CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN CHINESE STRATEGIC CULTURE – CHINESE DECISION-MAKING IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT

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This thesis examines how China’s predominant strategic culture has changed since the 1950s. This thesis analyzes Chinese decision-making in the Taiwan Strait from 1954-2011 – paying attention to years of heightened tension in the Taiwan Strait (1954-55, 1958, 1995-1996).

This thesis argues that China’s strategic culture was once realpolitik, but is now shifting toward a more engagement, stability-oriented strategic culture – a neoliberal strategic culture packaged in Confucian rhetoric. Under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong, China practiced a realpolitik strategic culture, while other strategic cultural discourses (Confucianism) were intentionally shunned. China’s 1978 Reform and Opening policies, however allowed Chinese elites to reconsider China’s dominant realpolitik strategic culture. Chinese elites now adopt a more pragmatic economic approach and are actively promoting Confucianism to fill the ideological void left by Marxism. Additionally, China’s economic opening and engagement with international institutions have resulted in a shift in Chinese strategic thinking from a predominately realist orientation toward a more constructivist one. This thesis contends that these changes in China’s strategic culture are manifest in the PRC’s Taiwan policy.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

War in the Taiwan Strait could break out over misperception or miscalculation. Although deterrence and years of increasing economic interdependence significantly reduce the likelihood of conflict, the crises that have occurred in the Taiwan Strait since the mid-1950s illustrate that the potential for conflict remains. To avoid future misunderstandings, US policy makers must understand Chinese strategic thought better. One avenue for this is to study China’s strategic culture. There are numerous definitions of strategic culture.¹ I define strategic culture as a deeply held set of beliefs about the efficacy and role of warfare in human affairs, (re) interpreted, defined, and promoted by a country’s military and political elites for various reasons, which set the conceptual parameters for perceiving and reacting to one’s external security environment.²

This in mind, what does Chinese strategic culture look like? How does it circumscribe and rank China’s strategic preferences? Has China’s predominant strategic culture changed? If so, what has caused this change and what is China’s dominant strategic culture now? Most scholars agree that Chinese strategic culture is influenced by some combination of its Confucian and military traditions (eg, The Seven Military Classics). However, there is much debate about how these cultural traditions inform Chinese foreign policy in practice and which elements are operative today. Thus, Chinese strategic culture has been described in various and often conflicting ways. Chinese

² It is necessary to note that my definition draws from insights from both Alastair Iain Johnston and Andrew Scobell’s definitions of strategic culture.
strategic culture has been described as offensive-oriented and realpolitik, or defensive-oriented and pacifist. Which of these understandings – if any – is most accurate?

I address these questions through an historical (1954-2011) case study of Chinese decision-making in the Taiwan Strait. I analyze Chinese decision-making during periods of heightened tension in the Taiwan Strait, the 1954-1955 & 1958 crises, 1996 Crisis. I also examine China’s post-1996 Taiwan strategy. During this time, China experienced several changes in its domestic and external environment. China underwent drastic internal economic changes. Under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong, China was an impoverished and diplomatically isolated, Marxist-Leninist regime. However, in 1978-79, under the stewardship of Deng Xiaoping, China initiated the ‘Reform and Opening’ (改革开放 gaige kaifang) policies, which opened China’s economy to the world. Ultimately, these reforms shifted China’s economy from a command economy to a more market-oriented one, ushering in a period of significant economic growth that has continued to present time.

China also experienced several dramatic changes in its external security environment. In the mid-1960s, Sino-Soviet relations worsened, and in 1972 China normalized relations with the United States. The United States recognized the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as the sole legitimate government of China and renounced formal ties with the Republic of China (ROC) – a move that was adopted by the vast majority of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly members.³ To prevent China from retaking Taiwan by force, the United States adopted a policy of ‘strategic ambiguity’

under the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) in 1979.\(^4\) The TRA allowed the United States to provide *de facto* rather than *de jure* recognition of Taiwan.\(^5\) During this time, China also experienced other changes in its external security environment: the spread of liberal democracy (in Eastern Europe and Latin America), the growth of neoliberal institutions (eg, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank), the emergence of a US-led system of unipolarity, and Taiwan’s democratization. Democratization altered Taiwan’s political identity and standing in the world, and exposed cross-Strait relations to the contentious and pluralistic nature of democratic politics.

This thesis argues that China’s dominant strategic culture throughout the 1954-55 and 1958 Crises was a realpolitik strand of strategic culture. This realpolitik strategic culture made China suspicious of US intentions in the Taiwan Strait. In terms of strategic preferences, China exhibited a willingness to engage in coercive diplomacy – the display or use of military force to coerce another actor into satisfying one’s diplomatic goals. In particular, Chinese decision-makers often used preemptive military force. However, China’s security environment has undergone several dramatic changes (eg, Sino-US rapprochement, China’s 1978 Reform and Opening policies). As a result, economic interdependence is mitigating the influence of China’s realpolitik strategic culture and undermining the ideological legitimacy Marxism. To fill this ideological void, Chinese elites are promoting Confucianism.

In addition, as China’s economy began to liberalize, China began engaging with multilateral institutions, which have socialized China to a limited degree. This change has

\(^4\) The term “strategic ambiguity” was popularized in Kurt Campbell, Derek J. Mitchell, “Crisis in the Taiwan Strait?” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2001).

\(^5\) Under this act, the United States proclaims a commitment to defend Taiwan from aggression, but underspecifies which conditions would necessitate a US intervention.
resulted in a constructivist shift in Chinese strategic thinking. Despite this, the 1996 Crisis highlights that China’s realpolitik strategic culture remains. This thesis argues that although China’s realpolitik strategic culture remains the dominant strand of China’s strategic culture, economic interdependence and China’s increasing emphasis on constructivist variables (e.g., Confucian norms) mitigate the influence of China’s realpolitik strategic culture.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter Two provides the theoretical framework, hypotheses, and methodology for this study by reviewing literature on strategic culture, particularly Chinese strategic culture. I first situate the study of strategic culture into the broader field of international relations theory. Second, I discuss the literature on strategic culture and its conceptual development. Third, I examine the literature on Chinese strategic culture. I argue that scholars tend to believe that China’s operative strategic culture is realpolitik, pacifist-defensive minded or some combination of these two strands of thought. From this literature review, I establish the hypotheses for this thesis and methodology for addressing them.

Chapters three through six discuss China’s decision-making during the Taiwan Strait crises. Chapter Three analyzes the 1954-1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis. First, this chapter discusses the impact of the Korean War on the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) plans to retake Taiwan. Second, this chapter examines Chinese decision-making during the 1954-55 Taiwan Strait Crisis.

Throughout this discussion, I highlight the PRC’s reasoning for relying on force for dispute resolution and the PRC’s understanding of the United States and Taiwan.
Chinese decision-makers over-exaggerated threats posed by the United States and the ROC. Chinese leaders believed that the ‘imperialist’ United States planned to encircle China and use Taiwan as a base for attacking China. Every action taken by US and ROC leaders fit into China’s preconceived understandings of these two actors. To prevent these threats from materializing, Chinese decision-makers believed that the preemptive, albeit limited use of military force was the most efficacious route for deterring US aggression.

Chapter Three also examines the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis. First, I will discuss the impact US alliance-building efforts in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, and US limited nuclear policy on Chinese strategic thinking. Second, I look how the PRC’s threat perceptions about the United States influenced its decision to engage in preemptive military strikes. This case study demonstrates that in the 1958 Taiwan crisis, much like the 1954-55 crisis, Chinese leaders misperceived and exaggerated the intentions of the United States and the ROC. Rather than waiting for a crisis to occur, China initiated a crisis with limited objectives.

Chapter Four describes the structural and cultural changes that occurred during the Mao period. I first discuss the several political, economic, and structural changes that occurred during the period between the 1958-1995 crises. These changes include, the Sino-Soviet split, the normalization of US-China relations, China’s rapid economic growth following the Reform and Opening policies of 1978-79. These changes presented opportunities for Chinese elites to pursue more pragmatic economic policies and tolerate (and eventually promote) competing ideological discourses such as Confucianism.

Chapter Five focuses on the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. I argue that this crisis demonstrates that China’s realpolitik strategic culture remained during the early 1990s.
During the 1995-1996 Crisis, the PRC continued to overestimate threats posed by the United States and the ROC, and relied on the “preemptive” use of military force – this time for coercive diplomacy. Chinese leaders viewed Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui as a separatist. China’s characterization of Lee as a separatist, however, was misguided. Although Lee Teng-hui did not agree to the conditions for China’s One-China policy, he was open to reunification, just on different terms.⁶

Chinese leaders also misperceived US intentions when the United States allowed Lee to visit Cornell University in 1995.⁷ China ignored the role played by domestic politics in the US decision to allow Lee to visit the United States. In response to these concerns, Chinese decision-makers decided to utilize coercive diplomacy through missile tests and amphibious military exercises near the coast of Taiwan. Similar to previous crises in the Taiwan Strait, the scope of China’s actions was limited. China had no intention of actually retaking Taiwan. Instead, China wanted to send a warning to the US and ROC that it would not tolerate separatism. I, however, argue that the scope of China’s actions during the 1995-1996 Crisis was even more limited than it was during the prior crises.

Chapter Five discusses China’s post-1996 and contemporary foreign policy toward Taiwan. I argue that China’s foreign policy in the Taiwan Strait is reflecting the increasing relevance of neoliberal variables (economic interdependence) and a rhetorical shift toward a modern, re-conceptualized Confucian strategic culture. China has increasingly emphasized its “soft power” – a diplomatic tool and or non-material or normative form of

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power (as opposed to economic or military power) that seeks to legitimize a country’s actions through cultural attraction (e.g., the proliferation of China’s Confucian Institutes, China’s Harmonious World Concept). In addition, driven by economic concerns, China has also increasingly engaged international institutions, joining institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2000. The increasing relevance of constructivist variables is highlighted by actions such as China’s introduction of its “New Security Concept” paper. The New Security Concept emphasizes the need cooperation and peaceful territorial dispute resolution – a rhetorical shift from China’s more bellicose behavior under Mao. These are both examples of a gradual shift in Chinese strategic thinking from a purely realpolitik strategic culture toward a more constructivist one.

As for Taiwan, China has taken a much more pragmatic approach, despite disconcerting actions by leaders such as Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian. This peaceful approach differs from China’s previous approach toward the more status-quo leader, Lee Teng-hui. Furthermore, this peaceful approach is occurring while China continues to grow more powerful economically and militarily – in contrast to neorealist predictions. This suggests that neoliberal variables such as economic interdependence, and China’s increasing emphasis on soft power are beginning to mitigate the influence of China’s more dominant realpolitik strategic culture.

After reviewing contemporary cross-Strait relations, Chapter Six discusses conclusions and implications of this study for current cross-Strait relations. This chapter also examines potential sources for conflict in the Taiwan Strait, as well as policy recommendations for addressing these challenges.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature on strategic culture, particularly Chinese strategic culture. First, I situate the literature on strategic culture in the broader field of international relations theory. Second, I trace the conceptual development of strategic culture, as well as debates within the field. Third, I review the literature on China’s strategic culture. After discussing the literature on China’s strategic culture, I develop a set of hypotheses, and I present my methodology for addressing them.

STRATEGIC CULTURE IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

There are three predominant theoretical frameworks for studying international relations: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. While classical realists ground their assumptions in the power-hungry, self-interested qualities of human nature, neo-realists assume that the anarchical structure of world politics is the root source of interstate conflict. Without an overarching governing authority, states (the unit of analysis in realism) must fend for themselves. Stability is maximized when there is a clear international order – preferably a bipolar rather than a multipolar one – that reflects the power capabilities of states in the system. Power transitions from one type of order to another are turbulent and often result in war. Despite these dire predictions, realists were unable to foresee the peaceful end of the Cold War. Realists also struggle to explain the increasing importance of non-state actors.

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8 It is important to note that there is wide variation within each of these schools of thought. This section is only intended to provide a general overview for the purpose of comparison.
Liberal scholars accept the neo-realist premise that states operate in an anarchical superstructure. However, liberal scholars emphasize the importance of economic interdependence, democratic governments, and international institutions for reducing conflict. Liberals contend that economic interdependence encourages peace by raising the financial costs of war. Liberals are also proponents of “democratic peace theory.” This theory argues that democracies seldom go to war with one another, because democratic governments are accountable to a population that bears the costs of war. Last, liberals argue that international institutions promote peace, because they “can increase information flows, reduce transaction costs, and prevent cheating.”

Despite liberalism’s strengths, some scholars argue that democracies are prone to “launch messianic struggles” against authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, countries transitioning to democracy often engage in civil or international wars.

Contrary to realism and liberalism, constructivism focuses on the role of ideas instead of material factors. Constructivists are agnostic about the nature of anarchy. In the words of Wendt (1992), “Anarchy is what states make of it.” Thus, while realists assume that anarchy automatically necessitates insecurity, competition, and eventual conflict, constructivists do not assign a positive or negative value to anarchy. From a constructivist perspective, depending on socio-cultural norms, historical legacies, a state in anarchy constructs whether other states are allies or adversaries. For constructivists, state identity, interests, and threats are all social constructs that are the result of historical processes and

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12 Walt 1998, 32.
13 Amitav Acharya 2008, 68.
ongoing social discourse. While some constructivists are interested in how states understand their identity and interests in an anarchical environment, other constructivists examine how “transnational communication and shared civic values” are eroding the territorial basis of the state.\textsuperscript{16} Other constructivists focus on the transformative effect of norms on state behavior, in particular the “legitimate purposes for which state power may be employed.”\textsuperscript{17} However, constructivism’s emphasis on the role of discourse in shaping state interests and behavior is often critiqued as “describing the past [better] than anticipating the future.”\textsuperscript{18}

The study of strategic culture fits best within the constructivist paradigm. Whereas realist and liberalist theories stress the importance of material factors, constructivists highlight the role of ideational variables, such as culture. Like constructivism, strategic culture theories assume the world is inter-subjective. Therefore, anarchy does not necessitate conflict, because threat perceptions and ideas about the utility of military force are socio-cultural constructs. Furthermore, states may or may not have similar strategic cultures. Therefore, there may or may not be noticeable differences among states, in terms of foreign policy.\textsuperscript{19}

Liberal and realist theories, on the other hand, assume that states are undifferentiated units that behave ‘rationally’ to changes in their structural environment. The key factors determining behavior are material factors, such as a state’s relative power within the anarchical structure of world politics. Although strategic culture theories do not necessarily reject the notion of ‘rationality’ \textit{per se}, strategic culture does place limits on

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 41.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 38.
\end{itemize}
the range of choices available to decision-makers. Strategic culture also ranks preferences for behavior.20

STRATEGIC CULTURE – ORIGINS AND CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Snyder (1977) is credited as the first person to coin the term “strategic culture” in his study on the Soviet Union’s limited-nuclear strategy.21 Snyder’s report examined the US doctrine of “strategic flexibility” and its underlying assumption that if deterrence failed, both the United States and the Soviet Union would practice “intrawar deterrence,” and thereby act with restraint. Game theorists believed the United States and Soviet Union would act cooperatively when presented with credible deterrents. Snyder argued, however, these game theorists ignored historical, cultural, and organizational influences on Soviet and American strategy.22

Snyder, thus, studied what he termed as the Soviet Union’s “strategic culture.” Snyder defined strategic culture as: “the body of attitudes and beliefs that guides and circumscribes thought on strategic questions, influences the way strategic issues are formulated, and sets the vocabulary and the perceptual parameters of strategic debate.”23 Thus, strategic culture was viewed as the long-term cultural/historical symbolic influences that color and circumscribe how decision-makers view strategy. Therefore, decision-makers view strategy through the prism of their nation’s unique strategic culture. This prism creates conceptual barriers for appropriate action, and thus limits the range of possible choices available to decision-makers at a given time. Certain strategic

20 This will be discussed further below.
23 Ibid., 9.
preferences appear completely sensible, while others do not. Thus, simplistic game-theory models are unable to comprehend the way a nation’s unique culture and history may limit “rationality” and inform decision-making.

Since Snyder’s first articulation of strategic culture, a large body of research on strategic culture has emerged. According to Johnston (1995), strategic culture was, at first, a “loosely defined” concept, attempting to address the shortcomings of ahistorical and acultural realist theories, however, “three generations” of research on strategic culture have emerged. The first-generation of research built upon Snyder’s research on the Soviet Union’s strategic culture. First generation research viewed strategic culture as being informed by large “macroenvironmental” variables such as geography, history. To these scholars, strategic culture informed everything from grand strategy to tactics.

First generation research, however, was too broad in scope, too deterministic and often conflated independent and dependent variables – viewing strategic culture more contextually, and thus influencing both the independent and dependent variables. Thus, these explanations struggled to identify and differentiate strategic culture as an idea and how it informed strategy in practice. These explanations also were too deterministic, in the sense that they viewed nearly every aspect of a state’s foreign policy behavior as deriving from its strategic culture – which was problematic empirically. First generation researchers also assumed that a state had a homogenous and uniform strategic culture, and

25 Ibid., 36.
26 Johnston 1995, 36.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 37.
ignored the influence of different and often competing strategic cultural discourses.\textsuperscript{29} Last, first generation research ignored the ability to elites to utilize a strategic cultural discourse rhetorically to disguise realpolitik behavior.\textsuperscript{30}

The second generation of research on strategic culture emerged in the mid-1980s.\textsuperscript{31} These scholars sought to correct the first generation’s mistakes by focusing on the instrumentality of strategic culture.\textsuperscript{32} Second generation scholars argued that leaders drew from culturally acceptable/legitimate sources of authority to rhetorically justify realpolitik behavior. Thus, for these scholars, while strategic culture exists, state interests are more important than strategic culture for determining state behavior.\textsuperscript{33}

However, Johnston argues that elites are socialized by the strategic culture they advocate. Strategic cultures create a range of behaviors that are culturally acceptable; thus, by advocating a strategic culture, elites are constrained in terms of actions they can take, lest they be viewed as hypocritical.\textsuperscript{34} Therefore, regardless of whether state leaders use strategic culture instrumentally, we should expect strategic culture to have noticeable effects on state behavior. Thus, states with different histories and cultural symbols, should have noticeably different foreign policy behavior. Despite this, second generation researchers are divided on whether one should expect cross-national differences in state behavior.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 41.
Third generation research on strategic culture emerged in the 1990s. This research avoided several of the first-generation’s mistakes. Third generation scholars targeted case studies where material interests alone could not completely explain state behavior. Unlike first generation scholars, however, they were careful to separate their independent and dependent variables, strategic culture and foreign policy behavior, respectively. Third generation researchers were interested in theory testing and contrasting strategic culture explanations with neo-realist arguments. However, as Johnston notes, in neorealism “optimal strategies can very drastically.” Therefore, it is easy for these scholars to establish deterministic neorealist arguments. This undermines the third-generation’s ability to establish a “conclusive competing test” to realist explanations. Third generation researchers often made deterministic cultural arguments, and thus had a difficult time explaining when strategic culture does not have an observable impact on state behavior.

To remedy the problems of these three generations of research, Johnston sought to develop a more rigorous definition of strategic culture. Johnston conceptualized strategic culture as a “system of symbols” deeply rooted in history, which inform strategy. These symbols carry such an “aura of factuality” that their prescribed strategy appears uniquely

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37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 42.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 44-46.
legitimate. Johnston also recognized the presence of several subcultures. However, Johnston argued that typically one strategic culture is dominant over the others and is manifested in policy. This view by Johnston represents an attempt to treat strategic culture as an independent variable and state behavior as a dependent variable.

First-generation scholars, such as Gray (1999), however critique Johnston’s attempt to create a falsifiable theory of strategic culture. These scholars argue that strategic culture can only be viewed as a context for understanding state behavior, and that it influences both independent and dependent variables. At a more fundamental level, these critiques represent an anti-positivist critique of Johnston’s work. Johnston, however, argues that the first generation’s “strategic culture as context” explanation is tautological and does not offer a viable way for measuring the presence of strategic culture in society. Stuart Poore (2003), however, argues that culture permeates everything, including how we understand material variables. Thus, a tautological understanding of strategic culture is inevitable.

I disagree with Poore’s argument, however, because it is too deterministic and denies the role of human agency. If context or culture permeates every aspect of human life, then people will always be socialized by the same structure of culture. If every aspect of human life is determined by culture, and every person is always socialized by the same culture, culture can never change. How, then, does one explain cultural change if culture determines everything? Anthony Giddens (1984) argues that although people may operate

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42 Ibid., 46.  
43 Ibid., 44.  
in a structure of preexisting cultural rules and norms, *people* can change these rules.\textsuperscript{47} Rather than simply eliminating strategic culture as an independent variable or viewing strategic culture as independent of human behavior, it is more useful to view strategic culture and human action as operating in a feedback loop. Although strategic culture may constrain behavior, people have the *agency* to question, reinforce, contest, reject, and even change predominant strategic cultural discourses.

Although strategic culture can be altered, many scholars contend that it highly resistant to change. This is because dominant strategic culture discourses often have widespread legitimacy throughout a given society, they are “difficult to disconfirm,” and they are often institutionalized in bureaucracies. Thus, alternative strategic cultures must overcome these obstacles.\textsuperscript{48} Other scholars, however, argue that strategic culture can be dynamic. Lantis and Charlton (2011) argue that strategic culture can occur during “demographic changes, political transitions, and economic transitions,” or when “political and military power is used to change political and societal structure . . .”\textsuperscript{49} These periods of sudden societal, political, or economic change can have a profound impact on national psyche and present a type of “shock” that allows leaders and societies to reconsider the utility of dominant strategic cultural discourses. Hence, working in a feedback loop, during sudden political, societal, or economic transformations, people can reimagine, or reconstruct their strategic culture. Lantis and Charlton note, however, that these periods of

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
transformation can be “discontinuous” – elites and society at large are socialized by strategic culture at different rates.⁵⁰

Insights from constructivism also provide explanations for change in strategic culture. For constructivists, state identities are in flux and change in response to social-structural interactions. Other scholars “allow for the possibility of change when strategy fails to meet objectives.”⁵¹ For example, during the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, many Chinese elites questioned the utility of China’s traditional culture for addressing the challenges created by Western powers. Last, similar to second generation theorists, some scholars emphasize the ability of elites to use strategic culture instrumentally.⁵² As noted above, however, political elites are also likely socialized by strategic culture. Therefore, although elites may have agency they are also bound by the same strategic cultural influences as others.

Lantis and Charlton argue that the key to strategic cultural change is some combination of structural or systemic, societal, political, or economic changes (these challenges may emerge domestically or exogenously) and elite agency.⁵³ Elites can either seek to maintain the status quo or act as agents of change. If an external shock fundamentally exposes the inadequacies of commonly held beliefs, elites may or may not decide to act as agents of change. If external shocks do not disconfirm preexisting beliefs or if an external shock is absent, elites will not have the impetus to alter the dominant strategic cultural discourse and belief system.

⁵⁰ Ibid.
⁵¹ Ibid.
⁵² Ibid.
⁵³ Ibid., 296.
Overall, since Snyder coined the term strategic culture’ in 1977, the concept has been reinterpreted in numerous ways. Conceptualizations of strategic culture have often either been too broadly defined and tautological, “mechanically deterministic,” neglected the role of elites in manipulating strategic cultural discourses or for elites to be socialized by the very discourse they seek to propound, developed deterministic counter-tests, neglected the presence of multiple strategic cultures, and last, they often neglected the ability for strategic culture to rank preferences for behavior. Although first-generation scholars argue strategic culture should be viewed more as context than as an independent variable, contextual approaches to strategic culture are tautological and have little explanatory power. Those who contend culture determines everything neglect the ability for culture to change. Elites, who are socialized by dominant strategic cultural discourses, can pave the way for altering, challenging, or reaffirming dominant strategic cultural discourses. After reviewing the literature on strategic culture, I now focus on Chinese strategic culture.

CHINESE STRATEGIC CULTURE

Literature on China’s strategic culture typically proposes three sets of hypotheses regarding China’s operative strategic culture: (1) China has a pacifist-defensive, Confucian strategic culture; (2) China has an offensive-oriented, realpolitik strategic culture; (3) China has both an offensive realist and defensive-minded strategic culture. First, those who see China as a defensive-pacifist country emphasize the importance of China’s Confucian tradition. In short, these scholars argue that Confucianism stresses the importance of peace and developing “harmonious” relations with outsiders. Thus, in Chinese strategic culture, warfare is to be avoided, and only practiced in self-defense.
Second, those who believe Chinese strategic culture is offensive-oriented and realpolitik emphasize the importance of China’s ancient military doctrines, especially the writings of Sun Zi. For these scholars, China’s strategic culture is similar to realist theories – viewing warfare as the rule of international relations, rather than the exception, and focusing on strategies to best one’s adversary in combat. These scholars argue that China tends to deal with threats preemptively, striking offensively when conditions are most advantageous.

Third, some scholars argue that both China’s strategic culture combines both its pacifist and offensive traditions. Scholars such as Andrew Scobell (2002) argue that China has a “Cult of Defense” – meaning that Chinese leaders truly believe China is a uniquely pacifist power, and thus they are able to justify almost any use of force, even offensive or preemptive military action, as an act of self-defense. I will discuss each of these claims below.

China scholars have long maintained that Chinese culture influences China’s approach to warfare in unique and distinctive ways. Many of these scholars contend that Chinese culture – its Confucian tradition and military tradition – is predominantly defensive-minded and adverse to war. For example, John Fairbank, without explicitly using the term ‘strategic culture’, argues that Chinese military tradition, unlike many Western traditions (eg, Napoleon, Alexander the Great) does not glorify war. Instead, Chinese cultural influences such as Confucian writings and Sun Zi’s Art of War view warfare as an aberration in human affairs. Confucianism supports a hierarchical system that promotes order through indoctrination and a system of rewards and punishments, “the military functioned on a third level, as a last resort when disorder had reached such

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54 Sun Zi’s name often appears in the Wade-Giles form “Sun Tzu.” I will use the pinyin form – “Sun Zi” throughout this thesis.
proportions that neither indoctrination in the classical teachings nor suasion by rewards and punishments was efficacious.”

Fairbank (1974) says the core of Confucianism’s pacifist bias is the concept of the “superior man” (君子/ Junzi). According to Fairbank the superior man “should be able to attain his ends without violence.” In the hierarchical Confucian system, if the “One Man at the top of the social pyramid” has to resort to physical violence, this person demonstrates failure to act as a “sage in the art of government.” In summary, China’s Confucian tradition views warfare as morally objectionable and “applies equally to domestic and foreign relations.”

According to Fairbank, Sun Zi also denigrated the utility of warfare. Fairbank says, Sun Zi views violence as something that should be avoided, and only a smart part of conflict. In Sun Zi’s view, violence was costly, and one should view the most efficient way to subdue an opponent before resorting to violence – whether this be through “surprise” or “deception.” Ultimately, the goal is to compel an adversary surrender without having to resort to violence. Thus, according to Fairbank’s interpretation of Sun Zi, when responding to an adversary, strategy and subterfuge are preferable to outright conflict.

However, although Fairbank depicts Sun Zi as a pacifist, similar to depictions of Confucianism, Sun Zi is traditionally regarded as a realist. While war is to be avoided when possible, war is viewed as an unfortunate reality in world affairs. Sun Zi offers

56 Ibid., 7.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 8.
59 Ibid., 11.
strategies for how to exploit an enemy’s weakness to one’s own advantage. Sun Zi described war as a “vital matter of the state,” and thus advised that one take advantage of *shi* (*施*) or strategic advantage to “[make] the most of favorable conditions and tilt the scales in [your] favor.” This belief that war is inevitable part of international affairs, and that one should act when the timing is best to exploit an adversary’s weakness (perhaps through an offensive or preemptive attack) is very similar to the realist worldview.

The first person to explicitly and systematically analyze China’s strategic culture was Alastair Iain Johnston (1995). Johnston argues that China has two strategic cultures: a pacifist Confucian strategic culture and an offensive, realpolitik strand. According to Johnston, however, only China’s realpolitik strategic culture is operative, while the Confucian strand is merely philosophical. Thus, Johnston disagrees with depictions of China having an operative strategic culture that is pacifist in nature.

Johnston examines Chinese foreign policy during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Johnston chooses this time period, because decision-makers during this period of time were the “self-conscious heirs” of China’s ancient philosophical traditions, and during this time, China was isolated from Western cultural influences. From this analysis, Johnston argues that China has two strategic cultures. The dominant strategic culture is what he terms the “parabellum” strand; this strand of thought is similar to realpolitik strands of Western thought. In this worldview, conflict is the norm rather than peace, and actors (states) compete in zero-sum terms. Actors seek security through military might and at

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62 Ibid., 29.
times must use violence to subdue adversaries. In this worldview, it was better to act offensively, rather than defensively. Johnston also argued that China had a second strand of strategic culture – a Confucian-Mencian strand. This strand of thought is pacifist, and defensive, yet was only manifest at the philosophical level, and “did not inform the decision-axioms of Ming officials.

Andrew Scobell (2002) also disagrees with depictions of China possessing an operative, anti-militarist strategic culture. Like Johnston, Scobell argues that Chinese strategic culture has two main strands: a Confucian strand and realpolitik one. However, unlike Johnston, Scobell argues that both of these traditions are operative and they interact to form what he terms as a “Chinese Cult of the Defense.” According to Scobell, Chinese elites believe China is a uniquely pacifist, non-expansionist country. This belief enables Chinese leaders to justify almost any use of force, offensive or otherwise. It is important to note, that Scobell does not simply argue that elites use this strategic culture instrumentally. They actually believe China is uniquely pacifist. Although many citizens in countries throughout the world contend to be “peace-loving,” Scobell argues that what is unique in China is the “extreme degree to which this is stressed.” This belief – that China is a uniquely pacifist country – is articulated in official publications, such as Chinese defense white papers. Chinese leaders, researchers in the PRC, and Chinese military researchers also echo this view. Many Chinese elites assert that China always tries to resolve disputes peacefully, and only uses force as a last resort. Scobell says that

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63 Ibid., 61.
64 Ibid., 30.
65 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 3.
68 Ibid., 5.
69 Ibid.
many Chinese assert that China is opposed to hegemony (霸 主 *ibaquan zhuyi*). Many Chinese analysts also contend that China only goes to war in “self-defense.”

According to Scobell:

> One prominent Chinese military scholar [Li Jijun] insists that virtually all of the approximately 3,700 – 4,000 wars China has fought in more than 4,000 years of dynasties (ending with the collapse of the Qing in 1911) have been civil wars or wars to unify the country. And all of the eight “military actions” since 1949, the scholar asserts, have been waged in “self-defense.”

Scobell says that Chinese researchers also contend that China is nonexpansionist. These researchers compare Ming dynasty admiral Zheng He to Western explorers such as Christopher Columbus and Vasco Da Gama. They argue that unlike these Western explorers, Zheng did not engage in colonization. Overall, the impact of the interaction between China’s defensive-pacifist strategic cultures and its offensive/realpolitik strategic culture is that China is able to justify almost any use of force in purely defensive terms.

Huiyun Feng (2007), however, refutes the assertion that China’s operative strategic culture is the offensive-oriented, realpolitik strand propounded by Johnston and Scobell. Feng examines the strategic thinking of Chinese decision-makers during the Korean War, the Sino-Indian War, and the Sino-Vietnamese War. Feng concludes that China’s dominant strategic culture is, in fact, Confucian and defensive-oriented.

Feng argues that Johnston’s insistence on China possessing a parabellum strategic culture is misled, because it ignores the ability for change and the role played by

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70 Ibid., 7-8.
71 Ibid., 8.
72 Ibid.
individual leaders.\textsuperscript{74} According to Feng, China’s Confucian strategic culture is not merely philosophical, but is the predominant and \textit{operative} strategic culture in China today. Feng substantiates this view by analyzing speeches by Chinese leaders throughout and after the Cold War.\textsuperscript{75}

Overall, Johnston, Scobell and Feng represent three strands of thought on Chinese strategic culture. Whereas Johnston emphasizes the offensive, realpolitik strand of Chinese strategic culture, Feng argues that China has as defensive/pacifist strategic culture. Scobell, on the other hand, views both of these strands of strategic thought as operative. However, despite the strengths of these approaches, each of these scholars assumes China’s contemporary strategic culture has remained relatively static over time. As discussed above, however, strategic culture is not immutable. Large events such as political transitions, economic crises, and exogenous shocks present opportunities for elites to reconsider and reframe predominant strategic cultural discourses. China’s contemporary history has been tumultuous (eg, the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, the Chinese Civil War). This turbulent history presented Chinese elites and society, numerous opportunities to challenge dominant strategic cultural paradigms.

Some scholars attempted to account for how Chinese strategic culture has (or has not) changed since traditional times. Tiejun Zhang (2002) argues that throughout Chinese history, China has possessed a pacifist, Confucian strategic culture. However, Zhang argues that China’s present strategic culture is “defensive realist.”\textsuperscript{76} Zhang contends that for nearly 2,000 years Chinese strategic culture has been characterized as Confucian and

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 36-98.
defensive natured. China was economically self-sufficient and it maintained hierarchical relations with peripheral powers. The majority of China’s population was ethnically Han Chinese and shared a common Confucian culture. Furthermore, despite the various dialects of Chinese, China had only one written language. These factors helped promote cultural homogeneity.  

In terms of strategic thinking, China’s imperial examinations ensured that Chinese political elites shared a common Confucian education and understanding of politics. Zhang terms this traditional Chinese strategic culture as “cultural moralism” – an emphasis on taking a “benevolent” and “virtuous” approach to domestic and foreign policy. This emphasis on morality is also reflected in other Chinese concepts such as just or righteous war (yi zhan). Wars are justified if they are intended to punish evil, unjust or illegitimate rulers.

According to Zhang, China’s strategic culture changed in the mid-19th century. This was due to China’s encounters with Western powers, which fundamentally reshaped China’s relationships with outside powers. China’s hierarchical tributary system was replaced by a horizontal Westphalian system of interstate relations. Zhang says that because of this shift to a Westphalian system, Chinese leaders to support principles such as sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. Furthermore, after suffering at the hands of Western powers during China’s “Century of Humiliation” China’s strategic culture began to emphasize that China become a “strong nation.” Zhang says the second characteristic of China’s contemporary strategic culture to achieve

77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 75-76.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 81.
economic and military power, to protect China’s national interests and territorial integrity.\footnote{Ibid.} In pursuit of these goals, Chinese national elites seek to increase China’s Comprehensive National Power (CNP). This requires that China enhance its economic, military, and even soft power.\footnote{Ibid., 82-84.} Zhang argues that this change in China’s strategic culture reordered China’s strategic preferences. Zhang says that China prefers an “active” rather than a “passive” defense.\footnote{Ibid., 85.}

Thus, China has begun to focus more on power projection capabilities, such as investing in a blue water navy.\footnote{Ibid., 86.} Zhang, however, says there are restraints on China’s use of force. Since China is in pursuit of increasing its national power, it must engage with the world and behave cooperatively to continue reaping economic benefits. Yet, Zhang notes that China does not rule out war for key national interests (eg, Taiwan).\footnote{Ibid., 84.}

While Zhang recognizes that China’s strategic culture has changed since traditional times, he does not acknowledge the impact of Marxism and China’s Reform and Opening policies on China’s strategic culture. Although China’s “Century of Humiliation” profoundly impacted Chinese strategic thinking, it is likely that Chinese strategic culture would have been markedly different under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek than it was under Mao. Mao’s ability to mobilize millions of people to engage in the destructive Cultural Revolution (文化大革命/Wenhua Dageming) demonstrates the depth of Mao’s influence. As for China’s Reform and Opening policies, China went from an impoverished Marxist-Leninist regime to being the world’s second largest economy in
2010. Zhang, however, does not address how this economic transition impacted China’s strategic culture.

In a later article, Alastair Iain Johnston (1996) also addresses the transition from traditional to contemporary China. Johnston assesses the strategic culture espoused by Mao Zedong. As described above, Johnston argues that in traditional China, China’s operative strategic culture was a realpolitik, *parabellum* strategic culture. According to Johnston, China’s traditional *parabellum* strategic culture has persisted across different structural contexts and into Maoist China. In fact, Johnston contends that China’s realpolitik strategic culture was “reinforced” by Marxist-Leninist thought. Mao utilized a Marxist understanding of “contradictions” driving history inexorably forward. Contradictions between adversaries become so stark that zero-sum conflict is inevitable and even desirable.  

Other scholars support this understanding of Mao having a realpolitik worldview. As Kenneth Lieberthal (2003) notes, “Mao seems to have drawn heavily from traditional Chinese military thought, especially from his understanding of the fourth-century BC writings of China’s great strategist, Sun Zi.”

However, Johnston’s attempt to demonstrate that China’s operative, realpolitik strategic culture persisted across all structural contexts neglects the impact of China’s 1978-79 economic reforms. As Johnston notes in his later work, China has been increasingly cooperative within international institutions. This observation stands in stark contrast to China’s more aggressive realpolitik behavior under Mao.

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Furthermore, in recent years, Chinese elites have been emphasizing China’s Confucian culture.\(^{89}\) As noted above, although elites may promote cultural discourses for instrumental purposes, they are not immune to the socializing effects of culture. Elite belief systems may change or the discourse can place constraints on the scope of options available for elites. For Johnston’s argument – that China has maintained a realpolitik strategic culture across all structural-material environments – to be more convincing it must account for China’s present cooperativeness and the increasing prevalence of China’s Confucian discourse.

Overall, literature on China’s strategic culture traditionally emphasizes that China’s strategic culture is static. Scholars argue that China’s operative strategic culture is defensive-pacifist, realpolitik, or a combination of these two strategic cultures. However, the theoretical literature demonstrates that strategic culture is not immutable. Elites can alter dominant strategic cultural discourses when faced with large structural changes – exogenous shocks, political or economic transitions. Contemporary China has experienced several drastic structural changes (eg, China’s “Century of Humiliation”, China’s 1978 economic reforms). To argue that China has had a continuous strategic culture from traditional times to present, one must account for these contemporary structural changes.

Zhang and Johnston both account for some, though not all, of these changes in contemporary Chinese history and its impact on China’s strategic culture. Both of their portrayals of China’s strategic culture, however, are incomplete. Zhang accounts for the impact of China’s “Century of Humiliation,” yet glosses over how Marxism (or Mao’s

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\(^{89}\) I will discuss this in further detail in Chapter Four.
interpretation of it)\textsuperscript{90} and China’s 1978 economic reforms impacted China’s strategic culture. Johnston, on the other hand, does recognize the influence of Mao. However, Johnston’s arguments is constrained by a rigid cultural determinism that ignores the impact of China’s 1978 economic reforms and the increasing prevalence of Confucianism in China’s elite discourse.\textsuperscript{91}

After reviewing the literature on Chinese strategic culture, several gaps emerge. This thesis seeks to address these gaps. First, this thesis seeks to account for change and or continuity in China’s strategic culture from the Maoist period through the post-Deng era. Second, although strong cultural arguments can pose an alternative explanatory model to positivist arguments, it is important that this thesis avoids the cultural determinism of previous work on strategic culture.

Whereas previous research on China’s strategic culture argued that China’s strategic culture has remained static across varying structural contexts, theoretical literature on change in political and strategic culture suggests otherwise. This is because strategic culture is, in fact, sensitive to structural change. Strategic culture interacts with structural changes. Strategic culture shapes how a state views and interacts with the world. However, these interactions with the outside world also shape a state’s strategic culture. Thus, this thesis seeks to account for not only how China’s strategic culture influences its disposition toward the international system and its understanding of the role of force in human affairs, but also how structural events and the international environment, in turn, influence strategic culture.

\textsuperscript{90} As noted by Daniel Bell (2008), under Mao, China did not strictly follow Marxist ideology. According to Marxist thought, capitalism is a necessary step on the road to communism. For more on this topic, please see Daniel A. Bell, \textit{China’s New Confucianism}, (Princeton: Princeton University 2008), 4-5.

\textsuperscript{91} I will discuss this further in chapter 4.
This thesis seeks to account for change and continuity in China’s strategic culture from the Maoist period to the post-Deng era. Zhang argued that China’s strategic culture changed from traditional China to contemporary China after China’s “Century of Humiliation.” Zhang, however, ignored the impact of Mao on Chinese political thought. Johnston argued that Maoist China was offensive-realist. Yet, Johnston did not account for the impact of structural changes such as China’s Reform and Opening policies. To address the gaps in the literature, this thesis asks two broad questions:

(1) What was China’s strategic culture during the Maoist era?

(2) What was China’s strategic culture after the Maoist era?

If (as I argue) China’s strategic culture did change after Mao, three hypotheses emerge about China’s strategic culture:

H1) China will have an offensive-oriented realpolitik strategic culture.

H2) China will have a defensive-pacifist strategic culture.

H3) China will have a combination of an offensive-oriented strategic culture and a defensive-pacifist strategic culture.

It is important to note that this thesis assumes that strategic culture itself changes. Any resuscitation of older Chinese strategic thought by Chinese elites will (obviously) be different than its ancient philosophical orientation. Furthermore, this thesis assumes (and will demonstrate) that even if elites utilize a strategic cultural discourse, they are not immune from it. Elites are socialized by the discourse they employ, either because it changes their internal belief system or because the rhetoric closes certain “unjustifiable” or culturally illegitimate routes of strategic behavior.
In this thesis, I (like Johnston) argue that China under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong, had an offensive-realpolitik strategic culture. I, however, contend that China’s Reform and Opening period presented Chinese elites the opportunity to alter China’s strategic culture. I argue that during this period, Chinese elites tolerated the emergence of other ideological discourses (questioning China’s realist strategic culture). I argue that beginning in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, and especially in the 2000s China has promoted a Confucian cultural discourse. Elites have promoted this cultural discourse to encourage stability and enhance the CCP’s legitimacy, as Chinese citizens have increasingly become disillusioned by the incongruence between China’s communist ideology and quasi-capitalist behavior. This strategic cultural discourse is meant, first and foremost for domestic consumption, but is also manifest in China’s foreign policy. This rhetorical emphasis on Confucianism is buffeted by growing regional economic interdependence. By examining China-Taiwan relations, I argue that China’s foreign policy reflects these changes in China’s strategic culture.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis utilizes the case study methodological approach. I examine Chinese decision-making in the Taiwan Strait from 1954-2011. I focus on Chinese foreign policy during the 1954, 1958, 1996 Taiwan Strait Crises, as well as contemporary cross-Strait relations. I will first discuss the reasoning for focusing on Taiwan and for looking at it from the period designated. Second, I describe the strengths of the case study approach. I also address the methodological limitations to this study, and my approach for addressing these constraints.
I examine Chinese decision-making in the Taiwan Strait for several reasons. First, rather than assuming that China’s strategic culture has remained static and unchanged from ancient times until present, this thesis assumes that China’s strategic culture has likely undergone profound changes during its recent history. Hence, focusing on China’s more contemporary history will provide insights that are more relevant to China’s current strategic thinking.

Second, this thesis focuses on Taiwan, because the CCP has staked much of its legitimacy in unifying the Taiwan Strait, or at least preventing Taiwan from seeking independence. To China, Taiwan is important not just for strategic purposes, but also China’s historical and cultural attachment to Taiwan. Therefore, Taiwan presents a case where CCP leaders would likely have difficulty setting aside emotions and pursuing detached, calculative, and strictly rational decision-making. This presents a useful case for analyzing the effects of strategic culture on China’s behavior. Third, China’s strategic thinking toward Taiwan is important, because the possibility of war remains and threatens peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

This study examines the years from 1954-2011, because this period covers Chinese decision-making prior to and after large structural changes in its security environment. The 1954-55 and 1958 crises occurred during the Cold War and prior to changes such as US-China normalization of relations, China’s economic reforms (1978-79), and Taiwan’s democratization. Studying these years allows me to observe how China’s strategic thinking adjusted to China’s evolving security environment. By examining China’s strategic thinking after the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, I can provide a
more contemporary and relevant analysis of China’s strategic thinking in the Taiwan Strait.

The case study method is an appropriate research design for this study, because I am conducting a small-n study, rather than a large-n study. Thus, this thesis values nuance and “thick description” over generalizability. A focused study on Chinese decision-making in the Taiwan Strait can better highlight the ways in which Chinese strategic culture colors China’s threat perceptions, and circumscribes and ranks China’s strategic preferences.

By utilizing the case study approach, this thesis can be more eclectic in its methods of data collection. There are limitations to this approach, however, because archival sources for Chinese decision-making during the 1996 Crisis are less abundant than sources for the 1954-55 and 1958 Crises. Therefore, it will be more difficult to discern Chinese intentions for these more contemporary crises. However, rather than being limited to one type of source, this thesis draws from a variety of primary sources such as speeches, official policy statements, news articles, as well as secondary sources and analyses.

This chapter explores Chinese decision-making during the 1954-55 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises. I argue that Chinese decision-making during this crisis represented the realpolitik strand of Chinese strategic culture. This realpolitik strategic culture viewed the United States as an impending threat that could only be managed through the limited use of force. This strategic thinking would be predominant throughout the 1954-1955 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises. In later sections, I will demonstrate how structural changes in China’s strategic environment allowed other strands of Chinese strategic culture to challenge the legitimacy of this paradigm.

In this section, I first provide background for China’s strategic thinking in the Taiwan Strait. After emerging from decades of internal division at the hands of Western powers (eg, The Opium Wars), Japanese imperialism, and civil war, Chinese leaders were suspicious of the intentions of outside powers – especially in regards to territorial disputes. I argue that after the Cold War, the United States support for the Guomindang (GMD)92, and the United States advances beyond the 38th parallel during the Korean War lent credence to China’s realpolitik strategic culture. This realpolitik strategic culture colored China’s understanding of US intentions in the Taiwan Strait. China’s realpolitik strategic culture would remain dominant until China experienced large structural changes in its security and economic environment (eg, Sino-US rapprochement, China’s economic reforms).

I argue that China’s realpolitik strategic culture made Chinese leaders misperceive US intentions in the Taiwan Strait. Although Chinese leaders had an intrinsic interest in

92 The name “Guomindang” is often referred to in Wade-Giles as “Kuomintang.” Throughout this thesis I will refer to it by the pinyin version, “Guomindang.”
Taiwan, they also believed that the United States was intent on eventually using Taiwan as a base for launching a larger military campaign on the Chinese mainland. US efforts to arm and supply the GMD were seen by China as part of a larger US plot to attack China’s mainland. Furthermore, US alliance building activities were seen as efforts to encircle China. US-Taiwanese negotiations for a mutual security treaty also confirmed Chinese suspicions about US intentions.93 To Chinese leaders, this threat of war was a long term, rather than immediate threat. Chinese decision-makers believed that an “offensive-preemptive” military action – acting offensively in the belief that it preempts near-term threat – was the best way to deter long-term US aggression. US policy makers, however, had no intention of pursuing a war with China. The United States was arming the GMD to deter further communist expansion, and to distract the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) from its efforts in Korea and Indochina.

BACKGROUND TO THE CRISIS

The foundations of the 1954-55 Taiwan Crisis were laid during the Chinese Civil War and the Korean War. Although the entity of China had been in existence for thousands of years, China the modern nation-state was only three decades old and in a state of disarray. After suffering at the hands of Western powers during the Opium Wars and under Japanese imperialism, China was divided internally between the CCP and the GMD. Without a single power in control, China’s identity and strategic cultural paradigm was in flux, open to contestation. US policies during the Chinese Civil War and the great power politics of the Cold War legitimized China’s realpolitik strand of strategic culture,

and colored China’s perceptions of US actions in the Taiwan Strait. CCP leaders viewed the United States as supporting their adversaries, the GMD.

In reality, although the United States did provide material support for the GMD, support for the GMD was mixed. Cold War logic pushed the Truman Administration toward supporting the GMD. Although the Truman Administration would later attempt to distance itself from the GMD, the CCP viewed US intentions as hostile. Official US policy toward Taiwan was neutral. During a January 5, 1950 press conference, US President Harry Truman stated:

The United States has no predatory designs on Formosa, or on any other Chinese territory. The United States has no desire to obtain special rights or privileges, or to establish military bases on Formosa at this time. Nor does it have any intentions of utilizing its Armed Forces to interfere in the present situation. The United States Government will not pursue a course which will lead to involvement in the civil conflict in China.\footnote{Harry S. Truman, “The President’s News Conference,” The American Presidency Project, (January 5, 1950). http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=13678#axzz1n5NwwaVX}

This neutrality, however, came to an abrupt end only six months later. On January 25, 1950 North Korea’s Kim Il-Sung attacked Seoul, with tacit, albeit reluctant, approval from both the Soviet Union and the PRC.\footnote{Sam Jameson, “Mao, Stalin Gave Kim OK to Wage War, Documents Say,” Los Angeles Times, July 21, 1994. Available at, http://articles.latimes.com/1994-07-21/news/mn-18336_1_kim-il-sung} Concerned that Asia could fall in the Soviet sphere of influence, US policymakers believed that neutrality on the Taiwan issue was no longer a viable option. On June 27, 1950, US President Truman reversed the US position on Formosa, stating:

The attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will use armed invasion and war. It has defied the orders of the Security Council of the United Nations issued to preserve international peace and security. In these circumstances the occupation of Formosa by Communist forces would be a direct
threat to the security of the Pacific area and to the United States forces performing their lawful and necessary functions in that area. 

President Truman ordered the US Seventh Fleet to enter the Taiwan Strait to “neutralize” the strait, allowing neither the PRC to attack Taiwan, nor the GMD to attack the mainland. In addition to “neutralizing” the Taiwan Strait, the United States sent aircraft and warships in the region to halt the North Korean’s advance.

The North Korean invasion altered US threat perceptions of the Soviet Union. Zhang (1992) says that Paul H. Nitze, the director of Policy Planning Staff, believed that the Soviet threat was not merely a political or economic threat, but an imminent military threat. Nitze believed that the Soviet Union was willing to exploit “soft spots” such as Taiwan, “where the US deterrent was weak.” Nitze also believed that Soviet aggression was a natural extension of its increasing power capabilities.

US officials were especially concerned that the Soviet Union would occupy Taiwan. Several high-ranking US officials noted the influx of Soviet troops, military equipment, and planes into China. US General Douglas MacArthur equated Soviet occupation of Taiwan with allowing the Soviets to have “an unsinkable aircraft carrier and submarine tender, ideally located to […] checkmate the offensive capabilities of the central positions of the FEC [Far Eastern Command] front line.” The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimated that the PRC would likely attack Taiwan sometime “during the period of June-December.”

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97 Chen Yi-Shen 2010.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 57.
101 Ibid.
US policymakers feared that the “soft spot”, Taiwan, would be the next target of Soviet aggression. Thus, US officials believed that a show of strength in Taiwan Strait was necessary to deter further Soviet aggression. US policymakers, however, were acutely aware of the political sensitivity of choosing sides in the PRC-GMD dispute over Taiwan. They were concerned that taking sides could increase the possibility of war. To avoid provoking the PRC, but to send a strong signal for deterrence, the United States adopted the “neutralization” approach.102

Although the United States sought to convey deterrence, the PRC interpreted US actions as hostile. According to Zhang, CCP leadership believed, first, that the United States would try to bring Taiwan into its sphere of influence to use it as a “stepping-stone for a future invasion of China.”103 Second, the CCP leadership believed that the badly weakened GMD would seek US military support, to help it gather its forces for an eventual return to the mainland. Either scenario would disrupt PRC plans to defeat the GMD.104 Zhang says that the CCP believed the United States intended to encircle China. CCP leaders believed the United States was attempting “to resurrect [Imperial Japan’s] Great East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere” through its alliances with South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines.105

Perhaps in response to MacArthur’s assertion, the CCP press described Taiwan as an “unsinkable aircraft carrier” for US imperial ambitions in East Asia.106 Zhang also notes that CCP leadership believed that the United States was ambiguous over the legal

102 Ibid., 57-64.
103 Ibid., 64.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid., 65.
106 Ibid., 65.
status of Taiwan “because it was still looking for a pretext to occupy the island.”  

Further compounding these fears were PRC beliefs that the United States was inciting separatism in Taiwan and supporting GMD’s naval blockade of Communist-controlled areas. Last, CCP intelligence reported that the United States was increasing its military activities in the region.  

When President Truman ordered the Seventh Fleet to travel to the Taiwan Strait, Chinese suspicions of a US threat seemed to be confirmed. Chairman Mao Zedong, addressing the PRC State Council, declared that Truman’s decision exposed the United States’ “imperialist face […] to the people of China as well as the peoples of Asia.” In response to President Truman’s decision, Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai stated (emphasis added):

> [...] The attack by the puppet Korean troops of Syngman Rhee on the Korean Democratic People’s Republic at the instigation of the United States Government was a premeditated move by the United States to invade Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam and the Philippines. It is nothing but a further act of intervention by US imperialism in the affairs of Asia. 

Beyond confirming China’s suspicions about US intentions, the US response disrupted Chinese plans to attack Taiwan. Although Beijing had approved of Kim Il Sung’s attack, it had only done so reluctantly. Both the Soviet Union and the PRC were hesitant to approve the attack. The Soviet Union was concerned that an attack by North Korea could lead to world war with the United States, while the PRC feared that an attack by North Korea could possibly delays its plans to retake Taiwan indefinitely. Furthermore, as

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107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., 66.
relatively young nation (the PRC had only taken control of the Mainland in 1949), the PRC was not yet ready to engage in a large-scale international conflict.

The Soviet Union acquiesced to Kim’s demands after receiving assurances from Kim that North Korea could quickly defeat the South. Soviet leaders also viewed the attack as an opportunity to distract the United States from its commitments to protect Europe. Some scholars argue that the Soviet Union gave Kim the ‘green light’, because they anticipated that the Chinese would enter the war.\textsuperscript{111} China on the other hand, resented what they viewed as US support for Chiang Kai Shek, and US efforts to rebuild its former adversary, Japan.\textsuperscript{112} Once the Korean conflict began, the PRC was forced to abruptly cancel its plans to retake Taiwan and assume a defensive posture.\textsuperscript{113}

By June 30\textsuperscript{th}, the United States began authorizing its first ground troops to enter the Korean theater under the aegis of the United Nations Command (UNC) – with US General MacArthur as the leading commander. Initially, US troops were unable to halt the advance of North Korean troops. By August, however, “the ground forces of the […] started to slow, if not halt, the North Korean [advance].”\textsuperscript{114} In September, the United States had launched a successful amphibious assault on Inchon, and by the end of September, North Korean troops had retreated from Seoul and behind the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel.\textsuperscript{115}

Following these successful operations, the UNC, led by the United States, made a decision that would fundamentally alter the course of Sino-American relations. Rather than stopping at the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel, UN troops attempted to unify the Korean peninsula. The US ignored PRC warnings that it would enter the Korean conflict if the United States

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Burton I. Kaufman, \textit{The Korean Conflict}, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press 1999), 38.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Zhang 1992, 66.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Allan R. Millet, \textit{The Korean War}, (Dulles: Potomac Books 2007), 23.
  \item \textsuperscript{115} Kaufman 1999, 9.
\end{itemize}
advanced toward the Yalu or if it crossed the 38th parallel.\textsuperscript{116} Why did the United States advance beyond the 38th parallel, and why did it neglect these warnings?

The United States was motivated to advance past the 38th parallel, because US leaders viewed it as an opportunity to enhance its strategic buffer against the threat of communism. With North Korean troops demoralized from defeat, many US leaders believed that it would be easy to defeat the North.\textsuperscript{117} This, however, raised concerns about whether the PRC and the Soviet Union would intervene militarily.

Acheson, however, had several reasons to believe that a Soviet or Chinese attack would not occur. First, the Soviet Union did not attack, when the United States was caught off guard by Kim Il Sung’s invasion of South Korea. Thus, leaders, such as Secretary Acheson believed that the Soviet Union would be much less willing to intervene now that the United States was in a position of strength. Since China’s strategy was viewed as dependent on the Soviet Union’s, US leaders believed China would be hesitant to attack without Soviet support. Second, Acheson believed there were inherent conflicts between China and the Soviet Union that could be exploited in the likelihood of an attack.\textsuperscript{118} Third, US intelligence estimates concluded that the PLA was too weak and poorly organized to confront US armed forces. Furthermore, US leaders believed the PRC was not centralized and would struggle governing mainland China, let alone engaging in combat with the United States.\textsuperscript{119}

US leaders also believed that US reassurance measures had conveyed the United States’ benign intentions. The October 7 UN Resolution made it explicitly clear that the

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 19.
UNC had limited objectives in Korea, and would leave once Korean independence was restored. Furthermore, the United States had made efforts distance itself from Chiang Kai-Shek. When the United States sent the 7th Fleet to “neutralize” the Taiwan Strait, the United States tried to convey deterrence rather than aggression. President Truman had stated that it would prevent an attack from both the PRC and from the GMD. Combined with US perceptions about the PRC’s capabilities and intentions, the Acheson believed that the United States had succeeded in conveying its limited objectives in the Korean peninsula. Thus, the United States dismissed Chinese threats as merely posturing.120

The United States, however, would soon find that threats to intervene in the war were true. On November 1, 1950, Chinese troops entered the Korean War121 and engaged in combat. However, “almost as soon as the Chinese engaged in battle, they broke off fighting.”122 This limited aggression did not discourage the UN forces and they continued their advance northward. Only two days later, China launched an all-out assault on UN forces. This forced the US eighth army to withdraw “more than 300 miles, the longest retreat in American military history.”123 The United States and China would remain at a virtual stalemate across the 38th parallel for the following three years.124 By 1950, US and Chinese officials expressed interest in reaching an armistice. Armistice talks began in July 10, 1951 and would continue, periodically, for over two years.125 On July 27 1953, Chinese and North Korean military officials signed an armistice with the US led-UNC.

120 Ibid., 19-20.
121 For a strategic cultural perspective on China’s motivations for entering the Korean War, see Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1968).
122 Kaufman 1999, 11.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., 14-19.
125 Ibid., 17.
Subsequent talks, however, failed to produce a lasting peace agreement; thus, the Korean War has technically never been concluded.\textsuperscript{126}

THE 1954-55 CRISIS

Although the cease-fire should have reduced tensions, China soon initiated a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. I argue that, viewing the world through a realpolitik strategic cultural lens, Chinese decision-makers saw US-alliance building activities as a concerted effort to divide Asia and encircle China. Chinese leaders believed the United States was supplying Taiwan with the arms needed to retake the mainland. To respond to this threat, Chinese decision-makers attempted to deter the United States. Chinese leaders began using the rhetoric of “liberating” Taiwan to demonstrate that China would be willing to go to war over Taiwan. Ultimately, Chinese leaders initiated a crisis in the Taiwan Strait to demonstrate China’s resolve. This crisis, however, was not aimed at capturing Taiwan, but rather to send a strong message to the United States and ROC.\textsuperscript{127}

Despite the cessation of hostilities in Korea, many Chinese leaders increasingly became concerned with the possibility of a US attack from Taiwan. According to Zhang, CCP leadership was preoccupied with its “three-front” concept.\textsuperscript{128} For example, when describing this concept, Zhou Enlai stated:

[The United States] has tried to conduct armed intervention against China and menace Asia from three fronts – Taiwan, Korea and Indo-China. Now that the flames of war in Korea and Indo-China have been successfully put out, the US aggressive group is making more intensive use of the traitorous Chiang Kai-shek gang on Taiwan to enlarge the war of harassment and destruction against China’s


\textsuperscript{127} This argument is the same as the argument made by Shu Guang Zhang.

\textsuperscript{128} Zhang 1992, 190.
mainland and seacoast in an attempt to step up its intervention against China and its menace to Asia.  

With the cessation of hostilities in Korea and Indochina, Chinese officials believed that Taiwan would be the next front for an attack from the United States. According to Zhou (emphasis added):

Directed and assisted by the US aggressive group, the traitorous Chiang Kai-shek gang is using Taiwan as its base to conduct increasingly desperate attacks against our coastal islands, bomb out coastal cities, rob our fishermen in the coastal areas, plunder and seize our merchant ships and vessels of countries trading with China, and dispatch special agents to infiltrate the mainland for subversive activities.

CCP analysts and officials also believed that the United States was building a series of alliances to encircle China. Analysts such Lin Meiqing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that the United States would use Taiwan, the Philippines, and Japan as a “chain-of-islands defense line,” and Thailand and Pakistan as “strategic strongholds” for encircling China.  

Chinese leaders’ threat perceptions of the United States colored their understanding US actions. US alliance-building activities in South and Southeast Asia fed into the Chinese narrative about US intentions. The idea for a collective security in Southeast Asia originated from the US fear of Southeast falling like “dominoes” to Soviet influence (via Chinese aggression). With a truce in Korea, US officials worried that Chinese communist forces would be free to wreak havoc in Indochina. US policymakers

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130 Ibid.
became more urgent to form a collective defense organization in 1954, as the prospect of French loss at Dien Bien Phu became a reality.\textsuperscript{131}

It is important to note that although Taiwanese officials insisted that Taiwan be a part of the US security alliance building activities, President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles believed a mutual security treaty with Taiwan would be too much of a commitment, because: 1) they feared it could provoke Chinese aggression; 2) the scope of such a treaty would be unclear and could commit the United States to defend more than it was willing to; 3) the timing was bad, especially since French and British allies were seeking to ease regional tensions following the Geneva talks.\textsuperscript{132}

Chinese officials argued that US alliance building activities were not aimed at simply containing the communist threat. Zhou Enlai asserted that the United States would build a “Northeast Asian” counterpart to link up with SEATO to encircle China.\textsuperscript{133}

According to Zhou:

[The United States] is trying to combine the reactionary forces in Japan, the Syngman Rhee clique in South Korea and the Chiang Kai-shek gang of traitors into a so-called North-east Asia Defence Alliance, which it plans to link up with the “South-east Asia Treaty Organization.” This series of conspiracies of the US aggressive group is obviously directed against the six hundred million people of China.\textsuperscript{134}

This fear of the United States encircling China was echoed in China’s leading newspapers. People’s Daily (人民日 /Renmin Ribao) claimed that the United States intended to encircle China and use Syngman Rhee and Chiang-Kai Shek as “tools for aggression against China.”\textsuperscript{135} Zhou Enlai argued that US alliance-building activities in Southeast Asia

\textsuperscript{131} Roger Dingman, “John Foster Dulles and the Creation of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization in 1954,” The International History Review 11, no.3 (August 1989): 458-459.
\textsuperscript{132} Zhang 1992, 203-204.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 190-191.
\textsuperscript{134} Zhou Enlai 1954, 15.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
were designed to “organize a military alliance to split Asia […] to] interfere in the internal affairs of South-east Asian countries and suppress the national liberation movements […]”\textsuperscript{136} In addition to fears about US alliance building activities in Southeast Asia, the PRC was concerned about the possibility of a US-Taiwan alliance. Zhang says that Chinese leaders “believed that the US Taiwan alliance would make the US occupation of Taiwan seem legal and turn the island into a staging area for military strikes against the Chinese mainland.”\textsuperscript{137}

Considering China’s threat perceptions of the United States, what were US intentions? US leaders did not seek to help the GMD recapture the mainland. However, US decision-makers did see the utility of keeping Chiang Kai-shek armed. By doing this, the United States could allow the GMD to harass the PRC and keep its military tied down and unable to harm US interests elsewhere (eg, Korea, Indochina). This policy was consistent with the “Van Fleet concept.” This concept argues that it is cheaper to arm and support anti-communist troops than to commit US troops to a region.\textsuperscript{138} Thus, whereas Zhou Enlai viewed the United States alliance buildings as the US “dividing Asians,” the US policy makers viewed it more as “Asians defending Asians.”\textsuperscript{139}

In response to the potential threat from the United States, the PRC decided it needed to deter the United States. The CCP initiated a propaganda campaign declaring that China would “liberate” Taiwan. As Zhou Enlai stated:

\begin{quote}
The liberation of Taiwan is China’s sovereign right and internal affair and no interference by any foreign country will be tolerated […] The Chinese people are determined to liberate Taiwan. As long as Taiwan is not liberated, China’s territory is not intact, China cannot have a tranquil environment for peaceful construction, and peace in the Far East and throughout the world is not secure. On
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{136} Zhou Enlai 1954, 11-12.  
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 192.  
\textsuperscript{138} Zhou Enlai., 11-12.  
\textsuperscript{139} Zhang 1992.
August 11, 1954 the Central People’s Government Council passed a resolution urging all Chinese people and the Chinese People’s Liberation Army to redouble their efforts in all fields of work and strive to liberate Taiwan and eliminate the traitorous Chiang Kai-shek gang.\footnote{Zhou Enlai 1954, 16-17.}

This official policy of “liberating” Taiwan would continue until 1979.\footnote{I discuss the shift of China’s policy of “liberating” Taiwan to “peaceful unification” in Chapter 4.} This policy served as a threat that China would use military force to prevent foreign (or US) intervention in the region.

Chinese leaders also decided that a controlled use of military force would be necessary to convey Chinese resolve. As Zhang states, Mao followed the Sun Zi maxim, “the best strategy of war is to destroy the adversary’s strategy before it is put into effect.”\footnote{Zhang 1992, 194.} Chinese leaders calculated that the United States would not be willing to risk war with China over the islands nearby Taiwan. This was because Chinese leaders were confident in their alliance with the Soviet Union.\footnote{Ibid., 195.} Furthermore, Chinese leaders were confident after their experience and “success” fighting the United States militarily during the Korean War. Zhang says, this confidence was derived on another maxim by Sun Zi: “Know the enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles with no danger of defeat.”\footnote{Ibid.}

China resumed preparations for attacking the Dachen Islands in June of 1954, which had been stalled during the Korean War. China began its bombardment of Jinmen on September 3\textsuperscript{rd}. It is important to note, however, that at this point of the crisis, China limited its use of force to artillery force, and withheld its use of its “ground, naval, and air forces.”\footnote{Ibid., 199.} Although China’s actions represented a challenge to the status quo in the
Taiwan Strait, China was careful not to provoke a US attack. Chinese leaders wanted to avoid direct conflict with the United States, and only permitted their forces to strike back against US forces if they were attacked by the US first, and if retaliation carried no “grave risk.”

The United States considered a number of diplomatic measures to deter China from continuing the attack. US officials convinced New Zealand to propose a UN Resolution calling for a cease-fire. This would serve multiple purposes: it would encourage support from US allies, portray China as an outcast, and strain the Sino-Soviet alliance. US officials also decided that establishing a security treaty with the China would send a strong signal to China that the United States intended to protect Taiwan.

The United States, however, was unsure whether it wanted to commit itself to the islands outside of Taiwan. The United States decided to make the mutual defense treaty deliberately ambiguous. Article VI of the “Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States of America and the Republic of China,” states, “the terms ‘territorial’ and ‘territories’ shall mean in respect of the Republic of China, Taiwan and the Pescadores […] The provisions of Articles II and V will be applicable to such other territories as may be determined mutual agreement” (emphasis added).

Last, US officials considered coercive measures, and potentially the use of nuclear weapons. Zhang says, “Policy Planning Staff director Robert Bowie further recommended that the administration

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146 Ibid.
147 Ibid., 210 - 211.
148 Ibid., 213.
announce that it would ‘from time to time’ drop nuclear bombs on Jinmen and Mazu if the Communist Chinese attempted to capture them.”\(^\text{150}\)

These actions by the United States prompted strong condemnation from the CCP. In response to New Zealand’s proposal to the UN, Chinese foreign minister, Zhou Enlai submitted cable to then UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold. This cable criticized the proposal as a violation of China’s internal affairs, and argued that the UN Security Council should condemn the United States instead.\(^\text{151}\) The US-Taiwan Mutual Security Treaty attracted an even stronger response. Zhou Enlai claimed that the treaty was not defensive but represented the “naked aggression” of the United States. According to Zhou, since the Korean War was over, the United States no longer had a pretext for its “occupation” of Taiwan. Thus, the Mutual Security Treaty would justify “outright seizure of China’s territories of Taiwan and the Penghu Islands.”\(^\text{152}\) Moreover, Zhou stated:

The “Mutual Security Treaty” between the United States and Chiang Kai-shek is designed to extend aggression and prepare for a new war. It has nothing to do with the maintenance of peace. The aggressive circles of the United States, and those who follow them, are advancing all kinds of arguments to conceal the warlike purpose of this treaty. But this purpose cannot be concealed. It is well-known that since it undertook its armed aggression on Taiwan, the United States Government has been aiding and abetting the Chiang Kai-shek traitor gang in its war of harassment and destruction against the Chinese mainland […] the United States Government now attempts to legalize the occupation of Taiwan by its naval and air forces […] with a view to strengthening its military base in Taiwan.\(^\text{153}\)

Therefore, the signing of the Mutual Security Treaty further convinced China that the United States posed a threat to its security.

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\(^{151}\) Zhou Enlai, “Cable From the Premier and Foreign Minister Chou En-Lai To UN Secretary-General Opposing The New Zealand Proposal To Intervene in China’s Internal Affairs,” Letter to UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, February 3, 1995, in Oppose US Occupation of Taiwan and “Two China’s” Plot: A Selection of Important Documents, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press 1958), 31-34.


\(^{153}\) Ibid., 21.
To demonstrate resolve and deter the United States, China expanded the conflict in the Taiwan Strait. On January 18, 1955 the PLA attacked and captured Yijiangshan Island. Although China intended to expand the conflict to the Dachen Islands, Chinese officials became increasingly concerned about an attack from the US Seventh Fleet.\textsuperscript{154} Thus, Chinese leaders halted their plans to expand the conflict. Chinese leaders concluded that this would only attract a direct US military intervention. Another factor influencing China’s decision was the passage of the Formosa Resolution. According to the Formosa Resolution:

\begin{quote}
[...] The President of the United States [...] is authorized to employ the Armed Forces of the United States as he deems necessary for the specific purpose of securing and protecting Formosa and the Pescadores against armed attack, this authority to include the securing and protection of such related positions and territories of that area now in friendly hands and the taking of such other measures as he judges to be required or appropriate in assuring the defense of Formosa and the Pescadores.\textsuperscript{155}
\end{quote}

China became more concerned about US intervention, because the Formosa Resolution more explicitly declared the US commitment to Taiwan and its surrounding islands. Chinese leaders also became increasingly concerned that the United States would use nuclear weapons against China. As Zhang describes, Chinese journals, newspapers, and CCP officials started describing their concern over US using the nuclear-equipped Seventh Fleet to strike China.\textsuperscript{156} Zhou Enlai criticized the United States for “using war threats and brandishing atomic weapons.”\textsuperscript{157} During the Bandung Conference of April

\begin{footnotes}
\item Zhang 1992, 219.
\item Zhang 1992, 220.
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1955, Zhou Enlai indicated that China did not want to go to war with the United States. In
July, the crisis was over.\footnote{Zhang 1992, 222.}

THE 1958 CRISIS

In 1958, the PRC once again attacked Jinmen and Mazu. Similar to the 1954-1955
Crisis, Chinese leaders believed that, in the future, the United States and GMD could
launch an attack on the Chinese mainland. To prevent this, the PRC preemptively
attacked Jinmen (Quemoy) and Mazu. Similar to the 1954-1955 Crisis, the PRC’s
objectives were limited in scope. Although the PRC ultimately sought to retake Taiwan,
the PRC’s intentions during the 1958 Crisis were intended to convey the PRC’s resolve to
the GMD and the United States.

Several factors exacerbated Chinese fears of a US-GMD attack. First, Chinese
leaders believed the United States would potentially use Taiwan as a base for launching a
nuclear attack. Chinese analysts viewed recent books and articles on nuclear strategy from
figures such as Henry Kissinger and Allan Dulles as indicative of a shift in US strategic
thinking – one that justified the use of tactical nuclear weapons.\footnote{Ibid., 226.} The US decision to
place tactical nuclear weapons in Taiwan further heightened Chinese suspicions.
Numerous editorials and CCP proclamations highlight China’s fear of a US conspiracy to
nuclear attack] were needed because ‘the maniacs’ [the United States] might launch a
Chinese leaders also believed the United States and GMD were increasing their military activity in Taiwan. The increasing presence of GMD troops on Jinmen and Mazu and the establishment of the US-Taiwan Defense Command were seen as evidence of increasing military activity.\(^{162}\)

Second, Chinese leaders also believed the United States had no intention of resolving the Taiwan issue diplomatically. In fact, CCP leaders viewed the US diplomatic stance as hardening.\(^{163}\) During the Fifth Session of the First National People’s Congress (NPC), Zhou Enlai stated (emphasis added):

> […] The Chinese side has made many efforts in seeking a gradual improvement of Sino-American relations by starting with those questions which are comparatively easy to solve and whose solution would create favourable conditions for settling major issues between China and the United States […] But these proposals were rejected by the United States Government practically out of hand […] Efforts on the part of the Chinese Government alone will be in vain until the United States Government changes its rigid and hostile attitude.”\(^{164}\)

Chinese leaders believed that the United States was delaying a diplomatic solution to the Taiwan issue to legitimize the permanent division of Mainland China from Taiwan. According to Zhou, “The United States is first to create wherever possible a state of ‘two China’s’ in certain international conferences and organizations so as to establish gradually a fait accompli of “two Chinas” in international affairs.”\(^{165}\)

PRC leaders were also upset that the United States neglected appointing an official of ambassadorial rank to participate in the Sino-American ambassadorial talks, after the

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163 Ibid., 27.


165 Ibid., 54.
main negotiator for the US was transferred.\(^{166}\) This underscored that the United States, at the time, recognized the GMD as the legitimate government of China, rather than the PRC. By not appointing someone of ambassadorial rank for these talks, the PRC believed that the United States had no intention of treating the PRC as a legitimate member of the international community. A June 30, 1958 PRC statement on Sino-American ambassadorial talks highlights Chinese perceptions of US diplomatic actions:

Irrefutable facts show that what the United States was after in the Sino-American ambassadorial talks was [...] to impose its imperialist will on the Chinese people and, failing that, to make use of ambassadorial talks to deceive the people of the world and cover up its sinister designs to continue its aggression against China and create international tension.\(^{167}\)

Chinese leaders became increasingly impatient and suspicious of US intentions. Zhou Enlai gave the United States an ultimatum of 15 days to appoint someone of ambassadorial level, or the PRC would cancel the talks.\(^{168}\)

Overall, Chinese leaders were concerned that the United States was willing to use tactical nuclear weapons. CCP officials also believed the United States had no intention of resolving the Taiwan issue diplomatically. Instead, CCP leaders believed the United States intended to “occupy” Taiwan and make the permanent division of Taiwan and Mainland China a *fait accompli* in the eyes of the international community. These concerns made CCP officials increasingly concerned of a future attack from the United States. As Zhang discusses, during the Eighth Party Congress, Mao proclaimed that the largest threat facing China was a war with the “imperialists.” Thus, Mao called on the CCP to “keep alert.”\(^{169}\)

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\(^{166}\) Zhang 1992, 228.


\(^{168}\) Ibid., 62-63.

\(^{169}\) Zhang 1992, 229.
Mao believed the best way to deter a US attack was to demonstrate China’s resolve. Mao said, “Dulles looks down upon us [because] we have not yet completely shown and proven our strength.” Therefore, Mao decided that China needed “demonstrate […] its boldness.” Mao even referenced traditional Chinese ghost stories from *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, to argue that the only way to stop the “ghosts” (in this case, the US) was to show the “ghosts” that they are not afraid (by means of offensive-preemptive military action). Mao believed that the PRC needed to demonstrate to US leaders that they were not afraid of the US and would be willing to go to war over Taiwan. As Peng Dehuai stated, China’s strategy was to “apply [short term] belligerence to prevent general war [*yizhan zhizhan*].” Since CCP leaders believed that the United States would attack the Chinese mainland sometime in the future, they concluded that it was best for China to take the initiative.

In 1958, Chinese leaders believed the timing was right for initiating a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. There are three general reasons for this assumption. First, CCP leaders believed that by not recognizing the PRC, the United States was becoming increasingly unpopular internationally and that divisions were beginning to emerge between the United States and its Western allies. These beliefs are illustrated in an August 16, 1958 *Renmin Ribao* editorial:

> More and more countries have established diplomatic relations with it [China] and more and more people are demanding that it be recognized. Of late, in particular

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174 Ibid., 230.
large sections of public opinion not only in countries standing for peace and neutrality but also in Britain, France, West Germany and other Western countries, as well as in the United States itself, are demanding the recognition of China and restoration of its legitimate rights in the United Nations [.] Furthermore, viewing the world through a Marxist lens, Mao believed the United States would inevitably come into conflict with other capitalist countries.176

The second reason Chinese leaders believed the timing was right for initiating a crisis is that Chinese leaders believed that as divisions were occurring among the United States and its Western allies, ties between socialist countries were growing stronger, especially between the Soviet Union and China. Chinese leaders expressed support for Khrushchev and worked to garner support for Khrushchev among Eastern European countries.177 Chinese leaders believed that the Soviet Union could credibly deter the United States counterattacking should the PRC attack Taiwan. Chinese leaders sought Soviet assistance with developing a nuclear weapon.178 It is important to note, however, that the issue of Soviet assistance would become a point of friction between China and the Soviet Union after the crisis.179

The third and most immediate factor motivating Chinese leaders to initiate a crisis in the Taiwan Strait in August of 1958 was the US military intervention in Lebanon. With the United States involved militarily in Lebanon, Mao believed that the United States would be tied down and less likely to respond militarily to a Chinese attack on Taiwan. Mao likened the United States involvement in local conflicts worldwide to “hanging rope.” Every time the United States engaged in a local conflict it was metaphorically

177 Ibid., 229-230.
178 Ibid., 232.
179 I will return to this further below.
placing a rope around itself; therefore, every time the United States engaged in another conflict it would “choke itself.”¹⁸⁰ Using this reasoning, Mao (mis-) calculated that the United States would seek to avoid conflict with China and would encourage the GMD to withdraw its troops from Jinmen and Mazu.¹⁸¹

Although Mao was prepared to strike Jinmen and Mazu in July of 1958, Mao postponed the attack to gauge international opinion and request the resumption of ambassadorial talks with the United States. When the United States hesitated to respond to China’s request, Chinese leaders used this delay as a justification for using force.¹⁸²

China’s aims during this crisis were limited in scope. Although Chinese leaders sought the evacuation of GMD troops from Jinmen and Mazu and to demonstrate Chinese resolve, Chinese leaders did not want to engage in a larger conflict involving the United States. Chinese leaders were highly concerned about the possibility of accidentally firing on US troops. CCP officials gave direct orders to the military to avoid engaging the US military.¹⁸³ Chinese leaders were concerned that too large of an artillery bombardment on Jinmen and Quemoy could inadvertently result in American casualties. Some CCP leaders even suggested that China should warn the United States ahead of time.¹⁸⁴

On August 23, 1958 the PRC attacked Jinmen and Matsu, striking with nearly 40,000 artillery shells. The PRC also initiated a blockade against GMD resupply efforts.¹⁸⁵ US decision-makers were highly concerned about the possibility of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, and began considering the use nuclear weapons on Mainland China. Although the

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 235.
¹⁸² Ibid., 235-236.
¹⁸³ Ibid., 236-237.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 237.
United States did not disclose their willingness to make this type of commitment to the ROC, for fear that the ROC would exploit this, the United States did dispatch US naval forces to the region to escort GMD ships during their resupply efforts.\(^{186}\)

Prior to attacking Jinmen and Matsu, Chinese leaders neglected to inform their Soviet counterparts of their plans for attack. Although Chinese leaders counted on the Soviet nuclear deterrent, they did not want compromise China’s sovereignty by giving the Soviet Union *de facto* veto power over Chinese decision-making. Once China initiated the crisis, however, the Soviets were forced to demonstrate whether they would be willing to protect the PRC. Khrushchev warned US president Eisenhower that any attack on Mainland China would be considered as an attack on the Soviet Union.\(^{187}\)

Despite these warnings, the United States continued to provide military support to the GMD. By September 6, Zhou Enlai requested that the United States resume the ambassadorial talks. The PRC announced a cease-fire on October 6\(^{th}\), which was only interrupted once when the PRC claimed a US ship had entered China’s territorial waters. On October 25\(^{th}\), China resumed the ceasefire, and decided to fire (with propaganda rather than shells) on Jinmen and Matsu on alternate days.\(^{188}\) In the aftermath of the crisis, China’s relationship with the Soviet Union was weakened. Beyond the mutual mistrust this crisis spurned, the Soviets began to view Chinese foreign policy as liability. China, on the other hand, was convinced that it “could not rely any longer on the Soviet extended deterrence unless it was prepared to sacrifice its own sovereignty and national

\(^{186}\) Ibid.
\(^{187}\) Ibid., xiii.
\(^{188}\) Ibid., xvi.
interests.”\textsuperscript{189} This would lay the grounds for the later unraveling of the Sino-Soviet alliance.

Overall, in a realpolitik fashion, China viewed conflict with the United States and the GMD as inevitable. Thus, it was best to deal with this crisis at a time of China’s choosing. The PRC took the initiative and attacked Jinmen and Mazu at a time that China viewed as opportune. China’s decided the best way to deter a future US attack was to force the United States into a crisis and demonstrate China’s resolve. China’s attempts to avoid direct military contact with the United States indicate that China never intended to launch a full-scale invasion of Taiwan, an action that would have most likely guaranteed a massive US military retaliation (perhaps even with nuclear weapons).

CONCLUSION

The 1954-1955 & 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises demonstrate the predominance of China’s realpolitik strategic culture. Throughout these crises, Chinese leaders believed the United States planned to use Taiwan as a base for launching military operations against Mainland China. Chinese leaders viewed US alliance-building activities in Southeast Asia and with Taiwan as evidence that the United States intended to encircle China. Following the cessation of hostilities in Korea and Indochina, China believed that Taiwan would likely be the next theater for conflict with the United States. Chinese leaders decided to “prevent” a long-term US attack by demonstrating Chinese resolve, particularly through the use of limited and preemptive military force.

For the following decade, there would be a \textit{de facto} stalemate in the Taiwan Strait. As the following section demonstrates, however, during the 1970s, China would

\textsuperscript{189} Zhang 1992, 266.
experience large changes in its domestic political economic structure and external security environment. These changes diluted China’s predominant realpolitik strategic culture. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, economic engagement and China’s increasing emphasis on Confucian thought have mitigated the influence of China’s predominantly realpolitik strategic culture. These changes in China’s strategic culture have had a noticeable impact on China’s strategy toward Taiwan.
CHAPTER IV
CHANGE IN CHINA’S STRATEGIC CULTURE

This section provides background for the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. I discuss changes in China’s strategic security environment and domestic political economic structure that prompted Chinese leaders to reconsider and alter China’s dominant strategic culture. These changes include Sino-US rapprochement, China’s Reform and Opening policies.

I argue that economic interdependence and China’s promotion of Confucianism have diminished the influence of China’s predominately realist strategic culture. This shift in China’s strategic culture was accompanied by a constructivist shift in China’s strategic thinking. As a result, Chinese leaders began to increasingly emphasize engagement and cooperative security. Despite this change, however, China’s realpolitik strategic culture has not disappeared. The continuity of China’s realpolitik strategic culture notwithstanding, China’s continued engagement in the international community has led Chinese leaders to soften their approach toward Taiwan. China has also continued emphasizing more cooperative and pacifist elements of its strategic culture.

The literature on strategic culture provides several conditions required for strategic culture to change. Elites can question, reinforce, contest, or change predominant strategic cultural paradigms. Several factors present opportunities for elites to reconsider dominant strategic cultural paradigms. Opportunities for change include dramatic political and economic transitions. Elites can also change strategic culture for political purposes. This instrumentality notwithstanding, elites can be socialized by strategic culture. Therefore, even if elites use strategic culture for instrumentally, they are socialized by the same
discourse they advocate. Overall, strategic culture changes when there is both a large challenge to predominant belief systems and elite agency.

The literature suggests that Chinese elites should have opportunities to reframe China’s dominant strategic cultural discourse during times such as domestic political or economic transitions. Although Chinese elites can change China’s predominant realpolitik strategic culture, this process will likely be “discontinuous” – with elites being socialized at an uneven pace. Furthermore, China’s realpolitik strategic culture will likely be institutionalized in China’s bureaucratic structures. Therefore, although China’s strategic culture may shift away from its realpolitik strategic culture, this strategic culture will not completely disappear; thus, China’s realpolitik strategic culture will likely continue to have, at least, a minor impact on Chinese foreign policy. Overall, I argue that Sino-US normalization and China’s Reform and Opening policies have led to economic interdependence and a rhetorical emphasis (by Chinese elites) on Confucianism. This has undermined China’s predominately realist strategic culture.

SINO-US NORMALIZATION

Since the outbreak of the Korean War, Sino-US relations were antagonistic and virtually frozen. By the early 1970s, however, mutual suspicions between the PRC and the United States began to diminish. Motivated by Cold War geopolitical logic, and mutual fear of the Soviet Union, the United States and the PRC normalized relations. Sino-US normalization impacted Chinese strategic thinking by reducing Chinese suspicions of the United States and by paving the way for CCP reformers to initiate China’s Reforming and Opening policies. Furthermore, Sino-US normalization was accompanied by a reversal of US policy toward Taiwan. Through the Shanghai Communiqué and the 1979 Taiwan
Relations Act (TRA) the United States recognized the existence of only one China. The United States also adopted a policy of “strategic ambiguity.”

China’s main motivation for seeking closer ties with the United States was its worsening relations with the Soviet Union. China, in the midst of the turbulent Cultural Revolution, became increasingly concerned that the Soviet Union would launch a preemptive strike on China’s nuclear forces. According to Wang Zhongchun (2005) the downward trajectory in Sino-Soviet military cooperation began in 1959 when the Soviet Union “unilaterally terminated an October 1957 agreement promising to supply China with new military technologies, including materials for producing an atomic bomb.”

Tensions continued to mount as the Soviet Union placed troops and artillery along the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Mongolian borders. The Soviet buildup on the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Mongolian borders left China vulnerable to a multidirectional assault, such as those launched by the Soviet on Japanese troops in 1945.

This Soviet military buildup continued throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Chinese leaders became especially concerned when the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968. Sino-Soviet tensions peaked in 1968 when Chinese and Soviet troops clashed on Zhenbao Island. China began to increasingly view the Soviet Union as its top threat, rather than the United States. As Wangchun highlights, “In Mao’s strategic thinking, at any one time China could only face a single main enemy militarily.” Thus, Chinese leaders decided that it was in China’s interests to repair

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190 I will discuss this in further detail below.
192 Ibid., 150-151.
193 Ibid., 151.
194 Ibid., 153.
relations with the United States and build up their defenses against the Soviet Union. Wangchun notes, however, that Chinese fears of an offensive Soviet attack were exaggerated, since “Moscow’s strategic emphasis remained in Europe, and it never came close to preparing for a full-scale war against China.”

Motivated by mutual concern over the Soviet Union, the United States and China began the process of normalizing relations. After years of secret negotiations, in 1972 US President Richard Nixon traveled to China and began the long process of Sino-US normalization. On February 27, 1972, the United States and the PRC issued a Joint Communiqué (known as the Shanghai Communiqué), which stated (emphasis added):

The Chinese reaffirmed its position: The Taiwan question is the crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States; the Government of the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal government of China […] The US side declared: the United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China […] With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all US forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes.

Although the United States did not specify whether the PRC or the ROC would constitute “China”, the Shanghai Communiqué represented a significant overture by the United States. Furthermore, the United States goal to ultimately remove military forces from Taiwan indicated that the United States did not plan to indefinitely support the ROC militarily. By January 1978, the United States officially recognized the PRC diplomatically and cut-off official ties with Taiwan. According to the statement:

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195 Ibid.
As of January 1, 1979, the United States of America recognizes the People’s Republic of China as the sole legal government of China. In the future, the American people of Taiwan will maintain commercial, cultural and other relations without official government representation and without diplomatic relations […]197

By removing this obstacle to Sino-US relations, the United States and China were able to establish full diplomatic relations and open China’s market to US businesses. ROC President Chiang Ching-kuo responded by saying regardless of whether the United States recognized the ROC, the ROC was “an independent sovereign state with a legitimately established government […]”.198

Despite the United States policy shift away from officially recognizing Taiwan, the US government continued to provide arms to Taiwan through the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). According to this act, US diplomatic relations with China rested “upon the expectation that the future of Taiwan [would] be determined by peaceful means.”199 Any act of aggression would be of “grave concern” to the United States.200 To protect Taiwan, the TRA allows the United States “to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character” and to “maintain the capacity […] to resist any force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize […] Taiwan.”201 Overall, the TRA allowed the United States to be ambiguous about its commitments to Taiwan. This deterred the PRC from attacking Taiwan and deterred ROC leaders from declaring independence.

200 Ibid.
201 Ibid.
The structural changes that most profoundly impacted China’s strategic culture were China’s 1978-79 economic reforms led by Deng Xiaoping. Deng shifted China’s Marxist-Leninist economy toward a more pragmatic, capitalist economic model. I contend that, as argued in the theoretical literature, this dramatic economic transition presented an opportunity for elites to challenge China’s dominant, realpolitik strategic cultural discourse. I argue that China’s economic shift from a Marxist economic model to a more capitalist-oriented one has eroded the rhetorical legitimacy of Marxist ideology (and its realpolitik strategic culture manifestation). This has created an ideological vacuum that has been increasingly filled by Confucianism.

I argue that Chinese elites have shifted China’s strategic cultural discourse to Confucianism. Chinese elites have most likely initiated this shift for instrumental purposes. China’s economic reforms have unleashed numerous social ills (e.g., large income disparities, increasing crime rates), which pose threats to the CCP’s legitimacy. Confucianism’s emphasis on harmony and stability serve to legitimate the CCP’s continued rule. The instrumental nature of China’s switch in strategic culture is highlighted by China’s reinterpretation of the Confucian classics to justify Capitalism (an ideology that is in opposition to Confucianism’s traditional emphasis on frugality). This strategic culture stresses the need for stability and harmony through cooperation. China’s increased cooperation is manifested in its engagement with international institutions. Despite the initial instrumental rationale for advocating Confucianism, I argue that Chinese elites were not immune from the socializing effects of strategic culture.
I argue that Chinese elites gradually began tolerating Confucianism during China’s economic reform period. Following the 1989 Tiananmen incident, Chinese elites began to increasingly promote Confucianism. Chinese elites most prominently promoted Confucianism in the 2000s when China began outlining its Harmonious Society (和 社会/hexie shehui) and Harmonious World (和 世界/hexie shijie) policies. As China has promoted Confucianism, and as China has become increasingly economically interdependent globally, it has increasingly engaged with international institutions. China’s increasing cooperation with international institutions throughout these periods has also had a socializing effect on China’s strategic culture.

This section discusses China’s economic reforms and the changes that occurred in China’s strategic culture. Throughout this section, I also highlight the changes that occurred in China’s Taiwan policy. I demonstrate how China’s increasing emphasis on promoting economic growth and China’s increasing promotion of Confucian principles of “harmony” have corresponded with China’s Taiwan policy. I argue that these variables have moderated PRC’s Taiwan policy. This moderation has become increasingly noticeable as these variables continue to diminish the influence of China’s realpolitik strategic culture.

CHINA’S REFORMS & REEMERGENCE OF CONFUCIANISM

In 1978-1979, Chinese leaders initiated economic reforms that fundamentally reshaped China’s economy and its relations with the outside world. As these reforms progressed, China began shifting away from its more dominant realpolitik strategic culture and gradually embraced Confucianism. In terms of foreign policy, China renounced its support for Communist guerrilla movements throughout Southeast Asia. In regards to
Taiwan, China switched its rhetoric from a policy of “liberating” Taiwan to “Peaceful Unification.”

While these policies represent a departure from China’s realpolitik strategic culture, I do not suggest that China completely switched its strategic culture (as the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis demonstrates). As China’s reforms have progressed, however, the CCP can no longer base its legitimacy on Marxism (as demonstrated by the 1989 Tiananmen Crisis). To support its continued rule, the CCP increasingly emphasized its economic legitimacy and a Confucian culture discourse throughout the 1990s, and especially during the 2000s. In the following chapter, I argue that this is reflected in the PRC’s more pragmatic Taiwan policy.

Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms began the process of shifting China’s strategic culture away from its realpolitik orientation. In 1977, Deng Xiaoping, after being persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, returned to his old official posts. When Deng returned to power, he first reformed China’s university entrance system. These reforms made entrance into China’s colleges determined by student performance in a competitive examination system. These reforms diluted the importance of familial and political connections for attending college. Students would no longer be “barred from university entrance because members of their families had previously been landlords or capitalists.” Deng’s reformist agenda gradually gained popularity among the CCP

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202 I will describe these in further detail below.
203 Ibid.
204 Ibid.
leadership. Deng accepted a post as the Chairman of the Military Commission. Ultimately, Deng would wrestle political power from Hua Guofeng.²⁰⁶

Deng initiated reforms that fundamentally restructured and liberalized China’s economic system. The quote attributed to Deng, “To get rich is glorious!” (致富光荣 * /zhifu guangrong),²⁰⁷ epitomizes the shift Deng initiated away from Marxist ideology. During the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee Deng, recalling Zhou Enlai, proclaimed importance of the “four modernizations,” – “modernizing agriculture, industry, national defense, science and technology.”²⁰⁸ Deng emphasized that China’s past commitment to ideology had prevented it from realizing these goals. Deng acknowledged that China needed to take a more pragmatic approach for accomplishing these four modernizations.²⁰⁹ During this meeting, Chinese officials agreed that China would need to cooperate economically with other countries, adopt more advanced technology, and strengthen its education system.²¹⁰ Chinese officials also decided that China needed to become less bureaucratic and centralized.²¹¹

One important pillar of China’s economic reforms was its “Open Door” policy. The Open Door policy opened China’s economy to the outside world. This required four broad measures:

²⁰⁵ Ibid.
²⁰⁷ As noted by LA Times columnist Evelyn Iritani, there is no proof that Deng actually made this statement. Regardless, the widespread use of this term by academics and journalists is indicative of the consensus that Deng’s economic ideology was capitalist-oriented. Evelyn Iritani, “Great Idea But Don’t Quote Him; Deng Xiaoping’s famous one-liner Started China on the Way to Capitalism. The Only Problem is There’s No Proof he Actually Said it,” The Lost Angeles Times, September 9, 2004.
²⁰⁸ Tisdell 2009, 275-276.
²⁰⁹ Ibid.
²¹⁰ Ibid., 275.
²¹¹ Ibid., 276.
(1) The government has decentralized decision-making regarding exports and imports to local governments or regional foreign trade corporations. (2) A series of special economic zones and coastal open cities have been designated for the purpose of stimulating exports and attracting foreign investment. (3) Administrative restrictions on exports and imports have been replaced by tariffs, quotas, and licensing. (4) Controls on foreign exchange have been loosened over the years, particularly for foreign-invested/managed firms.  

The first reforms occurred in the agricultural sector. These reforms are generally referred to as the contract responsibility system (CRS). According to Koo (1990), under the CRS system:

Peasants contract to produce and sell to the state certain quantities of commodities at low official prices. They are then free to sell on the free market anything produced over the contracted amount. What the system amounts to is a lump-sum tax on farm produce or a zero marginal tax on the incremental yield.

By the 1980s, China expanded these reforms to medium and large size industrial enterprises. In 1984, during the Third Plenum of the Twelfth Central Committee, Chinese leaders decided to apply these reform measures to China’s State Owned Enterprises (SOEs). These reforms expanded the autonomy of SOEs, allowing them to “produce according to market needs after the fulfillment of planned production.” SOEs were also allowed to “retain a share of profit in proportion to their over-fulfilled production.”

Overall, China’s economic opening and its domestic reforms increased Chinese productivity and wealth. As Pak-hung Mo and Sung-ko Li (1998) highlight, “From 1978...
to 1993, real *per capita* GNP grew more than 7 percent annually […]” 219 This increasing wealth corresponded with increasing trade and FDI. As Wei illustrates, China’s trade-GNP ratio increased “from about 9.7 percent in 1978 to 26.8 percent in 1989,” while its “Accumulated FDI from 1979 to 1992 […] reached $34.5 billion.” 220

During China’s reform period, the ideological monopoly of Marxism began to dissipate as the CCP began to tolerate other religious and philosophical discourses. On December 4, 1982 the PRC introduced a new constitution that paved the way for religious freedom. According to Article 6 of the new constitution, the PRC would tolerate and no longer discriminate against people because of their religious beliefs. However, the constitution makes a caveat, noting that no one may, “make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order.” 221 Although this declaration of religious freedom represents a marked shift from Maoist China, there is a significant gap between rhetoric and reality. The Chinese government continues to place numerous restrictions on freedom of religion. The PRC only recognizes state-sanctioned religions: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. All religious groups must register with the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) and are subject to tight supervision. 222

Corresponding with this increasing permissibility religious discourse has been a resuscitation of Confucian thought. Lionel Jensen (1997) highlights the CCP’s increasing tolerance of Confucianism during the Reform and Opening period. Under Mao, Confucianism was viewed as an old ideology linked to China’s feudal past. During the

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219 Ibid.
222 For more information on freedom of religion in China, please see: “Annual Report 2011,” the Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC), October 2011.
Cultural Revolution, Confucian symbols and statues were destroyed throughout the country. By the late 1970s, the CCP was beginning to once again tolerate Confucian thought. In 1978, Shandong University’s Department of history sponsored a reevaluation of Confucian thought.\textsuperscript{223}

By 1980, Confucius research centers began emerging around the country. In 1985, CCP officials allowed a Confucius Research Institute to be established near the symbolic Forbidden City.\textsuperscript{224} Chinese officials also began allowing books about Confucianism to be published.\textsuperscript{225} The CCP even supported celebrations of Confucius’s birth. According to Jensen, “On September 22, 1984, when the 2,535\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Kongzi’s (Confucius) putative birth was celebrated, three thousand selected Chinese and foreign guests presided over the ceremonies while the populace filled the temple grounds.”\textsuperscript{226} This increasing prevalence of Confucian symbolism coincided with a declining emphasis on Marxism/Maoist thought. Jensen describes this in a telling anecdote:

On the streets of Beijing in 1984, the revered “Little Red Book” of Chairman Mao’s selected quotations was not available, although several vendors proudly hawked Kongzi’s \textit{Selected Sayings (Lunyu)} in a handsomely bound vermillion-covered pocket book edition. A local publication of the \textit{Qufu Tanwen Guanli Weiyuanhui} (Qufu Control Committee for Cultural Artifacts), the obviously imitative production contained all twenty chapters of the standard \textit{Lunyu} printed in simplified characters […] Its resemblance to the first editions of Mao Zedong’s quotations is startling \[.\]\textsuperscript{227}

Overall, the Reform and Opening period allowed Chinese elites to reconsider China’s dominant Marxist ideology. Chinese elites initiated reforms that shifted China’s economy from a top-down command economy to a more market-oriented one. This move

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{225} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., 13.
toward economic pragmatism allowed Chinese elites to reconsider China’s dominant ideology. China began to gradually tolerate other competing ideologies and allowed for limited freedom of religion. Chinese officials also began permitting research and literature on Confucius. The CCP even began to celebrate Confucian symbolism.

CHANGE IN CHINA’S FOREIGN POLICY

As Chinese elites initiated economic reforms and began reconsidering China’s prevailing Marxist ideology (which I noted earlier was offensive-realist), China’s foreign policy began to take a more pragmatic and cooperative approach regionally, globally, and even in its relations with Taiwan. China, once estranged from Southeast Asia because of its support for communist insurgencies throughout the region, reestablished its diplomatic ties in Southeast Asia during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. China halted its support for communist insurgent movements in the region.228 China’s relations with ASEAN members continued to improve throughout the 1980s, as China and ASEAN cooperated on resolving Vietnam-Cambodia conflict.229

Globally, China has also become increasingly cooperative. As Iain Johnston (2008) has observed, China, once estranged from the international community, has been joining numerous multilateral institutions and signing several arms control treaties. According to Johnston, “[China] particularly after Mao’s death in 1976, [has went] from being a ‘novice’ in international institutional life to being a participant at levels nearing those of most major developing and developed states.”230 Even if China’s participation has been motivated by instrumental purposes, China’s increasing cooperation in these

229 Ibid., 5.
international institutions is having a socializing effect on China’s identity.\textsuperscript{231} This socialization process is also diluting the realpolitik strand of China’s strategic culture.

China’s shift away from its dominant realpolitik strategic culture was also reflected in its approach toward Taiwan. On January 1, 1979, the PRC officially adopted a new approach toward Taiwan that emphasized “peaceful unification.” In an open letter to China’s “compatriots” in Taiwan, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC) expressed this shift in policy. Chinese officials stated that after normalizing relations with the US and signing a peace treaty with Japan, there was a “popular feeling and general trend” that supported unification.\textsuperscript{232}

This letter also stated that both China and “Taiwan authorities” shared a common understanding that there is only one China. This mutual understanding could serve as a platform for reducing tension and ultimately for pursuing unification. China requested that dialogue and exchanges between China and Taiwan occur to begin the process of unification. The letter also conveyed that the Chinese government had “order[ed] the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to stop the bombardment of Quemoy and other islands.”\textsuperscript{233}

On September 30, 1981, Ye Jianying, vice-chairman of the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee clarified China’s policy of peaceful unification in a nine-point proposal. This proposal encouraged talks between the CCP and GMD to achieve the goal national unification and encouraged increasing relations between Taiwan and China in areas, such as “mail, trade, air and shipping services, and visits by relatives

\textsuperscript{231} I will discuss this further below.
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid.
and tourists as well as academic, cultural and sports exchanges […]\textsuperscript{234} The proposal also allows for Taiwan to remain autonomous in several arenas. Taiwan could keep its armed forces, and the CCP would not “interfere with local affairs in Taiwan.”\textsuperscript{235} Furthermore, Taiwan’s political leaders to “take up posts of leadership in national political bodies and participate in running the state.”\textsuperscript{236} Taiwan could maintain its socio-economic system and its relations with foreign countries. This proposal also guaranteed that the Chinese government would not encroach upon the property rights of Taiwan citizens.\textsuperscript{237}

Beyond guaranteeing Taiwan’s continued autonomy, Ye’s nine-point proposal also provided incentives for Taiwan to unify with the mainland. For example, according to the proposal, “When Taiwan’s local finance is in difficulty, the central government may subsidize it as is fit for the circumstances.”\textsuperscript{238} People would be allowed to move to the mainland without fear of discrimination and with guaranteed “freedom of entry and exit.”\textsuperscript{239} The proposal welcomed “industrialists and businessmen” from Taiwan to invest in the mainland, and assured them that “their legal rights, interests, and profits [would be] guaranteed.”\textsuperscript{240}

In an interview with Professor Winston L.Y. Yang of Seton Hall University on June 26, 1983, Deng Xiaoping provided further clarification of China’s peaceful unification policy. Deng’s comments, however, suggested that Taiwan’s autonomy would be more restricted than suggested by Ye. Deng said:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{235} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{236} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{237} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{238} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{239} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{240} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
We do not approve of “complete autonomy” for Taiwan. There must be limits to autonomy, and where there are limits, nothing can be complete. “Complete autonomy” means two China’s, not one. Different systems may be practiced, but it must be the People’s Republic of China alone that represents China internationally. We recognize that the local government of Taiwan may have its own separate set of policies for domestic affairs. And although, as a special administrative region, Taiwan will have a local government, it will differ from local governments of other provinces, municipalities and autonomy regions [...] it will enjoy certain powers of its own that others do not possess.241

During this interview, Deng reaffirmed several of Ye’s nine points. Deng said Taiwan would be allowed to “practice a social system different from the mainland [,] enjoy independent judicial power […] and] maintain its own army.”242 Deng also reaffirmed that Taiwan political officials could hold public office in China’s central government.243 In addition, Deng encouraged further rounds of talks with Taiwan “authorities.” These talks, Deng said would take place on “equal footing,” as opposed to “talks between […] central and local governments.”244

Despite this call for treating both parties as equals, Deng said, “it is unrealistic to call for reunification of China under the ‘Three Principles’” – nationalism, democracy, people’s livelihoods – proposed by Taiwan.245 These statements regarding China’s peaceful unification policy will be essential for contextualizing Lee Teng-hui’s comments regarding Cross-Strait relations in Chapter Five. Regardless of the terms of China’s proposals for peaceful unification, China’s policy of “peaceful unification” represents a marked shift in China’s strategy toward Taiwan.

242 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
Overall, this section highlighted how China’s foreign policy changed in conjunction with changes occurring in its economic system and ideological framework. China’s shift toward a capitalist economic system and the emergence of alternative ideological discourses, suggests that China had become disillusioned with its predominant Marxist ideology. In terms of foreign policy, this Marxist ideology was offensive-oriented. As Chinese elites began to question and reject this Marxist ideology, China’s foreign policy became less ideological and more pragmatic. China reestablished relations in Southeast Asia, engaged in multilateral institutions, and took a less hostile approach toward Taiwan. The following section discusses the further changes that occurred in China’s strategic culture throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

CHINA’S STRATEGIC CULTURE – 1990s to 2000s

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, China’s realpolitik strategic culture became less prominent. Two forces contributed to this. The first force is China’s increasing economic interdependence globally, and its rhetorical justification through Confucianism. I argue that China has increasingly encouraged Confucianism to legitimize its rule. This Confucian discourse encourages stability and cooperation to promote economic growth. Though primarily intended for domestic consumption, this Confucian discourse is also evident in China’s foreign policy (eg, China’s Harmonious World policy). The second force diminishing the influence of China’s realpolitik strategic culture is China’s increasing socialization from international institutions. As China has engaged the international system, it has gradually internalized more cooperative international norms.
The first force diminishing the influence of China’s realpolitik strategic culture is China’s increasing promotion of Confucian rhetoric. Although Chinese elites began to once again tolerate Confucianism, it was not until the 1990s and the early 2000s that the CCP began to significantly promote this Confucian discourse. This discourse served to legitimize the CCPs continued rule and China’s economic liberalization. This government-led promotion of Confucianism makes sense in context. As China’s political reforms failed to match its 1978-79 economic reforms, China’s Communist ideology was being undermined. In search for an alternative, Confucianism, which helped legitimize imperial rule for over 2,000 years, appeared to be a viable alternative.

The 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident was a watershed moment in Chinese history that led the CCP to increasingly promote Confucianism. As a consequence of Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms, Chinese citizens enjoyed increasing economic freedom and began demanding political freedom as well. In 1989, student-led pro-democracy protests gained popular support as thousands of Chinese citizens gathered at Tiananmen Square. Although the CCP tolerated changes to its economic system, it was not yet willing to relinquish political power. The government utilized military force to suppress the protests, drawing condemnation from the international community. Though the true number of casualties will never be known, estimates range anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand deaths.\(^{246}\)

The Tiananmen Square Incident underscored the widespread disillusionment among Chinese citizens with China’s Marxist ideology. CCP leaders decided that Marxism no longer served to legitimize their rule. Suisheng Zhao (1998) argues that in the

1990s, the CCP faced a legitimacy crisis. The CCP could no longer rely on Communist ideology and performance legitimacy to maintain its control on power. Following the Tiananmen Square Incident, the CCP began encouraging Chinese nationalism and reviving Confucianism. Thus, the CCP engaged in state-led nationalism, utilizing “patriotic education campaigns” and extensive propaganda. This nationalism emphasized China’s cultural distinctiveness.  

Steven Mufson (1996), a correspondent for the Washington Post, describes this nationalism as “a mix militarism, Maoism, Confucianism […]” The CCP increasingly tried to distance itself from the rigid ideological confines of the Maoist era. According to Daniel Bell (2008), Marxist ideology has been so discredited that it no longer provides the “moral foundation for political rule in China.” The CCP considers Confucianism to be the best ideology to fill this ideological vacuum, because of its emphasis on stability. Confucian values such as harmony are “meant to reflect the ruling party’s concerns for all classes.”

Only months after the Tiananmen Square Incident, the Chinese government led a celebration of Confucius’s putative 2,540th birthday. During this ceremony, party elder Gu Mu gave a speech emphasizing the need for China to not only continue its advances in science and technology, but to also attain “harmony” – a term associated with Confucian thought. Furthermore, according to John Delury (2008), following the Tiananmen Square Incident, traditional Confucian discourse “resurfaced in both

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249 Daniel Bell 2008, 8.
250 Ibid.
intellectual discourse and party rhetoric.” Throughout the 1990s, there was a continued expansion of China’s Confucius institutes.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s the CCP has increasingly revived Confucian thought, especially aspects that encourage social stability and deference to authority.\footnote{John Dotson, “The Confucian Revival in Propaganda Narratives of the Chinese Government,” \textit{US-China Economic and Security Review Commission Staff Research}, July 20, 2011, 5.} As the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission highlights, China’s state controlled media regularly praises Confucian thought. This official government endorsement of Confucian thought was illustrated during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. During the 2008 Olympics, the torch running ceremony and the opening ceremonies both prominently displayed Confucian symbolism and imagery (e.g., costumes, slogans, advertisements, etc.).\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 5, 8.} In 2009, a Chinese state-owned company released a major motion picture regarding the life of Confucius.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 8.} By 2011, a statue of Confucius appeared in Tiananmen Square, only to later be relocated to a more discreet location.\footnote{Andrew Jacobs, “Confucius Statue Vanishes Near Tiananmen Square,” \textit{The New York Times}, April 22, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/23/world/asia/23confucius.html}


\begin{quote}
The newfound praise for Confucius is tied closely to the Party’s official narrative of a “Harmonious Society” […] This propaganda theme emphasizes: the Party’s benevolent concern for the welfare of the common man; an (at least nominal)
effort to balance growth more evenly between China’s haves and have-nots; and, above all, the clearly implied responsibility of China’s citizens not to challenge CCP rule.\footnote{258}

According to Kin-Man Chan (2008), the harmonious society concept’s “social values cover not only political and economic institutions but also cultural and environmental dimensions [.]”\footnote{259} To establish a harmonious society, Hu emphasizes that China must achieve “scientific development” (科学 展/kexue fazhan). This scientific development concept refers to the pursuit of more sustainable and more equitable development policies.\footnote{260} Overall, these policies aim to establish a “moderately well-off society” (小康社会/xiaokang shehui).\footnote{261} It is important to note that, similar to the term “harmony,” the term “xiaokang shehui” is a Confucian phrase that is over 2,500 years old.\footnote{262} According to Xinhua News Agency, the term is believed to have first appeared in the “Book of Songs”, and more prominently in the “Book of Rites.”\footnote{263} This term represents the CCP’s attempt to revive Confucian symbolism and discourse to legitimize contemporary economic policy.

Chinese elites are also infusing Confucian symbolism in official foreign policy discourse. Described as an extension of China’s domestic harmonious society policy, Chinese elites are propounding a “harmonious world” (和 世界/hexie shijie) foreign policy concept. The exact meaning of “harmonious world” has been interpreted in numerous ways by different Chinese political elites. According to Yongnian Zheng and

\footnote{258}{John Dotson 2011, 5.}
\footnote{259}{Ibid.}
\footnote{260}{Ibid.}
\footnote{261}{Ibid.}
Sow Keat Tok (2007), the harmonious world policy is a shift away from China’s “Peaceful Rise” discourse and signifies a more confident China willing to “undertake greater responsibilities in international affairs.” China’s choice of the word “harmony” to describe its foreign policy is by no means a coincidence. Even in official government statements, the PRC discusses the Confucian origins of the term “harmony.”

As Chinese elites have promoted Confucianism in official state discourse, the CCP has also begun to more openly embrace capitalism. In fact, the CCP is now allowing capitalists into its own ranks. In October 2000, Jiang Zemin introduced a new concept/policy known as the “Three Represents” (三个代表/三ge daibiao). The Three Represents are: “Representing the development trend of China’s advanced productive forces,” “Representing the orientation of China’s advanced culture,” and “Representing the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.”

These “advanced productive forces,” represent those Chinese private entrepreneurs who have benefitted from China’s economic reforms. As Kenneth Lieberthal (2004) highlights, by adopting the Three Represents concept as official policy in 2002, the CCP gave its “blessing (for) the recruitment of successful private-sector entrepreneurs into its ranks.” By permitting private-entrepreneurs to gain political power, the CCP is further solidifying its reorientation away from Marxism and toward capitalism. As Lieberthal

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notes, however, a potential consequence of this is it “raises the possibility that in a matter of decades the Chinese political system could evolve into a form of oligarchy.”

The CCP’s embrace of Confucianism and Capitalism are intimately interrelated. By emphasizing Confucian themes of “harmony” and “social stability,” the CCP creates pillars for pursuing economic growth. The CCP can establish ideological legitimacy to help support its rule during times of dramatic socio-economic transformation. Similarly, through economic performance legitimacy the CCP can demonstrate that it has the “mandate” to rule. China’s embrace of capitalism and Confucianism represent a marked shift away from China’s Marxist ideology in terms of philosophical orientation and goals. Capitalism is antithetical to Marxism. Likewise, Confucianism was seen as an ideology that supported China’s feudalist past – an ideology that Mao struggled against. Whereas Mao’s version of Marxism viewed conflict as inevitable and zero-sum terms. Contrarily, Confucianism and capitalism value stability for maximizing economic growth (capitalism) and social harmony (Confucianism).

The second factor diminishing the influence of China’s realpolitik strategic culture is a constructivist shift in Chinese strategic thinking. China has begun to espouse more cooperative security norms. As Johnston (2003) describes, Chinese participation rates in international institutions, its degree of compliance with international norms, and its behavior toward ‘rules of the game’ indicate that it is a much more cooperative actor than is commonly understood. Perhaps most indicative of this constructivist shift in China’s strategic thinking, is China’s 1996 release of its “New Security Concept.” This paper revived Zhou Enlai’s support for the UN’s “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,

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268 Ibid., 312.
269 Johnston 2003, 5-25, 49.
which includes the principle of “peacefully [resolving] territorial and border disputes and other controversial issues through negotiations.”

Johnston (2008) examines the impact of regional institutions such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) on China’s behavior. Johnston argues that China is becoming socialized by the ARF. According to Johnston, China has made several gestures to ARF members to indicate that it is cooperating with ARF norms. China began engaging in confidence building measures (CBMs) and started publishing defense white papers to demonstrate transparency. China has also signed numerous regional cooperative security treaties. China has cooperated with ARF norms by releasing policy concept papers and by signing a number of regional cooperative security treaties, such as the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC). This document commits signatories to resolving territorial and jurisdictional disputes peacefully, and to respect freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

The PRC also acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), which enshrines values such as “non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; [the] settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means; [and the] renunciation of the threat of the use of force.” Last, Johnston concluded that China’s increasing interaction with ARF has created a “constituency of protomultilateralists who [have] internalized a view of security that places less stress on unilateral security and more on cooperative

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security strategies.” These protomultilateralists – consisting of scholars, diplomats, and analysts – have begun to view common security as part of Chinese national interests.

Overall, through the 1990s and early 2000s, China’s realpolitik strategic culture has been further diluted by two forces: the emergence of an alternative Confucian discourse supported by economic interdependence, and a constructivist shift in Chinese strategic thinking. The state-led process of China’s Confucian revival suggests that the emergence of China’s Confucian discourse was instrumental. However, as a consequence, China has engaged with the world community in a more cooperative fashion. This has, in turn, reinforced cooperative stability-oriented elements of China’s strategic culture.

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION

My examination of China’s strategic cultural change illustrates many of the insights from the theoretical literature on strategic culture. China experienced large changes internationally and domestically that allowed Chinese elites to reconsider China’s predominant realpolitik strategic culture. China broke off relations with the USSR and normalized relations with the United States. Furthermore, following the disastrous Cultural Revolution and the death of Mao Zedong, Chinese elites reconsidered their ideological commitment to Marxism/Maoist thought. China experimented successfully with economic pragmatism through its Reform and Opening policies. Chinese elites diluted the Marxism’s ideological monopoly and became more tolerant of competing ideological frameworks, such as Confucianism. China’s foreign policy mirrored these changes, as China promoted a more cooperative foreign policy with its regional neighbors, the world community, and toward Taiwan.

275 Ibid., 197-198.
Just as elite agency (Deng’s reforms) and large structural changes (Sino-US normalization, Reform and Opening policies) led to a dilution of China’s Marxist, realpolitik strategic culture during the 1980s, elite agency resulted in the promotion of a Confucian discourse. Following the 1989 Tiananmen Incident, CCP leaders decided that China’s Marxist ideology no longer served to legitimize their continued rule. Therefore, the CCP utilized a combination of capitalism and Confucian discourse to bolster its legitimacy. This Confucian discourse has manifested itself in China’s “Harmonious Society” and “Harmonious World” policies. China has also sought to promote stable and cooperative foreign relations to encourage economic growth. This has not only constrained China’s behavior, but it may have even socialized China into accepting some international norms.

The following chapter illustrates how China’s changing strategic culture has impacted Chinese foreign policy. I examine Chinese foreign policy toward Taiwan before and after the 1995-996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. I contend that Chinese decision-making in the Taiwan Strait corresponds with the diminishing influence of China’s realpolitik strategic culture and the increasing importance of economic interdependence and Confucian rhetoric. I argue that although the 1995-1996 Crisis in many ways resembles the previous crises, China demonstrated much more restraint during this crisis and had a more limited scope militarily. As China’s predominant strategic culture has been diminished by economic interdependence and an increasing rhetorical emphasis on Confucianism in the late 1990s and early 2000s, China has taken a more pragmatic and cooperative approach toward Taiwan.
CHAPTER V

Although economic interdependence and China’s increasing rhetorical emphasis on Confucianism are mitigating Chinese realpolitik behavior, China’s realist strategic culture has not disappeared and still continues to have a distinct impact on Chinese foreign policy. The 1995-1996 Taiwan Crisis demonstrates the continuing influence of China’s realpolitik strategic culture. This crisis shared several similarities to the 1954-55 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises. In each of these crises, Chinese leaders misperceived the intentions of the United States (and Taiwan during the recent crisis). During these crises, China utilized coercive diplomacy to demonstrate its resolve and prevent future crises from occurring. In the 1954-55 and 1958, China engaged in crises to prevent the United States from using the GMD to retake the mainland as part of its larger strategy against the Soviet Union.

During the 1995-1996 Taiwan Crisis, China viewed ROC President Lee Teng-hui as a separatist. Chinese decision-makers also believed that the United States was encouraging Taiwanese separatism by permitting Lee to travel to the United States. Chinese displays of force – missile launches near the Taiwanese coast and amphibious military exercises – were intended to signal Chinese resolve and to deter the ROC from declaring independence.

China also used force prior to ROC’s elections to intimidate Taiwanese voters from electing Lee. During this crisis, the PRC overestimated the threat posed by Lee. As Richard Bush argues, “Lee Teng-hui did not, in fact, oppose unification in principle. Instead, Lee took a firm and consistent stand on the terms and conditions that would
define Taiwan and its unification with the mainland.” Additionally, Taiwan’s purchasing of US arms was a reaction to China’s military buildup, and consistent with “Taipei’s definition of its status as a sovereign government.” China’s threat perceptions, however, colored its understanding of the events that unfolded.

This section examines Chinese decision-making during the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. I argue that during the crisis, China misperceived US and ROC intentions and relied on coercive diplomacy. China’s goals for using force were limited in scope, and China had no intention of actually attacking Taiwan. First, I examine the incident that provoked China to engage in the crisis – ROC President Lee Teng-hui’s trip to the United States. Although China viewed this action as indicative of Taiwan’s intentions to declare independence (with US support), there is little evidence that the United States was supportive of such a move. There is also insufficient evidence that Lee intended to declare independence.

Second, I discuss China’s actual use of force. Although China’s military exercises represented the largest displays of force since the 1958 Crisis, China’s had limited goals. China only intended to demonstrate resolve and deter Lee from declaring independence. China also wanted to deter the United States from supporting such a move. I demonstrate this by examining how China’s “military exercises were clearly defined, circumscribed in terms of location, duration, and scope.” I also examine how Chinese leaders gave their American and Taiwanese counterparts ample warning, and attempted to convey that these

277 Ibid.
military exercises were only limited in scope. Last, I assess the PRC’s post-1996 foreign policy toward the ROC.

CHINESE DECISION-MAKING AND THE 1995-1996 CRISIS; LEE TENG-HUI’S PRESIDENCY

ROC President Lee Teng-hui’s 1995 visit to the United States to speak at Cornell University was the catalyst for the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. To Chinese leaders, this trip indicated Lee’s separatist intentions and the United States’ tacit support for him. I argue that although Lee was at times antagonistic, he did not oppose unification. However, although Lee supported unification, Lee wanted to negotiate from a more equal bargaining position. There is also scant evidence that the United States supported Taiwan’s independence. The US decision to allow Lee Teng-hui to visit the United States was more of a result of Congressional pressure than a fundamental policy shift in the US foreign policy toward Taiwan. Overall, this section demonstrates that Chinese decision-makers either misperceived ROC and US intentions, or they deliberately misconstrued them.

The Chinese government has often characterized ROC President Lee Teng-hui as a separatist. As stated in a 2000 PRC white paper entitled “The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue”:

> The struggle between the Chinese government and the separatist forces headed by Lee Teng-hui finds its concentrated expression in the question of whether to persevere in the One-China Principle or to create “two China” or “One-China, one Taiwan.”

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Richard Bush (2005) argues that despite PRC rhetoric, there is little evidence that Lee was a separatist. Throughout Lee’s tenure in politics his public statements regarding unification have been consistent. Lee was never opposed to unification in principle. Lee, however, was not satisfied with China’s conditions for unification.280

Lee Teng-hui and other ROC leaders, after decades of self-rule, did not want to lose autonomy. As discussed above, however, Ye Jianying’s “nine-points” and Deng Xiaoping’s conversation with Winston Yang indicated to Taiwan that although China had adopted a more peaceful approach to cross-strait relations, the PRC intended to treat Taiwan as a local government under mainland jurisdiction, rather than granting Taiwan complete autonomy. This view was further solidified in 1984 when China specified guidelines for conducting its relations with Hong Kong when it became a Special Administrative Region (SAR).281

In response to Beijing’s proposals, Lee set high conditions for unification. In Lee’s first press conference as President in 1988, he argued that while unification was the ultimate goal, there were significant ideological barriers between Taiwan and the mainland. Lee, in line with the ROC’s previous statements, argued that unification should be consistent with Sun Yat-Sen’s “Three Principles of People,” which emphasized democracy and social welfare. Lee contended that the PRC’s “Four Cardinal Principles,” which highlighted principles such as socialism and the “dictatorship of the proletariat.”282 Although these ideological differences posed obstacles to unification, Lee did not argue that Taiwan should declare independence. In fact, Lee argued that Taiwan’s independence

281 Ibid., 71-72.
282 Ibid., 72-73.
movement was illegal and “destabilizing,” and that “We [Taiwan] stick to a ‘one China’ policy; that is, China must be reunified.”

During Lee’s speech at Cornell University, Lee spoke only briefly about Taiwan’s economic growth and democratization. Instead, Lee spoke mostly about his time at Cornell. Lee only addressed Mainland Chinese officials once during the speech. Lee stated (emphasis added): We believe that mutual respect will gradually lead to the peaceful reunification of China under a system of democracy, freedom and equitable distribution of wealth.”

During his May 20, 1996 inaugural address, Lee stated, “Here in this country, it is totally unnecessary or impossible to adopt the so-called course of ‘Taiwan independence.’” Regardless of Lee’s words, his trip was symbolic because he was the first Taiwanese leader to visit the United States since 1979. This trip alarmed Chinese officials, because it signaled the United States was beginning to recognize Taiwan as an independent state.

This interpretation, however, exaggerates of US intentions. Lee’s 1995 trip to the United States was a consequence of US domestic political pressure. In 1994, Lee traveled to South Africa. When Lee’s plane stopped in Honolulu to refuel, the United States denied

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287 Ibid.
Lee a visa. Lee’s plane was forced to land and spend the night in a US military airfield. Lee complained of being treated like a “second class” leader.\textsuperscript{288} Lee’s visa denial “caught the attention of influential Taiwan Americans,” who later lobbied for Lee’s Cornell visit.\textsuperscript{289} According to Denny Roy (2003), several members of the US Congress pressured the Clinton Administration to allow a visit from Lee. These members argued that the United States was acting hypocritically, allowing figures such as the Irish Republican Army’s (IRA) Gerry Adams and the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s (PLO) Yasir Arafat to travel to the United States, yet not allowing Lee to visit.\textsuperscript{290} Once the crisis was underway, the United States made further efforts to assure China that it did not support Taiwan independence. In August 1995, US President Clinton sent a letter to Jiang Zemin stating: “The United States would (1) “oppose” Taiwan independence; would not support “two Chinas,” or one China and one Taiwan; and (3) would not support Taiwan’s admission to the United Nations.”\textsuperscript{291}

Although Lee was, perhaps, antagonistic toward the PRC and his trip to the United States was unprecedented, there is little evidence to support PRC claims that Lee was a separatist, or that US policy had shifted toward supporting ROC independence. Throughout his career, Lee consistently supported unification. Lee, however, did not agree with the PRC’s approach. Lee insisted the PRC treat Taiwan as an autonomous entity rather than a local government under the aegis of the PRC. Furthermore, although the United States permitted Lee to visit the United States, this decision was the result of US

\textsuperscript{288} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{289} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{290} Roy 2003, 196-197.

domestic politics. Hence, this decision was not necessarily indicative of an overall shift in US policy toward Taiwan.

Why did PRC leaders argue that Lee was a separatist and that the US supported such a move? Either Chinese decision-makers actually misperceived US intentions or they deliberately misconstrued them. However, considering China’s harsh response\textsuperscript{292} to Lee’s trip to the United States, it appears that China indeed viewed Lee as directly threatening Chinese interests at some level – either as a present or a future threat. China’s misperception of US and ROC intentions is similar to its reaction during the 1954-1955 and 1958 Taiwan Crisis.


tt{\textbf{CHINA’S USE OF FORCE DURING THE 1995-1996 CRISIS}}

China’s display of force during the 1995-1996 Crisis was also consistent with elements of its realpolitik strategic culture. However, China’s display of force during 1995-1996 was even more restrained than it was in previous crises. Though the 1995-1996 Crisis represented the largest display of force since the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, China’s objectives were even more limited in scope. Similar to previous crises, PRC leaders sought to convey their resolve – this time to signal that ROC independence was unacceptable.

According to Andrew Scobell (2003), throughout 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, Chinese leaders ensured that the PLA was limited in its maneuverability. Chinese leaders also clearly articulated to their American and Taiwanese counterparts that Chinese military exercises were limited in scope.\textsuperscript{293} Following Lee’s trip to the United States, China initiated a series of military exercises, including missile tests in close proximity to

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{292} I will address this further below.
\end{footnotesize}
Taiwan’s busy port city, Kaohsiung. Although the PRC’s military exercises were more reactive in 1995 (in response to Lee’s trip), China’s display of force in 1996 (prior to Taiwan’s first presidential election) was much more carefully orchestrated.\textsuperscript{294}

Throughout both rounds of military exercises, the Chinese leaders made several efforts to communicate to their US counterparts that the military exercises were limited in scope. In 1995, China sent Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu to the United States to communicate that China had no intentions of actually invading Taiwan and to forewarn the United States that more military exercises would likely occur.\textsuperscript{295} Chinese officials also sought to understand how the US would respond. After receiving a “stern but vague” response from US Assistant Secretary of Defense, Joseph Nye, Chinese leaders believed the United State would, at most, provide only a “token” response.\textsuperscript{296} When the United States dispatched two aircraft carriers into the Taiwan Strait in 1996, Chinese leaders were surprised and viewed it as an overreaction by the US.\textsuperscript{297}

China’s display of force was intended to deter Taiwan from pursuing independence, and thus, prevent China from having to use more force in the future. Despite assertive rhetoric, Chinese military officials communicated that they did not want to begin a war in the Taiwan Strait and that the Taiwan dispute should be settled through peaceful means.\textsuperscript{298} Chinese leaders also made several efforts to ensure that they maintained centralized control over military actions. These efforts were intended to limit the possibilities of China accidentally striking the enemy and escalating the crisis.\textsuperscript{299}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{294} Ibid., 182-183
\item \textsuperscript{295} Ibid., 181.
\item \textsuperscript{296} Ibid., 182.
\item \textsuperscript{297} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 183.
\item \textsuperscript{299} Ibid., 182
\end{itemize}
Scobell says, although China’s use of missiles were viewed as China’s most provocative act, Chinese leaders viewed the use of missiles as ideal, because “they were both a clear demonstration that Beijing’s threats were credible – China had the will to use force and the capability to strike Taiwan – and offered little danger of escalation.”

POST-1996 CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS; CHEN SHUI-BIAN’S PRESIDENCY

Since the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis (mostly during the 2000’s), the PRC’s Taiwan strategy has been less coercive. Whereas the PRC used military exercises to signal to Lee Teng-hui that a formal declaration of independence would result in war, the PRC’s post-1996 Taiwan Strait policy has focused on cooperation and economic engagement. Though PRC leaders viewed Lee as a separatist, the PRC did not rely on actual displays of military force, even when pro-independence candidate Chen Shuibian was elected in 2000. Instead, Chinese officials made a clear threat to Chen with the Anti-Secession Act, and Chinese officials worked with US officials to reign in Chen’s behavior. This is reflective of the growing importance of economic interdependence. Despite these changes, the PRC’s realpolitik strategic culture still exists and continues to manifest itself in the PRC’s Taiwan strategy. This is best exemplified by China’s continued naval modernization and military buildup across the Taiwan Strait.

Following the 1995-996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, cross-Strait relations remained tense. However, by October 1998 Chinese and Taiwanese officials resumed talks, regarding unification. The resumption of political talks was likely, to some degree, influenced by US

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300 Ibid.
President Bill Clinton’s June 30, 1998 statement regarding Cross-Strait relations.\(^{301}\)

During a 1998 summit meeting in China, Clinton stated:

> We don’t support independence for Taiwan, or two China, or one Taiwan-one China. And we don’t believe that Taiwan should be a member in any organization for which statehood is a requirement. So I think we have a consistent policy. Out only policy has been that we think it has to be done peacefully.\(^{302}\)

According to a Clinton Administration official, this statement was used to help Jiang Zemin– who the Clinton Administration believed sought peaceful unification – win over hardliners in the CCP.\(^{303}\) Clinton’s explicit declaration that the United States would not support Taiwan if it declared independence placed pressure on Taiwan leaders to resume diplomatic talks. Although this resumption of talks represented the largest contact between Taiwan and Mainland China since the Chinese Civil War, these talks produced little in terms of substance. Taiwan negotiators were, once again, reluctant to let China treat Taiwan as anything less than an equal negotiating partner.\(^{304}\)

Throughout the remainder of the 1990s, cross-Strait relations remained tense. In 1999, the PRC more than tripled the number of ballistic missiles in provinces facing Taiwan. This increase was likely intended to negate any attempt by the United States to place Taiwan under a missile-defense shield.\(^{305}\) Tensions were further heightened in

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1999, when Lee referred to cross-Strait relations as “special state-to-state” relations.\(^{306}\)

Following this statement, Chinese and Taiwanese fighter jets flew “hundreds” of sorties in the Taiwan Strait and China test fired a long-range missile.\(^{307}\) Chinese officials also conveyed to their US counterparts that China was considering using military force in the Taiwan Strait – a message that was echoed in leading Chinese newspapers (eg, *Global Times*).\(^{308}\) Whether Chinese leaders actually considered using force is unknown, because these threats never materialized.

Although Chinese leaders were highly suspicious of Lee Teng-hui’s intentions and even used military threats during the 1995-1996 Crisis, during the 2000’s China had a much less coercive Taiwan policy. This occurred even as pro-independence candidate Chen Shui-bian was elected in 2000. In the 1990s, Chinese leaders reacted aggressively to any language by Lee suggesting Taiwan was a sovereign entity equal to the PRC. Chen, on the other hand, and his party the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) were explicit that Taiwan and China were equals and that Taiwan should ultimately seek independence. For example, on August 3, 2002, Chen proclaimed (emphasis added):

*Taiwan is our country, and our country cannot be bullied, diminished, marginalized, or downgraded as a local entity. Taiwan does not belong to someone else, nor is it someone else’s local government or province. Taiwan also cannot become a second Hong Kong or Macau because Taiwan is a sovereign independent country. Simply put, it must be clear that Taiwan and China are each one country on each side [yibian yiguo] of the strait. [...] Only the 23 million great people of the Taiwan have the right to decide Taiwan’s future fate, and status. If the need arises, how should this decision be made? It is our long-sought ideal and goal, and our common idea: a referendum … I sincerely call upon and*

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encourage everyone to seriously consider the importance and urgency of legislation for holding referendums.  

It is important to note the stark difference in language used by Chen. Whereas Lee Teng-hui never went as far as describing Taiwan as an independent country, Chen had no qualms about using such controversial terminology. Furthermore, Chen discussed the need to hold a referendum on Taiwan’s status. In 2003, Chen attempted to hold such a referendum and revise the constitution. This referendum ultimately failed. However, this referendum alarmed the United States enough that it issued an official statement discouraging Taiwan from unilaterally altering the status quo.

Despite Chen’s pro-independence stance, the PRC took a less hardline approach toward Taiwan in the 2000s, than it did when Lee Teng-hui was in power. The PRC, though warning that it would use force if Taiwan declared independence (or forestalled unification indefinitely), emphasized engagement and cooperation more in the 2000s. In a letter to the DPP, PRC Vice Premier Qian Qichen stated:

We hold that political differences must not interfere with economic and trade exchanges between the two sides of the strait … We are willing to hear opinions from people in Taiwan on the establishment of a mechanism for economic cooperation and the promotion of economic relations between the two sides … The Democratic Progressive Party should think more about the welfare of the people in Taiwan, thoroughly discard its “Taiwan independence party platform,” and develop cross-strait relations with a sincere attitude. We believe that the broad masses of the DPP are different form the minority of stubborn “Taiwan independence” elements.

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311 I will discuss the reasons for this below.
313 “PRC Vice Premier Qian Qichen’s Invitation to the DPP,” January 24, 2002, in Shirley A. Kan 2011, 66.
When Chen was reelected in 2004, the United States was concerned that it would further erode stability in the Taiwan Strait. The United States issued another statement emphasizing it would not support any decision by Taiwan to unilaterally alter the status quo. Rather than engaging in coercive diplomacy (as China did prior to Lee Teng-hui’s election, the PRC utilized alternative strategies, attempting to influence Taiwan’s domestic politics and once again calling for engagement. In 2005, the GMD – the DPP’s opposition party – released a joint statement with the CPC, declaring their goals to:

(1) Resume cross-strait negotiation on the basis of the “1992 Consensus;” (2) cease hostilities, conclude a peace agreement, and launch military confidence building measures (CBMs); (3) comprehensively expand economic engagement; (4) negotiate Taiwan’s international participation including in the WHO; (5) set up party-to-party platform.

Overall, although Chen Shui-bian has been much more explicit about supporting Taiwanese independence, the PRC has taken a less coercive approach toward cross-Strait relations.

Besides taking a less coercive approach toward Taiwan, Chinese leaders are also becoming less suspicious of US intentions. During the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, China intended to send a message to both the US and ROC that independence would not be tolerated. According to Andrew Kennedy (2007), most Chinese analysts do not view the United States as supporting Taiwan independence. This is an overall shift from Chinese fears during the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis.

Nevertheless, although Chinese leaders do not believe the United States is bent on promoting independence, their views of US intentions are not completely sanguine.

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Chinese leaders view the United States as committed to preventing Taiwan’s unification for a variety of (though not necessarily mutually exclusive) reasons – hegemonic fears, historical constraints, or because the United States views Taiwan’s democracy as “an example to inspire political liberalization on the mainland.” Although Chinese leaders view US obstructionism as contrary to Chinese interests, this view represents a lessening of Chinese suspicions of the United States from earlier eras.

**MA YING-JEOU’S PRESIDENCY**

Throughout the latter half of the 2000s, cross-Strait relations continued to improve. When GMD leader Ma Ying-jeou won the 2008 election in Taiwan, Relations between Taiwan and the PRC improved markedly. Unlike Chen Shui-bian, Ma Ying-jeou supported maintaining the status quo and improving cross-Strait relations. In Ma’s inaugural speech he declared that he supported a principle known as the “3 Noes”: “No unification, no independence, and no use of force.” The PRC has responded positively to Ma. On December 31, 2008, PRC leader made six proposals on achieving “peaceful development in the Taiwan Strait. Shirley Kan (2011) summarizes them as follows:

1. Abide by the “one China” principle and enhance political mutual trust;
2. advance economic cooperation and common development;
3. promote Chinese culture and strengthen the spiritual bond;
4. strengthen people-to-people exchanges, with the DPP putting an end to “Taiwan independence” separatist activities;
5. safeguard national sovereignty and consult on foreign affairs, including Taiwan’s participation in the activities of international organizations;
6. end the state of hostility and reach a peace agreement, including exploring the establishment of a mechanism of mutual trust for military security.

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317 Ibid., 270.
The PRC’s emphasis on economic cooperation and exchanges was not just rhetorical. By 2010, the PRC and Taiwan had signed 15 economic agreements, including the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). The ECFA is aimed at eliminating trade and investment barriers to help boost cross-Strait trade.” These agreements reflect the growing economic interdependency between China and Taiwan. As the CRS (2011) notes, “Taiwan’s total trade with China grew from $31.5 billion in 2001 to $120.8 billion in 2010 (an increase of 283.5%). [Furthermore,] China is currently Taiwan’s largest trading partner […] its largest export market, and its second largest source of imports.” In addition, the PRC and Taiwan have agreed to allow direct flights from Taiwan to Mainland China – encouraging cross-cultural and business links, as well as increasing tourism. Overall, this emphasis on stability and economic engagement during the 2000s represents a marked shift from China’s approach toward Taiwan in the 1990s.

It is important to note that besides China’s increasing emphasis on economic engagement, other factors have encouraged stability. The first, and most obvious, factor promoting stability is the continued deterrent provided by the US policy of “strategic ambiguity.” This deterrent applies not only to China, but also to Taiwan since the US proclaims it will not support Taiwan if it chooses to declare independence. Similarly, economic interdependence, a consequence of China’s economic engagement strategy, also increases the costs of conflict. The third, and less apparent, factor promoting stability is Taiwan’s democratization.

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321 Ibid., 13.
322 Ibid.
Democratic peace theorists contend that democratization reduces the likelihood of war for a variety of normative and structural reasons. Normatively, democratic regimes should be more accustomed to resolving disputes through compromise than non-democratic regimes, and democratic regimes often espouse a liberal ideology that is committed to ideas such as freedom and tolerance. Structurally, democracies have an array of institutions that make the decision to go to war more difficult. Most importantly, in democracies, citizens, who bear the burdens of war, place a check on politicians that does not exist in authoritarian regimes. Mansfield and Snyder (2002), however, contend that newly democratizing regimes may be more likely to engage in war than nondemocratic regimes. This is because recently democratizing countries are likely to have weak institutional mechanisms and politicians appealing to nationalist sentiment for political gain – a combination that makes war more likely than not.

Consistent with Mansfield and Snyder’s argument that recently democratized are war-prone, Taiwan’s democratization provided the catalyst for the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. Lee Teng-hui appealed to Taiwanese nationalist sentiment, alarming Chinese leaders of his potentially separatist intentions. However, following this crisis, Taiwan’s democratization has placed increasing structural constraints on war. As Christopher Hughes (1999) argues, Taiwan’s democratization has “internationalized” the Taiwan issue.

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326 For further discussion on this, please see: Chang Pao-Min, “The Dynamics of Taiwan’s Democratization and Crisis in the Taiwan Strait,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 18, no. 1 (June 1996); Also, please see: Yuan-kang Wang, “Democratization in Greater China: Taiwan’s Democratization and Cross-Strait Security,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (Spring 2004): 293-298, Available at: http://homepages.wmich.edu/~ymz8097/wang-cross-strait%20security.pdf
by making it difficult for democratic powers such as the United States to “turn their backs” on Taiwan.\textsuperscript{327}

Taiwan’s democratization also places structural constraints against Taiwanese politicians seeking independence. Any decision to declare independence must be approved through democratic mechanisms. Nationalist politicians are constrained by a population that overwhelmingly does not support independence.\textsuperscript{328} Although Chen won the 2000 presidential election, his win cannot be viewed as a popular mandate for independence. Chen’s victory was the result of a split KMT vote between James Soong (who ran as an independent) and Lien Chan. Whereas Soong and Chan’s cumulative votes totaled nearly 60 percent of the popular vote, Chen Shui-bian garnered only 39 percent of the vote.\textsuperscript{329} During Chen’s Presidency, electoral gridlock – created by the Pan-Blue coalition’s control of the Legislative Yuan – prevented Chen from passing controversial legislation.\textsuperscript{330}

When Chen ran again in 2004, he only won the election by less than 1 percent.\textsuperscript{331} Electoral mechanisms prevented Chen’s Referendum Act – which many analysts feared would disrupt cross-Strait relations – from gaining enough votes to be passed.\textsuperscript{332} When Chen supported another controversial referendum again in 2008 – this time “asking whether Taiwan should apply for UN membership under the name ‘Taiwan’” – the referendum, once again, “failed to reach the threshold of 50% of the electorate turnout

\begin{footnotes}
\item[327] Christopher Hughes 1999, 143-144.
\item[328] I will discuss this in further detail below.
\item[332] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
[...] required for a referendum to be place in contention for passage.” Chen’s unpopularity and inability to pass these referendums illustrates the structural constraints democratization places on Taiwan’s nationalist leaders. Under authoritarian rule, Chen would have not faced these institutional challenges in declaring Taiwanese independence.

In 2008 and 2012, Ma – who supported improved cross-Strait relations – won Taiwan’s elections by 16 percent of the vote in 2008, and 6 percent in 2012. Ma’s party, the GMD, won 81 seats of the 113 member Legislative Yuan in 2008 and 64 in 2012. This large victory reflects the electorate’s repudiation of Chen Shui-Bian and the popularity of Ma’s pro-China policies. Furthermore, it reflects the sentiment of Taiwan’s population, in regards to independence. According to a 2011 poll conducted by the Global Views Survey Research Center, only 27 percent of Taiwan’s population favors independence, while over 53.5 percent favor maintaining the status quo. Ma has worked to improve cross-Strait relations. Ma has instituted the “Three No’s Policy – No Unification, No Independence, No Use of Force.” Under Ma’s stewardship, Taiwan and China have improved bilateral ties in several arenas by increasing increased trade and initiating direct flights between Taiwan and the mainland.

Despite these stabilizing aspects of Taiwan’s political transformation, Taiwan’s democratization makes unification more difficult. Taiwan’s democratization has

333 Dumbaugh 2008, 5.
334 Ibid., 4; Also, see, Robin Kwong, “Ma Ying-Jeou wins Taiwan election,” Financial Times, January 14, 2012. http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7e4b45bc-3eb3-11e1-9139-00144feab49a.html#axzz1svCthSYU
335 Dumbaugh 2008, 5; Kwong 2012.
338 Ibid.
complicated the PRC’s strategy of “Peaceful Unification.” Just as any decision by Taiwan to declare independence would have to gain popular support and pass through a system of democratic institutional checks, any decision for unification would also have to overcome these constraints. Under authoritarian rule, Taiwan would have an easier time negotiating unification. For practical reasons, Taiwan’s democratization makes its political system much less compatible with Beijing’s than it once was. Furthermore, the “One-Country, Two-Systems” formula applied to Hong Kong would likely be less palatable to Taiwan. After exercising popular sovereignty through direct presidential elections, it is difficult for the PRC to present Taiwan’s elected officials as “merely […] provincial leader[s].” Therefore, although Taiwan’s democratization can be viewed as a source for stability in the Taiwan Strait, it also makes the resolution of the Taiwan issue more complicated.

While there are numerous factors promoting stability in the Taiwan Strait (eg, economic interdependence), China’s realpolitik strategic culture has not disappeared. The PRC has yet to renounce the use of force as a viable option for resolving the Taiwan dispute. China’s naval modernization and military buildup across the Taiwan Strait are evidence of this. While maintaining a “no first use” policy, the PRC currently has approximately 25 nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

339 Christopher Hughes, “Democratization and Beijing’s Taiwan Policy,” in eds. Steve Tsang and Hung-mao Tien, Democratization in Taiwan: Implications for China, (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 143.
341 It is important to note that these numbers are estimates. The exact size of China’s nuclear force is unknown. Nevertheless, this nuclear force pales in comparison to that of the United States, which has nearly 6,000 nuclear weapons. Shirley A. Kan, “China: Ballistic and Cruise Missiles,” Congressional Research Service, August 10, 2000.
Considering China’s “no first use” policy and the comparably small size of this force, these nuclear weapons appear to be mostly for deterrence purposes.

Regardless of the size of China’s nuclear stockpile, the PRC has focused mostly on developing its *conventional* missile capabilities. According to Chase and Erickson (2012) the development of China’s conventional military weapons has been the “cornerstone” of China’s military modernization.\(^{342}\) Chinese strategists view conventional weapons as a more credible form of deterrence (威 *wei she*), because, unlike nuclear weapons, they are less likely to provoke a nuclear response.\(^{343}\) Chase and Erickson note, however, that this concept of deterrence does not translate equally to its English equivalent, and is viewed by many experts as embodying both the concepts of deterrence and “compellence” or coercion.\(^{344}\)

Most of China’s conventional weapons are aimed at Taiwan. As recent as 2010, China had approximately “1,000 to 1,200 solid propellant road-mobile [short range ballistic missiles] SRBMs, all deployed in areas opposite Taiwan.”\(^{345}\) In addition to developing a large arsenal of conventional missiles, China is also modernizing its naval forces. According to Ronald O’Rourke (2012) of the US Congressional Research Service (CRS), China has invested heavily in an “anti-access force.”\(^{346}\) O’Rourke says most observers believe the primary objective of China’s military, specifically its naval, modernization is to develop an anti-access force in the Taiwan Strait.\(^{347}\) This type of force could “deter US intervention in a conflict involving Taiwan, or failing that, delay the

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\(^{343}\) Ibid., 117-118.

\(^{344}\) Ibid., 118.

\(^{345}\) Ibid., 125.


\(^{347}\) Ibid., 4.
arrival or reduce the effectiveness of intervening US naval and air forces.” Overall, China’s increasing military buildup indicates that although China has taken a less coercive approach toward Taiwan, China has yet to rule out military force as an effective method for resolving the Taiwan issue.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

This section provided empirical evidence for a broader transition in Chinese strategic thinking. During the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, Chinese strategic culture was beginning its shift away from its realpolitik orientation and toward an increasing emphasis on stability, engagement, and cooperation. Chinese elites gradually revived Confucian traditions, and Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms had been in effect for nearly 15 years. As discussed earlier, however, Chinese elites did not fully promote China’s Confucian culture (as evidenced in the Harmonious Society and Harmonious World concepts) until the early 2000s. In addition, despite nearly 15 years of economic reforms, Jiang Zemin did not introduce the Three Represents concept until 2000. Thus, China began shifting from its realpolitik strategic culture in the early 1990s, however this shift would not become as prominent until the 2000s.

The PRC’s behavior during the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis reflects this shift in China’s strategic culture. Although PRC leaders still exaggerated the threat of Taiwan and viewed coercive force as an effective deterrent, during the 1995-1996 crisis, the PRC’s use of military force was more restrained than it had been previously. Chinese leaders limited the maneuverability of the PLA. PRC leaders also indicated to their American and Taiwanese counterparts that these military exercises were limited in scope.

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348 Ibid.
Following the 1996 Crisis, the PRC took a much less coercive approach toward Taiwan. This approach paralleled the broader shift in China’s strategic culture away from its more realpolitik orientation, and toward an increasing emphasis on stability and harmony. Chinese leaders emphasized cross-Strait stability, employed a strategy of economic engagement, and attempted to open cross-Strait links. Chinese leaders did not repeat their 1995-1996 show of force, even when pro-independence candidate Chen Shui-Bian was elected in 2000. Most Chinese leaders also no longer view the United States as bent on promoting Taiwanese independence; however, many do believe the United States wants to maintain the status quo. It is important to note that these changes did not occur in a vacuum – the United States deterrent has remained in place and Taiwan’s democratization places electoral constraints on a formal declaration of independence. Despite these changes, elements of China’s realpolitik strategic culture remain, as evidenced in China’s continued military buildup across the Taiwan Strait.
Cross-Strait relations are more stable now than they have been since the Chinese Civil War. There are several material factors supporting this stability: US-China and China-Taiwan economic interdependence, mutual nuclear deterrence, and the US policy of strategic ambiguity. In addition, the current GMD leadership seeks to promote stability in the Strait. Despite these factors for stability, for decades, cross-Strait relations have been punctuated by crises. In 1996, China engaged in provocative saber rattling, despite the undisputed military and economic predominance of the United States. Furthermore, many current material factors for stability may be undermined in the future. A wave of protectionism in the United States, a change of leadership in Taiwan, or a legitimacy crisis for the CCP, could easily undermine these sources of stability.

Material factors alone cannot account for China’s foreign policy behavior, nor can only material factors guarantee continued peace in the region. This paper has argued that one method for understanding Chinese foreign policy is the study of China’s strategic culture. As this thesis highlighted, strategic culture is not immutable, nor is it immune from international pressure. States have multiple strategic cultures, however, one strategic culture is typically more prominent than others. A state can change its strategic culture and strategic cultures can also change. This thesis argued that large structural changes, such as exogenous shocks, political and economic transitions present political and military elites the opportunity to reaffirm, question, or alter a country’s predominant strategic culture.

This thesis argued that China’s strategic culture is shifting away from its earlier realpolitik orientation toward a more cooperative stability-oriented strategic culture.
During the 1955 and 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises, Chinese leaders believed that if they did not strike Taiwan first, the United States would use Taiwan as a base for attacking China. Although China ultimately sought to regain Taiwan, these crises were limited in scope. Chinese leaders intended to demonstrate resolve and deter (what they believed to be) a future attack from the United States and Taiwan. Following these crises, several large changes occurred in China domestically and in its security environment – the Sino-Soviet split, US-China normalization, and China’s Reform and Opening policies. These policies allowed Chinese elites to reconsider China’s predominant Marxist ideology – which manifested itself as a realpolitik strategic culture.

Throughout the 1980s, China began to tolerate competing ideologies, such as Confucianism. As China’s economic reforms progressed, CCP leaders decided that China’s Marxist ideology no longer served to legitimize their rule. During the 1990s and 2000s, CCP leaders increasingly encouraged a Confucian discourse. As a result, China’s predominant strategic culture has gradually shifted away from its realpolitik orientation toward a more cooperative orientation. Nonetheless, China’s realpolitik strategic culture continues to have a distinct impact on its foreign policy.

At the same time, China’s increasing economic liberalization has led it to increasingly engage with international institutions. This has resulted in a constructivist shift in Chinese strategic thinking, which has reinforced the cooperative elements of China’s strategic culture, such as those proclaimed in China’s Confucian rhetoric. I argued that China’s foreign policy toward Taiwan reflected these changes in China’s strategic culture. China demonstrated more restraint during the 1996 Crisis than it did in previous crises. Following this crisis, China continued to demonstrate restraint and increasingly
sought cooperative relations with Taiwan – even as Taiwan’s more nationalistic Chen Shui-Bian came to power.

Normatively speaking, economic interdependence and China’s increasing rhetorical emphasis on cooperative Confucian norms appear to bode well for peace and stability in the region. As this thesis demonstrated, however, multiple strategic cultures exist simultaneously and a state can alter its strategic culture. In addition, strategic culture, itself, can also change. Thus, predicting the trajectory of China’s strategic culture is difficult. Current trends in China’s strategic culture suggest that China continuing economic growth and engagement with international institutions, will encourage Chinese elites to continue promoting China’s cooperative norms such as those proclaimed in China’s Confucian rhetoric.

There is no guarantee, however, that these trends will continue. This thesis argued that large structural shifts present elites the opportunity to question, reaffirm, or alter predominant strategic cultural discourses. One can neither predict how Chinese elites will respond to large structural changes in China’s domestic and or external security environment, nor can one predict which strategic cultural discourse will become predominant if Chinese elites alter China’s strategic culture. Furthermore, it is difficult to predict how these strategic cultures will be reinterpreted. Just as the brand of Confucianism championed by contemporary Chinese elites is different from earlier manifestations of Confucian thought, China’s realpolitik strategic culture may also be reinterpreted differently.

There are several types of large structural changes that could allow Chinese elites to rethink China’s strategic culture. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Chinese elites
began questioning China’s dominant strategic culture because of both large domestic and external structural changes. Externally, the Sino-Soviet alliance unraveled. Domestically, following the deaths of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai and the destruction of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese elites shifted China’s economy from a command economy toward a more market-oriented one. Similarly, in the future, large domestic and external changes may enable Chinese elites to reconsider China’s the utility of China’s Confucian discourse. A large economic crisis or a legitimacy crisis for the CCP could prompt Chinese elites to reconsider or alter China’s strategic culture. Externally, if other countries pursue policies of containment rather than engagement, Chinese elites may view China’s continued economic liberalization and Confucian discourse as ineffective means for dealing with contemporary challenges.

What are the implications of China’s strategic culture for US foreign policy? If, as this thesis argues, countries possess multiple strategic cultures, and China’s predominant strategic culture is shifting away from a realpolitik orientation, toward a more engagement and stability-oriented one, then one can view Chinese strategic culture as currently being at a crossroads. China may continue its peaceful and cooperative norms or it could shift back toward a more aggressive, offensive-oriented, and realpolitik variant. There are limits to how much the United States can impact China’s strategic culture. US policymakers, however, should recognize the large structural factors that could lead to a shift in China’s strategic culture. Below is a list of some of the potential, and interrelated, structural changes that could lead to a change in China’s strategic culture.

(1) A large economic crisis in China.

(2) A legitimacy crisis for the CCP.
(3) A rapid political transition.

(4) A change in China’s external security environment that prompts Chinese leaders to reconsider the utility of engagement. For example, if the United States or China’s regional neighbors pursue policies of containment rather than engagement with China.

Although there are limits to how much the United States can prevent a large economic crisis in China, the United should continue engaging China economically. Realists such as John Mearsheimer (2005) argue that neoliberal prescriptions to increase economic interdependence for peace will only enrich and empower China. Since, as these scholars argue, a rising China will inevitably come into conflict with the United States, it would be unwise for the United States to pursue increased economic engagement with China. If this thesis is correct, however, increased economic interaction with China will help reinforce China’s pacifist and cooperative elements of Chinese strategic culture. Thus, US policy makers should ignore neorealist prescriptions and continue promoting economic interdependence rather than pursuing containment strategies.\(^{349}\)

A legitimacy crisis for the CCP and a rapid political transition, are interrelated, and could both potentially destabilize regional security. If the CCP continues to grow economically and if China’s middle class continues expanding, Chinese citizens may begin questioning the legitimacy of the CCP, its monopoly on political power, China’s poor human rights record, and high-levels of corruption from CCP officials. The United States can only do so much to limit the impacts of a legitimacy crisis for the CPP or prevent a rapid political transition. The United States can, however, continue promoting

gradual political reform and encouraging China to improve its human rights record. One avenue for pursuing this is by improving the rule of law in China. This would help discourage human rights abuses, decrease corruption, and provide pillars for a gradual and stable political transition in China.

To prevent China from becoming disillusioned with its current strategy of engagement, the United States should avoid being perceived as balancing China. As the United States begins its “pivot” toward Asia,\(^350\) it must be sure that its reengagement with the region is not perceived as a containment strategy. As Wang Jisi and Kenneth Lieberthal (2012) argue, many Chinese political elites may already be starting to view US-China relations as a zero-sum game.\(^351\)

To prevent China from distrusting US intentions, the United States should continue engaging China in regional security institutions such as the ARF and the East Asia Summit (EAS). Although progress may be slow, the United States should rely more on engagement strategies than balancing and containment strategies. The United States should also encourage China to become a larger stakeholder in regional and international institutions. By becoming more invested in the current international order, Chinese elites will have more difficulty seeking to abandon or alter it. Last, the United States should increasingly engage China bilaterally. The current US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue is an indispensable institution for this task. The United States should also encourage increased direct military-to-military links with China. Through increased transparency, both sides can reduce mutual insecurity.


In the near future, there will likely be areas of increased tension between the United States and China. China’s rise will likely continue to increase fears in the United States. A rising China will also require increased oil and raw materials. As China seeks to expand its power and enhance its energy security, there will likely be increased tensions over territorial disputes, such as those in the South China Sea.

It is important, however, that US policy makers do not view these increased tensions or acts of Chinese aggression as necessarily representing a shift away from China’s cooperative norms. Increased tensions could (or could not) signify larger trends in China’s strategic culture. To determine whether China’s predominant strategic culture is undergoing change, US policy makers need to pay close attention to China’s foreign policy discourse and the increasing or decreasing prominence of certain cultural symbols. For example, US policy makers should pay close attention to the presence of Confucian terms, symbols, and references in Chinese official discourse.

China’s future strategic culture could take a variety of forms. China’s strategic culture could resemble the realpolitik form of the Maoist era. As discussed earlier, China’s realpolitik strategic culture, emphasized preemptive, offensive-oriented uses of military force that were limited in scope. In the Taiwan Strait, China’s use of military force was used to demonstrate resolve and deter the United States and Taiwan. If China exhibits this realpolitik strategic culture in the future, US policymakers must be careful that their actions are not interpreted as hostile, because this may lead China to engage in a preemptive use of military force. If China uses military force, US policymakers must be cautious when analyzing the intentions of Chinese leaders. China’s use of military force may be limited in scope and only intended to demonstrate China’s resolve. Understanding
this could help US policy makers avoid miscalculating China’s intentions, and perhaps prevent any future crises from escalating.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates the necessity of studying non-material factors, such as history and culture, when attempting to understand a country’s foreign policy. Policymakers and academics should also devote more attention to cultural discourse and understanding which cultural symbols are mobilized by political and military elites. This thesis also illustrates that strategic culture must be understood as dynamic. Simplistic characterizations of countries possessing a single dominant strategic culture from traditional times to present will lead academics and policy makers to make incorrect assumptions about a state’s strategic behavior. Future research should account for change and continuity in other countries’ strategic cultures. A comparative study could also shed light on how different strategic cultures lead to different foreign policy outcomes.


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