Chinese security behavior since the emergence and maturation of the unified Chinese state well over 1,000 years ago has contained five core features, each significant to both current and future security policy:

- Efforts to protect the Chinese heartland through border defense and control over a large and long-standing strategic periphery whose outer geographic limits remained relatively constant over time.

- Periodic expansion and contraction of periphery control and regime boundaries, primarily as a result of fluctuations in state capacity; the eventual reemergence of a unified state, often despite long periods of fragmentation and civil war.

- The frequent yet limited use of force against external entities, primarily for heartland defense and periphery control, and often on the basis of pragmatic calculations of relative power and effect.

- A heavy reliance on noncoercive security strategies to control or pacify the periphery when the state is relatively weak, unable to dominate the periphery through military means, or regards the use of force as unnecessary or excessively costly.

- A strong, albeit sporadic, susceptibility to the influence of domestic leadership politics, through both the largely idiosyncratic effect of charismatic leaders and elite strife and the more regular influence of recurring leadership debates over autonomy and the use of force.
This chapter describes and analyzes each of these features, thus providing the historical context for presenting and evaluating China’s current and possible future strategic orientation and behavior, contained in Chapters Four and Five, respectively.

**BORDER DEFENSE AND PERIPHERY CONTROL**

For over 1,000 years, China’s external security behavior has been keyed to the defense of a Chinese cultural, geographic, and sociopolitical heartland. This area largely comprises present-day North and South China Proper, which encompasses a mosaic of rich agricultural plains, interspersed with small and medium-sized mountain ranges, centered on the tributaries and floodplains of the Yellow River in the north and the Yangtze River in the south. The eastern, southern, and southwestern boundaries of the Chinese heartland are defined primarily by geographical barriers (the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and the mountains, jungles, and high plateaus of the west and southwest). In the north, however, the boundaries of the Chinese heartland were determined by a combination of both geographic and human factors: the enormous expanse of the arid steppes and deserts of the north and northwest, which resisted the establishment of the sedentary, intensive agricultural settlements of the south, and the fierce resistance presented by nomadic tribes that occupied the entire northern frontier. Map 2 highlights the approximate area of the Chinese heartland.

Demographically, over 90 percent of the occupants of the Chinese heartland are ethnic Han Chinese or descendants of mixed Han-nomadic or Han-Southeast Asian peoples.¹ These people constitute a highly homogeneous culture distinguished by a single written language, a tight-knit, lineage- and clan-based pattern of social organization, and a common set of social beliefs drawn largely from the humanistic and ethical doctrine of Confucianism.

¹The Han Chinese have not remained separate from other cultures in Asia. They have absorbed many of the political and social customs and beliefs of nearby peoples throughout their long occupation of the Chinese heartland. Indeed, prolonged interaction between Han Chinese and Inner Asian peoples in particular significantly influenced the structure and behavior of the imperial Chinese state, as discussed below.
The Chinese heartland emerged over 1,000 years ago largely as a result of four historical developments:

- The creation of a single, unified Chinese state (the short-lived Qin Dynasty) in 221 B.C., through a protracted process of warfare and diplomatic maneuver among many rival feudal kingdoms. This first Chinese state encompassed much of present-day North China south of the Great Wall.
- The emergence of the major institutional and conceptual features of the imperial Chinese state during the Former Han Dy-
nasty (206 B.C.–24 A.D.), the refinement and extension of those features over the next several centuries, and the concurrent extension of the Chinese regime’s centralized political and military control over most of the heartland region described above.2

• The subsequent occupation and settlement of the entire heartland region, through the gradual migration of northern Chinese peoples southward, eastward, and southwestward to the ocean, the high plateaus of Central Asia, and the jungles of Southeast Asia. Much of North and Central China Proper had been settled by the end of the Later Han Dynasty (220 A.D.), although parts of the southwest and South China Proper were not fully, and permanently, settled until centuries later, during the Tang Dynasty (618–907), the Song Dynasty (960–1279), and, in the case of present-day Yunnan Province, during the early decades of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644).

• The gradual acceptance by the entire populace of the heartland region of the fundamental precepts of Confucianism as a basis for ordering relations within society; this process began during the Former Han Dynasty and continued through at least the end of the Tang Dynasty.

Historically, the defense of this Chinese heartland required efforts by the Chinese state to directly or indirectly control, influence, or neutralize a very large periphery surrounding it.3 For virtually the entire imperial era (i.e., from the Han Dynasty until the mid 19th century, when the late Qing Dynasty came into contact with many Western imperialist powers), this periphery region primarily encompassed large tracts of land along the northern and northwestern frontiers,

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2Although the Qin had conquered and absorbed its rivals, abolished many of the social and economic foundations of the previous feudal order, and established a centralized bureaucratic polity across North China, its rulers governed by rigid and despotic laws and harsh punishments. Thus it did not survive long past the death of its founder. In its place eventually emerged a more sophisticated regime that combined elements of its autocratic predecessor with a more enlightened political and social system led by civilian government administrators and scholar-officials educated in Confucian precepts that stressed the maintenance of political and social order through the broad acceptance of explicit hierarchical roles and ethical values.

3The central importance of the concepts of core and periphery to Chinese security policy are also stressed by Michael H. Hunt, whose work has influenced our overall understanding of this complex subject. See in particular, Hunt (1996).
i.e., modern-day Xinjiang, Outer and Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and northeast China (i.e., former Manchuria). The northern part of present-day Southeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula were only intermittently regarded as a part of China’s strategic periphery during the imperial era, whereas ocean regions adjacent to China’s eastern and southern coastline, Hainan Island, Taiwan, Japan, and the Russian Far East first took on a strategic value only at the end of the imperial era, during the Qing Dynasty. In other words, for most of the imperial era, China’s strategic periphery consisted primarily of inland regions adjoining its continental borders. During the modern era (i.e., since the mid 19th century), China’s strategic periphery has expanded to fully encompass both continental and maritime regions. Map 3 shows the approximate extent of China’s historical periphery.

Throughout most of Chinese history, the pacification or control of this periphery was usually regarded as essential to prevent attacks on the heartland and, during various periods of the imperial era, to secure Chinese dominance over significant nearby inland (and, to a much lesser extent, maritime) trade routes. The establishment of Chinese control or influence over the periphery, whether actual (as in the form of military dominance or various specific types of lucrative economic and political arrangements) or largely symbolic (as reflected in the more ritualistic aspects of China’s tributary relations with periphery “vassal” states and kingdoms), was also considered extremely important during most of the imperial era as a means of affirming the hierarchical, sinocentric, Confucian international order. Even when periphery areas did not pose a significant security threat to the Chinese heartland, or during times of relative Chinese

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4The period of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279) constitutes a partial exception to this general statement. As explained in greater detail below, at that time, the imperial Chinese state was forced, by the loss of North China to nomadic powers, to defend increasingly important maritime trade and transport routes along the southern coastline and to ensure the security of China’s rivers and tributaries. During the final years of the Song, the growing Mongol threat to China’s rivers, lakes, and seacoast prompted a significant expansion of the Song navy. Swanson (1982), p. 59. For the vast majority of the imperial era, however, inland-oriented Chinese rulers did not view the oceanic regions adjoining China’s coastline as a strategic periphery to be controlled through the maintenance of a superior green or blue water naval force.
weakness, the symbolic maintenance of a sinocentric order nonetheless remained an important objective of the Chinese state, to sustain the political legitimacy and authority of the Chinese order and, it was hoped, to deter potential adversaries.

In addition to seeking control or influence over the strategic periphery, the Chinese state also frequently employed a more passive means of defending the heartland—various types of static defenses along China’s territorial frontier and coastline. These defenses usually consisted of military garrisons and fortifications. The fore-
The Historical Context

most example of the latter was, of course, the famous Great Wall, constructed along a major portion of China’s northern frontier to protect against nomadic attacks. The Chinese also at times built fortifications and garrisons at various points along China’s southern maritime borders, primarily to defend against attacks by pirates.\(^5\) Such attacks at times constituted significant security threats to the Chinese heartland.\(^6\) Although sometimes serving as mutually reinforcing strategies for the defense of the heartland, sharp debates often occurred within China’s ruling circles over whether to rely primarily on static defenses along China’s more turbulent northern and northwestern frontier or to launch more costly military expeditions to control the periphery beyond. These debates are discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter.

During the first part of the modern era (i.e., the late 19th and early 20th centuries), most of the northern and western parts of China’s long-standing strategic periphery were directly and formally incorporated into the Chinese heartland, either by military force and occupation (in the case of Tibet and Xinjiang) or by the sinicization of the region through cultural assimilation and acceptance of Han Chinese migration and settlement (in the case of Inner Mongolia and Manchuria). (Mongolia itself, however, thanks to its prior status as a client of the Soviet Union, escaped this process.) As a result of this assimilation, the territorial boundaries of the Chinese state attained their maximum extent, reaching the borders of established states that had emerged in the modern era. Although marking an unprecedented increase in the aggregate territorial size of the Chinese state, this expansion did not greatly increase the overall size of those combined heartland and periphery areas that had historically fallen under Chinese rule or influence. In other words, after incorporating

\(^5\)As Swanson (1982, p. 55) asserts, imperial Chinese maritime strategy centered on the largely shore-based defense of river approaches, major harbors, and large offshore islands.

\(^6\)During the Ming, pirates repeatedly attacked the seacoasts of East Asia, from Korea to Indochina. They threatened some of the most fertile and prosperous areas of imperial China and at times struck far inland to seize and plunder important towns and cities. Between 1552 and 1559, for example, pirate attacks spread to areas north and south of the Yangtze delta, extended into modern Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces, and threatened urban centers such as Nanjing, Suzhou, and Yangzhou—the original base of Ming power, the location of the founder’s grave, and a political center next in importance to the Beijing area. Such attacks accelerated the decline of the Ming. So (1975), pp. 3–7.
most of its traditional northern and western strategic periphery, the Chinese state in the early modern era (i.e., during the late Qing and nationalist periods) did not immediately seek to control or dominate a new, more distant strategic periphery beyond Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria. This was most likely because the state at that point was either materially unable to establish such control or did not see the need to do so. The communist regime has also thus far generally eschewed efforts to control a new, larger strategic periphery.

The geographical delineation of the Chinese heartland and the extensive periphery beyond it remained relatively constant into the modern era for several reasons: First, major geographical formations (i.e., oceans, mountains, high plateaus, arid steppes, deserts, and jungles) largely determined the outer limits of the heartland in the pre-modern era. Such major physical boundaries prevented, for both geographic and practical economic/administrative reasons, more distant migration and permanent settlement by the largely sedentary Han Chinese agricultural population and the accompanying establishment of those stable governing institutions found within the heartland.

Second, the periphery areas along China’s continental border were occupied by marauding tribes and kingdoms of the northeast, north, northwest, and southwest. These included, in early times, the Xiongnu and Xianbi of the north and northeast steppes, and, later, the Jurchens and Manchus of the northeast, the Mongols of the north, and the Turkic and Tibetan peoples of the northwest and southwest desert and plateau areas. During the imperial era, these peoples posed the primary security threat to the Chinese state and heartland and resisted efforts by Chinese rulers to control or domi-

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7Lattimore (1979), pp. 274–275, and Lattimore (1962), pp 88–89. Lattimore argues that very practical cost-benefit calculations of military and administrative expense versus local tax revenue income often determined the limits of Chinese imperial expansion. For a similar argument, see Sheperd (1993). Sheperd states that, because of limited fiscal capacity, “the Chinese state only found direct rule of frontier territories attractive when a jurisdiction’s economic development ensured that local tax revenues would cover the costs of administration or when strategic concerns dictated an administrative presence (that might have to be subsidized by the central government) despite low revenue potential” (p. 401). Also see Hucker (1975), pp. 61–62.

8Barfield (1989).
nate their lands. Although many fewer in number than the Han Chinese and generally lacking political and social institutions suitable for administering the settled agricultural population of the Chinese heartland, these largely pastoral nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, kingdoms, and confederations constantly harassed and encroached upon the inland continental boundaries of the Chinese state, frequently controlled large portions of Chinese territory, and twice conquered the entire Chinese heartland. In fact, non-Chinese ruled all or part of the Chinese empire for considerably more than one-half of the period between 1000 and 1911.

The threat posed by nomadic warriors was largely due to their superior warfighting capabilities and high mobility. Expert horsemen skilled in the use of the bow and sword, they could quickly concentrate overwhelming forces at a single point and thus overwhelm China’s usually static defenses. They were also usually able to evade pursuit and destruction by much larger, yet slower, infantry-based and heavily armored Chinese forces. Such forces were often hard to deploy in sufficient numbers at critical points along the border, difficult to provision in barren frontier areas, and constrained in their movement and length of time in the field by a heavy reliance on long supply trains.

Third, throughout the imperial period, no other major power centers beyond the Chinese state were positioned either to threaten China or

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9Semi-nomadic peoples included tribes from areas that contained both settled farming and pastoral nomadic communities. These were found primarily in parts of Manchuria and Turkestan. One major power that threatened the imperial Chinese state was not nomadic: the Tibetan Empire.

10Most notable were the regimes established in North China by the Liao (916–1125) and the Jin (1115–1234), when parts of South China were ruled by the Han Chinese Song Dynasty (960–1279).

11The Yuan Dynasty (1264–1368) was established by the Mongols and the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) was established by the Manchus, both non-Han Chinese nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples. For a brief overview of the origin and nature of these non-Chinese regimes, see Hucker (1975), pp. 122–133, 144–157, and Fairbank (1992), pp. 112–118, 143–162.


13For further details on nomadic military prowess and the problems confronting most imperial Chinese forces that operated in northern and northwestern periphery areas, see Barfield (1989), pp. 55–56; Hucker (1975), pp. 122–123; and Jagchid and Symons (1989), pp. 52–53.
to provide allies against nearby threats. Contemporaneous empires centered in modern-day European Russia, India, and Italy were geographically distant or extremely difficult to reach and largely uninterested in the affairs of an empire located at the far end of the Eurasian continent, remote from most critical pre-modern maritime and land-based lines of communication and trade. As a result, the Chinese state was not compelled to expand beyond its historical periphery to balance or counter distant threats from other established powers. It persisted as the dominant civilization and political power within Central and East Asia until the mid 19th century.

Fourth, and closely related to the previous point, the relatively fixed extent of the Chinese heartland and periphery also resulted from the general economic and political self-sufficiency of the Chinese state. Although at times engaged quite extensively in trade and cultural contact with other lands, and while absorbing and adapting an array of foreign religious and ethnic beliefs and practices, the imperial Chinese state generally remained self-sufficient (and, at times even insular) as an economic and political entity. Specifically, unlike smaller states or larger maritime empires, the Chinese state did not rely on external sources of raw materials, commodities, or know-how to prosper or survive; nor, during most of the imperial era, did it highly value or depend upon external political or military support, in the form of explicit, long-standing alliances, for its existence, although it certainly cooperated at times with foreign entities to counter major threats.

External economic interests played a notable, but highly limited, role in imperial Chinese security calculations primarily in four ways. First, the Chinese desire to protect trade routes through Central Asia to the Middle East and beyond (e.g., the famous Silk Road) gave added impetus to Beijing’s efforts to control or dominate parts of Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang). Second, the imperial court’s interest in pearls, ivory, and other precious materials spurred efforts to subjugate parts of Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam. Third, the Chinese need to secure tax revenues from seaborne commerce prompted the Southern Song Dynasty to build a notable coastal naval presence.
Fourth, the later Ming Dynasty constructed a major blue water naval force in part to expand China’s tributary trade relations.\textsuperscript{14}

However, none of these economic factors was absolutely critical to external Chinese security behavior, or persisted over long periods of time. The extension of imperial Chinese control far into modern-day Xinjiang was primarily strategic and reactive, i.e., intended to outflank nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes to the north and northeast and to deny them the resources of that area. The expansion of Chinese influence into northern parts of modern-day Southeast Asia was part of the larger southward migration of Han Chinese populations and culture mentioned above and also at times occurred in response to various security threats, discussed below. The significance of seaborne commerce during the Song Dynasty was only a temporary phenomenon, reflecting the fact that the Song regime had been pushed out of North China by nomadic peoples and was forced to augment its declining land tax revenues by levying taxes on seaborne trade. This situation did not persist long after the collapse of the Song, however, as the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) was able to establish control over the entire Chinese heartland and resume the traditional reliance of the Chinese imperial state on land taxes and internal grain transport. The subsequent development of a major blue water naval force under the early Ming emperors partly reflected the desire to increase significantly imperial coffers after the devastation wrought by the Mongol Yuan Dynasty and the costs of establishing the Ming Dynasty, and did not survive the death of its strongest patron, the Emperor Ming Yongle.\textsuperscript{15}

Politically, for most of the imperial era, the Confucian institutions and beliefs of the Chinese state and the parochial interests of various leadership groups usually led to a stress on internal order over development and the maintenance of domestic harmony, stability, and prosperity over the conquest and absorption of foreign territories,

\textsuperscript{14}Zheng He undertook seven voyages between 1405 and 1433 as commander of the Ming fleet under Emperor Ming Yongle. His fleet visited Southeast Asia, Ceylon, India, the Persian Gulf, and East Africa.

\textsuperscript{15}Hucker (1975), pp. 59–61; Fitzgerald (1972), pp. 90–93, 185–186; Levathes (1994); Wolters (1970), pp. 156–157; and Thomas Barfield, personal correspondence. The significance of the Ming fleet in relation to the Chinese use of force will be discussed in some detail below.
especially those areas *beyond the periphery*.\textsuperscript{16} During various periods of imperial Chinese history, military incursions into the known periphery and more ambitious efforts to expand China’s political, economic, and military reach beyond the existing periphery were often strongly resisted by Confucian civilian bureaucrats and imperial advisors, for both selfish individual/bureaucratic reasons and broader conceptual reasons.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, although certain foreign beliefs such as Buddhism were clearly regarded by some Chinese rulers as threats to the harmony and stability of the Confucian Chinese state and society, such intellectual threats almost invariably prompted defensive reactions from the Chinese state (i.e., sporadic efforts to stamp out the offending ideas domestically or insulate Chinese society from further such intrusions) rather than offensive (and expensive) forays far from home to destroy the source of the ideas.

During the modern era, contact with industrialized nation-states, the related demise of Confucian concepts of state authority and interstate relations, and the overall increasing demands of economic and military modernization have compelled the Chinese state to significantly alter the means by which it seeks to control its periphery, while also limiting its ability to do so. However, these developments have thus far not resulted in a major expansion of China’s strategic periphery beyond its historical limits. This might largely be because the security challenge posed by Western industrial states and Japan has taken place during a weak state era covering the decline of the Qing Dynasty in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a subsequent period of internal political fragmentation in the early to mid 20th century, and the emergence, under communist leadership, of a unified yet still relatively weak Chinese nation-state in 1949. During these periods, the Chinese state has been almost entirely preoccupied with reestablishing domestic order, ensuring domestic well-being, and strengthening China’s control over traditional frontier areas, in part through the incorporation of past periphery regions into the heartland. Only very recently (i.e., since the mid 1980s) have some Chinese strategists and leaders begun to speak about the need to expand and in some cases redefine China’s strategic frontiers to

\textsuperscript{16}For various views on the primarily non-expansionist outlook of imperial Chinese rulers, see Kierman and Fairbank (1974).

\textsuperscript{17}More on this point below.
include regions well beyond China’s present territorial boundaries and entirely new areas such as outer space and cyberspace. 18 Whether a stronger China will formally adopt an expanded definition of its strategic periphery and use more assertive policies to defend it will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

FLUCTUATIONS IN PERIPHERY CONTROL AND REGIME BOUNDARIES

Historically, virtually every Chinese regime (both Han Chinese and non-Han Chinese alike) has at various times sought to maximize its control or influence over the strategic periphery described above and thus set regime boundaries at the maximum level permitted by geographic, economic-administrative, and military-political constraints. However, such efforts usually depended upon the prior establishment of domestic order and well-being, which in turn depended upon the existence of a relatively strong and unified state. Hence, a pattern of peripheral (and territorial) expansion and contraction emerged that coincided with the rise and decline of individual Chinese regimes. 19

For most major regimes of the imperial era (e.g., during the Han, Tang, Ming, and Qing Dynasties), attempts to assert control or influence over the periphery usually occurred after an initial period of internal regime formation and consolidation. Throughout this early period, which sometimes lasted for several decades, the energies of China’s new political leadership were devoted to eliminating any remaining domestic resistance and reestablishing internal order and control. As a result, external security policy during these times was usually keyed to the establishment of static defenses along those territorial boundaries inherited from the previous regime and the pursuit of noncoercive measures (such as various appeasement or divide-and-conquer tactics, discussed below) designed to placate or neutralize nearby potential threats.

18Nan (1997); and Godwin (1997).
19The following overview of the general pattern of periphery expansion and contraction relies upon several sources, including Barfield (1989); Fairbank (1992); Hucker (1975); Huang (1997); Hunt (1984); Harding (1984); Spence (1990); Kierman and Fairbank (1974); and O’Neill (1987).
Major exceptions to this pattern of behavior during the imperial era were presented by the Qin (221–207 B.C.) and Sui (581–618) Dynasties. Both regimes united China by force after long periods of political division and warfare and subsequently adopted and sustained highly aggressive, coercive policies toward the periphery from their earliest years, as they did in the domestic realm. Yet such excessively militant policies contributed greatly to the early demise of both regimes and arguably provided a negative lesson for later dynasties (and particularly for the Han and Tang Dynasties that immediately followed the Qin and Sui, respectively).

Once internal order had been established and a regime’s unity and authority had been assured, most Chinese regimes (both imperial and modern) would undertake efforts to assert (or reassert) direct control over the periphery and consolidate the territorial boundaries of the Chinese state at their maximum historical limits. During the imperial era, such undertakings would sometimes cover several generations and were usually carried out by a series of early or “founding” emperors possessing extensive experience or interest in military affairs and the motivation and resources necessary for such a costly effort. The foremost examples of imperial “founding” efforts to subdue or dominate periphery peoples occurred during the Han Dynasty, under Emperor Han Wudi (against present-day Xinjiang, South China, Southeast Asia, and parts of southern Manchuria and northern Korea), the Tang Dynasty, under Emperor Tang Taizong (against Central Asia, Mongolia, Tibet, northeast India, and northern Korea), the Ming Dynasty, under Emperors Ming Hongwu and Ming Yongle (against southern Manchuria, Central Asia, Mongolia, Burma, northern Korea, and Vietnam), and the Qing Dynasty, under Emperors Kang Xi and Qianlong (against Taiwan, southeast Siberia, Mongolia, Central Asia, Tibet, and Nepal). Such efforts were not always successful. For example, the early Ming attempt to reincorporate much of present-day Vietnam into China failed after the death of its major proponent, Ming Yongle.20

During the modern era, both the Republican and Communist governments undertook similar “founding” efforts to reestablish and then consolidate Chinese influence along the periphery. In both

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20See below for more on imperial Chinese security policy toward Southeast Asia.
cases, however, this occurred largely despite the absence of a prior period of regime formation and consolidation.

Nationalist China sought to capitalize on prior Qing successes in absorbing most periphery territories into the Chinese empire. On February 15, 1912, the former prime minister of the defunct Qing court (Yuan Shikai) proclaimed, in the articles of abdication of the last Qing emperor (Emperor Pu Yi), that all former periphery territories acknowledging Qing suzerainty or nominally under Qing rule were to be considered part of the new Republic of China (ROC). These included Mongolia, Xinjiang, Manchuria, and Tibet. In the decades before the announcement of the abdication document, Xinjiang and Manchuria had already been formally incorporated as Chinese provinces (in 1884 and 1903, respectively) but had been subsequently ruled by local warlords as quasi-independent states. Tibet had acknowledged Qing suzerainty during most of the Qing Dynasty (usually under duress) but subsequently rejected the nationalist claim to the kingdom. Inner and Outer Mongolia, which had also been vassal states of the Qing, also rejected the nationalist claim. Nationalist Chinese leaders subsequently sought to confirm their claim to Tibet and Mongolia by sending military forces into both areas soon after the establishment of the ROC. These efforts were not successful, however, largely because of the weakness of the ROC regime. Taiwan was not included in Yuan Shikai’s proclamation of 1912 because it had been formally incorporated into China centuries earlier and had become a part of the Chinese heartland through extensive Han Chinese migration.

The communist regime moved to reaffirm or consolidate Chinese control over virtually all the above periphery areas (including Taiwan, but excluding Outer Mongolia) within the first decade of its establishment in 1949, through a combination of political and military means. These efforts resulted in the formal incorporation of each

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23 Taiwan became a prefecture of Fujian Province from 1684, the date of the establishment of undisputed Qing control over Chinese settlements on the West coast of the islands. It then became a Qing province in 1887, largely in response to foreign aggression from Japan and France. For further details, see Shepherd (1993), especially pp. 106–107, 397.
area into the People’s Republic of China as either a province (in the case of Xinjiang, former Manchuria, and Inner Mongolia) or an autonomous region (in the case of Tibet), with the sole exception of Taiwan, which was prevented from being absorbed into the PRC by the intervention of the United States in 1950.

Throughout history, attempts to consolidate Chinese control over the periphery served three specific purposes: (a) to eliminate existing or potential threats to Chinese frontiers and trade routes posed by nearby tribes, kingdoms, or foreign states; (b) to intimidate or persuade neighboring states, kingdoms, and peoples along the periphery into accepting Chinese suzerainty and thereby acknowledging China’s sinocentric world view; and generally (c) to reinforce, among the Chinese populace, the personal authority of the new regime and its leaders. These purposes all derived, in turn, from the fundamental desire of the Chinese state (both imperial and modern) to affirm its legitimacy, authority, and status with regard to both domestic and foreign audiences and to defend the heartland from attack.

During virtually the entire imperial era, security concerns arguably constituted the primary motive for efforts to control or influence the periphery along China’s turbulent northern and northwestern borders, whereas legitimacy and status concerns, although important, were usually of secondary importance. In contrast, policy toward China’s southern and southwestern periphery was arguably motivated primarily by regime legitimacy and status concerns throughout most of the imperial era, although security issues were clearly involved in several instances, especially in relations between the Tang Dynasty and both Tibet and the Tibeto-Burman Nan-chao kingdom. These became increasingly important during the Ming and Qing periods as southern and southwestern borderlands became increasingly unstable. During the modern era, security concerns have come to dominate Chinese calculations toward the entire periphery, whereas legitimacy and status concerns have become far less significant, given the collapse of the Confucian world view.24

24The difference in emphasis on security versus nonsecurity concerns in China’s policy toward the periphery is further discussed below, in the context of the use of coercive versus noncoercive security measures.
From the time of the Han Dynasty, when the Chinese state had expanded to occupy, if not entirely control, virtually the entire heartland described above, efforts to control or influence China’s strategic periphery have been largely limited to the reestablishment of the level of dominance that was lost during previous periods of regime decline and/or fragmentation. In other words, periphery expansion has been primarily defensive in nature, intended to eliminate persistent external security threats and bolster or reestablish regime authority within the established periphery and heartland, not to extend regime power and influence significantly beyond the known periphery described above.

The sole major exception to this general pattern of limited expansion during the imperial era was presented by the Mongol Yuan Dynasty. This regime sought, with varying degrees of success, to extend its direct control beyond China’s traditional periphery to include India, the entire Korean peninsula, Japan, Burma, and Java. This effort occurred largely because the conquest of China was only one part of the overall Mongol conquest and occupation of the Eurasian continent—a conquest that ultimately extended from eastern Germany to Korea and from the Arctic Ocean to Turkey and the Persian Gulf. In other words, the Mongols treated the Chinese heartland as one of many conquered territories and as a stepping stone to further conquests; this was highly atypical of Chinese regime behavior toward the periphery.25 In contrast, other nomadic occupiers of the Chinese heartland generally undertook efforts to control or dominate only the existing periphery. The one partial exception was the Manchu Qing Dynasty, which established stronger controls over larger expanses of territory along many inland peripheral areas and also for the first time began to treat certain offshore, maritime areas in a strategic manner.

For example, Taiwan was first considered a strategic territory and hence regarded as part of China’s strategic periphery during the Qing

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25The Mongols were also extremely atypical in their approach to domestic government. They were the only nomadic occupiers of the Chinese heartland who did not generally adopt Chinese methods of administration and did not extensively intermarry with Han Chinese. The Mongol presence in China was essentially a military occupation designed to keep the Chinese subdued and to exploit Chinese resources. For further information on the origins and nature of the Mongol occupation of China, see Barfield (1989), pp. 187–228. Also see Wang (1968), p. 49.
era. The Qing rulers came to view Taiwan as a potential security threat, for three reasons: First, it had served for many years as a strategic haven for the Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga) and his heirs, who had harassed the Qing regime for decades after the establishment of the dynasty in 1644. Second, it had been occupied and partly colonized in the last years of the Ming by representatives of what was at that time a formidable imperialist power—the Dutch East India Company. Third, it was viewed as a potential staging area for attacks on the Mainland by pirates (a major problem during the Ming, as indicated above) and by domestic rebels.26

The contraction of central state control over China’s traditional periphery occurred primarily during the latter one-third of a regime’s existence, as a result of accelerating systemic decline. During each dynastic regime, imperial revenues would gradually decrease, and government effectiveness decline, because of a combination of several factors, including (a) the progressive withdrawal of land from taxation to benefit the ruling class; (b) the increasing inefficiency of the ruling house resulting from protracted struggles among imperial relatives, retainers, and concubines; and (c) the general decline in leadership capability and bureaucratic capacity resulting from growing corruption, factional intrigue, and the emergence, over time, of greater numbers of weak or dissolute emperors. This process would continually increase the burden of taxation on the common peasantry and eventually precipitate peasant unrest, which in turn would produce greater demands within leadership circles for a larger amount of shrinking resources to be spent on the maintenance of domestic order and well-being. As a result, each Chinese regime suffered a steady reduction in the level of state resources and leadership attention available for periphery defense and control.27

Most imperial regimes would initially attempt to compensate for declining central capabilities by relying on quasi-independent regional military forces or on various noncoercive measures, such as

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26Sheperd (1993), pp. 1, 106, 142; and Kessler (1976), p. 90. As Sheperd states, for the Qing, Taiwan was not a neglected frontier, but rather “a strategic periphery that frequently commanded central government attention” (p. 3).

27Descriptions of the process of dynastic decline and regime weakening can be found in Fairbank (1992); Hucker (1975); and Huang (1997). Also see Sheperd (1993), pp. 400–406.
gifts, subsidies, the ritual trappings of imperial prestige, and various diplomatic maneuvers (discussed in greater detail below) to ensure the quiescence of periphery peoples. Eventually, however, growing state incapacity would force a withdrawal from the periphery or at least a major reduction in effective central control over periphery areas and borderlands, especially those areas along the northern and northwestern border. This process of periphery contraction usually occurred in the face of mounting nomadic incursions, internal peasant uprisings, and increasing signs of independence among regional military leaders and officials. Overall, such developments would also produce a prolonged interregnum of domestic unrest and eventually lead to either the wholesale collapse of the central state or its displacement from a large part of the Chinese heartland.

In some instances, this decline would result in the prolonged division of the heartland among several competing states, often both Han Chinese and nomadic in origin.\(^{28}\) In other cases, the disintegration or contraction of the central state would soon be followed by the emergence of a new, unified regime, usually by a successful leader of peasant rebellion, a formerly loyal regional military leader, or sometimes by a nomadic invader.\(^{29}\) Regardless of the length of time and severity of political conflict and division involved, however, a new, unified regime would eventually reemerge from the ashes of the previous regime. And once established, the new regime would again seek to assert control over the entire Chinese heartland and periphery. If successful, this would lead to a new cycle of expansion and subsequent decline and contraction.

This pattern has continued into the modern era. Both the nationalist and communist regimes sought to reestablish a unified political-social order and expand and consolidate control over China’s long-standing periphery areas after the collapse or defeat of the preceding regime (i.e., the Qing and the Republic of China, respectively). However, the entire process of regime establishment, consolidation, mat-

\(^{28}\)The foremost examples of these periods of political disunity include the era of North-South Division (420–589), the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms era (907–960), and the Song-Liao-Jin Dynasties era (960–1234).

\(^{29}\)The most notable examples of a relatively rapid process of regime reemergence after the collapse of the previous regime are the Ming Dynasty (which emerged from the Yuan) and the Qing Dynasty (which emerged from the Ming).
uration, and decline and the associated pattern of periphery expansion and contraction did not run its full course in either case. The nationalist regime never managed to fully reestablish domestic order and recover territories lost to foreign imperialists or domestic insurgents before it was severely damaged by Japanese militarists and toppled by the communists.\textsuperscript{30} The communist regime achieved both of these key objectives but is still evolving toward an uncertain future.

The general expansion and contraction of Chinese state control over periphery (and sometimes heartland) areas is illustrated by Maps 4a–h.\textsuperscript{31}

The impetus to reunify the Chinese state and regain control over the periphery, rather than permit the Chinese heartland to be permanently divided into separate warring states, reflects the influence of deep-seated material and cultural factors. Perhaps most important is the existence, among the peoples of the Chinese heartland, of a highly homogeneous culture and civilization incorporating a common set of political and social beliefs about the organizational and procedural requirements for stability, peace, and prosperity in an often chaos-prone environment. During imperial times, these beliefs centered, as outlined above, on the notion of a harmony-oriented Confucian-Legalist order enforced by a single imperial bureaucracy and sustained by a broad stratum of educated scholar-officials who served as both government administrators and social/intellectual elites across the entire Chinese heartland. During the modern era, the commitment to a unified regime rests upon a popular belief in the historical longevity and persistence of a single Chinese state and a single Chinese culture and, most recently, a less traditional, state-

\textsuperscript{30}From this perspective, the era of the nationalist Chinese state, spanning the relatively short period between the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 and the rise to power of the communists in 1949, should most appropriately be viewed as an interregnum of internal disunity separating two eras ruled by unified Chinese regimes.

\textsuperscript{31}These maps were adapted from Barraclough (1993), pp. 80–81, 124–125, 164–165, and 228, and Huang (1997), pp. 50, 71, 101, 176, and 215. They do not depict the exact boundaries of the imperial Chinese state, as the actual extent of imperial control along the periphery and within the heartland was indeterminate over many periods and varied in administrative type (e.g., military versus civilian control). The purpose is to show the general fluctuation that occurred in the extent of Chinese control over heartland and periphery areas between early and late regime periods.
The Historical Context

Map 4a—Early Han Dynasty

Map 4b—Late Han Dynasty
Chinese presence was primarily military

Map 4c—Early Tang Dynasty

Map 4d—Late Tang Dynasty
Map 4e—Early Ming Dynasty

(Arrows denote extensive foreign incursions)

Map 4f—Late Ming Dynasty
Map 4g—Early Qing Dynasty

Map 4h—Late Qing Dynasty
centric form of Han nationalism centered upon a putative “alliance” between ethnic Han Chinese, other mixed Han and non-Han peoples of the heartland, and the minority peoples of the traditional periphery.³² Overall, for both pre-modern and modern Chinese regimes, the unity of the Chinese nation is strongly associated with peace and plenty, whereas disunity means civil war, insecurity, and disaster for elite and commoners alike.³³

THE USE OF FORCE

Many students of China’s strategic history (including many Chinese scholars) argue that Chinese rulers and military leaders generally denigrate the role of violence in preserving external (or internal) state security, preferring instead to subdue or persuade an opponent through nonviolent stratagems involving subterfuge, maneuver, accommodation, and moral suasion or force of example. For such observers, warfare is viewed by the Chinese as a last resort. This argument often derives from the belief that (a) Chinese philosophers and military theorists such as Confucius, Mencius, and Sunzi generally eschewed violence in favor of accommodation, moral suasion, or stratagem; and (b) the views of these highly esteemed thinkers determined the beliefs and actions of Chinese practitioners of statecraft and warfare regarding when and how to employ force.³⁴

A closer examination of the above thinkers’ writings and of the historical record does not generally confirm this viewpoint, however. First, one must clearly distinguish between the beliefs of Confucius and Mencius, who were primarily concerned with how to create and maintain proper civilian government and, to those ends, emphasized the importance of moral suasion and imperial virtue (de) over coer-

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³²This concept was enshrined in the nationalist Chinese definition of the state at the time of the formation of the ROC in 1912., when the Chinese regime was said to include five races: Han Chinese, Manchu, Mongol, Tibetan, and Hui (Muslim, largely located in Xinjiang). This concept was subsequently repeated by Chiang Kai-shek (1943). O’Neill (1987), p. 214; Hunt (1984), p. 17; and Gladney (1991).


and the views of Sunzi, who was primarily concerned with how to win military campaigns. Moreover, Sunzi’s emphasis on the use of stratagems over simple coercion related more often to the tactics of military campaigns than to the larger strategic question of whether to deploy armies against an opponent. In other words, Sunzi was primarily concerned with how a military leader could vanquish his opponent without relying extensively on brute force, once the decision had been made to use military measures. He did not advocate shirking from the use of force when it was deemed necessary and effective. Thus, Sunzi was far more willing to apply coercion against a foreign power than were either Confucius or Mencius.

Second, even though the pacifistic views of Confucius and Mencius as espoused by the practitioners of Confucian statecraft have at times influenced strategic decisions concerning whether, and to what degree, force should be employed, a cursory examination of the security behavior of the Chinese state suggests that Chinese rulers have frequently resorted to violence to attain their national security objectives. In fact, one could argue that the use of force has been endemic in Chinese history. According to one Chinese military source, China engaged in a total of 3,790 recorded internal and external historical wars from 1100 B.C. (Western Zhou) to 1911 (end of the Qing Dynasty). These included both violent internal conflicts during periods of internal division and conflicts with non-Chinese powers. Moreover, in the Ming alone, China engaged in an average of 1.12 external wars per year through the entire dynasty. The overall extent of state-sanctioned violence against both internal and external foes is broadly indicated by Figure 1.

Figure 2 shows the degree to which imperial and modern Chinese regimes have used violent methods against periphery peoples or along the periphery. As the figure indicates, most major external military campaigns carried out by the unified Chinese state occurred

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35 Of the two philosophers, Mencius arguably placed a greater stress on the importance of moral suasion over coercion. Confucius was more willing to permit the use of force to punish wrongdoing and to educate the wayward subject or foreign leader.

36 See, for example, Boylan (1982), especially pp. 343–345.

37 For all of these figures, see Johnston (1995), p. 27.

38 Information on the Mongol Yuan regime is not included in Figure 2 because it is not considered to be a Chinese or highly sinicized regime.
during the first one-third of a regime’s existence (a period that lasted in some cases as long as 100 years) and were directed almost exclusively against peoples of the periphery. This general pattern also seems to hold for the most recent era. Iain Johnston shows that the use of force by the Chinese communist regime against external foes has been relatively frequent and intense as compared with other major powers of the modern era, occurred more often during the early years of the communist regime (i.e., the 1950s and 1960s), and has been primarily directed at the resolution of territorial issues along the periphery.39

In addition, the use of force by the Chinese state has involved relatively large numbers of soldiers, during both the imperial and modern periods, and has often resulted in significant numbers of

Figure 2—Major Chinese Campaigns Against the Periphery, 221 B.C. to the Present

SOURCE: Compiled primarily from information contained in O’Neill (1987), and Barraclough (1993).
casualties. One scholar has estimated that imperial Chinese armies on average mobilized approximately 100,000 soldiers for combat, and in some cases fielded armies in excess of a million men out of a total population of less than 50 million. Modern Chinese standing armies have also totaled over a million soldiers. By comparison, the armies of feudal Europe rarely exceeded 50,000 men, and modern Western armies could approach or exceed a million soldiers only under conditions of total war mobilization.

Iain Johnston attributes the Chinese state’s reliance on violence to the workings of a hard realpolitik strategic culture that prefers the complete elimination of security threats through force over less coercive methods. According to Johnston, this viewpoint, which is not only reflected in the behavior of Chinese civilian and military rulers but also contained in many overlooked classical writings on statecraft and warfare, views war as a relatively constant element in state affairs, regards the stakes involved in interstate behavior in zero-sum terms, often views pure violence as highly efficacious, and yet is also highly sensitive to relative material capabilities and tends to show absolute flexibility (quan bian) in the application of force. As a result, according to Johnston, the Chinese state will usually choose to eliminate an opponent through offensive force over static defense or accommodation when it clearly enjoys a superior military position and confronts minimal political or economic repercussions.

The broad historical assessment of Chinese security behavior presented in this chapter tends to support this observation. Unlike Johnston, however, our assessment also suggests that such Chinese behavior has derived more from the material or structural conditions confronting the Chinese regime than from cultural factors. That is, there appears to be a general correlation, over broad periods of Chinese regime history, between decisions to employ various types of coercive and noncoercive measures on the one hand and, on the other hand, shifts in relative power relations with foreign entities, calculations of the relative economic and social cost to the Chinese

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40Lee (1988), pp. 210–212. Lee also concludes that the severity of wars involving the imperial Chinese state, as measured by the estimated number of deaths, was at least as severe as those in Europe, and probably far more so (p. 224).

regime of using various measures, and changes in the structure of an often unstable domestic and external security environment. Moreover, the historical record strongly suggests that China’s past use of force against outsiders has been largely limited to efforts to regain heartland territories lost to foreigners and to generally control or pacify periphery areas.

During the imperial era, every unified Chinese regime resorted to violence against outsiders at various times throughout its existence—from its initial formation through its eventual decline and collapse. However, the external use of violence was especially evident during the early stage of an imperial regime’s existence, after domestic rule was consolidated, and was employed to reclaim lost territories or to increase Chinese control or influence over the periphery. Violence was also relied upon, secondarily, during the long middle stages of a regime’s existence before its decline, largely in response to armed incursions from the periphery or in an effort to “punish” or “chasten” nearby peoples for affronts to the emperor or “the people” of China. Violence against foreign entities was least evident during the last stages of a regime’s existence, when the leadership was often internally divided and largely preoccupied with the suppression of internal revolts.

Almost without exception, once imperial rule had been consolidated internally, the early rulers of an imperial Chinese regime would embark on military campaigns in an attempt to absorb adjacent territories into the Chinese heartland, forcibly retake parts of the heartland lost during the decline of the previous regime, or simply to assert (or reassert) dominant influence over periphery areas by defeating them militarily. Efforts undertaken by Chinese “founding” emperors to reestablish imperial Chinese influence along the periphery were almost exclusively military, and often occurred during the early years

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42 Obviously, the greatest aggregate levels of state violence occurred when China was internally divided, as a major component of often prolonged struggles among groups or regimes contending with one another to reestablish unified central control over the heartland. However, this study is concerned primarily with the use of violence by the unified Chinese state against non-Chinese political entities.

43 The following broad characterization of the conditions under which the Chinese state has employed force against external foes is drawn from Barfield (1989); Fairbank (1992); Hucker (1975); Huang (1997); Hunt (1984); O’Neill (1987); and Lee (1988).
The Historical Context

of a regime’s existence. These campaigns would sometimes extend over many decades (and in some instances persist sporadically for over a century), largely because of the tenacity and high military capabilities of China’s opponents.

The majority of these military forays were directed against nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples along China’s northern and northwestern borders and consisted largely of efforts to retake lost territory within the heartland or to reestablish Chinese preeminence along the largely fixed periphery.\textsuperscript{44} The use of offensive coercive measures during the early life of an imperial regime was far less prevalent along China’s eastern, southern, and southwestern maritime and continental borders. This was largely because most outside powers along those borders were either too distant to pose a serious threat to the Chinese heartland (as in the case of Japan\textsuperscript{45}), did not possess formidable military forces, or did not repeatedly encroach upon China to acquire the resources needed to maintain or expand their local power position, as did most nearby inner Asian nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes and kingdoms (more on this point below).

The few cases of major military actions taken against China’s eastern, southern, or southwestern neighbors during the early life of an imperial regime usually occurred as part of an effort to expand Chinese territory or to acquire resources. The most notable example of such behavior consisted of attacks against the ancestors of present-day Vietnamese or other minority tribes residing in present-day southwest China during the Qin, Han, Song, and Ming Dynasties.\textsuperscript{46} In

\textsuperscript{44}Efforts to absorb inner Asian territories into the Chinese heartland were usually unsuccessful and therefore less frequently attempted. The most notable exception to this general pattern occurred during the early Tang, when Turkish troops under the Tang banner extended China’s borders (although not Chinese settlements) deep into Central Asia. See Barfield (1989), p. 145.

\textsuperscript{45}Japan became a security concern to the imperial Chinese state only during the Ming, when Japanese warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi attacked Korea and tried to conquer China in the 1590s. However, this threat ended with his death in 1598. O’Neill (1987), p. 203.

\textsuperscript{46}The founder of the Qin Dynasty, Qin Shih Huang Di, conquered the Vietnamese state of Nan-Yueh (then occupying parts of present-day southwest China and northern Vietnam) in 214 B.C., but the Vietnamese soon regained their independence and were recognized as a vassal state until 111 B.C., when Emperor Han Wudi retook Nan-Yueh and divided it into nine counties. From 111 B.C.–543 A.D., Nan-Yueh was the Chinese province of Chiao-chih. It was administered at senior levels by Chinese offi-
addition, many early rulers of Chinese imperial regimes also attempted at various times to absorb militarily parts of present-day Korea.\textsuperscript{47}

The one instance in which maritime military power was applied in the early period of a regime against southern and southwestern periphery areas (and beyond) occurred during the early years of the Ming Dynasty. In addition to fulfilling the specific economic purposes noted above, the large blue water naval force assembled under Emperor Ming Yongle was intended to help complete the unification of the new Ming regime, pacify maritime sea routes, establish or reinforce political relations, support Yongle’s effort to conquer Vietnam, and generally assert Chinese influence in areas to the west of the South China Sea, especially as part of a larger strategy aimed at countering the growing influence of Muslim power in Central Asia. Hence, various naval forces and expeditions (which usually contained hundreds of ships and tens of thousands of soldiers) fought and defeated Mongol navies, eliminated local pirates, and defended...
those local kings who had offered tribute and gifts to the emperor from armed challenges by usurpers or rebels. They also conferred tributary status on many local leaders and spent considerable time ensuring the security of the Malacca Strait, an important early Ming trade route and entrepôt linking East Asia and the Indian Ocean. However, with the exception of Ceylon, the Zheng He naval expeditions rarely, if ever, used force in dealing with coastal states west of Sumatra. Moreover, as suggested above, this entire episode was exceedingly brief, having been prompted by the pressures (and opportunities) confronting the early Ming and sustained by the energies of Emperor Ming Yongle and his supporters. It came to an abrupt end following the death of the emperor and the decline of his supporters’ influence at court.

Military incursions into periphery areas or armed displays would often be accompanied by the establishment of Chinese military garrisons and the construction of fortifications, both within periphery areas and at the outermost limits of the Chinese heartland. These defenses were intended both to protect the heartland from direct attack and to ensure the long-term obedience of the inhabitants of the periphery by providing a quasi-permanent Chinese military presence among them.

Imperial Chinese regimes also resorted to force at various times during the often extended middle period of a regime’s existence, before the onset of dynastic decline. During this period, force was most often used in response to external provocations or incursions directed against the Chinese heartland or periphery, or generally to punish and chastise disrespectful statements and behavior or other perceived transgressions against Chinese authority committed by periphery states. In particular, strong, unified Chinese imperial regimes periodically employed force against both nomadic confederations and, to a lesser extent, more established southwestern or

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49 The Zheng He expeditions also ended because Ming attention and resources became focused increasingly on coping with the challenges posed by a growing Mongol threat from the north and intensifying pirate attacks along China’s southern coastline, which led to efforts to fortify land defenses. Swanson (1982), pp. 40–43.

50 Barfield (1989); Hunt (1984); and Hucker (1975).
southern powers when such entities violated the sinocentric hierarchical structure of the tributary relationship and demanded to be treated *explicitly and formally* as an equal to the Chinese emperor,\textsuperscript{51} persistently levied excessively onerous tributary requests, or repeatedly attacked Chinese territory or frontier areas. The Xiongnu nomadic tribes of the Han Dynasty period were perhaps the worst offenders in their demand for formal equality with the Chinese emperor. Unable to accept this affront, the Han rulers frequently employed force against them.\textsuperscript{52} Similar Chinese responses occurred at the height of the Tang, which was plagued by military incursions into present-day Siquan and Yunnan Provinces by the Tibetan Kingdom and the Tibeto-Burman Nan-chao Kingdom.\textsuperscript{53} And numerous nomadic leaders along the northern and northwestern frontiers provoked an armed response from strong Chinese regimes through their repeated and escalating attacks and demands.\textsuperscript{54}

However, strong Chinese imperial regimes generally did not employ force to enforce peace or to extend their influence or direct control beyond the established periphery. Even the famous, far-ranging Zheng He naval expeditions of the Ming era did not employ force against distant peoples or to conquer distant lands. Moreover, imperial Chinese regimes did not routinely use force to separate or subdue warring periphery states or confederations unless such conflict directly threatened Chinese territory or posed the prospect of lowering or removing Chinese influence along the periphery. Thus, imperial regimes would sometimes intervene militarily when an established and loyal vassal ruler was challenged by internal rebellion or attacked by a nonvassal regime but would not generally do so to enforce peace throughout all periphery areas or beyond. Such limited interventions arguably occurred most often in the case of the more sedentary states or kingdoms near China’s eastern and south-
ern borders, such as Korea and Vietnam. In these instances, expectations of military support usually derived from the overall tributary-suzerain relationship, which in some cases exchanged a formal acknowledgment by the vassal of Chinese preeminence for a Chinese obligation to protect the vassal when attacked.

The use of force against outsiders was least evident during the final stages of an imperial regime. Rather than rely on highly expensive and often inconclusive military forays against the northern and northwestern periphery, weak indigenous Chinese dynasties usually chose to increase tributary payments to potentially threatening nomads to keep them quiescent. Such weak regimes would also usually avoid the use of force in support of periphery vassal states of whatever type, as suggested above. Moreover, by the later stages of a dynasty’s existence, domestic unrest usually posed a far greater and more urgent security threat to the regime than external aggression. In fact, in some instances, large nomadic confederations would actually assist the Chinese court in fending off internal challenges, primarily to maintain the lucrative tributary relationship.

A severely weak, declining imperial Chinese regime would usually resort to force against foreigners out of desperation, or as a consequence of domestic political pressures and machinations. The former use of force most often consisted of intense (and almost invariably unsuccessful) armed responses initiated in response to...

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55 The most famous example of this type of behavior was China’s successful military defense of Korea against Japanese invasion during the Ming Dynasty.

56 For a general reference to Chinese military support on behalf of vassal states, see Hunt (1984), p. 15. Also see Lam (1968), p. 178; Swanson (1982), p. 15; and Chen (1969), p. 8. This was by no means a hard and fast rule, however. Some tributary relationships did not imply Chinese protection of any kind. Moreover, even when such security assurances had been provided, imperial regimes such as the Qing would at times invoke the concept of “impartial benevolence” (i-shi tong-jen) to disclaim any responsibility to protect the state or kingdom in question. This would usually occur during periods of regime decline, however. Fletcher (1978), p. 105.

57 Again, military campaigns against internal rebellions by central armies or regional military supporters of the Chinese state are not included in this assessment, which examines the behavior of the unified Chinese state against foreign powers.

58 Thomas Barfield, personal correspondence. This point is discussed in greater detail below.

59 For example, the Uighurs propped up the late Tang to keep tributary payments coming. Barfield (1989), p. 131.
persistent and major external attacks on the Chinese heartland, along with various types of military bluff to intimidate potential foreign foes. The protracted armed defense of the Southern Song against Mongol invaders and the military actions undertaken against foreign imperialist powers in the mid 19th century by the Qing rulers were particularly notable examples of weak regime defensive military behavior.\(^6^0\)

Chinese imperial regimes were by no means always successful in applying force against periphery peoples and generally did not persist in the use of force when its disadvantages came to outweigh its advantages. Thomas Barfield has shown that most Han Chinese imperial regimes were largely unable to militarily defeat and subjugate the nomadic tribes and confederations along China’s Inner Asian borders, often despite concerted and costly efforts to do so. This was partly because, with few exceptions, Han Chinese rulers, unlike most foreign-originated dynasties, did not fully understand, and hence could not fully exploit, the internal organizational and social strengths and weaknesses of their nomadic opponents.\(^6^1\) As a result, most unified Chinese regimes often relied on relatively unsophisticated measures to pacify the northern and northwestern periphery, primarily massive military campaigns. Most of these campaigns were either entirely unsuccessful or, when initially successful, did not achieve lasting results. As highly mobile, skilled warriors, nomadic soldiers were generally able to evade decisive defeat by the slower, primarily infantry-based Chinese forces deployed against them.\(^6^2\) In addition, Chinese forces were unable to subdue Inner Asian peoples

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\(^{6^1}\) Although many Chinese frontier commanders understood well their nomadic foes, the Chinese court rarely attempted to understand them. The one major exception to this was early Tang Emperor Tang Taizong, who was part Turkish and well versed in the ways of nomadic warfare. But his highly effective, and largely coercive, strategy against nomadic peoples was opposed by Confucian officials and soon ended. Barfield (1989), p. 122.

\(^{6^2}\) The Chinese eventually incorporated cavalry units into the forces they deployed against the nomads on the steppe. However, these units had only a limited effect because the Chinese had to buy horses at high prices and could not easily replace their losses, whereas the nomads raised their own horses in large numbers. Hence, the Chinese often lacked sufficient horses to sustain mounted steppe campaigns for prolonged periods. Thomas Barfield, personal correspondence.
Pastoral nomadic communities could retreat in the face of Chinese invasions and return to their lands after the Chinese had departed. In contrast, Chinese forces depended upon the food and materials provided by fixed agricultural areas; yet such areas could not be established in significant numbers on the arid steppe. As a result, Chinese forces were dependent upon a long logistical train that originated in the heartland and would thus usually remain in periphery areas for only a few months at a time. Even when they were able to defeat nomadic forces, Chinese armies were eventually forced to return to the Chinese heartland, leaving behind isolated and largely ineffective garrisons. Eventually, nomadic communities and their warriors would reappear, and the strategic balance along the periphery would remain largely unchanged.  

The more sedentary, sinitic states or kingdoms near China’s eastern and southern borders (such as Korea and Vietnam and parts of Tibet east of the Tibetan plateau) did not enjoy the advantages of terrain and mobility possessed by the Inner Asian peoples. Hence, a strong Chinese state could more effectively bring its superior military forces to bear against these powers or areas and thereby at times establish a clearly dominant position over them. In such instances, the tributary and trade relations established and maintained with strong Chinese regimes were thus ultimately founded on a genuinely hierarchical power structure involving the potential threat of military coercion. However, strong imperial Chinese regimes did not always achieve a sustained, or undisputed, position of military dominance over such powers. This was especially true in the case of Vietnam, as suggested above. At such times, Chinese regimes would again adopt a pragmatic approach and accept from the vassal the symbolic forms of obeisance of the hierarchical tributary relationship, thereby agreeing

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64 During the Han Dynasty, the Tibetan border with China was not far from present-day Chi’ang-an, far to the east of the present-day border between the Tibet Autonomous Region and China Proper. Hence, eastern Tibet at that time encompassed significant agricultural lands, upon which the Chinese subsequently encroached. As a result of such Chinese expansion, the Sino-Tibetan border moved progressively west, with the intervening territory coming under direct Chinese rule and subject to extensive Han Chinese migration. Later dynasties eventually extended their political influence into the Tibetan plateau itself, which the Chinese were unable to settle. The authors are indebted to Thomas Barfield for this observation.
to what was in effect an armed truce, marked by trade and reasonably amicable political relations. As in the case of nomadic peoples, this would usually remain in effect as long as the power in question did not attack Chinese territory or make excessive demands on the court.\textsuperscript{65}

The use of force against the periphery by both Han Chinese and highly sinicized non-Han regimes was also limited by domestic political considerations. Confucian civilian officials and advisors often resisted costly, prolonged military campaigns against nomadic tribes and confederations because such actions weakened their power and influence by diverting resources from domestic civil administration, served to increase the power of military leaders, merchants, and imperial retainers at their expense, and in general increased the personal power of the emperor over the officialdom. Some Confucian officials also opposed the use of force against external foes because, in their eyes, the very application of massive force undermined the authority and legitimacy of the imperial order as a whole. For them, proper rule and order derived from the observance of Confucian benevolence and virtue, not compulsion through the use of arms.\textsuperscript{66} The influence of domestic leadership factors on the use of force is discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter.

It is possible that at least some Han Chinese regimes before the unprecedented occupation of the entire Chinese heartland by the Mongol Yuan Dynasty did not persist in the use of force against the northern and northwestern periphery because they did not believe that nomadic tribes and confederations posed a mortal threat to the Chinese state. This is at least suggested by the fact that most nomadic leaders did not want to conquer and occupy China. Their main intent was to extort from Chinese rulers the riches and materials needed to establish and maintain internal nomadic alliances. Indeed, large nomadic confederations emerged only when a united

\textsuperscript{65}This is not to imply that tributary relations between sinitic states and imperial Chinese regimes were based solely on calculations of relative military prowess. See below for a more detailed discussion of the advantages of the tributary relationship to both sides.

\textsuperscript{66}This argument is especially stressed in Barfield (1989), and in personal correspondence. Also see Jagchid and Symons (1989), pp. 52–62; and O’Neill (1987), pp. 202, 208.
and relatively strong imperial Chinese state existed to provide nomadic leaders with essential resources. Nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples conquered parts or all of the Chinese heartland usually after the Chinese state had been severely weakened from within, or had collapsed altogether and was unable to provide the necessary tribute, or when parts of China had fallen under the control of non-Chinese nomadic groups that strongly resisted a strategy of appeasement toward their nomadic neighbors. The first situation largely applies to the Manchurian conquest of part or all of China, whereas the last led to the Mongol conquest.67

Such experiences tended to confirm the widespread view among traditional (and modern) Chinese elites that internal weakness invites foreign aggression. However, there is little direct proof that pre-Ming Chinese rulers did not persist in using force against northern and northwestern peoples primarily because they did not fear a mortal threat from them. Some of the most successful emperors and military leaders of imperial Chinese regimes were part-nomadic and hence presumably understood that nomadic tribes had the potential to do much more harm militarily than merely plunder and raid frontier areas. More important, whether because of internal weakness or nomadic military prowess, from earliest times, nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples frequently made major inroads into and at times occupied large parts of the Chinese heartland (these included, most notably, various Xiongnu, proto-Tibetan and proto-Mongol Xianbi tribes during the Later Han and the Manchurian-based Liao and Jin (Qin) regimes during the Song).68

Therefore, on balance, it is more likely that Han Chinese imperial regimes did not persist in the use of force against the northern and northwestern periphery for reasons more closely associated with the military, economic, and domestic political factors mentioned above. Eventually, the relative ineffectiveness of force against northern and western nomadic and semi-nomadic opponents, combined with its enormous financial cost and domestic political divisiveness, often

68Hucker (1975), p. 79; O’Neill (1987), p. 316. Fairbank states that the Liao, Jin, and Yuan regimes “form a connected sequence of incursions of Inner Asian military power into China and must be viewed as a single, if sporadic, process” (1992, pp. 118–119).
prompted both strong and weak imperial Han Chinese regimes to
discard coercive methods in favor of a variety of noncoercive security
strategies. As discussed in greater detail below, these strategies
usually employed various forms of thinly disguised appeasement,
diplomatic maneuver, and a greater reliance on a static military
defense.

In contrast to the experience of Han Chinese regimes, dynasties of
nomadic or semi-nomadic origin were more successful in subduing
periphery peoples by force. Such regimes better understood the
complex tribal and personal relationships and internal structures
and social beliefs of nomadic tribes as well as the dynamics of con-
federation formation. Thus, they would often intervene militarily at
crucial points to disrupt and weaken nomadic groups. Moreover,
such regimes maintained military forces—especially large cavalry
units—that were more able to conduct protracted warfare on the arid
steppe. Arguably the most successful practitioners of force against
the periphery were the Mongol Yuan and the Manchu Qing leaders.
Unlike other imperial regimes, the Yuan conquered areas far beyond
the periphery, largely as part of the overall Mongol conquest and oc-
cupation of the Eurasian continent. As a result of this and other fac-
tors associated with its non-Chinese approach to domestic rule, the
Yuan is thus not considered typical of Chinese regimes. In contrast,
the highly sinicized Manchu Qing rulers limited their external mili-
tary forays largely to the traditional periphery. However, the Qing
pursued a particularly aggressive, and generally successful, policy
toward the periphery and as a result managed to extend imperial in-
fluence and control beyond the limits achieved by earlier regimes.
Specifically, using a strong, hybrid military that combined both no-
madic and Han Chinese elements, the Qing secured and largely re-
tained Korea, Tibet, and both Inner and Outer Mongolia as vassal
states, successfully invaded Burma and Nepal (the latter largely in
defense of Tibet), advanced China’s border well north of the Amur
River (in response to Russian settlement in the Siberian Far East),
and incorporated Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang) and Taiwan into the
empire as provinces. Moreover, under the Qing, the Mongols and
other nomadic peoples were essentially eliminated as a threat to the

Chinese heartland.70 These successes provided the basis for the subsequent claims to sovereignty over Xinjiang, Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, and Taiwan made by both the nationalist and communist regimes.

However, the Qing did not at first encourage Chinese immigration into any of these areas, preferring instead to maintain them as stable buffers against more distant centers of power, i.e., India, France, Japan, Russia, Great Britain, and, in the case of Taiwan during the 1700s, the Dutch.71 Hence, although these regions were administratively incorporated into the Qing empire, they did not become part of the Han Chinese heartland until subsequent Han migration had occurred, often despite restrictions, or they had been formally annexed by the nationalist regime.72 Also, the original Qing effort to administratively and militarily incorporate Tibet, Mongolia, and Xinjiang began in the 1700s, well before the imperialist Western threat became serious. In particular, a Lamaist Buddhist-based religious and political connection between Tibet and Mongolia, established during the Ming, made it necessary for the Qing to conquer Tibet to secure their control of Mongolia and Xinjiang.73

The major exceptions to the above pragmatic approach to the use of force by Han Chinese regimes occurred during the Qin (221–207 B.C.), Sui (581–618), and Ming (1368–1644) Dynasties. The first two regimes persisted in the use of force against the periphery throughout their relatively short existence. Both dynasties united China after centuries of disunity and conflict and then embarked on sustained (and sometimes highly successful) efforts to forcibly

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70 For further details on Qing military successes against the periphery, see O’Neill (1987), pp. 45, 139; and Hucker (1975), pp. 150–152. Also Fletcher (1978).
71 The Chinese also believed that permanent Chinese immigration into periphery areas would be very costly and would exacerbate social unrest by significantly upsetting the ethnic status quo and facilitating the use of such areas by pirates, rebels, and other antigovernment elements. See, for example, Sheperd (1993), pp. 142–145.
72 O’Neill (1987), pp. 322–323. For example, the Qing were eventually forced in the late 19th century to admit Han Chinese into most of Qing Central Asia and to regularize its provincial administration, in large part to keep Russia at bay. The authors are indebted to Edward Dreyer for this observation.
73 Edward Dreyer, personal correspondence.
subjugate nomadic groups.74 However, the enormous economic and social costs of such an unremittingly militant approach arguably accelerated the decline of both regimes and served as a negative lesson for subsequent Chinese rulers.

The Ming was the only long-lived Han Chinese imperial regime that shunned the appeasement policies of earlier dynasties for most of its existence, at least with regard to threats along China’s northern and western borders. Instead, early Ming emperors persisted in largely unsuccessful efforts to subdue militarily the nomadic tribes to the north, and middle and late Ming rulers adopted a siege mentality marked by an emphasis on strong static defenses and reduced contact with the outside. As a result of this largely noncooperative strategy, the Ming experienced incessant raiding along the northern frontier throughout much of its existence. Moreover, the number and intensity of such raids grew over time and continually sapped the strength of the Ming regime both economically and militarily.75 This largely military-based policy (which had its domestic correlate in a more autocratic form of government76) emerged to a great extent because of China’s experience at the hands of the uniquely rapacious and destructive Mongol Yuan Dynasty that preceded the Ming. That experience made Ming leaders acutely sensitive to the threat posed to the Chinese heartland by nomadic groups.77 Eventually, the Ming leadership was compelled, as their power declined, to purchase security by adopting the tributary “pay-off” stratagem

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74 O’Neill (1987), pp. 298–300; Hucker (1975), pp. 87–88; Barfield (1989), pp. 32–33, and personal correspondence. We should point out that the Sui was not an entirely Han Chinese regime. It was led by rulers of mixed Chinese-nomadic blood, which probably explains some of its successes against northern periphery peoples.
77 Barfield (1989), pp. 248–249, and personal correspondence. Also see Wang (1968), pp. 49, 53. In addition, Ming sensitivity was probably increased by the fact that Emperor Ming Yongle (1403–1424) had moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing in 1421, thus placing it closer to the northern border. If the capital had been far to the south, then even a Mongol invasion that overran the Beijing area would be embarrassing but no real threat to the dynasty, since its economic and population center was in the south. A final factor that explains the greater Ming reliance on military measures is the advent of firearms. This made a wall-building strategy more plausible and gave Ming armies a distinct advantage in the field against the horse archer-style of warfare practiced by the nomads. The authors are indebted to Edward Dreyer and Thomas Barfield for these observations. Also, see Waldron (1990).
used by previous Chinese regimes. Yet Ming arguments in favor of accommodation almost invariably depicted such a strategy as a stopgap measure designed to allow Ming power to strengthen and thus to improve the effectiveness of offensive uses of power when conditions were ripe.78

During the modern era, regime formation and maintenance have similarly involved a frequent yet limited use of violence toward the periphery, although the requirements for establishing and maintaining periphery control (and, indeed, for ensuring China’s overall security) have changed considerably in modern times. The newly formed Republic of China undertook military actions against Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet between 1911–1935, largely in an effort to establish strong buffers against continuing (and unprecedented) security threats posed by imperialist powers, especially Russia and Great Britain. These efforts met with only limited success, however, given the general weakness of the nationalist regime and the more pressing security challenges presented by communist insurrection and the Japanese invasion.79 Ultimately, the nationalist regime was more effective in using diplomatic measures to reduce foreign influence along the periphery during the 1920s and 1930s, even though it did not actually manage to assert full control over most of these areas.80

During its formative years (i.e., the 1950s and early 1960s), the People’s Republic of China undertook similar military campaigns against the periphery from a decidedly stronger position. These actions subsequently confirmed the earlier formal incorporation into the Chinese state of all periphery regions (i.e., Tibet, Xinjiang, Manchuria, and Mongolia, minus Outer Mongolia) that had taken place during the Qing and early Republican periods.81 The PRC established an unprecedented level of direct control over periphery territories as a result of such military actions (which were in some instances helped

78 The authors are indebted to Iain Johnston for this last point, personal correspondence.
Interpreting China’s Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future

by support from communist Russia, greatly exceeding the level of control exercised by past Han Chinese regimes such as the Han, Tang, or Ming. In addition, during its early years, the PRC also deployed military forces to counter or deter incursions into or perceived threats against both nearby periphery areas (such as Korea, Tibet, and Nepal) and heartland borders from major industrial powers such as the United States and Great Britain. The PRC leadership also planned to use military force to reestablish direct Chinese control over Taiwan, which had been formally incorporated into the Chinese heartland during the early Qing Dynasty but had remained outside Beijing’s sphere of influence since the late 19th century. These latter efforts did not meet with complete success, however, because of the superior military strength of the adversaries involved.

Since the mid 1960s, the PRC has resorted to force less often than during its early years. However, one should not conclude from this apparent decrease in the use of force that the communist regime is entirely satisfied with its level of control over the Chinese periphery. Although having incorporated many traditional periphery areas directly into the Chinese nation-state, the Chinese communist regime remains relatively weak compared with those major industrial powers capable of deploying forces along its borders (e.g., the United States, Japan, and Russia) and, more important, has continued to be plagued by an assortment of domestic ills. As a result, it has not fully restored the level of influence over periphery areas enjoyed by the early Qing rulers, as a result of their highly successful military exploits. This is not to say, however, that the Chinese regime today necessarily seeks to replicate the level and type of control over the periphery enjoyed by strong imperial Chinese regimes, nor that it seeks to expand significantly the geographic expanse of the traditional periphery to encompass, for example, parts of the Russian Far East, Central and Southwest Asia, or the Western Pacific. The influence of mixed weak-strong state capabilities on near-term Chinese security behavior toward the industrial powers and nearby states, and the implications of the emergence of a much stronger China

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82Stalin essentially permitted the PRC to regain control over Manchuria and Xinjiang.
83For excellent discussions of PRC security policy and military behavior toward Korea, Nepal, Tibet, and Taiwan, see Hunt (1996), pp. 13–17, 159–200; Christensen (1996b); Chen (1994); Grunfeld (1996); Smith (1998); and Goldstein (1989).
over the longer term for Chinese security policy and behavior will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

To sum up, the historical record suggests that the Chinese state has frequently employed force against foreign powers but generally followed a pragmatic and limited approach to the use of such force. Specifically, it has employed force against foreigners primarily to influence, control, or pacify its strategic periphery and generally has done so when it possessed relative superiority over its potential adversaries on the periphery. In these instances, force was most often used in attempts to establish (or reestablish) relations of deference toward China by periphery powers, to absorb nearby areas such as Vietnam and Korea, or to deter or end attacks from the periphery by either nearby or (in the modern era) more distant powers. However, an inability to establish a material position of superiority over the periphery through military force—or strong levels of domestic opposition to the use of such force—often led to the adoption by the state of noncoercive methods, usually involving appeasement and passive defenses, which frequently provided long periods of security from attack. This suggests that security during much of Chinese history did not require unambiguous military dominance by the Chinese state over periphery areas. In particular, as will be discussed in the next section, when military control over the periphery could not be established or maintained without threatening internal order and prosperity, or the interests of key elites, the Chinese state usually opted for political arrangements that provided some measure of security from attack while often, although not always, preserving some symbol of deference to Chinese authority.

THE USE OF NONCOERCIVE SECURITY STRATEGIES

Despite a frequent reliance on force to eliminate internal opposition, reestablish the strategic periphery, chasten disrespectful foreign powers, and quell or intimidate potential external threats, the rulers of most Chinese regimes (both modern and pre-modern) have sought to employ a variety of noncoercive military, economic, and diplomatic measures to ensure China’s security (or maintain China’s preeminence) over extended periods. These measures have variously included the construction of passive defenses, policies of ap-
peaceminent and cooptation, cessation of contact with outsiders, the assertion or maintenance of hierarchical, sinocentric diplomatic relations, or the acceptance of more equal interactions using political balance, tactical alliance, and maneuver. Often, such measures were generally shown to be more effective and deemed less costly and less controversial domestically than offensive, military-centered security policies, and permitted the regime to focus greater energies and resources on the maintenance of domestic order and well-being. The specific precipitant, form, and timing of each noncoercive measure used by the Chinese state varied considerably, however, largely depending on structural factors relating to the relative strength and internal unity of the Chinese regime and the general historical period under examination (i.e., imperial or modern).

During the imperial era, relatively weak Chinese states confronted by internal problems associated with regime formation or decline (e.g., the elimination of remaining resistance to a new imperial order or the suppression of rising domestic rebellion) would rely most often on a combination of static defenses, appeasement, and, at times, cultural-ideological efforts to coopt or indoctrinate foreigners into the sinocentric world view through the ritual trappings of the hierarchical suzerain-vassal tributary relationship. Taken as a whole, these measures were intended to provide the regime with a respite from external attacks and thereby permit a greater concentration on the primary task of establishing (or reestablishing) internal order and well-being.

Toward relatively more dangerous nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples, a weak Chinese state would rely most heavily on a combination of appeasement via trade, subsidies, payments, lavish gifts, and, when possible, static defenses. Toward those ordinarily less-dangerous sinitic powers on its eastern and southern borders, weak Chinese regimes would tend to emphasize the culturally based, hierarchical aspects of the tributary relationship to elicit or maintain

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84The influence of internal political factors on Chinese security strategies will be discussed in the next section.

85Fairbank (1968a), pp. 11–12.

86Strong imperial regimes were also compelled to employ appeasement policies on occasion. This point is discussed in greater detail below.
deference, while permitting increasingly generous trade relationships. Such stratagems were also initially applied during the late Qing period (a decidedly weak state era) to the imperialist powers. In particular, Qing rulers initially attempted to pressure or persuade foreign traders and dignitaries to perform and accept traditional hierarchical, tributary-based rituals and trade relations.

During periods of regime decline, such strategies of appeasement and symbolic dominance could not long conceal the weakness of a declining Chinese regime or indefinitely buy off growing external threats, however. In virtually every case, they would soon be augmented, if not replaced altogether, by strategies keyed to diplomatic balancing, maneuver, cooptation, collaboration, and largely tactical alliance. This was especially true in the case of imperial China’s relations with nomadic and semi-nomadic entities, and with regard to late Qing policies toward the imperialist powers from approximately 1880 onward. Such measures reflected a clear recognition of the need for a weak China to become extensively involved in the affairs of the outside world, to play stronger powers off against one another to maximize strategic leverage and flexibility. (This does not mean that strong imperial Chinese regimes did not also engage in diplomatic balance and maneuver. In fact, they frequently did so, but primarily as an adjunct to more hierarchical, tributary-centered strategies discussed below.)

Elements of this “weak regime” strategy of appeasement and diplomatic maneuver were also evident during extended periods of internal political fragmentation. During such times, the imperial Chinese state frequently relinquished even the symbolic forms of the hierarchical tributary relationship and treated potential adversaries as political equals. The foremost example of this type of regime was the

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87 This is not intended to imply that weak imperial regimes did not use the ritualistic trappings of the tributary relationship toward nomadic peoples, nor that such regimes would entirely shun efforts at outright appeasement and static defenses toward southern and eastern peoples. An emphasis on one or more strategies over others was largely a matter of degree.


Song Dynasty (960–1279). During the life of this dynasty, control over the Chinese heartland was divided between a Han Chinese imperial state and several large nomadic regimes (the Liao, the Xi Xia, and the Jin). In this precarious security environment, the Song rulers kept their potential nomadic adversaries at bay over a very long period of time through policies that combined strong military defenses (by the middle of the 11th century, the Song army numbered well over a million soldiers), diplomatic maneuver, appeasement, alliance behavior, and occasionally (albeit often unsuccessfully91) offensive warfare. The Song relied in particular upon an appeasement policy marked by very large, and increasing, subsidy payments to nomadic states. The regime was eventually defeated by the Mongols after a fierce resistance, and largely because Song power had been greatly eroded internally as a result of the influence of weak emperors, domineering chief councilors, and wrangling careerist officials.92

In general, strong imperial Chinese regimes would also employ a wide variety of noncoercive measures to ensure peace and stability along the periphery. Once domestic power was consolidated and China’s territorial borders secured, most regimes sought largely to maintain order and elicit deference from periphery states and peoples. This normally did not require continuous military coercion or conquest. On the contrary, most established, strong Han Chinese regimes were primarily oriented toward system maintenance and hence took a relatively non-militant approach to security issues.93 In particular, when not provoked to the use of force by excessively disrespectful or aggressive periphery powers, such regimes would usually rely primarily on a combination of static defenses and tributary/trade relations to attain their security objectives. Along the northern and northwestern frontiers, these measures would also frequently be combined with efforts to "play barbarians off against one

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90See the contributions to Rossabi (1983), for various excellent analyses of Song foreign relations.
91The Song was for the most part successful in the use of offensive force only against the more sedentary areas to the south. It conquered and reunified all of the Chinese heartland south of the Yellow River. Fairbank (1992), p. 114.
93For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Wills (1968), pp. 252–254.
another” (yi-yi-zhi-yi) in various forms of alliance and maneuver and to control nomads through the regulation of trade contacts and privileges.

For a strong imperial state, the traditional tributary relationship served many practical, political, economic, and cultural purposes: It reaffirmed the applicability to Chinese and non-Chinese alike of China’s hierarchical and sinocentric system of political and social values and thereby legitimized the entire Confucian order, it provided an avenue for regular diplomatic communication between the Chinese court and foreign rulers, and it served as a convenient and durable basis for mutually beneficial economic relations between China and foreign states, thereby increasing, in many instances, China’s leverage over those states. In addition, tributary relations also gave recipient periphery states important legitimacy, status, and leverage within their own subregion, by providing significant economic benefits and a form of political recognition by the dominant power in East Asia. Moreover, tributary status often, although not always, implied Chinese diplomatic and military protection of the vassal state against domestic usurpers or foreign nontributary states, as noted above.

When possible, strong Chinese imperial regimes generally sought to ground the tributary and trade relationship in a genuinely hierarchical power structure based on a clear position of military superiority. Under such circumstances, periphery powers were often pressured, enticed, or coerced by strong and wealthy imperial Chinese regimes to accept a more clearly defined status as Chinese vassals that involved specific reciprocal benefits and obligations. Local leaders were usually allowed to retain their positions and rule their lands as they wished, provided they “kept the peace, accepted symbols of [Chinese] overlordship, and assisted [Chinese] armies when

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94 One of the best summaries of the tribute system is in Fairbank (1964), pp. 23–38. Also see Fairbank (1978a), p. 30; and Wills (1968), p. 254.
96 Shepard argues that practitioners of Confucian government understood that normative persuasion usually required the threat of coercion to provide effective control (1993, p. 185). Also see Lam (1968), pp. 178–179; and Suzuki (1968), pp. 183–186.
called on. They would also often receive generous gifts, subsidies, and trade concessions from the Chinese court, ostensibly as an expression of the benevolence and generosity of the emperor, but more accurately to ensure continued loyalty and support. Such gifts and concessions (along with various diplomatic ploys) were often used by a strong regime to foment hostilities among nomadic groups and to prevent the formation of nomadic confederations. In some instances, and particularly during the early period of contact with imperialist powers in the mid 19th century, a compliant vassal state (such as Korea at that time) would also agree to avoid foreign relations with states other than China. In return, the Chinese state often assumed a level of responsibility for the security of the vassal, especially against external attack.

This type of more genuine vassal-suzerain relationship was easier to establish and maintain among the more sedentary, sinitic regimes of the eastern, southern, and southwestern periphery, which were culturally more receptive to the hierarchical, sinocentric impulses of Chinese diplomacy, generally less aggressive, and far more vulnerable to military pressure than the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples to the north and northwest. Indeed, many of these regimes had strong political and economic incentives to maintain a cooperative relationship with China. For example, some regimes used the bene-

98Barfield (1989), pp. 64–67, 112. Occasionally, this strategy also included more coercive measures designed to ensure local compliance. Chinese forces were often garrisoned within periphery areas, as a deterrence to attack and a symbol of imperial authority. Moreover, the sons of rulers were often sent to the Chinese capital to receive education in Chinese culture and also to serve as hostages to ensure their father’s loyalty, and Chinese noblewomen were given in marriage to local leaders. These more sophisticated practices were more often implemented by non-Han Chinese or partly nomadic imperial regimes against nomadic areas. See O’Neill (1987), p. 313.
99Jagchid and Symons (1989), p. 56. Such practices would at times prompt aggressive responses and eventually lead to the breakdown of tributary relations and military conflict along the northern and northwestern frontiers.
101For most of the Qing Dynasty, contacts with the more sinitic southern and southeastern states were handled by the Ministry of Rituals, reflecting the common sinitic culture of these peoples. Inner Asian peoples were handled by the Office of Border Affairs. Kirby (1994), p. 17; Hsu (1970), pp. 62–65; and Spence (1990), pp. 117–119.
ficial, tributary-based trade relationship with strong and unified Chi
nese regimes to establish wealthy trading states, such as the Shrivi
jaya during the Tang and the Malacca during the Ming.\textsuperscript{102} It is thus
no surprise that, as a rule, imperial Chinese rulers were more willing
and able to employ noncoercive measures, centered on the tributary
relationship, toward sinitic periphery states. Such entities were
explicitly regarded by several emperors as far less of a threat to the
security and stability of the heartland than the nomadic and semi-
nomadic peoples of the north and northwest.\textsuperscript{103} In fact, many
Chinese rulers eventually came to believe, however incorrectly, that
the maintenance of peace along the southern, southwestern, and
eastern periphery could be explained by the persuasive and attract-
ing power of Chinese culture, as symbolically expressed in the tribu-
tary relationship, and not simply by material considerations such as
military and economic power relationships.\textsuperscript{104}

Among the more threatening and less-submissive nomadic peoples
of Inner Asia, the tributary relationship, combined with other nonco-
ercive measures such as frontier trade and markets, intermarriage
between nomadic leaders and Chinese maidens, and other gifts and
bestowals, often became (as in the case of weak Chinese states) an
elaborate form of pay-off, albeit one couched in the guise of defer-
ence to Chinese authority. In other words, as long as strong nomadic
powers performed ritual obeisance to the Chinese emperor, even
strong Chinese states were usually content to purchase peace along
the periphery, especially when such powers proved difficult to sub-
due through military means. And the rulers of such regimes paid
tribute not out of a genuine recognition of the superior virtue of the
Chinese emperor but because they gained politically and economi-
cally from the exchange.\textsuperscript{105}

The advent of the modern era witnessed the emergence of several
new, or partly new, factors that affected the security environment
and outlook of the Chinese state and its leaders. These factors have

\textsuperscript{103}Wolters (1970), pp. 31–32, 36, 50. Also see Wang (1968), p. 53.
\textsuperscript{104}Wolters (1970), p. 36.
\textsuperscript{105}This is a major inference drawn from Barfield (1989). It is also argued by Jagchid
altered the specific form and application of China’s noncoercive security strategies in important ways, although they have not changed the basically pragmatic approach used in the application of such strategies to protect the periphery. Five fundamental factors are of particular importance.

First, the emergence of significant security threats to the heartland from distant, powerful nation-states meant that the Chinese state could no longer protect itself from external attack by merely controlling or dominating, through various types of suzerainty relationships, those areas immediately adjacent to the heartland. By necessity, efforts to control the periphery became intimately bound up in larger strategies to counter actual or potential threats from both near and distant industrial powers. To deal with such threats, the Chinese state would eventually need to establish more direct forms of control over the traditional periphery, where possible, and sustain a highly sophisticated level of diplomatic skills to influence events both regionally and globally.

Second, the superior organizational, material, and ideological capabilities and qualities of the modern nation-state fatally undermined the past attractiveness of the imperial Confucian-Legalist political-cultural order as a basis for defining the heartland and as a means of establishing and maintaining a unified and prosperous Chinese regime. In its place arose a statist, multi-ethnically based definition of Chinese nationalism centered on (a) a putative “alliance” between Han Chinese and the minority peoples of the traditional periphery, and (b) the totalitarian institutions of a monolithic, Leninist bureaucratic state with a strong military component. Thus, Chinese cultural universalism gave way to a stress on national essence and the defense of China’s “unique” culture and people. On the organizational level, a centralized, authoritarian, usually status-quo-oriented, and bureaucratic state structure staffed by educated scholar-officials and led by an imperial family and its retainers was replaced by an even more totalitarian and bureaucratic structure of rule staffed by often poorly educated cadres motivated by an ideology of social transformation and control and led by charismatic figures with extensive military experience.

As a result of the above two developments, the geographical scope of the Chinese heartland was broadened and the power and authority
of the Chinese state over Chinese society was strengthened and deepened.

Third, closely related to the previous factor, the decline of Chinese cultural preeminence and the rise of a more egalitarian international system of modern nation-states eventually forced the Chinese state to discard the hierarchical, culturally oriented tributary relationship of the imperial era and adopt many of the concepts and practices of the European interstate system (e.g., the use of international law and interstate treaties between legally equal and sovereign powers). In this context, the long-standing Chinese sensitivity to relative material capabilities that often influenced traditional political, cultural, and military relations with the outside world became even more important than during the imperial period and resulted in a primary stress on the relative economic and military capabilities of the major powers and their shifting relationships with one another and with China. At the same time, traditional sinocentric attitudes toward international relations were expressed, at least partly, in an emphasis on China as an exemplary model of a nonhegemonic, nonpredatory, progressive state concerned with the plight of other underdeveloped states.

Fourth, a deep-seated “victim mentality” among both the elite and the populace first emerged in the imperial period but came to full prominence in the modern era as a result of China’s humiliation and subjugation by foreign imperialist states. In the context of the previous three factors, this victim mentality has intensified the long-standing Chinese sensitivity to foreign threats and territorial incursions and accentuated the strong commitment to the creation of a powerful and respected Chinese nation-state able to redress past wrongs (e.g., the seizure of Chinese territories such as Taiwan) committed by stronger imperialist states; defend Chinese state sovereignty, national interests, and regime status in a larger international arena dominated by the great powers; and protect Chinese society against foreign “cultural contamination” and threats to domestic order and stability.

106 The Chinese notion of victimization by foreigners has been a long-standing theme in Chinese history, deriving from earlier periods of conquest by nomadic invaders such as the Mongols and Manchus, which exposed Han Chinese internal weakness. The authors are indebted to Thomas Barfield for this observation.
Fifth, the primary challenge of maintaining domestic order and well-being was made worse during the modern era by huge increases in China’s population and, until recent decades, by significant declines in productivity per farm laborer. China’s population approximately doubled during the last 150 years of the Qing Dynasty and then doubled again after the communist victory in 1949, following a slight decline in population in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as a result of military conflicts and economic disasters. In large part as a result of such massive population increases and resulting hunger for land, the man-land ratio per household dropped considerably and both agricultural and industrial production slowed. These pressures added greatly to the existing sense of vulnerability of the Chinese state and society to domestic chaos and hence strengthened the perceived need to devote enormous energies to assuring internal order and well-being.

Together, these developments meant that not only the form of diplomatic relations with the outside world but also the substance of China’s security policy have changed significantly in the modern era, even though the basic security problem has generally remained the same. To ensure domestic order and establish and maintain control over its periphery, the Chinese state now needed to acquire the sophisticated organizational, material, and conceptual capabilities and practices of an industrialized nation-state. Moreover, to survive, the Chinese state would need to develop such abilities in relation to both nearby periphery states and more distant industrial powers, as part of both regional and global security strategies.

However, the acquisition of these abilities would take a considerable period of time, given the vastly superior capabilities of Western industrialized states, the depth of China’s internal problems, and the degree of conceptual and organizational transformation required of Chinese political and military leaders. Indeed, for most of the modern era, and despite its reconstitution by highly disciplined and determined nationalist and communist elites, the Chinese state has

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108 That is, a primary emphasis on the maintenance of domestic order and well-being, combined with efforts to dominate or neutralize the periphery and attain geopolitical preeminence in an overall environment of changing resources.
remained relatively weak in comparison with its major actual and potential adversaries, even though it has become significantly stronger than many of the states on its immediate periphery.

Chinese elites in the early modern era did not immediately realize the magnitude of the security challenge that confronted them. Late Qing rulers initially attempted to deal with the security threat posed by imperialist powers through the use of hierarchical tributary-based interactions, trade restrictions and concessions, and usually ill-timed efforts at armed resistance. These actions resulted in disastrous military defeats and a belated recognition of the need to protect the Chinese heartland by a combination of both “strong-state” military efforts to reestablish control over the periphery where possible and prolonged “weak state” diplomatic strategies against the industrialized powers that used much of the language and logic of the European nation-state system. Thus, both late Qing and especially early nationalist rulers relied on external balancing, cooperative relationships, and appeals to international law to fend off imperialist aggression while also undertaking efforts to build a modern military and consolidate direct control over long-standing periphery areas such as Tibet, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Xinjiang.109

The reunification of the Chinese heartland and the subsequent establishment of a Chinese communist regime in 1949 brought further modifications in the hybrid “weak-strong” state security strategy of the modern era. The People’s Republic of China attained a relatively high level of state capacity, especially compared to the much weaker nationalist regime, which had existed during a period of domestic political division and extreme social disarray. As a result of its greater strength and control over the heartland, and its political affiliation with communist Russia, the PRC was able to successfully incorporate three long-standing periphery areas (Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet) into the Chinese nation. However, despite such successes, the economic and military capabilities of the communist Chinese state remained greatly inferior to those of the advanced industrial states, partly because of the legacy of underdevelopment of the Qing and republican periods, and partly because of the disas-

trous effects of Maoist and Stalinist socioeconomic policies. Hence, efforts by the Chinese leadership to establish a stronger presence along the entire periphery and to protect the Chinese heartland from direct attack were checked or complicated by the presence of a major continental industrial power to the north and west (the Soviet Union) and a major maritime industrial power to the east and south (the United States), as well as other smaller nearby powers.110

In response to this unprecedented situation, the Chinese state has continued to pursue a version of the past “weak-state” security strategy of extensive diplomatic balance and maneuver throughout most of the communist period.111 Toward the major powers, this strategy has involved Chinese efforts to establish formal or informal alliances or strategic understandings with, first, the Soviet Union, and, then the United States, as the third, and weakest, player in a complex strategic triangle. It has also at times included, as an important corollary to the larger “great power” strategic game, extensive efforts to court lesser industrial states such as Great Britain, Japan, France, and Germany, as well as secondary efforts to elicit support from newly emergent Asian and African states along China’s periphery and beyond, through political or ideological appeals to third world or socialist solidarity.112 Such appeals have frequently included attempts to present China as a model of a peace-loving, nonpredatory, progressive developing state deserving emulation by other developing nations.113 This was often conveyed through the enunciation of various “principles” that ostensibly guide China’s international behavior (e.g., nonintervention in the internal affairs of other countries,

110Specifically, after 1949, the PRC was prevented from reestablishing direct control over Taiwan, and a position of suzerainty over Korea, Nepal, and possibly Vietnam, by the military and political resistance of the United States, India, and France. It was also unable to reestablish a position of dominance over all of Mongolia and areas north of former Manchuria, because of the presence of the Soviet Union.

111One major exception to this approach occurred during the 1960s, when the Chinese state adopted a variant of a “strong state” autonomous strategy, for largely domestic reasons to be discussed below.

112Useful summaries of communist China’s strategic interactions since 1949 are provided by Barnett (1977); Pollack (1984); Tow (1994); and Yahuda (1994).

113This approach was often accompanied, during much of the 1950s and 1960s, by more assertive policies for enhancing Chinese influence that sought to foment Maoist-style revolutions in third world countries. Armstrong (1977).
the rejection of aggressive hegemonic ambitions, and a commitment to a “no first use” nuclear weapons doctrine).

Such moral posturing, which continues to the present day, resonates with traditional Chinese impulses toward cultural preeminence and thus reflects a continuing desire for China to attain and hold a position of prominence within the international community. It also to some extent derives from a genuine desire to reject the supposed predatory motives and actions of major powers in the nation-state era, born of China’s perceived victimization by such powers. Perhaps more important, however, it also serves the interests of a weak state by generating support among lesser powers while hopefully deflecting aggressive behavior by stronger powers. Moreover, China’s attempt to present itself as a totally nonaggressive state has also been used, at times, to reduce international criticism of its military forays against the periphery.\textsuperscript{114}

To successfully pursue the above strategy of balance and maneuver between two militarily and economically superior industrial powers, the Chinese communist state needed to augment its diplomatic capabilities with a level of military prowess sufficient to deter direct attacks by the superpowers and to generally justify China’s participation in a great power strategic triangle, albeit as a “junior partner.” Hence, the Chinese state maintained, from the pre-1949 era, a massive standing army (with even more massive reserves) trained to wear down a technologically superior opponent through the fluid tactics of infantry envelopment and guerrilla warfare. By the end of the 1960s, the PRC had also acquired a small, crude nuclear weapons capability and, by the early 1980s, an intermediate and long-range nuclear ballistic missile force capable of mounting a credible retaliatory strike against a small number of key Soviet and U.S. cities and nearby military bases. In addition, China’s ability to withstand a major attack from either superpower was increased, in the 1960s and 1970s, by the dispersal of major industrial facilities across the

\textsuperscript{114}For example, as reflected in China’s use of the term “self-defense counterattack” to describe its limited military invasion of Vietnam in 1979.
In sum, Chinese leaders in the 20th century have generally pursued a hybrid “weak-strong” state security strategy. This strategy includes a variant of the traditional “strong-state” effort to control the strategic periphery (in this case by directly incorporating peripheral areas claimed by the Qing regime into the Chinese heartland, whenever possible) as well as elements of a “weak-state” approach combining a relatively unsophisticated, territorial defense-oriented military force with an extensive level of involvement in diplomatic balance and maneuver, especially in relation to the superpowers. Since the establishment of the communist regime in 1949 and until the decline of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, the Chinese state relied for the most part upon a security strategy keyed to external balancing through shifting strategic relationships with the United States and Soviet Union (rather than internal balancing through a crash program of military modernization), combined with the maintenance of a strong yet technologically unsophisticated defensive force designed to deter attacks on Chinese territory, not to project Chinese influence and presence beyond the heartland. Thus, in many respects, the overall security approach of the Chinese state in the 20th century has resembled a modern-day variant of the imperial Song security strategy, combining the construction of strong military defenses (and occasional defensive warfare along the periphery) with extensive involvement in diplomatic maneuver and alliance behavior.

In recent decades, a second set of modernizing changes have further altered China’s security environment and brought about even greater changes in its security strategy. These developments have resulted in a further adaptation of the existing “weak-strong” state security approach of the modern era toward a highly “calculative” security strategy emphasizing market-led and outward-oriented eco-

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115 For overviews of China’s defense strategy and force structure during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, see Whitson (1972); Gittings (1967); Pollack (1972); and Pollack (1979).

116 However, such a defensive force would almost certainly have been sufficient to reestablish dominant influence or control over former periphery areas such as Taiwan, Korea, and Mongolia if the United States and the Soviet Union had not directly or indirectly prevented such actions.
nomic growth, amicable external relations with all states (in contrast to the past emphasis on external balancing), relative restraint in the use of force combined with greater efforts to create a more modern military, and a continued search for asymmetric gains internationally. Unlike the policies of domestic social transformation and autarkic development of the ideologically charged Maoist era, this security strategy is specifically designed to provide for long-term domestic social stability and to generate the means to construct a strong and prosperous nation better able to interact with and influence the international community.

These developments inevitably prompt the question, Will an increasingly capable China eventually resort to a modern-day variant of a purely “strong-state” security strategy that involves efforts to expand geographically its security periphery and dominate that periphery in ways that threaten U.S. interests and potentially undermine the stability of the Asia-Pacific region? The factors shaping China’s current calculative security strategy, the major features of that strategy, and its implications for the future will be examined in further detail in the following two chapters.

THE INFLUENCE OF DOMESTIC LEADERSHIP POLITICS

The Chinese state has generally pursued a pragmatic approach to security policy, largely responding to shifts in relative external capabilities and the lessons learned through a long history of border defense to control or influence the periphery. However, domestic factors have at times exerted a critical, and sometimes irrational, influence over the strategic calculations and behavior of the Chinese state. The most important domestic influences on Chinese security policy have been associated with leadership personalities and leadership politics, including leadership strife resulting from the personalized nature of the Chinese political system.

Chinese history is replete with instances of political leadership groups seeking to use both domestic and foreign policies to outmaneuver opponents. In the struggle to amass and maintain individual and bureaucratic power in a highly personalistic system of rule, Chinese leaders have initiated, modified, or completely distorted policy measures in efforts to mobilize supporters, weaken the position of
individual opponents, defend/attack vested bureaucratic interests and beliefs, or simply to place a personal stamp on events.

Understandably, the influence of elite power struggles and individual leadership personalities on security policy has generally been greatest when the Chinese regime has been either immersed in intense conflict or led by a particularly charismatic, powerful figure. For example, vigorous, charismatic leaders have occasionally opted for or persisted in policies of external aggression when objective conditions suggested a more cautious, prudent approach. In the modern era, such behavior has often been motivated by a desire to build domestic political support by stimulating deep-rooted anti-foreign attitudes among the populace through the creation or intensification of a foreign threat.\footnote{Liao (1976); and Liao (1984).} Strong Chinese leaders have also pursued aggressive or ideological foreign policies as part of a more rational strategy designed to build domestic political support for approaches that they believe are essential to national security and necessitated by external “objective” factors, not just by domestic elite conflict.\footnote{Christensen (1996b). This point is discussed in greater detail below.} In addition, dominant leaders have at times squandered scarce resources instead of using them to strengthen the security of the Chinese state in times of need.\footnote{Perhaps the most notable example of such behavior is the Empress Dowager’s decision to reconstruct the Summer Palace using large sums appropriated to build a modern naval force. Partly as a result of this decision, China’s navy was unprepared for the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. O’Neill (1987), p. 84.}

In general, the effect of personalities and power struggles on policy content and direction has been highly idiosyncratic, reflecting the personal whims or predilections of individual leaders and the vagaries of the power contest. Although the effect of such machinations on a particular policy can be profound, it is virtually impossible to measure or predict how or when policy might be thus affected.

Some analysts of the relationship between Chinese domestic politics and foreign policy argue that the frequent use of force by the Chinese state can be largely attributed to the influence of domestic leadership conflict and competition in a political process lacking strong legal and institutional norms. Hence, for these observers, the emergence

\footnote{Liao (1976); and Liao (1984).}
of a less-personalized political order in which elite conflict and leadership succession are mediated by stable institutions, more predictable processes, and commonly recognized legal structures will inevitably produce a more cooperative, less-aggressive pattern of Chinese security behavior. Although a more institutionalized political process will likely reduce the propensity to use security policy as a tool in the power struggle and also restrain the arbitrary influence on policy exerted by strong leaders, other factors such as relative material capabilities, the structure of the international order, and domestic competition over alternative policy approaches (discussed below) will probably continue to exert a decisive influence on China’s use of force, as they have in the past.

Security policy has been affected by domestic politics in a more regular and predictable manner as a result of the formation of leadership groups around enduring alternative policy approaches, each reflecting the influence of long-standing and conflicting philosophical and bureaucratic interests. Historically, the two most important policy debates affecting China’s security behavior have been over (a) autonomy or self-reliance (i.e., internal balancing) versus close involvement with or dependence upon other powers (external balancing), and (b) the prolonged use of coercive strategies centered on offensive military force against the periphery versus a policy centered on noncoercive strategies involving static defense. These two policy debates are sometimes closely related: Arguments in favor of autonomy or self-reliance have often stressed a reliance on static defense over offensive force, whereas proponents of extensive involvement with other powers frequently emphasize security approaches centered on the use of offensive military capabilities. However, the two debates are not identical, e.g., a regime can seek to maintain its autonomy through a primary reliance on offensive force.

Throughout much of Chinese history, and particularly in the modern era, exposure to foreign contacts and ideas has generated a deep-seated tension among China’s leadership, and within Chinese society, between those who fear excessive involvement in and dependence upon the outside world and those who support extensive interaction with outsiders, and the introduction of foreign ideas, as a

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120 For example, Waldron (1990).
necessary way to increase the capabilities of the Chinese state and to develop Chinese society.\textsuperscript{121} This highly contentious debate, relevant to policies affecting both domestic development and external security, is of course present in every developing society. But it exerts a particularly strong influence in China. The combination of China’s geographical vulnerability to external attack from a variety of near and distant states, the related belief that domestic unrest invites foreign aggression, the historical economic self-sufficiency of the Chinese state, and China’s past cultural preeminence within East Asia have together created a strong belief among Chinese elites in the advantages of relying on China’s own resources and hence in maintaining autonomy and independence from foreign social, economic, and political contacts and influence. Within Chinese society as a whole, this belief has contributed greatly to the existence of an undercurrent of extreme xenophobia that continues to the present.\textsuperscript{122}

During the imperial era, support for an autonomous approach toward both domestic development and foreign security strategies was often expressed, in the political realm, by Confucian advisors and scholar-officials. These individuals argued that extensive diplomatic and economic contact and involvement with foreign “barbarians” (i.e., those outside the Chinese heartland who did not acknowledge or practice the manifestly superior tenets of Confucian political and social organization) would weaken the Confucian-Legalist order, demoralize the population, create economic disruption and lawlessness, and thereby threaten domestic tranquillity, harmony, and stability.\textsuperscript{123} On a more practical (and parochial) level, Confucian bureaucrats also generally opposed extensive foreign contacts and involvement with foreign entities because such actions tended to divert resources from internal civil administration and strengthened the political influence and power of their rivals at court (usually imperial retainers and members of the imperial family), merchants, and, in some instances, military leaders. These factors led many

\textsuperscript{121}This argument is explicitly applied to the modern era in Hunt (1996), pp. 20–25, 31–50. It is less explicitly presented in Barfield (1989).

\textsuperscript{122}The virulent, anti-Western reaction of the Chinese government and society to the accidental bombing by U.S.-led NATO forces of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, during the Kosovo conflict of 1998–1999 is at least partly attributable to such xenophobic attitudes.

\textsuperscript{123}Hunt (1996), pp. 20–21. Also see Hao (1980).
officials to oppose extensive levels of foreign trade and foreign ventures such as the above-mentioned maritime expeditions of the early Ming Dynasty.\textsuperscript{124} Such views and interests thus contributed significantly to the overall limitations on imperial China’s activities beyond the periphery.

Opposition among Chinese elites to extensive involvement with, and dependence upon, the outside world has continued during the modern period, although the specific argument against such involvement has changed significantly since the collapse of the Confucian-Legalist order. In addition, sensitivities to extensive political and military involvement with foreigners, and especially with major powers, has arguably been strengthened by the intensely negative experience of Chinese defeat and subjugation at the hands of Western industrial nations and Japan during the imperialist era\textsuperscript{125} and, during the communist period, by the collapse of China’s alliance with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{126}

Both nationalist and communist political leaders and intellectuals criticize the negative influence upon the Chinese nation and society wrought by predatory economic imperialism and supposedly decadent and disruptive Western cultural, political, and social ideas. In particular, they point to the alleged damage done to China’s economic development by corrupt and rapacious businessmen operating in China; the general threat of “cultural contamination and subversion” posed by Western religious and philosophical beliefs and popular culture and by Western concepts of social, political, and economic pluralism; the egoistic search for profits above all else; a legal system centered on protecting the rights of the individual above


\textsuperscript{125}This experience included the failure of efforts by late Qing rulers to establish alliances with specific imperialist states (e.g., Russia) to defend against other imperialist states (e.g., Japan), the perceived betrayal of Chinese interests at the Versailles Conference and again at the Yalta Conference, and the general problems encountered during the entire modern era with allegedly exploitative and culturally subversive foreign businessmen and Western missionaries. See Hsu (1970) and Spence (1990).

the group; and other assumed features of industrialized Western society. Such ideas and practices are viewed as detrimental to China’s effort to construct a wealthy and powerful nation-state, corrosive to the self-sacrificing collectivist and nationalist beliefs that modern Chinese leaders have sought to cultivate among ordinary citizens and, more broadly, are seen as a threat to the national and cultural identity of the Chinese people. Moreover, some contemporary Chinese leaders and intellectuals argue that Western, and especially U.S., ideas and institutions should also be rejected by the Chinese people because they serve as instruments of U.S. dominance over the international system. Hence, if adopted, such ideas and institutions will allegedly perpetuate China’s subservience to the United States in the regional and global arenas. If China is to become a major power in the modern era, proponents of this viewpoint argue, it must therefore reject U.S. influence and develop its own uniquely Chinese developmental forms. Taken as a whole, these attitudes have thus created a highly exaggerated belief, among some leaders and many ordinary citizens, that China’s modern-day social, economic, and political development problems have been and will continue to be greatly aggravated, if not completely caused, by extensive contact with or emulation of the West.127

To remain secure from foreign material and cultural threats, these leaders argue, as their imperial Confucian predecessors did using a different logic, China must depend primarily, if not solely, on the genius, industry, and patriotism of the Chinese people. Any significant opening of the Chinese heartland to foreign ideas and practices will inevitably erode social order and fatally threaten the stability and security of the Chinese nation and its ability to achieve great power status, they insist. Thus, regarding the realm of interstate relations, such leaders maintain that China must avoid “entangling alliances” or other forms of extensive international diplomatic or political involvement (and especially involvement with superior industrial powers) that limit the freedom and autonomy of the Chinese state or expose Chinese society to extensive foreign political, economic, or social influences. They also argue that China must ultimately ensure

127 Many of the themes mentioned in this paragraph are discussed in Spence (1990); Hsu (1970); Hsu (1980); Hao and Wang (1980); Hunt (1996); and Fairbank (1992). See also Robinson and Shambaugh (1994); and Dittmer and Kim (1993).
its security by building a strong, modern military unencumbered by the limitations inherent in multilateral security structures or defense pacts.128

Opponents of this antiforeign, pro-autonomy viewpoint generally fall into one of two broad categories. The first, and more widely accepted, opposition viewpoint has been evident, in various cultural and political forms, during both the imperial and modern eras, but became particularly pronounced during the final decades of the Qing Dynasty, and has emerged again in recent decades as part of the economic reform movement. Its proponents accept the above arguments of the “neo-isolationists” regarding Chinese vulnerability to foreign threats and intrusions that potentially undermine domestic political and social stability and development. However, such individuals also argue that a relatively weak China (especially as compared to the major powers) must adopt and modify foreign attitudes, technologies, and methods and become more deeply involved in the international system to survive and prosper as a strong and independent state in an increasingly interactive, rapidly developing, and often dangerous world. These individuals argue that a weak China cannot maintain true independence and security if it does not locate reliable outside support and, when necessary, draw on appropriate foreign developmental models, beliefs, and technologies while retaining fundamental Chinese moral and philosophical values.129

The second opposition viewpoint first emerged during the 20th century and thus far constitutes a minority (but perhaps a growing minority) among those advocating involvement with the outside world. It presents a liberal and western-oriented critique of both the antiforeign, pro-autonomy viewpoint and the views of those advocating the highly limited and instrumental use of Western techniques by a weak Chinese state. Adherents of this viewpoint argue that


129One version of this argument became especially strong in the later years of the Qing Dynasty, during the self-strengthening (ziqiang) movement of the latter half of the 19th century. Proponents of this movement argued that China’s modernization effort must seek to retain the essential (t’i) moral, philosophical, and organizational elements of Chinese state and society while accepting from the West only what is of practical use (yong). Wright (1962); Hunt (1996), pp. 21–22, 31–35; Spence (1990), pp. 225–226; Hsu (1970), pp. 333–352; Hsu (1980); Hao and Wang (1980), p. 201; and Fairbank (1992), p. 258.
modernity ultimately requires the permanent adoption and acceptance, as the core elements of Chinese state and society, of a wide variety of western-originated or western-supported institutions and ideas, including the centrality of legal norms and procedures and codified institutional processes over subjective, personal bases of authority; formal political and economic limits on the power of the central government; the construction of quasi-autonomous political, judicial, and social spheres; and support for various international and multilateral regimes and fora.\footnote{A recognition of the need for China to adopt Western ideas and practices, not just technologies, was basic to the (often radical, socialist) views espoused by early 20th century Chinese political intellectuals such as Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu, Lu Xun, Liang Qichao, and Sun Yat-sen. However, arguments in favor of many of the fundamental features of Western capitalist democracies have become notable only during the reform period of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. See Nathan (1990); Schell (1988); and Hamrin (1990). Adherents of this viewpoint argue that such a transformation does not require the wholesale rejection of all indigenous Chinese institutions and ideas but rather their modification and adaptation to the universal requirements of modernity, as has occurred, for example, in Japan.}

Hence, proponents of this viewpoint insist that to sustain domestic order and well-being, deter external threats to Chinese territory and national interests, and ultimately attain great power status, China must maintain extensive involvement with the outside world and participate in the shaping of the international community not only when it is weak, but also (and especially) after it becomes strong and prosperous.\footnote{Contemporary Chinese proponents of post-1978 economic and social reform policies and the opening to the outside world include individuals from both of the above "anti-isolationist" schools of thought.}

The debate between these two general positions has grown particularly intense during periods of regime weakness or decline, when the Chinese state has become heavily involved in diplomatic machinations and at times permitted an expanded level of foreign access to Chinese society. Such extensive involvement in foreign affairs, usually accompanied by growing political and social corruption, state incapacity, and economic collapse, often bolstered the position of those opposed to extensive foreign contacts. These individuals blamed China’s ills on excessive collaboration with foreigners and demanded the adoption of strategies keyed to political and economic autonomy and self-reliance. This argument resulted in often highly inappropriate Chinese external strategies (including at times the use
of offensive force) that accelerated the decline of the state and ultimately weakened its overall security.

The two most notable examples of such policy interventions have occurred in the modern era (i.e., since the latter half of the 19th century). During the final years of the Qing Dynasty, the continued inability of the Chinese state to adequately defend the heartland against imperialist pressures through a heightened weak-state policy of diplomatic appeasement, accommodation, and alliance resulted in an abrupt shift toward a policy of total autonomy and armed resistance to all foreigners. This took the form of the so-called Boxer Uprising of 1898–1901. Those who supported the Boxers among the Chinese leadership cited the social corruption and decline resulting from excessive exposure to the West, the pure nativist qualities and fighting capabilities of the Boxers,132 and the general inability of China’s weak-state strategy to protect China against further incursions to justify the adoption of an autonomous, force-based strategy to deal with the foreign threat. However, this strategy merely led to further humiliations and defeat and even greater inroads on Chinese sovereignty by the imperialist powers.133

During the 1960s, the communist regime adopted a largely autarkic security strategy of opposition to both superpowers. This occurred despite the continued relative military inferiority of the Chinese state and signs of growing threats from both the Soviet Union and the United States, and largely because of the dominant influence over policy exerted by Mao Zedong.134 Although the logic of this situation would have suggested the adoption of a weak-state strategy of accommodation or alliance at that time (in fact there is some evidence that certain Chinese leaders wished to improve relations with the Soviets in the mid 1960s—and especially after Nikita

132 The Boxers were originally both anti-Manchu and anti-foreign Han Chinese believers in the power of traditional stylized exercises, martial arts, and magic.
134 The emergence of a major dispute with the Soviet Union following the collapse of the Sino-Soviet alliance in the late 1950s, and the growing threat posed by the United States as a result of the intervention of the United States in Vietnam, the expansion of the U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile and long-range bomber force, and U.S. unwillingness to consider a “no first use” nuclear doctrine, resulted in the emergence of a dual threat to China.
Khrushchev’s ouster in 1964—to strengthen China’s strategic leverage and ease its economic problems), the Chinese state instead adopted a “dual adversary” approach and eventually, during the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s, an isolationist foreign policy. This policy was pushed and justified by Mao Zedong in part on the basis of a strategy of autarkic social and economic development and military defense. Mao argued that foreign ideas and practices, in the form of, on the one hand, Soviet-led “social-imperialism” and its system of repressive, elitist bureaucratic party control and, on the other hand, U.S.-led imperialism and its aggressive predatory system of exploitative capitalism, together threatened the unity, independence, and vitality of Chinese society and stifled Chinese growth. In reaction to these threats, he espoused a policy of self-reliance and ideologically motivated mass mobilization that drew on a theory of the innate “revolutionary” qualities of the Chinese people to innovate, cooperate, and overcome material obstacles to development. This approach arguably weakened China’s security and led to confrontations with both superpowers and ultimately a military clash with the Soviet Union in 1969.\textsuperscript{135}

The internal leadership debate over whether to use offensive force or less-coercive measures (such as static defense) in Chinese security policy has invoked many of the same arguments outlined above. During the imperial period, a heavy and persistent reliance on offensive force was often resisted by Confucian civilian officials and advisors, for many of the same political and cultural reasons that such individuals opposed extensive involvement with foreigners. In particular, a reliance on offensive force was seen to divert resources from domestic administration (often without producing clear-cut victories) and to augment the power and influence of non-Confucian elites, such as military leaders, merchants, and imperial retainers. More broadly, a sustained preference for coercive over noncoercive measures also tended to increase the personal, often arbitrary power of the emperor over the authority of Confucian officials. This in-

\textsuperscript{135}Mao also advocated this autarkic, populist approach to domestic development and national defense to weaken the power and influence of his rivals within the senior party apparatus, who tended to support Soviet-style Leninist and Stalinist policies and party structures of rule. For overviews of the origins and evolution of the “dual adversary” foreign policy, see Barnett (1977); Gittings (1974); Harding (1994a); Goldstein (1994); Yahuda (1978); and Hinton (1970).
creasingly became an issue from the late Tang onward, when Chinese emperors became more autocratic and the functions of government administration and military defense became increasingly lodged in separate elites. In addition, for many Confucian officials, the influence of certain core Confucian beliefs such as “rule by virtuous example” or de was weakened by a heavy reliance on coercive security strategies, which allegedly debased human nature and led to an increasing dependence on punitive central controls, state monopolies, heavy taxation, and widespread conscription. These practices, whether applied to Chinese or foreigners, were all in theory anti-Confucian and were seen to undermine the dominant belief system and hence the social status and authority of Confucian scholars and officials.

Political and ideological resistance to the excessive use of force, combined with the opposition to extensive involvement with foreigners, often led to a preference among many Confucian officials for a security strategy centered on a strong, static border defense and those diplomatic and economic approaches that minimized or regulated contact with the outside; foremost among the latter were the cooptation and appeasement practices basic to the traditional tributary relationship, as well as the use of frontier trade and markets. Confucian officials generally did not oppose the payment of even extremely high tributary “gifts” to nomadic leaders as long as the latter performed symbolic acts of deference to the imperial order and refrained from attacking the heartland. Even at their highest, the tributary “gifts” demanded by nomadic leaders were much less expensive than the costs of any prolonged military campaign. Also, the most sizeable payments usually tended to come at those times when

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137 As Fairbank states, “The central myth of the Confucian state was that the ruler’s exemplary and benevolent conduct manifesting his personal virtue (de) drew the people to him and gave him the Mandate [to rule]” (1992, p. 111). This concept was applied to both residents of China and foreign “barbarians.”
the imperial state was weakest and thus willing to buy peace at any price to preserve itself.\textsuperscript{139}

However, Confucian officials were not entirely opposed to the use of force and did not invariably shun extensive involvement with foreigners. Theoretically, in the view of such officials, there was no fundamental contradiction between virtue and the use of force as long as the force was applied by a ruler who possessed virtue, as measured by a \textit{primary} reliance on noncoercive measures and the maintenance of a stable and harmonious society.\textsuperscript{140} Indeed, some Confucian officials strongly favored aggressive military measures to chastise and subdue periphery people. In particular, they could be very demanding of military punishment for what they viewed as symbolic insults to the doctrinal authority of the imperial order, such as the refusal by foreign leaders to pay ritual homage to the superior position of the emperor in the tributary relationship.\textsuperscript{141} In the early modern era, some Confucian officials during the final years of the Qing Dynasty also supported the use of force against imperialist powers in a desperate effort to limit or eliminate foreign influences on Chinese society, as discussed above in the case of the Boxer Rebellion. At the same time, however, more pragmatic Confucian officials also recognized that extensive diplomatic involvement in the affairs of other powers was at times required for the survival of the Chinese state. As a general principle, therefore, Confucian officials opposed an \textit{excessive or prolonged} reliance on such practices as corrosive of their political position and the existing political and social order.

Opposition to the Confucian preference for noncoercive security measures was most often expressed by military figures, including hereditary military nobles and defense commanders and “warrior” founding emperors. At times, political opponents to Confucian officials at court, such as members of the imperial household, non-Confucian imperial advisors, and imperial retainers, would also

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\textsuperscript{139}The authors are indebted to Thomas Barfield for these observations.
\textsuperscript{140}Wang (1968), p. 49.
\textsuperscript{141}Confucian officials of the Han Dynasty were strong advocates of force against the nomadic Xiongnu tribes for precisely this reason. Barfield (1989), pp. 53–54. Such examples can also be found in later dynasties.}
advocate the use of force, including both extensive military campaigns against periphery powers and, more rarely, efforts to extend China’s territorial borders. Such advocacy derived from both narrow political motives (i.e., a desire to undermine the influence of Confucian officials) and a more principled belief that the maintenance of Chinese centrality and the preeminence of the emperor, both domestically and internationally, required relatively frequent displays of the military superiority of the imperial regime.

The balance of power between advocates of force and advocates of noncoercive measures would usually depend on both the material circumstances confronting a particular regime (especially its relative strength or weakness compared to periphery states or regimes, as discussed above) and the origins and internal leadership makeup and outlook of a regime. In general, strong, militant (or militarily experienced), and actively engaged emperors would usually tilt the balance decidedly in favor of pro-force advocates. This especially occurred during the early decades of a regime, and often despite vigorous protests by Confucian officials. As suggested above, advocates of force would also tend to prevail when aggression by periphery peoples was especially persistent and accompanied by insulting behavior, in part because such actions would permit an alliance between Confucian and non-Confucian elites. Conversely, advocates of noncoercive approaches would tend to exert a greater influence on policy toward powers along the southern and southwestern periphery, especially given the reduced threat posed by such entities and the fact that such states were highly receptive to core Chinese political and social beliefs.

The use of force against outsiders became a subject of intense debate within senior leadership circles at numerous times in the history of imperial China. In many instances the outcome could have gone either way; at times, such conflict would produce paralysis or highly erratic behavior. However, as a general rule, the influence of Confucian officialdom, as the carrier of China’s core political and cultural norms, increased significantly over time during each dynasty and became especially dominant during the middle stages of a long-

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lasting regime. In many instances, this trend would reinforce the general tendency during those times to prefer noncoercive measures and, when employing force, to avoid prolonged and expansionist wars. This would be far less true for the non-Han Chinese dynasties of conquest (and intervention) (e.g., the Topa Wei, Liao, Jin, Xi Xia, Yuan, and Qing), whose rulers were not Chinese, who were more greatly influenced by the traditions of previous Inner Asian empires, and who could draw on stronger military/aristocratic elites from their own peoples to balance officials drawn from Confucian officialdom.\footnote{The authors are indebted to Edward Dreyer for this general observation, provided in a personal correspondence. Dreyer also observes that the dominance of essentially land-bound and continental-oriented Confucian officials within Han Chinese regimes greatly reinforced the existing tendency to denigrate the strategic significance of China’s maritime periphery. Hence, the characteristic expression of Chinese naval abilities during most of the imperial era was not a blue water navy run by the state but, at most, a small coastal force for the defense of rivers and shores, and the occasional manipulation of non-state-run pirate fleets.} It was also less true for the predominantly Han Chinese Ming and Sui regimes, for reasons noted above.

Unfortunately, few reliable data exist to determine the extent to which the use of offensive force over static defense has been a major issue of debate among leadership groups during the 20th century. The modern Chinese state, both nationalist and communist, has often used offensive force in an attempt to establish stable buffer areas along the traditional periphery. Yet little if any evidence exists to suggest that this use of force was strongly contested by political officials. Obviously, since the collapse of the imperial order, Confucian values and interests have not played a role in internal leadership discussions or debates. However, broad-based political and bureaucratic interests and especially the imprint of dominant personalities have undoubtedly remained very strong as factors influencing overall decisionmaking. Until the 1990s, modern Chinese regimes have been led by assertive, charismatic founding figures with extensive military experience, such as Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping. Hence, as in the case of imperial China, these individuals almost certainly dominated, if not monopolized, leadership discussions over the adoption of coercive over noncoercive strategies, especially regarding such a critical national security issue as periphery defense. Moreover, as in the past, these leaders generally did not
shirk from the application of force in efforts to pacify the heartland, consolidate (and in some instances expand) national borders, and influence the periphery.

Two significant partial exceptions during the Maoist era were the Korean War of 1950–1953 and the Vietnam War of 1965–1975. There is some evidence to indicate that both conflicts prompted significant debate among Chinese leaders, especially over whether and to what degree China should employ offensive force. During the Korean War, senior leaders responsible for economic affairs might have resisted extensive intervention in the Korean conflict because of its likely economic costs. Nonetheless, it is almost certainly the case that, even in these instances, any debate occurred within narrow limits set by the paramount leader.

It is even more difficult to find instances in which broad-based bureaucratic interests played a major role in decisions to use force, as opposed to decisions regarding domestic development issues, where such factors have clearly played an important role. This is partly because the modern Chinese regime is only just emerging from an era of state formation and consolidation and beginning an era of more routinized maturation and development. Therefore, as (and if) this process proceeds, one might expect that the ascension to power during the post-Mao era of relatively uncharismatic political leaders possessing little military experience will result in greater internal debate over the use of force, perhaps duplicating, to some extent, the general lines of debate evident during the imperial era. This seems particularly likely given the increasing importance to China’s national security of external economic ties and the growing role in policymaking of senior officials with extensive economic and bureaucratic experience.

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144 Christensen (1996b), especially Chapter Five; personal correspondence with Christensen.

145 There is some evidence to suggest that the limited application by China of military force for political ends (in the form of military exercises and missile firings) during the Taiwan mini-crisis of 1995–1996 provoked rather intense bureaucratic conflict. However, in this instance, the lines of debate were apparently between the Chinese military and the professional diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, not civilian officials charged with domestic economic development. Swaine (1998a) (revised edition), p. 75.
In sum, domestic leadership competition or particular leadership views have at times exerted a decisive influence over the security behavior of the Chinese state. The highly personalized nature of China’s leadership system has at times injected a strong element of instability and unpredictability into external security decisionmaking as leadership groups sought to manipulate foreign and defense policy in an effort to outmaneuver political opponents or build support among the Chinese populace. In these instances, the effect on policy content and direction has often been idiosyncratic, i.e., usually reflecting the personal whims or predilections of strong, charismatic leaders or the vagaries of the power struggle. This suggests that the influence of elite competition and individual leadership personalities on security policy has generally been greatest when the Chinese regime has been immersed in intense conflict or led by a strong, charismatic figure.

China’s security policy has also been affected by domestic politics in a more regular and predictable manner as a result of the formation of leadership groups around enduring alternative policy approaches. Historically, the two most important policy debates affecting China’s security behavior have been over autonomy and the use of force. During the imperial era, a relatively strong leadership consensus in support of self-reliant, coercive security strategies arguably occurred most often in the early or middle years of regimes, in response to repeated military provocations or insults to the authority or status of a strong Chinese state. Such actions permitted a convergence of interests between militant, charismatic, founding leaders and highly status-conscious Confucian officials. At the same time, during the height of most imperial Han Chinese regimes, the growing influence of civilian officials would often produce a preference for noncoercive security strategies, or at the very least a desire to avoid the excessive or prolonged use of force. During the modern era, China has been ruled, until the 1990s, by assertive, charismatic founding figures with extensive military experience. Hence, as in the case of imperial China, these individuals almost certainly dominated, if not monopolized, leadership discussions over the adoption of coercive over non-coercive strategies, especially regarding such a critical national security issue as periphery defense.

Also of note are those instances in which internal leadership conflict has led to a misguided rejection of noncoercive strategies in favor of
a strategy of autonomy and offensive force. Such behavior has usually occurred during the latter stages of regime decline, at least during the modern period, and invariably produced disastrous results. Conversely, domestic leadership conflict has also at times resulted in the use of noncoercive measures of accommodation and appeasement when coercive policies might have been expected.