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# *Imagining China's Madrid in Manchuria*

## **The Communist Military Strategy at the Onset of the Chinese Civil War, 1945-1946**

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*This article is an interdisciplinary study of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) military decision making at the outset of the civil war. The historical phenomenon of the Communists' invocation of "Madrid" is studied in the context of the Chinese civil war in Manchuria, particularly the battle of Sipingjie. The strategic culture of the Communist leaders is discussed thematically in terms of their desire for a decisive battle, their expectation of a short war, and their propensity for preemptive strikes. Analyzing newly released primary documents, the author argues that norms, beliefs, and material conditions work in tandem in the making of strategy in a way that the realist premise fails to explain. He concludes that the interaction of normative and material factors, symbolized by the Madrid concept, heightened the CCP policy makers' acceptance of risk in 1946, which foreshadowed the open general war in China over the following three years.*

**Keywords:** *Chinese civil war; Manchurian civil war; battle of Sipingjie; military decision making; strategic culture*

In the summer of 1938, the prospects of China's war with Japan looked grim. The Japanese armies were closing in on Wuhan, then China's military headquarters and symbol of its War of Resistance. The troops from the Guomindang (GMD) government, responsible for the defense of Wuhan, seemed unable to contain the advancing enemy. At the same time, on the front line of the Spanish civil war,

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Madrid, defended by the Republicans, was withstanding the attack of Franco's forces. Delegates of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Wuhan delivered assurances that if the Chinese masses mobilized as the Spanish people had done in Madrid, the city could be held (Wang Ming, Zhou Enlai, and Qin Bogu, [1938] 1987; Zhou Enlai, [1938] 1987).

Pro-CCP newspapers and magazines in Wuhan produced numerous articles disseminating this line, summed up in an editorial in *Xinhua ribao*: "turn Wuhan into China's unbreakable Madrid" (*Xinhua ribao*, August 1, 1938). A powerful war song expressed the Communists' hope:

Warm blood burning with righteous indignation at the lake of Boyang;  
Sparks flying off in the Yangzi River;  
The nation roars in anger;  
Defend Great Wuhan!  
Wuhan is the center of our War of Resistance;  
Wuhan is the greatest metropolis;  
We'll defend her without fail;  
Like the Spanish people defend Madrid, we'll shatter the enemy's offensive;  
And consolidate our anti-Japanese battle line;  
We'll use our inexhaustible power;  
Defend Great Wuhan! ["Baowei da Wuhan," (1938) n.d.]

Mao Zedong, however, quickly pointed out that the "Madrid" approach to the defense of Wuhan was, at that stage, unrealistic, though he pledged that many Madrids would be established in China when the conditions were ripe. For the present, he argued that China did not have a Madrid (Mao Zedong, [1938a] 1965: 187). Mao subsequently urged his comrades to shift their position, avoid battle, and, if needed, abandon the city (Mao nianpu, 2.85). The CCP's propaganda apparatus in Wuhan soon followed his lead and adopted that view (Zhou nianpu, 1998: 425; *Xinhua ribao*, September-October 1938), and the GMD forces abandoned Wuhan in late October. The Chinese Communists also evacuated; the promise of a Madrid in China thus was left unfulfilled (MacKinnon, 1996).

Nonetheless, such events make the case even more strongly for the conventional view that in Maoist doctrine, "the general who had the

courage to retreat was preferred over the bold and brilliant gambler" (Stuart and Tow, 1982: 298). Indeed, the military decision makers of the CCP, particularly Mao Zedong, have for decades been portrayed as the proponents of mobile warfare and the opponents of using positional and forward defense as the principal means of waging war. Previous studies have contended that Mao and his generals sought the annihilation of the enemy through means other than holding ground with fixed battle lines (Elliott-Bateman, 1967: xi, 25; Jencks, 1982). Even a scholar such as William Wei, who believes that Mao's military talent has been exaggerated, believes that Mao favored mobile warfare (Wei, 2002: 238). At the very least, many view Mao's idea of guerrilla warfare as based on a determination to avoid battle unless overwhelming superiority could be achieved prior to an engagement (Møller, 1995: 212-4; Bellamy, 1990: 5, 218-30; Keegan, 1994: 202).

For Mao and other CCP strategists, mobile warfare had been an integral part of the army's "military tradition" since the early 1930s (Mao Zedong, [1938c] 1965: 227-9; Guo Huaruo, 1989: 1-17),<sup>1</sup> and an emphasis on the flexibility of its application was important to this tradition (Junshi da cidian, 1992: 19). The matrix of Maoist revolutionary strategy thus manifested flexibility in the use of different modes of combat. The CCP forces had already demonstrated their operational flexibility. In the 1930s, small operational units engaged offensively in guerrilla warfare while the main forces conducted mobile warfare in major battles. In particular, the Communists' main methods—"strike against an isolated force and delay its reinforcement" (*zuyuan dadian*) and "lay siege to an isolated force and strike against its reinforcement" (*weiyuan dadian*)—combined soft-core positional defense and siege warfare within the framework of mobile warfare (Guofangbu shizhengju, 1967; Chen Haoliang, Wang Tongluo, and Liu Liqin, 1995).

Later, in the war against Japan, Mao called for a shift to guerrilla strategies. Nevertheless, full-strength guerrilla units of the CCP armies could conduct regular warfare (Mao Zedong, [1938b] 1965: 107-9). In fact, the CCP maintained its regular forces (i.e., the Eight Route Army and the New Fourth Army) throughout the war. In mid-1945, at the Seventh Congress, the party leadership decided, not surprisingly, to return to a strategy of mobile warfare to achieve a satisfactory postwar settlement. It passed a resolution favoring the

"strategic changeover from guerrilla to mobile warfare as the principal means of war" (Zhonggong, 15.112-4). Clearly, this change by the military was not doctrinal (Cheng, 2002: 181-6; cf. Tanner, 2003); it was rather a strategic shift to a different mode of combat within the same doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

This dimension of the civil war strategy of the CCP in 1945-1946 deserves attention because Mao and his associates adopted a strategy during this period that emphasized the short and decisive battle, a fire-power-intensive forward defense, and positional warfare—the antithesis of the conventional image of the CCP's military strategy. The adoption of such an "unorthodox" strategy started in late 1945 and culminated at Sipingjie (known as Siping after June 1947) in March 1946. Directed by Mao Zedong and led by Lin Biao, the CCP's Manchurian field force put up a gritty defense in the center of the Manchurian plain at Sipingjie, in an effort to stop the troops of Jiang Jieshi's government from advancing northward. Without secure flanks, depth, or superiority of numbers and firepower, the Communists were forced to defend a 50-kilometer-wide front in the latter stage of the battle (Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun, 1984: 45-6). By the time that their success seemed unlikely, Mao sent a telegram to his forces at Sipingjie in which he brought up the defense of Madrid as a parallel to their own struggle. Now, unlike in Wuhan in 1938, Mao thought the time to create China's "Madrid" had arrived, and he argued that a heroic positional defense of the city could achieve a decisive victory. Mao's view was negated by realities, however. After months of Nationalist assaults that inflicted disproportionate casualties on Mao's armies, the battle concluded in May, and the Communists staged a morale-sapping withdrawal. In the wake of the defeat, Mao replaced his short-war strategy with a more pragmatic base-area approach, which proved pivotal to the CCP's ultimate victory in China (Levine, 1987).

The loss of Sipingjie was a rare setback in the history of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), particularly given its excellent field record under Mao's leadership against the Nationalists. Recent studies ascribe the CCP's poor decision making in this period to the "over-confidence" of its leadership. Some severely criticize Mao's enthusiasm for following Moscow's instructions (Sheng, 1997: 130-4). Some blame Lin Biao for clouding Mao's judgment (Hu Zhefeng, 1996). Other scholars argue that the battle was fought under "unique"

political and historical conditions and exonerate Mao for its failure (Deng Ye, 2001; Chen Lian, 2002: 53). If the CCP's civil war strategy was not solely derived from its ideological adherence to Moscow's revolutionary line, how should the adventurist quest of the CCP leadership for a swift and decisive victory be understood? This article seeks to explain how a military strategy based on estimates of material interests (e.g., achieving a favorable peace deal) could drift from its pragmatic origins and lead to decisions that flew in the face of military realities. In other words, it explores why a strategy was maintained long after all chances of achieving the original goal had evaporated. To this end, it addresses issues as germane today for America vis-à-vis Iraq as they were in the 1940s for the CCP: the expectation that a war will be brief and the belief that the optimal means of fighting is a preemptive strike.

There were, of course, two sides to this battle, and the GMD's strategy naturally affected the CCP's decision making. Indeed, the battle at Sipingjie is sometimes thought of as a clash of titans—Lin Biao confronting the GMD's best strategist, Bai Chongxi.<sup>3</sup> My focus here, however, is not on the battle's empirical process but rather on the strategic thinking of the CCP leadership. This article probes the least-understood part of the strategic culture of the CCP.

#### *"EXPAND IN THE NORTH": THE VIEW OF AN IDEALISTIC REALIST*

Throughout World War II, the Communists expanded considerably in both their military power and their territorial control, presenting an unprecedented obstacle to the GMD.<sup>4</sup> Making use of their enhanced military power, the CCP leaders focused on territorial expansion to achieve a satisfactory postwar settlement (Zhonggong, 15.145-7; Chen, 1986: 78-117).

After the Japanese surrender, Mao flew to Chongqing for peace negotiations with the GMD, but his moderation was based on realpolitik—the notion that military power and territorial occupation could deter the enemy from aggression and thereby safeguard the core of the Communist movement (Mao Zedong, [1945c] 1965: 19-20). Echoing

Mao's idea, Zhou Enlai later further expounded this theme as "idealist realism" (Tanpan, 535-40).

Although Mao and Jiang had signed the "October Tenth Agreement," their major differences remained unsettled (Clubb, 1972: 260; White and Jacoby, 1961: 288; Pepper, 1986: 724). A directive from Yan'an in the wake of the Chongqing peace talks urged the regional bureaus to continue to expand their armed forces (Zhonggong, 15.324-5). In this context, Manchuria, with its political, strategic, economic, and geographical importance, became a venue for the Communists' expansion (Takahashi Masanori, 1943: 42-8, 179-91; Bain, 1946; Borisov, 1975: 66-71). Such action was in line with what Mao had enunciated at the Seventh Congress: "Even if we will lose all of our existing base areas, so long as we can possess Manchuria, the foundation of the Chinese revolution will be secured" (Mao Zedong, [1945b] 1993). But it was not until 1946 that the intelligence analysts of the GMD finally realized that Mao had a propensity to engage in excessively risky battles in those places that he regarded as significant base areas (Guojun dang'an, 1945-1947). As events unfolded, the vision of a Madrid in Manchuria gradually captured the mind of the paramount leader.

The initial plan for Manchuria exemplified a strategy designed to exploit the rivalries between the United States, the Soviet Union, and the GMD to recover the region before the Nationalists arrived. The USSR sent troops into Manchuria in the final stage of the Pacific War, but its postwar strategy was to avoid an escalation of conflict with the Americans (Hobsbawm, 1994: 71-2; 232; Holloway, 1994: 168).<sup>5</sup> By the same token, Moscow did not want to be implicated in China's civil war as it signed the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty and therefore proposed to develop the Manchurian economy in partnership with the GMD. Yet Stalin's power calculus was realistic enough to keep all options open. As events soon demonstrated, the Red Army had a hidden agenda at the operational level to support the Communist forces in Manchuria. In sum, at this stage, Moscow's grand strategy was "betting on all horses," as Steven Levine put it (Levine, 1977: 13; cf. Sheng, 1997: 105-12).

In response to the USSR's incursion into Manchuria, the Communist forces in Yan'an launched a propaganda war by issuing the

“Seven Orders of the Day” on August 11, 1945, immediately after the Soviets’ offensive began. One order stated that four strong contingents of combat units would be dispatched to Manchuria and the adjacent Rehe and Chahar provinces (Zhonggong, 15.217-25). But the mobilization of the CCP forces did not live up to the party’s propaganda. Later, a classified cable to the regional forces stipulated that only a detachment from the Hebei-Rehe-Liaoning Military Region was to redeploy; all other units were to stay where they were (Tang Kai, 1989: 48; cf. Sheng, 1997: 101, Westad, 1993: 78-9).

Mao Zedong was among the strongest supporters of this prudent approach. On August 26, the day the Sino-Soviet treaty was announced, he made a crucial comment on the party’s Manchurian strategy. Mao admitted that Manchuria was covered by the Sino-Soviet treaty and that authority lay “in the hands of the GMD.” However, he also said that “we are yet to decide whether our party can dispatch troops. . . . But it would not be a problem for us to send some cadres to work there.” Mao could regard Rehe as a fallback option because the province did not fall within the scope of the treaty (Yao Xu, 1985; Tang Kai, 1989: 48). Even if the Soviets were to dash his hopes in Manchuria, he could still make up for the loss by developing strongholds in Rehe.<sup>6</sup>

The actual number of CCP troops sent to Manchuria in late August was far less than what had been officially announced, as mentioned above. The first forces sent to Manchuria and Rehe consisted of 13,000 men led by Li Yunchang (Liaoshen, 2.589). With Mao’s Rehe plan in mind, Li divided his army into three detachments, dispatching one each to Rehe and Mongolia; only the third contingent, totaling 4,000 men, was to form the vanguard of the Communist forces sent to Manchuria (Zeng Kelin, 1988; Li Yunchang, 1985: 57-9; cf. Tanner, 2003: 1188-9). Their destination was the environs of Shenyang, the largest city in Manchuria.

On August 29, an instruction was telegraphed from Yan’an to regulate the activities of all units preparing to enter Manchuria or the adjacent areas. The telegram was important because it signaled the leadership’s recognition that the USSR would conform to the conditions of the Sino-Soviet treaty; it ordered the armies not to make “formal contacts” with the Soviets. This would be a covert operation for all units. Activities such as “entering the big cities by train” were strictly

prohibited. The armies were allowed to take control only of those territories where the Soviet troops were not quartered (Saich, 1996: 1268-70).

But this plan was shattered by a telecommunication breakdown with the CCP forces. Because a lack of working telegraph wires prevented Li's armies from learning the terms of the final briefing from headquarters (Li Yunchang, [1945] 1989: 12), his troops met up with the Soviet troops and entered the big cities, effectively contradicting the instruction from Yan'an. The Communist forces initiated joint operations with the Soviets to subdue the Japanese-Manchukuo armies at Shanhaiguan and Jinzhou (Zeng Kelin, 1989: 32-3; Zhang Zhikui, 1989: 86-7).<sup>7</sup> With Soviet approval, one of Li's divisions entered Shenyang on September 6 (Ding Xiaochun, Ge Fulu, and Wang Shiying, 1987: 8). Although done in violation of orders, the capture of Shenyang marked the culmination of the CCP's early success in Manchuria. Using weapons taken from the Japanese, Li's troops swiftly added to their numbers. The fusion of new recruits and experienced campaigners effectively upgraded the regional armies en bloc into field forces (Dong Zhanlin, 1989: 73-84). Zeng Kelin, the leader of Li's scouting division—now the “garrison commander of Shenyang”—boarded a Soviet plane back to Yan'an to make his report on September 14, accompanied by a representative of the Soviet Red Army (Liu nianpu, 1.491).

According to People's Republic of China (PRC) records, the Soviet representative requested that the CCP forces vacate the big cities (Liu nianpu, 1.490). Scholarly studies, however, show to the contrary that both sides had reached some mutual understanding, and the Communists were permitted to send troops into Manchuria without revealing their real identity (Sheng, 1997: 107; Yang Kuisong, 1997: 533). At any rate, the achievements of its vanguard forces went far beyond the expectations of the leadership in Yan'an, which began to sense that they could be serious contenders in Manchuria. Having taken charge while Mao was in Chongqing, Liu Shaoqi telegraphed Mao about the new situation on September 15: “This was a once-in-a-thousand-years opportunity” (Liu nianpu, 1.491-2).

Yan'an thus decided to establish the Northeast Bureau of the Central Committee (NEB)—the Communist high command in Manchuria (Liu nianpu, 1.490-1). A large contingent of upper-level cadres

constituted the new Manchurian party leadership, reflecting what was regarded as one of the most significant personnel investments in party history (Levine, 1987: 107-21). On September 18, the headquarters of the NEB, led by Peng Zhen, was established in Shenyang (Liaoshen, 2.592). Under Soviet protection, this bureau effectively accelerated the Communist challenge to the GMD's legitimacy in Manchuria. Meanwhile, the withdrawing Soviets asked the Communists to take over the defense of the Bailingmiao line in Inner Mongolia (Zhonggong, 15.278-80). An intelligence report of September 18 indicated that if the Communists gained control of Manchuria, the British and Americans would soften their stance (Liu nianpu, 1.494). The Communists took full advantage of this development, as Yan'an committed itself to a new civil war strategy summed up in Liu Shaoqi's succinct expression: "expand in the north" (Liu nianpu, 1.493-4).

The new approach quickly gained the support of Mao and the Politburo (Zhonggong, 15.280; Liu nianpu, 1.495). In a directive to his forces delivered on September 19, Liu stressed that they had an excellent opportunity to control Manchuria and make it the basis for a satisfactory postwar settlement. The dispatch of 30,000 Shandong troops to Manchuria by sea would proceed according to schedule, while field forces in eastern China numbering 80,000 were to move northward to fill the vacuum left by the Shandong troops (Liu Shaoqi, [1945b] 1984: 365-7). Various divisions of the CCP army (notably the elite Third and First) began their Manchurian expedition soon after (Huang Kecheng, 1989: 328; Ling Shaonong, 1988). This amounted to a full-scale "military migration" of the Chinese Communists. The redeployment continued on a large scale for the remainder of 1945 and into 1946. The total army redeployment reached a staggering 100,000 troops, representing one-sixth of the regular forces of the CCP (Levine, 1987: 103).

At the operational level, Liu Shaoqi endeavored to undertake two different kinds of army deployment. On one hand, he attempted to use a defensive strategy that would actively seek out decisive battles as a means to block the GMD's influx into Manchuria. For this purpose, Liu sought to concentrate a massive force in East Hebei to engage the

enemy on chosen terrain (Liu nianpu, 1.498, 500-1). On the other hand, Liu simultaneously called for combat units to be dispersed into the most uninhabitable areas of Manchuria to avoid battle in the interim, as he still regarded guerrilla warfare as a major strategy (Liu nianpu, 1.502, 510-11).<sup>8</sup> On September 28, a directive from Yan'an to the NEB made clear that the leadership was not confident about waging a major battle. Its decentralization scheme was based on worse-case assumptions: if their field forces could not counter the more modernized GMD armies in the imminent battles, they could still revert to their traditional base-area strategy (Zhonggong, 15: 299-301; cf. Tanner, 2003: 1192). But the army found it difficult to prosecute two distinct military strategies, and Liu himself was at times confused. After noting the weakness of his forces and the need for guerrilla warfare, Liu said in a telegram sent to the NEB on October 9: "only after drawing the enemy inward 50 or 100 kilometers into the hinterland could we send our main forces to annihilate them in a decisive battle" (Liu nianpu, 1.510-1). Such a claim was conspicuously incompatible with his East Hebei plan.

In practical terms, Liu's redeployment schedule was under pressure from the very beginning. First, units trying to land in Manchuria by sea were deployed far more slowly than had been scheduled. The lack of training and discipline was largely responsible, and the original plan of September 29 to transfer 20,000 to 30,000 troops via Liaodong Gulf within a month simply could not be carried out (Li Bingling, 1988: 44-5; Xiao Hua, 1988a; Liu nianpu, 1.504-5). Second, there was a clear disparity between Liu's plan to decentralize and the realities on the ground. Some of the areas required to be developed as rural bases were in the remote backcountry of Manchuria (Zhonggong, 15.299-301). The harsh conditions of the bandit-infested rural areas made it all but impossible for army units to live off the country without establishing very strong ties with the local population. Not surprisingly, the NEB ignored Liu's requirements: most of the main forces remained stationed near the big cities (Peng Zhen, 1992: 6; Lü Zhengcao, 1988: 533).<sup>9</sup> Liu criticized the NEB for its lack of progress, but Mao's intervention silenced his complaints (Liu nianpu, 1.505).

*MAO AGAINST MAO*

Mao overruled Liu's decentralization policy after he returned from Chongqing. His new ambition was to defeat the Nationalists in a swift and final showdown in the metropolitan centers of Manchuria and to occupy the entire region (Mao nianpu, 37-9, 42-4; Zhonggong, 15.364-6, 370-2, 388-9, 394-6). This short-war strategy was developed against the backdrop of the GMD-Soviet dispute over Manchuria. In Changchun, the GMD delegation clashed with the Soviets over the takeover and the proposed economic cooperation scheme. The Soviets therefore made every effort to foil the GMD's plan to ship its troops into Manchuria.<sup>10</sup> The GMD was left with no alternative but to adopt a plan with a high combat risk and substantial logistical difficulties (Zhongguo dier lishi dang'anguan, 1946). By landing an expeditionary force at Qinhuangdao, the nearest port to Manchuria in China proper, the Nationalists staked everything on the hope that their army could pass through the Liaoxi Corridor by capturing the main rail line and then finally conquer Jinzhou (Zhang Jia'ao, 1989: 61-99).

For Mao, a decisive battle in Manchuria seemed the optimal choice: "The major direction of war has shifted to the northeast from the beginning of November," he remarked (Junshi, 107-10). It is worth noting that Mao's vision was of a decisive battle that would be followed by a long-term stalemated peace. He told his comrades on October 20 that the present conflict "should not be misunderstood as the advent of full-scale civil war"<sup>11</sup> (Zhonggong, 15.370-2).

Stepping up preparations for war, Mao reorganized his Manchurian forces, establishing the Northeast People's Autonomous Army (NEPAA); at the end of October, Lin Biao was appointed its commander (Mao nianpu, 3.43).<sup>12</sup> While the GMD's Thirteenth and Fifty-Second Armies were still en route to Qinhuangdao, their advance detachments had started the assault on Shanhaiguan but were repulsed by the Communists.<sup>13</sup> The skirmishes fully exposed the GMD's weakness—its troops were easily demoralized during engagements, and their lax defenses provided targets for nighttime raids (Junshi, 136; Du Yuming, 1985: 524-7; Zhang Heming, 1989).

With great confidence, Mao envisioned a decisive battle in Jinzhou in November (Zhonggong, 15.413-4; Mao nianpu, 3.46-7). He told the NEPAA to defend Shanhaiguan as the first line of defense for at

least three weeks and to inflict great losses on the enemy. His plan was that while the GMD forces procrastinated, the elite Third and First Divisions would occupy pivotal positions in the Jinzhou area and mount a preemptive, decisive attack when the GMD armies, weakened by the Shanhaiguan defenders, arrived. At the moment of contact, Mao estimated, his forces would have a concentration of a maximum of 70,000 troops, which would ensure total victory over the invaders (Junshi, 139-41, 126-7, 113-4). Mao's optimism had quickly become a widespread article of faith among the army's high command. Li Yunchang, the deputy commander of the NEPAA, put forward a fairly aggressive proposal to Lin Biao requesting a geographical expansion of the battlefield into Hebei that sought to sever the GMD's supply line between North China and Manchuria (Li Yunchang, [1945] 1989).

But the calculus of the optimists in the CCP camp did not fully take into consideration their armies' offensive capability. A military report written on November 9 revealed that the garrison in Shanhaiguan had no more than 13,000 men—a force substantially outnumbered by the approximately 70,000 GMD troops (Li Yunchang and Sa Ke, [1945] 1989; cf. Huang Kecheng, 1989: 330). The CCP forces were also hampered by lack of arms. Contrary to the view that the Communists had no weapons problem because of the Japanese arms transferred to them by the Soviets (Sheng, 1997: 110), civil war records show that in late 1945, they were equivalent only to an ill-armed militia.<sup>14</sup> The Nineteenth Brigade, for instance, after having obtained some Japanese weapons, still averaged only one rifle for every two men (Zhang Heming, 1989: 160-1). The Seventh Division left its best weapons at its base, intending to refit with the Japanese arms in Manchuria, but it was disappointed to find almost no suitable weapons when it arrived. The logistics of the supplies coming from Jinzhou were in disarray—the supply officers approved the delivery of 100,000 rounds of ammunition but not a single rifle (Zhang Heming, 1989: 160).

Members of the elite Third Division proved in no way better equipped than their understrength comrades. Noncombat casualties reduced troop numbers from 35,000 to 32,000 after the division arrived from north Jiangsu. Two other factors added to its difficulties. First, the army was seriously underfed. The supplies services could not keep up with the fast-moving troops, and it became increasingly

difficult for the army to maintain grain stores in the bandit-filled region. Second, the Manchurian winter was an implacable enemy. The army was deliberately not equipped with winter outfits suitable for the extreme cold in Manchuria so that it could move rapidly; the strategy succeeded, but at great cost (Huang Kecheng, 1989: 328-34).

Mao, who was well informed about the situation, showed little sympathy for the distressed division. Mao required his main forces to act as combat-capable regular armies, but at the same time, he advocated the guerrilla warfare principle of self-sufficiency. When Huang Kecheng, the head of the Third Division, telegraphed his grievances to Mao, the chairman's reply was nothing but a qualified snub: "The NEB is unable to provide assistance; you should send an advance party to depart a few days ahead to organize the provisions" (Junshi, 136-7). As a field commander, Lin Biao apparently did not want to do anything to ruffle Mao, but he nevertheless overruled Li's November 9 proposal to expand operations into Hebei (Li Yunchang, 1989: 24-5). In a telegram to Mao on November 13, Lin refined Li's plan into a smaller scale offensive scheme and planned a hit-and-run attack against the enemy that would employ guerrilla tactics. Although Lin Biao tried to score some points with Mao by endorsing the latter's emphasis on the enemy's weakness, his plan was entirely incompatible with Mao's decisive-battle strategy (Junshi, 144 n. 2).

Mao's war plan was severely challenged when the GMD armies launched the final assault on November 15. The Communists were heavily besieged by the enemy's superior firepower, and as their defense was stretched thin, their lack of depth invited the enemy's penetration. After the GMD armies occupied some key positions on November 16, the Shanhaiguan garrison received orders to retreat. The GMD's deep-penetration corps pushed forward to overtake the withdrawing Communists, but their poor coordination allowed the CCP troops to slip through (Chen Tsun-Kung and Chang Li, 1986: 213-4; Long Shuiwen, 1989; Yang Jingbin, n.d.: 5-10).

Mao was oblivious to the defeat, obstinately maintaining his commitment to a decisive battle. In a telegram sent on November 15, Mao overruled Lin's hit-and-run plan. As hostilities escalated, Mao put aside his own military principles, such as his theory of base areas and mass mobilization. "Fight out the problem in one battle," he vehemently exhorted his commanders (Junshi, 143-4). But realities did not

support Mao. The GMD armies pushed forward in full strength along the Beiping-Shenyang railway and outpaced the demoralized Communists. The CCP armies managed to survive by avoiding engagements. With only token resistance, they allowed the GMD to achieve an astonishing conquest of Xingcheng, Jinxi, and Huludao on November 22 (Du Yuming, 1985: 530-4).

While the CCP war machine was thrown out of gear, its supreme leader also endured an enforced layoff. The official biography of Mao Zedong declares that Mao was hospitalized from mid-November because of neurasthenia (Mao zhuan, 749). As Liu Shaoqi took charge again, a telegram bearing the signature of the “military committee” (*jun wei*) that was sent to the NEPAA high command on November 17 stressed the necessity of using guerrilla tactics and in-depth defense. Hit-and-run attacks, nighttime raids, and harassment forays were once again the priority (Zhonggong, 15: 424-5).

The CCP’s misfortunes were exacerbated when its enemy launched a diplomatic offensive. In mid-November, the GMD ordered the withdrawal of its delegation from Changchun in protest against Moscow’s uncooperative tactics. The Soviets, caught in a barrage of diplomatic criticism, resorted to sacrificing the CCP. The Red Army thus informed the NEPAA that it would hand over the cities along the Chinese-Changchun railway to the GMD, and the CCP forces would be asked to retreat (Mao nianpu, 3.49; Liu nianpu, 1.530-1). As damage control, Liu Shaoqi immediately ordered the armies to evacuate the big cities (Zhonggong, 15.431-4; Liu Shaoqi, [1945a] 1984: 368-9).

Lin Biao recognized that the change in the political status quo would inevitably entail modifications to the CCP military strategy.<sup>15</sup> On November 21, he dispatched a telegram from the front line to both Yan’an and the NEB requesting permission to withdraw his forces. In the telegram’s most controversial section, Lin proposed abandoning Jinzhou and withdrawing troops 100 to 150 kilometers northward to avoid being crushed by the enemy. A subtext of Lin’s idea of avoiding battle was that unless the enemy’s units stretched out into a battle line and made themselves vulnerable, an offensive would be pointless.<sup>16</sup>

While acknowledging Lin’s tactics, Liu Shaoqi still urged the CCP armies to launch counterattacks against the GMD, but he did so with much less determination than Mao (Liu nianpu, 1.530-3). In fact, Liu was on a slow but steady move toward reinstating his policy of force

decentralization and gradually abandoning Mao's short-war strategy. This trend was evident in an oft-quoted precept delivered on November 22: "Leave the high road alone and seize the land on both sides" (*rangkai dalu zhanling liangxiang*) (Liu nianpu, 1.530-1).

The NEB was evacuated from Shenyang on November 23 under pressure from the Soviets, and the strategic debate between Yan'an, the NEB, and the commanders of the NEPAAs continued to grow. The heat of the argument was exemplified by Huang Kecheng's personal plea to Mao for a complete return to Mao's "protracted-war" strategy, which emphasized the building of base areas to secure the rear and primarily sought victory through attrition of the enemy in a long-term struggle (Huang Kecheng, 1989: 334; Mao Zedong, [1938b] 1965: 93-102).

But the GMD armies did not allow the Communists time to work out the most suitable strategy. On the day that Huang wired his suggestion, his division was completely overtaken by the Nationalists. While the Nationalists easily overwhelmed the token resistance of the garrison and seized Jinzhou on November 26, Huang's Third Division was still lumbering through the periphery of Jinxi. The harassment raids they initiated after their arrival were probably a move to console themselves in a campaign they would rather have forgotten (Liu Zhen, 1990: 202; Du Yuming, 1985: 534-5). The fall of Jinzhou totally dashed Mao's hopes for a decisive battle and a short war.<sup>17</sup> Probably because of the bad news, Mao told Huang to put his plan forward to the NEB. Huang's troops finally retreated from the city's outskirts after gaining Lin Biao's permission (Huang Kecheng, 1989: 334-7).

Liu Shaoqi attributed the fall of Jinzhou to the fatigue of the main forces and to the new recruits' lack of training (Liu nianpu, 1.535-6). But he did not swerve from his efforts to restore his decentralization scheme. From late November onward, Liu dispatched a series of telegrams to both the NEB and the army pressing for the dispersal of forces; on some occasions, Liu even took action to popularize Lin Biao's tactics (Liu nianpu, 1.533, 545; Zhonggong, 15.504-5).

The NEB, however, failed to make the drastic transition from Mao's decisive war blueprint to Liu's risk-averse guerrilla strategy. Because the initial plan was to control the urban areas for a longer

term, the NEB had developed certain affiliates (e.g., the Northeast Bank) to further that purpose; these organizations could survive only in urban areas ("Lilao," [1946] 1988). Once they abandoned all they had already done, NEB headquarters argued, they would find themselves holding only a few enclaves in the mountainous regions and would be reduced from a position of superiority to dire straits. The NEB thus stationed its troops mostly in the environs of Shenyang city after their retreat and, with the bandit-plagued region at their back, showed little relish for dispersing the troops more widely. In addition, NEB headquarters started disseminating the idea that its forces were capable of defeating the incoming GMD armies and reexerting control over Shenyang (Zhonggong, 15.505-11).

As views polarized, small-scale bickering erupted between Yan'an, the NEB, and its branch bureaus (Zhonggong, 15.505-11; Chen Yun, [1945] 1984; Liaoshen, 2.597-8). Liu Shaoqi ordered Peng Zhen to give up unrealistic hopes of seizing the big cities, criticizing Peng's move as "risky." Liu needed Peng to avoid being attacked by both the GMD and the bandits in the event of real war, so that he might carry out Yan'an's bidding: building unassailable bases in eastern, northern, and western Manchuria. "This is the only prudent course, the only course without risk. Follow it and you will not land yourselves in a passive position; otherwise, that danger exists," Liu lectured Peng (Liu Shaoqi, [1945a] 1984: 369-70).

The debate abruptly ended when Mao broke his silence and made the final ruling from his hospital bed. On December 28, he sent a lengthy telegram to the NEB to rehabilitate the "old" base-area strategy as his "new" plan. Mao's treatise, now titled "Build Stable Base Areas in the Northeast" in his *Selected Works*, was in fact an attempt to rationally justify the aggregation of ideas from Liu Shaoqi, Huang Kecheng, and Lin Biao without mentioning their names. "Our party's present task in the Northeast is to build base areas. . . . The regions in which to build stable bases are the cities and vast rural areas comparatively remote from the centres of Kuomintang [GMD] occupation," Mao wrote (Mao Zedong, [1945a] 1965: 81-3). Mao's short-war expectations seemed at that moment to be no more than a distant memory.

### THE COUP DE GRÂCE

Yan'an's plan to build base areas in Manchuria was further delayed when the United States became proactive in organizing GMD-CCP negotiations in January 1946. George C. Marshall, on a mission to China, acted as arbiter in what came to be known as the Committee of Three.<sup>18</sup> Marshall soon hammered out a cease-fire agreement that would end all military conflict in China. This "Order for Cessation of Hostilities," announced on January 10, was the result of an inescapable trade-off between the two parties of interest in Manchuria and its neighboring provinces. The final agreement granted the GMD the right to undertake military movements in Manchuria ("Press Release," [1946] 1996). In return, the advance of the government's troops in Rehe and Chahar was halted, a success that the Communists could not have achieved by military means (Liu nianpu, 2.5; Tanpan, 39-40; telegram from Marshall to Truman, January 10, in Merrill, 1996: 69-71).<sup>19</sup> Thus, the specter of war in Manchuria returned, as the "truce" almost invited both sides to continue the pursuit of a military resolution there.

On the eve of the announcement of the cease-fire, both sides pushed ahead to secure final positions, leading to fierce fighting (telegram from Marshall to Truman, January 16, in Merrill, 1996: 79-80; Qin Xiaoyi, 1978: 2762-4). But because the cease-fire was designed to create a peaceful atmosphere for the inauguration of the Political Consultative Conference (PCC) on January 10, the leaders of the two opposing sides tried to show that they were restraining their forces (Tanpan, 54).<sup>20</sup> In a directive, Mao described the truce period as the "new stage of democratic construction" (*heping minzhu xinjieduan*) (Zhonggong, 16.15-9).

Nevertheless, mistrust and hostile attitudes on both sides put peace in jeopardy. After receiving intelligence reports that the GMD would continue to push ahead in Rehe province, Liu Shaoqi decided to preempt the enemy's attack (Liu nianpu, 2.8-9). In his January 13 telegram, Liu started to force the CCP leadership to support his "using violence to stop violence" ideology, asserting that the enemy could be coerced to obey the cease-fire only after being heavily punished on the battlefield. "If we do not initiate a punitive attack and annihilate the greater number of them, the reactionaries in Rehe and Manchuria who

are on the offensive will not obediently carry out the cease-fire order," Liu insisted (Liu nianpu, 2.9).

In particular, Liu urged Lin Biao to wage an immediate one-week offensive (starting January 13) to reopen the communication line between Manchuria and Rehe. Liu told Lin to end the offensive if the enemy stopped fighting, but he clearly had no intention of allowing that to happen: the order for the offensive was issued without waiting for more reports to confirm whether the GMD's attack would stop when the truce agreement went into effect at midnight on January 13 (Liu nianpu, 2.9). Furthermore, because the directive was apparently founded in a belief that a civil war in Manchuria was inevitable, the options Liu set before Lin Biao were not between war and peace but between waiting for the attack and preempting it. Yet in the telegram he sent to the CCP delegation in Chongqing, in which he described his combat orders to the local forces in Rehe and Lin Biao, Liu varied the wording sufficiently from that of the orders themselves to forestall any accusation of warmongering. Liu wrote on January 13: "If the reactionaries continue to attack after 21:00-23:00 of 13 January, we will strike resolutely regardless of sacrifice. . . . If the reactionary army still attacks Chifeng and Chengde on 14 January, Lin Biao will launch an immediate attack against them on the 15th" (Liu nianpu, 2.9).

On January 4, the NEPAA had been renamed the Northeast Democratic United Army (NEDUA), showing the party's determination to achieve military control over Manchuria (Yuan Wei, 1987: 180). Not surprisingly, the powder keg exploded on the day that the cease-fire agreement was implemented. The NEDUA amassed five regiments to attack the isolated GMD troops at Yingkou and completely eliminated the entire battalion. According to the Communist account, the assault did not end until January 15, beyond the cease-fire date, although the city was captured in the evening of January 13 (Chen Haoliang, Wang Tongluo, and Liu Liqin, 1995: 615; Xiao Hua, 1988b: 238).

Yan'an seemed to believe that a peace settlement would soon materialize, and the question was how big a slice of the pie it could obtain in a coalition government in waiting. The CCP's aim was to legitimize its presence in Manchuria. Liu suggested that the Communist forces should be stationed near cities along the main railway, using them as a bargaining chip in the negotiations with the GMD. If the Nationalists refused to open a dialogue on the Manchurian issue and attacked their

positions, CCP forces would strike back. The CCP's ferocious counteroffensive, planned with utter disregard for any sacrifices demanded of the troops, was expected to take an enormous toll on the enemy and thus prove decisive in winning the war. It would be, according to Liu, "the final battle in this historical new stage" (Liu nianpu, 2.14). Liu's plan was based on a firepower-intensive forward defense posture. In this regard, his strategy was almost indistinguishable from what Mao had previously advocated in the defense of the Shanhaiguan-Jinzhou zone.

Liu Shaoqi told his commanders that they should exploit this "last chance for war," emphasizing that the conditions needed for a *protracted* war were currently lacking. He predicted that the war in Manchuria would be a short one because once fighting broke out, Marshall would immediately plead for a truce: the confrontation would last no more than a couple of weeks. The peace settlement to follow would end their chance to fight. Liu even advised his commanders, "Do not stick inflexibly to the principle of so-called numerical superiority" (Liu nianpu, 2.18), one of Mao's basic tenets (Mao Zedong, [1936] 1965: 233-9): they should launch an offensive regardless of whether they achieved crushing superiority in numbers. Should these plans result only in stalemate, that outcome would constitute successful deterrence because the adversary's losses would increase. Liu saw a stalemate as better than the embarrassing retreat at Jinzhou. He told his commanders on February 5, 1946: "You have lost the chance to fight in Jinzhou[;] . . . this is your last chance for war. You are absolutely not going to miss this opportunity again" (Liu nianpu, 2.18).

#### *A SHATTERED PEACE*

Lin Biao never had the opportunity to answer Liu's call for a big battle. Boosted by the arrival of the elite New Sixth Army in early February, the Nationalists continued their advance in Manchuria. Most of Lin Biao's divisions retreated after putting up only token resistance, although some had their noses bloodied in engagements with the American-armed enemy (Kanluan, 4.57-61). But as the GMD armies kept pushing forward, a vicious spiral ensued. Facing an increasing threat, Lin Biao committed to a small-scale high-intensity war of

insurgency. A hit-and-run attack against an isolated Nationalist regiment at Xiushuihezi (located to the north of Shenyang) on February 13 caused 1,500 Nationalist casualties (Li Zuopeng, 1970: 4-9; cf. Kanluan, 4.59-61). The GMD crack troops responded fiercely and inflicted heavy casualties on the Communists in an engagement at Shalingzi, a village to the south of Shenyang (Chen Haoliang, Wang Tongluo, and Liu Liqin, 1995: 617). The Communists, in turn, then extended the war to Rehe province, making it a difficult battleground for their adversaries (Qin Xiaoyi, 1978: 2813-4, 2816).

At its closing session on January 31, the PCC adopted resolutions on issues of political, military, constitutional, and national reconstruction, fueling hopes for a permanent peace in China (Merrill, 1996: 360-1, 458-69; Chiang Yun-tien, 1976: 35-51). From March 1 to 17, the Second Plenary Session of the GMD's Sixth Central Executive Committee (CEC) met at Chongqing for the purpose of endorsing the PCC resolutions. But the congress was convened in an extremely anti-Communist atmosphere. Hostile speeches delivered by the hawks, including one from Jiang Jieshi, effectively destroyed any conciliatory feelings (Qin Xiaoyi, 1978: 2814-5; Tang Zong, 1991: 597).<sup>21</sup> Just as the situation began to deteriorate, Marshall was recalled home to report to President Truman; after his departure on March 11, the fragile peace quickly disintegrated (Merrill, 1996: 126-8, 366).

Yan'an's reaction was to pursue its political goals by other means; it therefore intensified the war in Manchuria. Liu Shaoqi believed that the GMD could spare no more than five armies (approximately 150,000 men) for Manchuria. Any augmentation of this number would weaken the GMD's nationwide troop deployment. If Lin Biao's troops could eliminate some of the existing GMD troops in Manchuria, the Nationalists would soon find themselves fighting a losing battle (Liu nianpu, 2.24-5). Liu's position quickly gained Mao's full support. In a speech on March 15 to the Politburo, Mao insisted that civil war was the only means left to defeat the "Fascists" and thus to avoid the possibility of a third world war (Mao nianpu, 3.60-1).

While Mao was heightening his war talk, his party once again benefited from the bad GMD-Soviet relationship. The GMD had failed to take advantage of the less hostile atmosphere after its withdrawal from the Sino-Soviet negotiations. Although the GMD government had

sent its delegation back to Changchun in December, its refusal to make major concessions on economic issues had proved counterproductive, leading to further strains in the negotiations (Zhang Jia'ao, 1989: 137-8, 144-58, 174-7, 181; Qin Xiaoyi, 1981: 387-94). Although the Nationalists managed to recover Shenyang after the Soviets' unexpected withdrawal on March 15, most cities and prefectures situated to its north fell into Communist hands as the result of Soviet noncooperation (Yang Jingbin, n.d.: 59-60; Zhang Jia'ao, 1989: 280-1).

On March 18, Liu telegraphed Zhou Enlai, the party's chief negotiator in Chongqing, telling him to renege on promises, veto agreements, or use any other possible measures to cancel the concessions that had already been made to the GMD (Liu nianpu, 2.29; Zhou nianpu, 1989: 652). Although the CEC ratified the PCC resolution in toto at its session on March 16, a five-point revision was imposed on the Resolution on the Draft Constitution adopted by the PCC (Merrill, 1996: 482-7; Zhou Enlai, 1981: 460 n. 352). Using this revision as a pretext, Zhou triggered the falling-out with the GMD at a press conference in Chongqing on March 19 (Zhou Enlai, [1946a] 1996; 1946b). The CCP thereafter stopped using the expression "new stage of democratic construction" and dropped policies couched in those terms (Zhou nianpu, 1989: 652). Disputes after the Nationalist CEC, the subsequent reaction of the CCP, and the further CCP-Soviet alignment in Manchuria thus together irretrievably buried the short-lived but celebrated period of a negotiated peace. The looming big battle in Manchuria would make the inevitability of conflict apparent to all.

#### *SIPINGJIE: CHINA'S MADRID*

While the CCP-GMD negotiations took a step closer to a total split, to the Nationalists' chagrin, Lin Biao's armies occupied Sipingjie on March 18 after defeating the anti-Communist local forces (Zhai Zhongyu, 1988). The city, halfway between Shenyang and Changchun, was now an obstacle to the advancing GMD troops, and it became increasingly apparent that the GMD could not win the war without an enormous effort. When the GMD armies tried to regain

control of Sipingjie in April, the city became the most important battleground in the civil war.

In the face of the ever-growing difficulties of recovering Manchuria, the GMD dispatched four more armies into the region, including the battle-seasoned New First Army. Beginning on March 15, the GMD armies launched sweeping operations to take selected Communist positions and thereby reexert control over Sipingjie (Kanluan, 4.72-85; cf. Chen Haoliang, Wang Tongluo, and Liu Liqin, 1995: 618-9; Merrill, 1996: 488).

The Communists then retreated to the southeast of Shenyang, amassing two columns for a strong defense at Benxi.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, Lin Biao arrived at Sipingjie with his headquarters to shore up the defense with six NEDUA brigades (Kanluan, 4.97-8; Mao nianpu, 3.65 n. 1). Such placements of forces dragged the Nationalists into a two-front battle, but they nevertheless advanced undeterred. The New First Army swiftly took control of the Shenyang-Sipingjie section of the main rail line. The NEDUA tried every possible measure to hold up the advancing enemy, including street fighting and the use of barbed wire, but most of their counterattacks were both costly and largely futile (Kanluan, 4.85-8).

Toward the end of March, Mao Zedong, having recovered from his illness, gradually took the helm again (Liu nianpu, 2.32). Thenceforth, he almost single-handedly directed his armed forces with the aim of holding Sipingjie with large-scale positional warfare. Mao ordered Lin Biao to defend Sipingjie at all costs, telling him that a death toll of tens of thousands was the price they had to be prepared to pay to stop the Nationalists (Junshi, 153-4, 164). Both Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai, however, reminded Mao of the dangers of attrition. They were skeptical of their military capability for conducting trench warfare. Rather than focusing on territorial losses and gains, they suggested, it was more appropriate to reduce the physical strength of the enemy as much as possible and, over the long run, force a peace deal (Zhou nianpu, 1989: 654; Junshi, 164). In other words, an aggressive gesture was actually a practical strategy on the part of a weaker combatant (the CCP), aimed at deterring the stronger enemy (the GMD) to secure a favorable settlement. With this philosophy of war in mind, Lin Biao hammered out a grand plan to attack the Nationalist

besiegers from their rear (Guojun dang'an, 1948; Junshi, 3.206-7). In his reply, Mao amended his position to support Lin and Zhou's strategy—which concurred completely with the paradigm of offensive accommodation (Junshi, 163).

The NEDUA made every effort to carry out the orders of its decision makers. On April 16, the Communists successfully ambushed and paralyzed a division of GMD's Seventy-First Army on the outskirts of Sipingjie, but as the attack pushed the stricken enemy to stay closer to the main body of its forces for security, the NEDUA was deprived of new opportunities to launch mobile attacks. At Benxi, the NEDUA, for the most part, used the tactic of "strike against an isolated force and delay its reinforcement" (*zuyuan dadian*), entirely immobilizing the enemy's two divisions after a massive offensive (Kanluan, 4.74-6, 93-7; Chen Haoliang, Wang Tongluo, and Liu Liqin, 1995: 619-21). Yet inconsistency in the views of the leadership again appeared, and Zhou Enlai was the first to change his stand. Zhou took the GMD's accommodationist proposal of April 11 for a halt in the fighting in Manchuria as a sign of the enemy's military weakness. It had been his view earlier that they should militarily "teach the GMD a lesson" prior to any settlement (Zhou nianpu, 1989: 640-1), so he was quick to seize on this new turn of events. He informed Lin Biao that his forces should capture Changchun, which they had held under siege since the Soviet withdrawal, within two days (Zhou nianpu, 1989: 657). Zhou's idea was turned down by Lin Biao for tactical reasons, however (Junshi, 167 n. 4).

Mao, too, changed his stand after being informed that George Marshall was returning from Washington. He knew Marshall would immediately step in to halt the fighting in Manchuria. He thus pressed Lin Biao to seize Changchun and Harbin before Marshall intervened. Lin did just that: the NEDUA took Changchun on April 18 (He Qinzhui, 1988). The capture of the old capital of Manchukuo symbolized the Communists' control of Manchuria, and Mao now considered the city their last line of defense (Junshi, 177-8). "Turn Changchun into China's Madrid if necessary," Mao said (Mao nianpu, 3.70-1).

Some have argued that Mao's thinking at this stage had already gone "along the lines of a Moscow-led world revolution" (Sheng, 1997: 134); if so, he must at the same time have felt enormous hesitation. The evidence is in Mao's words, which seem to indicate that in

the name of necessity, he had relinquished the authority for taking such an action to his field commander—an authority normally held by political leaders, not military professionals (Hartle, 1989: 108). In other words, Mao was going to allow Lin Biao to decide, or at least to advise him, on the operational feasibility of defeating the enemy in positional warfare. Indeed, Mao was aware that there would be a catastrophe if the military strategies were carried out without political mobilization. As he noted in 1938, a “Madrid” in China would never be realized unless “the whole army and people” were extensively mobilized (Mao Zedong, [1938a] 1965: 187). The mobilization of a civilian population and the collaboration of the local inhabitants, Mao recognized, relied fully on the development of base areas (Mao Zedong, [1938b] 1965: 93-102).

Perhaps because Mao felt that he needed further military successes to support his Madrid plan, he ordered his commanders to eliminate the New First Army (*Junshi*, 171-2, 182-3). But the enemy was not a paper tiger. After a successful three-pronged operation, the GMD armies captured some crucial positions on the outskirts of Sipingjie, and the city now came within range of direct Nationalist fire. On April 20, the New First Army began to storm the city, where the NEDUA put up a staunch resistance. Until the end of April, the Nationalists had Sipingjie essentially under siege, and the NEDUA was entirely on the defensive (Kanluan, 4.88-93).

Marshall returned to China on April 18, but he was unable to persuade Jiang Jieshi to withdraw from the attack. The latter committed himself to a major battle to reclaim Changchun (Qin Xiaoyi, 1978: 2866-7). Mao’s offensive-accommodation plan was thus effectively thwarted: on one hand, hopes for a peace agreement in the foreseeable future were dashed; on the other hand, the difficult situation in Sipingjie had made it unprofitable to continue a war of attrition against the enemy’s elite. The military picture was grim on the southern front, too. On April 22, the captains from Benxi reported that it looked unlikely that they could defend their positions should the enemy launch a second-phase assault (*Junshi*, 187 n. 3).

But Mao was unmoved and insisted they press ahead. He ordered the commanders in Benxi to fight tenaciously to at least delay the enemy until there was finally a peace agreement (*Junshi*, 186-7). The consequence of Mao’s order was to effectively turn the CCP’s

operations in Manchuria into a defensive-accommodation mode of warfare. However, favorable intelligence supporting Mao's plan was lacking, and he needed to do more to justify his decision than simply to bypass the cost-benefit calculations of his associates (as he had done on previous occasions). In line with his Madrid motto, Mao resorted to a different set of values that were contrary to the strategic culture of opposing positional warfare; by doing so, he changed the strategy of the CCP's Manchurian campaign. On April 27, Mao asked Lin Biao to augment the numbers of the defense forces in Sipingjie, and their last line of defense was therefore shifted from Changchun to the besieged city. "For peace and democracy...turn Sipingjie into China's Madrid," he wrote, demanding that his officers conjure up a military miracle (Ding Xiaochun, Ge Fulu, and Wang Shiying, 1987: 55).<sup>23</sup> Such a scenario was, in the terms of game theorists, putting a "golden rule" above the "original logic of value selection" and thus fundamentally changing the nature of the game (Mérő, 1998: 48-51).

Bolstered by their air force, the GMD armies achieved a series of breakthroughs on the outskirts of Benxi, after fierce engagements from April 29 to May 2 against the NEDUA's new ordinance, night raids, and bayonet charges. The GMD's victorious offensive on May 3 finally forced the NEDUA to retreat (Kanluan, 4.100-6; Wu Wei, 1988). The fall of Benxi radically compromised Mao's strategic position, allowing the enemy a freer hand to strike Sipingjie and making it all but impossible for the NEDUA to maintain numerical superiority. And once the Communist defenders had lost that numerical advantage, their combat risks would be correspondingly increased, whether they undertook close-in or head-to-head encounters or engagements that were more tactical and linear. Mao was well informed about the change in the force-to-force ratio, but he preferred that Lin Biao conduct one more strike before seeking to terminate the operation, in case his Sipingjie defenders were able to prevail against the attackers and turn the tide (Mao nianpu, 3.74). Lin Biao gave Mao a simple and direct reply: it was not possible to dislodge, much less rout, the battle-seasoned enemy within such a short time. Besides, Lin told Mao, the attackers had already concentrated and fortified their positions, and they were poised to attain tactical superiority at some decisive points (Junshi, 199 n. 2).

Lin's report fell on deaf ears, as Mao decided to stake his armed forces on maintaining the status quo in the major cities of northern Manchuria. Hopes for peace vanished on 29 April. Jiang Jieshi bluntly refused a proposal to settle the Manchurian problem that was endorsed by both Marshall and Zhou Enlai (Zhou nianpu, 1989: 661; Chang, 1952: 175). Yet Mao told Lin Biao on April 30 that an agreement would possibly be signed by "tomorrow or the day after tomorrow" (Junshi, 3.190). Although Mao finally conceded on May 1 that the slim hope for a peaceful settlement had evaporated altogether, he remained adamant on the unyielding defense of Sipingjie. He urged Lin to defend the city for the longest possible time and avert enemy breakthroughs (Junshi, 3.195, 198). As peace was almost unimaginable at this desperately late stage, Mao's decision in effect shifted the strategy of defense accommodation into a plan for defending the status quo that relied on gradually diluting the enemy's strength.

The defenders at Sipingjie came under greater threat when the GMD's New Sixth Army arrived, fresh from its victory in Benxi. The enemy's reinforcements robbed Lin's 70,000 to 100,000 defenders of their clear numerical superiority because they were now facing more than ten GMD divisions (more than 120,000 men) (Hooton, 1991: 34; cf. Huang Kecheng, 1989: 346; Geng Routian, 1981: 62-3). The Communists at Sipingjie were left with only two options: either to heed Mao—that is, continue their courageous positional battle—or to disengage in a planned retreat at a moment of their choosing.

As the attrition rate of his best troops reached a staggering 50% or more, Huang Kecheng urged Mao to pull the forces out. Huang argued that if they continued to unflinchingly defend the city, they would inevitably lose both cities to the enemy, and their own troops were likely to be immobilized by excessive losses. If they avoided further attrition, these combat units could be shifted to pacify the bandit-infested regions and consolidate the base areas, before launching the decisive campaign in the future (Huang Kecheng, 1989: 346-7).

Mao refuted Huang's argument in an open telegram to all regional bureaus on May 15. He asserted that the longer the defense was maintained, the greater the chance of achieving a peace settlement and thus averting an open general war. With regard to the problem of developing rural bases, Mao's attitude was one of having his cake and eating it, too. While he urged his captains to avoid intense engagements and

concentrate on their base-area programs (Junshi, 215-6), he also scrupulously consulted Lin Biao, in a personal telegram of May 15, on whether it was still worthwhile to prolong the war or better to cede Changchun in exchange for a settlement. Nevertheless, Mao still wanted Lin to retain Sipingjie, to ensure he had enough bargaining power in hand when, in due course, he played the trump card (Changchun) to revitalize the negotiations (Junshi, 218-9).

Mao's contingency plan was soon shattered by the New Sixth Army, which on May 14 launched an assault from the east flank of Sipingjie and quickly gained ascendancy. These effective air and land operations took a severe toll on the Communists in head-to-head battles. The GMD armies conducted further large-scale operations on May 16, making their offensive multipronged. On May 18, detachments of the New First Army, supported by armored vehicles, occupied the position of most advantage immediately to the east of the city. A total collapse of the NEDUA defense seemed imminent, and Lin Biao and his forces fled the city at night (Kanluan, 4.119-22; Chen Haoliang, Wang Tongluo, and Liu Liqin, 1995: 620).

The NEDUA was in full retreat, with the GMD forces at their heels. Mao redoubled his efforts by delivering urgent instructions to suspend all large-scale operations in China proper in the hope of appeasing the Nationalists (Junshi, 228-32; Liu nianpu, 2.46-7). On May 23, Mao confided to the members of the minor parties that he was willing to cede Changchun (*The New York Times*, May 25, 1946: 10; Mao Zedong, [1946] 1983). The war thus moved into a withdrawal-appeasement mode.

The GMD armies, which remained untouched, severely punished the routed Communists (Guojun dang'an, 1946-1947). The Nationalists regained control over Changchun on May 23; by the time the CCP was preparing to give up its headquarters in Harbin, Jiang Jieshi offered a fifteen-day truce in Manchuria (Jiang Jieshi, [1946] 1996; Junshi, 250-1). The Communists quickly accepted the offer (Zhou Enlai, [1946a] 1996). As it turned out, however, the truce would be extended incrementally for four months without leading to any agreement on the Manchurian issue. By and large, the attacking GMD troops stopped their pursuit on the southern branch of the Sungari River, and hence Lin Biao's troops managed to escape what had looked like a certain catastrophe.

With Mao's full support, the CCP leadership soon reembraced its pragmatic practices. According to Mao, the Sipingjie campaign was an exceptional case, not to be invoked when considering future strategy. Rather, he advanced the idea that there were important trade-offs between the defense of big cities and mobile warfare, with the latter providing greater rewards in reducing the enemy's effective strength—a point with which Lin Biao could not have agreed more (Junshi, 236). In Harbin in early July, Lin presided over an expanded meeting of the NEB (Ding Xiaochun, Ge Fulu, and Wang Shiying, 1987: 65).<sup>24</sup> On July 7, the meeting passed the monumental July Seventh Resolution (*qiqi jueyi*), reconfirming the correctness of Mao's rural strategy and mobile warfare principles.<sup>25</sup> In the second half of 1946, approximately 12,000 cadres were dispatched to mobilize the rural population of Manchuria to carry out the party's bid for a more aggressive land reform program, bolstered by military operations that eradicated the bandits.<sup>26</sup>

The Communists had reverted to their traditional strategy of insurgency, but the battle of Sipingjie remained a topic of debate within the leadership's upper levels. During the Lushan Plenum of 1959, the debate was rekindled at an informal meeting between Mao and Huang Kecheng. According to Huang, it had been necessary to use the city to halt the enemy's headlong advance. Nevertheless, this strategy was condemned in the later stage of the battle because the defenders were forced to endure heavy losses at the hands of a better-armed and highly concentrated enemy. Mao was not convinced: "At that stage it was my decision to put up a staunch defense at Sipingjie" (qtd. in Huang Kecheng, 1989: 348).

Mao's assertion became the standard assessment of the Sipingjie debacle; for decades, the prevailing opinion in the PRC has given credit to Mao for his ability to make tough decisions and has found the field commanders responsible for operational failures. Commentators have argued that the decisions were made "under given political and historical conditions" (Han, 1988: 88) and actual political needs (Peng Zhen, 1992: 4; Deng Ye, 2001: 57). The latest official verdict, provided by the influential Central Research Office for Party History (Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi) in 2002, steadfastly follows this line: it concludes that the defense of cities in Manchuria was dictated by international politics and the "struggles" at the negotiating

table against the GMD (Dangshi, 891-4)—a typical structural/political “constraints” rationalization (Waltz, 1979: 107-11; Luttwak, 2001: 138-40). At the same time, the field commanders receive the blame for the defeat (Lü Zhengcao, 1988: 535; Hu Zhefeng, 1996). The polemics of the 1960s and the 1970s held Peng Zhen (*Beijing ribao*, May 17, 1967); Lü Zhengcao, Zhang Xuesi, and others (Lü Zhengcao, 1988: 539-40); and ultimately Lin Biao (Lugu, 1974; Chensi, 1974) accountable for the operational blunders in the civil war in Manchuria—providing an excuse for political witch hunts in Mao’s China.

#### *NORMS, REALITIES, AND THE MAKING OF STRATEGY*

The main argument of this article is that preconceived norms underpin an instrumental awareness of strategic behavior. In the Chinese case, the Communist leadership’s understanding of the notion of decisive war, its beliefs regarding a short war, and its emphasis on moving preemptively to secure a victory shaped its choice of strategies. Throughout the period under study, Mao and Liu Shaoqi’s faith in the fighting styles developed by the military during the previous two decades did not waver; instead, their understanding of war determined the means they chose to achieve their objectives.

Mao stated in 1938 that he would create several “Madrids” in China in due course. As seen in this study, Mao and his associates never gave up the search for a decisive battle, even though their field commanders tended to avoid direct confrontation with the enemy. This tendency was evident first in Liu Shaoqi’s plan for a major battle in East Hebei, then in Mao’s ill-fated plan in the Shanhaiguan-Jinzhou area, and later in his strategy for the defense of Sipingjie.

The desire for a decisive battle was based on the expectation of a short war. Mao sought a swift victory that would put the entire region under Communist control and thus justify his policy choice. Such a belief emphasized a forward defense posture but ignored the fact that next to the more modernized GMD troops, Mao’s armies appeared little better than an ill-armed horde. By the same token, Liu Shaoqi, and perhaps even Zhou Enlai at some points, believed that the conflict would be explosive and short. Liu called for preemptive attacks

against the enemy during the cease-fire period, a proposal that was utterly incompatible with his policy stressing decentralization of force. Most important, the predetermined strategy required Lin Biao to gamble his troops in an unwanted escalation of the war. Liu nevertheless translated his theory of preemption into the notion of a "final battle," based on a belief that war was the only means to achieve a cease-fire. To describe Liu's strategy of preemptive strikes as a preventive measure within the so-called historical new stage identifies only the tip of the iceberg. Liu's strategy of extracting concessions at gunpoint required accepting risk and inducing conflict at levels well beyond what could be expected of any preventive strategy. His later attempt to convince his commanders to launch an attack in the name of deterrence, without regard for Mao's principle of numerical superiority, raises the question of whether such an approach was not overly venturesome.

On the other hand, the present study has also shown that on many occasions, material conditions counterbalanced the ideology-driven decision-making calculus of the political leaders. The Communists' strategic behavior was, in Alexander Wendt's words, not an "ideas all the way down" phenomenon (Wendt, 1999: 92-138). Although strategic behavior has ideational roots, it is not independent of the material conditions or "structure," as Alastair Iain Johnston has claimed (Johnston, 1995, 1996).<sup>27</sup> The CCP's unsuccessful Madrid approach demonstrates that cultural norms and material conditions work in tandem in the making of military strategy. The flexibility demonstrated by CCP leaders at the earliest stage showed that a strategy based firmly on estimations of "expected utility" and "subjective probability" (see McDermott, 1998: 15-33) could offer decision makers a range of operational options. The CCP leadership's mixture of realist and ideologically oriented considerations perhaps explains why Zhou Enlai used the term *idealist realism*—the CCP version of realpolitik—to describe the decision-making style of his party. In this light, it seems understandable that the PRC officially adopts a realist approach in its contemporary verdict on the Sipingjie debacle.

However, the interplay between normative and materialist determinants in the making of the CCP's civil war strategy was intense. The CCP leaders' initial plan for Manchuria was risk averse and based on a clear, pragmatic goal. But when the opportunity to take control of the

entire region loomed, the realistic game plan gradually shifted to a strategy that gave priority to a swift and decisive victory. When the situation deteriorated to the point that Mao's short-war strategy seemed about to endanger his field forces, Liu Shaoqi stepped in to repair the blunder. Mao's hospitalization can thus be seen as fortunate, enabling him to avoid the potentially damaging appearance of vacillating leadership. When Mao rearranged his operational priorities from his hospital bed, the conflict among strategic factors reached a turning point: the desire for a decisive battle gave way to the base-area strategy, a strategic choice overwhelmingly supported by Mao's generals.

Similarly, Mao's original plan for the defense of Sipingjie was designed to achieve a clear objective: to destroy the GMD's crack troops in mobile warfare and ensure that a peace deal would be made on Communist terms. But the offensive-accommodation mode of combat was short-lived, as the combat conditions made this policy all but impossible to implement. Mao then changed to a defensive-accommodation plan, committing his forces to a positional war in the belief that the Nationalists would halt the fighting and reopen negotiations as soon as Marshall returned. This approach miscalculated the enemy's determination to reclaim Changchun, however, and therefore it too was shelved. Mao refused to withdraw his troops, still confident that his negotiators could bring about a cease-fire. Nevertheless, his attempt to sustain the defense of Sipingjie became less rewarding in the later stages of the battle, as his objective became increasingly difficult to achieve, and thus his commitment to prosecuting the battle became ever more difficult to justify.

The contradictory role of Mao as the key decision maker exemplifies how the interplay described above could heighten the margin for error in all military decisions. From the perspective of revolutionary warfare, the real difficulty for the military leadership was not determining to stick to a guerrilla game plan but carefully picking the right moment to shift from the guerrilla struggle to open warfare for the decisive victory (Van Creveld, 2000: 204). In this sense, the Madrid concept was more than a romantic notion for the CCP (cf. MacKinnon, 1996: 933).

With hopes for a favorable peace deal dashed and in the face of the enemy's ever-growing military superiority, Mao called on the spirit of

his Madrid concept and compelled the NEDUA to realize it through a devastating defense. In this desperate late stage, however, the paramount leader could only imagine that he still had a good grip on what would turn out to be the optimal strategy. In imagining China's Madrid in Manchuria, Mao had a vision of the defense of Sipingjie that was outside his normal tactical discourse: the justification for his gamble came at the expense of the pragmatic culture of his party.

In his private discussion with Mao about the Sipingjie debacle, Huang Kecheng pointed exactly to this question: why did Mao insist on sustaining the defense when all chances of achieving the original goal had evaporated? In theory, the "certainty effect" is likely to reduce policy makers' tolerance for accepting risk (Haas, 2001: 266-7), but as this study has shown, Mao's act was outside the postulations of modern theories of risk taking. Huang's question underscored Mao's style: his timing of a switch from a strategy of risk acceptance to a conservative but cost-effective appeasement approach occurred far later than one would have expected in a prudent policy maker.

Although the collapse of Lin Biao's forces destroyed Mao's vision, his decision did not seem an absolute "representational failure" (Wendt, 1999: 56). Mao's Madrid dream was clearly not born of any realist rationale, but the Communists' courageous defense of Sipingjie gave way to a recognition that the base-area strategy was the best possible way of struggling against the GMD—a kind of "quasi-rationality" that might not have been available to the CCP leadership had they relied on "rational choice" (Mérő, 1998: 185-6). When Mao and his generals arrived at a common understanding of the war, the vacillations between the various strategies of the CCP leaders reached another turning point, as they returned wholeheartedly to the base-area approach. The civil war in Manchuria in 1946 foreshadowed the open general war in China over the next three years. Lin Biao's surviving field force set up the foundations for the victory of the CCP by building base areas—that is, by widely distributing forces across the vast space of Manchuria, which proved to be fertile soil for insurrection.

## NOTES

1. Most of these principles of warfare were linked to Mao's victory in the intense internecine strife over the party's strategy for insurgency at the important Zunyi Meeting in 1935. They were later well elaborated in treatises written by Mao during the Yan'an period and, according to some Chinese strategists, developed into norms (Guo Huaruo, 1989: 2).

2. In other words, it was the policy makers' understanding of wars that shaped the "instrumental awareness" of their strategic choice and thus determined the "instrumentality" for achieving their objectives (see Kowert and Legro, 1996: 461-2).

On a couple of occasions during the 1930s, Mao had momentarily temporized and supported the strategies that he had initially opposed, but as William W. Whitson argues, "This . . . did not mean that Mao had revised his own faith" (Whitson, 1973: 48; see also Wei, 1985: 122). Nevertheless, a recent study of the civil war in Manchuria in 1945-1947 by Harold M. Tanner (2003) suggests that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) shifted its military doctrines twice in three years. Tanner argues that in 1944, the CCP leadership decided to discard its reliance on a guerrilla/rural base and embraced a "new" doctrine of urban-oriented mobile warfare and city defense. Although this new doctrine was quickly put into practice in Manchuria in the fall of 1945, its adoption was short-lived, as in 1947, it was transformed into another "hybrid doctrine" that combined both guerrilla and mobile warfare strategy (Tanner, 2003: 1180, 1194, 1202, 1204-5, 1222). But other scholarship opposes such a claim: military doctrine is the fundamental principle of a military organization that provides for collective action in time of war, and it is authoritative. The element that frequently changes is the *judgment* on a doctrine's application, not the doctrine itself (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1988: 117; Dupuy and Margiotta, 1993: 773-5)—as the CCP's case vividly demonstrates. Because a doctrinal shift involves various ideational and structural factors in both the army and society, the process normally requires a relatively long period (Kier, 1997). Case studies support this view that doctrinal development takes time. It took ten years (1918-1928) for France to transform its military doctrine (Kier, 1995); for the Northern Song China (960-1127 C.E.), less than thirty years (Tsang Shui-lung, 2003: 243-95); for the Roman army, more than one and half centuries (completed in 378 C.E.) (Liddell Hart, 1974: 24-54).

3. Du Yuming, the head of the Northeast Security Headquarters, was the overall commander of the Guomindang's (GMD's) Manchurian forces. Du's deputy, Zheng Dongguo, took over from mid-February 1946, as Du was on leave for a kidney operation in Beiping. Zheng sent Liang Huasheng to oversee operations in Sipingjie, but from April 10 onward, Zheng personally took charge of the campaign. After Du returned on April 18, he spent most of his time in Shenyang, recovering from his illness. Jiang Jieshi sent Bai Chongxi, his deputy chief of staff, to Shenyang on May 17 to "supervise operations," but the battle was already over by the time Bai arrived in Sipingjie on May 20. Although Bai did not claim in his reminiscences that he took charge of the Sipingjie campaign, some of his statements are ambiguous and may create a false impression of his significance in the battle (*Zhongyang ribao*, May 18, 19, 21, 23, 1946; Kuo Ting-Yee et al., 1984: 1.458, 2.815, 865, 874; Du Yuming, 1985: 540-1, 551). For the GMD's command decisions in Manchuria, see Cheng (2002).

4. A People's Republic of China (PRC) source claims that Communists had 470,000 regular forces and 2,100,000 militia on the eve of the Japanese surrender (*Zhonggong*, 14.261-7).

5. The Soviets entered Manchuria on August 9, 1945. A successful strategic envelopment by the 1,740,000 troops of the Soviet Red Army quickly forced the 700,000 Japanese troops to capitulate on August 15 (Nakayama, 1990: 34; Glantz, 1989: 554-5).

6. Indeed, ascendancy in Rehe was indispensable to containing a strong enemy in North China. The Nationalist general Fu Zuoyi, who maintained well-trained cavalry in the north, was

potentially a major contender for control of China proper in the coming civil war. This was exactly what Mao had to worry about before he committed his forces to Manchuria.

7. Shanhaiguan is the coastal end of the Great Wall, a mountain bypass of the Liaoxi Corridor connecting North China and Manchuria. Jinzhou is an industrial city along the Beiping-Shenyang (Beining) railway located to the south of Shenyang.

8. The most remote areas in the region were territories contiguous with Rehe, Outer Mongolia, the Soviet Union, and Korea.

9. Some CCP units had started to evacuate from Shenyang in early October in compliance with the agreement reached with the Soviets, but most still remained on the outskirts of the city (Peng Zhen, 1992: 5; Liu nianpu, 1.507-8).

10. The Soviets refused to allow the GMD troops to disembark in Dalian, the largest seaport in Manchuria and naturally the best place for troops to land. They also allowed the CCP forces to take control of Yingkou (the maritime access to the Manchurian Plain, with Shenyang within striking distance) and Huludao (a seaport situated on a cape extending into Liaodong Gulf just outside Jinzhou), the GMD's alternative disembarkation points.

11. Mao's subsequent warning to the GMD that the government's sending troops to Manchuria would be tantamount to declaring a full-scale war was in fact no more than a deterrent smokescreen (Li Yong and Zhang Zhongtian, 1988: 54).

12. For those units entering Manchuria near the end of 1945 (e.g., the Third Division of the New Fourth Army), their original designations were maintained until January 1946. See Wang Xiaozhu (1988).

13. The Thirteenth and Fifty-Second Armies were transported to Qinhuangdao from Hong Kong and Vietnam on October 24 and 30, respectively, by the Seventh Fleet of the U.S. Navy (Chen Tsun-Kung and Chang Li, 1986: 207; Yang Jingbin, n.d.: 1-2).

14. The Soviets had transferred a certain amount of weaponry to the Communists, but as both Nationalist and PRC original materials reveal, the CCP forces were initially unable to bring most of the newly acquired heavy artillery, tanks, and airplanes to the front lines. The delay was caused, first, by the time needed to train the servicemen to use these modern weapons. The records show that Japanese technicians were employed, but their contributions were limited. Second, the Communists' inferior logistic capability hampered their efforts to transport heavy equipment to the front (Guojun dang'an, 1946; Liu nianpu, 1.502; Lü Zhengcao, 1988: 529-34).

15. I have argued elsewhere that at this stage, the priorities of military strategies of the CCP, such as decentralization and forward defense, guerrilla raids, and decisive war, were dictated by a realism-based political objective. I have concluded that through the entire 1945-1947 period, the strategic culture of the CCP manifested mixed features of realist and value-driven considerations (Cheng, 2002: 181-223). Harold M. Tanner has since similarly claimed that "strategy and doctrine were conditioned by the availability of resources" (Tanner, 2003: 1204).

16. The full text of this crucial telegram cannot be found in the official civil war history of the PRC. Nevertheless, because of its importance, fragments of it have become available in official or semi-official materials published in commemoration of the Liaoshen Campaign, although these contain certain obvious errors of transcription (especially dating mistakes), which add to the confusion and mystery (Liaoshen, 2.597; Peng Zhen, 1992: 9; cf. Huang Kecheng, 1989: 331-8). However, a telegram from Liu Shaoqi to Lin Biao, Peng Zhen, and Luo Ronghuan on November 23, 1945, indisputably confirms that Lin Biao's telegram was dispatched on November 21, 1945, at 08:00 (Liu nianpu, 1.533). The existence of this telegram is further confirmed by a journalistic account of the Manchurian civil war published in the PRC (Zhang Zhenglong, 1989: 120).

17. The situation in China proper also turned against the CCP. The besiegers of Guisui suffered heavy casualties at the hands of the GMD defense and lost their tactical superiority. The

enemy's air and land counterattack in early December brought the CCP assault on the Beiping-Guisui railway to a sorry end (Geng Routian, 1981: 31-3; Liu nianpu, 1.532-3).

18. The "three" in this ad hoc committee, formed on 7 January, 1946, were the two opposing Chinese sides plus Marshall. The initial members were Zhang Qun representing the GMD, Zhou Enlai from the CCP, and Marshall as the chairman (Merrill, 1996: 357). Together, they formed a tripartite peace conference to work on the cease-fire, on the reopening and repairing of communications, and on the repatriation of Japanese.

19. Most scholars today believe that the CCP was at a disadvantage during the Marshall truce (Levine, 1979: 359; Westad, 1993: 144), apparently overlooking the major gain made by the Communists in the cease-fire in Rehe and their own need for freedom of troop movement in Manchuria. Besides, the CCP leadership realized that if the cease-fire agreement included Manchuria, U.S. influence would be admitted into the region, thereby jeopardizing Soviet interests (Sheng, 1997: 128). Furthermore, the Communists reached an understanding with their Nationalist counterparts on January 11 and made it a matter of record in the peace conference minutes that the number of troops sent into Manchuria would be restricted (Zhonggong, 16.20-1; Liu nianpu, 2.7).

20. The Political Consultative Conference (PCC), made up of representatives from the GMD, the CCP, minor parties, and nonpartisans, was in session at Chongqing from January 10 to 31, 1946. It met as a consultative body to discuss issues concerning the democratization of the government and the military problems of the nation. Although all the parties represented were morally obliged to accept its resolutions, it had no legal authority: PCC resolutions were subject to legal approval by the governing bodies of the various parties represented (Merrill, 1996: 359).

21. Jiang delivered a speech on March 4 in which he held that they should examine the PCC resolutions and rectify their blunders on the basis of Sun Zhongshan's teachings.

22. The "column" is the largest subgroup of the CCP forces and the ancestor of the "corps" of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

23. A Communist survivor from the Sipingjie battle claims that Yan'an did not itself believe the Madrid rhetoric, but he admits that the party leadership's intention was to engage in a major battle that could change the balance in Manchuria (Chen Yi, 1988: 225).

24. During the Harbin meeting, Peng Zhen's positions as secretary of the Northeast Bureau of the Central Committee (NEB) and first political commissar of the Northeast Democratic United Army (NEDUA) were filled by Lin (Levine, 1987: 99-100).

25. The resolution was drafted by Chen Yun ([1946] 1984), the deputy secretary of the NEB and the deputy political commissar of the NEDUA, but with substantial amendments by Mao (Junshi, 3.332-5; Yuan Wei, 1987: 188-9).

26. On May 4, 1946, a new agrarian policy of confiscating landlords' property and redistributing it among the peasants replaced the policy of rent reduction that had been in effect since 1942. The radical change was thought to be intended to attract peasant support during the civil war (see Liu Shaoqi, [1946] 1984). The land reform was officially completed in mid-1948 (Levine, 1987: 206-29; Wang Yuan'nian, 1990: 336). For the operations against the Manchurian bandits, see Wang Yuan'nian (1990: 332-49).

27. Johnston has set forth the highly theoretical argument that the strategic behavior of China, from past to present, is consistent with a strategic culture of hard realpolitik (Johnston, 1995: 255-8; 1996). He sees this behavioral pattern as deriving from China's "ideational roots" and as fundamentally independent of the material or structural conditions. His theory has attracted attention in some quarters (e.g., Swaine and Tellis, 2000: 49; Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, 1996: 68-72).

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