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The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina

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The whole book, and it is only a little more than a hundred pages long, is clear, factual, straightforward, and generally free of the emotional overtones that often cloud discussion of these matters.

As well or better than any I have encountered, Admiral Wegener manages in a few pages to get past the problems of terminology—naval power, mastery of the sea, seapower, etc.—without getting bogged down in hairsplitting or straining at too precise a definition. This may, in part, be due to clear thinking in the original German text and, in part, perhaps the greater part, to an uncommonly fine English translation by Henning Wegener.

With first an adequate recognition of modern technology, including nuclear propulsion and weapons, and an appreciation of Russian attitudes toward navies under the Czars and the Soviet attitudes in the Stalin period, the author proceeds to the evolving Soviet concepts and actions with respect both to the peripheral seas and the open oceans.

There are two cracking good chapters, one on the role of Soviet naval forces in peacetime and one on Soviet naval forces in the future. Then Admiral Wegener concludes with a discussion of the two naval strategic concepts, saying that "on both sides [United States and Soviet], the overall conceptions have matured only fairly recently. The rivalry for mastery of the oceans has only just started. In the process, the Soviet Union is likely to arm itself more quickly than the West."

By and large, this is an excellent primer for the understanding of the basic problem facing the United States. Most USN officers probably have an intuitive (if sometimes vague) understanding of this situation. For them this is a good and easy way to help bring order to their thinking. I do wish there were some way to get free copies to members of the Armed Forces and Appropriations Committees of the

Congress (and to their staffs) and to journalists and commentators who apparently shape so much of our national attitudes. If these men were to take an hour to read this short book, it might provide a context within which the naval budget requests would make more sense for the future health of the United States and Western society.

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Whiting, Allen S. *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975. 299pp.

Allen Whiting is best known for his definitive work on China's entry into the Korean war, *China Crosses the Yalu*. While drawing on this previous work, Whiting more importantly draws on his service in the State Department from 1961 to 1966 as Director of the Office of Research and Analysis. He also served as the American representative in Hong Kong (1966-1968). Currently he is Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan's Center for Chinese Studies.

The author seeks to delineate Chinese politico-military policy with respect to perceived foreign threats and uses the Sino-Indian clash of 1962 as the primary example. Whiting conducts a day-by-day examination of this conflict, concentrating on the period January to November. By generalizing on his findings, substantiated by the Korean and Indochinese conflicts, he arrives at a "calculus of deterrence" which he defines as the "attempt to infer what general strategy underlies persistent patterns of behavior aimed at persuading a perceived opponent that the costs of his continuing conflictual activity will eventually prove unacceptable to him because of the Chinese response."

Political scientist's jargon aside, Whiting attempts to establish a scale by which the validity of China's deterrent

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moves may be measured. Unfortunately, he fails in this attempt for two reasons.

The first and more general of these reasons is the difficulty in accounting for the subjectivity of the human element in decisionmaking. How does one quantify a personality trait? How can the mood or temper of a political leader be particularized? These are examples of questions that Professor Whiting's "calculus" cannot allow for. The second reason is more specific: the lack of timely information about decision-making in the People's Republic of China. The author is aware of both of these problems. He attempts to overcome them by utilizing the maximum possible sample of information about the Chinese polity.

The Sino-Indian conflict did not result from a sudden move by China. Whiting briefly sketches the murky history of the Himalayan border. This border was based on disputed treaties and arbitrary definitions; it ran through the highest and some of the most barren territory in the world. The Chinese argued that the border followed the foothills on the Indian side of the Himalayas. India averred that the border was defined by the crest of the mountains.

Negotiations between the two countries were held during the 1950's and as late as September 1962, after armed clashes had already occurred. These talks were inconclusive. The situation was exacerbated by China's construction of a road through part of the disputed territory in 1959-1961.

Nonetheless, China was more conciliatory toward compromise than was India. Whiting discusses at length Prime Minister Nehru's intransigence, resulting from considerations of India's domestic politics. In fact, in late 1961 the Indian Army began executing a "forward policy." That is, patrols and bases were pushed into and beyond the disputed territory.

China responded both diplomatically

and militarily. Efforts were made to negotiate with India and army forces were greatly strengthened in the region. Thus, when in October 1962 China launched a military attack in the area, it was with forces which outnumbered the Indian units by 5 to 1 and which were vastly superior in firepower and supply.

The Indian forces were routed. For instance, no Chinese were taken prisoner while there were almost 4,000 Indian POW's. The Chinese forces quickly reached a position from which they could sweep into the Assam Plain; then, they unilaterally withdrew to positions along the border. China occupied no territory it had not claimed prior to the outbreak of the fighting. The author describes this unilateral pullback as "unprecedented in modern times." He cites it as demonstrating China's carefully orchestrated use of military force as a tool of diplomacy.

However, Whiting believes the fact that military force was resorted to indicates its failure as a deterrent. Likewise, he believes that China's attempts to utilize military threats and troop movements as a deterrent in Korea failed in the face of MacArthur's insensitivity to these signals.

Whiting suggests that the deterrent effect of the Chinese Army was realized—and then only partially—in Indochina during the 1960's. He cites the presence of 50,000 Chinese troops in North Vietnam and the joint Chinese-North Vietnamese air defense network as signals which were effective in deterring the United States from such steps as invading north of the DMZ or bombing the Red River dikes. The author argues that the United States was significantly deterred by the threat of expanded Chinese military participation in the Indo-Chinese conflict.

This last point may be debatable; the author does not pretend to have investigated thoroughly the American decisionmaking process of the period. However, what is most questionable about

this book is the attempt to delineate a Chinese "calculus of deterrence" through quantitative analysis of Chinese official statements and press releases. The sample taken is too small; what is omitted or not available may alter or negate the results of the analysis.

The conclusions are unexceptional. Whiting avers that Chinese decision-making in foreign policy is basically rationalistic and that China makes extensive use of civil and military signals prior to taking military action. Whiting also believes that China overestimates collusion between perceived enemies. Thus, in 1962 China incorrectly believed India to be acting in close concert with the United States in pursuing the "forward strategy." In fact, American aid—apart from scattered CIA involvement—came only after armed conflict had begun.

Whiting's most significant finding is the close intertwining of the foreign

policy process with internal conditions in China. Thus, during the chaotic aftermath of the "Great Leap Forward" in 1960-1962, the Chinese leaders assumed that their perceived enemies would take advantage of their weakness. Hence, China's own foreign posture became more militaristic; recourse to military action was considered more probable.

This book is valuable chiefly for its description of the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict. The author also writes authoritatively about the Indo-Chinese war. Despite the invalidity of the proffered "calculus," Professor Whiting has written an important book. However, the reader must work through the unsuccessful attempts at generalization and systemization to find a timely and perceptive description of the use of military force in the formulation and execution of Chinese foreign policy.

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