PREFACE

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THE KOREAN WAR of 1950–1953 is a major bench mark in the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) during the first decade of Communist power. The conflict catapulted the new regime of Mao Tse-tung from the situation of a victor in civil war to that of a contender with the United Nations for control of Korea. It forced the Chinese and Russian Communists into closer political and military collaboration than had previously existed. It highlighted Peking's relations with New Delhi as India essayed the role of mediator between East and West. Finally, it affected the course of Chinese Communist relations with both the United States and the United Nations for many years to come.

These problems were thrust upon a new Chinese ruling group, inexperienced in foreign affairs. Equally important, that ruling group remained almost unchanged in composition long after the Korean War. It is fair to assume that the course of events and the consequences of policy in 1950–1951 conditioned the manner in which Mao Tse-tung and his associates subsequently evaluated the role of China in Asia, the nature of the Sino-Soviet alliance, and relations with the West, particularly with the United States.

The initial purpose of this inquiry, therefore, was to determine the extent to which later Chinese Communist policies emerged from developments attending the Korean War. In the course of research, an additional topic of interest appeared, namely, the way in which the Korean War illuminates the broader question of limited war.[1] Until October 1950, when Chinese Communist "volunteers" crossed the Yalu River, two important constraints had conditioned the course of the war. First, each side had enjoyed privileged sanctuaries from which it could supply the front, the Communists working from Chinese and Soviet territory bordering Korea, and the United Nations forces operating

from bases in Japan. In addition, despite both Russian and American possession of atomic bombs, no nuclear weapons had been employed by either side. What import did these limitations have for the Chinese Communist decision to intervene? Did that decision leave room for maneuver in the event of miscalculation about the effect such intervention might have upon these limitations of combat? This case study offers clues concerning the stability of limitations, the problem of testing their observance by the enemy, and the question of how one side communicates to the other the conditions which might induce it to override such limitations.

This last problem raises still another aspect of limited war, namely, the role of expectations of enemy behavior. Such expectations may be derived from direct communication between belligerents or indirect communication through third parties, and from statements primarily designed for domestic audiences but monitored by the enemy. In addition, expectations may be inferred from ideological assumptions about the enemy and past experience of him. What are the enemy's war aims? How likely are they to fluctuate according to the shifting tides of battle? How credible are his deterrent threats or his hints of compromise? If the enemy signals a willingness to negotiate, how can his intentions be tested while safeguarding freedom of maneuver and advantages at the battle front? Some insight into these problems may be gained from study of the interaction between Sino-Soviet moves and United States decisions in the fateful months of August and September 1950.

These considerations have determined the framework within which the Chinese Communist decisions that led to Peking's involvement in the Korean War have been examined. This work does not, therefore, purport to analyze Chinese Communist military strategy per se, nor does it examine the Soviet strategy behind North Korean aggression. Even less is it a comprehensive history of the first six months of the war. Necessarily, however, it probes key Sino-Soviet decisions relating to Peking's reactions, and so may throw light on certain obscure aspects of the conflict about which there has been considerable speculation but little research. In particular, the postponement of Peking's attack against Taiwan, Chinese Communist charges of U.S. air violations across the Yalu River, the movements of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into Northeast China, and the three-week break-off in contact between

Chinese Communist "volunteers" and U.N. forces in November 1950 are examined in detail for their relationship with the decision to commit Chinese Communist power in Korea.

A brief word on the analytical scheme may prove helpful. Developments attending the Korean War are viewed from the perspective of decision makers in Peking, in so far as that perspective can be reconstructed from Chinese Communist statements and behavior. Alternative courses of action open to the Chinese have been derived from the frame of reference within which the new regime evaluated events, alternative policy goals, and the available means of promoting policy. The logic behind final decisions has been deduced upon the assumption that the Chinese leaders calculated the expected costs, risks, and gains associated with alternative courses of action. In brief, it has been assumed that Chinese Communist behavior is rationally motivated.

This approach is intended neither to justify Chinese Communist decisions nor to find fault with U.S. and U.N. decisions. Such judgments lie beyond the scope of this inquiry.

It has been impossible to determine the role of individual Chinese leaders in framing decisions on the Korean War. It seems certain that differences of opinion existed. These differences may have played an important role, for instance, in delaying the final military intervention. The absence of reliable evidence on this point has compelled the author to use the terms "Peking" and "Moscow" instead of singling out Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-lai, or others.

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