960s. The goal here is not to chronicle or explain the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations in Nehru's later years, which would require more space and analysis of both countries' policies. Instead, it is simply to explore the one case in which Nehru endorsed military action against a stronger state.

NEHRU'S NUCLEAR CRUSADE

In retrospect, Nehru's dedication to the cause of nuclear disarmament is one of the most striking features of his foreign policy. The Indian leader spoke passionately and thoughtfully in favor of disarmament not only before the Indian parliament but also at the United Nations and in private meetings with U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, and British prime minister Harold MacMillan.[3] As Kanti Bajpai has written, "Nehru's approach [to disarmament], looked at from where we are now, appears more sophisticated, more original, more flexible, more practical, and more ambitious at the same time than anything that India or most countries in the world are prepared to essay."[4] While making the case against nuclear weaponry, Nehru invoked both the possibility of international cooperation and the threat of global conflagration. As he told his audience at the United Nations in 1960: "[I]f within the next three or four years, effective disarmament is not agreed to and implemented, then all the goodness in the world will not be able to stop the drift to certain disaster."[5] Nonetheless, Nehru's nuclear diplomacy was not simply an idealistic campaign to save the world from itself. It was also fully consistent with a realpolitik sense of India's own interests. Although India did

[3] At the United Nations, see Jawaharlal Nehru, "Problems of Peace," October 3, 1960, in *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946–April 1961* (Delhi: Government of India Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Publications Division, 1961), 216–25. On his meetings with world leaders, see Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, 75, 186–87; George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 51.

[4] Kanti Bajpai, "Nehru and Disarmament," in Kamath, *Nehru Revisited*, 354.

[5] Nehru, "Problems of Peace," 219.

have its own nuclear energy program, it was hardly in a position to keep up with the superpower arms race. It thus made eminent sense to slow it down if at all possible. In addition, Nehru became concerned about China's nuclear trajectory in the early 1960s and sought to constrain the PRC's program, as will be described later. In Nehru's view, nuclear restraint was not only good for the world but good for India as well.

Although Nehru's passion for nuclear disarmament reflected both global concerns and a sense of India's own interests, the question remained as to how boldly India should pursue this goal. The first section of this chapter makes it clear that Nehru acted with considerable daring, restraining India's own nuclear program both unilaterally and multilaterally as he sought to elicit restraint from other states. The second section then considers how Nehru's strong sense of moral efficacy inspired India's approach by exploring his own policy preferences and outcome expectations with the help of new archival materials. The discussion concludes by considering alternative explanations for India's nuclear diplomacy under Nehru.

Creating – and Constraining – India's Nuclear Option

Nehru took office intensely enthusiastic about the promise of nuclear energy. As George Perkovich has written, the Indian prime minister believed that nuclear energy offered India "a shortcut to modernity and major power status." To exploit this opportunity, India created its own Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in August 1948 and its Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) in 1954. The latter fell under the direct charge of the prime minister, in keeping with Nehru's interest in the nuclear program. Outlays for nuclear research subsequently increased 12-fold between 1954 and 1956. By the late 1950s, the AEC was receiving more than 27 percent of all government investment in research and development, and India had more than a thousand nuclear scientists and engineers working in the program.[6]

To oversee India's nuclear efforts, Nehru relied on the physicist Homi Bhaba. As the dominant personality in the AEC, and later secretary of the DAE, Bhaba answered only to the prime minister. The two men were well matched: both were Cambridge educated, highly cosmopolitan, and convinced that nuclear technology held the key to India's future.[7] Together, Nehru and Bhaba directed the Indian nuclear program with very little external oversight and considerable

[6] For the quotation, see Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 59. For recent overviews of Nehru's approach to nuclear technology, see Itty Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State* (London: Zed Books, 1998), 34–112; Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest to Be a Nuclear Power* (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2000), 59–92; Bharat Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security: The Realist Foundations of Strategy* (Delhi: MacMillan India, 2002), 163–280; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 13–59. For the figures in this paragraph, see Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 33.

[7] In fact, Bhaba would refer to Nehru as "bhai" (brother) in their correspondence, while Nehru referred to Bhaba as "My dear Homi." On their close relationship, see Chengappa, *Weapons of*

ambition. Initially conceived in 1954 and formally adopted in 1958, Bhaba's plan for the program envisioned three stages. India would first construct natural uranium-fueled reactors with help from Canada. These would produce electric power, with plutonium as a by-product. Second, India would construct reactors fueled by the recaptured plutonium and thorium, which was plentiful in India. These second-stage reactors would produce uranium-233 as a by-product, which would then be used to fuel the third-stage breeder reactors. Progress on this plan began in 1955, when India and Canada reached an agreement on the construction of the Canada–India Reactor, US (CIRUS). Unlike Apsara, India's one-megawatt research reactor completed in 1956, the 40-megawatt CIRUS would generate appreciable quantities of power and plutonium.[8]

Nehru understood that India's investments in nuclear energy would create new military options for his country. Although he repeatedly denied any interest in developing nuclear weapons (though sometimes with apparent caveats), the progress of the nuclear energy program nonetheless had brought India to the edge of weapons-making capability by the early 1960s.[9] The CIRUS reactor went critical in July 1960, using indigenously produced fuel rods, and it was running at full power by October 1963. Meanwhile, the construction of India's first plutonium reprocessing plant had begun in 1961 at Trombay. By January 1961, Nehru claimed that India would be capable of manufacturing nuclear weapons "within the next two or three years," even as he disavowed any interest in doing so.[10]

Nehru's evident attention to India's military options in the early 1960s is not surprising. Not only had the superpowers massively increased their nuclear capabilities over the preceding decade, but China's interest in nuclear weaponry was increasingly apparent as well. In fact, as early as 1960, Indian diplomats were worrying that China might test an atomic bomb in the next few years.[11] For his part, Nehru apparently told Bhaba in August 1961 to take "precautionary measures" in light of China's evident interest in the bomb. It remains unclear what Nehru meant by this, but he reportedly allowed Bhaba to conduct theoretical studies of the physics of nuclear explosions starting in January 1962.[12] Later that year, while China and India were at war on the border, Bhaba told Nehru that a Chinese nuclear test was only 12 to 18 months away.[13] In July

Peace, 73; Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security*, 183–85; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 21.

8 Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 26–27.

9 On the caveats, see ibid., 34–35.

10 For the quotation, see G. G. Mirchandani, *India's Nuclear Dilemma* (New Delhi: Popular Book Services, 1968), 235. On the progress of India's program at this time more generally, see Abraham, *Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb*, 120–24; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 34–39.

11 "Possibility of China Exploding Atom Bombs," National Archives of India (New Delhi), Ministry of External Affairs 1960, File no. 9(1) EAD/60.

12 For the preceding quotation and Bhaba's theoretical studies, see Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, 85–86.

13 Ibid., 88.

1963, Nehru told the UK high commissioner, Sir Paul Gore-Booth, that he was expecting a PRC test in Xinjiang.[14] In March 1964, Nehru told R. K. Karanjia that "our information is that the Chinese might test a nuclear device any time now."[15]

Despite the emerging nuclear threat from China in the early 1960s, and despite India's own advances in nuclear technology, Nehru did not launch a weapons program during his final years in office. Instead, he made a bold effort to improve India's security through diplomacy. This entailed decisions on both the domestic and international fronts. On the domestic front, he ensured that India would retain its credibility as an advocate of disarmament by insisting that the nuclear program remain peaceful. Bhaba had privately expressed interest in nuclear weapons starting in the late 1950s, and shortly after the war with China he sought Nehru's permission to prepare for a test.[16] In response, Nehru firmly rejected Bhaba's request and made it clear that he did not wish to pursue nuclear weapons.[17] Soon thereafter, Nehru was publicly pressed by the Jan Sangh, an opposition party, to review the government's "no bomb" policy, but again he rejected the suggestion.[18] As he told Parliament: "How can we, without showing the utter insincerity of what we have always said, go in for doing the very thing which we have repeatedly asked the other powers not to do?"[19]

On the international front, Nehru pressed ahead with diplomatic efforts to rein in the nuclear arms race. In 1954, he had become the first world leader to call for a moratorium on nuclear testing, appealing for a "standstill agreement" on such tests after the U.S. detonation at Bikini Atoll.[20] In the late 1950s, the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union began negotiations toward an actual test ban treaty, but by 1961 the talks had essentially broken down.[21] When talks resumed in the United Nations' Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) in 1962, India joined the committee and worked hard to ensure that the talks accomplished as much as possible. After the United States

[14] Sir Paul Gore-Booth to Commonwealth Relations Office, July 22, 1963, U.K. National Archives, File no. DO 196/210.

[15] R. K. Karanjia, ed., *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru: As Revealed in a Series of Intimate Talks with R. K. Karanjia* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), 161.

[16] Abraham, *Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb*, 114; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 33, 35.

[17] Author's interview with M. K. Rasgotra, New Delhi, January 30, 2004. Bhaba related this information to Rasgotra at a private dinner shortly after the 1962 war. At the time, Rasgotra was an Indian diplomat working on Sino-Indian relations in the Ministry of External Affairs. Rasgotra related the same information to Raj Chengappa. See Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, 88–89.

[18] Shyam Bhatia, *India's Nuclear Bomb* (Sahibabad: Vikas Publishing House, 1979), 108–9; Mirchandani, *India's Nuclear Dilemma*, 239.

[19] Quoted in Bhabani Sen Gupta, "India and Disarmament," in *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years*, ed. B. R. Nanda (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 250.

[20] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Statement Made by the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in Lok Sabha on 2 April 1954 on Hydrogen Bomb," in *Documents on India's Nuclear Disarmament Policy*, ed. Gopal Singh and S. K. Sharma (New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, 2000), vol. 1, 23–27.

[21] On the course of the negotiations, see April Carter, *Success and Failure in Arms Control Negotiations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 42–78.

and Britain had proposed a partial test ban in September 1961, India continued to press for a treaty that would forbid tests of any kind.[22] Subsequently, when the Brazilian delegate to the ENDC put forward the idea of a partial test ban in July 1962, India neither supported nor opposed the proposal.[23] In the end, after it became clear that a comprehensive ban was out of reach, India supported the partial ban proposal enthusiastically. On August 5, 1963, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Britain signed the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) in Moscow. The day the accord was reached, Nehru hailed it as "a watershed" that would "take the world toward disarmament and peace," and the Indian government signed it immediately.[24]

Nehru supported the PTBT even though it constrained India disproportionately. On the one hand, it did not significantly constrain India's actual or potential rivals in the nuclear sphere. China had made it clear well in advance that it would not be bound by any test ban treaty negotiated in its absence. True to its word, the PRC rejected the treaty without hesitation and conducted its first nuclear test in the atmosphere in October 1964. Nor did the PTBT significantly constrain the superpowers. Both the United States and the Soviet Union had conducted underground nuclear tests before signing the treaty, and President John F. Kennedy had even stated that the United States would maintain "an active development program" in the future.[25] Although the treaty's preamble made vague references to further cooperation toward the goal of disarmament, this was obviously not a binding commitment. In short, as far as securing India's security interests was concerned, the PTBT was essentially toothless.

In contrast, signing the PTBT was not a costless gesture for India. To be sure, India retained the option of testing underground, as it eventually did in 1974. In the early 1960s, however, the Indian government did not know how feasible underground testing would be. In general, the PTBT was not seen as totally precluding a nuclear test on India's part, but neither was it dismissed as an insignificant constraint. As one Indian nuclear scientist recalled, "[O]pinion was rather divided because we did not have much information on whether an underground explosion could be contained."[26] In addition, because underground tests require a testing site with a large shaft bored into the ground, the preparations for such explosions would be more difficult to conceal. Subsequently, in 1982 and 1995, the United States pressured India not to conduct nuclear explosions after detecting preparations at the Pokhran

[22] Arthur S. Lall, *Negotiating Disarmament: The Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference*, Cornell Research Papers in International Studies, no. 2 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Center for International Studies, Cornell University, 1964), 20–21.

[23] Gupta, "India and Disarmament," 246n33.

[24] Quoted in Mirchandani, *India's Nuclear Dilemma*, 240.

[25] Quoted in Gupta, "India and Disarmament," 248.

[26] Author's interview with P. K. Iyengar, Mumbai, January 5, 2005. Iyengar began working in the Indian nuclear program in the 1950s and later served as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission from 1990 to 1993.

test site.[27] Most important of all, India's negotiating record makes it clear that Nehru actually sought a treaty that did not allow tests *of any kind*. It is thus difficult to argue that he agreed to sign the treaty only because it allowed underground testing. Nehru was prepared – even eager – to sign a treaty that barred India from conducting any kind of nuclear test, regardless of China's stance, but he was never given the opportunity.

In sum, Nehru's nuclear diplomacy was a strikingly bold effort to elicit international cooperation. Although he strongly supported the development of India's nuclear energy program and understood that this program created new military options for his country, he refused to pursue this option, even as China progressed toward the bomb. Instead, Nehru invested in a diplomatic solution to India's nuclear security challenge, supporting international initiatives in the disarmament sphere even when this imposed disproportionate costs on his country. In the next section, I assess the role that Nehru's sense of moral efficacy played in inspiring this boldly cooperative approach.

Moral Efficacy and Nehru's Nuclear Crusade

Why did Nehru constrain India's nuclear program even as the superpowers and China raced ahead with nuclear armament? If Nehru's sense of moral efficacy influenced his approach, we should find that he sincerely supported the cooperative gestures that India made under his lead. In addition, we should find that Nehru's sense of moral efficacy helped inspire this preference by shaping the kinds of outcomes that he believed would flow from these gestures. The following discussion considers each of these questions in turn.

On the first point, it is abundantly clear that Nehru sincerely supported India's cooperative approach. Indeed, the preceding discussion has already shown that Nehru was central to this effort. It was Nehru who rejected suggestions that India launch a weapons program in the early 1960s, even after the war with China. And it was Nehru who proposed the idea of international restrictions on nuclear testing, who favored a comprehensive test ban treaty, and who supported and celebrated the PTBT when a comprehensive ban proved unobtainable. To be sure, it has been argued that for most of his time in office Nehru actually sought to develop nuclear weapons, only to lose his "conviction" or "nerve" at the end.[28] Nonetheless, Nehru's private correspondence with Bhaba – who knew the prime minister's mind on nuclear matters better than anyone – makes it clear that Nehru sincerely hoped for nuclear restraint well before his final years in office. On August 24, 1955, for example, Bhaba wrote Nehru from Geneva, where he had chaired the first UN conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy: "One should take the opportunity of this excellent atmosphere to push forward with an enlarging of the areas of cooperation in this field, from which it may be possible in due course to pass gradually to

[27] Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, 256–57, 394–95.
[28] Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security*, 281.

a solution of the tougher problem of atomic armament."[29] Had Bhaba known that Nehru was not seriously interested in disarmament, why would he have bothered to express hope for "a solution" to the nuclear arms race in a private letter to him? Subsequently, in 1956, Nehru wrote to Bhaba following the publication of *Nuclear Explosions and Their Effects*, a report prepared by the Indian government that highlighted the dangers of nuclear testing and nuclear war. "I am sure that the publication of such a volume will be good," Nehru wrote, "and will be an important step towards educating not only the public, but various governments."[30] Again, why should Nehru pretend to be interested in combating the nuclear arms race in private? Admittedly, Bhaba later seemed more interested in making an Indian bomb than in promoting disarmament, but that is no reason to assume that Nehru shared this view. On the contrary, their disagreement over nuclear testing in late 1962 indicates that the two men came to have different perspectives on the best way forward for India.

Nehru's preference for cooperative gestures, in turn, reflected a conviction that progress toward nuclear disarmament was possible – and that India could lead the way toward it. Let us first consider Nehru's optimism in the first regard. Nehru saw the test ban idea not as an end in itself but as a stepping stone to broader forms of nuclear restraint. Having proposed the idea in 1954, he was encouraged when the superpowers took it up later in the decade and moved toward an agreement in the early 1960s. On August 28, 1961, Nehru's foreign secretary, M. J. Desai, wrote the prime minister about test ban discussions. Desai ended his note with the following observation: "The conclusion of a test ban treaty will also open up possibilities for purposeful discussions on the question of total disarmament." Nehru wrote back the same day, signaling his agreement with Desai's conclusion.[31] That same month, Nehru even seemed to suggest that this process might constrain China. Speaking before Parliament, he referred obliquely – but unmistakably – to China's nuclear program as necessitating progress toward a test ban and disarmament more generally:

> It is obvious that in the course of a few years, maybe two, three or four years more, many more countries are likely to have [nuclear weapons] and if there is no check on their production and manufacture now, then it will become impossible at a later stage to put any check on them, when many countries have them. . . . Therefore, it is of utmost importance that [the established nuclear powers] should try to arrive at a settlement in regard to these nuclear tests and, of course, in regard to general disarmament.[32]

[29] Bhaba's letter was later published in *Nuclear India*, vol. 26, no. 10 (1989), 10. I accessed this issue in the papers of Homi Bhaba (Accession no. 1389) at the Nehru Memorial Library in New Delhi.

[30] Jawaharlal Nehru to Homi Bhaba, May 18, 1956, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 33, 152.

[31] For both notes, see M. J. Desai to Jawaharlal Nehru, August 28, 1961, National Archives of India, Ministry of External Affairs Transfer File no. 73 (92) AMS/61.

[32] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's Statement in Lok Sabha on 16 August 1961 on Disarmament (Extracts)," in Singh and Sharma, *Documents on India's Nuclear Disarmament Policy*, 368–69.

On a visit to the United States in November 1961, Nehru continued to press not just for a test ban but also progress beyond this benchmark, while recognizing that disarmament would not happen overnight.[33]

After the test ban treaty was concluded, Nehru praised it as an important first step toward disarmament. Celebrating India's Independence Day on August 15, 1963, Nehru expressed hope that "further progress will continue to be made and the world [will] be rid of the nuclear danger."[34] In October 1963, India sent a memo to the secretary-general of the United Nations calling for action to prevent nuclear proliferation. The PTBT was a "landmark" step in this regard, but it did not address "the manufacture, acquisition, receipt, or transference" of nuclear weapons. A treaty addressing these issues was now "the next logical step."[35] No doubt India's immediate concern was China, but such a treaty would also have implications that went well beyond Sino-Indian relations. In November, Nehru wrote to President Kennedy, suggesting that the PTBT was both a means of exploiting Sino-Soviet differences and an important step toward disarmament:

> The growing Sino-Soviet differences during the last few years, which have come out in the open in such a dramatic manner in the last few months, present an extremely important development requiring adjustment in our thinking. We feel that the limited rapprochement between your great country and the USSR, evidenced by the Partial Test Ban Treaty, is a very good beginning. If that new developing situation is carefully handled, there are possibilities of reaching satisfactory agreements on other questions connected with disarmament which have a vital bearing on the important issue before the world today, viz., the issue of war or peace.[36]

For Nehru, then, the PTBT was not merely an end in itself but the start of something much greater.

Nehru's sense of opportunity here was not simply diffuse optimism. Instead, imbued with a strong sense of India's moral efficacy, he believed that his country would play a vital role in leading the world toward disarmament.[37] Nehru's general sense of India's moral authority in world affairs had risen substantially – from a considerable base – after he took office. As early as July 1950, he had argued that, "[W]e force people and countries to think a little more clearly

[33] For example, see Jawaharlal Nehru, "Remarks before Collegiate Council for the United Nations," November 12, 1961, National Archives of India (New Delhi), Ministry of External Affairs Transfer File no. 52 (13) AMS/61 (KW).

[34] Jawaharlal Nehru, "One Nation," August 15, 1963, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1968), vol. 5, 4.

[35] *Disarmament: India's Initiatives* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1988), 26–28. See also John Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 317.

[36] Jawaharlal Nehru to John F. Kennedy, November 11, 1963, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, President's Office Files, Box 118a, Folder 9 (India Security 1963).

[37] For a similar argument, see Bajpai, "Nehru and Disarmament," 365–66.

than they might otherwise do."[38] Following the end of the Korean War, he claimed that "the whole armistice and truce was, to some extent, brought about by the efforts of India."[39] Similarly, the Geneva Conference in 1954 was "much influenced by India."[40] As a result, "a world war has been averted, partly at least, because of India's policy and her influence." Although Nehru did not want to "shout about this," he was convinced that India had "played a very important role in this matter." If Nehru had become discouraged about India's diplomatic prowess during the war over Kashmir, his confidence had now returned.

Nehru's strong sense of moral efficacy, in turn, informed his belief that India could promote nuclear restraint. When debating a resolution on nuclear explosions in May 1957, for example, Nehru stressed to his colleagues that the goal was not to condemn other governments but to win them over, as only India could:

> If we have attained some respect in the eyes of other countries in the world, it is because we have spoken with some sense of responsibility, with some sense of, not condemning but, trying to win over the other people. . . .
>
> The moment you enter that sphere of strong language and condemnation, you cease to have any real effect. . . . And the approach to reason, the calm approach to the reason or to the emotions of the other party, is lost. Of course, if I may say so, not that I pretend to act up to it, but it may be said to be, to a small extent, the Gandhian approach. I do not presume to be capable or to be worthy of following Gandhiji in his policy entirely. But anyhow we have all learnt something from him.[41]

When the debate continued two days later, Nehru once again emphasized India's unique ability to advance disarmament, as well as the relevance of the experience gained in the independence struggle. "More especially in the last 30 years or more," he observed, "we have been conditioned in thinking a little more in terms of peaceful action than other countries have been."[42] In 1960, when Nehru perceived signs of real interest in disarmament in Soviet proposals, he pointed to India's role in planting the seed:

> India has, in the past, taken great interest in disarmament and we have not only participated in the debates in the U.N., but have put forward a number of proposals. As with many others, our proposals met with a cold reception. *It is interesting to find, however,*

[38] G. Parthasarathi, ed., *Jawaharlal Nehru: Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947–1964* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), vol. 2, 144.

[39] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Issues in Foreign Policy," March 23, 1954, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 25, 383.

[40] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Virtue of India's Policy," June 23, 1954, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 26, 309.

[41] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Statement Made by the Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru in the Lok Sabha on 22 May 1957 on Nuclear Explosions Resolution," in Singh and Sharma, *Documents on India's Nuclear Disarmament Policy*, 91–92.

[42] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Statement Made by the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on 24 May 1957 on Nuclear Explosions Resolution," in Singh and Sharma, *Documents on India's Nuclear Disarmament Policy*, 96.

that what we propose gradually becomes acceptable at a later period [emphasis added]. Some important aspects of the Soviet proposals demonstrate this.[43]

Subsequently, after the PTBT was reached, the proud Indian prime minister reminded the world, "We were the first to raise our voice for this kind of arrangement."[44]

Nehru's strategy was not merely to offer constructive suggestions toward disarmament but more broadly to delegitimize nuclear weapons as instruments of statecraft. At times, in fact, this seemed to be the paramount goal of Nehru's nuclear diplomacy. As he told Parliament in March 1955:

> People go about signing documents: ban atomic weapons, atom bombs; don't manufacture them. I have also sometimes talked about this. But the more I think of it the more am I convinced that it is completely futile now to talk about this business of banning this and that. . . . [T]he time is going to come presently when the hydrogen bomb might be made with some ease even by a small country. . . .
>
> I see no other way out except for countries and nations to adopt Gandhiji's gospel . . . to realize that force is no remedy, that war is not only no remedy but is an ultimate evil today.[45]

In keeping with this view, Nehru shaped his rhetoric to stress the immorality and futility of nuclear war. The hydrogen bomb in particular was an "evil thing," one that "threaten[ed] the existence of man and civilization as we know it."[46] Nehru did not necessarily believe that such rhetoric would influence world leaders, but he hoped to constrain them indirectly by influencing the people that they governed. As he stated when he proposed the nuclear test moratorium in 1954: "[I]nformed world public opinion is in our view the most effective factor in bringing about the results we desire."[47] Or as he put it more precisely three years later, "[T]he general understanding of humanity should morally condemn the making and possession of nuclear weapons so greatly that no one would dare use them."[48] Wielding morality as a weapon and targeting public opinion, Nehru was falling back on the tactics that he had mastered in the independence struggle.[49]

If Nehru envisioned quite positive best-case scenarios in nuclear diplomacy, did he also play down the potential dangers for India? The most immediate

[43] Parthasarathi, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, 377.

[44] Nehru, "One Nation," 4.

[45] Jawaharlal Nehru, "India and World Affairs," March 31, 1955, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 28, 313. See also Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, 83.

[46] Jawaharlal Nehru, "India in the World of the Hydrogen Bomb," April 11, 1954, and Jawaharlal Nehru, "Steps against Hydrogen Bomb Tests," April 2, 1954, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 25, 32 and 445, respectively.

[47] Nehru, "Steps against Hydrogen Bomb Tests."

[48] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Suspension of Nuclear Tests," May 24, 1957, in *India's Foreign Policy*, 197.

[49] Bharat Karnad stresses this point as well. See Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security*, 70.

danger would seem to be that India would constrain itself in order to promote cooperation while China's unfettered weapons program raced ahead. In addition, because the superpowers had demonstrated the ability to test underground, whereas India had not, the PTBT threatened to put India in a disadvantageous long-term position vis-à-vis the United States and the Soviet Union. In short, the danger was that India's diplomatic commitments and military restraint would relegate it to a lagging position in the nuclear arms race.

It is difficult to say how much Nehru worried about this danger. He certainly appreciated that some international institutions in the nuclear sphere would not work to India's advantage. In 1954, after Eisenhower had proposed international control of fissile materials under the United Nations, Nehru rejected giving such "vast power" to a body that would have "the great powers sitting in it and lording it over." He later referred to this danger as "atomic colonialism."[50] Did he worry during the test ban negotiations that India might end up disadvantaged as well? From the evidence currently available, there is little sign that he did. Instead, he seemed preoccupied with the opportunities that progress toward mutual restraint afforded. Without greater access to Nehru's private papers, it is perhaps safest not to draw any firm conclusions at this point. Yet the lack of any obvious concern with the potential dangers that the test ban talks posed for India is worth noting and is consistent with his sense of moral efficacy.

In sum, Nehru restrained India's budding nuclear program in the early 1960s fundamentally because he believed this course promised progress toward nuclear disarmament. Such progress, in turn, had much to offer India. In Nehru's view, the test ban talks marked the beginning of a process that could be extended to constrain China while also slowing the global nuclear arms race and reducing the risk of nuclear war. In retrospect, Nehru clearly exaggerated the opportunity that the test ban talks presented. Yet this was no random misperception. Instead, it reflected his belief that India could make a difference through its own self-restraint and its principled critique of nuclear armament.

Alternative Explanations

Nehru's willingness to restrain India's nuclear program, even as other countries raced ahead with nuclear armament, might be explained in a number of other ways. First, we must ask whether situational considerations made Nehru confident that India's restraint would not be exploited. Most importantly in this regard, one could argue that Nehru could afford to restrain India's nuclear program because he believed that Washington and London would support his

[50] For this quotation and the preceding one, see Jawaharlal Nehru, "Statement Made by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in Lok Sabha on 10 May 1954 Regarding Nuclear Energy Agency," and Jawaharlal Nehru, "Statement Made by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in Lok Sabha on 23 July 1957 on Atomic Energy Department," in Singh and Sharma, *Documents on India's Nuclear Disarmament Policy*, 29 and 104, respectively.

country against China. Declassified American documents indicate that President Eisenhower offered some kind of assurance that the United States would support India against China in late 1959.[51] Following the 1962 war, India and the United States developed closer military ties, which manifested in arms sales and an air defense agreement that was reached in July 1963. The latter provided for joint training exercises between American, British, and Indian forces within India while noting that the United States would "consult" with India in the event of a Chinese attack.[52] In this context, Nehru's nuclear restraint might be seen as "free-riding" on allied support.

There are two difficulties with this explanation, however. First, it remains unclear to what extent Nehru believed that India could and should rely on the United States and Britain against a nuclear-armed China. He did welcome Anglo-American support against China as Sino-Indian relations deteriorated, at least up to a point, and he even asked the United States to intervene in the 1962 border war, as described later in this chapter. Yet it is unclear how far Nehru thought this support would extend; the United States did not pledge to support other countries against Chinese "nuclear blackmail" until after the PRC had conducted its first nuclear test, in October 1964.[53] Even Bharat Karnad, the strongest advocate of the idea that Nehru relied on Anglo-American nuclear protection against China, maintains that Nehru was dissatisfied with the idea of relying on other countries after the 1962 war.[54] The second difficulty with the "free rider" argument is that it cannot explain the full range of Indian nuclear behavior under Nehru. More precisely, it does not explain his eagerness to sign a test ban treaty. Whereas a unilateral decision to hold off on a weapons program can be reversed if and when alignments shift, international treaty commitments are not so easily undone. Moreover, Nehru not only sought to conclude a test ban treaty but also wanted to make the treaty as strong as

[51] See Curtis LeMay, "Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense: 'The Indian Nuclear Problem: Proposed Course of Action,'" October 23, 1964, attached to Letter from Robert McNamara to Dean Rusk, October 28, 1964 (Secret), and Dean Rusk, "State Department Telegram for Governor Harriman from the Secretary," February 27, 1965 (Secret). Accessed through the National Security Archive's "India and Pakistan – On the Nuclear Threshold" at http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB6/index.html. Note that the talking points prepared for Eisenhower by U.S. ambassador Ellsworth Bunker before the president's trip to India in 1959 indicated that "it would be very helpful if you could indicate inferentially that in the case of a widening of the Sino-Indian conflict our support would go beyond a simple moral backing." See U.S. Department of State, "Talking Points in Preparation for President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Meeting with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru," December 7, 1959 (Secret). Accessed online through the Declassified Documents Reference System, May 19, 2010.

[52] For the content of the air defense agreement, see John Kenneth Galbraith, "Telegram from the Embassy in India to the Department of State," July 10, 1963, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1961–1963* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000), vol. 19, item 307. Accessed online at http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjf/46456.htm.

[53] On this pledge and its effect on India, see Andrew B. Kennedy, "India's Nuclear Odyssey: Implicit Umbrellas, Diplomatic Disappointments, and the Bomb," *International Security* 36, no. 2 (2011): 120–53.

[54] Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security*, 135–56, 161.

possible: he favored a comprehensive ban. To understand why, one must look beyond the issue of external support.

One might still argue that Nehru felt compelled to cooperate in the nuclear realm because of considerations unrelated to his moral efficacy beliefs. First, one might see Nehru as being constrained by his own sense of identity. In this view, nuclear restraint was the only "appropriate" course of action for a leader who styled himself as Gandhi's heir and who championed disarmament so avidly. If Nehru was driven by such a "logic of appropriateness," he should have been willing to cooperate on nuclear disarmament regardless of how he expected other states to behave; the critical question would have been what was morally appropriate for an antinuclear leader rather than how a given policy would affect India's security. Yet this was clearly not the case. Nehru was quite capable of resisting nuclear initiatives, such as Eisenhower's proposal for international control of fissile material, that he believed would be exploited by other states and detrimental to Indian security. In contrast, Nehru was willing to support the PTBT because he saw it as a precedent that could be used to convince other states to accept more restrictive arrangements (such as a comprehensive test ban) in the future. Said differently, Nehru seems to have followed a "logic of consequences" rather than a "logic of appropriateness" when contemplating moves in nuclear diplomacy.

It is also possible that Nehru was compelled to restrain India's nuclear program by a range of political and economic constraints. Bharat Karnad maintains that a number of such constraints held Nehru back. For one, he suggests that Nehru faced domestic political pressure to adopt an anti-bomb posture.[55] Nonetheless, it is hard to believe that domestic pressure compelled Nehru to devote so much attention to disarmament. As George Perkovich has argued, nuclear policy "barely figured" in Indian politics before 1963.[56] Moreover, if anything, elite opinion began to swing *in favor* of the bomb after the war with China, although substantial pressure to go nuclear did not coalesce until after the Chinese test in late 1964.[57] It is thus hard to see how domestic politics could have dictated Nehru's approach, either before or after 1962.

Economic considerations were probably a more important constraint, as Karnad suggests.[58] When fending off criticism from the Jan Sangh in March 1963, Nehru did point to the cost of a weapons program in defense of nuclear restraint.[59] Yet this is only part of the story; Nehru also stressed that it would be hypocritical for India to press other states to disarm while developing weapons of its own. In addition, the Indian government somehow managed to find the money to fund research on nuclear explosions shortly after the Chinese test, only months after Nehru died. Lastly, economic considerations by themselves

[55] Ibid., 203–12.
[56] Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 39.
[57] Abraham, *Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb*, 115–16.
[58] Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security*, 212–16.
[59] Bhatia, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 109.

cannot explain why Nehru expressed such enthusiastic support for the PTBT and why he sought a more comprehensive test ban.

Karnad also notes the external pressure on India not to go nuclear after 1962.[60] Economic and military cooperation between the United States and India increased dramatically after the war with China, increasing Washington's leverage over New Delhi. The Kennedy administration took this opportunity to press India to make concessions to Pakistan on Kashmir. This effort met with little success, but the United States was also negotiating with India over the supply of two 200-megawatt reactors to be built at Tarapur. In this case, Washington was pressing New Delhi to accept IAEA safeguards on the reactors, which would ensure that nuclear fuel was not diverted to a weapons program. India ultimately did accept the safeguards, and an agreement was finalized in August 1963.[61] In this context, Nehru may have worried that a clandestine weapons program would upset relations with Washington just when India needed U.S. support against China.

Nonetheless, it remains unclear why Nehru could not have authorized preparations for peaceful nuclear explosions after the Tarapur deal was signed. After all, fear of the U.S. reaction did not stop the Indian government from embarking on such a course less than a year after Nehru died. In addition, it is hard to argue that external pressure forced India to support the PTBT. The United States did not need to pressure India to sign the PTBT; rather, it was India that was pressing the United States to agree to some kind of test ban. If anything, the record shows that Nehru would have preferred a more comprehensive test ban, not more freedom of action.

It is also important not to overstate the degree of American pressure on India; nonproliferation was not the only issue in U.S.-India relations in 1962–1963. In fact, as Karnad and other scholars have noted, U.S. secretary of state Dean Rusk flirted with the idea of helping India acquire nuclear weapons as a counterweight to China starting in 1961.[62] Although this idea never took off, U.S. officials did see a need for India to respond somehow to China's impending blast. Eventually, the Kennedy administration came to see the construction of the Tarapur reactors as symbolizing India's increasing nuclear sophistication, and in that sense an answer to a Chinese test. At an interagency meeting on the Tarapur talks on May 31, 1962, U.S. ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith noted that, once China tested, the question would be asked, "[W]hat is India doing in the nuclear field?" In this context, he suggested, it would be "useful" if India could point to new advances.[63] On June 5, Robert Komer of the National Security Council cited Galbraith's argument approvingly in a

[60] Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security*, 229–63.

[61] On the details of the agreement, see Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 56.

[62] Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security*, 229; Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 52.

[63] Memorandum of Conversation (Subject: Tarapur Nuclear Power Plant), May 31, 1962, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, National Security Files, Box 422, India Nuclear (Tarapur) 1961–1963.

memo to the president: "[Galbraith] also urges a strong political argument, i.e. to the extent that India can make a splash in peaceful atomic development, it will help counter the impact of a Chinese nuclear test."[64] Galbraith later argued that the United States should not press India too hard on the safeguards issue, given the importance of reaching an agreement on Tarapur. As he cabled Washington, "[A]mong other things I had taken for granted Tarapur represented our counter to prospective implosion of an atomic device by the Chinese."[65] Although these discussions do not suggest that the United States wanted India to develop nuclear weapons, it is clear that nonproliferation was not the only concern in U.S. nuclear diplomacy with India during this period.

PEACE AND WAR WITH CHINA

In 1949, India's leaders faced a new political and military challenge as communist forces took control of the Chinese mainland. Although Nehru had high hopes for Sino-Indian relations, the collapse of nationalist China was not a development that the Indian leadership welcomed. Chinese communist propaganda was anything but friendly to India in the late 1940s: the CCP regularly portrayed Nehru as a British stooge, and Mao personally encouraged the Communist Party of India to throw off "the yoke of imperialism."[66] The new Chinese regime was also considerably stronger than India. As noted in Chapter 4, the Chinese communists emerged from the revolution with an army that would still possess three million soldiers after its demobilization plans were complete. In contrast, although the Indian Army had surged to two million soldiers during World War II, postwar demobilization and partition shrank it to roughly 350,000 men, although India also inherited an air force of seven fighter squadrons from the Raj.[67] It was within this context of political uncertainty and military inferiority that independent India first faced communist China.

Most pressing for purposes of India's physical security was how the new Chinese regime would approach Tibet, which had traditionally served as a buffer between Russia and imperial China on the one hand and British India on the other. The first section of the following discussion explores how Nehru initially attempted to secure India's interests in Tibet and on the Sino-Indian

[64] R. W. Komer, "Memorandum for the President (Subject: India Power Reactor Project)," June 5, 1962, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, National Security Files, Box 422, India Nuclear (Tarapur) 1961–1963.

[65] John Kenneth Galbraith, Cable for the White House, the U.S. Information Agency, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Council of Economic Advisors, and the Department of State, May 14, 1963, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, President's Office Files, Box 118a, Folder 9 (India Security 1963).

[66] Quoted in Subimal Dutt, *With Nehru in the Foreign Office* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1977), 76.

[67] Raju Thomas, *The Defence of India: A Budgetary Perspective of Strategy and Politics* (Delhi: MacMillan, 1978), 145, 176.

border. It focuses on the question of India's military support for Tibet, documenting Nehru's caution in this regard and exploring how his weak sense of martial efficacy informed this approach. The second section then considers how Nehru's approach evolved following the emergence of the Sino-Indian border dispute in the late 1950s. As explained earlier, the goal here is not to explain why the relationship deteriorated but to explore the one case in which Nehru approved military action against a more powerful rival.

Military Restraint and Peaceful Coexistence

When Nehru and Patel took charge of the Indian state in 1947, they also inherited India's distinctive relationship with Tibet and China. In the first half of the twentieth century, Tibet had functioned independently of China, and the British had come to see it as a vital buffer that served to insulate India against threats from the north. To maintain this state of affairs, the British had recognized Chinese suzerainty – not sovereignty – over Tibet, accepting China's nominal authority so long as it respected Tibetan autonomy. The Raj had also negotiated a number of special rights and privileges for India within Tibet itself. These included a political mission in Lhasa that dealt directly with the Tibetan government, the establishment of trade agencies in Gyantse, Gartok, and Yatung, the posting of military escorts to protect Indo-Tibetan trade and pilgrims, and the right to operate telegraph lines and a postal service between Tibet and India. Under the Simla Convention of 1914, the British had also secured Tibetan acceptance of the McMahon line along the crest of the Himalayas as the Indo-Tibetan border between Bhutan and Burma (see Map 8.1).[68]

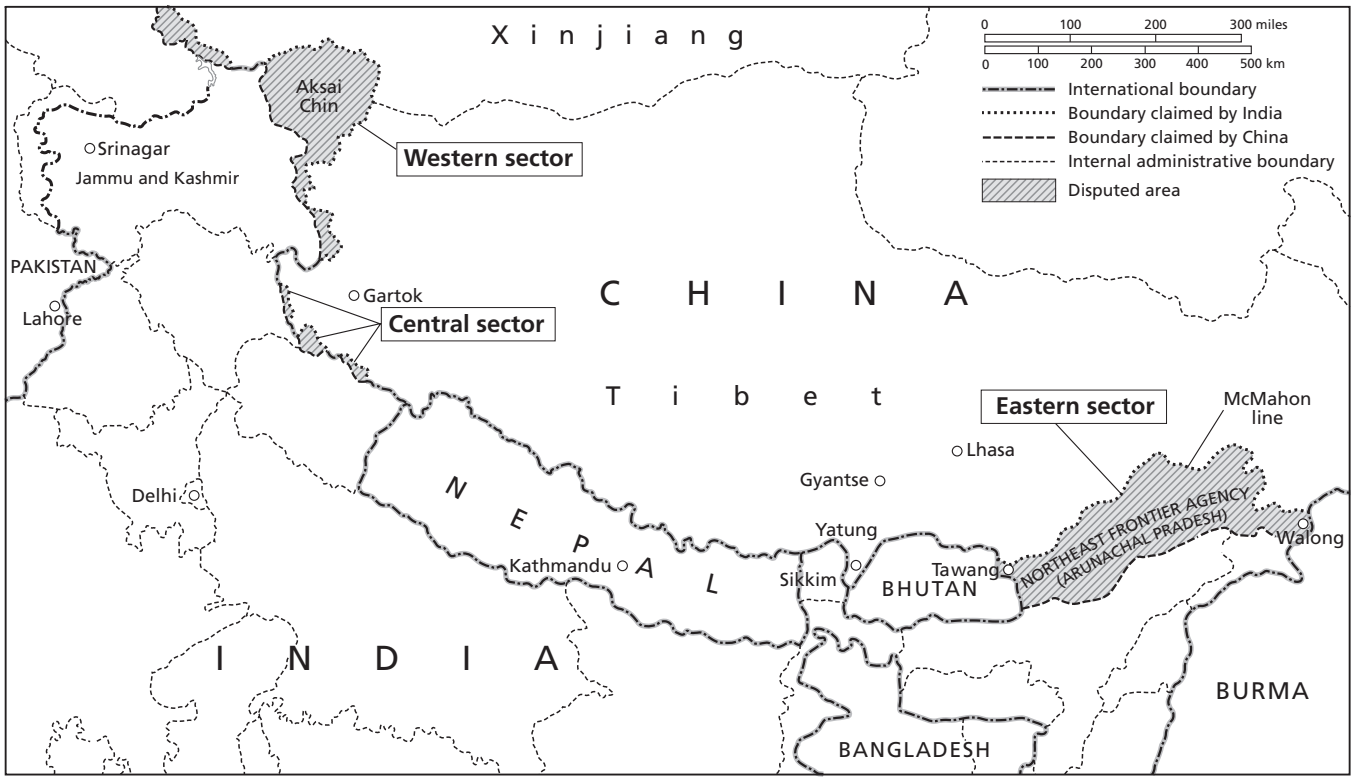
Nehru wished to maintain this state of affairs upon taking power. Although India's special position in Tibet was a legacy of the imperial Raj, India's policy after the transfer of power was to maintain the status quo in Indo-Tibetan relations.[69] Indeed, Nehru's early missives to both nationalist China and the PRC on Tibet asserted that India's rights in Tibet should continue.[70] More broadly, Nehru sought to maintain Tibet's status as a buffer between China and India.[71] In March 1947, the Indian leader-to-be had welcomed a separate

[68] Nancy Jetly, *India-China Relations, 1947–1977: A Study of Parliament's Role in the Making of Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1979), 13; Hugh Richardson, *Tibet and Its History* (Boulder, Colo.: Shambala, 1984), 173–76. Note that the legal status of the Simla agreement was a complex issue even at the time it was negotiated. See Alastair Lamb, *Tibet, China & India, 1914–1950* (Hertingfordbury: Roxford Books, 1989), 13–21.

[69] B. N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1971), 54; Richardson, *Tibet and Its History*, 173–76. This orientation is also evident from Indian archival materials from this period. See "Indo-Tibetan Policy," National Archives of India (New Delhi), Ministry of External Affairs 1948 File no. 7(6) P/1948.

[70] Yang Yun-yuan, "Controversies over Tibet: China versus India, 1947–1949," *The China Quarterly*, no. 111 (1987), 413; Jawaharlal Nehru, "Indian Note to China on the Question of Tibet," November 1, 1950, in *China–South Asian Relations, 1947–1980*, ed. R. K. Jain (New Delhi: Harvester Press, 1981), vol. 1, 29.

[71] Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 43–44.



MAP 8.1. The China-India Border

Tibetan delegation to the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi, which featured a map displaying Tibet as an independent country until the Chinese delegation protested.[72] After becoming prime minister, Nehru spoke of Chinese "suzerainty" over Tibet rather than sovereignty, in keeping with British practice. Although he did not define precisely what that meant, it is clear that he hoped that Tibet would retain not only internal autonomy but also some kind of international standing, even if that fell short of full independence. As he stated at a press conference in January 1950, only days after recognizing the PRC, "Tibet has a definite diplomatic status."[73] Nehru neglected to say that the only country with representation in Lhasa at the time was India.

Even as India sought to maintain the status quo in Tibet, there was concern that China would not accept such an outcome. In June 1948, K. M. Pannikar – then the Indian ambassador in Nanjing – prepared a note in which he worried that China's occupation of Tibet would mean "the immediate revival of claims against Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim and also the denunciation of the Macmahon [*sic*] line."[74] In December, Nehru perceived that "a great part of China" would fall under communist control and that "the future Tibet may become a subject for argument" between China and India.[75] It was against this backdrop of quiet concern that Nehru's government supported Tibet's efforts to withstand Chinese pressure. India continued to supply Tibet with arms into 1950, including Bren guns, Sten guns, and 2-inch and 3-inch mortars. Indian officers also provided limited military training to Tibetan soldiers at Gyantse. Nonetheless, India's support was carefully calibrated to avoid a confrontation with China. India did not sell as much ammunition as Tibet requested, which limited opportunities for training, and it declined to sell arms that would seem specifically directed against China, such as antiaircraft guns. India also declined to provide demolition experts who could have helped to obstruct a Chinese advance. Nehru was also careful not to be seen as collaborating with the United States, which began taking an interest in Tibet in 1949. In March 1950, the American ambassador in New Delhi, Loy Henderson, reported that New Delhi would likely demur from a joint effort to help the Tibetans. Henderson noted that the Indians saw collaboration with Washington against Beijing as politically problematic and that the United States had yet to meet India's own requests for military supplies.[76]

[72] Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913–1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 561–64. Gandhi reportedly told the Tibetan delegation that India would publish a brochure about the conference that would circulate internationally and serve as documentary proof of Tibet's independence. See Goldstein, *History of Modern Tibet*, 562.

[73] Jawaharlal Nehru, "On a No-War Declaration," January 6, 1950, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 14 (pt. 1), 27.

[74] Quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 232–33.

[75] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Letter to Premiers of the Indian Provinces," December 6, 1948, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 8, 231.

[76] Goldstein, *History of Modern Tibet*, 619–20, 662–63; Lamb, *Tibet, China & India*, 519; Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 16–26.

Nehru also refused to endorse any kind of military expedition to Tibet for the sake of safeguarding Tibetan autonomy or defending India's frontiers. In May 1949, an undersecretary from India's Ministry of External Affairs told an American diplomat that the Indian Army would oppose a Chinese invasion of Tibet if it came to that.[77] In June and July, internal Indian communications stressed the need for continuing Indian support for Tibet, including arms sales and "precautionary military measures for the defence of our own frontier." In response to these notes on July 9, Nehru was clear that India would continue to maintain its mission in Lhasa and that it would continue to provide Tibet with "such aid as we have been giving them in the past," a vague reference to India's limited military assistance. Yet if anyone was suggesting that India deploy troops to Tibet, the prime minister ruled it out. As Nehru wrote, "I do not think that any question arises, at present at least, of our occupying any part of Tibetan territory."[78]

In September, the question of Indian support for Tibet became more pressing. China's new communist rulers proclaimed that Tibet was Chinese territory, announced that the People's Liberation Army was ready to "liberate" the plateau, and warned that they would tolerate no foreign intervention.[79] In response, Nehru ruled out deeper involvement in Tibet once again. As he put it while writing to the premiers of the Indian provinces in December 1949:

> We would like Tibet to be autonomous and to have direct dealings with us and we shall press for this. But it is clear that we cannot bring any effective pressure to change the course of events in Tibet. Therefore, we must be cautious about the steps that we might take so as not to get entangled in enterprises which are beyond our strength. We have accepted certain facts as they are. I emphasize this aspect as there is often vague talk about India doing this or that in other countries, regardless of the obvious factors in each case. One thing is dead clear. We will not permit the slightest intervention, aggression or invasion of any Indian territory wherever it might be.[80]

With the PRC flexing its muscles, Nehru clearly sought to preclude an Indian military expedition, even as he affirmed his commitment to defend India's own territory.[81]

Nehru's conservative stance was partly a function of his belief that a Tibetan expedition was unnecessary for Indian security. His July 1949 note had asserted that the Himalayan geography would make it very difficult for China to pressure India militarily even if the PLA occupied Tibet. Yet it also reflected his

[77] Lamb, *Tibet, China & India*, 516–17.

[78] On these internal notes and Nehru's reply, see Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Indian Mission at Lhasa," July 9, 1949, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 12, 410–11.

[79] Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*, 60.

[80] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Letter to the Premiers of the Indian Provinces," December 1, 1949, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 14 (pt. 1), 367.

[81] Note that Nehru's note was written *before* his top advisors had reached a consensus that a military expedition would be infeasible, which evidently occurred in 1950. See Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*, 80–81.

strongly materialist sense of martial efficacy, which made him pessimistic about the feasibility of such an operation. In Nehru's view, there was no upside to such an intervention: India was simply not strong enough to help Tibet resist China. As he put it in his letter to the Indian premiers, he was wary of "enterprises which are beyond our strength." G. S. Bajpai put it more precisely when summing up Nehru's view for the British high commissioner in New Delhi around the same time: although India was eager to maintain Tibetan autonomy, the government "did not feel that they had the military resources effectively to defend Tibet against Chinese encroachment."[82] Nehru believed that India would be fighting for a lost cause and, in doing so, provoking China. As he would later explain in response to criticism in Parliament, "[W]e do not go like Don Quixote with lance in hand against everything that we dislike. . . . [W]e put up with these things because we would be, without making any difference, merely getting into trouble."[83]

Nehru continued to take a cautious approach after the PRC moved to take control of Tibet in late 1950. When the PLA attacked Tibetan forces at Qamdo in October, creating a crisis in Sino-Tibetan relations, Nehru sent three notes to Beijing protesting against the use of force, which prompted the PRC to retort that India had been "affected by foreign influences hostile to China."[84] Despite the mounting tension, Nehru continued to oppose any kind of military expedition to Tibet. Now more than ever, Nehru saw military efforts to resist China as futile. His pessimistic outcome expectations were made clear in an internal note on Tibet that he authored in November 1950: "It may be taken for granted that China will take possession, in a political sense at least, of the whole of Tibet. There is no likelihood whatever of Tibet being able to resist this or stop it. It is equally unlikely that any foreign power can prevent it. We cannot do so."[85]

In keeping with this assessment, Nehru now took a conciliatory approach and sought to befriend Beijing, hoping that this would undermine the rationale for stationing sizable military forces on the plateau.[86] Nehru thus decided not to support Tibet's appeal to the UN Security Council in the fall of 1950, and he also shifted India's stance on the Korean War from support for the UN

[82] Quoted in Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 25.

[83] Quoted in Dutt, *With Nehru in the Foreign Office*, 90.

[84] For this correspondence, see Jain, *China–South Asian Relations*, vol. 1, 23–29. Note that the Chinese-Tibetan clash in October 1950 is not listed as a crisis in the ICB database because Tibet is not considered an international actor for purposes of the database. Nonetheless, Tibet did possess its own government and armed forces at the time, and the battle clearly marked an important crisis in Sino-Tibetan relations. India became involved in the crisis indirectly as a result of its protests against China's use of force. On the battle, see Goldstein, *History of Modern Tibet*, 638–97.

[85] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Policy Regarding China and Tibet," November 18, 1950, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 15 (pt. 2), 343.

[86] On this shift in Nehru's thinking, see Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 49–50; Dawa Norbu, "Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality," *Asian Survey* 37, no. 11 (1997): 1079–80.

side toward a mediatory role. Nehru subsequently urged the Dalai Lama to reach an agreement with Beijing concerning Tibet's status. This advice helped produce the 17-point agreement between the PRC central government and "the local government of Tibet" in May 1951, which set forth terms for Tibetan autonomy under Chinese rule.[87]

Nehru's efforts to improve ties with Beijing eventually culminated in the 1954 Sino-Indian agreement on Tibet. The accord implicitly recognized PRC sovereignty over the plateau and substantially reduced India's official presence in Tibet. The Indian mission in Lhasa was officially redesignated a consulate general, and the PRC established its own consulate general in Bombay. India retained its trade agencies, but it agreed to withdraw its military escorts (about 200 soldiers at that point) and to hand over the post and telegraph services that it controlled, as well as 12 rest houses. Most importantly, the accord left open the question of the Sino-Indian border; there was no endorsement of the McMahon line or any other boundary. Rather than securing India's traditional position in Tibet as he had once hoped to do, Nehru made an effort to befriend China instead.[88]

Nehru's decision not to resist China's entry into Tibet more strongly might seem unsurprising from a realist perspective. As noted earlier, communist China had emerged from the revolution with an army that greatly outnumbered its Indian counterpart. If Beijing was forced to concentrate on Korea starting in the summer of 1950, New Delhi had its own preoccupation in Kashmir. Indeed, the Indian Army chief, General Cariappa, estimated in early 1950 that India could at best place a battalion just across the border at Yatung, and perhaps send a company of troops to Gyantse – still 160 miles from Lhasa (see Map 8.1).[89] Nonetheless, there was more than one way to look at the challenge that India faced in Tibet. In June 1950, for example, the U.S. State Department presented an outline of its views on Tibet to the British embassy in Washington. The outline conceded that "it is probable that the Chinese Communists have the military strength to capture Tibet." Yet it also noted some grounds for optimism:

> The terrain through which a military force attacking Tibet from China would pass lends itself to guerrilla resistance and confronts the attacking force with major logistic problems. Comparatively little assistance in the form of specialized military instruction and supplies might stiffen Tibetan resistance and make a Chinese Communist military expedition so costly that it would not be undertaken, particularly in the absence of a manifestation by the Western States of extraordinary interest in Tibet or an attempt to alter its international status.

The outline proceeded to note that "India is perhaps the only country" that could provide Tibet with the requisite support.[90]

[87] For the text of the agreement, see Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 449–52.
[88] For the agreement and accompanying notes, see Jain, *China–South Asian Relations*, vol. 1, 61–68.
[89] Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*, 80.
[90] Quoted in Goldstein, *History of Modern Tibet*, 666.

The point here is not to argue that greater Indian support for Tibet would have been well advised, merely that it was possible to assess the situation differently than Nehru did and that there were means of assisting Tibet that would not have required deploying a large number of troops on the plateau. In late 1949, Nehru categorically asserted that, "[W]e cannot bring any effective pressure to change the course of events in Tibet." In contrast, U.S. officials were arguing in mid-1950 that "comparatively little assistance" might deter China from sending its own expedition to the plateau. The United States was not calling for an Indian military intervention, merely for greater supplies and military instruction from India in order to bolster Tibet's capacity and will to resist. Nor were American diplomats the only ones to note the advantages conferred by Tibet's terrain. Robert Ford, a British radio operator who worked for the Tibetan government until he was captured by the Chinese in 1950, later described Tibet as "a military paradise for defense."[91] Ford added that "narrow passes could be held against immense forces" and that the Tibetans had resisted the Chinese in this manner before. For Nehru, however, the idea of the weak resisting the strong was a nonstarter. As noted in Chapter 6, he had asserted in 1946: "No country which is not industrialized can carry on war for long however good the army might be."[92] With this limited sense of martial efficacy, Nehru was bound to err on the side of caution when deciding whether and how India should support Tibet against China.

Did Patel also favor a conservative approach to Tibet? Before the fall of 1950, there is little sign that he questioned Nehru's basic stance. China's attack on Tibetan forces that October, however, prompted him to argue for a tougher approach. In a long letter to Nehru, Patel denounced the Chinese assault as "little short of perfidy," given the assurances that Ambassador Pannikar had received in Beijing about China's plans for Tibet. Patel proceeded to suggest strengthening India's administration, intelligence, and internal security in frontier areas while also improving transportation and communications links. More dramatically, he called for a redeployment of Indian forces toward the border and a reconsideration of retrenchment plans for the army. Patel also suggested that India withdraw its support for communist China's entry into the United Nations. More broadly, he raised "wider questions" of India's relations with other countries, including the United States, the Soviet Union, and Britain, implying interest in the possibility of external support for India. Patel died soon thereafter, on December 15, and this letter appears to have been his last statement on China policy.[93]

[91] Robert Ford, *Captured in Tibet* (London: George G. Harrap and Co., 1957), 18.
[92] Nehru, "Note on Defence," 491.
[93] Vallabhbhai Patel to Jawaharlal Nehru, November 7, 1950, in Das, *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, vol. 10, 335–41.

Nehru's government did subsequently seek to strengthen India's presence in the frontier areas, although progress was slow.[94] Patel's more dramatic suggestions, however, were discarded because they would have contradicted Nehru's efforts to reassure China about Indian intentions. The key question for our purposes here, however, is whether Patel's prescriptions were consistent with his limited sense of martial efficacy. They clearly were. Although Patel's stance was a tougher one, there was no hint in his letter of challenging China for control of Tibet, or even part of it. He focused entirely on building up Indian defenses in the border areas, not offensive operations. Patel did not even believe that it was possible to rescue Tibet's political leadership. His letter stated that, "[F]rom the latest positions, it appears that we shall not be able to rescue the Dalai Lama." This defense-minded approach was entirely consistent with Patel's views – no great sense of martial efficacy is needed to call for greater investment in defense. Moreover, Patel's reference to improving India's relations with external powers suggested that he doubted India could face China alone.

In sum, although Nehru and Patel ultimately came to differ on the best way to approach China, neither leader sought a military confrontation with the PRC. Nehru focused on reassuring India's stronger neighbor so that its military presence in Tibet would be minimal. In contrast, Patel stressed border defense and hinted at the cultivation of strong allies. Although these were different approaches, both of them were consistent with a limited sense of martial efficacy.

Alternative Explanations

Nehru's conservative approach to Tibet in the late 1940s and early 1950s might be explained in a number of ways. First, it is worth asking whether domestic political considerations prevented him from adopting a more assertive policy. The Indian National Congress had come to power preaching nonviolence – could it have justified to its constituents a military expedition beyond India's borders?[95] Although this is an interesting question, it does not seem to have been a major consideration for Nehru. His correspondence does not express concern with how to justify a Tibetan expedition to Indian voters, perhaps because Nehru never became sufficiently serious about undertaking such an expedition to worry about how to explain it. In addition, had Nehru been more inclined to challenge China, he could have appealed to the widespread sympathy for Tibet within India, particularly after the PRC announced its

[94] India's efforts at the crucial task of road construction lagged in particular. See K. Subrahmanyam, "Nehru and the India-China Conflict of 1962," in Nanda, *Indian Foreign Policy*, 117.

[95] U.S. ambassador Loy Henderson raised this issue at the time. See Lamb, *Tibet, China & India*, 517.

intention to "liberate" the plateau in September 1949.[96] In fact, domestic concern for Tibet and the security of India's borders would ultimately push Nehru toward a tougher posture than he initially adopted, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Alternatively, it could be argued that Nehru chose not to resist the PRC in Tibet more strongly because he was more interested in pursuing Sino-Indian amity. Nonetheless, it is clear that Patel also favored a relatively conservative stance, albeit of a different nature, even though he was much less enthralled by the idea of Sino-Indian cooperation. This suggests that no Indian leader with a limited sense of martial efficacy would have resisted China's entry into Tibet, regardless of his hopes for Sino-Indian relations. In addition, it is important to note that Nehru took office hoping to work with *nationalist* China, and he was clearly disquieted when the communists prevailed instead. It was in this context that Nehru considered a more concerted military effort to assist Tibet in 1949, only to conclude that it was beyond India's capabilities. Nehru's subsequent efforts to befriend communist China only became pronounced after the PLA began to pressure Tibet in the fall of 1950, as noted earlier. In short, it is far from clear that a strong desire to pursue amity with the emerging Chinese communist regime was driving Nehru's thinking before late 1950.

Lastly, one could argue that Nehru was motivated by moral considerations emerging from his anti-imperialist sensibilities. Was he embarrassed to have inherited the Raj's privileges in Tibet, and did he look on the idea of greater military support for the Tibetans as "imperialist" and therefore not to be condoned?[97] Following the conclusion of the 1954 agreement with China, Nehru did say that it was inappropriate for independent India to station soldiers in Tibet.[98] Yet this was obviously a response to criticism that India had given up too much, and, in a telling conclusion to his remarks, Nehru observed that, "[I]f we had not withdrawn voluntarily, we would have been forced to do so." Indeed, up to that point, Nehru had sought to preserve India's rights in Tibet, including the right to station military escorts, which he said reflected "usage and agreements which are natural between neighbors with close cultural and commercial relations."[99] On the question of a military expedition to Tibet in particular, the evidence presented here makes it clear that Nehru rejected the idea because he believed it was beyond India's capabilities, not because it would seem a reenactment of British imperialism. To be sure, he did warn in July 1949 that India should be "very careful" in taking any measures "which might mean an invasion of Tibetan sovereignty."[100] His attribution

[96] On popular feelings of amity toward Tibet within India, see Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 39–40.

[97] Alastair Lamb suggests that the latter was a consideration for Nehru. See Lamb, *Tibet, China & India*, 518.

[98] Jawaharlal Nehru, "India and the International Situation," May 18, 1954, in Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*, vol. 25, 420.

[99] Jawaharlal Nehru, "Indian Note to China on the Question of Tibet," November 1, 1950, in Jain, *China–South Asian Relations*, vol. 1, 29.

[100] Nehru, "Indian Mission at Lhasa," 410.

of "sovereignty" to Tibet at this particular moment aside, this was not a categorical injunction against military action on India's part. As noted earlier, Nehru still seemed to be keeping his options open at that point, ruling out an occupation of Tibetan territory "at present" but leaving the future unclear. It was after the PRC proclaimed its intention to "liberate" Tibet that September that Nehru became more categorically opposed to an expedition. At this point, Nehru was against intervening in Tibet regardless of whether Lhasa would have welcomed it. In short, Nehru's perceptions of the feasibility of the intervention – rather than its legitimacy – were the dominant note in his calculations.

From Peaceful Coexistence to War

As the 1950s progressed, Sino-Indian relations went from friendly to fractious, particularly as it became clear that Beijing and New Delhi held very different views on their mutual boundary. Disputes emerged in three sectors (see Map 8.1). In the west, the two sides disputed the ownership of 33,000 square kilometers at the junction of Kashmir, Tibet, and Xinjiang. China occupied the primary feature of this area, the Aksai Chin plateau, in the 1950s and completed a road through it in 1957. The road held considerable strategic value as the only connection between Xinjiang and western Tibet. In the east, India argued that the border was delimited by the McMahon line between Bhutan and Burma, the boundary negotiated by Britain in 1914. China ultimately came to claim 90,000 square kilometers south of this line, an area that India administered as the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA) and that later became the state of Arunachal Pradesh. In the central sector between these two larger disputes, the two sides quarreled over several mountain passes that lie just west of the junction of India, Nepal, and Tibet. These border tensions worsened considerably after China cracked down on an uprising in Lhasa in March 1959, prompting India to grant asylum to the Dalai Lama.[101]

Nehru's initial handling of the rising tensions with China was quite conservative. In late August 1959, a small-scale clash at Longju in the eastern sector touched off what has traditionally been seen as the first Sino-Indian border crisis. On August 28, Nehru announced that responsibility for the eastern border would be transferred from the Assam Rifles, a frontier constabulary, to the army, but he also worked to avoid an escalation of the conflict. Nehru thus rejected calls from Parliament that India bomb the road that China had constructed in Aksai Chin.[102] In addition, Nehru issued an internal directive in mid-September making it clear that conflict with China was to be avoided: "We must avoid actual conflict until it is forced down upon us. That is to say, *we must avoid armed conflict not only in a big way, but even in a small way*

[101] On the importance of the Aksai Chin road, see Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 79–86. On the details of the territorial dispute, see Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 326–28.

[102] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, 94.

[emphasis added]. On no account should our forces fire unless they are actually fired at."[103]

Having outlined a cautious approach for India, Nehru was appalled when Indian and Chinese patrols clashed once again at the Kongka Pass in the western sector in late October, apparently as a result of a Chinese ambush. The clash prompted the prime minister to give the army responsibility for the entire border. The point of this decision was not to challenge Chinese positions – India did not even occupy Longju after China abandoned it in mid-October – but to gradually improve India's position vis-à-vis China over time. India would not only improve its border defenses but also invigorate its defense-related industries and its economy more broadly. As Nehru explained to Parliament in December, "[W]e have got here to face a situation which can only be faced by strength. . . . [T]hat strength can be built up in many ways – armies, etc. – but basically again it has to be built up by the industrial background that you have."[104] In keeping with his highly materialist sense of martial efficacy, he sought to avoid military conflict in the short term and build up India's strength over time. As a result of this conservative approach, as well as restraint on the Chinese side, in 1960 and 1961 the border was considerably calmer.[105]

In April 1960, the two governments attempted to resolve the border dispute when Zhou Enlai traveled to New Delhi. In the course of the talks, Zhou essentially offered to trade China's claims in the east for Indian concessions in the west.[106] Nehru, however, was unwilling to make such a deal. This refusal reflected a variety of considerations. According to Neville Maxwell, Indian leaders had discussed just such a compromise at a high-level meeting at the turn of 1959–1960. Nehru apparently ended the discussion by observing: "[I]f I give them that I shall no longer be Prime Minister of India – I will not do it."[107] Besides domestic political considerations, Srinath Raghavan emphasizes that the Indian leadership was hardly inclined to trust the Chinese at this point.[108] The Indians were particularly worried that if they accepted China's

[103] Quoted in Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1971), 129.

[104] Jawaharlal Nehru, *Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1961–1962), vol. 1, pt. 1, 244.

[105] Except as otherwise noted, this paragraph is based on Steven A. Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 66–79. Note that Nehru probably knew about and tolerated clandestine U.S. support for Tibetan resistance at this time, but his aides made it clear that they did not wish for India to be seen as supporting such assistance, and there was no "conspiracy" between New Delhi and Washington to detach Tibet from China. See Steven A. Hoffman, "Rethinking the Linkage between Tibet and the China-India Border Conflict: A Realist Approach," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 3 (2006): 186–90. See also John Garver, "China's Decision for War with India in 1962," in Johnston and Ross, *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, 101.

[106] This is clear from both Indian and Chinese sources. On the Indian sources, see Chatterjee Miller, *Scars of Empire*, 80, 118–19. For the Chinese sources, see Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation*, 94.

[107] Quoted in Maxwell, *India's China War*, 161.

[108] Srinath Raghavan, "Sino-Indian Boundary Dispute, 1948–1960: A Reappraisal," *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 31 (2006): 3890.

claims in the western sector, this would embolden Beijing to make additional demands subsequently. Other scholars have argued that Nehru's refusal to make concessions in the western sector reflected a historically informed view of India's traditional boundaries, which he personally did not wish to violate.[109]

In the wake of Zhou's visit, Nehru looked for new ways to improve India's leverage in the dispute. The two sides had agreed in the talks to appoint a group of officials from both sides to examine the legal and historical record on the boundary, and this group met several times in the latter half of 1960. The group produced a lengthy "Officials Report" in December, which was then published by the Indian government in February 1961. Nehru saw the report, which detailed the arguments of both sides, as highlighting the superiority of India's case, prompting him to believe that some kind of diplomatic solution was still possible.[110] In particular, Nehru seems to have been willing to allow continued Chinese occupation of Aksai Chin if Beijing conceded Indian sovereignty over the area "in theory."[111] Another possibility was apparently contemplated by R. K. Nehru, the prime minister's cousin and a former ambassador to the PRC, who visited Beijing for talks in July 1961. This would have involved India giving up Aksai Chin and getting in return the strategically placed Chumbi Valley between Sikkim and Bhutan.[112] In any case, the prime minister would continue to press the Chinese with the Officials Report until the outbreak of war in the fall of 1962.

Starting in late 1961, Nehru sought to further increase the pressure on China through what became known as the "forward policy."[113] Under this approach, India would establish outposts up to, and sometimes beyond, Chinese positions in the disputed areas. The policy was first adopted in the western sector following a meeting on November 2 in Nehru's office. New Indian posts subsequently appeared in the western sector in the winter of 1961–1962, creating a criss-cross pattern of Chinese and Indian positions. Although India moved more slowly in the eastern sector, twenty-four new posts had been set up along the McMahon line by mid-1962.[114] The point of the forward policy was not to drive the Chinese out by force but to establish an Indian presence in disputed areas wherever possible. As Steven Hoffman has noted, "[N]o real military threat was posed to the Chinese; the Indian military effort was mainly

[109] Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 23–28. See also Chatterjee Miller, *Scars of Empire*, 79–123.

[110] Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 88–91.

[111] Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 263–64, 283.

[112] Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 88–91.

[113] On the origins of the forward policy, see ibid., 92–100. There is some dispute as to whether Nehru stressed the development of more substantial supporting bases behind the forward posts. He apparently did not mention this aspect at the meeting that devised the policy on November 2, but the task was included in the directive that emerged following the meeting. Nehru also mentioned the construction of such bases in speeches later that month. In any event, the bases were not established; there was no way such a task could be accomplished in time to support the forward policy. See Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, 208–9; Maxwell, *India's China War*, 221–24; Palit, *War in High Himalaya*, 107–8.

[114] Maxwell, *India's China War*, 292.

symbolic."[115] Nehru himself summed up the essentially nonviolent nature of the policy during the meeting at which he approved it, noting that India's posts would bolster its claim because possession was nine-tenths of the law.[116]

Although the forward policy was not designed as an attack on Chinese forces, India's approach briefly became more assertive after a second border crisis developed in early September. On September 8, Chinese forces in the eastern sector crossed Thagla Ridge near the trijuncture of Tibet, Bhutan, and NEFA, a ridge that the Indian government viewed as defining the proper Sino-Indian border in the area. The move put at risk a recently established Indian post called Dhola, which was situated just below the ridge. Nehru learned of the development while in London for a Commonwealth meeting. After consulting with Krishna Menon, who was now serving as India's defense minister, Nehru's initial instinct was to "play it cool" and not publicize China's move.[117] Nonetheless, the news began to leak out as early as September 10.[118] At a meeting on September 10 or 11, Krishna Menon ordered Indian forces to evict the Chinese from the area, a decision that Nehru would later support. At the time, the Indian leadership mistakenly believed that the PLA had no more than a battalion in the area, whereas India would have a brigade (i.e., at least three times as many troops) there within days. On October 10, however, Chinese superiority in the area became apparent after Chinese troops overwhelmed an Indian platoon. Returning from the front, General B. M. Kaul told Nehru and Krishna Menon that Indian forces faced an entire Chinese division near Thagla Ridge. As a result, on October 11, the operation was postponed indefinitely. The following day, Nehru remarked at an impromptu press conference (according to one account): "Our instructions are to free our territory. . . . I cannot fix a date, that is entirely for the Army." In light of the decision just made, the prime minister was clearly trying to deflate expectations of imminent military action, as other scholars have made clear. The effect, however, was quite the opposite, as the press seized on his apparent commitment to military measures.[119]

Given his limited martial confidence, why did Nehru condone significant military action against a stronger state at this time, even if the action was postponed shortly thereafter? In Chapter 2, I noted several reasons why leaders

[115] Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 92.

[116] J. P. Dalvi, *Himalayan Blunder* (Bombay: Thacker and Co., 1969), 68. In addition, Neville Maxwell suggests that Nehru may have hoped that the new posts would strengthen India's ability to induce a Chinese withdrawal in the western sector, the stumbling block in the 1960 talks. By establishing a presence there, New Delhi could meaningfully propose "joint" withdrawals from the western sector, as opposed to simply calling for a Chinese withdrawal. See Maxwell, *India's China War*, 174.

[117] Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 294.

[118] Maxwell, *India's China War*, 311.

[119] On the order and its aftermath, see Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 130–59. Nehru's quotation is at p. 154. See also Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, 218–20. Curiously, the Indian military apparently continued to adopt an assertive posture in the area near Thagla Ridge after October 11. See Palit, *War in High Himalaya*, 232–36.

might challenge stronger adversaries with some confidence irrespective of their martial efficacy beliefs. Several of these appear to have informed Nehru's calculations in this case. First, the Indian leadership clearly had limited aims that it hoped to achieve quickly. The object was not to repulse Chinese forces all along the border but merely to evict them from a limited area. Second, Indian leaders believed that the local balance of power would be in their favor. When the order was given, it was believed that India would have a brigade operating against no more than a Chinese battalion. This clearly mattered: as soon as the inaccuracy of this belief became clear, the order was suspended.

Third, and more broadly, Nehru expected external support from both superpowers, making strong Chinese retaliation unlikely. Although the United States did not take a formal position on the border dispute when it emerged, the Eisenhower administration had publicly criticized China's use of force on the border in 1959.[120] The Kennedy administration subsequently took office with a very public desire to improve relations with India, and it promptly increased U.S. economic assistance to India to record levels.[121] Perhaps even more importantly, Indo-Soviet ties were warming substantially during this period. In 1959, the Soviet Union took a neutral stance on the border dispute following the Longju clash, aggravating the Chinese considerably. In 1962, the Soviets agreed to supply India with MIG-21 fighter aircraft in addition to the high-altitude transports and helicopters that it was already supplying.[122] With Indo-Soviet ties improving, Nehru believed that Moscow would be strongly inclined to prevent a Sino-Indian conflict. In fact, by February 1962, Australian high commissioner Walter Crocker ventured to suggest that Nehru saw Moscow as India's "best insurance" in dealing with the PRC.[123] This assessment was echoed by analysts at the U.S. State Department in May.[124] China, in contrast, was seen by Nehru as isolated and weak in the early 1960s, given the failure of the Great Leap Forward, the withdrawal of Soviet advisors in 1960, and the emergence of renewed tensions with Taiwan in 1962.[125] Under these conditions, Nehru assumed that China would not wish to start a war with India, particularly because he believed that such a war would quickly escalate to global proportions. As he told Parliament in December 1961, "Is it imaginable that a war between India and China will remain confined to these two countries? It will be

[120] U.S. Department of State, "President's Briefing Book for Prime Minister Nehru's Visit," November 1, 1961 (Secret). Accessed online through the Declassified Documents Reference System, June 23, 2010.

[121] Kux, *India and the United States*, 186–89.

[122] Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 123.

[123] Quoted in Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 282.

[124] Unattributed memorandum, "Likely Developments in the Sino-Indian Border Dispute," May 7, 1962 (Secret). Available in Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Vice Presidential Security File, State Department Intelligence Reports, January–June 1962. Accessed online through the Declassified Documents Reference System, June 23, 2010.

[125] Palit, *War in High Himalaya*, 109–10, and 160–61. See also B. M. Kaul, *The Untold Story* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1967), 321.

a world war and nothing but a world war."[126] As a result, when Army Chief of Staff General P. N. Thapar told the prime minister in early October 1962 that attacking the Chinese forces near Dhola would have serious repercussions, Nehru said that he had "good reasons" to believe the Chinese would refrain from taking any strong action.[127] In retrospect, his failure to consider the possibility that China would conduct a brief – but humiliating – campaign on the border is not terribly surprising. As K. Subrahmanyam has argued, the Indian government had no strategic-planning process that could have anticipated a range of possible Chinese actions and prepared appropriate responses.[128]

In addition to these considerations, it is also clear that Nehru felt compelled to approve the operation to evict Chinese forces for reasons that went beyond its perceived feasibility. In particular, he was under great pressure domestically to respond forcefully to what was seen as a Chinese intrusion on Indian territory. The impact of public pressure was particularly apparent when Nehru met with General Kaul at the prime minister's residence late on October 3, 1962, when Kaul was preparing to take command in NEFA. As Kaul remembers, the prime minister explained that his government would forfeit public confidence completely should it fail to take action against the Chinese at Dhola. Even if the operation did not succeed, Nehru explained, it was important that the army do the best that it could. Both Sarvepalli Gopal and Neville Maxwell have written that Kaul's account of this meeting rings true.[129]

In short, Nehru chose to support military action against Chinese forces in September 1962 because of a range of considerations that combined to outweigh his limited martial confidence. India's limited aims, its (apparent) local superiority, and its external support combined to make the operation seem at least potentially viable as well as unlikely to result in a major conflict. The domestic political pressure on Nehru, in turn, made the operation seem imperative, even if it did not succeed. In the end, of course, Nehru's limited martial confidence did constrain India's approach, as he allowed the operation to be put off indefinitely after it became clear that India's local superiority was an illusion.

China's limited attack on October 10 shook Nehru's belief that a major conflict was unlikely, but it did not destroy it. Writing to the premiers of India's

[126] Nehru, *Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 61–62. Gopal emphasizes this point as well. See Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, 209.

[127] Quoted in Kaul, *Untold Story*, 365. Note that this hope was not a passing fancy; since 1961, Nehru had discounted the possibility of a large-scale Chinese attack in response to provocations on the border. See Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, 206–9, 211, 217; Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 122–24; MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Coming of the Cataclysm*, 298; Maxwell, *India's China War*, 175.

[128] K. Subrahmanyam, "Evolution of Indian Defence Policy (1947–1964)," in *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. IV (1947–1964)*, ed. Iqbal Narain (New Delhi: All India Congress Committee/Vikas Publishing House, 1990), 528–34.

[129] Kaul, *Untold Story*, 367–68. See also Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, 219–20; Maxwell, *India's China War*, 325.

provinces on October 12, he explained that the situation in the eastern sector had become "dangerous." He noted that 11 Indian soldiers had been killed in the attack, with a comparable number wounded. In the future, he suggested, "it seems likely that conflicts on a bigger scale might take place there." Nonetheless, Nehru continued to underestimate the actual level of danger. For one thing, he seemed to believe that conflict would remain confined to the border; the letter did not mention the possibility of a more penetrating "invasion" or even "war." In fact, he seemed worried only about NEFA. He did not refer to the western sector even once in the entire letter, even though India's position there was particularly weak. Nor did Nehru seem to think that serious conflict was imminent. He concluded the letter by noting that he was headed to Sri Lanka for a four-day visit. If Nehru had any inkling of what China was preparing to unleash on October 20, it is hard to believe that he would have left the country. Subsequently, in November, Nehru explained the decision to leave Indian forces below Thagla Ridge after October 10 by noting that "to the last minute we did not expect this invasion in overwhelming numbers." Nehru refused to believe that China would start a full-blown war with India until it actually happened.[130]

Indeed, Nehru was nothing less than stunned when China launched offensives in both the eastern and western sectors on October 20. As the PLA quickly reversed the gains that India had made under the forward policy, Nehru brooded over his misjudgment. As his cabinet secretary later recalled: "Those who saw him at close quarters in that week of October 1962 saw him moved, as only a person like him could be moved, who had given his trust and stood by it, and who could not just accept the fact of betrayal as part of a political game, of realpolitik."[131]

In fact, Nehru was physically challenged by the attack. On October 16, Galbraith had reported that "the Prime Minister seems to be in better health and much improved in morale." By November 9, Galbraith was warning President Kennedy: "One of the worst problems here is that the Chinese attack strikes the country with a very tired leader whose principles and ideas also have been badly shattered by the event." The ambassador enclosed a photo of the demoralized prime minister to drive home his point.[132]

As the war unfolded, Nehru struggled to make the best of a bad situation. Publicly, he put on a brave face and tried hard to appear optimistic. Privately, however, his decisions reflected no great confidence. At a meeting on October 23, looking "pale and subdued," Nehru agreed that Indian forces should

[130] Parthasarathi, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 5, 526–33. The last quotation is from Maxwell, *India's China War*, 391.

[131] S. S. Khera, *India's Defence Problem* (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1968), 199.

[132] John Kenneth Galbraith to John F. Kennedy, November 9, 1962, President's Office Files, Box 118a, Folder 4 (India General, April 1962–December 1962); John Kenneth Galbraith to John F. Kennedy, October 16, 1962, President's Office Files, Box 118a, Folder 8 (India Security 1962).

abandon the town of Tawang in NEFA, despite its political importance.[133] They would fall back instead to the more defensible Se La Pass. The prime minister also looked for help abroad. India was already receiving aid from Britain, but on October 23 Nehru's government began sounding out the United States as well. The Indian cabinet formally approved a request for American assistance on October 29, and the first U.S. shipments arrived in India on November 3.[134]

Nehru also softened India's diplomatic stance on the border dispute. On October 27, he wrote to Zhou Enlai to suggest talks after the two sides returned to the positions they had held before September 8.[135] Under pressure, he had abandoned India's earlier insistence that China first withdraw from Aksai Chin as a precondition for negotiations. In fact, as Maxwell puts it, the letter was "remarkable for its mildness," given that the two countries were at war.[136] To be sure, Nehru could have gone further to placate the Chinese. He rejected China's demand of October 24 that India "respect the line of actual control" as of November 1959.[137] In addition, after the civility of his note on October 27 was criticized domestically, Nehru took a tougher line when corresponding with Zhou in early November.[138]

Nehru's refusal to accept China's terms at this stage almost certainly reflected the fear that he would forfeit his party's support if he did so. Although compromise made sense militarily, it was "political nonsense" in New Delhi.[139] Indeed, to atone for the losses up to that point, the beleaguered prime minister was forced to accept Krishna Menon's resignation as defense minister on November 7. Nehru accepted the resignation with great reluctance, and only after it became clear that his party might turn against him if he refused.[140] Clearly, agreeing to China's terms at this point would have courted his removal from office. In addition, Nehru apparently believed that the military danger to India at that point was relatively limited. This was not because he was confident that India's forces would repulse the Chinese advance. Instead, he later recalled that he had expected the Chinese to stop upon reaching the end of their supply routes.[141]

On November 14, General Kaul launched a local offensive at Walong, near the eastern end of NEFA, which ended in a smashing defeat for the Indian forces. The attack apparently was not ordered by Nehru but was designed to

[133] Palit, *War in High Himalaya*, 246.
[134] Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 181, 196–99; Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*, 381–82.
[135] *Notes, Memoranda, and Letters Exchanged and Agreements Signed between the Governments of India and China, October 1962–January 1963 (White Paper no. VIII)* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1963), 4–5.
[136] Maxwell, *India's China War*, 376.
[137] *Notes, Memoranda, and Letters Exchanged and Agreements Signed between the Governments of India and China*, 3.
[138] Maxwell, *India's China War*, 376.
[139] MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Coming of the Cataclysm*, 309.
[140] Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 200–6.
[141] Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*, 438–39.

be a present for him on his seventy-third birthday.[142] Four days later, the PLA unleashed a new offensive in NEFA, after which Indian resistance in the eastern sector disintegrated. India's defeat on the border was total.

Upon learning of India's crumbling defenses, Nehru looked to Washington for help. On November 19, he wrote two long letters to President Kennedy outlining the situation, one at 8:00 P.M. and the other a few hours later. The second of these letters made it clear just how dire the situation was. "With the advance of the Chinese in massive strength," Nehru wrote, "the entire Brahmaputra Valley is seriously threatened and unless something is done immediately to stem the tide the whole of Assam, Tripura, Manipur and Nagaland would also pass into Chinese hands." He noted that India had limited its earlier requests to "essential equipment" given "the wider implications of such assistance in the global context" and because "we did not want to embarrass our friends" (presumably Moscow). Yet Nehru was now prepared to put those concerns aside: "The situation that has developed is, however, really desperate. We have to have more comprehensive assistance if the Chinese are to be prevented from taking over the whole of Eastern India. Any delay in this assistance reaching us will result in nothing short of a catastrophe for our country."

The prime minister was no longer simply asking for equipment but for direct U.S. intervention in the war. Specifically, he said that India needed "a minimum of 12 squadrons of supersonic allweather fighters" as well as "modern radar cover." Nehru asked that U.S. personnel man these planes and radar installations while India's personnel were trained. These planes would protect India's cities, radar installations, and lines of communication. The prime minister added that "[W]e should if this is possible also like U.S. planes manned by U.S. personnel to assist the Indian Air Force over Indian areas where air action by the I.A.F. against Chinese communication lines supplies and troop concentration [*sic*] may lead to counter air action by the Chinese." Nehru then noted that "any air action to be taken against the Chinese beyond the limits of our country (e.g., in Tibet) will be taken by I.A.F. planes manned by Indian personnel." He also reassured Kennedy that U.S. assistance would be used "entirely for resistance against the Chinese." The United States was in the process of drafting a favorable reply to this request when China announced its unilateral cease-fire on November 21.[143]

Nehru paid a steep price for underestimating China's willingness to use force on the border. He was personally devastated, and his authority was questioned as never before. Although Nehru had increased defense spending after the border dispute emerged in the late 1950s, it would now surge to 4.5 percent

[142] Maxwell, *India's China War*, 393.

[143] These two letters have only recently been declassified. See Jawaharlal Nehru to John F. Kennedy (both letters), John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, National Security Files, Box 111, India Nehru Correspondence (November 11, 1962–November 19, 1962). For more background on the letters, see Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis*, 206–10.

of GDP in 1963–1964 – more than double the level in 1960–1961.[144] Nehru had long sought to avoid such levels of military spending, which he believed would delay India's economic modernization. But after stumbling into a war with China, he had little choice.

CONCLUSION

The introduction to this chapter noted that Nehru's proclivity for diplomatic boldness and military restraint persisted well beyond his early years in office. The cases examined in this chapter make it clear that his national efficacy beliefs helped to sustain this approach. On the military side, Nehru's limited sense of martial efficacy informed the cautious approach he initially took toward Tibet and China. Although India's relations with communist China were decidedly uncertain in 1949 and Nehru was eager to maintain Tibet as a buffer, he ruled out the possibility of significant military support for Tibet at this time. Simply put, Nehru saw no possibility of improving Indian security through an armed expedition to Tibet, or even through more generous military assistance and training. As the preceding analysis has shown, this was not the only way to evaluate the situation at the time; more optimistic assessments were possible. Yet Nehru was not the leader to endorse such rosier views: he had come to power convinced that the weak were incapable of resisting the strong through force.

Nehru sought to maintain a conservative approach to China after the border dispute emerged in the late 1950s. While transferring responsibility for the border to the army in 1959, he sought to avoid military conflict "not only in a big way, but even in a small way." Even after the forward policy was adopted in late 1961, Nehru did not foresee a major conflict with China. In September 1962, of course, Nehru did approve a military operation to evict Chinese forces from disputed territory. This decision was an exception that reflected a range of considerations that combined to make the operation seem both politically imperative and potentially feasible, and it is telling that Nehru postponed the operation as soon as China's local superiority was recognized. Indeed, the broader pattern of Indian military policy under Nehru, toward both Pakistan and China, was one of restraint.

On the diplomatic side, this chapter has focused on Nehru's boldest diplomatic initiative: his campaign for nuclear disarmament. Nehru did not undertake this effort simply because he saw nuclear weapons as immoral or because of political pressure. Instead, Nehru's strong sense of moral efficacy impelled him to believe that India was uniquely capable of promoting disarmament and that its "Gandhian approach" could ultimately succeed. In keeping with this outlook, Nehru saw the test ban negotiations not as a threat to his country's military development, as Mao did, but as an opportunity to enhance Indian security. He thus unilaterally restrained India's own program as he pursued

[144] Thomas, *Defence of India*, 3.

an agreement, and after the PTBT was negotiated in 1963 Nehru embraced the treaty as a stepping stone to broader efforts to slow the arms race. In the end, he overestimated what India could accomplish; the opportunity that he perceived to advance the cause of disarmament at this time was more illusory than real. Even so, India's first prime minister would undoubtedly take pride in the stigma that has come to surround the idea of wielding nuclear weapons in combat today, a taboo that he strove to create.[145]

[145] For in-depth studies of the nuclear taboo, see T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009); Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-use of Nuclear Weapons since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

9

Conclusion

The preceding chapters of this book offer three principal findings. The first is that Mao and Nehru came to power with very different national efficacy beliefs. Whereas Mao was highly confident in the military sphere but much less confident in the diplomatic sphere, Nehru was just the reverse. These contrasting beliefs stemmed from the different paths that these two leaders had taken to power. Mao overcame a host of daunting military challenges in the course of the Chinese Revolution, but his diplomatic accomplishments were much less impressive. In contrast, the Indian independence struggle provided Nehru with a wealth of experience in diplomacy and nonviolent remonstration, but no military experience. Nonetheless, Mao and Nehru's beliefs were not simply determined by the different processes through which their states were formed. The way in which these leaders interpreted the triumphs that brought them to power was crucial as well. Indeed, even though Liu Shaoqi and Vallabhbhai Patel experienced the Chinese Revolution and the Indian independence struggle, respectively, they possessed different backgrounds and different personalities, and they interpreted these experiences differently than Mao and Nehru did. As a result, Liu did not develop Mao's strong sense of martial efficacy, and Patel did not acquire Nehru's great sense of moral efficacy.

The second finding is that Mao and Nehru's national efficacy beliefs shaped their foreign policies in important ways immediately after they took office. Chapter 4 demonstrated that Mao's beliefs prompted him to act with military boldness and diplomatic caution after the Korean War broke out. On the military side, Mao's martial confidence inspired him to anticipate remarkably positive outcomes if China intervened in the conflict, notwithstanding its material disadvantages. He thus pressed for China to enter the war in October 1950, even as North Korea was collapsing. The objections to this move raised by Liu and others make it clear that a leader with less martial confidence would have stayed out of the conflict. Subsequently, Mao's martial confidence combined with his much weaker sense of moral efficacy to produce a highly cautious

approach to wartime diplomacy in early 1951. Whereas a leader with more diplomatic confidence and less martial confidence would almost certainly have seized the "golden opportunity" that emerged to initiate negotiations with the United States at this time, Mao decided against it. As a result, he missed a chance to rest his overextended troops and to end the war on better terms than he ultimately did.

Nehru's national efficacy beliefs produced a very different set of policies following the outbreak of war in Kashmir in 1947. As shown in Chapter 7, his great sense of moral efficacy prompted him to expect positive outcomes if India brought its complaints against Pakistan before the UN Security Council. He thus endorsed this move, only to be greatly disappointed by the outcome. Patel's resistance to the UN appeal demonstrates that a leader with less confidence in the diplomatic realm would not have taken this step. Nehru's limited sense of martial efficacy, in turn, caused him to see much less opportunity for assertive action in the military sphere during the war. He was pessimistic about India's prospects not only if it attacked Pakistan but also within Kashmir. The latter case is particularly revealing because the systemic cues here were decidedly ambiguous.

The third finding is that Mao and Nehru's national efficacy beliefs continued to shape their policies well into their later years in office. As noted at the outset of Chapter 5, Mao continued to initiate conflict with more powerful opponents, particularly on land, whereas his diplomacy remained consistently conservative. Moreover, the analysis in this book has not only documented congruence between Mao's beliefs and his post-Korea foreign policies but also demonstrated the role his beliefs played in generating these policies by focusing on two cases in the mid-1960s. In the military realm, Mao's strong martial efficacy beliefs prompted him to believe that the risks of entering the Vietnam War were manageable and that China would prevail if the conflict were to escalate. He thus supported the deployment of Chinese soldiers to North Vietnam in 1965. Liu's more conservative stance, in contrast, indicates that China would have been less likely to send troops into the conflict had its leader possessed less confidence in the military sphere. In the diplomatic realm, Mao's weak sense of moral efficacy caused him to adopt a highly conservative approach to nuclear arms control and disarmament. In fact, Mao was so cautious here that he backed away from his own government's proposal for a world disarmament conference once the rest of the world began to show interest in it. As argued earlier, this was an opportunity that a leader with greater confidence in the diplomatic realm would have embraced.

Nehru's national efficacy beliefs proved strikingly persistent as well. As demonstrated at the beginning of Chapter 8, he remained remarkably ambitious in the diplomatic realm after the war in Kashmir, leading the charge for nonalignment and nuclear disarmament in the 1950s and early 1960s. And throughout this period he continued to avoid military conflict with stronger states, albeit with one exception. The case studies conducted in Chapter 8, in turn, indicate that Nehru's national efficacy beliefs played an important role in

producing this pattern of policy. Nehru's great sense of moral efficacy inspired him to believe that India was uniquely capable of promoting nuclear disarmament. He thus restrained India's nuclear program and embraced the PTBT, notwithstanding the disproportionate costs for India, in hopes of leading the world toward broader measures to slow the arms race. Nehru's more limited sense of martial efficacy, in turn, informed his approach to Tibet after the communists prevailed in the Chinese Revolution. Whereas a leader with strong martial efficacy beliefs might have made greater efforts to support Tibet against China, Nehru was not such a leader, and he emphasized a diplomatic approach instead. Although Nehru ultimately did sanction the use of force against Chinese troops on the border in September 1962, this decision reflected a range of factors that made the action appear politically imperative and potentially feasible, and it was an exception that stood out against a larger pattern of military restraint.

Although this book has compared Mao and Nehru as foreign policy makers, the point here is not to equate them as political leaders in any kind of overall sense. Indeed, although neither one was as successful in foreign policy as he had hoped, they made very different kinds of mistakes. Mao's militant approach to foreign affairs alienated much of the outside world, exacerbated China's poverty, and left it in a precarious international position by the end of the 1960s. Nehru's diplomatic initiatives, meanwhile, created institutional processes – particularly UN involvement in Kashmir and international efforts to restrict nuclear testing – that India would later seek to evade. Needless to say, their domestic legacies are dramatically different as well. Mao's domestic policies proved so destructive that his successors explicitly repudiated what he hoped would be his lasting contribution, the Cultural Revolution. Mao's successors have also rejected his economic ideas and dramatically increased China's prosperity and its international standing as a result. In contrast, although India has moved away from the kind of state-led development model that Nehru championed, his emphasis on tolerance and democracy still shines brightly in retrospect.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON MAO AND NEHRU

This book builds on a number of other studies that have explored the psychology, ideas, and worldviews behind Mao and Nehru's foreign policies in recent years. The findings of this book challenge some of these studies while supporting or complementing others. In Mao's case, one prominent line of research has argued that his proclivity to use force in international crises reflected his exposure to realpolitik themes in the Chinese strategic classics, including Sun Zi's *The Art of War*.[1] In this view, Mao came to believe early on that political life was highly conflictual and violent, and this worldview underpinned his confrontational approach to foreign policy after he came to power. This study

[1] Johnston, "Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China," 216–68.

has focused on Mao's penchant for challenging stronger rivals in particular, and it demonstrates that an additional aspect of Mao's belief system – his great confidence in China's martial prowess – played a crucial role in this regard. As noted in Chapter 3, China's strategic classics may have helped to inspire Mao's martial confidence insofar as they suggested ways in which skillful commanders could defeat more powerful opponents. More generally, however, this study emphasizes the importance of Mao's revolutionary experience in the development of his martial efficacy beliefs. It is clear, after all, that Mao was exposed to the Chinese strategic classics relatively early in life, but his strong confidence in the military sphere did not fully cohere until the late 1940s, when it became clear that the communists would triumph in the Chinese Revolution. This finding fits with the more general expectation that the most intense and durable efficacy beliefs stem from "enactive mastery experiences," which provide the most direct evidence of one's ability.[2]

Other scholars have stressed how Mao's radical commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideology drove his highly conflictual foreign policy. Chen Jian has developed a particularly comprehensive version of this argument, emphasizing that Mao used force not only to pursue his ideological agenda abroad but also to mobilize China's masses for the "continuous revolution" at home.[3] There is no question that Mao exploited tensions with the United States and the Soviet Union for domestic purposes. Yet, as other scholars have stressed, the optimal approach to domestic mobilization is to maintain international tensions *while avoiding war*, which can lead to a costly diversion of resources and perhaps even defeat.[4] In this light, Mao's decisions to initiate armed conflict with the superpowers in Korea, Vietnam, and on the Sino-Soviet border still seem rather puzzling. It is less surprising if we take into account Mao's strong sense of martial prowess, which made him optimistic about China's ability to prosecute land conflicts with stronger states.[5]

Recent years have also seen increasing interest in dysfunctional aspects of Mao's personality and how these may have helped to drive his confrontational

[2] Note that Johnston's chapter cited earlier also maintains that quantitative indicators of power, particularly the Correlates of War Composite Index of National Capability (CINC), suggest that a shift in China's favor was a necessary if not sufficient condition for Mao's government to use force in international crises. See ibid., 255–56. Nonetheless, the CINC data also make it clear that China remained markedly weaker than the superpowers throughout the Maoist period. It is also important to note that the CINC data understate China's relative weakness because they rely on such broad indicators as total population and military personnel, where China scores quite high, and do not take into account military technology, an aspect of military power where Maoist China would score rather low.

[3] Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 10–15. On Mao's "continuous revolution" more generally, see Lowell Dittmer, *China's Continuous Revolution: The Post-liberation Epoch, 1949–1981* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

[4] Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 14, 219.

[5] Note that Chen's work on the Korean War supports the notion that Mao's willingness to challenge the United States reflected confidence that he derived from the revolution. See Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 179.

foreign policies.[6] This study does not challenge the idea that Mao suffered from significant psychological disorders and, in particular, strong narcissistic tendencies. Nonetheless, the link between narcissism and the specific kinds of foreign policy decisions of interest in this study remains unclear. After all, narcissism is not uncommon among political leaders; as Jerrold Post has written, "if narcissistic characters were stripped from the ranks of public figures, the ranks would be significantly thinned."[7] In contrast, relatively few leaders choose to initiate military conflicts with stronger adversaries. So there must be more to Mao's story. Post notes that narcissistic leaders may surround themselves with sycophantic advisors, leaving them out of touch with political reality, a possibility that could be quite relevant in Mao's case.[8] Nonetheless, this explanation cannot tell us why Mao was so much more ambitious in the military sphere than in the diplomatic sphere.[9] In addition, the "sycophantic advisors" thesis does not seem relevant to the decisions explored in this study because Mao faced considerable resistance from important colleagues when he sought to intervene in Korea and when he sought to adopt a more militant line in foreign policy in the early 1960s. More intriguing is the idea that Mao was a "malignant narcissist," a leader who combined extreme grandiosity with a paranoid outlook and an absence of conscience.[10] This personality type would seem particularly likely to produce a highly aggressive foreign policy. Even so, although Mao can be understood in these terms, it is striking that other malignant narcissists that scholars have identified (Fidel Castro and Kim Jong-Il, for example) have been more politically hostile than militarily aggressive where stronger adversaries were concerned.[11] Even malignant narcissists seem to be constrained by what they believe to be militarily achievable. I thus suggest in this book that Mao's narcissism may have mattered in an indirect manner: by prompting him to interpret the communist Chinese revolution as evidence of his own army's great martial prowess, thereby helping to create his strong sense of martial efficacy.

This book also has much to say about recent studies of Nehru's foreign policy. One recurrent criticism in the literature is that his idealistic brand of diplomacy indulged his own sense of morality and pride at the expense of India's national interests. As one prominent author has written of Nehru's approach to external affairs: "Foreign policy was an end in itself, rather than a means

[6] Michael Sheng's work is particularly noteworthy in this regard. See Sheng, "Mao Zedong's Narcissistic Personality Disorder," and Sheng, "Mao and the Korean War."

[7] Post, *Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders*, 83.

[8] Ibid., 86. See also Jerrold M. Post, *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World: The Psychology of Political Behavior* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), 108–10.

[9] Indeed, other scholars have argued that narcissistic leaders may at times adopt conflictual foreign policies but at others undertake high-profile peacemaking efforts. See Rose McDermott, *Presidential Leadership, Illness, and Decision Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 171.

[10] On malignant narcissism, see Post, *Leaders and Their Followers*, 202, 219, 255.

[11] On Castro and Kim, see ibid., 201–2 and 255, respectively.

to promote the security and well-being of the citizenry in whose name it was conducted. . . . Nehru's foreign policy positions were self-justifying emanations of his intellect; to link them to direct benefits to the Indian people was beneath him."[12]

The specific decisions explored in this book, however, make it clear that this condemnation is too sweeping. Nehru did not appeal to the UN Security Council during the Kashmir conflict because his conscience compelled him to do so or to prove that India was morally superior to other countries. Instead, the record indicates that he hoped to bring international pressure to bear against Pakistan, facilitating India's prosecution of the war. Similarly, his campaign for disarmament was not simply dictated by a moralistic aversion to nuclear weapons or a desire to be "better" than the nuclear powers. Instead, Nehru sought to slow an arms race that he did not wish to run, and, in his later years, his nuclear diplomacy aimed to constrain China in particular. The fact that Nehru was largely unsuccessful in these endeavors is beside the point. He hoped that his ambitious diplomacy would succeed, and he believed that India would be better off as a result.[13]

At the other extreme, other scholars have argued that Nehru's idealistic rhetoric was mere window dressing, obscuring a foreign policy that was much less cooperative than is often believed.[14] Certainly, Nehru was willing (if not eager) to use force as an instrument of foreign policy, in spite of his calls for military restraint on the part of other countries. This book has simply emphasized that he was generally quite cautious in this regard, in keeping with his limited sense of martial efficacy. In that sense, it resonates with recent scholarship that has stressed Nehru's "innate circumspection" where the use of force was concerned.[15] Yet although this book recognizes that Nehru was not above using force, it also makes clear that he sincerely sought to promote international cooperation, particularly when he believed that such cooperation would be in India's interest, and that he made significant gestures in pursuit of this end. Indeed, Nehru's proactive cooperation on Kashmir and on nuclear disarmament entailed real sacrifices that complicated Indian foreign policy for decades thereafter. It is thus going too far to suggest that Nehru's lofty rhetoric was nothing more than camouflage for a highly realpolitik foreign policy or that his policies never lived up to the principles that he espoused.

[12] Tharoor, *Nehru*, 184. For another critical view, see Ashok Kapur, "The Indian Subcontinent: The Contemporary Structure of Power and the Development of Power Relations," *Asian Survey* 28, no. 7 (1988), 703–5.

[13] This point resonates with the work of other scholars who have characterized Nehru's diplomacy as being grounded in his perception of Indian national interests. See Khilnani, *Idea of India*, 178; J. N. Dixit, *Makers of India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2004), 77–97.

[14] Bharat Karnad has emphasized this point with respect to Nehru's nuclear policy in particular, as discussed in Chapter 8. Neville Maxwell, in turn, has argued that Nehru's policies toward India's neighbors did not live up to the lofty principles that he articulated. See Neville Maxwell, "Jawaharlal Nehru: Of Pride and Principle," *Foreign Affairs* 52, no. 3 (1974), 633–43.

[15] Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 8.

This book also offers a counterpoint to arguments that Nehru took office as an idealist but was rapidly forced by events to adopt a more realist approach to foreign affairs.[16] To be sure, there is no denying that Nehru's policies evolved substantially in response to setbacks. Following the Kashmir conflict, he never again invested much hope in appeals to the UN Security Council. More fundamentally, the war with China prompted Nehru to support substantially higher levels of defense spending and to forge a closer relationship with Washington. In fact, the 1962 defeat was nothing short of psychologically devastating for Nehru, and it is often noted that it accelerated his physical decline. Even so, he continued to press for disarmament even in the aftermath of the China war, and toward this end he signed a test ban treaty that did little to constrain the superpowers (and did nothing to constrain China). In this key respect, Nehru's belief in India's special diplomatic capabilities, and the proactive diplomacy that it inspired, lasted until his death.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this book has focused on Mao and Nehru, it is my hope that scholars will explore the impact of national efficacy beliefs on foreign policy in other contexts in the future. There are three questions that I wish to highlight in this regard. First, and most simply, have other leaders been inspired by strong national efficacy beliefs to challenge international constraints? There are a number of intriguing possibilities here. On the military side, Mao is not the only leader to have sought victory against more powerful opponents, even when his colleagues counseled restraint. As noted at the outset of this book, Alexander determined to fight the more powerful Persian Empire at Gaugamela in 331 B.C., even though his most senior general advised him to seek an accommodation. Napoleon chose to fight a larger Russian and Austrian force at Austerlitz in 1805, one that fielded twice as many cannon as the French could, despite suggestions from his advisors that he avoid battle.[17] When Robert E. Lee ordered Pickett's charge at Gettysburg in 1863, General James Longstreet suggested maneuvering away from the larger, well-positioned Union force toward more favorable terrain.[18] In each of these cases, the commander in question deliberately embraced a boldly confrontational approach, rejecting more cautious alternatives proposed by close associates.

In the diplomatic realm, Nehru is not the only leader to have made costly diplomatic moves in hopes of eliciting cooperation from other states, notwithstanding the reservations of his colleagues. In the peace talks that followed

[16] See Baldev Raj Nayar and T. V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 115–58.

[17] Margaret Scott Chrisawn, *The Emperor's Friend: Marshal Jean Lannes* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001), 119–20.

[18] Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: Scribner's, 1968), 360–61.

World War I, President Woodrow Wilson made numerous concessions and offered to shackle America's newly preponderant power within the most comprehensive and ambitious international organization ever proposed to that point, the League of Nations.[19] Wilson believed that these concessions, and the American example of self-restraint within the League, would ultimately create a more peaceful international order, but 53 U.S. Senators ultimately took a more skeptical view. Seven decades later, Mikhail Gorbachev made concessions in arms control negotiations with the United States in hopes of eliciting greater American cooperation in both economic and military matters. Although there was a general recognition within the Soviet leadership that military retrenchment was necessary, Gorbachev's willingness to engage in such generous diplomacy was not matched by all of his colleagues in the politburo.[20]

The limitations of space preclude an in-depth discussion of these cases, but there is evidence to suggest that each of these individuals were influenced by strong national efficacy beliefs. Alexander believed that his small but deadly army, which had been honed by his father, was quite capable of defeating larger adversaries after it had conquered Greece.[21] Following his meteoric rise through the ranks, Napoleon's martial confidence became particularly palpable during the First Italian Campaign of 1796–1797, which featured French victories over more numerous forces from Austria and the Italian Piedmont.[22] Robert E. Lee's faith in the Confederate army rose to prodigious heights following victories over Union forces in Virginia in 1862. Subsequently, following his defeat at Gettysburg, Lee confessed, "It's all my fault. I thought my men were invincible."[23] Woodrow Wilson, in turn, developed great confidence in his ability to wield "the arts of persuasion" as a young man. As president, he came to see himself as a "special instrument" of a new and powerful "moral force" in the world, a sentiment reinforced by the adulation he received in postwar Europe.[24] Lastly, although scholars are still debating the precise motivations behind Gorbachev's boldness in arms control, part of the explanation may lie in the diplomatic confidence he gained while winning over Margaret Thatcher

[19] On the concessions Wilson made in order to secure support for the League, see Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919* (London: Constable and Co., 1933), especially 157–84.

[20] William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 91–92.

[21] Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 74–79.

[22] David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: MacMillan, 1966), 29, 53–121. Dwyer's more recent account also sees the Italian campaign as an important formative experience for Napoleon, but it stresses how Napoleon exaggerated his successes in Italy for domestic audiences. See Philip Dwyer, *Napoleon: The Path to Power* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 195–272.

[23] Quoted in Douglas Southall Freeman, *R. E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), vol. 3, 136.

[24] For the quotations in this and the preceding sentence, see John M. Blum, *Woodrow Wilson and the Politics of Morality* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1956), 12, 159. On Wilson's postwar tour of Europe, see Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 50.

in London in 1984.[25] Each of these cases is therefore worth exploring in more detail.

The second question that I wish to highlight is whether and how national efficacy beliefs influence foreign policy when political power is more dispersed. In such cases, one must naturally broaden the analysis to include additional policymakers as appropriate. In Chapter 2, I briefly highlighted two possibilities in this regard, drawing on the work of other scholars of foreign policy decision making. Specifically, one could expand the analysis to include the various members of a small group of elite policymakers (such as the members of the politburo) or to encompass multiple autonomous actors who share control over foreign policy (such as the U.S. president and the congressional leadership). If appropriate, one could even analyze media commentary or public opinion in order to assess popular views of national efficacy in a given area.

When authority over foreign policy is shared, it is obviously more difficult for a single leader with a strong sense of national efficacy to implement an ambitious agenda. Woodrow Wilson's failure to secure ratification of the Treaty of Versailles offers a case in point. Yet it is also possible that the interaction between multiple decision makers will amplify efficacy beliefs in ways that lead to bold policies even in the absence of a predominant leader. If decisions are made by a small group of policymakers, for example, it is possible that a consensus will coalesce around a very high appraisal of national efficacy as a result of groupthink. That is, relatively confident policymakers may reinforce each other, prompting less sanguine counterparts to self-censor because of the pressures for concurrence that often develop within cohesive groups. In fact, Irving Janis once noted that overestimations of national capability are a very common symptom of groupthink.[26] Alternatively, if decisions are made by a group of autonomous actors, the bargaining process among them may lead to a more ambitious military posture than any single individual desires, as Jack Snyder has argued.[27] Although such boldness may be driven more by logrolling processes than by a strong sense of national efficacy, the efforts to justify such a bold policy may generate "myths of empire" among the wider public that include a strong belief in national military prowess. These "myths" may then inspire ambitious military efforts at a later date. In sum, even in the absence of a predominant leader, domestic decision-making processes may amplify perceptions of national efficacy in ways that lead to remarkably bold policies.

The third question that I wish to highlight is whether and how strong national efficacy beliefs on the part of one leader may influence the foreign policies of his successors. Perhaps the simplest possibility in this regard is that

[25] On the impression this visit made on Gorbachev, see Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 75–78. Note also that Gorbachev witnessed and was inspired by Nehru's visit to Moscow in 1955. See Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 52–53.

[26] Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), 174.

[27] Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

a leader may succeed in passing his beliefs on to one or more of his successors. As noted in Chapter 2, there are a number of ways in which strong efficacy beliefs may be acquired, so such transmission from one leader to another could occur through several different pathways. A leader might persuade close associates that his lofty estimation of national capability was correct, or he might be more inclined to promote individuals who already shared his beliefs. Alternatively, a leader might adopt bold policies on the basis of his beliefs, and these policies – if deemed successful – might inspire others to develop a strong sense of national efficacy as well. The possibility that strong efficacy beliefs will be passed from one generation of leadership to the next should thus not be dismissed.

If we focus on China and India in particular, it seems that Mao and Nehru did not succeed in passing on their stronger senses of national efficacy to their successors, though they undoubtedly influenced them in many other ways. In China, Deng Xiaoping emerged as China's leader in the late 1970s after eclipsing Mao's chosen successor, Hua Guofeng. Although Deng had acquired considerable experience as a military commander in the revolution, experience that left an impression on him, his writings from the 1970s reveal that he believed that the PLA's fighting capacity had declined dramatically over the previous 20 years. As Deng put it in 1977, "[T]he quality of our army just isn't as good as before."[28] In India, meanwhile, Indira Gandhi emerged as India's new leader in 1966, following a brief stint by Lal Bahadur Shastri. Although Gandhi continued to evoke her father's favorite themes in foreign affairs, calling for nonalignment and nuclear disarmament, she seemed less confident of India's ability to forge new patterns of international cooperation. As one observer wrote in 1973, whereas India's approach to nuclear diplomacy before 1965 reflected a sense that it had a "special leadership role," after 1965 Indian leaders seemed to withdraw from this role as they became more pessimistic about the efficacy of "appeals to moral force and political will."[29] Indeed, although Indira Gandhi later supported the Six-Nation Five-Continent Disarmament Initiative in the early 1980s, she apparently did so with little hope that it would actually have an impact on the nuclear powers.[30]

[28] A more extended excerpt from his remarks is even more illuminating: "We must also admit that our Army is not sufficiently capable of conducting modern warfare, and that although it is numerically strong, it is of relatively poor quality. It was of very good quality during the war years and the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea. Indeed, given quality of that kind, our army could fight even with its present weapons and could learn to adapt itself to the conditions of modern warfare and defeat the powerful imperialists. The point is that because of the interference and sabotage of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, the quality of our army just isn't as good as before." See Deng Xiaoping, "The Army Should Attach Strategic Importance in Education and Training," August 23, 1977, in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975–1982)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1983), 75.

[29] Michael Sullivan, "Re-orientation of Indian Arms Control Policy, 1969–1972," *Asian Survey* 13, no. 7 (1973), 692.

[30] Author's interview with M. K. Rasgotra, New Delhi, January 30, 2004. Rasgotra served as foreign secretary in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs from 1982 to 1985.

It would be premature, however, to conclude that Mao and Nehru's stronger efficacy beliefs left no imprint whatsoever on their respective countries. Mao's faith in the ability of the weak to defeat the strong still resonates in some quarters of the PLA. Some Chinese military writers now cite Mao as they revive such slogans as "using the inferior to defeat the superior" (*yi lie sheng you*) or "using the weak to defeat the strong" (*yi ruo sheng qiang*), albeit in a different strategic context.[31] Some Indian leaders, in turn, seem to have been inspired by Nehru's tireless diplomacy, even if they have not acted with comparable boldness. As other scholars have noted, Rajiv Gandhi was donning the mantle of his grandfather when he sought to reinvigorate Indian disarmament diplomacy in the late 1980s.[32] Nehru's imprint may also be discerned in the "Gujral doctrine," adopted while Inder Gujral was prime minister in 1997 and 1998, under which New Delhi abandoned the notion of reciprocity in favor of a more generous diplomatic approach in dealing with its smaller neighbors.[33] Even Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who presided over India's nuclear tests in 1998, has been likened to Nehru for his active diplomatic engagement with India's neighbors.[34] In short, Mao and Nehru's national efficacy beliefs were not simply handed down from one generation to the next, but neither were they entirely extinguished when the two leaders died. The intriguing afterlives of these beliefs warrant closer scrutiny in the future.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

This study has a range of implications for the study of international relations more broadly. First, its focus on individual leaders speaks to a resurgence of interest in how political elites shape the making of foreign policy.[35] More specifically, this book is part of a growing body of literature concerned with how the psychological characteristics of individual leaders shape foreign

[31] For example, see Zhu Xinmin, "Jianchi Yi Kexue Fazhanguan Wei Zhidao, Dali Jiaqiang Minbing Yubeiyi Budui Jiceng Jianshe" ["Persist in Using Scientific Development Concepts as Our Guide, Greatly Strengthen the Basic Construction of the People's Militia and Reserve Units"], *Guofang* [National Defense] no. 11 (2006), 5; Huang Xianzhong, "Zhandou Jingshen he Kexue Jingshen Shi Duoqu Zhanzheng Shengli de Fabao ["Fighting Spirit and Scientific Spirit Are Magic Weapons for Seizing Victory in War"]," *Xiandai Junshi* [Contemporary Military Affairs] no. 7 (2005), 12–13.

[32] Nayar and Paul, *India in the World Order*, 198–99.

[33] Stephen Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2001), 40.

[34] Sreeram Chaulia, "BJP, India's Foreign Policy and the 'Realist Alternative' to the Nehruvian Tradition," *International Politics* 39, no. 2 (2002), 215–34.

[35] For some examples, see Byman and Pollock, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men"; Alexandre Debs and Hein Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," *The American Political Science Review* 104, no. 3 (2010), 430–45; H. E. Goemans, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Giacomo Chiozza, "Introducing Archigos: A Dataset of Political Leaders," *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 2 (2009), 269–83; Elizabeth Saunders, "Transformative Choices: Leaders and the Origins of Intervention Strategy," *International Security* 34, no. 2 (2009): 119–61.

policy decisions.[36] The approach taken in this book, however, differs from that adopted by many other recent studies in this field. In particular, many psychologically oriented studies suggest that leaders frequently make foreign policy decisions more or less irrationally. Leaders are depicted not as cold and calculating but as mentally compromised by emotional arousal, raging hormones, mental illness, or other debilitating conditions. In contrast, the theory developed in this study does not challenge the idea that leaders make decisions based on calculations of expected outcomes. Instead, it seeks to show how such calculations are shaped by the beliefs that leaders hold about the national efficacy of their states. In addition, the theory set forth here does not maintain that leaders' beliefs necessarily distort the calculations that they make. On the contrary, it is entirely possible that a leader's sense of national efficacy will accurately reflect the actual proficiency of his state, even if that was not always the case in this study. In taking this approach, I hope to show that psychological constructs are not simply means of explaining deviations from rational-choice models; they can also be crucial for understanding how "rational" calculations are actually made.[37]

At the same time, this study also indicates that leaders can misperceive their state's level of national efficacy, and that such misperceptions can prove quite durable. Although this finding might seem surprising, at least from a rationalist perspective, it accords with abundant psychological research that has documented the resilience of strong efficacy beliefs.[38] Moreover, it is not entirely clear from a purely rationalist perspective when leaders should adjust their national efficacy beliefs. Of course, it is easy to suggest that such beliefs should be updated in response to success and failure. Success and failure, however, are often hard labels to apply. Was China's intervention in the Korean War a success or a failure? It was not as successful as Mao had hoped, yet it was hardly a total failure. Even when the nature of the outcome is clear, success is not always proof of great competence, and failure need not reflect incompetence. As noted earlier, individuals with strong efficacy beliefs often attribute failure to adverse circumstances rather than a lack of ability on their part. In this light, it is hardly surprising that strong efficacy beliefs are not easily extinguished.

[36] For some examples of this growing body of literature, see Michael Horowitz, Rose McDermott, and Allan C. Stam, "Leader Age, Regime Type, and Violent International Relations," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 5 (2005); Hymans, *Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*; Rose McDermott, *Political Psychology in International Relations* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004); McDermott, *Presidential Leadership, Illness, and Decision Making*; Stephen Peter Rosen, *War and Human Nature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[37] In this respect, this study resonates with some other recent works that have sought to show how psychological attributes and processes may support rational decision making. See Rose McDermott, "The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscientific Advances for Political Science," *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 4 (2004), 691–706; Jonathan Mercer, "Rationality and Psychology in International Politics," *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005), 77–106.

[38] See Chapter 2's discussion on this point.

This book also offers new explanations for old puzzles in international relations. Martial efficacy beliefs, for example, represent a new type of explanation for why states initiate conflict with stronger opponents. As noted in Chapter 2, extant explanations for such decisions tend to emphasize situation-specific considerations. In contrast, this book highlights beliefs that leaders can take with them from one military encounter to the next. In a sense, this approach builds on T. V. Paul's insight that "military or civilian groups that value the use of force" may be more likely to challenge more powerful rivals.[39] The focus here, however, is not military-minded regimes but the mindsets of specific individuals, which after all can vary widely within the same government. In addition, I have sought to determine more precisely what kinds of beliefs will inspire leaders to challenge stronger rivals. Focusing on specific individuals and specific beliefs, I have tried to identify the key elements of militarily audacious leadership.

Martial efficacy beliefs also represent a new kind of explanation for why leaders sometimes succumb to "false optimism" about military conflict.[40] More specifically, the concept of martial efficacy beliefs fits into an emerging body of literature on the ideational sources of false optimism. Dominic Johnson, for example, has argued that human beings are generally prone to "positive illusions" for evolutionary reasons, and that these illusions often make leaders overconfident about military conflict.[41] This book suggests that individual leaders can vary widely in their confidence levels, even when they are political allies within the same government, because they have different perceptions of national efficacy. In addition, I do not wish to suggest that high levels of martial confidence are necessarily "positive illusions." In some cases, a leader's confidence may be justified, and their optimism could thus prove "correct" rather than "false." Turning to other scholars, Chris Twomey has argued that leaders sometimes succumb to false optimism because they view the opponent in question as employing a less effective mode of fighting.[42] The theory developed in this study complements this perspective. I argue that leaders sometimes discount the material superiority of their adversaries not because they see them as ineffective at translating their power into combat capability but because they believe their own states possess the proficiency needed to overcome material inferiority. Said differently, it is a belief in their own state's efficacy – rather than the other state's inefficacy – that inspires them. In a given case, of course, it is possible that both dynamics may be at work.[43]

[39] Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 33.

[40] On false optimism in general, see Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 14–34.

[41] Dominic D. P. Johnson, *Overconfidence and War: The Havoc and Glory of Positive Illusions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[42] Twomey, *Military Lens*.

[43] In Chapter 4, for example, I note that Mao's tendency to view the U.S. approach to warfare as inferior played a role in his thinking leading up to the intervention in Korea, even as I emphasize the importance of his exalted view of China's martial efficacy in the making of this decision.

The concept of moral efficacy, in turn, offers a new perspective on why states make costly gestures in pursuit of cooperation. Recent research has emphasized the importance of such gestures as "costly signals" that credibly communicate one's own willingness to cooperate.[44] That is, by sending a costly signal, the state in question is engaging in behavior that a noncooperator would presumably avoid. Having observed the signal, the target state(s) may then feel more comfortable cooperating with the signaler should they wish to do so. In contrast, this study suggests that costly gestures may also be designed to persuade. In other words, the signal may be an attempt not only to demonstrate one's own preferences but to change the preferences of other states in a more cooperative direction. Nehru's decision to approach the UN Security Council in 1947 not only demonstrated that India was open to a diplomatic resolution of the Kashmir conflict but was also essential if India was to have an opportunity to win the council's support against Pakistan. Similarly, Nehru's nuclear restraint not only showed that India was prepared to cooperate toward disarmament but more importantly was designed to give India's calls for disarmament greater moral force.

Most broadly, this book offers a new explanation for why states sometimes react to the same international environment in very different ways. Foreign policy decisions are ultimately made by individuals, and individual leaders can vary widely in what they believe their states can accomplish in the international arena. The point here is not that international structures are irrelevant to the making of foreign policy but rather that the same constraint can mean different things to different leaders. What looks like an insuperable hurdle to one leader can be a difficult – but surmountable – challenge to another. Moreover, there is no a priori reason to assume that the leaders who are more confident in this regard are thinking and acting recklessly. Even Kenneth Waltz has conceded that "with skill and determination structural constraints can sometimes be countered . . . virtuosos transcend the limits of their instruments and break the constraints of systems that bind lesser performers."[45] This book found that Mao and Nehru's attempts to "transcend the limits of their instruments" often fell short. Even so, ambitious policies need not always evoke regret with the benefit of hindsight.

[44] Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, 184–88.
[45] Waltz, "Reflections on *Theory of International Politics*," 344.

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