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Introduction

The year 331 B.C. was a remarkable moment in history. It was then that Alexander confronted the Persian king Darius III at Gaugamela, an encounter that sealed the fate of one empire and heralded the rise of another. Yet it might have been otherwise. Darius had offered generous terms before the battle, including territorial concessions and a treaty of friendship and alliance. Darius also commanded a vast army, including much more cavalry than Alexander could field. Because Darius's terms were so generous, and his forces so forbidding, Alexander's most senior general, Parmenion, urged him to accept the offer. Alexander, however, refused to compromise. Confident of success, he rejected Darius's terms and laid claim to the entire Persian Empire. Subsequently, in the wake of his stunning victory at Gaugamela, Alexander pronounced himself the king of Asia.[1]

In the study of international relations, we often assume that leaders are hemmed in by broad international structures that lie beyond their control. More specifically, scholars frequently tout the balance of power, as well as international norms and institutions, as powerful constraints on the options that leaders have.[2] In this view, leaders themselves lack much agency or importance; they merely respond to the incentives provided by the environment. Nonetheless, leaders sometimes choose remarkably ambitious courses in foreign policy, as Alexander did, even when the international environment offers reasons for restraint. When these ambitious efforts succeed, they can have revolutionary effects, giving rise to new distributions of power and new forms of

[1] A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 76–85.

[2] I am referring here to structural theories that take the existence of states as given and posit international structures as constraints on the agency of these states, rather than theories that are concerned with how international structures actually generate states. On the distinction, see Alexander Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (1987): 342.

cooperation. Even when these efforts fail, they can still have important consequences, providing cautionary tales to others and reinforcing the status quo. In short, international structures still leave much room for leaders to matter in international politics. If structures "shape and shove," as Kenneth Waltz suggests, leaders are quite capable of shoving back.[3]

This book focuses on two twentieth-century leaders who "shoved back" in very different ways: Mao Zedong and Jawaharlal Nehru. Both Mao and Nehru came to power in the early years of the Cold War, confronting an international system dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. Under Mao, China challenged this system through military action. In fact, Mao ordered attacks on the armed forces of both superpowers during his time in power, and in doing so he inflamed and reshaped military conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and on the Sino-Soviet border. Nehru, in contrast, launched a diplomatic challenge to the Cold War system. Calling for nonalignment and disarmament, Nehru's India sought to reshape the international order through a combination of self-restraint and vigorous diplomacy. In different ways, both Mao and Nehru made concerted efforts to remake their worlds rather than simply accepting them as they were.

Such assertiveness is puzzling because the international structures that Mao and Nehru faced offered them good reasons to proceed more cautiously. Mao's military assertiveness, for example, flouted the bipolar distribution of power in the Cold War. Notwithstanding its large population, Maoist China was never a match for the superpowers in terms of material power, either in economic or military terms. In 1950, for example, China's gross domestic product (GDP) represented only 4.5 percent of the world total, compared with 27.3 percent for the United States and 9.6 percent for the Soviet Union.[4] Although Mao's China could field an impressively large army, it was technologically backward and remained severely deficient in terms of firepower, armor, transport, and air and naval support, as described in the chapters that follow. China also lagged behind the superpowers by a wide margin in the nuclear sphere: it conducted its first nuclear test only after Mao had been in power for 15 years, and it lacked any kind of intercontinental delivery system until after Mao's death. From the standpoint of material power, Maoist China had excellent reasons to bide its time and build up its strength rather than challenging superpowers on the battlefield.[5]

Nehru's bold diplomacy, in turn, is puzzling if one examines the normative and institutional context in which it was conducted. That is, Nehru's India

[3] Kenneth Waltz, "Reflections on *Theory of International Politics*: A Response to My Critics," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 343.

[4] Angus Maddison, *The World Economy* (Paris: OECD, 2006), vol. 1, 263.

[5] Note that even "offensive realist" theories that conceive of states as fundamentally expansionist depict leaders as highly sensitive to the balance of power, seeking to expand only when material conditions are favorable. See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 37.

proved willing to cooperate even when the relevant international norms and institutions offered little assurance that other states would reciprocate. After war broke out between India and Pakistan over Kashmir in 1947, for example, Nehru agreed to bring the conflict before the nascent United Nations Security Council, even though India was considerably stronger than Pakistan at that point and even though there was no assurance that the council would take India's side in the conflict. Subsequently, Nehru became an enthusiastic proponent of nuclear disarmament and deliberately restrained India's own efforts in the nuclear sphere, even as other states forged ahead with nuclear weapons programs and resisted meaningful restraints on their own capabilities. In short, rather than simply relying on extant patterns of cooperation, Nehru's India cooperated proactively in an effort to build new ones.[6]

What inspired Mao and Nehru to chart such strikingly ambitious courses in foreign policy? It is tempting to treat these two leaders as singular historical figures and to attribute their policies to unique aspects of their personalities and circumstances. This book, however, takes a different approach. It develops a theory that explains the varying willingness of leaders to challenge international structures and then assesses how well that theory can explain some of the most crucial choices that Mao and Nehru made. By employing a theoretical approach, this book situates Mao and Nehru's decisions within a common conceptual framework and facilitates direct comparison of two leaders who have traditionally been studied in isolation. At the same time, the theoretical concepts developed in this study may also be applied to additional cases in the future, allowing broader claims to be made about the theory's explanatory power.[7] Indeed, if the theory developed here sheds light on some of Mao and Nehru's most important decisions, it is worth asking whether it can also illuminate the choices made by other leaders who have sought to overcome structural constraints. I return to this point in the conclusion.

THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF

This book argues that both bold and conservative foreign policies can be explained by what I call the "national efficacy beliefs" of individual leaders.

[6] Note that even theories that stress the role of state preferences (as opposed to international institutions) in international cooperation contend that states are constrained by the preferences of other states and, in particular, that states will not cooperate unless they perceive convergent interests with others. See Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 520–21.

[7] In this respect, this study resembles several books that have sought to explain Chinese foreign policy in theoretical terms and then suggested additional cases to which the theory could be applied. See Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 248–52; Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 301–5; Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 263–64.

As explained in the next chapter, these beliefs are convictions about the ability of one's state to accomplish specific military and diplomatic tasks, as opposed to estimates of the material power it possesses. In a sense, these beliefs are perceptions of national proficiency in different areas of foreign policy. My focus on efficacy beliefs builds on decades of research in psychology and comparative politics, which has produced a vast body of literature demonstrating the impact of such beliefs on human behavior in a wide variety of domains. My goal in this book is to show how the concept of efficacy beliefs can illuminate the making of foreign policy as well.

I identify two kinds of national efficacy in particular. *Martial efficacy* refers to the ability to overcome material disadvantages on the battlefield, whereas *moral efficacy* denotes the ability to elicit cooperation from other states through diplomacy. The beliefs that leaders hold about their states' martial and moral efficacy, in turn, shape how they approach structural constraints in the international system. Martial efficacy beliefs influence how leaders approach the distribution of material power and, more specifically, the challenge of military conflict with a stronger opponent. Whereas weak martial efficacy beliefs counsel restraint in such situations, more robust beliefs convince leaders that they can prevail even when the balance of power is unfavorable. Moral efficacy beliefs, similarly, shape how leaders approach costly commitments when international norms and institutions that could support cooperation are weak or nonexistent. Leaders with weak senses of moral efficacy shy away from such commitments for fear of being exploited. In contrast, those with stronger beliefs are more confident that cooperation on their part can induce comparable or greater restraint from other states. They are thus more likely to cooperate, even when the international environment offers little assurance that other states will reciprocate.

This theoretical framework does much to explain the very different courses charted by China under Mao and India under Nehru. As subsequent chapters will make clear, Mao and Nehru held very different senses of national efficacy, differences that correspond to the contrasting means through which they came to power. Having led the Chinese communists to victory over more powerful enemies in the revolution, Mao took power with a great sense of martial efficacy but a much weaker sense of moral efficacy. Having helped topple the British Raj through nonviolent resistance and remonstration, Nehru took office imbued with a strong sense of moral efficacy but much less confidence in the military sphere. These very different senses of national efficacy, in turn, played important roles in the courses that Mao and Nehru charted in foreign policy. Mao's great sense of martial efficacy was instrumental in the decisions he made to challenge the United States in Korea and Vietnam, whereas his weak sense of moral efficacy made him much more cautious in the diplomatic sphere. Nehru's strong sense of moral efficacy helped inspire his decision to approach the United Nations during the first Kashmir war and his ambitious campaign for nuclear disarmament, but his weaker sense of martial efficacy made him much less assertive in the military realm.

CASE SELECTION: WHY MAO AND NEHRU?

This book focuses on Mao and Nehru not only because their foreign policies are puzzling but also for reasons of methodology and research design. There are four points that I wish to highlight in this regard. First, because this study represents the first attempt to investigate the effect of efficacy beliefs on foreign policy, it is useful to focus on two relatively dominant leaders as a means of simplifying the analysis.[8] Most of the time, Mao and Nehru's policy preferences powerfully shaped the foreign policies that their states adopted, albeit with a few exceptions that I note in the chapters that follow. It thus should be relatively easy to assess whether their efficacy beliefs actually mattered in the development of policy. If we can demonstrate that efficacy beliefs shape the policies adopted by states with predominant leaders, then the next step is to ask whether and how they exert an influence when authority over foreign policy is more fragmented. I discuss how we might take this next step in the next chapter and in the conclusion.

Second, comparing Mao and Nehru allows for wide variation in the independent variable of interest in this study: national efficacy beliefs. As explained earlier, both Mao and Nehru played important parts in the stunning successes that brought them to power, and these experiences instilled strong, but very different, senses of national efficacy in them. Whereas Mao came to power with a great sense of martial efficacy and a weak sense of moral efficacy, Nehru was just the reverse. This wide variation, in turn, implies widely varying policy choices, as explained in the next chapter, which may be observed empirically.

Third, because Mao's China and Nehru's India were quite similar in a number of respects, this study compares choices that were made under broadly comparable conditions. Perhaps most importantly, both states were highly populous but decidedly poor when Mao and Nehru took office. They were thus quite similar in terms of latent material power. Although China led India in total population (547 million to 359 million) in 1950, China's per capita GDP was only 70 percent of the Indian figure at that time.[9] As a result, China and India's shares of global GDP at midcentury were roughly equal at 4.5 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively. In fact, India actually led China in nuclear technology in the early 1950s, constructing in 1956 the first nuclear reactor to go critical in Asia outside the Soviet Union. In short, it is difficult to argue that material resources by themselves can account for the very different foreign policies adopted by Mao's China and Nehru's India.

Mao and Nehru also shared similar predicaments in other respects. Both men were nationalist icons of new states, speaking for peoples who had suffered

[8] On predominant leaders as foreign policy decision-making units, see Margaret G. Hermann, Thomas Preston, Baghat Korany, and Timothy M. Shaw, "Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 83–131.

[9] Maddison, *World Economy*, vol. 1, 213, 263–64.

under foreign domination while nursing proud memories of former glory. As such, both leaders sought to modernize their countries and to revive some semblance of their earlier prominence. At the same time, both India and China endured problematic births as modern nation-states, creating vexing territorial conflicts with Pakistan and Taiwan, respectively, that endure to this day. Lastly, because both states were established in the wake of World War II, Mao and Nehru confronted the same international system – the same Cold War world – after taking power. In a variety of respects, Mao and Nehru faced comparable challenges on taking power.

Of course, there were many important differences in the contexts in which Mao and Nehru operated, and some of these were important influences on the foreign policies that they adopted. At the global level, India was a founding member of the United Nations, whereas mainland China was excluded from that body until the early 1970s. Regionally, East Asia became a Cold War battleground much earlier than South Asia, particularly with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Domestically, Mao presided over a communist state that was relatively insulated from popular pressure, whereas Nehru led a parliamentary system (albeit one that his party dominated) that held regular elections. In addition, the Chinese military under Mao was considerably larger than the Indian military under Nehru, a legacy of the armed struggle through which the Chinese communists came to power. One could also point to cultural dissimilarities between China and India as informing the very different foreign policies that they chose.

The presence of potentially confounding variables such as these is a common problem for studies that rely on a limited number of case studies. This book, however, offers a compelling means of addressing this problem and approximating a "controlled comparison."[10] Specifically, because my focus is individual leaders, I compare Mao and Nehru not only with each other but also with their own colleagues. The most important individuals in this respect are Liu Shaoqi and Vallabhbhai Patel, respectively. As Mao's heir apparent, Liu participated in important foreign policy decisions before he was purged in the Cultural Revolution. As Nehru's deputy prime minister, Patel was involved in some of the seminal decisions in Indian foreign policy before his death in 1950. Liu and Patel thus faced many of the same foreign policy challenges that Mao and Nehru did, but they did so with national efficacy beliefs that differed in crucial respects. Although Liu participated in the Chinese Revolution, he played only a limited military role in it, and he did not derive the same level of martial confidence from this experience as Mao did. Patel helped lead the Indian independence struggle, but he did not emerge from it with Nehru's powerful sense of moral efficacy. By comparing Mao with Liu, and Nehru with Patel, we can assess how varying efficacy beliefs influence the policy preferences

[10] On the elusive ideal of a controlled comparison in qualitative research, see Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 151–79.

of political leaders while controlling for all of the differences between Mao's China and Nehru's India.[11]

Lastly, the relative abundance of primary and secondary source material on Maoist China and Nehruvian India means that there is ample opportunity for careful process tracing in the case studies that follow. In this way, we can ascertain whether and how Mao and Nehru's national efficacy beliefs played a role in policymaking, testing not only predictions about foreign policy decisions but also about how those decisions were actually made.[12] The primary sources that I have drawn on most heavily for this purpose include *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao* (*The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Founding of the Nation*) and the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* series. In addition, this book draws on new documentary evidence gathered through my own archival research. In China, I visited both the Foreign Ministry Archive in Beijing and the Jiangsu Provincial Archive in Nanjing, both of which have made new historical documents available to foreign scholars in recent years.[13] In India, I visited both the National Archives and the Nehru Memorial Library in New Delhi, focusing on files transferred from the Ministry of External Affairs at the former and on Nehru's personal correspondence at the latter.[14] My research on India also benefited enormously from visits to the British National Archives and the British Library in London, which were extremely helpful for gaining insight into Indian foreign policy in the years immediately following independence, as well as to the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, which contained materials that shed light on Nehru's policies and U.S.-Indian relations in the early 1960s. My research has also benefited greatly from interviews and conversations with retired officials and academics in both China and India, a number of which are cited in the pages that follow.

[11] One might also compare Mao with Zhou Enlai, but this comparison would be less illuminating because Zhou's military experience in the revolution was extensive and because Zhou was much less willing than Liu to question Mao's judgment. As Roderick MacFarquhar has written, Mao "always felt able to count on [Zhou's] obedient acceptance of his directives, even when they went against the grain." See Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution: Contradictions among the People, 1956–57* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 9. Mao's personal doctor even called Zhou "absolutely, obsequiously obedient" to Mao. See Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York: Random House, 1994), 258.

[12] On the utility of process tracing for testing causal mechanisms, see George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 205–32.

[13] On the recent opening of Chinese archives, see Christian Ostermann, "Archival Thaw in China," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* no. 16 (Fall 2007/Winter 2008), 1–6. I am indebted to Wang Dong for calling my attention to documents now available at the Jiangsu Provincial Archive in particular. For a list of the relevant files, see Wang Dong, "The Quarrelling Brothers: New Chinese Archives and a Reappraisal of the Sino-Soviet Split, 1959–1962," Cold War International History Project, Working Paper #49 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005), 75–77.

[14] Note that the complete collection of Nehru's personal papers after 1947 remains generally unavailable to scholars at this time. Even so, the Nehru Memorial Library does make available many files of correspondence between Nehru and a wide range of officials, family members, and friends while he was prime minister.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Following this introduction, this book begins in Chapter 2 with a more extended presentation of the theoretical argument. As explained earlier, the goal here is to develop a common framework that may be used to compare Mao and Nehru with each other, as well as with their colleagues, and that may also be applied to additional cases in the future. The chapter begins by explaining the concept of national efficacy beliefs in more detail, drawing on previous work on efficacy beliefs in both psychology and political science. It then identifies the specific kinds of national efficacy of interest in this study, introducing the concepts of martial and moral efficacy in particular. Next, the chapter outlines the methodology that I employ to measure leaders' perceptions of martial and moral efficacy, building on the preceding discussion. The chapter then sets forth a set of hypotheses concerning how such perceptions should influence the making of foreign policy, focusing on specific types of military and diplomatic decisions. It concludes by describing how these hypotheses will be tested in subsequent chapters and noting important alternative explanations to be considered.

Chapters 3 through 5 (Part I) focus on Maoist China and proceed chronologically through history. The point here is not to narrate Mao's life and times; instead, each chapter represents a distinct analytical step in testing the theoretical argument outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 is devoted to measuring the independent variable, documenting the national efficacy beliefs that Mao and Liu developed as they rose to power through the Chinese Revolution. In a lengthy exploration of his revolutionary works, I find that Mao's martial confidence developed gradually over time, reaching its apex only in the latter half of the 1940s. Liu, in contrast, never developed a comparable level of martial confidence, which accords with his much more circumscribed role in the military side of the revolution. Neither Mao nor Liu evinced a strong sense of moral efficacy, and Mao in particular lacked much faith in his state's ability to elicit cooperation from its adversaries.

Chapters 4 and 5 then test the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2 by asking whether Mao and Liu's national efficacy beliefs shaped their approaches to foreign policy after they came to power. Chapter 4 focuses on military and diplomatic decisions made shortly after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, considering Mao's approach to the Korean War in particular. On the military side, the chapter assesses the role of Mao's martial efficacy beliefs in China's decision to intervene in the conflict in the fall of 1950. On the diplomatic side, it explores the impact of Mao's moral efficacy beliefs on China's wartime diplomacy and, in particular, its decision to reject cease-fire negotiations in early 1951. Chapter 5 then demonstrates that Mao's military boldness and diplomatic conservatism extended well beyond the Korean conflict. In the military realm, it focuses on Mao's decision to involve China's armed forces in the Vietnam War. The analysis here draws on evidence from Chinese archives that offers new insight into Mao's thinking

about this conflict while also calling attention to Liu's greater reluctance to deploy Chinese forces to Vietnam. The second half of the chapter, in turn, focuses on diplomatic decision making during the same period, examining Mao's conservative approach to nuclear arms control in the mid-1960s. The analysis here illuminates a particularly puzzling but understudied decision in PRC foreign policy: the decision to back away from one of China's central disarmament proposals after the outside world began to show some interest in it in 1965.

Chapters 6 through 8 (Part II) focus on Nehru's India and rely on a similar analytical division of labor. Chapter 6 documents the national efficacy beliefs that Nehru and Patel developed over the course of the Indian independence struggle. Starting with an in-depth exploration of Nehru's pre-independence writings, it finds that he took office with a strong sense that India could play an important role in shaping the emerging international order. Patel, in contrast, took less interest in diplomacy, and he never exhibited Nehru's degree of confidence in India's diplomatic capabilities. Neither leader possessed a particularly strong sense of martial efficacy upon taking power, as one would expect given their total lack of military experience at that point.

Chapters 7 and 8 then return to hypothesis testing and assess whether Nehru and Patel's different national efficacy beliefs influenced their approaches to foreign policy following Indian independence. Chapter 7 explores how Nehru and Patel handled the military and diplomatic challenges that accompanied the 1947–1948 war with Pakistan over Kashmir, drawing on archival evidence from the British Library and the U.K. National Archives. On the diplomatic side, it assesses the role of Nehru's moral efficacy beliefs in India's bold decision to approach the UN Security Council in late 1947. On the military side, it assesses the impact of Nehru's martial efficacy beliefs on India's cautious prosecution of the war as it unfolded in 1948. Chapter 8 then explores how well this pattern of diplomatic boldness and military restraint was sustained after the Kashmir conflict. In the diplomatic sphere, it considers how Nehru's moral efficacy beliefs inspired his ambitious approach to nuclear disarmament, relying on evidence from Indian archives and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. In the military realm, the chapter explores Nehru's efforts to secure India's interests in Tibet and on the Sino-Indian border. The discussion here analyzes both Nehru's long-standing military restraint vis-à-vis China and his decision to adopt a more forceful approach in September 1962.

Chapter 9 concludes the book by summarizing the findings and then exploring their broader implications. The latter discussion begins by explaining how the findings comport with a number of recent studies that have explored the psychology and ideas that informed Mao and Nehru's foreign policy choices. It then considers possible directions for future research and highlights several distinct questions in this regard. Lastly, the chapter considers the implications of this book's findings for several distinct bodies of literature in the study of international relations, as well as our understanding of foreign policy decision making more generally.

2

National Efficacy Beliefs and Foreign Policy

It is popular in the study of international relations to assume that individual leaders possess little agency in the face of international constraints. Like many assumptions, this one is an obvious oversimplification, but it can be useful and often seems justified. Nonetheless, assuming away the agency of leaders leaves us poorly positioned to understand why they sometimes *do* choose to go against the grain of the international system. Or, as Richard Samuels has succinctly put it, "[W]e know too much about constraints and not enough about choices."[1] To redress this gap, this chapter assumes that political elites do possess some freedom to choose in foreign policy and develops a theoretical framework to explain how they perceive and relate to systemic constraints.[2]

More specifically, the focus here is on two basic ways in which leaders try to improve their state's position despite unpropitious international circumstances. When I use words like "ambitious" and "bold," or "restrained" and "conservative," in the pages that follow, I am referring to whether or not leaders are engaging in these kinds of behaviors. First, leaders may defy the distribution of power by challenging stronger states or coalitions on the battlefield. Such behavior, although not the norm, is hardly a rarity. In fact, states have launched wars against significantly stronger adversaries at least 11 times since World War II alone.[3] When successful, these challenges can alter material balances or geographical advantages, sometimes only incrementally but sometimes more dramatically.

[1] Richard J. Samuels, *Machiavelli's Children: Leaders and Their Legacies in Italy and Japan* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), x.

[2] For a more extended critique of the tendency to assume away the agency of leaders, see Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollock, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (Spring 2001): 107–33.

[3] T. V. Paul identifies ten such cases between 1945 and 1993. See T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3–4. Since 1993, Pakistan's attack on India in the Kargil War of 1999 represents another case.