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China's Military Foreign Policy: Rationales for Interference in International Conflicts

This paper aims to shed light on the rationales behind China's dual approaches to military foreign policy decision-making in major international conflicts – military aid and military intervention. Due to growing instability in the international environment, epitomised by Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East, China's stance has become increasingly significant in shaping conflict dynamics. By analysing 99 major international conflicts spanning seven decades of the regime's governance since its inception (1949–2021), this study employs a binary multivariate logistic model to assess the determinants of China's military foreign policies. The findings reveal that specific environmental factors drive these decisions, with their relative importance shifting as conflict conditions evolve. Moreover, the systemic evidence presented in this study not only corroborates findings from previous case studies on Chinese military policy but also tests the explanatory power of major international relations theories, offering broader insights into China's strategic behaviour.

Keywords
China, The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Military Aid, Military Intervention, Decision-Making Rationales

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Introduction

A state's strategic planning and decision-making concerned with a major international conflict[1] involves the analysis of other consequential states' possible military reactions that might affect the conflict's development. These military reactions *per se* are the foreign states' policies toward major international conflicts, and there are rationales behind their respective adoptions. However, it is often not enough for policymakers to plan and decide strategically based merely on knowing the potential rationales that might enact a specific military policy of a foreign state; more importantly, they need to know how strong (i.e., the likelihood of policy adoption) each of these rationales is in that foreign state's political leadership's calculation, whereby policymakers can predict the foreign state's reaction based upon these rationales' influence according to the specific conflict's nature[2].

Historically, states have intervened in support of one party against others (e.g., the Kingdom of France in the Thirty Years' War[3], the House of Habsburg in the War of the Spanish Succession[4]). However, since the end of World War II, a new form of military intervention[5] has emerged: interventions under United Nations peacekeeping mandates (Connaughton, 2001). While such interventions are officially neutral, ceasefires often benefit the weaker side in a conflict[6]. Military aid, on the other hand, refers to a third-party state providing military equipment, advisors, training, or a limited number of combatants not organised as a military force formation to support one party in a conflict against others.

The relationship between these two military foreign policies is that a traditional military intervention is often accompanied by military aid, although this is not a necessity in peacekeeping interventions. This is because, on the one hand, a foreign intervention force typically requires local assistance to effectively engage in combat[7], while the party benefiting from the intervention must continue fighting alongside its foreign patron to maintain its legitimacy[8] and secure a stronger position in future negotiations[9]. On the other hand, in both of these scenarios, the intervening state needs military aid to materially support or reward its client.

As a consequential global power today, China's rising influence has become a key factor shaping the dynamics of international politics, particularly in major international conflicts (e.g., the Chinese State Council Information Office (SCIO)'s white paper report *Chinese*

Defence Policy in the New Era indicated that the PLA should "维护国家海外利益 [safeguard the overseas national interests]" (State Council Information Office, 2019)). Historically, the CCP has been involved in five military interventions and provided military aid in 29 of the 99 major international conflicts over the last seven decades. This article examines two forms of Chinese military foreign policy: *military intervention* (deploying organised forces to influence a conflict) and *military aid* (providing equipment, advisors, or training). Through uncovering the rationales behind these military policy decisions and, more importantly, revealing how the relative significance of these rationales shifts in response to changes in key features of major international conflicts, this research equips foreign policy practitioners with a dynamic tool for assessing the evolving risks associated with the CCP's military foreign policy decisions.

The paper is structured into six sections. The first examines the relevant literature and identifies key research gaps. The second introduces the theoretical framework and methodological approach. The third and fourth sections outline the statistical models, hypotheses, and case-sampling procedures. The fifth section reports the model results and interprets the findings. Finally, the concluding section discusses the study's limitations.

1. Literature Review

Existing research on the rationales and principles behind the CCP's military foreign policy decision-making predominantly adopts a case-oriented approach. These studies focus on the analysis of either a single specific international conflict or a comparison of several cases within a distinct historical or analytical context[10].

Driven by China's growing leverage in global conflicts, academic interest in the CCP's strategic policy-making has surged in recent years. This trend is evident in typical case studies examining regions such as the Korean Peninsula (Chen, 2024), the Ukraine War (Shin, 2022), the Himalayan regions (Kurita, 2022), the two Iraq Wars (Wu, 2004), the Afghanistan War (Encarnation & Christine, 2023), the Syrian Civil War (Niu & Ali, 2018), the Vietnam War (Zhang, 2015), and various African conflicts (Hutchison, 1976), etc. Methodologically, studies following this approach generally use findings from various geopolitical (Kissinger, 2011), geoeconomic (Woods, 2008), or other reductionist

analyses[11] to identify underlying military foreign policy rationales, such as security concerns or ideological solidarity. Scholars often seek to uncover a hidden rationale behind the CCP's foreign policy or to interpret their findings through strategic interests outlined in specific CCP publications[12] or leadership speeches[13]. This includes directly examining the CCP leadership's rhetoric and writings, conducting foreign policy document analysis, or quantifying different arguments in articles in state-owned media outlets like the *People's Daily*.

Despite the variety of these case studies, the question of whether – or under what circumstances – the CCP will militarily aid or intervene in ongoing or future conflicts r`pemains at their core. Put differently, this involves identifying the determinant rationales behind the CCP's military responses to conflict, as mooted in this paper. A similar approach can be found in Mullenbach and Matthews' research on the motivations behind United States' interventions in intrastate conflicts (Mullenbach & Matthews, 2008). However, key differences remain between the two studies; for instance, the criterion for case selection in the former relies on conflict type (intrastate conflicts), whereas this research is based on conflict scale (defined as over 1,000 battle-related deaths in a year).

While existing scholarship has undoubtedly enhanced our understanding of the CCP's decision-making regarding major international conflicts, several analytical gaps in current case studies remain to be addressed. These limitations can be categorized into two dimensions: methodological and epistemological.

From a methodological perspective, many case-oriented studies often focus narrowly on specific conflicts, offering limited generalizability regarding CCP decisions across other similar conflicts. More importantly, many works highlight only a single dimension of rationale, such as energy security, economic sustainability, or sovereignty. But what happens when these rationales conflict within the same international conflict? If the CCP chooses a particular military foreign policy based on one rationale over another in a specific case, does this preference apply to other cases as well? Moreover, if one rationale consistently appears in all cases involving China's specific foreign policy, can it be considered a necessary condition for that policy? Is it also a sufficient condition? For example, if the CCP provides military aid in a conflict due to security concerns outweighing economic ones, does this mean economic concerns can never outweigh security concerns in other cases? Even if security concerns drive all

instances of China's military aid, other factors—such as legitimacy or ethnic considerations—may still significantly shape the ultimate decision.

From an epistemological perspective, much of the existing research in this area employs an `interpretivist approach (e.g., Kane, 2001). However, a key question arises: how can we ensure that official records, such as CCP foreign policy documents or leadership speeches, genuinely represent actual intentions?[14] Political language – inherent to such documents – is not strictly factual; rather, it consists of rhetoric that can be strategically deployed. While analytical methods like intertextuality may demonstrate chronological consistency in statements, this only indicates that the CCP has repeated the same messaging; it provides no insight into the reliability of the statements or whether they genuinely reflect the CCP's intentions.[15] Game theory suggests that "cheap talk" can be deceptive or irrelevant. Even if a statement is honest and true, its significance depends on the conflict's context. A valid rationale may be inconsequential, while the true driver of foreign policy lies in the state's vital interests in that conflict. Thus, declared intentions remain mere words until actions confirm them. Likewise, a claim of restraint gains credibility only when the state demonstrably halts the action it pledged to avoid.

This research seeks to address these two limitations through two complementary approaches. First, to counter the lack of a general methodological framework, it systematically examines the rationales underlying the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) military policies by comprehensively analysing all relevant cases between 1 October 1949 and 31 December 2021. Second, to resolve uncertainties regarding the validity of declared rationales, it adopts a res non verba (deeds over words) approach, relying on empirical evidence of observable behaviour rather than on rhetoric or case-specific interpretations.

By combining these approaches, the study follows a logical positivist strategy that grounds its arguments in systematic empirical evidence rather than isolated case studies. It also minimises subjective elements in the analytical process by avoiding methods that rely heavily on interpretation, such as discourse analysis, thematic analysis, or other forms of document-based qualitative inquiry. Instead, the research focuses exclusively on CCP foreign policy actions in international conflicts (ICs) and the contextual conditions under which they occurred, thereby excluding the political rhetoric contained in official documents.

This approach provides a stronger empirical basis for identifying relationships between CCP behaviour and environmental factors. Foreign policy actions in a specific IC constitute concrete and verifiable events, whereas official statements frequently serve rhetorical purposes rather than reflect actual policy preferences. Likewise, environmental factors represent observable realities, while theoretical interpretations of international relations remain inherently subjective. To draw an analogy, a tailor measures a customer's body directly rather than estimating their size from a shadow.

2. Research Framework and Methodology

> *"That of voluntary actions the will is the necessary cause, and by this which is said, the will is also caused by other things whereof it disposeth not, it followeth, that voluntary actions have all of them necessary causes, and therefore are necessitated."*
>
> - Thomas Hobbes

The theoretical premise of this study draws on Hobbes's proposition of a "cause-will-action" chain, suggesting that actions reflect underlying intentions. Accordingly, the central task is to identify the dominant rationale driving a Chinese military policy decision – the "will" – that outweighs alternative motivations and possible courses of action.

Translating this logic into empirical analysis presents a challenge because a wide range of factors – the "causes" – may influence the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) decision-making process in response to international conflicts. These factors are conceptualised as "environmental factors," referring to the objective conditions associated with major conflicts in the international system. To reduce analytical complexity and improve explanatory leverage, this study concentrates on a select group of theoretically relevant and historically persistent environmental factors that are most likely to influence CCP military foreign policy behaviour.

In this context, international relations (IR) theories serve as a guiding map to identify the potential environmental factors scrutinised by the CCP regime during the outbreak of international conflicts. However, the assumptions of different IR theories are often

in conflict with one another; even within the same theoretical school, the arguments of one branch can contradict those of another on the same subject. For instance, within the context of Taiwan, there is a stark contrast between defensive realist Charles Glaser and offensive realist John Mearsheimer regarding whether the United States should militarily intervene should the CCP attack Taiwan. The former opposes the idea, while the latter supports it. Although both are eminent IR scholars belonging to the same structural realist tradition, their disagreement highlights the even greater contradictions found across distinct theoretical paradigms, such as the divergent views between liberalism and realism.

These theoretical contradictions complicate deductive analysis, as an argument consistent with one theory may directly contradict the predictions of another. The Soviet–Afghan War provides an illustrative example. From an offensive realist perspective, China, as a relatively weak middle power at the time – should have remained outside the strategic competition between the Soviet Union and the United States. In contrast, defensive realism would predict that Beijing would support the U.S.-backed efforts in Afghanistan to balance against the more immediate Soviet threat.

Historical evidence supports the latter prediction. During the war, China cooperated with the United States against the Soviet Union despite the significant asymmetry in power between Beijing and Washington. This outcome was not determined by the internal logical coherence of either theoretical argument, but by the empirical reality of Chinese behaviour. The case, therefore, highlights a central epistemological assumption of this research: empirical actions provide the most reliable evidence of actors' underlying motivations and, simultaneously, serve as a test for competing theoretical explanations. Observable behaviour validates some theoretical claims while falsifying others. In this sense, such conduct constitutes the ultimate empirical benchmark against which both causal explanations and theoretical propositions must be evaluated.

Building on this epistemological premise, the study uses five major international relations theories as heuristic frameworks for identifying the potential rationales underlying CCP responses to major international conflicts: Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory (defensive realism), John Mearsheimer's offensive realism, Robert Keohane's neoliberal institutionalism, Alexander Wendt's constructivism, and Mark Crescenzi's theory of economic interdependence (liberalism). These

theories generate competing expectations regarding state behaviour and therefore serve as alternative explanations to be evaluated against observed CCP policy actions.

The related variables deduced from these five IR theories are detailed in the Appendix *Table 1*. Due to article length restrictions, the detailed theoretical links between variable definitions and their underlying theoretical assumptions are omitted, except for those interpreted in the discussion section. Nevertheless, the succinct summary below elucidates the theoretical connections between the five IR theories and these variables:

Defensive realism is one of the two main branches of the neorealist school. This school emphasises the primacy of security as a goal for states and treats power as a means rather than an end, distinguishing itself from classical realism, and Morgenthau's *animus dominandi* (Morgenthau, 1945). Regarding external international conflicts, structural realists analyze how interventionist policies or, conversely, remaining sidelined, affect a state's security. Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory, a cornerstone of defensive realism, provides a framework for understanding how states choose between balancing and bandwagoning behaviour in response to perceived threats. This theory posits that states align against perceived threats rather than simply balancing against power, based on four criteria: the threatening state's aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived aggressive intentions (Walt, 1987). In this research, six variables – *rnmc*, *proximity*, *border*, *borderstate*, *cmsp*, and *grievance* – are used to reflect these four criteria. The first captures aggregate power, the following three measure geographic proximity, the *cmsp* variable accounts for offensive capabilities, and the last one represents aggressive intentions (i.e., see *Table 1* for details). Offensive realism, developed by John Mearsheimer, offers a more deterministic account of state behaviour than defensive realism. While defensive realism holds that factors such as military posture, force structure, and diplomacy can significantly shape interstate relations[16], offensive realism maintains that the distribution of capabilities in the international system is the primary determinant of state behaviour. Because states operate in an anarchic environment and can never be certain of others' intentions, they seek to maximise relative power (Mearsheimer, 2001) and, ultimately, achieve regional hegemony as the best guarantee of survival. This pursuit relies on both latent power (wealth and population) and military capabilities.

To operationalise offensive realism, this study employs nine variables: *rgp*, *cgp*, *rgpc*, *rrh*, *borderrgp*, *proximityrgp*, *sr*, *gcp*, and *ppe* (Table 1). For example, China's position during the Soviet–Afghan War can be interpreted as a buck-passing strategy[17] in which the United States (*cgp* = 1) acted as the buck-catcher against the Soviet Union (*rgp* = 1). The conflict's proximity to Soviet borders (*borderrgp* = 1) further heightened its strategic significance[18] for Beijing.

The study draws on two strands of liberal theory originating from Kant (1903): economic interdependence and liberal institutionalism. Democratic peace theory is excluded because post-1949 China is not a democratic polity. Following Mark Crescenzi (2005), economic interdependence is expected to influence policymakers' calculations by raising the costs of disruption or confrontation. Two variables capture this dimension: *eit*, measuring China's economic dependence on the policy target or its supporting great power, and *eita*, measuring dependence on the policy target's adversary or its supporting rival power. These variables assess whether asymmetric economic interdependence constrains or encourages Chinese military activism.

Liberal institutionalism, prominently associated with Robert Keohane, emphasises the role of international institutions in fostering cooperation, transparency, and reciprocity among states. In contrast to realism, it argues that states are not solely power maximisers. Instead, participation in institutions can reduce the incentives for conflict and enable mutually beneficial outcomes (Keohane & Martin, 1995). To test this proposition, the study includes variables measuring China's participation in major international organizations: *igosun*, *igoswb*, *igosimf*, *igoswto*, and *unm*. These variables assess whether deeper integration into "international regimes" (Keohane, 1984) mitigates (or exacerbates[19]) Beijing's propensity for military intervention by increasing the opportunity costs of conflict.

Constructivism, or Wendt's "structural idealism,"[20] departs from both realism and liberalism by emphasising the constitutive role of ideas, identities, and norms. Unlike realist and liberal approaches, constructivism does not treat state interests as fixed or exogenously given. Instead, constructivists argue that interests are socially constructed through shared knowledge, beliefs, and intersubjective understandings. These processes generate constitutive effects that shape state preferences, expectations, identities, and perceptions of friendship or enmity.

To capture this perspective, the study employs four variables: *it*

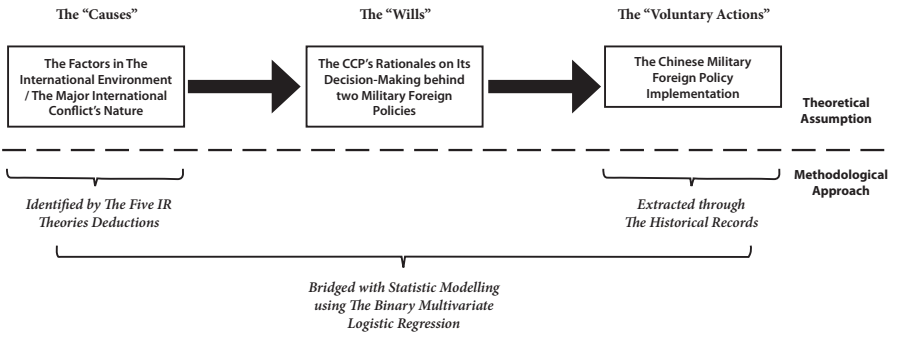
(ideological similarity with the target), *ita* (ideological similarity with the target's adversary), *lcepatt* (the target's threat to Chinese emigrant communities), and *lcepatta* (the adversary's threat to Chinese emigrant communities). Together, these variables assess whether ideological affinity and ethnic identity influence Chinese military foreign policy independently of material considerations.

The constructivist dimension of the analysis is intentionally limited to a parsimonious proposition: state behaviour depends, in part, on how states define themselves and others. Rather than examining the formation of identities and norms through CCP discourse, the study tests whether ideological and ethnic affiliations are sufficiently salient to influence behaviour beyond what would be expected by realist or liberal explanations. In this sense, the constructivist argument is operationalised through an "in-group versus out-group" logic based on ideological and ethnic identification.

Furthermore, the five IR theories initially identified a total of 30 potential environmental factors that could serve as rationales for the CCP's military policies. During the preliminary analysis – specifically the statistical refinement process conducted prior to the model tests— this pool of 30 independent variables was streamlined to mitigate potential issues such as multicollinearity, which can inflate standard errors and obscure the true relationships between the independent and dependent variables. This refinement also effectively resolved the "many variables, small N" problem (Lijphart, 1971). Consequently, only eight statistically significant variables remain across the two military foreign policies: five for military aid and three for military intervention.

To summarise the theoretical framework guiding this study, the core research structure is illustrated in *Figure 1* below:

Figure 1: **Theoretical Framework of the Research**



Methodologically, once both datasets are established – the Chinese military foreign policy actions (extracted via document analysis) and the potential environmental factors (identified through theoretical deduction) – the research addresses the core question regarding the rationales behind China's military foreign policy decisions in major international conflicts. This is achieved by testing the correlations[21] between these two phenomena. Furthermore, by analyzing the variations in statistical significance among the environmental factors (treated as independent variables) in relation to a specific CCP military foreign policy (treated as the dependent variable), this study identifies the determinant rationales behind the adoption of specific military foreign policies.

To formalize this decision-making process, the model is structured as follows:

- Let *F* represent the finite set of all possible CCP foreign policy actions towards an international conflict.
- Let *E* represent the finite set of all possible combinations of environmental factors related to an international conflict.
- Let *R* represent the CCP's preference relation, which ranks the foreign policy actions in *F*.

The underlying assumption – that the CCP's choice of a specific foreign policy action, *C(F)*, towards a particular international conflict represents a rational maximization of its preferences, *Max(R, F)* – can be expressed as follows: given a specific subset of environmental factors *e* (where *e* is a non-empty subset of the power set of *E*, denoted as $e \subseteq 2^E \setminus \{\emptyset\}$), there exists a specific foreign policy action *f* (where *f* is a member of *F*, denoted as $f \in F$) that is strictly preferred by the CCP (*Max(R, F)*) over any other alternative foreign policy action *~f* (where *~f* is a member of the set of all foreign policy actions other than *f*, denoted as $\sim f \in F \setminus \{f\}$):

$$e \rightarrow C(F) = Max(R, F) = \{f \in F \mid \forall \sim f \in F \setminus \{f\}, fR \sim f\}$$

To empirically analyse the influence of environmental factors on the CCP's military foreign policy actions, in the model formulation, the dependent variable in the model formulation is the CCP's choice between two distinct military foreign policy actions within the set *F*. The independent variables are the environmental factors associated with an international conflict, represented by the set *E*. Specifically, the model assesses how various environmental factors within *E* affect

the probability of the CCP selecting one specific military action over another. This approach allows for the examination of the relationship between a binary outcome representing a specific hypothesis (the CCP's foreign policy action) and multiple independent variables (the environmental factors.

3. Research Hypotheses and Model

This research examines two distinct categories of CCP military foreign policy actions toward major international conflicts, which serve as the dependent variables in the statistical model: Military Intervention (*mil_int*) and Military Aid (*mil_aid*). Military Intervention (*mil_int*) is defined as the deployment of organized CCP military forces, above battalion size, to directly engage in a conflict. Military Aid (*mil_aid*) encompasses the provision of military advisors, training, and low numbers of combatants not organised within a formal military formation[22], or the supply of military equipment (excluding dual-use products) to a party involved in the conflict. This category may include both bilateral and multilateral exercises, as well as the provision of resources. The preliminary model forms for the two hypotheses are structured as follows[23]:

$$f(Military\ Intervention) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(b_0 + b_1 factor_1 + b_2 factor_2 + b_3 factor_3 + b_4 factor_4 + \ldots + b_k factor_k)}}$$

$$f(Military\ Aid) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(b_0 + b_1 factor_1 + b_2 factor_2 + b_3 factor_3 + b_4 factor_4 + \ldots + b_k factor_k)}}$$

We establish two **Dependent Variables:**

- **Military Intervention (*mil_int*)**: The deployment of CCP forces above battalion size to engage in a conflict. This is measured using the *UCDP* data and coded as 1 if present, and 0 otherwise.
- **Military Aid (*mil_aid*)**: The provision of military equipment, advisors, or training. This is also coded as a binary from the same *UCDP* records.

4. Research Data

The data sampling methodology for this research consists of two stages: first, identifying and selecting major international conflicts; second, determining and recording the feature values for the environmental factors and variables associated with these conflicts.

The first stage of data selection involves a five-step process to identify major international conflicts using the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's *UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset* version 22.1 (Högbladh, 2022). i) **Initial Dataset:** The *UCDP* dataset was used as the starting point, initially containing 2,568 cases. After filtering, conflicts with a "start_date" between October 1, 1949, and December 31, 2021, were retained, resulting in 2,018 cases. ii) **Selection of Major International Conflicts:** From these 2,018 cases, 528 were identified as major international conflicts ("war") based on the criterion that their "intensity_level" was equal to 2, as defined by the *UCDP*. iii) **Exclusion of Direct CCP Involvement:** Conflicts in which China (under the CCP) was a direct conflict party were excluded, reducing the sample to 521 cases. This ensures the analysis remains focused on conflicts where China is not a direct belligerent but could still exhibit a foreign policy response. iv) **Merging of Protracted Conflicts:** Cases belonging to the same protracted conflict (identified by identical "conflict_id" values but differing "year" values) were merged into a single case. For example, the twelve Myanmar (Burma) conflict cases (conflict_id=231) were merged into one, resulting in a sample size of 97 conflicts. This step was taken to avoid overrepresenting conflicts that extended over many years in the dataset. v) **Addition of Key Conflicts:** Two historically significant conflicts, the First Indochina War (conflict_id=216) and the Korean War[24] (conflict_id=235) were added to the sample. The addition of these two conflicts allows for a more comprehensive analysis of conflicts relevant to China's foreign policy during the study period. Following these five steps, the final sample consists of 99 major international conflicts. A full list of these cases can be found in Appendix *Table 2*. This selection procedure ensures that the study focuses on the most relevant conflicts for the research question while avoiding double-counting the same conflict across multiple years.

The second stage of data sampling involves assigning values to the environmental variables based on the characteristics of each major international conflict. This process combines historical records, conflict data, and expert analysis to determine accurate values for each

variable.

For instance, regarding the independent variables, consider the binary variable "*rgpc*" (Rival Great Powers Clash), which is defined as a situation where the United States and the Soviet Union were both adversaries of the CCP, and their proxies clashed in a major international conflict between July 16, 1960, and February 21, 1972, a period of heightened Cold War tensions. If this condition is met, the variable is assigned a value of 1; otherwise, it is assigned a value of 0. Therefore, the Angolan War of Independence and the Six-Day War are coded as 1 for "*rgpc*", while the Angolan Civil War and the Yom Kippur War are coded as 0. Similarly, another binary variable "*eit*", which indicates whether the CCP's economy is heavily reliant on a major power's aid or has an economic interdependence with the target during the conflict. It is coded as 1 for the Korean War because China's foreign trade was less than 20% of its annual GDP[25], while the country relied heavily on the Soviet aid (CIA, 1955) throughout the conflict. This detailed valuation process ensures that the model captures the distinct conditions present in each conflict.

Additionally, for the two dependent variables, the main coding challenge involves borderline cases – specifically, how to determine whether the CCP's action constitutes a military intervention, military aid, or neither (i.e., neutrality). As presented in the variables' definitions in *Table 1*, the thresholds for distinguishing between these two different military policies are threefold: 1) for the military intervention category, the scale of PLA troops must exceed battalion size; 2) for the military intervention category, the combatants should be deployed in a military formation; otherwise regardless of the number of the combatants the policy is categorized as military aid instead (this applies to two borderline cases: the Communist insurgency in Burma (conflict_id = 264) and the Laotian Civil War (conflict_id = 262)); 3) for the military aid category, if the CCP is aiding both opposing parties, then the CCP's policy is categorized as neutrality instead.

Based on these three criteria above, among the 99 MIC cases, there are Chinese military intervention cases are five: the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cambodian-Vietnamese War, the Republic of the Congo Civil War, and the South Sudanese Civil War. The Chinese military aid cases number twenty-nine (i.e., here is a list of their conflict_id (see Table 2 in Appendix for the MIC's details): 216, 235, 246, 249, 262, 264, 267, 275, 283, 285, 287, 288, 292, 293, 300, 309, 312, 313, 325, 333, 336, 352, 353, 404, 11346, 13604, 13637, 13641, 14275).

5. Model Test Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the hypotheses tests for both models (see, *Table 3* below) and their subsequent discussions.

Table 3: **The Two-Models Tests Results.**

	cmsp	unm	it	border	rnmc	borderrgp	igoswto
Coefficient (MI)	4.87833	3.82956	2.33938	2.88238*	2.75032*	-	-
Odds Ratios (MI)	131.4112	46.04213	10.37484	17.8567*	15.6476*	-	-
Probability (MI)	5.7271%	2.0841%	0.4773%	2.6900%*	2.3651%*	-	-
AMEs (MI)	15.90%	12.48%	7.63%	-	-	-	-
Coefficient (MA)	2.22478	-	1.07883	-	1.2784	1.91795	2.26085
Odds Ratios (MA)	9.2514	-	2.9412	-	3.5908	6.8069	9.5912
Probability (MA)	43.1481%	-	19.4385%	-	22.7551%	35.8325%	44.0350%
AMEs (MA)	32.20%	-	15.62%	-	18.50%	27.76%	32.73%
Statistic Significance (MI)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes*	No	No
Statistic Significance (MA)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Description: * = "mil_int" model additional test result, MI = Military Intervention policy, MA = Military Aid policy.

Based on the tests of the two Chinese military foreign policy models, the main findings are as follows:

I. For the CCP's military intervention foreign policy towards major international conflicts, the model test identified three key environmental factors: *cmsp*, *unm*, and *it* are the determinant factors behind the CCP's decision-making in regard with military intervention. This result shows that when analyzing whether China will intervene in a major international conflict, we need to evaluate whether there is a significant increase in the military deployment in the conflict zone by China's adversary, whether Beijing can gain support from the majority of the UNSC member states, and whether the party supported by the CCP possesses a similar ideology.

II. For the CCP's military aid foreign policy in major international conflicts, the model test identified five key environmental factors: *cmsp*, *it*, *rnmc*, *borderrgp*, and *igoswto* are the determinant factors behind the CCP's decision-making in regard with military aid. This result shows that when analyzing whether China will provide

military aid in a major international conflict, we need to assess whether there is a significant increase in the military deployment in the conflict zone by t China's adversary; whether there is a strong rival to China in terms of material capability; whether the party supported by the CCP shares a similar ideology,; whether the conflict borders a rival great power; and whether China is a member state of the World Trade Organization.

III. The environmental factor *cmsp* (i.e., the change of the Chinese-supported party's adversary or the supporting rival great power's military presence in the conflict zone) is a significant factor affecting the CCP's decisions on both military intervention and military aid policies. The test shows that when the *cmsp* is true, t China is 131 times more likely to intervene militarily compared to scenarios where China's adversary has not increased its military presence. For Chinese military aid, China is 9 times more likely to provide support.

IV. The environmental factor *unm* (i.e., the CCP's military foreign policy is mandated by the U.N,. or a U.N. Resolution is supported by four of the five UNSC member states but vetoed by only one) is also a key factor considered by China in decisions regarding military intervention. This indicates that, to some degree, the CCP cares about international legitimacy in its foreign military actions; in other words, soft power is a concern for the regime.

V. The environmental factor *it* (i.e., the Chinese-supported party or its supporting cooperative great power possesses a similar ideology to the CCP's communism) is significant for both military policies. For military aid, under the environmental factor *it* (ideological similarity) alone, the probability of the CCP adopting such a policy is 19.44%, while for military intervention, the probability is a mere 0.48%[26]. This suggests that while ideological alignment does play a role in prompting Beijing to provide military aid, it is not a primary driver of the CCP military intervention foreign policy (as seen in cases like the Angolan Civil War, the Soviet-Afghan War, etc.). Despite the weak additive effect of *it*, *it* possesses a rather high average marginal effect (AME, where *it*'s value is 7.63%) which can significantly enhance the effect of other environmental factors on the regressand – as elaborated in the analysis of the interaction effects between the different regressors in the latter part of this section.

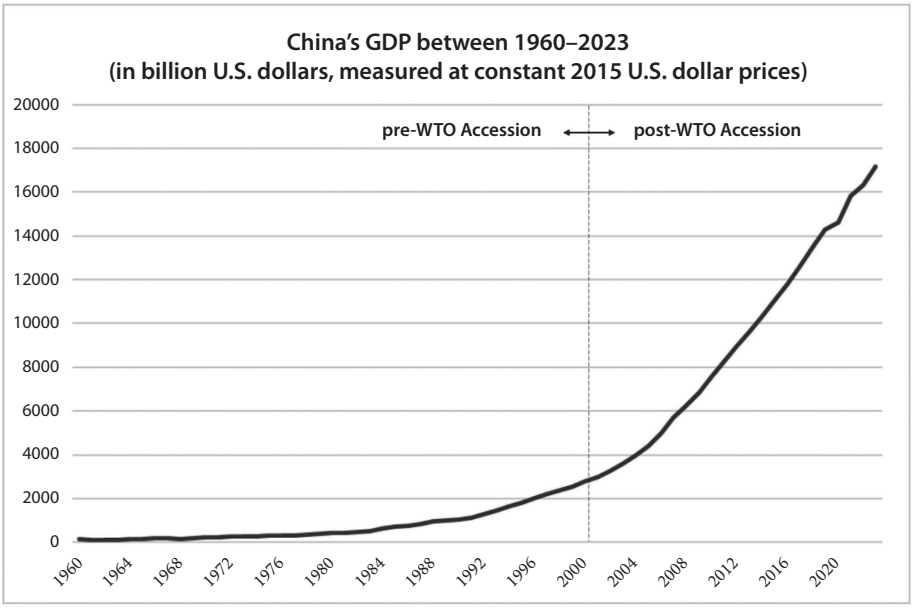
VI. The environmental factor *rnmc* (i.e., the ratio of national material

and military capabilities) is a significant factor affecting the CCP's decision-making regarding its military aid policy. The test shows that when the *rnmc* is true, its additive effect alone yields a 22.75% probability that Beijing will provide aid to the conflict. The CCP's concern about capability asymmetry are well-founded, as military theorist Carl von Clausewitz (1918) emphasises the importance of numerical superiority in warfare. He argues that, when two forces are roughly equal in terms of equipment, training, and military doctrine, it is exceedingly difficult for even the most talented general to achieve victory against an enemy twice their strength[27]. This "gap of double," as it may be described, represents a substantial risk to the CCP's strategic interests and even its survival, particularly when such a powerful adversary is projecting influence in its geographical proximity, as measured by environmental factors such as *cmsp* together with *border*, *borderstate*, and *proximity*.

VII. The environmental factor *borderrgp* (i.e., the conflict zone geographically shares a common border with a rival great power of China) is another significant factor affecting the CCP's decision-making regarding its military aid policy. The test shows that when the *borderrgp* is true, its addictive effect alone yields 35.83% probability that Beijing will provide aid to the conflict. This rationale is derived from offensive realism theory, which posits that "<…> there are only a limited number of regions where they should be willing to risk a war. Those places include the great power's own neighbourhood and distant areas that are either home to another great power or the site of a critically important resource." (Mearsheimer, 2019). However, the CCP's military aid operations do not fully match the offensive theory's argument, because the CCP has never sent military forcesto the distant strategic resource areas (i.e., *sr* = 1) like the oil-rich Middle East to counter a rival great powers' operations. Here, it is necessary to point out that the power projection capability has not been a problem for such Chinese military interventions; China has always been open to using an allied great power's (i.e., the USSR prior to 1960 and the U.S. after 1972) logistics, as the Cubans did in the Angolan Civil War and the Ogaden War. Hence, such "misplaced" state behaviours remain at odds with the offensive realism's argument on middle or minor powers[28].

VIII. The environmental factor *igoswto* (i.e., membership in the intergovernmental organisation – World Trade Organisation) is a significant factor in Beijing's decision-making regarding its military aid policy in major international conflicts. The test shows that when China is a member, it is 9 times more likely to provide military aid than when it was not participating in the IGO. During the period from China's accession to the WTO in 2001 to the end of 2021, there were 10 major international conflicts. China provided military aid in five of these conflicts – a notably high proportion, despite most falling into the category of counter-terrorism operations (except the Syrian Civil War). This suggests a correlation between China's WTO membership and its willingness to use military aid. This correlation could stem from several factors. First, as illustrated in *Figure 2* below, China's accession to the WTO led to substantial economic growth (Ianchovichina & Martin, 2003), which in turn may have increased the state's capacity to invest in international conflicts aligned with its interests - as Stephen Walt (Walt, 2017) argued that "When new powers emerge, they will not passively accept arrangements established when they were weaker." Namely, as a state grows stronger, it gains the capacity and willingness to pursue its interests more actively. Second, this may also be related to the fact that China has become one of the WTO's most active members and its economy has become an integral link in global supply chains. China's increased participation in the global economy may have led to a greater willingness to utilise military instruments, especially when they align with its economic and security interests. Nevertheless, regardless of the underlying causes, the statistically significant positive effect of WTO membership on the CCP's propensity to adopt military aid in major international conflicts remains a notable finding.

Figure 2: **China's GDP between 1960 and 2023**



* *Raw data source:* World Bank. (2026). Databank. https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=NY.GDP.MKTP.CD&country=CHN#

The above eight findings provide a static analysis of the CCP-led China's rationales over its choice between the two military policies in international conflicts. However, the nature of international conflicts is more often than not dynamic; thus, we need to update our views based on changes in a conflict's nature. In relation to the models in this paper, this means we must also examine the interaction effects among the environmental factors. *Figure 3* and *Figure 4* below illustrate the probability changes when the combination of environmental factors in a major international conflict shifts:

Figure 3: **The Probability of Adopting a Military Intervention Policy**

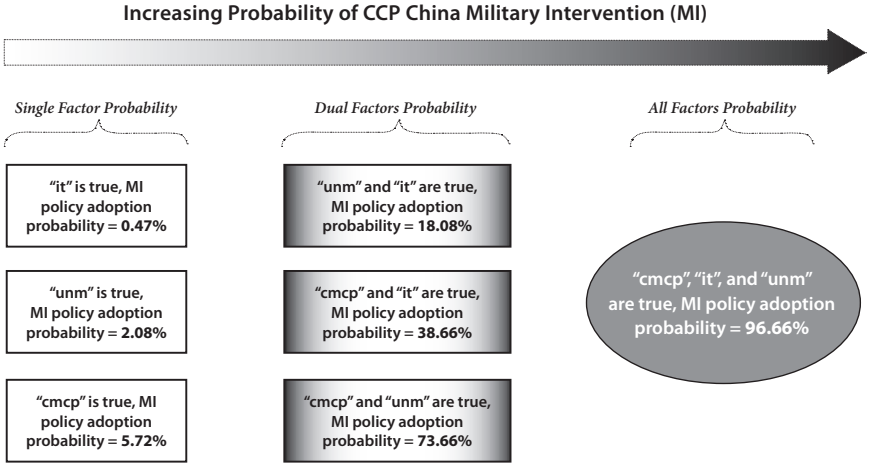
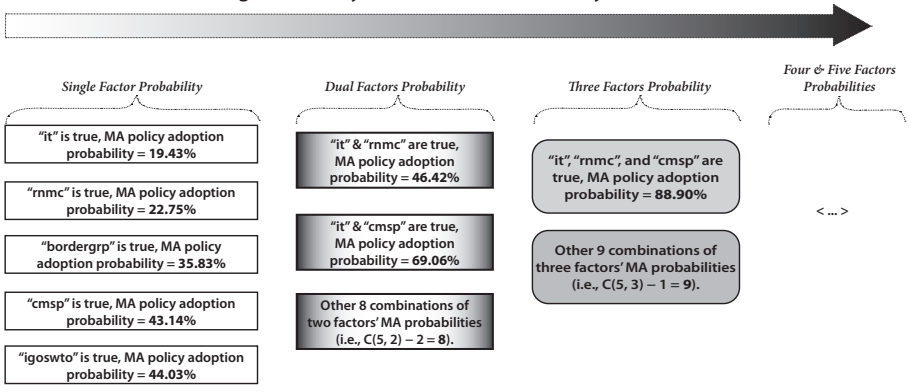


Figure 4: **The Probability of Adopting a Military Aid Policy**



Due to space limitations for a scientific article, the researcher uses a scenario simulation to elucidate the interactive dynamics involved in applying the model test findings (illustrated in the two figures above) to analyze Chinese decision-making regarding its military foreign policy choices.

For instance, regarding military intervention, if hostilities between North and South Korea were to resume, the ideological affinity between the CCP and the Kim regime would not, in itself, render Chinese military intervention likely – current assessments suggest only a 0.48% probability. However, should South Korea initiate large-scale mobilisation or if U.S. expeditionary forces were deployed

to the peninsula in significant numbers (i.e., in addition to the U.S. 8th Army stationed in the country), thereby altering the balance and scale of military engagement, the probability of CCP intervention would increase markedly to approximately 38%, effectively approaching the threshold of strategic ambiguity for opposing actors. Furthermore, if the CCP were to obtain international legitimacy through the endorsement of four out of five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, the chance of Chinese military intervention would rise to near certainty, with an estimated probability of 96%. Regarding the probability of Chinese military aid to the DPRK, is the figures are 19.43% and 69.06%, respectively (as the effect of the regressor *unm* is irrelevant in the military aid model).

The eight findings presented above, together with the interaction analysis of environmental factors, constitute the main contributions of this study. In addition, the systemic results yield valuable insights from several insignificant environmental factors, some of which contradict conventional wisdom on the subject. For instance, ethnic-related variables such as *lcepatta* and *lcepartt* showed no significant impact on the CCP's military foreign policy decisions. The CCP's steadfast military support for the Khmer Rouge during the Cambodian conflict, despite their massacre of ethnic Chinese, illustrates that shared ethnic ties are not a significant driver of Beijing's military foreign policy. Ideology frequently takes precedence over ethnic considerations. Although the CCP has voiced concern for Chinese citizens abroad (e.g., through "wolf warrior" diplomacy), such concerns have rarely translated into military policy responses.

In contrast to previous studies on this subject, this research does not aim to refute earlier findings. On the contrary, the systematic evidence uncovered here largely reinforces and complements them. For instance, as discussed in the literature review, Thomas Kane (2001) in his qualitative analysis of CCP leadership statements concluded that "sovereignty," "power," and "ideology" constitute the three fundamental principles guiding the Party's foreign policy decision-making. In parallel, the quantitative tests in this study yield similar results: ideological similarity (variable it), along with security concerns (variables *cmsp* or *rnmc*), emerge as key determinants shaping the CCP's military foreign policy decisions—particularly with respect to sovereignty and power. Different paths, same destination. In conclusion, as presented in the above discussion, certain rationales have consistently determined the CCP's decision-making regarding its

military aid and military intervention foreign policies throughout its seven decades of governance. The effects of these rationales change in accordance with shifts in the nature of the major international conflict. By applying the findings of the two models compiled in *Table 3*, policy practitioners can evaluate and extrapolatively predict the role of the Chinese factor in shaping a conflict's development by monitoring the nature of the conflict and its ongoing changes.

6. Limitations of the Research

The limited number of military intervention cases (constituting only 5% of the sample) and potential omitted variables may reduce the model's robustness. Additionally, the logical-positivism approach used here is best suited for studying states with single-party systems (e.g., the CCP in China, and Fascist Italy, etc.), dominant party systems (e.g., Japan's LDP), or a "deep state" (e.g., the U.S. intelligence-foreign policy establishment during the Cold War), where policy inertia arises from entrenched interests. Much like the realist tradition posits that the state is a monolithic unit, the researchers in this article treat the CCP as a "black box" unit. Due to the fact that there is no change in the CCP's inherent character that its leadership, and Deng, Jiang, Hu, and Xi have been reiterating the ultimate importance of the "party's survival ('党的生存')", as did Mao. This restricted scope limits the research.

Future research should extend beyond military intervention and aid to include economic or diplomatic assistance, utilizing non-linear modelling. Treating foreign policy actions as a single ordinal variable (e.g., ranking diplomatic aid below military intervention) would oversimplify their qualitative differences. For example, diplomatic or economic aid rarely provokes military retaliation, unlike military aid or intervention, which carry distinct strategic risks. Analysing these as separate categories ensures a more accurate approach.

Further, as Kenneth Waltz (2003) observed, "A theory cannot include everything." Likewise, no model can fully capture the complexities of international relations without devolving into a mere historical description. The model design in this study is, like any other, far from perfect. The ongoing refinement of modelling in international relations (IR) resembles the pharmaceutical chemist's persistent effort to reduce a drug's side effects while enhancing its therapeutic efficacy. Although no panacea exists for endogeneity, we can continually

improve variable specification and strike a better balance between the model's descriptive richness and explanatory power to more effectively fit the subject under study.

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Appendix

Table 1: **Variables and Their Definitions**

Variables	Description
T*	The Target of the CCP foreign policy action.
FPA*	Foreign Policy Action, the CCP's foreign policy implementation.
IC*	International Conflict.
gov	Government. Coded "1," if the T is a foreign government when the conflict erupts. If it is an interstate conflict, and the T is the one that initiated the war, then the T should be coded as exf = 1 while gov = 0 (e.g., by this definition, the T role in Six Days War is a contrast to its role in the Yom Kippur War). Control variable.
opp	Opposition. Coded "1," if the T of the CCP's FPA is a non-governmental opposition force including the types like rebel groups, separatist movements, criminal organizations, or terrorist groups, etc. which are detached and not operating in the state's political system during the conflict. Similar to variable gov, if it is an extrastate conflict, and the T is the one that initiated the war, then the T should be coded as exf = 1 while opp = 0. Control variable.
exf	The External Force. Coded "1," if the T of the CCP's FPA is an external force to the IC, whether it is a foreign government or an external non-governmental organization as for the conflict state (e.g., the North Korea/DPRK in the Korean War). Control variable.
mil_int	Military Interference. It denotes that Chinese armed forces above battalion size have directly engaged in combat activities in the IC whether it presents itself as a national force (e.g., like in the Sino-Vietnamese War) or being disguised as a volunteer force (e.g., PVA in the Korean War); but such definition does not include the cases that PRC provided military advisors, military training or a small number of combatants that is not organized in military formation (e.g., the Chinese "Zhiying Volunteer Troops/知青志愿兵" in the Communist insurgency in Burma). Further, for those cases which the CCP were conducting peacekeeping military intervention mission (i.e., not post-conflict peacebuilding force like demining, or engineering units but combat units during the IC) under UN mandate the coding for them is: mil_int = 1, neutrality = 1, unm = 1. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates that the IC's feature does match the environmental factor mil_int's definition (i.e., the CCP adopts such a policy), otherwise "0".
mil_aid	Military Aid. That denotes the CCP provides military equipment, advisors, training, or a small number of combatants that are not organized in a military formation to a party in the IC (i.e., Dual-use products are not included in this category). It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor mil_aid's definition (i.e., the CCP adopts such a policy), otherwise "0".
neutrality	Neutrality. That denotes China stand on the sidelines without any active policy towards the conflict, or it simultaneously provided military aids (or economic aid) to both T and its adversary (e.g., Iran-Iraq War). In such case the coding will be: neutrality = 1, mil_int = 0, mil_aid = 0. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor neutrality's definition (i.e., the CCP adopts such a policy), otherwise "0".
mmc	The Ratio of National Material and Military Capability is found upon the Correlates of War Project's National Material Capabilities (NMC) Data Documentation v.6 (Greig & Enterline, 2016), and its definition tries to strike a conceptual balance between the balance of power and the balance of military power. The data used by the Ratio of National Material and Military Capability are drawn from NMC's two variables: "cinc" – the score of Composite Index of National Capability and "milex" – Military Expenditures. The definition of the Ratio of National Material and Military Capability is: the sum of the cinc ratio of the T's adversary (or the rival great power supporting T's adversary – take the greater of the two) to China and the milex ratio of the T's adversary (or the rival great power supporting T's adversary – take the greater of the two) to China, then divide it by two. Additionally, if the rpg's supporting target is the same T as China's FPA (e.g., Angolan War of Independence or the 1971 Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) insurrection), then rnmc = 0. It is a binary variable, which the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor rnmc's definition and rnmc is above 2, otherwise "0". This variable is related to structural realism. The rnmc's math formula is as follows (i.e., the sign "TA" in the formula denotes "The CCP policy target's adversary (or the rival great power supporting T's adversary – take the greater of the two)"): $$\textit{The Ratio of National Material and Military Capability} = \frac{\frac{cinc_{TA}}{cinc_{China}} + \frac{milex_{TA}}{milex_{China}}}{2}$$
border	The conflict zone is geographically sharing a common border with China. It is a binary variable with value "1" indicating the conflict occurs in China's neighbouring country (e.g., Afghanistan War), otherwise "0".
borderstate	The IC is situated in China's neighbouring state, but the territory/IC zone in which the IC is taking place is not geographically bordering with China (i.e., border = 0, e.g., the Fourth Baluchistan Conflict in Pakistan, the two Chechen Wars in Russia). It is a binary variable with value "1" indicating the conflict occurs in China's neighbouring country (e.g., Afghanistan War), otherwise "0".
proximity	The IC zone is geographically located within China's proximity, which denotes that the IC does not occur in China's neighbouring state but the IC zone is separated by one state within the East Asia region (e.g., Cambodian Civil War but not conflicts related to Iran in Middle East Region, although there is only one state – Afghanistan – separating Iran and China). It is a binary variable with value "1" indicating the IC's feature does match the environmental factor proximity's definition, otherwise "0".

cmsp	The change of the T's adversary or the supporting rgp's military scale presence in the IC zone. That denotes any of the following two conditions is true: 1) when border = 1, the T's adversary or the supporting rgp's military scale has increased and exceeded 10,000 combat personnel; or 2) when border = 0, the T's adversary or the supporting rgp's military scale has increased and exceeded 10,000 combat personnel, and the distance between China and the IC state is within 1,000km (i.e., the short range ballistic missile's strike range). It is a binary variable with value "1" indicating the IC's feature does match the environmental factor cmsp's definition, otherwise "0".
grievance	The CCP's historical grievance of the T's adversary or the rgp which is supporting T's adversary in the IC. Which denotes it had inflicted a fatal risk to the CCP (e.g., regarding great power, grievance =1 denotes that the United States had involved in the IC during the period from Oct. 1, 1949 to Feb. 20, 1972, or the period from Mar. 2, 1969 to Dec. 26, 1991 as for the USSR's involvement in the IC). It is a binary variable with which value "1" indicate the IC's feature does match the environmental factor grievance's definition, otherwise "0". A fatal risk here is defined as the rival had tried to destroy the CCP, for instance, during the two Chinese Civil Wars the United States assisted the KMT to root out the CCP, or in 1969 the Soviet planned to wage a nuclear war to complete annihilate the CCP together with the Chinese population.
cgp	Cooperative Great Power involvement (i.e., the cooperative great power denotes the Soviet Union between Oct. 1, 1949 and July 16, 1960; and the United States from Feb. 21, 1972 to Dec. 26, 1991). It is a binary variable with which the value "1" indicates there is a great power which has a cooperative relationship with China involved in the IC (e.g., the United States in the Afghan–Soviet War), otherwise "0".
rgp	Rival Great Power involvement (i.e., the rival great power denotes the United States from Oct. 1, 1949 to Feb. 20, 1972 and Nov. 16, 2016 onwards; the Soviet Union between July 16, 1960 and Dec. 26, 1991). It is a binary variable with which the value "1" indicates there is a great power which is hostile towards China involved in the IC (e.g., the United States in the Korean War), otherwise "0".
rgpc	Rival Great Powers Clash. Which denotes that between July 16, 1960 and Feb. 21, 1972 the United States and the Soviet Union were both the CCP's rival great powers, their supporting proxies clashed with each other in the IC. It is a binary variable, with the value "1" indicating there is military clash between the great powers' supporting parties in the IC (e.g., Angolan War of Independence), otherwise "0".
borderrgp	The conflict zone is geographically sharing a common border with a rival great power. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the conflict occurs in that great power's neighbouring country (e.g., Hungary for the Soviet Union during the Cold War), otherwise "0".
proximityrgp	Proximity of Rival Great Power. When the IC zone is geographically located within a rival great power's proximity which denotes the IC occurs in either its neighbouring country (variable border = 1) or separated by one country within its region (e.g., Iran is a proximity location for Russia after 1991, whereas it was bordering with Russia/Soviet Union before 1991 according to this definition). It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor proximityrgp's definition, otherwise "0".
rrh	The Region of a Regional Hegemony in which the IC took place. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor rrh's definition, otherwise "0".
sr	Strategic Resource. Which denotes fossil fuels, such as oil in Iraq, natural gas in Russia, etc., due to China possesses rich coal and steel, rare earth, and uranium resources, e.g., 2.8 million tons in 2023. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates there is a strategic resource for China's economic or military needs situated in the IC territory, otherwise "0".
gcp	Geographical Choke Point. A place where the strategic resource (variable sr) must go through before reaching China or a great power. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates there is a geographical choke point where the strategic resource for the states' economic or military must get through is situated in the IC state, or bordering it (i.e., in this research they are the Suez Canal, the Bosphorus-Dardanelles Straits, the Panama Canal, Hormuz Strait, the Red Sea, and Gibraltar Strait), otherwise "0".
ppe	The product of population size and economy size ratio of the T's adversary (or the rival great power supporting T's adversary - take the greater of the two) to China. That denotes the population size and economy size ratio of the T's adversary to China is bigger than 2 (i.e., the T's adversary's product of its population size and its economy size is 100% bigger than that of China's, the equation is: the T's adversary's population size * the T's adversary's economy size / China's population size * China's economy size > 2). Similar to the variable rnmc's definition, if the rgp's supporting target is the same T as China's FPA, then ppe = 0. It is a binary variable with which the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor ppe's definition, otherwise "0".
eit	The economic reliance or economic interdependence between the CCP and the T or the cooperative great power that supports T in the conflict. That denotes either the CCP regime had been unilaterally receiving the T or the cgp's aid when the IC erupted (e.g., long-term credits, equipment, or technical aid, etc.). The total amount of the aids during the conflict is bigger than 10 million U.S. dollar. The other following two conditions are both satisfied: 1) China's trade-to-GDP ratio is bigger than 20% or China's external balance is bigger than 1% of the GDP; 2) The share of the international trade between China and the T or the cgp that supporting T in the total Chinese international trade is more than 10%. It is a binary variable with which the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor eit's definition, otherwise "0".

eita	The economic interdependence between the CCP and T's adversary or the rival great power supporting T's adversary in the conflict when the IC erupted. That denotes the following two conditions are both satisfied: 1) China's trade-to-GDP ratio is bigger than 10%; 2) The share of the international trade between China and the T's adversary or the rpg supporting T's adversary in the total Chinese international trade is more than 10%. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor eita's definition, otherwise "0".
igosun	Membership in the intergovernmental organization – the United Nations. That denotes the CCP has become a member of the United Nations when the IC erupted. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor igosun's definition, otherwise "0".
igoswb	The membership in the intergovernmental organization – one of the postwar neoliberal Trinity – World Bank. That denotes the CCP has become a member of the World Bank when the IC erupted. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor igoswb's definition, otherwise "0".
igosimf	The membership in the intergovernmental organization – one of the postwar neoliberal Trinity – International Monetary Fund. That denotes the CCP has become a member of the IMF when the IC erupted. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor igosimf's definition, otherwise "0".
igoswto	The membership in the intergovernmental organization – one of the postwar neoliberal Trinity – World Trade Organization. That denotes the CCP has become a member of the WTO when the IC erupted. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor igoswto's definition, otherwise "0".
unm	The CCP's FPA is mandated by U.N. or a U.N. Resolution is supported by the four UNSC member states but only vetoed by one (e.g., United Nations Security Council Resolution 462 on Soviet-Afghan War). It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor unm's definition, otherwise "0".
it	The T or its supporting cgp possesses a similar ideology to the CCP's communism. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor it's definition, otherwise "0".
ita	The adversary of T or its supporting rgp possesses a similar ideology to the CCP's communism. It is a binary variable with the value "1" indicates the IC's feature does match the environmental factor ita's definition, otherwise "0".
Icepatta	The Chinese emigrant community with a large population is attacked/threatened by the T's adversary during the IC. It is a binary variable with which value "1" indicates there is a large Chinese emigrant community with a population of more than 100 thousand situated in the conflict country (e.g., Indonesia, Vietnam, etc.) and being attacked/threatened by the T's adversary. (But if the Chinese population was attacked or threatened by the T instead of T's adversary, Icepatta = 0, e.g., Cuba, Khmer Rouge), otherwise "0".
Icepatt	The Chinese emigrant community with a large population is attacked/threatened by the T during the IC (e.g., Khmer Rouge). It is a binary variable with which the value "1" indicates there is a large Chinese emigrant community with a population of more than 100 thousand situated in the conflict country and being attacked/threatened by the T, otherwise "0".
dfa	De facto Alliance. Beijing's relationship with the T has profound economic and military cooperations with China during the years preceding the IC (e.g., Kim Il Sung's regime was such a de facto ally with China during the Korean War, and it only became a de jure ally with China on 11 July 1961 by signing the Sino-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance Treaty – 8 years after the Peninsula Armistice). It is a binary variable, which the value "1" indicates there is such a relationship between the T and China, otherwise "0".

*String variable.

Table 2: The 99 Major International Conflict Cases

conflict_id	location / IC	conflict_id	location / IC
216	Vietnam (North Vietnam) / First Indochina War	329	Ethiopia, Somalia / 1964 Ethiopian–Somali Border War
231	Myanmar (Burma) / Kachin conflict	330	Indonesia / Indonesian occupation of East Timor
235	North Korea, South Korea / Korean War	331	Morocco / Western Sahara War
237	Indonesia / Invasion of Ambon	332	Mozambique / Mozambican Civil War
241	Kenya / Mau Mau rebellion	333	Afghanistan / Soviet–Afghan War
242	Cuba / Cuban Revolution	336	Nicaragua / Nicaraguan Revolution
243	Indonesia / Darul Islam rebellion	337	Somalia / Somali Civil War
246	Algeria / Algerian War	338	Iran / Iran-Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) Conflict
249	South Vietnam / Second Indochina War	341	Liberia / 1980 Liberian coup d'état
250	Hungary, Russia (Soviet Union) / Hungarian Revolution of 1956	351	India / Insurgency in Punjab
252	Egypt, France, Israel, United Kingdom / Suez Crisis	352	Sri Lanka / Sri Lankan civil war (prelude)
259	Iraq / 14 July Revolution	353	Cameroon / Hidden War
260	Lebanon / 1958 Lebanon Crisis	354	Turkey / Turkey-northern Iraq Kurdistan Worker's Party(PKK) Conflict
262	Laos / Laotian Civil War	359	South Yemen / South Yemen civil war
263	Angola / Angolan War of Independence	361	Chad, Libya / Toyota War
264	Myanmar (Burma) / Communist insurgency in Burma	364	India / 1984 Kashmir Insurgency
267	Ethiopia / 1960 Ethiopian coup attempt	371	Iraq, Kuwait / Iraqi invasion of Kuwait
268	Ethiopia, Somalia / Ogaden War	374	Rwanda / Rwandan Civil War
269	Nepal / 1960 Nepal coup d'état	382	Sierra Leone / Sierra Leone Civil War
270	France / The Putsh of The Generals	385	Serbia (Yugoslavia) / Croatian War of Independence
272	France, Tunisia / Bizerte crisis	386	Algeria / Algerian-Islamic Armed Movement Conflict, Algerian Civil War (prelude)
275	Ethiopia / Eritrean War of Independence	388	Azerbaijan / First Nagorno-Karabakh War
282	Sudan / First Sudanese Civil War	389	Bosnia-Herzegovina / Bosnian War 1
283	DR Congo (Zaire) / Congo Crisis	390	Croatia / Croatian War of Independence
285	Mozambique / Mozambican War of Independence	392	Georgia / War in Abkhazia
287	Burundi / 1965 Burundian coup	395	Tajikistan / Tajikistani Civil War
288	Chad / Chadian Civil War	398	Bosnia-Herzegovina / Bosnian War 2
289	Colombia / Colombian Internal Armed Conflict	401	Russia (Soviet Union) / First Chechen War, Second Chechen War
291	Indonesia / Papua conflict	402	Yemen (North Yemen) / Yemeni civil war
292	Peru / 1962 Peruvian coup d'état	404	Pakistan / First Afghan Civil War
293	South Vietnam, North Vietnam (North Vietnam) / Vietnam War	408	Congo / Republic of the Congo Civil War
297	Nigeria / 1966 Nigerian coup d'état	409	Eritrea, Ethiopia / Eritrean–Ethiopian War
298	South Africa / South African Border War	412	Serbia (Yugoslavia) / Insurgency in Kosovo, Kosovo War
299	Syria / 1966 Syrian coup d'état	413	Ethiopia / Oromia conflict
300	Cambodia (Kampuchea) / Cambodia Civil War, Cambodian–Vietnamese War	418	United States of America / September 11 attacks
301	Israel, Jordan / Six-Day War	420	Australia, Iraq, United Kingdom, United States of America / Iraq War
302	Israel, Syria, Egypt / Yom Kippur War	437	Ethiopia / Ethiopia-Sidama Liberation Movement Conflict
303	Nigeria / Biafra War	11343	Egypt, Syria, Israel / Six-Day War
306	El Salvador, Honduras / Football War	11345	South Sudan / South Sudanese Civil War
308	Philippines / Moro conflict	11346	Libya / First Libyan Civil War
309	Sudan / 1971 Sudanese coup d'état	13247	Ukraine / War in Lugansk
312	East Pakistan / Bangladesh Liberation War	13306	Ukraine / War in Novorossiya
313	Sri Lanka / 1971 JVP insurrection	13604	Syria / Syrian Civil War
314	Uganda / 1971 coup d'état in Uganda	13637	Afghanistan / War in Afghanistan (escalation period)
316	El Salvador / 1972 Salvadoran coup attempt	13641	Nigeria / Boko Haram insurgency
318	Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) / Rhodesian Bush War	13692	Afghanistan, United Kingdom, United States of America / War in Afghanistan
323	Cyprus, Turkey / Turkish Invasion of Cyprus	13694	Libya / Second Libyan Civil War
324	Iran, Iraq / Iran–Iraq War	13902	Turkey / Kurdish–Turkish conflict
325	Pakistan / The Fourth Balochistan Conflict	14275	Philippines / Philippines-ISIS conflict
327	Angola / Angolan Civil War		

Endnotes

[1] The term "major international conflict", as used in this paper, is defined as a conflict in which China acts as a third party and is indirectly involved, with a nature equivalent to the Uppsala's concept of "war", which is defined as "at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a given year" in its dataset's "intensity level" variable. As of 2021, a total of 99 major international conflicts have occurred since 1949, when the CCP assumed sovereignty over China, based upon the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's *UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 22.1* dataset (Högbladh, 2022) – in this paper the researchers used the abbreviation "*UCDP*" to represent this dataset. For further details, see the "4. Research Data" section and Appendix *Table 2*.

[2] For instance, NATO's military reaction policy was a nuclear first use against a conventional attack (M. C. 48, clause 3. b., clause 37 and later M. C. 14/2, clause 13. c.). Therefore, in a military conflict scenario any attack was a rationale for NATO to adopt a nuclear counterattack in accordance with its strategic planning. However, as the 1961 spring war game directed by Thomas Schelling showed, none of the four leading NATO states' delegates had the willingness to adopt the 4th option – to use tactical nuclear weapons on the USSR troops who were blockading in Helmstedt. Therefore, the rationale/factor of a reaction policy and the determinant of that reaction policy are different in their degree of importance, and only the reaction itself is the final judge for examining these rationales' respective weights.

[3] One of the best political analyses of the Thirty Years war come from historian Robert L. Bireley's writing in his *Religion and Politics in The Age of The Counterreformation*'s chapter 2, 5, 10 & 11.

[4] In the book *A Question of Empire*, Linda and Frey's conclusion of Leopold I's rationale for intervening in Spain was straightforward – the portent of a unified Franco-Spanish kingdom and its implications in Italy and the Continent were indeed a picture too horrible for any Habsburg Emperor to handle.

[5] In this study, the terms "military intervention" and "military interference" are used interchangeably to refer to third-party military involvement intended to influence the course of a conflict, without normative distinctions. Likewise, "China" and "Beijing" are employed as metonymic references to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

[6] A truce or a long-term ceasefire can be used as a tool to let the weaker side buy time and regain its strength before resuming the fight, and the intervening foreign state with whom the weaker party aligned itself often facilitated these deals to prevent the destruction of its *de facto* ally in the conflict. The ancient thinkers like Appian described such schemes without any sugar coating, in his *Roman History* the description of the malicious policy of Rome's "peace-making" envoys between its nemesis Carthage and Masinissa's Numidia kingdom was blatantly honest.

[7] For instance, from the very basic local guide to get information about the logistic conditions like which road/bridge can pass heavy vehicles all the way to the joint operations with the local force.

[8] For instance, the French disobeyed and sent their 2nd Armoured Division to liberate Paris in 1944.

[9] For instance, after the Allies landed in Normandy in 1944, Stalin had strategic options: he could adopt a defensive stance, allowing the Allies and Nazis to weaken each other on the Western Front (since the Allies, with 850,000 troops committed, had no choice but to fully defeat the Third Reich—a logic similar to Kennan's analysis of the U.S. advantage over Britain in European affairs in his book *American Diplomacy:*

1900-1950. Alternatively, as Koch argues in his article *The Spectre of a Separate Peace in the East: Russo-German 'Peace Feelers', 1942-44* that Stalin could have negotiated with Germany to either secure favourable terms or use it as leverage to pressure the West for greater concessions post-war. Despite these possibilities, the Soviets continued fighting after Operation Bagration.

[10] For example, the RAND Corporation report (Heath et al., 2021) analysed two case studies of China's military interventions (the 1979 Vietnam War and the 2009 counterpiracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden) and provided a general review of Chinese military interventions from 1946 to 2018. However, the report's review primarily offered descriptive statistics of the CCP's behaviours without exploring the rationales behind these interventions, their respective weights in decision-making, or how different conflict features influence the importance of these rationales. Additionally, the RAND's report relied on qualitative methods – such as the analysis of CCP leadership personalities and official statements – which this research avoids.

[11] This term coined by Waltz (1979) in his seminal book *Theory of International Politics* (chapters 2 & 4) – this reductionist school of thought denotes the international relations (IR) studies that treat foreign policies as mere outcomes of the domestic political system, specifically as a dimension of public policy processes reflecting national or subnational milieux. For example: Andrea Ghiselli analysed Chinese military foreign policy through the prism of the civil-military relationship; Swaine studies the PLA's role in the Chinese foreign policy; Kai Quek and Alastair Iain Johnston examined the effects of Chinese public opinion on the CCP's reluctance to back down during a conflict, etc.

[12] For instance, "(whether) the risk of non-intervention is obviously greater than the risk of intervention," and "(whether) does not cause serious damage to the core interests of related parties," – are the two essential questions highlighted by Jake Rinaldi regarding the Chinese military intervention decision-making based upon the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences' 2020 book *Science of Military Strategy* (Chinese: "战略学").

[13] For instance, Kevin Rudd tends to use Xi's characteristics, worldview or the Chinese economy to explain the CCP's foreign policies, such as the arguments in his book "*China under Xi Jinping: Alternative Futures for U.S.-China Relations*' page 6-13, and *On Xi Jinping: How Xi's Marxist Nationalism is Shaping China and the World*'s page 83-104.

[14] For instance, the CCP's Prime Minister Zhou formally announced *The Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence* in 1953. However, the CCP had been sponsoring (providing both funding and combatants to) communist guerrilla movements in many Southeast Asian states throughout Mao's era, which stands at odds with its own "mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs" principle in its statement. As for other significant the CCP's foreign policy statements, see: Wilson Center, "Foundations of Chinese Foreign Policy."

[15] Regarding this uncertainty, Charles Glaser highlights "motives" as a key variable in security policymaking in *Rational Theory of International Policy* (2010), while Stephen Walt emphasizes "intention" in *The Origins of Alliance* (1987). This suggests that a state's strategic posture is influenced not only by structural idealism and liberal traditions but also by realist scholars, who argue that states often act on their stated intentions. John Mearsheimer, in *Why Leaders Lie* (2011), notes that leaders tend to be honest in diplomacy, though exceptions like Hitler exist. However, in the online discussion *U.S. Presidential Election* Mearsheimer stresses that intentions are ultimately unknowable, as they reside solely within in policymakers' minds and can change over time, making

it impossible to predict future intentions with certainty.

[16] Stephen Walt's own explanation in the online discussion *The New Era of Great Power Competition* is that "For defensive realists like me, there are two main differences. First, although we recognize that states cannot know intentions with a 100 percent certainty, we believe that states can still make intelligent judgments about intentions. Thus, we are more worried about, say, Russian power today because of what we think Putin's intentions might be than we are worried about, say, British power. Even though Britain has nuclear weapons and could wipe us off the face of the earth if it wanted to, we just don't think Britain is likely to do that anytime soon. A second difference is that defensive realists believe that, under some circumstances, it is possible to construct military postures that are less threatening to others, which don't have the capacity to conquer others easily and are primarily good for defending your own soil, but not good for doing much of anything else."

[17] Regarding different offensive realism strategies, see *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*' chapter 5.

[18] In the lecture *The Rise of China and the Decline of the U.S. Army* at the Army War College, Mearsheimer argued that being adjacent to a rival great power is a condition "worth expending substantial blood and iron". As well, in his article Realism and Restraint he repeated that "The rationale that a great power's military interference should be limited to three types of regions (i.e., a great power's own region, a rival great power's home region, and a region possessing strategic resources)."

[19] In the book *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics*'s chapter 3 titled "The Logic of Order: Westphalia, Liberalism, and The Evolution of International Order in the Modern Era" John Ikenberry (2014) put the IGOs' intervention function into such light that "The UN Security Council – a traditional Westphalian political site – that is widely understood to be the most appropriate venue for <…> liberal intervention." Of course, even for such an ardent liberal like Ikenberry, in his *Liberal Leviathan*, there are still differences between "good and bad interventions."

[20] The establishment of constructivism in IR came through its critiques of the flaws in other IR traditions' thoughts. For Wendt, his critique of Waltz's neorealism is largely founded on the argument that "<…> prudence (i.e., always assuming the worst-case scenario and taking the malicious intentions of others as given) does not mean they (the states) will or should throw experience to the wind" (Wendt, 1999, p. 109), and human experience comes from history; however, history is not merely facts or presented structural changes, but is socially constructed. By construing "interests" as a form of idealism and "power" as the constitution of the "interests", Wendt's application of rational choice upon Waltz's structural realism has transformed or fused the latter's "distribution of capabilities" into a "distribution of interests/ideas" – because interests are constituted by ideas. This theory challenges the materialist assumptions of realism by asserting that social factors, such as identity and norms, play an equally crucial role in shaping state behaviour.

[21] T The researchers selected a binary multivariate logistic regression model. Compared to the probit model, the logit model is better suited for samples with extreme-value distributions. This is owing not only due to the binary nature of the data (a bimodal probability distribution) but also to the fact that the frequencies of the two modes are highly imbalanced, with a significant difference in their relative proportions.

[22] For instance, the "Zhiqing Volunteer Troops/知青志愿兵" in the Communist insurgency in Burma were less capable combatants in warfare than they were Maoist fanatics focused on promoting propaganda.

[23] Beyond the scope of this paper, future studies could expand the dependent variables to include economic and diplomatic assistance. Furthermore, the null hypothesis (or benchmark model) in this research, in addition to its orthodox definition of a "no model" scenario or a 50–50 pure guess (i.e., 0.5 when all coefficients are equal to 0), can also be construed as any foreign policy action in set F that is not the alternative hypothesis (the ∀~f). For instance, the null hypothesis for the military intervention hypothesis can be neutrality or any other potential CCP foreign policy action, provided that such actions are not accompanied by military intervention.

[24] Although the Korean War erupted on June 25, 1950, it was filtered out in step i) because the Uppsala dataset records the conflict's commencement as May 31, 1949—prior to the CCP taking power in China on October 1, 1949.

[25] One of the thresholds for the variable "*eit" definition. In 1952 – the third year of the Korean War – the total amount of PRC exports was only 4.356 billion Yuan, which was approximately equal to 1 billion U.S. dollars at the time (i.e., the Yuan-Ruble exchange rate had been pegged at 1.03 to 1 until 1959 while it was 4 rubles to 1 dollar officially) and the external balance was –1.04 billion Yuan. However, in that year PRC's GDP was 56.1 billion Yuan (PRC data) or 79.2 billion Yuan (CIA data) at best, whereas, in 1952 alone,* Soviet aid to China had reached 1.074 billion Yuan. Therefore, the assignment of the value to the variable "*eit" in the Korean War case (conflict_id = 235) is 1. Source in this regard: National Bureau of Statistics of China's 1984 China Statistical Yearbook,* pp. 12-15. Chao K. and Mah F.'s 1964 article *A Study of the Rouble-Yuan Exchange Rate*, p. 193. Wyczalkowski M. R.'s IMF article *The Soviet Price System and the Ruble Exchange Rate*, p. 214. Central Intelligence Agency's research report *The Gross National Product of Communist China: 1952-60*, p. 1, and Shen Z.'s book *Mao Zedong, Stalin, and The Korean War*, p. 388.

[26] In addition to its relatively weak effect, the impact of the environmental factor "*it*"'s is also restricted by the geographical distance between the conflict zone and China, which is represented by variables like *"border"*, *"borderstate"*, and *"proximity"*. For instance, although the ideological factor plays a role, unlike Cuba's actions, the CCP has never sent organized troops to remote conflicts, as Cuba did in the Angolan Civil War and the Ogaden War.

[27] This assertion is made by Clausewitz in his book *On War.* However, taking a step back, throughout the Napoleonic Wars, there was a unique case where a general did achieve success when fighting against an enemy double the size of his own: Marshall Louis-Nicolas Davout defeated the author and Blücher's 60,500 Prussian troops with a mere 27,000 French soldiers in the Battle of Auerstedt. Of course, such an exceptional case does not negate the argument thereof.

[28] Mearsheimer in the online debate *Exclusive: John Mearsheimer vs Alexander Dugin: All You Need to Know About China, Russia, and the US* stated that "<…> about how the smaller states in the system navigate the competition that takes place between the great powers. I think there is not much more to say than that you want to do everything you can to make sure you don't get caught in the crossfire. You may be forced in some cases to ally with one great power rather than the other, and in such a case, if you are aligned with a great power, you want to go to great lengths to make that great power behave as responsibly as possible, and to get that great power to act in ways that are in your interest. But I think if you don't find yourself in a situation where you have to ally with one of the great powers, what you want to do is do everything possible to remain on the sidelines to not get involved, because great powers are ruthless, and when they get into a security competition with each other they behave in ruthless ways. And as a minor power, or even a major power but not a great power, you have a vested interest in staying out of the way as much as possible."