

Chinese Choices: A Poliheuristic Analysis of Foreign Policy Crises, 1950–1996

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This paper uses the Poliheuristic Theory (PH), developed by Mintz, which incorporates both psychological and rational choice components in a synthesis of these previously isolated approaches, to explain decision making in Chinese foreign policy crises. China is an interesting initial case for this project for two reasons. One is its importance as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and rising superpower. The other is China's reputation as a nearly unique "black box"—an especially challenging case—with regard to decision making in foreign policy crises. Taken from the authoritative compilation of the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) Project, the nine cases (with available data) in which China is a crisis actor span the period from 1950 to 1996. A comparative analysis of Chinese decision making in times of crisis is used to test hypotheses derived from the PH. The hypotheses focus on how decisions are anticipated to occur over two stages. Principal expectations are that the non compensatory rule, which places priority on political considerations, will determine viable alternatives at the first stage, while choices more in line with expected value maximization or lexicographic ordering will characterize the second stage.

Broad and complicated are the scope and themes of Chinese foreign policy. Most notably, China is seen widely as a unique power when dealing with international relations in general and foreign policy crises in particular. This paper uses the Poliheuristic Theory (PH), developed by Mintz (1993, 2003a), which incorporates both psychological and rational choice components in a synthesis of these previously isolated approaches, to explain decision making in Chinese foreign policy crises. Taken from the authoritative compilation of the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) Project, the nine cases (with available data) in which China is a crisis actor span the period from 1950 to 1996. A comparative analysis of Chinese decision making in times of crisis is used to test hypotheses derived from PH. The hypotheses focus on how decisions are anticipated to occur over two stages. Principal expectations are that the noncompensatory rule, which places priority on political considerations, will determine viable alternatives at the first stage, while choices more in line with expected value maximization or lexicographic ordering will characterize the second stage.

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This paper consists of five additional sections. First, PH is introduced as the theoretical foundation of foreign policy decision making, along with the two most general hypotheses. The second section reviews studies of Chinese foreign policy making. Third, a comparative case analysis is outlined as the method. This includes an account of the coding procedures for the nine Chinese foreign policy crises identified by the ICB Project. The fourth section analyzes the results, which generally confirm PH. Implications regarding the differences and similarities of the cases also are discussed. Fifth, and finally, the concluding remarks review the results and identify directions for further research.

The Poliheuristic Theory of decision making and Foreign Policy Analysis: Theory and Hypotheses

Theory

Within the vast field of foreign policy analysis (FPA), research invariably focuses either on (1) the process or (2) outcome of decision making.¹ The first type of study mainly employs a cognitive or psychological approach to find out how decisions are made inside the “black box” of the state, while the second, with an emphasis on rational calculation, centers on why the final choice is made. Few studies take *both* aspects into consideration—FPA thus appears incomplete and seriously divided between the psychological and rational choice schools of decision making (Hill, 2003). It becomes increasingly clear that neither approach alone can provide a complete explanation for how and why foreign policy decisions are made, which creates the need for a unified model of decision processes and outcomes (Mintz and Geva, 1997; Danilovic, 2003; Hill, 2003; Levy, 2003; Mintz, 2003a, 2004a).²

Poliheuristic Theory integrates the cognitive and rational choice approaches to decision making and therefore represents a major step forward for the field of FPA (Mintz, 2003b:1–2). As a dynamic theory, PH gives a fuller explanation of variations in foreign policy decision making. Key variables, such as beliefs, values, psychological processes, personalities, domestic interests, and system structures, are incorporated (Levy, 2003:255). Specifically, individual characteristics and cognitive processes initially help to simplify the alternatives for decision makers. Afterward, decision makers analyze domestic interests, system structures (e.g., as a possible constraint on action due to the distribution of capabilities), and other things according to a rational calculus (i.e., either expected value or lexicographic) to identify the best choice.

According to PH, foreign policy decision making takes place in two stages, which, as will become apparent, effectively explains why neither cognitive nor rational choice models have had much success in providing a complete picture. PH’s model of decision making is conveyed by Figure 1, with specific application to the crisis domain that is the focus of the present investigation. At the first stage, decision makers implement a dimension-based and noncompensatory decision rule. The emphasis at this stage is not on the final choice, but instead on identifying alternatives that are deemed viable for further consideration. Options with low or negative values on one dimension (political, economic, diplomatic, military, and so forth) that *cannot* be compensated for, or replaced by, positive values on one or more of the other dimensions, are eliminated. Moreover, most salient at the first stage of decision making is politics: “politicians rarely will choose an alternative that

¹ As defined by Vertzberger (2002:479), FPA is “a field of study that describes and investigates the structures, processes, and outcomes of the purposeful policy initiatives and responses that are conceived by sovereign political entities and directed toward other political units (not necessarily sovereign states) *beyond* their borders.”

² In fact, the insistence that either the psychological or rational choice approach must be chosen exclusively is identified by Brecher (1999) as a “flawed dichotomy,” with destructive arguments between advocates of each school taking the place of efforts toward synthesis.

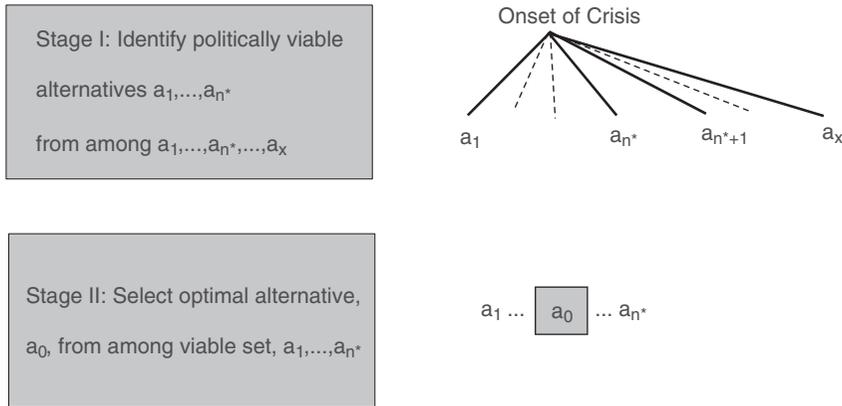


FIG. 1. Poliheuristic decision making in Crises

will hurt them politically” (Mintz, 2003b:3). In spite of the desire to believe otherwise, domestic political considerations do enter into even the highest levels of decision making in crisis situations (Brecher, 1993).

Figure 1 shows that options a_1 through a_{n^*} are viable politically and a_{n^*+1} through a_x are not. (Options not shown due to constraints on space, between those listed explicitly in the figure [e.g., a_2 , a_3 , and so on] are acknowledged by broken lines leading downward from “Onset of Crisis.”) In the second stage, decision makers choose from among options a_1 through a_{n^*} on the basis of one of two types of alternative-based strategy: (a) an expected utility calculus or (b) optimization along the most important dimension (i.e., lexicographic choice) (Mintz and Geva, 1997; Mintz, 2003b). The former aims to calculate and balance the costs and benefits for each alternative, while the latter requires that the final decision achieve the utility-maximizing goal along the dimension regarded as most vital for decision makers. In other words, the dimensions in the lexicographic scenario are *not* equally weighted—the most vital dimension will be evaluated carefully for each option and the final choice needs to be best in this way but does not have to be optimal in an overall sense. This represents, perhaps, maximizing on a limited, rather than a grand, scale. Choice of the option perceived as best— a_0 in Figure 1—is the result. Thus, with its two stages, the poliheuristic perspective addresses not only the outcomes but also the processes of decision making.

PH is dimension-based, noncompensatory, nonholistic, satisficing, and order-sensitive, characteristics that combine to distinguish it from expected utility, cybernetic, or prospect theories of decision making taken in isolation (Mintz, Geva, and DeRouen, 1994). As an alternative to the traditional dichotomy represented by psychological/cognitive and expected utility theories of decision making, the poliheuristic perspective recognizes that decision makers, faced with highly complex situations, incomplete information, and time constraints, tend to seek “short-cuts,” or cognitive heuristics. They do this at the beginning to process information, avoid cognitive constraints, and simplify decision matrices (Sherman and Corty, 1984; Vertzberger, 1990:144, 155; Mintz et al., 1994).³ PH also builds in the intuitively plausible presence of rationality through a decision calculus that focuses on politically viable alternatives. For such reasons, PH emerges as especially useful in

³ Leaders are not necessarily aware of the decision matrices, composed of dimensions and alternatives, that guide decision making from the standpoint of PH. The effective presence of these matrices is illustrated and supported in a number of experimental studies (e.g., Redd, 2003; Mintz, 2004b).

attempting to deal with *crisis* decision making, in which complexity, limited information and time constraints predominate virtually by definition.

PH sees domestic politics as “*the essence of decision*” (Mintz, 2004a:7). Decision makers almost always try to avoid choices that could bring political damage to themselves (Levy, 1992, 2003; Nincic, 1997). Therefore, no matter how high its overall utility scores along other dimensions, as long as the option under scrutiny scores low on political survivability, it will be removed immediately from further consideration. This is an example of the core of PH—the noncompensatory and nonholistic rule. Analysis of decision making by American presidents, including Eisenhower, Kennedy Nixon, Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Clinton, confirms the use of the noncompensatory principle of PH (Mintz, 1993; DeRouen, 2001, 2003; Taylor-Robinson and Redd, 2003; Goertz, 2004). Other case studies produce evidence of the noncompensatory principle in nondemocratic regimes, with the politically salient aspects varying accordingly (e.g., Astorino-Courtois and Trusty, 2003; Mintz, 2003b; Sathasivam, 2003). In sum, there is strong evidence in favor of a noncompensatory, lexicographic (LEX) model.⁴ Rather than a simple cost-benefit analysis, the LEX model merely selects the options that have the highest utility on the dimension regarded as most vital by decision makers (DeRouen, 2003; DeRouen and Sprecher, 2004). This strategy can appear at either stage. In the first stage, it is noncompensatory, while if emphasized in the second stage it is more maximizing (Mintz, 2003b:6; Sathasivam, 2003). For example, President Eisenhower’s final decision about the Dien Bien Phu crisis—between the remaining alternatives of an air strike and no military action—was determined ultimately by utility along the most important dimension: politics, in spite of discussions of counterbalancing considerations along a more diverse set of dimensions. Although the air strike looked superior on the strategic/military dimension, avoiding military action turned out to be the best option for the president’s political standing and thus was chosen.

After just a decade of existence, PH already has been used widely in a variety of areas to explain processes and outcomes of decision making in both democratic and nondemocratic regimes. Prominent examples are the use of force (Mintz, 1993; DeRouen, 2000), coalition formation (Mintz, 1995), war termination (Mintz and Geva, 1998), conflict resolution (Astorino-Courtois and Trusty, 2003; Mintz and Mishal, 2003), nonuse of force (DeRouen, 2003), influence of advisors (Redd, 2003), framing (Taylor-Robinson and Redd, 2003), crisis escalation (Clare, 2003; DeRouen and Sprecher, 2004), the influence of the mass media on foreign policy (Van Belle, 2003), initial crisis reaction (DeRouen and Sprecher, 2004), and so on (see Mintz, 2004a:4, Table 1). These studies test PH as a vision of decision making via a range of methods, from controlled experiments, through case studies, to aggregate data analysis. Accumulated evidence from mathematical modeling, experimental analyses, case studies, and cross-national, large-*N* data analyses strongly confirms propositions from PH (e.g., Dacey and Carlson, 2004; DeRouen and Sprecher, 2004).⁵

In sum, explanations derived from PH appear both scientifically valuable and robust. PH deserves further application to foreign policy decision making, especially in areas that have been studied in more strictly traditional, descriptive ways.

⁴ Other, less frequently implemented noncompensatory models will not be considered further. These models include the conjunctive (CON) and disjunctive (DIS); see DeRouen (2003:25, note 4). See also Abelson and Levi (1985), Redd (2000), and Sathasivam (2003).

⁵ Impressive evidence in favor of PH appears in the special issue of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (February 2004).

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses arise from the two-stage model of PH. Each is put forward in the crisis domain.

H1: *During the first stage of crisis decision making, leaders tend to avert political loss by using the noncompensatory rule with an emphasis on the political dimension.*

Biological limitations in the ability of human beings to process information, individual values, beliefs and preferences, along with the near-impossibility of obtaining complete information, inhibit rational choice at the initial stage (Vertzberger, 1990; Geva and Mintz, 1997; Levy, 1992, 2003; Mintz, 2003b, c). Thus the salient political considerations are put into bold relief on the menu for choice at the outset of a crisis. Time pressure and complex situations during a foreign policy crisis force decision makers to strive for short-cuts in order to simplify decision matrices. Therefore, cognitive heuristics are more important than rational utility maximizing in the initial stage of decision making and relatively straightforward political considerations come to the fore.

Furthermore, a number of studies have suggested that decision makers tend to avert political loss (Nincic, 1997; e.g., Levy, 1992, 2003). Serious political loss—the kind that naturally is at risk of happening in a crisis situation—is unacceptable to decision makers. Political loss can be manifested in any or all of the following aspects:⁶ threat to a leader's survival, significant drop in public approval for a policy, significant drop in popularity, lack of support for a particular policy (e.g., use of force or sanctions or peace), the prospect of electoral defeat, domestic opposition, threat to regime survival, intraparty rivalry and competition, internal or external challenge to the regime, potential collapse of coalition/government/regime, threat to political power, dignity, honor or legitimacy of a leader, demonstrations and riots, and the existence of veto players (e.g., pivotal parties in a parliamentary government) (Mintz, 2004a). Decision makers try to avert political loss by removing options that are likely to cause such damage.⁷ The noncompensatory principle reflects the political-loss-aversion tendency in leaders' thinking. Consequently, it is important to note that during this initial stage of screening, the use of the noncompensatory strategy is closely related to the emphasis on the political dimension. In sum, the first stage of crisis decision making is cognitively satisficing along the lines of domestic politics rather than rational or utility maximizing in other aspects.

H2: *During the second stage of crisis decision making, leaders tend to make the final choice among the remaining options by using either the utility-maximizing or LEX principles along a more diverse set of dimensions, which includes the political but also military, economic, and diplomatic.*

In the second stage of decision making, the logic of rational choice is more important to leaders than cognition purely about politics and the process of decision making is altered accordingly. After they have simplified decision matrices by eliminating alternatives that may cause political damage, decision makers will choose among the remaining alternatives in a more rational way that maximizes utility and minimizes risks/costs. Thus, at this stage, either (1) the alternative with the highest overall expected value, i.e., using the expected utility strategy or (2) the alternative with the highest utility along the most important policy dimension, i.e., using the LEX strategy, is chosen. As previous research suggests, the actual selec-

⁶ Note that many of these manifestations are absent in nondemocratic countries.

⁷ Loss aversion among decision makers is essentially consistent with the basic logic behind the diversionary theory, namely, internal conflict at times may be displaced outward, which therefore would minimize domestic political damage absorbed by decision makers (DeRouen, 2000; see also DeRouen, 2001:70).

tion of either strategy, to a large extent, depends on the varying conditions of the problem⁸ and on the cognitive and personal characteristics of the decision maker(s) (Mintz and Geva, 1997; Mintz, Geva, Redd, and Carnes 1997; Sathasivam, 2003; Taylor-Robinson and Redd, 2003).

Chinese Foreign Policy Decision Making: Opening the “Black Box”

China is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a state on the brink of superpower status. For such reasons, along with its reputation as a state about which very little is known in terms of foreign policy, China becomes a priority for application of PH. China is seen as a unique actor with three great “unknowns” about its foreign policy decision making (Bobrow, Chan, and Kringen, 1977:27): (a) elite perceptions and policy responses; (b) participants in decision making and their interactions; and (c) the analytic–cognitive basis for decision making. Chinese foreign policy decision making is particularly challenging to study because of the sheer size and history of the country and the complex range of relevant factors at the domestic and international levels. In particular, fundamental complexity is found in differences between Chinese and Western belief systems about the structure and dynamics of international *crises*. For instance, the notion of “crisis” (*wei ji* in Chinese *pinyin* romanization) embeds two levels of meanings: threat/danger as well as opportunity. Chinese leaders also view the relative capability of actors and China’s domestic economic and political crises in a more nuanced fashion. Chinese doctrine stresses dialectical reasoning, which is seen as part of orthodox worldviews in Marxism and Mao Zedong⁹ thought (Bobrow, Chan, and Kringen, 1979). In dealing with international crises, four bimodal attitude pairs provide mental readiness and useful heuristics for management of long-term Chinese foreign policy “strategies” as well as short-term decision “tactics” regarding immediate actions (Bobrow et al., 1979:54–67).¹⁰

Rational choice models in particular are viewed as seriously limited when it comes to explaining and predicting Chinese foreign policymaking. Western rationality, with its emphasis on cost–benefit analysis, is considered to be especially incompatible with “Eastern” or “Oriental” (or simply “Chinese”) ways of thinking (Whiting, 1975; Chan, 1978; Bobrow et al., 1979; Shih, 1990; Adelman and Shih, 1993; Yu, 1994; Shih, 1998; Johnston, 1998).¹¹ Studies of Chinese foreign policy generally emphasize factors pertinent to political psychology and culture, along with their interactions with domestic political interests, the international context, and other system-level variables.¹² Cognitive heuristics and shortcuts are a result or consequence of psychological and ideological constraints, different beliefs and values, misperceptions, emotions, framing effects, loss aversion, and the like (Vertzberger, 1990; Jarvis, 1992; Levy, 2003). Given the great power held among the small number of top political leaders, these elements are likely to play an even more important role in Chinese foreign policy decision making. In spite of the secrecy in Chinese foreign policy decision making, including its institutions, proc-

⁸ For instance, that may include “the interrelations of the value dimensions and the number of alternatives remaining after the first stage eliminations” (Astorino-Courtios and Trusty, 2003:32) and other situational and environmental constraints (Taylor-Robinson and Redd, 2003:81).

⁹ This also frequently is spelled as Mao Tse-Tung.

¹⁰ The four bimodal attitude pairs of Chinese decision making about vital international incidents, in brief, are: (1) optimism–pessimism; (2) boldness–caution; (3) rigidity–flexibility; and (4) emotional arousal (subjectivity)–analytic distance (objectivity). For more detailed interpretations, see Bobrow et al. (1979:64).

¹¹ In addition to different views of rationality, Chinese culture and heritage have also fostered a diverse notion of “state” (*guo jia* in Chinese), which is not centered on territorial sovereignty as in the Western concept, e.g., Pye (1990) calls China a civilization pretending to be a state; see also Chih-yu Shih (1998).

¹² A large body of literature focuses on the role of cognitive aspects as well as ideological and cultural influences on Chinese decision making (e.g., Whiting, 1975; Chan, 1978; Bobrow et al., 1979; Shih, 1990, 1992, 1998; Adelman and Shih, 1993; Johnston, 1995a, b; Christensen, 1996; Bachman, 1998).

esses, and dynamics (Lu, 1997:3), Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Jiang Zemin,¹³ along with the Politburos that consisted of several political elites composed mostly of their followers, have been regarded widely as those who ultimately decided the general direction as well as specific components of foreign policy throughout contemporary Chinese history.

Systematic analysis of Chinese foreign policy decision making, whether in international relations or Sinology, so far has achieved limited success, at least as compared with the study of Chinese domestic politics (Bobrow et al., 1977:27; Harding, 1994; Zhao, 1996:7–8; Yang, 2002; Zhao, 2004). A sustained theoretical trend in the study of Chinese foreign policy links elements from the micro and macro levels (e.g., Robinson and Shambough, 1994; Zhao, 1996). These studies attempt to integrate micro-level variables, such as individual characteristics and cognitive constraints, with macro-level variables, like international structure and domestic political context. This tendency effectively draws attention to the need for more comprehensive efforts to interpret Chinese foreign policy behavior. Specifically, a micro–macro linkage that incorporates system-level constraints and impact, domestic institutional and societal elements, and policy preferences and interpretations of individual decision makers as well as their interactions seems like the way to go (Zhao, 1996). Moreover, Johnston (1998), whose study is among the few available systematic ones, searches for patterns in Chinese conflict behavior and crisis management, which in turn sheds light on decision making in Chinese foreign policy crises.

PH is suited ideally to carry out this more expansive agenda as its presumed two-stage model of decision making can build in all of the preceding and potentially necessary elements at one point or another. So far, however, PH-oriented studies have focused on decision making in Chinese foreign policy crises only as a small part of a given large-*N* investigation. Thus China would seem to be an optimal choice for further application of PH to crisis decision making. This increasingly important proto-challenger to U.S. hegemony is understood, at least so far, frequently on the basis of research guided by ideological or psychological approaches that stress uniqueness. China thus becomes an especially exciting case for PH in terms of scientific progress. The ability to confirm propositions about crisis decision making in the Chinese context that have obtained support from cross-national testing would constitute an especially dramatic step forward.

Comparative Case Analysis and Coding Procedures

Comparative Case Analysis

Crises involving the People's Republic of China (PRC) are taken from the compilation of the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) Project, which spans the years from 1918 to 2000 (Brecher and Wilkenfeld, 1997, 2000). The ICB Project identifies crises at both the system (macro) and actor (micro) levels. At the macro level, international crises are defined as events that destabilize relations between two or more states by increasing disruptive interactions and challenging the structure of the international system.¹⁴ At the micro level, a foreign policy crisis occurs when decision makers perceive (a) their basic value(s) to be threatened, (b) finite time for response, and (c) heightened probability of involvement in military hostilities

¹³ Not until September 2004 did the power transition from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao, China's new leader, come to an end.

¹⁴ International crises can be categorized further into (a) crises within and outside of protracted conflicts and (b) intrawar crises (IWCs) versus crises that originated in nonwar settings (Brecher and Wilkenfeld, 2000:5–7). Case selection in the present study focuses on crises outside of a war setting. The reciprocal effects of war and IWCs will generate complications beyond the model proposed here and thus such cases might be more appropriate for inclusion in a future study.

TABLE I. ICB Foreign Policy Crises for the People's Republic of China, 1950–1996*

<i>Group</i>	<i>ICB No.</i>	<i>Crisis Name</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>China's Initial Reaction (MAJRES)</i>	<i>China's Overall Response (CRISMG)</i>	<i>Other Crisis Actor(s)</i>
Korean War	132	Korean War I	25 Jun.–30 Sept 1950	Political	Nonviolent military	U.S., S. Korea, and Taiwan
	133	Korean War II	30 Sept. 1950–10 July 1951	Violent	Violence	N. Korea, USSR, U.S., and S. Korea
	140	Korean War III	16 Apr.–27 July 1953	Political	Multiple, with violence	U.S., N. Korea, and S. Korea
Taiwan Strait crises	146	Taiwan Strait I	Early Aug. 1954–23 Apr. 1955	Violent	Multiple, with violence	Taiwan, and U.S.
	166	Taiwan Strait II	17 July–23 Oct. 1958	Political	Multiple, with violence	Taiwan, and U.S.
	192	Taiwan Strait III	22 Apr.–27 Jun. 1962	Nonviolent military	Multiple, no violence	
	415	Taiwan Strait IV	22 May 1995–25 Mar. 1996	Multiple, with nonviolent military act	Nonviolent military	Taiwan
Sino-Indian disputes	171	China/India Border I	25 Aug. 1959–19 Apr. 1960	Violent	Multiple, with violence	India
	194	China/India Border II	8 Sept. 1962–23 Jan. 1963	Violent	Violence	India
Sino-USSR dispute	231	Ussuri River	2 Mar.–20 Oct. 1969	Violent	Multiple, with violence	USSR
Sino-Vietnamese conflicts	298	Sino/Vietnam War	25 Dec. 1978 – 15 Mar. 1979	Violent	Violence	Vietnam
	352	Sino/Vietnam clashes	2 Apr.–2nd half of Jun. 1984	Violent	Violence	Vietnam
	371	Sino/Vietnam border	5–8 Jan. 1987	Violent	Violence	Vietnam
	384	Spratly Islands	14 Mar.–late Apr. 1988	Violent	Violence	Vietnam

*The 14 foreign policy crises for China are drawn from the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) project. See details about the ICB data set at <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/ibc/> and <http://www.icbnet.org/>. Due to insufficient information, perhaps connected to the relative lower level of importance of some of the crises, only 9 out of the 14 can be included in our present study. These 9 crises are in bold in this table.

(Brecher and Wilkenfeld, 2000:3).¹⁵ Thus an international crisis identifies events experienced in an objective sense, while a foreign policy crisis is based on the perceptions of leaders for an individual state.

According to the most recent ICB data set, China experienced 14 foreign policy crises between 1950 and 1996, which appear in Table 1, among which 9 will be the focus of this study as a result of data availability.¹⁶ Although each involves China as an actor, these international crises differ from each other in several ways. First, the crises occur in different socioeconomic and international political contexts—from establishment of Communist China through the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, to the open-up and economic reforms and the post-Cold War era. Second, the crises involve a range of actors other than China itself, most notably, superpowers like the U.S. and the USSR, as well as secondary or regional powers such as Vietnam and India. Third, participants play different roles in respective crises—the same actor, taking China as an example, could be the initiator in Taiwan Strait I but the respondent in Korean War I. Fourth, the crises feature different reasons behind the triggering mechanisms; territorial disputes, ideological confrontations and other issues could be noted. Fifth, the various crises had different consequences and impact on the regional balance of power and China's position in the world. A case in point is China's decision to enter the Korean War—in spite of the heavy investment in terms of money and military personnel, a long stalemate ensued. Later, the truce negotiations with the U.S. increased the status of the new China in East Asia as well as the world. Sixth, and finally, these crises vary in terms of intensity and duration—some of them took place within a protracted conflict, while others did not.

Since the number of cases pertinent to our research question is too small to carry out statistical analysis, it is best to use the small-*N* method, what Brecher (1975) calls “structured empiricism” or what George (1979) calls the “controlled comparison (or comparative) method.” Applying the “disciplined-configurative” type of analysis (George, 1979), we use general variables for descriptive and explanatory purposes, a practice conducive to comparison and summary of findings at the later stage. Controlled comparison starts with formation and testing of general hypotheses in rigorous terms (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994). We are interested primarily in Chinese decisions about whether to use force during these crises. For instance, why did China decide to send ground troops to Korea while it later concluded the third Taiwan Straits Crisis in 1962 unilaterally without use of force? Analysis of each case involves a common focus that should help the theoretical development of PH.

In spite of these differences, the five groups of crises also share important common traits and all meet the prerequisite of controlled comparison because of their membership in the same category. First, and most obviously, China is a central actor in each crisis. Second, all took place in a generally restricted geographic area—along the borders or in areas neighboring China. Third, almost all of these crises occurred in the context of the Cold War, which highlighted the impact of both the U.S. and the Soviet Union.¹⁷ Fourth, and finally, due to the difficulty of

¹⁵ Note that the occurrence, development, or termination of a crisis does not necessarily involve violence or even war. As Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997:7) observe, “all wars result from crises; but not all crises lead to war.”

¹⁶ As shown in Table 1, these crises are placed into five groups on the basis of substantive issues and actors involved: (a) Korean War I, II, III; (b) Taiwan Strait I, II, III, IV; (c) Sino-India Border I and II; (d) Sino-USSR border dispute and (e) Sino-Vietnam war, clashes and territorial/border disputes. The ICB variable for SEVVIO of violence suggests that the cases included, on average, are the more intense ones. Both of the full-scale wars, and five of the eight cases with serious clashes, are among the nine cases included in this study. For the Spratly Island crisis between China and the Philippines in 1995, the ICB dataset regards China as the triggering entity rather than a crisis actor. China's initial reaction (i.e., major response, or ICB's MAJRES variable) and overall response (i.e., crisis management, or ICB's CRISMG variable) are not applicable. As a result, this case is not included in our study and an explanation for this type of decision appears in Brecher and Wilkenfeld (2000:42).

¹⁷ The one exception during the post-Cold War era is the fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis from 1995 to 1996.

obtaining information, the analysis of these crises is based upon some primary, but mostly secondary, historical material from China and overseas. Thus, the Chinese crises, collectively speaking, are at once united by important characteristics but also diverse in other ways, which should facilitate an interesting comparative exercise.

However, as we started collecting historical materials and relevant literature on these crises, it turned out to be difficult to obtain sufficient material for each of them. Given the above-mentioned differences, some of the crises may have received inadequate attention for investigation by the Chinese government and/or academia, particularly with regard to decision making processes. For instance, decisions in the three Sino-Vietnamese crises in the 1980s were apparently overshadowed by the Sino-Vietnamese War from 1978 to 1979 and thus understudied. Another case in point is the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1962. As compared with the other three crises over the Taiwan Strait, the 1962 crisis had relatively low intensity (i.e., mainly political threat). While conflict over the Taiwan Strait could impact upon Sino-U.S. relations and the Taiwanese regime, the implications of this particular crisis seemed much less salient. An alternative explanation of the lack of information for such crises may be that vital official documents concerning the decision making processes still need to be declassified. Due to such information constraints, we are able to analyze only 9 out of the 14 crises with the controlled comparative method. Analysis of the remaining crises must be postponed to a later date if and when more materials become available for investigation. These cases include the Sino-Indian Border crisis from 1959 to 1960, the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1962, and the Sino-Vietnam clashes in 1984, 1987, and 1988.

Coding Procedures and Intercoder Reliability

Within the parlance of ICB, Stage I and II decision making focuses on how the major response (i.e., ICB's MAJRES variable) is derived. The goal is to assess whether the major response follows from (1) a first stage of identifying politically viable options and (2) a second stage of either rational or lexicographic choice. Thus the major response corresponds to an action by China stimulated by the crisis trigger (see Table 1).¹⁸

The following coding regime answers several basic questions that will allow coding and testing to move ahead: (1) What criteria should be used to differentiate dimensions in decision making?; (2) What materials would be deemed appropriate for identifying decision making within a given Chinese foreign policy crisis?; (3) What should be seen as the dividing line, in each crisis, between Stage I and Stage II in the decision making process?; and (4) What criteria should be used to identify whether Stage I or Stage II in the decision making process is cognitive- or rational-based?

Derived from the two hypotheses of foreign policy decision making, a questionnaire with 16 questions, along with minimal yet necessary coding instructions, is used to generate the data from our comparative analysis of the nine crises involving China. Given the new nature of the coding work on China, we have implemented procedures to maximize intercoder reliability: coders were (1) randomly paired together to code a given crisis; (2) given the same set of primary and/or secondary historical materials that we had identified as containing significant information regarding the decision making processes in the assigned crises; (3) provided with the same coding guidelines that instructed them on the procedures; (4) instructed

¹⁸ Within ICB's terminology, crisis management, or CRISMG, is the variable that conveys how a crisis is managed in an overall sense. In other words, while CRISMG pertains to actions in a crisis as a whole, the ICB variable for major response, MAJRES, provides a specific picture of how things are handled at the outset of the case. The more expansive agenda of examining all decisions throughout the case would require deconstructing CRISMG into its possibly numerous constituents, a task that is beyond the scope of this investigation.

to respond independently to the same set of questions (see Appendix 1) after reading the materials for each crisis; and (5) debriefed with one of the co-investigators in an effort to resolve any major controversies following their independent responses. Four doctoral students, along with one faculty member, have worked independently, pairwise, to code the nine crises for each hypothesis under the direction of one of the co-investigators of this project.¹⁹ The results are presented in Table 2. (Further details about Table 2 are provided below.) Each column in Table 2 aims to synthesize each coder's substantive contribution to fulfilling the key objectives, that is, to assess PH in an overall sense as well as test Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Based on the existing literature on PH, generally speaking, four dimensions emerge as important in foreign policy decision making—political, military, economic, and diplomatic, respectively (Mintz, 2003a; Sathasivam, 2003). The political dimension can be described as policy considerations that may lead to consequences, good or bad, for the standing of the current regime, that is, political parties and leaders in particular. According to our coding rules, the following circumstances in Chinese decision making are regarded as within the political dimension, which is hypothesized to take precedence at Stage I of the process in Chinese foreign policy crises:²⁰ (1) establishing control over the country by the Communist regime as a follow-up to the violent revolution; (2) survival of the new Communist regime being endangered by the threat of overtaking from the previous regime (i.e., the GMT or Nationalists); (3) survival of the Communist regime being threatened (i.e., verbally) by overseas adversaries who vehemently opposed Communism (e.g., the U.S. and other Western capitalist countries within the opposition camp against Communism); (4) need for support and even worship of individual political leaders (i.e., the cult of personality); (5) continuation of revolutionary momentum (e.g., the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution); (6) maintenance of the sovereignty of China as a Communist entity; (7) the need to strive for leadership in the international Communist camp (i.e., against the Soviet Union); (8) maintaining Chinese political (i.e., ideological) influence over neighboring states; (9) obtaining political power/leadership in the Chinese Communist Party (through power succession and consolidation); (10) maintenance of territorial integrity; and (11) prevention of new instances of undesirable history (i.e., surrender of sovereignty to foreign powers).²¹

The military dimension includes deliberations over policy implications related to the readiness, strength, and/or weakness of the military. Similar to the list for the political dimension, in the Chinese context, the military dimension is manifested through reference to any of the following issues: (1) the condition of military equipment and training, i.e., is it seen as outdated and/or is the budget insufficient to support potentially desirable Chinese military operations?; (2) the feasibility of the military option in terms of personnel, e.g., the Chinese army is noted as being large in number and the soldiers trained to keep courage and morale high in the battlefield; (3) the readiness of logistics and infrastructure for a military operation, e.g., some areas in China have no transportation system that is adequate for

¹⁹ These participants are all Chinese nationals who have been trained academically in North America. Each possesses significant knowledge about Chinese political history and actively studies Chinese politics. None had familiarity with either PH theory or our hypotheses at the time of coding.

²⁰ The coding rules in this study reflect the general categorization from the four dimensions in the PH literature (e.g., Mintz, 2004a) and are tailored to the China context in tandem with the widely agreed upon Chinese political history, political culture, regime types, and other institutional characteristics.

²¹ The wide range of considerations along the political dimension are drawn from different periods in Chinese political history, beginning with establishment of the Communist regime on the mainland in 1949 through political consolidation and chaos in the 1950s and 1960s, to the power transition from Mao to Deng in the late 1970s and subsequent transformation toward a market-oriented economy, and finally to the demise of the Soviet Union and another power transition from Deng to Jiang. These periods also hold true for the military, economic, and diplomatic dimensions as described below.

TABLE 2. Inter-coder Reliability: Decision Making for China's Major Responses in Nine Foreign Policy Crises, 1950–1996*

Crisis Name	Coder	China's Major Response [†]	Two-Stage Process [‡]	H (I) [§]	Politically Unacceptable Options Dropped Immediately	NC Rule	H (II) [#]	Maximizing or LEX Rule ^{**}
Korean War I (1950)	L	Military preparation	No	Yes	Do nothing	Yes	N/A	No
	D	Military preparation	No	Yes	Do nothing	Yes	N/A	No
	Y	Sending troops to Korea	Yes	Yes	Do nothing	Yes	Yes	Yes
	S	Military preparation but avoiding immediate confrontation	Yes	Yes	Do nothing	Yes	Yes	Not sure
Korean War III (1953)	D	Concluding armistice agreement	Yes	No	Full-scale war again with U.S. and South Korea	No	Yes	Yes
	K	Concessions over the armistice negotiations	Yes	Yes	Exposing China's Northeast directly to U.S. influence	Yes	Yes	Yes
Taiwan Strait I (1954–1955)	S	Military action against the offshore islands	No	Yes	Taking Taiwan by force or giving up Taiwan	Yes	N/A	Not sure
	L	Military action against the offshore islands	No	Yes	Indefinitely postponing solving the Taiwan issue	Yes	N/A	Not sure
Taiwan Strait II (1958)	Y	Bombing the offshore islands	Yes	Yes	Do nothing	Yes	Yes	Yes
	K	Bombarding Jimmen (Quemoy) and Mazu (Matsu)	Yes	Yes	Direct military confrontation with U.S.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Taiwan Strait IV (1995–1996) ^{††}	S	Military exercises in the Taiwan Strait	Yes	Yes	Full-scale war; do nothing	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Y	Military exercises in the Taiwan Strait	Yes	Yes	Full-scale war; do nothing	Yes	Yes	Yes
China/India Border II (1962)	S	Diplomatic means	Yes	Yes	Appeasement	Yes	Yes	Yes
	L	Military preparation	Yes	Yes	Appeasement	Yes	Yes	Not sure
Ussuri River (1969)	Y	Military clash with USSR	Yes	Yes	Full-scale war; do nothing	Yes	Yes	Yes
	K	Ambush of Soviet troops	No	Yes	Escalation	Yes	N/A	No
Sino/Vietnam War (1978–1979)	D	Punitive war against Vietnam	No	Yes	Do nothing	Yes	N/A	No
	L	Punitive war against Vietnam	No	Yes	Do nothing	Yes	N/A	Not sure

*The five coders, designated as D, K, L, S, and Y in the table, are paired randomly to code the crises. The results shown here are derived independently by each coder and then debriefed with the co-investigator. Limitations on space do not permit us to fully report the details of the coders' responses. However, details of the coding results are available upon request.

[†]The answers are those to Question 1 in Appendix 1.

[‡]The answers are primarily based on those to Questions 2 and 3 in Appendix 1.

[§]The answers are based on the aggregated analysis of the coders' responses to Questions 4, 7–9, 11, 13, and 14 in Appendix 1.

^{||}The answers are primarily based on those to Questions 7 and 8 in Appendix 1.

[#]The NC rule is the noncompensatory rule. The answers are based on those to Questions 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 14 in Appendix 1.

^{**}The answers are based on the aggregated analysis of the coders' responses to Questions 5, 12, 15, and 16 in Appendix 1.

^{††}LEX rule is the lexicographic rule. The answers are based on the aggregated analysis of the coders' responses to Questions 15 and 16 in Appendix 1.

^{‡‡}Initially, a difference had existed between the coders on whether the decision making was a two-stage process. This was easily solved during the debriefing session when they reached a consensus that it was a two-stage process.

efficient logistical support; (4) completion of military reform and expansion of military forces; (5) acquisition of nuclear weapons; (6) competition for strategic searoutes or inland passes (e.g., Spratly Islands),²² and (7) military aids/sales to the neighboring Communist allies (e.g., North Korea, Vietnam, or Pakistan).

In a similar fashion, considerations in the economic realm include likely effects on national economy, trade, growth, employment, and other salient elements. The economic dimension may include references to any of the following issues: (1) the state of the Chinese domestic economy, e.g., is it regarded as being in bad shape as a result of long-lasting warfare, which would make internal reconstruction necessary, even critical, which in turn limits options?; (2) competition for areas with a potential large volume of strategic and profitable natural resources (e.g., oil, maritime resources); (3) damage as a result of natural disasters; (4) damage as a result of economic sanctions from major powers (e.g., the U.S. and the USSR); (5) rapid economic growth as a result of transformation toward a market-economy; (6) low production as a result of the centrally planned and inefficient economy; (7) deteriorating economic performance as a result of mismanagement (e.g., the Great Leap Forward); (8) economic aid/loans from developed countries; and (9) economic aid/loans to other developing countries.

Finally, the diplomatic dimension refers mainly to policy deliberations or other nonviolent actions over possible effects on external relations, e.g., verbal protest, threat, accusation, demand, and so on. In the Chinese context, the diplomatic dimension includes references (although not restricted) to the following criteria: (1) Chinese diplomatic relations during its early years being generally hostile, except for relations with other Communist countries; (2) Sino-Soviet relations, despite deterioration after Khrushchev came into power, remaining central in the 1950s and 1960s; (3) relations with neighboring countries (e.g., the Soviet Union, India, Vietnam, and so on) involving territorial disputes that had been left from Qing Dynasty and Chinese warlords; (4) détente with the U.S. changing the balance of power during the Cold War confrontation; (5) return to the UN as an original member and subsequent permanent seat in the Security Council; (6) expansion of diplomatic relations with the majority of existing states (through visits, meetings, etc.), inclusive of developed as well as developing countries; and (7) expansion of membership in a variety of global and regional organizations. It is important to note that most of the activities that have expanded and improved Chinese diplomatic relations around the world have also been effective means to isolate Taiwan, which seeks international recognition as an independent state.

Of course, in some cases the distinctions are not clear-cut; the dimensions can be intertwined and thus difficult to differentiate and that is an ongoing challenge to PH research. However, the initial reactions of decision makers in a situation of crisis are not presumed to be analytical in the sense of expected value calculations, which leads to a process of screening policy options along the rough lines of these dimensions. In sum, although the importance of such distinctions is not disputed, more work is needed on identification of rigorous criteria that differentiate the dimensions.

Coding for the respective dimensions, as described above, creates a clear map to follow in operationalizing the two-stage decision making process. This approach should enable rigorous testing of the poliheuristic model in the Chinese context. Evidence of consideration of policy alternatives along the four dimensions comes from the Chinese official media outlet (e.g., *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily]), other primary archives, documents, and secondary historical analyses. Most of the ma-

²² Competition for strategic pathways resembles that over natural resources and the issue of détente, which are mentioned later in relation to another decision making dimension. Each of these issues is acknowledged for the dimension along which it seems most naturally salient, but it remains possible that, in individual cases, one or more of these issues might be categorized differently. For example, depending upon the context of the case, access to strategic pathways might be regarded as more salient along the economic as opposed to military dimension.

terials are suggested in respective ICB case summaries, supplemented by Chinese and English sources that we deem important (see Appendix 2).²³

The “error terms” for this comparative study, reflected in the mixed results for some crises reported in the next section, might derive from other sources. It is likely that each coder’s perception and/or interpretation of the major response in a given crisis, to some degree, biases coding of the decision making process in spite of the fact that background information effectively limits distortion. Varying understandings among the coders of key terms in the coding questionnaire also may explain some of the differences in their answers.²⁴

Testing the Hypotheses

To test Hypothesis 1, the procedure should be able to decide whether the political dimension, as opposed to any of the others (e.g., diplomatic, military, economic, and so on.), takes precedence in the initial screening of policy alternatives. During the initial stage, time, biological constraints, and imperfect information create imperatives for leaders to resort to cognitive shortcuts to reduce the complexity of their decisions. Thus, to confirm Hypothesis 1, it is essential to show that the political dimension is greater in salience than any of the others noted above in deciding upon viable options at Stage I. To be specific, the options regarded as politically viable are those that may have higher utility values along the political dimension than the others. Although they are not optimal choices, due to their relatively higher value in the political dimension, these options are kept viable for the next phase of the decision making. In the meantime, the policy options eliminated or taken off the table are those that have low values as far as domestic politics is concerned, regardless of the magnitude of their values on other dimensions. The process of such selection and elimination illustrates the use of the noncompensatory, satisficing principle by the leaders toward this end. To falsify this hypothesis, a case must demonstrate that choices are made with considerations of dimensions other than domestic politics or with comprehensive consideration of all policy dimensions, which would suggest the use of a compensatory rule.

To confirm Hypothesis 2, the procedure should demonstrate, in contrast to the first stage, that decisions among the remaining alternatives are made along a more *diverse* set of dimensions. After elimination of alternatives that might cause severe political damage to decision makers, the political dimension is now not necessarily more salient than others. At this stage, decision makers tend to be able to analyze the situation in a more rational fashion. As a result, the procedure in Stage II decision making should reveal that, after the elimination of nonviable alternatives along the political dimension, decision makers tend to make the final policy adoption by rationalizing and balancing among dimensions. For instance, political and military considerations might be coequal in one case, but military are most important in another, and then in still other instance economic criteria seem most important, and so forth. Among the remaining alternatives after Stage I selection, the utility calculus will include multiple aspects along the military, economic, and dip-

²³ The length of the coding material ranges from 20 to 70 pages, depending on the available sources for each case. Due to limitations on space, not all materials used in coding are listed in Appendix 2. However, we can provide all of the sources upon request.

²⁴ For instance, in spite of detailed instructions, the coders still could have different interpretations of the meaning of a “two-stage” process (see Appendix 1): do the two stages refer to tangible phases, as distinguished by specific events? Or, do they refer to two intangible stages in the minds of the decision makers, which can only be inferred from their writings, speeches, memoirs, and the like? Such error terms, of course, go with the territory; the investigators, it almost goes without saying, could not give the coders further detailed explanations for the key terms—had we suggested our own understandings in advance, the coders would have been biased seriously from the beginning and any relatively high level of intercoder reliability would lack credibility. Debriefing succeeded in clarifying and solving controversies in some crises but not all.

lomatic dimensions, respectively. Since the political dimension is *not* always on top of the ranking at Stage II, such diversity of rankings would support the idea of either rational (utility maximizing) or lexicographical choice along a given dimension. The option with the highest value in the crisis situation will be chosen. To falsify this hypothesis, the final choice in Stage II must emerge from a preeminent emphasis on political concerns.

Table 2 shows the results. This is the coders' overall assessment of the decision-making processes on the basis of available information about the cases.²⁵ Hypothesis 1, that is, use of the noncompensatory rule from PH along the political dimension, is strongly confirmed. Eight of the nine crises in Table 2 confirm that decision makers tend to be political-loss averse at the beginning of crisis decision making and therefore regard domestic politics as the most critical policy dimension. The exception is Korean War III (1953). One of the coders holds that China's decision to conclude the armistice agreement with the U.S. was primarily due to its military loss in the battlefield and the discouraging domestic economy. Without such initial considerations, according to the coder, Beijing would have made no compromise and continued the war because this appeared to be the most politically viable option.

In addition, five out of the nine crises confirm the premise of Hypothesis 2, that is, two-stage decision making processes. These five crises include Korean War II (1950–1951) and III (1953), Taiwan Strait II (1958) and IV (1995–1996), and Sino-Indian Dispute II (1962). The coders all agree that major responses for these crises resulted from comprehensive consideration of the four dimensions, rather than the political dimension alone. For the Ussuri River Crisis (1969), the two coders did not concur with each other: while one regarded it as in line with the two-stage proposition of PH, the other viewed it simply as a one-stage process and, as a result, the test for Hypothesis 2 is not applicable.

For the remaining three crises, Korean War I (1950), Taiwan Strait I (1954–1955), and Sino-Vietnam War (1978–1979), PH's two-stage proposition is rejected in spite of the fact that their conclusions all seem to support Hypothesis 1. Since the two-stage proposition is the premise of Hypothesis 2, it cannot be tested for these cases. (However, the coders appear to support Hypothesis 1, which pertains to the noncompensatory rule used by decision makers.) Thus the results for these three crises do not fully support PH.

An important feature shared by these cases is that each, respectively, is the initial crisis rather than an intrawar crisis within the corresponding set from Table 1. For example, the Sino-Vietnam War (1978–1979) is the first crisis between China and Vietnam, followed by another three of lower intensity throughout the late 1980s (Ross, 1988). Placement of a crisis within a series might have significant impact on the process of decision making about the major response. In other words, decision makers might approach that decision for the initial crisis in a different way than for either an intrawar crisis or a later crisis with the same actor(s). Before the initial crisis within a protracted conflict, the domestic and international context might allow decision makers to foresee the impending event and thus they would not need to seek "cognitive short-cuts" to simplify their decision making process. For instance, China had long foreseen the need for military operations against the Taiwanese regime over the offshore islands in 1954, as both coders and many scholars on China's foreign relations (e.g., Whiting, 1960; Chen, 1994; Zhai, 1994) assert. As a result, Beijing's decision about its major response to the Korean War I crisis would tend to be seen as a one-stage process.

²⁵ It is impossible for any decision making model to actually replay the decision making process, so it is only a simulation of the history at best. Our coding here is no exception, but the answers provided by the coders do represent more than summaries of the coding materials.

In contrast, for intrawar crises or crises within protracted conflicts, the intensity and implications of the initial crisis, complicated by lack of reliable information, would constrain significantly the decision makers' ability to make such one-stage decisions. As an alternative, it would be easier for them to rely on the noncompensatory rule to eliminate politically unacceptable options prior to their balanced consideration along all dimensions. This happened in Korean War II and III. In Korean War II, the first intrawar crisis, the CCP leaders were still not certain whether troops would be sent to Korea, although they had considered seriously the option and even started military and political mobilizations. Not until the Korean and UN troops crossed the 38 Parallel did Beijing make the final decision in favor of military intervention, which consisted of a two-stage process of noncompensatory elimination followed by utility-based balancing (see sources in Appendix 2). Once feasible, it should be interesting to test this inference for other crises, such as Sino-Indian I (1959) within the protracted Sino-Indian Border disputes.

Finally, limited available information about the crises under scrutiny posed another difficulty for testing. While many more sources focus on the nine crises selected than the other six, only a few items are related directly to processes of decision making.²⁶

Conclusions

Poliheuristic Theory is a relatively new but already powerful theory of foreign policy decision making. It includes a two-stage decision making process (Mintz, 1993, a). In Stage I, given cognitive constraints, decision makers tend to use heuristics (or short-cuts) to simplify their decision matrices (Mintz, 1993, 2003a). This process follows the noncompensatory principle, which helps to eliminate any alternatives that are nonviable for the political well-being of decision makers. In Stage II, decision makers are able to analyze the situation along more diverse dimensions (e.g., military, economic, and diplomatic). The political dimension is not necessarily most salient at this stage. The final decision can be made from utility calculation or lexicographic evaluation along the dimension deemed most important. The outcome derived from the two-stage decision making process becomes the initial major response toward the crisis. Other actions subsequently may be taken, which join major response as part of the overall management of the crisis.

Our paper assesses the validity of PH in the context of Chinese foreign policy crises. In this initial effort, we derive two hypotheses from the stages of PH and test them based on cases coded by Chinese area experts. We use data from the ICB Project to identify initially 14 Chinese foreign policy crises, which facilitate controlled comparative analysis. We put forward a detailed coding procedure for the nine cases with sufficient data and find relatively high intercoder reliability even prior to debriefing. The decision making processes and outcomes in the nine crises generally confirm our hypotheses and tend to support PH in spite of mixed results in three of them.

For at least three reasons, PH's mixed performance should be regarded as rather impressive, given the extremely difficult challenges posed in this study. First, the cases included focus exclusively on crisis situations. Thus the deck might be regarded as "stacked" against PH because, regardless of the stage being considered, its priority on politically motivated foreign policy decision making should be *least* in evidence during situations where the risk of military violence is significantly above the norm.²⁷ Second, it may be especially difficult, in a crisis situation, to identify the

²⁶ For the remaining five crises that are not within the scope of the current study, more information about decision making awaits declassification by the Chinese government, publication of memoirs, and the like.

²⁷ A contrary case can be made: Military violence and potential lives lost can lead to *heightened* political calculations. For a more complete development of this position, see Redd (2002).

dividing line between the first and second stages of decision making. Third, and finally, the cases pertain to China, a state that hardly could be more distant, literally and figuratively, from Western models of decision making, whether taken from political psychology or rational choice. Given such considerations, the performance of PH in this study should be regarded as extremely encouraging toward further research. With respect to what the present study contributes to FPA in general, it is worth pausing to look at some of the points made by Vertzberger (2002:488) in a recent overview of the field. Two points stand out in relation to the present investigation.

First, with respect to ongoing arguments about rational choice, reality is “much more complex than reflected by the debate.” The analysis of Chinese foreign policy crises through the lens of PH reinforces this point. When the multiple stages of decision making, along with the multifaceted dimensions of interest, are taken into account, PH shows that decision making cannot be comprehended fully without some real depth of analysis. Most notably, it is possible to find evidence that confirms both the cognitive and rational orientations within the same case of decision making—just at different stages.

Second, Vertzberger (2002:490) calls for a more “context-sensitive” implementation for any given theory of human behavior. The present study affirms the wisdom of that approach. The two general hypotheses from PH find support through a data-intensive process of testing that focuses on decision making in nine specific cases of Chinese foreign policy crises. Once again, the nuances of the policy dimensions suggest that Vertzberger is on the right track in calling for context-sensitive theorizing and empirical research.

The next step on our research agenda is a comparative analysis of the Chinese crises with a set of Israeli crises, once again using cases from the ICB project. The research design will follow the same procedure as the present study and should help move forward the application of PH to foreign policy studies while also producing substantive knowledge about the two prominent, yet very different, states concerned. Like China, Israel is a state that tends to be cited as unique, so the case selection will continue to be at the challenging end for PH, as would be desirable from a scientific point of view.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire for Coders*

1. In this case, what was the major *policy* response/action made by the Chinese leaders to the initiation of the crisis?
2. Do you see the decision making process for the major response as a one-stage or two-stage process?
 - a. One-stage.
 - b. Two-stage.
 - c. Not sure.
 - d. Don't know.
3. With regard to Question #2, if this was a two-stage decision making process, what do you think was the dividing line between Stage I and Stage II?
4. What were the politically viable options for the decision makers?
5. With regard to Question #4, were these options rational for the decision makers in the sense of maximizing gains while minimizing losses?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
 - c. Not sure.
 - d. Don't know.
6. What do you think were the most prominent reasons why the decision makers made their decision?

7. What do you think might have been the *most salient* politically *unacceptable* options that may conceivably have been considered by the CCP decision makers in this particular foreign policy crisis?
8. Did the CCP decision makers appear to eliminate these politically *unacceptable* options immediately?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
 - c. Not sure.
 - d. Don't know.
9. At the initial consideration of policy alternatives during the crisis, did the potential loss along the political dimension tend to be more salient to the decision makers than that along other dimensions?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
 - c. Not sure.
 - d. Don't know.
10. In this particular case, what scenarios represented potential *political loss* for the CCP leaders?
11. Did the fear of or concerns about political loss take precedence in the initial elimination of policy alternatives?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
 - c. Not sure.
 - d. Don't know.
12. If we arbitrarily categorize the dimensions as follows, on which did decision makers tend to ground their decisions: political, economic, military, or diplomatic? Please briefly justify your answer.
13. Do you think that, from the decision makers' point of view, consideration along the political dimension can be substituted for by another dimension (i.e., economic, military or diplomatic)?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
 - c. Not sure.
 - d. Don't know.
14. Do you agree that decision makers tended to give more consideration to the political dimension at the outset of the crisis?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
 - c. Not sure.
 - d. Don't know.
15. Do you think the final choice among the politically viable options was calculated on the basis of a more diverse set of dimensions, including diplomatic, economic, and/or military?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
 - c. Not sure.
 - d. Don't know.
16. Was it a utility-based (i.e., conventionally rational based on cost-benefit analysis, as opposed to normative/moral) calculation?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
 - c. Not sure.
 - d. Don't know.

*The options of "not sure" or "don't know" are offered in the questionnaire for three reasons: (a) the available coding material might contain contending points of view; (b) the coders might hold views different from those in the coding material; and (c) the coders might deem the available material insufficient to decide the decision making processes in some of the cases.

Appendix 2: Coding Sources

Korean War I

- *Sources in Chinese:*

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• *Sources in English:*

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