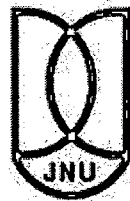


Signalling In International Crisis Bargaining

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award
of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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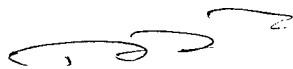
DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**Signalling in International Crisis Bargaining**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.


Deep Jyoti Barman

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



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Chapter-I

Introduction

This dissertation explains an understudied source of misperception and false optimism in international relations. The theory forwarded by this research argues that, when national leaders believe that the adversary will refrain from a large-scale military engagement, they will ignore the relative asymmetry in military capability and continue or even escalate the crisis by undertaking certain policies which are deemed as aggressive by the adversary. In other words, when a state believes in its impunity, it undertakes policies which are non-reflective of its true military capability, thereby deteriorating the already strained security environment. Attempts will be made in this research to explore the reasons for false optimism on the part of India in the Sino-Indian war of 1962.

At its core, the logic of the argument is based on a misreading of the international situation, misperception of the adversary's intentions and its stake in the conflict, and most importantly, misperception of the adversary's signals, to reinforce the already pre-conceived notions about its behaviour. Most works on false optimism argues, that false optimism makes it difficult for a nation to accurately assess the military balance between them and the adversary, forcing it to ignore, even strong military and diplomatic signals, thereby leading to failure of deterrence and strategic coercion. (Twomey 2005) However, this dissertation forwards an alternate argument; when a nation believes that the adversary will not risk war, it gathers the courage to undertake certain actions which are reckless and provocative. These actions are taken in spite of the knowledge that, the adversary is militarily superior.

This chapter outlines several aspects of this argument, laying the groundwork for the rest of the dissertation. It begins with a discussion of the topic at a broad level, highlighting the puzzles and questions that this dissertation addresses and the answers it proposes. Then it outlines the remainder of the dissertation, summarizing the theory and the evidence that supports it. Finally, this chapter concludes with a brief discussion of some of the literature that this dissertation builds on and expands from: rational theory of war, deterrence and compellence, dangers of false optimism, credibility, and the measurement of power.

Question and Topic

Is war rational? If states want to minimize costs while maximizing profits, why would they ever resort to war? Why do adversarial states fail to locate a solution below the threshold of war, depending on their relative power capabilities? Perhaps war is best thought of as a bargaining failure, if so, how central the role of information asymmetries? How important are misperception, miscalculation, and miscommunication in the outbreak of conflict? These questions lie in the centre of important debates in political science. Attempts at strategic coercion, response to such attempts by others, decisions to cross the use of force thresholds and to escalate in a limited conflict, these all depends on a state expecting some positive benefits from its actions.¹ That assessment, in general, depends on some evaluation of military balance conducted formally through a military net assessment or campaign analysis process or through methods that are less formal. Measurement of adversary's relative capabilities and will are critical for two reasons: first, such an assessment helps to determine the level of threat facing a nation. Assessment of their adversaries' relative power also shapes nations' expectations about the outcome of possible wars. Further, assessment of adversary's intent often includes some assessment of their cost-benefit analysis about the future. Second, under the best circumstances, communication between potential adversaries is difficult. When sending signals, nations need to understand how others measure power and will and send signals appropriate to their adversaries' perspectives. However, in circumstances where the two sides face off with different perceptions about the nature of military capability, this can be very challenging. In international relations this sort of miscommunication can lead to false optimism and, in turn, war.

Most works on false optimism argues that perceptual biases skews this assessment process in such a way that the adversary always looks weaker or atleast less formidable relative to one's own. However, this dissertation will demonstrate that false optimism does not necessarily lead to a faulty assessment of military power. On the contrary, this work argues that despite an accurate assessment of the military situation, when a state is convinced that the adversary will not risk war because of

¹ Positive at least relative to alternate outcomes.

either the overwhelming cost of war, uncertainty about the behaviour of other actors, etc. the state will ignore the military reality, thereby embarking on policies that can potentially escalate the crisis to new levels. To sum up, when relative capabilities is taken out of the war calculus, the focus shifts to relative will; where assessment is very difficult and mistakes frequent.

The conduct of international diplomacy depends on the ability to send signals which communicates the interest and resolve of the state to an adversary. In an international crisis, states make demands backed by threats to use force. Although these threats can be explicit in diplomatic communications, they will not generally carry much weight unless substantiated by some show of force - military measures designed to convey the commitment to resort to arms if one's demands are not satisfactorily met. (Lai 2004) To have an impact, this commitment must be credible; it must be in one's interest to carry out the threat if the opponent refuses to comply. In an environment where states possess private information about their valuations, capabilities, or costs, credibility can be established by actions that a state unwilling to fight would not want, or would not dare, to take. Military moves, such as arms buildups, troop mobilizations, and deployments to the potential zone of operations, can alter incentives in a crisis by changing one's expected payoff from the use of force. These are tacit bargaining moves that can restructure the strategic context thereby creating and possibly signaling one's commitments while undermining those of the opponent. (Lai 2004) This dissertation, however, forwards the argument that nations under the influence of false optimism fails to decipher even strong signals such as military mobilization and instead misinterpret them as weak signals thereby getting an impetus to escalate the situation farther. The task undertaken in this dissertation- firstly, purports a strong counter claim to the popular logic that strong signals deter war and secondly lays the claim that signals cannot be claimed as strong or weak just because of its inherent nature but rather depends on what the target audience thinks about it. E.g. Pakistan and India tests missiles every time there is tension in the border. Display of offensive capability is considered as a strong signal but in the Indo-Pak case, both states dismiss these signals as nothing but vulgar display of force. When the national leaders believe that the adversary, despite his superior military capability, would not dare to escalate the conflict beyond a point, they choose to ignore even strong signals displaying the adversary's resolve and capability to carry out the threat. It is important

to point out that this research does not disqualify the rationalist theory of war neither does it support that national leaders are irrational and their approach to issues of war are more passionate rather than pragmatic. On the contrary, the rationalist assumption is the basis of this work and efforts are undertaken to refine the theory such that the concept of bounded rationality can be comprehended with its paradigm.

The Sino-Indian border war of 1962 provides an excellent window in the phenomenon of misperception and miscommunication of signals due to false optimism. This dissertation looks at the signaling failure as a possible explanation for the Sino-Indian war of 1962. Consider the period of late 1950's when India ignored the Beijing's threat that any Indian claims in the western sector courted retaliation across the McMahon line. (Maxwell, 1970:175) India's Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru consistently emphasized the dangers of war not only for India and Indians but for the world as a whole. (Maxwell 1970:175) "War between India and China would be one of the major disasters of the world, 'he said in the upper house at the end of 1961...' for it would mean world war. It would mean war which will be indefinite. We would not be able to limit it in time, because it will not be possible for China to defeat us and it will be impossible for us to march up to Peking across Tibet." (Maxwell 1970:175) One editorial in the Times of India in 1961 reported that "one of the fantasies with which New Delhi hypnotizes itself into inactivity is the supposition that a Sino-Indian conflict on the border issue would plunge the entire world into a nuclear holocaust". (Maxwell 1970:178) The belief that a border war would lead to a world war made Indian leaders to believe that, the cost of war (India-China) was so high, that both of them will be deterred easily, and moreover the great powers will have an interest in stepping into the region when matters escalate beyond a certain point. This understanding of the international situation made Indian leaders believe that despite China's superior military force, it would be unable to escalate the crisis to war, giving it the impetus to follow a provocative strategy in dealing with the crisis which acted as a perceptual lens, skewing all signals sent and received by it. The perceptual lens of false optimism, on the part of India, projected an image of India as committed to war when it actually was not. Graver (2006) states that the two sets of factors responsible for China's decision to wage war against India in 1962 were- First, a perceived need to punish and end perceived Indian efforts to undermine Chinese control of Tibet, Indian efforts which were perceived as having the objective of restoring the pre-1949

status quo ante of Tibet, and secondly, a perceived need to punish and end perceived Indian aggression against Chinese territory along the border. These factors prove that China believed that India was an aggressive and revisionist power which was capable for undertaking military adventures against China and its interests. The attempt in this dissertation is to trace the reasons and effects of false optimism in the part of India and how it impeded signaling between the two states.

Organization of the Dissertation:

This chapter has introduced the question posed and the answer proposed. It has pointed to the importance of identifying the sources of false optimism and the effects of misperception of signals that might lead to diplomatic failures in cases of strategic coercion. After summarizing the rest of the dissertation, this chapter will conclude by identifying a number of literatures relevant to these hypothesized answers.

The next chapter continues to develop this causal chain more rigorously. It begins by defining the universe of inquiry of the study (attempts at strategic coercion including both compellence and deterrence) and the concept used as the independent variable (false optimism). Then, it uses the existing political science literatures in a number of areas to identify specific hypotheses that will flesh out the proposed causal chain based on two separate hypotheses. These hypotheses draw on psychological and organizational dynamics of that have been used before (in different ways) in political science. Chapter 2 also draws out specific empirical predictions that come from the theoretical hypotheses that can be used to evaluate them. Finally the chapter explains the methodologies used in the dissertation (qualitative case studies, process tracing, alternate theories, etc.).

The third chapter is the case study (Sino-Indian war of 1962). It highlights the distinct stages in the historiography of the Sino-Indian war and clarifies its biases of history-reading; which is post-revisionist. Instead of producing a chronological narration of the events leading to the Sino-Indian war of 1962, this chapter focuses on certain events which have a direct relevance in highlighting the hypothesized relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

The chapter finds that the Indian leadership, especially the political leaders, under prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and the top echelon of the military was convinced in their belief that a large-scale Chinese attack was impossible because the outcomes of such an action will set into motion a set of uncontrolled events which will culminate into a world war. Their belief was bolstered by inputs from the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) which presented reports suggesting that the Chinese were not militarily capable of mounting a large-scale assault due to logistical difficulties and also lacked the will to fight, because of the fear of isolation, due to its estranged relationship with the Soviet Union. (Maxwell 1979) (Raghavan 2010) (Hoffmann 1990) The conviction in India's immunity from a Chinese attack was so strong that the Indian leaders ignored even strong signals, both tying-hands and cost-sinking, sent by China and went ahead with their policies which according to the Chinese, tried to undermine their position in Tibet and alter the boundary situation. The effects of India's false optimism were so strong that India held on to a bargaining position which was unrealistic according to the relative power distribution; this locked India on a collision course with China as early as the 1950's and with the implementation of the forward policy the impact was imminent. But India was still confident that in this game of Chicken it would be China that would swerve away.

Finally, the concluding chapter summarizes the results. The case study provides initial support for the hypotheses and suggests that additional work on them is merited. The chapter also suggests important ways that policymakers can use the insights from this dissertation to reduce the prospects misperception across nations and better advance national interests without recourse to war. Finally, it discusses the contribution that this dissertation makes to the field.

Situating the Project in Existing Literature

This project fits within the existing literature in several ways. First, it builds on the existing understand on when deterrence works and when it fails. Second, its independent variable, false optimism, is grounded in the field of cognitive and psychological theories of war. Third, this work borrows heavily from the existing

literature on signalling and misperception. Fourth, it also explores the work on different types of military mobilization and its effect on the outbreak of war. Lastly, it has some (limited) implications for spiral and security dilemma research. In short, this dissertation integrates insights from several literatures and speaks on a number of important debates in the field. Each of these areas is discussed in turn.

Deterrence Success and Failure:

There is a large literature attempting to explain the success or failure of deterrence policies. (Jervis 1979) (Levy 1989) There are three key elements to the study and conduct of strategic coercion in international relations: credibility, capability, and communication (often referred to as the three Cs).² (Johnston, 1995) Political science has long emphasized the importance of and difficulties in accessing an adversary's credibility. (Gelpi 2003) (Mercer 1996) (Press 2005) (Schelling 1960, 1966) (Wholstetter 1959) Accessing the adversary's capability also boasts of a burgeoning literature. (Epstein 1985), (Posen 1984) Least studied is the way credibility and capability are communicated. The work on each of these is discussed in turn here.

Measuring Credibility and Intent

Thomas Schelling claims that motivations of both actors play a central role in the probability of success in strategic coercion through their effects on credibility and willingness to fight. (Schelling 1966) the credibility of the country making the deterrent or compellent threat will be enhanced if it is believed to care a lot about the issue and if it is expected to follow through with its threat if the opponent does not comply. (Jervis 1976: 77) On the other hand, highly motivated aggressors are harder to deter (or coerce) than are status quo powers. (Glaser 1997) (Schweller 1996) (Davis 1995) Schelling argues that it is because of the motivation that deterrence is thought to be harder than compellence. (Schelling 1966: 69-91) Prospect theory justifies the above mentioned claim by forwarding the logic that since people care more about

² This term is credited to Henry Kissinger

things they already have than things they do not possess yet, hence they are more likely to defend them more forcefully.(Schaub 2004) (Levy 1996) (Butler 2007)

Qualitative work also emphasized the importance of credibility. George and Smoke stresses their finding that the challenger's perception of the credibility of the commitment is critical. (George and Smoke 1994: 279-92) Eight factors are highlighted by George and Simons that leads to success of deterrent policies: clarity of objective, strong motivation, sense of urgency, strong leadership, domestic support, international support, fear of unacceptable escalation, and clarity of terms (George and Simons 1994) Many of these factors are directly related to clarity of signals.

Capability

Relative capability plays a major role in international politics in many ways.³ (Mearsheimer 2001) (Keohane 1984) (Moravcsik 1998) (Wendt 1999) States choose policies towards other states based, in part, on the relative balance between them. (Walt 1987) Morgenthau emphasizes the importance of measuring the balance and notes that "as for the assessment of the power of other nations, either to overrate or to underrate it may be equally fatal to the cause of peace"

(Morgenthau 1985: 564) there is sufficient amount of work using Large-N method to assess whether deterrence works (or not) in general and it has identified capability- particularly locally deployed capability- as primary factor of importance. (Achen and Snidal 1989) (Huth, 1997) (Huth and Russett 1984, 1990, 1993) (Lebow 1989) these scholars have concluded that greater capability ensures deterrence. Similar conclusions apply to instances of compellence or other influence strategies. (Schelling 1967) (George and Smoke 1974) Generally capability is measured as the overall relative power between the two countries, although some variants of the qualitative models consider only the local power that can be brought to bear (i.e. forces in the area, relevant to carrying out a threat). However measuring power is deemed very difficult since policy makers have no simple index on which they can converge. General opacity in international relations certainly plays some role here, (Twomey

³ This is one of the few realities of international relations that are in agreement (atleast in parts) across the board from realists, liberals, Marxists, and also constructivists.

2005) as do incentives to misrepresent. (Blainey 1988) The ambiguity and capriciousness of feedback, the lack of conclusive tests, and the dynamic nature of the balance itself all deepens these problems. (Wohlforth 1993: 296-300)) Further, shifts in power balance makes assessment of relative power even more difficult. (Wohlforth 1993: 296:300) Granter adds that when the effects of strategy is added into the mix, it makes analysis even more complex, leading military establishments to rely on oversimplified dominant indicators. (Granter 1997) Thus, the assessment of military capability should not be viewed simply as a data collection exercise, but rather as a complex process of interpretation that can be shaped by many factors. (Twomey, 2005)

Communication

Jervis notes that instruments of power such as military and economic resources are widely studied but the role of diplomatic skills and the full spectrum of techniques by which a state can influence the inferences others are making about it, have not been explored by the scholars of international relations, adequately. (Jervis, 1970) States makes frequent use of tacit signaling to communicate matters of great importance. (Downs and Rocke 1990) (Jervis 1970:18-26) Tacit bargaining takes place whenever a state attempts to influence the policy choices of another state through behavior, rather than by relying on formal or informal diplomatic exchanges. (Downs and Rocke 1990) The two classics in the field of coercive diplomacy by George and Simons (1994) and Schelling (1980) do not focus on the impediments to communication, but rather generate a set of prescriptions at the abstract level for deterrence and compellence to succeed that focuses on credibility, capability and some assurances that the threat are contingent. (Twomey 2005) Despite of the issue involved, being complex, beyond commendable admonitions for “clarity” in the threat, the difficulties associated with communication are not examined in depth. (Twomey 2005) Jervis (1970) highlights the link between perception and difficulties in communication:

The signaling actor may try to compensate for the fact that ambiguous signals sent in an environment of noise are especially susceptible to distortion. This would be relatively easy if all actors had the same perceptual predispositions. Introspection

would then permit the actor to understand the influences present when the signals were received and allow them to correct for them. But these predispositions vary and are determined by complex factors, some of which are beyond the knowledge of even the most careful and intelligent observer.

So far we have seen that attempts at deterrence and compellence can be frustrated in numerous ways – one side may lack the credibility to adequately threaten the other side, or the threat may be communicated unclearly. Each side's assessment of the other's motivations might lead them to doubt its credibility. The theory proposed in this dissertation by no means contradicts these any of these. It merely suggests that, in addition, when a state or states is under false optimism, it will be more difficult to more difficult to interpret signals even though the assessment of power is accurate. When one or both the states involved in a conflict suffer from false optimism which makes them believe in their impunity, it impedes the conduct of international diplomacy and statecraft by making communication more difficult. The substance of communication in question is related to impediments posed by credibility and capability. Twomey's work on misperception claims that if one does not know how one's adversary's understands military power, then one does not know how he will interpret any military signals one sends. (Twomey 2005) However, the dissertation claims, on contrary, that when state(s) are under the influence of a sense of impunity against the use of force, they will still suffer from the same perils of misperception and miscommunication, despite their ability to comprehend the adversary's understanding of military power. In other words, Twomey's theory can only explain war between those states, which have a big difference in their theories of victory, while the theory forwarded by this dissertation claims to explain war between states which may not necessarily have serious differences in their respective theories of war. E.g. India and Pakistan both have fought four wars since their creation, although they both inherited the same military from their British colonial master.

Culture, Strategic Culture and Communication:

The argument that culture shapes perceptions and political outcomes has a long and well respected lineage in political science. Constructive scholarship has been a source of analytic rigor in the renewed attention to the role of culture in foreign policy.

(Katzenstein 1996) (Farrell 1998) The depth of the ability of culture to shape people's understanding of the worlds can be substantial. Some psychologists and linguists argue that languages- one component of culture- treat people can shape basic cognitive processes like counting. (Everett 2004) Beyond political culture, several other factors can play a role in shaping perceptions about international security issues: strategic culture, civil-military culture, organizational culture, etc. (Scobell 2003:4-8)

The dissertation continues in the footsteps of these earlier works. It attempts to make use of the self conscious attention to positivist rigor that characterizes more recent scholarship on strategic culture. (Johnston 1995) (Gray 1979) Most of those who use the term "culture" tend to argue, explicitly or implicitly, that different states have different predominant strategic preferences that are rooted in the early formative preferences in the early or formative experiences of the state, and are influenced to some degree by the philosophical, political, cultural, and cognitive characteristics of the state and its elites. (Johnston 1995) Johnston also claims that ahistorical or "objective" variables such as technology, polarity, or relative material capabilities are all of secondary importance and it is strategic culture, alone that gives meaning to all these variables. (Johnston 1995) Although he illuminates the nature and importance of studying strategic culture, he wisely mentions that strategic culture approach necessarily rejects rationality and it is in fact compatible with the notion of limited rationality (where strategic culture simplifies reality), process rationality (where strategic culture defines ranked preferences or narrow options), and with adaptive rationality (where historical choices, analogies, metaphors, and precedents are involved to guide choices). (Johnston 1995) Schelling argues that whereas strategies in game focus on "best" choice depending on expectations about what other players would do, strategic culture, as the concept is used to date, implies that a state's strategic behavior is not fully responsive to other's choices, since a historically imposed inertia on choice makes strategy less responsive to specific contingencies. (Schelling 1960) Thus in the view of many analysts, the Soviets did not adopt American MAD-based deterrence doctrines , as US policy-makers had once predicted, since Soviet strategic culture- based preferences were formed prior to the nuclear revolution and deployment of American nuclear doctrine. (Johnston 1995)

This dissertation uses the concept of strategic culture one of the factors responsible origin of false optimism and as an impediment in communicating signals across states. There is a lot of literature on strategic culture which deals with differences in strategic culture and miscommunication. This dissertation steps goes a step further and explains how strategic culture manifests into false optimism and becomes responsible for strategic choices adopted by a state, systematically shutting down or weakening signals that are against the created perception. Geertz (1973) defines culture as “webs of significance” created by individuals in a social setting. Adopting this definition to the focus of our study, when national leaders face off across different cultures, they use their own webs of significance to evaluate power and signals. A powerful signal that is significant in one strategic culture may not be understood as significant in a different strategic culture. This is the recipe for endemic miscommunication and misunderstandings.

False Optimism:

Most of the literature on false optimism relates to either overestimation or underestimation of the adversary. This dissertation focuses on a separate problem- a perceptual problem caused by belief in one’s impunity because of a skewed calculation of the cost of war- and this problem generally leads to underestimation of the enemy’s resolve and its own set of negative consequences. Scholars have argued that is a potent and pervasive cause of war. (Blainey 1999)(Van Evera 1999) (Lebow and Stein 1993) The implication of false optimism for the entire deterrence success literature suggests: false optimism will make states less likely to be successful in deterrence and compellence. This dissertation is an effort in the direction of exploring the sources and impact of false optimism.

Escalation Spirals and Security Dilemma:

Another important source of escalation in international security theory is security dilemma and spirals (Jervis 1978) at its core, the escalation that stems from these sources comes from false pessimism. The spiral model suggests that wars are caused by states over-responding to misperceived threats and creating dilemmas. Jervis states that when states seek the ability to defend themselves, they get too much and too

little- too much because they gain the ability to carry out aggression; too little because others, being menaced, will increase their own arms and reduce the first state's security. (Jervis 1976:64) given the assumption of anarchy in international relations, states must assume the worst and maintain security forces to protect themselves. In situations other than perfect defense dominance, these forces will threaten others who will respond with their own build up, thus forcing the first nation to respond in kind. This concept is very close to the security dilemma- "an increase in one state's security decreases the security of others". (Jervis 1976:186) (Glaser 1997) The security dilemma lies at the heart of the spiral model; and the prisoner's dilemma is the game theoretic representation of it. (Jervis 1976:64) Jervis mentions it that since asymmetrical beliefs produces incompatible policies (Jervis 1967:65) and combined with inherent cognitive failings and misperceptions will together leads to war. (Jervis 1967: 75) A simple policy prescription arises from this model: it is "often not in the state's advantage to seeking wide margins of superiority over his adversary."

The spiral literature includes a number of themes and a large amount of this is formal in nature. In a seminal book, Robert Axelrod examines prisoner's dilemma using game theory, capturing the central elements of the spiral model. In this model he found the optimal solution for competing in an iterated prisoner's dilemma is a strategy of 'tit-for-tat'. (Axelrod 1984) Refinement of this early work has taken the form of adding uncertainty and noise into the simulation, making the real world application of such models more robust. (Axelrod 1997) While much of this work is prescriptive, it speaks primarily of the dangers of false pessimism (and ways to resolve it). Opacity is another phenomenon that has merited huge volume of literature. In certain circumstances, opacity may tend towards an overestimation of the enemy and an undue pessimism.

Parallel Arguments:

A number of scholars working in some of the above areas have come to parallel conclusions to that of the dissertation's overall argument. However, none make it their theoretical focus nor subject it through empirical evaluation. Nevertheless, this scholarship presents does provide an important starting point for the work presented here. Some scholars have evaluated the topic of understanding signaling and

deterrence, which are invaluable for this dissertation. Betts provides an interesting critique of rationality in international security noting the tension of “culture versus coercion”. (Betts 2000) He states that coercive strategies aimed at an adversary will depend on communication and cultural blinders prevent the common frame of reference necessary to ensure that the receiver hears the message that the sender intends to send. (Betts 2000: 28-29) Jervis (2002) suggests a way, for scholars, of overcoming this problem – Firstly, focusing on the image an actor is trying to project, the behavior it adopts to do so, and then shifting attention to the perceiver, examining what influences the perceiver and what inferences he draws. Secondly, observe what the perceiver thinks it must do in order to send the desired message in response, what it does to reach this goal, and how the actor in turn judges the other’s behavior and determines how the other perceives its behavior. He states that it is rare for actors, especially adversaries, to understand the situation the same way, to be able to discern how the other sees them and their behavior, or even to know what signals are taken to be most important. (Jervis 2002) This dissertation adopts this research strategy.

Most scholarship in the field of signaling and deterrence focus on one of the lenses, military, ideational, organizational, etc. to understand the shaping of perceptions about the outcome of a war. Example- Twomey (2005) focuses on the military lens to understand how different theories of victory interferes in accurate measurement of military power and contributes to underestimation of the adversary, leading to the failure of strategic coercion; Gartner (1999) emphasizes the power of the organizational lens in various national security bureaucracies in shaping perception of success and failure in war.

Some scholars pursuing theoretical goals have found empirical support for phenomena that are similar to that studied in this dissertation. Mearsheimer emphasizes the role of specific doctrines- blitzkrieg- in causing optimism and deterrence failure. (Mearsheimer 1983); Cohen argues that different concepts of operation and strategies led America to underestimate the danger posed by the Soviet Red Army. (Cohen 1988); and Shimshoni points out that when states rely on qualitative advantages and surprise have a difficult time in deterring their adversaries because such states cannot enhance their credibility by pointing out their military advantages, because doing so will erode the prospects for surprise. (Shimshoni, 1988)

Lai makes a similar argument when he examines the effects of private military mobilization on the outcome of military crisis. (Lai 2004)

This dissertation builds on many of these theorists to draw out their core shared issues, place them in a common general framework, and evaluate their plausibility through detailed empirical testing. However, this dissertation scores over earlier scholarship on two points- first, instead of focusing on one particular variable it takes a host of factors in understanding the origins of false optimism; and second, it does not limit itself to merely calculating the probability of success or failure in war for a state but also includes how a state perceives its adversary will calculate the cost of war.

Summary:

Thus, this project draws on theoretic work on deterrence theory, strategic coercion, signalling strategies, misperception of signals, sources and consequences of false optimism, measurement of power, etc. Empirically, it incorporates approaches used productively in an existing body of work on crisis diplomacy. It contributes to the understanding of the role of false optimism in leading to war as a bargaining failure, but it does so by outlining a series of sources that have not received much attention. If the argument proposed my the theory is correct, it has important implications for international theorists in the area of rationalist views of war, the efficacy of signalling strategies, the understanding of the sources of deterrence failure, and importance of crisis diplomacy and statecraft.⁴

This dissertation's argument also has important policy prescriptions for national leaders.⁵ This dissertation forwards an explanation for wars between states which have clear asymmetries in military capabilities. In sum this research explores the source of confidence or rather over-confidence of weak powers to challenge a stronger power.

⁴ Each of these is discussed in turn in Chapter 4: Conclusion

⁵ Again the final chapter discusses these.

Chapter-II

Theory and Method

The core of this chapter is a detailed statement of the causal statement advocated in the dissertation. The theory purported in this dissertation is: when a nation is under false optimism that the adversary will refrain from using large-scale military force against it, in a conflict situation or cannot escalate the crisis beyond a certain point. Then, that state undertakes certain policies which is non-reflective of its relative power, thereby impeding diplomacy and signalling, potentially leading to escalation of the conflict. There are two stages to this causal argument, each expressed as a hypothesis below: the first portion links the different beliefs about war to misperception, the second extends that to miscommunication and crisis outcomes (escalations or conflict). The logic of each will be sketched out in turn, and then predictions are derived to allow for testing in the dissertation's empirical work. This chapter includes an attempt to place the research within the existing literature, the theoretical framework and also an explanation of the methodology of enquiry pursued in the remainder of the dissertation.

What interests me in the project is the series of policies undertaken by the Indian government during its border conflict with China over half a century ago. A cursory reading of the history reveals that India despite being militarily inferior held a bargaining position which was unrealistic and yet it was reluctant to scale up its military preparedness. To explain this particular predicament of Indian leader's decision-making, this scholarship advocates an agent-centric approach which examines the effect of false optimism on the efficacy of signalling and outbreak of hostilities. Many scholars have argued that the Indian leadership failed to understand the seriousness of the Chinese threat and embarked on a path which left little room for a negotiated settlement, thereby inviting war on itself. (Maxwell 1970) (Hoffmann 1990)

On the whole, the literature dealing with the failure of national leaders to stand up to the challenge of an imminent assault can be divided into two major categories. They differ widely from one another in terms of the explicit and implicit premises, the specific nature of the explanation advanced, and the level of abstraction. (Ben-Zvi

1979:129) These may be termed as the analytic-revisionist and the cognitive-perceptual categories.

In most of their basic premises, analytical-revisionist studies comprise an extension of the logic of the rational theory of decision making. These theorists are convinced that actions taken by the actors reflect purpose or intention, and are chosen as a calculated solution to a strategic problem. (Allison 1971: 13) The proponents of this approach assume that statesmen accurately perceive external threats and opportunities, and select policies on the basis of a cost benefit calculus in order to advance national interest. (Levy 1983:76) This branch is committed to the notion of rationality and implies consistent value-maximizing choices, and generally ignores the possibility of chance, lack of coordination, unintended consequences and coincidences. Instead, it suspects that "well-laid plans give events a coherence they would otherwise lack," and that hidden manipulation and conspiracies, rather than confusion and chaos, are the factors responsible for the failure of national actors to meet the challenge of an impending onslaught (Jervis 1976:321). Analytic-revisionists argues that wars are not accidental and when a country attacks another country, the initiator's reaction is never a surprise for the leadership of the victim state, since the attacker merely reacts to a deliberate posture on the part of the victim, who provoked the confrontation as a carefully thought-out means of maximizing a broad cluster of desired goals, whose importance far outweighs the loses anticipated in the course of the confrontation. (Ben-Zvi 1971: 130) in other words, these theorists perceive the outbreak of war as the culmination of an elaborate scheme, intended to provoke the enemy into firing the first shot. This approach directly challenges the Rationalist theory of war advocated by Fearon and the likes. The Rationalist expiation of war argues that, wars are accidents that occur when the states in a conflict situation are unable to locate a bargaining settlement below the threshold of war due to impediments in the sharing of private information. (Fearon 1995)

The analytic-revisionist category of research, is predisposed to downgrade or obfuscate any conceptual, cultural, or communication impediments to a timely and accurate diagnosis of an immediate onslaught. On the other hand, the work which relies largely on cognitive premises as the basic analytical tool is skeptical about the prospects for fully overcoming the problems of confusion, ambiguity and deception. It

seeks an explanation in terms of the perceptual mechanisms and predispositions which obscure the relevant warning signals gathered by the victim state. (Cohen and Gooch 1990: 40) As a result of this innate propensity to see ambiguous information as confirming preexisting images and beliefs "about how the world works and what patterns it is likely to present us with" (Jervis 1985: 18) (Vertzberger 1990: 57) policy makers are bound — according to this category — to distort or dismiss as unreliable and unfounded, information which is incompatible with initial beliefs, particularly those which comprise the core of their belief systems.(Jervis, 1976: 187-190) Some argue that given the confusing mass of obstacles for accurate and timely threat perception "that are both profound and numerous, and therefore also practically insurmountable", strategic surprises are depicted by representatives of the cognitive orientation not as the exception but rather the rule. (Vertzberger 1990: 57-58)

Thus, whereas analytic-revisionist studies overestimate the human capability to control the operational environment, some (albeit not all) cognitive-perceptual works underestimate the ability of decision-making units to overcome the obfuscating screen of ambiguity, noise and deception and thus to predict their crisis behaviour upon the dynamics of the unfolding situation rather than on the premises of certain fixed belief systems. (Snyder and Diesing 1977: 271-297) In assessing the contribution of these two research categories in explaining cases of inadequate response to threat, it is evident that analytic-revisionist studies reduce the complexity of human behaviour in crisis situations to a monistic unity. In so doing, they establish distorted stereotypes of the political actor and of the nature of political processes. Committed to the belief that catastrophes such as Pearl Harbor, the Korean War, etc. did not result from genuine intelligence failures but were rather the outcome of deliberate provocations designed to entice the opponent to strike, analytic-revisionist interpretations greatly overestimate the human capacity to initiate, plan and manipulate. These studies ignore the fact that political actors do not function in a social, political, cultural and psychological vacuum, but are continuously confronted with a plethora of constraints which may well restrict their freedom of action and margin of maneuverability. (Ben-Zvi 1976: 135-141)

This research makes an effort to proceed beyond the single distinction between "signals" and "noise" and analyzes the origins of policy-making in a highly

differentiated manner, by focussing on cognitive, political and strategic sources of misperception of the opponent's intentions. In order to systematically reconstruct the perceptual and behavioural patterns by which members of the Indian political and military leadership attempted to cope with the welter of tactical indicators, which increasingly warned of an impending attack on India by China, it is essential to scrutinize carefully the two major determinants of expectations about future adversarial behaviour that pertain to the opponents' intentions and capabilities. Although it is widely assumed that intention assessment, which is believed to be intrinsically fraught with ambiguities and ambivalence, is considerably more difficult than capability assessment, which is at least partially based on hard evidence (which is relatively easy to obtain), one should not overlook the broad complex of intangible capability components and dimensions that are particularly susceptible to misperception. (Levy 1983: 82) These include: the enemy's motivation and morale; the quality of their military intelligence, control systems and communications; the nature of the prevailing military doctrine; and their ability to absorb and effectively employ new and sophisticated weapon systems. (Levy 1983: 82) Intention assessment may be divided into two sub-categories: first, perceptions of the adversary's basic intentions; and second, perceptions of the adversary's immediate intentions. (Jervis 1975: 50) The former are perceptions of the opponent's general behavioural style, approach to calculating political action, motivational calculus and ideology. (George and Smoke 1974: 582-83) These components comprise a coherent set of beliefs and expectations concerning the opponent's operational code, frame of reference, and overall cultural and conceptual frameworks. (Kam 2004:66) The second subcategory is perceptions of the opponent's anticipated short-term behaviour. Whereas perceptions of the adversary's basic intentions represent the potential and the desired, perceptions of the adversary's immediate intentions represent the tangible and the operational, with the initiator prepared to act forthwith in order to promote their basic objectives and thus to convert the hypothetical into the actual and observable. (Kam 2004: 60) However, this dissertation believes that it is virtually impossible to completely separate the assessment of the opponent's intentions from the appraisal of its capabilities, since any assessment of the opponent's immediate intentions is at least partially based on the analysis of the specific configuration, deployment and location of its military forces.

It is obvious from the beginning that this dissertation falls under the cognitive-perceptual research category as it centres on the bounded rationality assumption based on false optimism. After locating the research category, it is necessary to define the universe of the case study which centres on the concept of strategic coercion. The interest in the term strategic coercion is of vital importance since the dissertation focuses on the reaction of Indian leaders who acknowledged that Chinese military was far superior than their own and still went forward with military preparations and retained a hard bargaining stand, clearly defying any attempts made by China that warned them of an impending assault. Why did India not yield to mounting Chinese pressure and concede to their demands, thereby escaping the horrors of war?

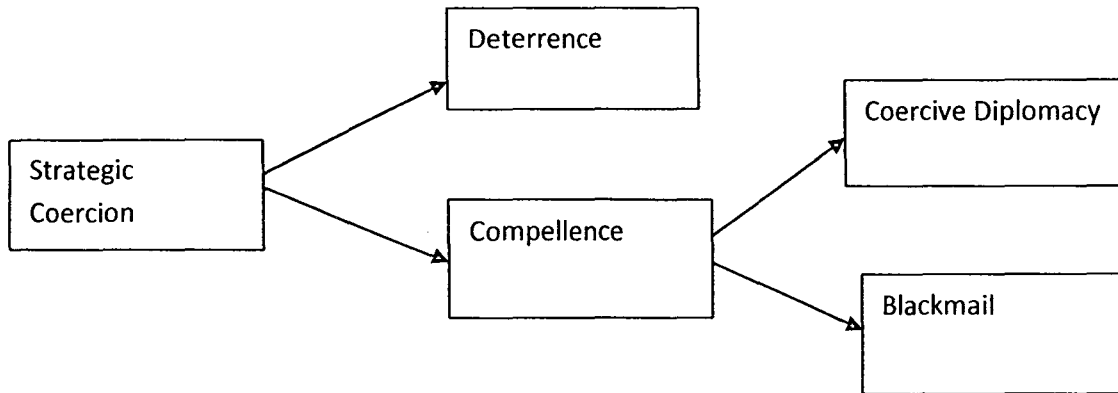
Strategic Coercion

The project focuses on one important way that strategic coercion can fail. Since the use of intimidation of one kind or another to get others to comply with one's wishes is an everyday occurrence in human affairs, it is important to be precise about what constitutes strategic coercion. Lawrence Freedman introduced the term "strategic coercion" which he defines as "the deliberate and purposive use of overt threats to influence another's strategic choices". (Freedman 1998: 15) He adopts the term as a way to subsume deterrence and compellence/coercive diplomacy, which shares many similar effect elements, under the same umbrella concept. (Freedman 1998:15) Both can be thought as a part of a "threat based bargaining process". (Freedman 1998:3)

In terms of the goal of the threat under strategic coercion, there is widely understood to be a distinction between stopping someone from doing something in the future (deterrence) and inducing them to do something that they would not have otherwise done (compellence). Thomas Schelling separates the two, emphasizing that compellence is more difficult than deterrence. (Freedman 1998:3)

The central difference between deterrence and compellence centres on what psychologists refer to as the "perceptual reference point." This highlights the question of whether the issue at stake is perceived as something that one does not already have or something that one already possesses. Going a step farther in categorizing the use of threats, Alexander George subdivides compellence into two neat concepts: "coercive diplomacy" and, what he refers to as the offensive side of policy, "blackmailing strategies". (George 1974:7) For him, coercive diplomacy aims to undo

whereas the more offensive “blackmail” tries to force the opponent to do something entirely new that it had not planned to do. Jokobsen provides an excellent chart to help think about these various concepts and how they relate to each other. (Jakobsen 1998:12)



This builds on Schelling’s dichotomy of Freedman’s umbrella term, discussed above, but adds some further detail by clarifying the two potential goals of compellence.

However, in practice, the boundary lines between the various forms of compellence, deterrence and coercion are not so clear. Clearly, there is a range of tasks to which coercive tools might be applied. In order of increasing difficulty, one can try and persuade an adversary to: not to do something it was planning to do, stop something it is currently doing, or do something new that it did not want to do. Nevertheless, these seem likely to be differences in degree rather than of nature. More fundamentally, the process of weighing capabilities, creating credibility, and communicating any of those demands is similar regardless of the goal of the strategic attempt. Therefore this dissertation will not restrict its universe to any one of these concepts, but will focus instead on strategic coercion, thus including both deterrence and compellence attempts.

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Finally, when discussing the goals of deterrence, scholars and analysts often draw the distinction between general and immediate deterrence. (Morgan 1977) (Fearon 2002) General deterrence is a state of affairs that exists between political adversaries before a crisis. When neither side has made an explicit threat, both sides are aware that they must consider that other’s interest as they ponder any further action. If general deterrence appears to be insufficient to ensure a nation’s interest, that nation may

choose to make a specific threat: “if our opponent attacks our country (or our ally), we will retaliate by doing the following...” At this point, general deterrence has broken down and the policy being pursued is immediate deterrence. A similar distinction could be made on the compellence side: some compellence acts are made more overtly than others are. Even here, potential grey areas exist. Oblique threats, expressions of interest in a region, statements that one country is monitoring the moves of another, all these fall short of an explicit deterrent threat that would clearly move a situation out of the realm of general deterrence and into that of an immediate deterrence. Thus, these two concepts are better thought of as part of a continuum. Thus, when studying strategic coercion, it is important not to neglect cases that are full blown cases of immediate deterrence but lie somewhere along the continuum towards the general deterrence ideal type. General deterrence can fail for the same reason as immediate deterrence does: questions of credibility and intent.

The Tools of Strategic Coercion

If strategic coercion is the use of threats to or actual force to achieve any of the broad range of goals then the tools to ensure its success will fall under two categories: the use of force itself, rather than mere threats of its use, and the use of incentives or carrots.

Strategic coercion should be distinguished from simply forcing an adversary to do something by using overwhelming force. Rather, strategic coercion depends at least in part on threats (implicit or explicit) to achieve its goals. (Jackobsen 1998) The distinction between using military power as a means of brute force to achieve a goal and the use of threats involving military power can trace its origins (at least) to Clausewitz, who writes on the one hand, “War is an act of force, and there is no logical limit to the use of that force. Each side, therefore compels its opponents to follow suit; a reciprocal action is started which must lead, in theory, to extremes.” (Twomey 2005: 56)

On the other he writes that “modifications in practice” in many areas impede this tendency towards all out war. Thus he concludes, “War is never an isolated act”, “war never consists of a short sharp blow”; and in war, the result is never final.” These factors lead to wars responding to the need of politics: If we keep in mind that war

springs from some political purpose, it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it...Policy, then, will permeate all military operations, and in so far as their violent nature will admit, it will remain a continuous influence on them. (Twomey 2005: 56)

This interjection of policy into the use of force characterizes the realm of strategic coercion.

Another way of raising this same issue is to discuss the phenomenon of limited war. Some scholars argue that since most wars fall short of an all out conflict, they retain an element of bargaining. (Schelling 1966: 126) Similarly, most arms races could escalate even further or more rapidly, and thus are also examples of limited international conflict. Some scholars differentiate between militarized and non militarized crisis. Rather than sharply distinct modes of interaction, diplomatic crisis, militarized crisis, limited wars, and total wars are better thought of as lying along a continuum of conflict. Thus in this dissertation, both non-militarized crisis and limited war phases of the case study will be examined.

Most scholars explicitly take a broad view regarding whether strategic coercion can include some brute use of force, while still distinguishing that from pure brute force method of military compellence. Thomas Schelling, argues in the chapter entitled, "The Diplomacy of Violence," that there lies a difference between nations getting what they want by brute force rather than threats, intimidation, and blackmail. Robert Pape also points out that "coercion...is logically distinct from imposition of demand after complete military victory."(Pape 1966: 13) He nevertheless, focuses on a class of events that are characterized by the heavy use of force, because even there, the communicative nature of the use of force is central. Alexander George appears to have a more restricted view of coercive diplomacy, stressing the importance of threats rather than the actual use of force. However, he also shows acquiesce to the fact that force might be used to strengthen diplomatic efforts at persuasion, in the form of limited military action, to demonstrate resolution and willingness to escalate to high levels of military action if necessary. (George 1974: 2) Violence can play communicative role in all conflicts except those that have escalated to Clausewitz's theoretical extremes. This dissertation will follow this broad definition of strategic

coercion, which includes the use of force so long as they have some communicative element and are not part of a total war strategy.

Another question regarding the nature of tools to implement strategic coercion is what exactly is threatened. Most work on deterrence or compellence has focused on threats to punish, other threats are also possible. Glenn Snyder has pointed out that military force can be used either to punish or deny victory to an adversary or to directly hurt him and that both of these may be useful to threaten in coercive diplomacy. (Snyder 1959) Freedman argues strongly that denial strategies can be used both to deter and to compel. (Freedman, 1998: 26) Schelling and Pape raises similar points, and Shimshoni goes further to point out that, in conventional deterrence, the distinction can be easily blurred.(Pape 1966: 13) (Schelling 1966: 2) (Shimshoni 1988: 15) The adapted usage here will include both of these tools of influence - punishment and denial.

Further threats and signals can be made explicitly or tacitly.⁶ Which much attention is focused on the former, it is important not to neglect the latter for several reasons. First they are ubiquitous. Arquilla finds that “tacit signals” using military forces were used in 60 percent of the cases he studies. (Arquilla 1992:163) For some scholars, tacit signals convey extraordinary clarity. Arquilla argues that the tacit signals despite devoid of nuance and heavier costs, relative to verbal communication, have three primary strengths. First, if they are unsubtle, are also unambiguous. Language is rich, and its very complexity can be used to obfuscate as easily as to clarify. He exemplifies his argument in an argument: a warship in the harbor can provoke many things but certainly not confusion. (Arquilla 1992: 157) Thus this dissertation will incorporate both explicit and tacit signals.

Finally, some scholars of strategic coercion use both threats and incentives, or carrot and stick, as tools of policy. However this dissertation will not address incentives,

⁶ Note that the word “signals” in the dissertation incorporates both Jervis’ usage of “signals” and “indices.” See Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970)

while it acknowledges that they can certainly be useful in achieving a nation's goals.⁷ This is done because the causal dynamic highlighted (misperceptions highlighted by different theories of victory) here focuses on impediments to communication of threats, primarily.

Thus for the purpose of this project, strategic coercion is defined as the process of one nation trying to convince another nation to do something it would have not done through threats (implicit or explicit) and limited use of violence, either by opposing an adversary's actions or punishing him. With the caveats discussed above, this is similar to the usage of the term by other's in the field.

The theory below should apply when strategic coercion is attempted. That is attempts at strategic coercion are the universe of cases for the theory. An attempt will be made in the dissertation to positively identify the attempts at strategic coercion made by the belligerents. The dissertation will also seek to analyze the communication regarding intent and assessment of balance of power between the nations.

Theory:

With those theoretical categories and definitions in place, this chapter now turns to the specific causal chain proposed by the theory. It begins with a summary of the existing work that explains the bargaining model of war and the causes of failure of strategic coercion before moving to the next stages of the causal chain proposed by the dissertation. First, false optimism should lead to an underestimation of adversary's resolve. Second, such an underestimation should lead to increased prospects of strategic coercive policies and unnecessary conflict.

Conflict-Bargaining Model:

Bargaining theories of war have produced some very important insights into the causes of war. Most important, they have raised the question of why states are unable to reach a settlement that is preferable to conflict. Most of these theories have focused

⁷ For a similar treatment, see Cortright and Gabbitas, "Incentives for nuclear restraint," in "Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emergent Threats in a Evolving Security Environment," eds. Brian Alexander and Alistair Miller (Virginia: Brassery's Inc., 2003) Ch.8

on the importance of uncertainty and signalling. States are uncertain about each other's resolve, and they use tactics such as military mobilization to signal their resolve to an opposing state. According to earlier literature, war occurs due to misperception and states' "incentives to misrepresent their positions"(Fearon 1995). It is these incentives to misrepresent that prevent states from locating bargains that are preferable to war. Fearon highlights both analytic-revisionist and cognitive-perceptual categories in his theory.

Rational-choice approach, particularly through the application of bargaining models has become one of the dominant approaches to studying the onset of war. These bargaining approaches challenge traditional approaches to studying war, such as realism, by examining the factors that prevent leaders from resolving a crisis before it escalates to war. In other words, "a coherent rationalist approach must show why states are unable to locate an alternative outcome that both would prefer to a fight"(Fearon 1995:380). Fearon (1995) and other scholars have used rational approaches to demonstrate the factors that prevent leaders from reaching ex ante bargains prior to war, providing rational explanations of why states enter into wars against each other (Fearon 1990, 1995)

Typical models of crisis bargaining posit two states with a policy disagreement, both trying to achieve their preferred outcome (Fearon 1995). The basic sequence of events once a disagreement is identified is as follows, and draws on Powell (2006). State A demands some policy change from State B. If state B refuses, State A makes a threat to back up its demand. If state B does not believe the threat is credible, it rejects State A's demands and finds out if the threat was a bluff. This can lead to no-change if State A backs down or to conflict if state A carries out the threat. If State B believes the threat, it negotiates terms of agreement with State A, which can vary in the extent to which B concedes. At this point, both State A and State B must promise to abide by an agreement between them. If State B believes State A's threat, but not its promise to abide by a deal in the future, State B may choose to fight anyway because it thinks it will do better now than in the future. Similarly, once State A has induced State B to negotiate with its credible threat, it must assess the credibility of a promise by State B to abide by a deal in the future. If State A thinks State B will restart the dispute and might do better in the future, it has an incentive to fight today. If neither can make a

credible promise not to restart the dispute in the future when they think they can get a better deal, fighting can occur.

In this basic model, the credibility of both threats and promises influence the incentives that states have for fighting. However, this dissertation will exclusively focus on threats rather than promises, while it acknowledges they can be certainly be useful in achieving a nation's goals. This is done because the causal dynamic highlighted (misperception caused by false optimism) here focuses on impediments to communication of threats, primarily.

Signalling Credible Threats

As illuminated in the above segment, since states have a strong incentive to bluff, demonstrating one's resolve is a difficult business in international relations. A great deal of work in international relations has focused on how states effectively signal their intentions to international actors. Thomas Schelling spoke of "throwing away the steering wheel" as the ultimate signal of commitment to a certain course of action in international affairs. (Schelling 1960) More recently, James Fearon's work on signalling and audience costs in crisis behaviour has spawned a cottage industry in rationalist explanations for war. (Potter and Gray 2008) Another important example can be found in Kenneth Schultz's research, which describes, again using the logic of costly signalling, how opposition parties can render a signal more or less credible in a democracy. (Schultz 2001)

It has been argued by many scholars that to make credible threats, states must send costly signals which are devoid of ambiguity. Costly signals can be defined as actions which incur a cost on the sender, thereby differentiating it from cheap talk. In other words, a signal is credible if a weak actor is unwilling/unable to mimic it. In game theoretic sense, costly signals can be understood as choices which reduce options available to the sender. The simplified conclusion of the literature is that, in an atmosphere of incomplete information, actors turn to credible signals to indicate their "type" to other actors. If actors make a clear investment in a signal, it will be deemed a credible representation of their commitment to a particular outcome.

The existing literature distinguishes between two types of costly signals that state leaders might employ in trying to credibly communicate their foreign policy interests to other states, whether in the realm of grand strategy or crisis diplomacy. Leaders might either (a) tie hands by creating audience costs that they will suffer *ex post* if they do not follow through on their threat or commitment (i.e., costs arising from the actions of domestic political audiences) (Fearon 1997) or (b) sink costs by taking actions such as mobilizing troops that are financially costly *ex ante* (Fearon, 1997); (Mesquita, 1997) Schelling 1960) (Slantchev 2005). Both of these factors create credibility of threats because they alter the costs of making a threat in the short term. Proponents of the audience costs mechanism argue that leaders can make more credible threats when their constituency is likely to hold them accountable for both backing down from a threat and failing in foreign policy. This creates incentive for leaders not to bluff and not to make threats when they are not fairly certain that they can achieve their goals. On the other hand, sunk-cost actions are those that a state undertakes to prove its resolve by paying a cost. E.g. - military mobilization, arms manufacturing, etc. When a state in a diplomatic crisis with a rival mobilizes its military or builds arms, it pays in advance some of the costs of fighting a war, since these are necessary preconditions to fighting. By paying a cost and thereby lowering the threshold of war, the state signals its resolve.

The appeal of clear costly signalling strategies rests on an intuitive link between credible threats and averting war — if the enemy ultimately wants to avoid war, a threat convincing enough, threatening enough, to make him or her count on war is also likely to make him or her yield. Therefore, a war triggered by enemy doubt as to the signaller's ultimate resolve can be averted by issuing believable threats. Making such threats believable requires attaching costs to threats — and these costly threats are theorized to be the only way to separate the states willing to pull the trigger from those bluffing a greater level of resolve. The implication of the theoretical explanation is that leaders not issuing clear costly threats are weak and unresolved.

But the linkage between costly signalling and war aversion is too simplistic and has been criticised by some scholars. The psychological approach suggests that every bit of new information does not necessarily convey the true intention of the rival state because information available between states is inherently noisy. The noise is created

by overlapping and often contradictory information generated from different segments of the government, domestic politics, etc. can greatly impede the communicative ability of the signals. Moreover, commitment problems, trade-offs between military efficacy and diplomatic initiatives, and the salience of the future have all been hypothesized to cause misperception of signals and cause a crisis to end in war, even without uncertainty. To this effect, Sagan and Suri (2003) argues that, contrary to most assumptions about crisis signalling, the October 1969 alert demonstrates that a major increase in military readiness, even a global nuclear alert, do not necessarily create the kind of costly commitments that can enhance the credibility of a threat by placing the reputation of a leader at stake. Although the October 1969 alert was certainly a loud signal of increased military preparedness for global nuclear war, Sagan and Suri (2003) demonstrated empirically that the Soviet leadership did not react in any meaningful way to this significant increase of U.S. military readiness, thereby suggesting that it was also a cheap signal, one that was indicative of a bluff, rather than resolve.

This proves that signals do not have an inherent costly/cheap value but their true value depends on the perceiver's interpretation. This dissertation building on the above theories argues - during crisis, a state which thinks it is immune to war will regard even costly signals sent by the adversary as cheap and indicative of a bluff rather than resolve. This complicates the already convoluted problem of making honest threats in an environment fraught with suspicion and full of noisy and contradictory information.

Hypothesis: 1

H₁: When a State believes that the adversary will not escalate the crisis to the threshold of war, it is more likely to misperceive the adversary's signals as weak, and these misperceptions, ceteris paribus, will lead to underestimation of the adversary's will.

This hypothesis has two components. The first focuses on opacity as a result of false optimism. The second focuses on the primary way this opacity manifests itself: underestimation of the adversary's will.

Causal Logic:

The first part of the hypothesis suggests that belief in impunity makes a state to misperceive adversary's signals. But what makes a state believe in its impunity against war? Steven Van Evera (1999) in his book argues that false optimism can be fostered by either miscalculation of adversary's power (capabilities) or will (resolve). Miscalculation of overall balance of power can be caused due to numerous reasons, such as - existence different theories of victory (which stems from different military doctrines) possessed by the states which makes states underestimate each other's military capabilities (Twomey 2005); feigning of military weakness by an adversary to lull its opponent (thereby getting a first-strike advantage) or motivate him to strike first (thereby legitimizing a counter-strike) (Slantchev 2007); rapid changes in military technology; withholding of secrets (private information) like military alliances, troop deployment, etc. Miscalculation of adversary's will is usually a result of miscalculation of adversary's power. The chauvinist myths embedded in many nationalisms are another source of false optimism. (Van Evera 1999: 25) Nationalist propaganda often inflates bravery of one's own people and denigrates the opponent's toughness and character. Steven Van Evera (1999) states that illusions about the balance of power feed illusions about the balance of will. He farther argues that, when governments infer that their opponent is weak, they will see the writing on the wall and folds. A government that exaggerates their relative power also exaggerate its relative will. (Van Evera 1999:27)

Many scholars have already argued that the more costly the governments believe the war will be, the more careful they are to avoid it. (Van Evera 1999) (Fearon 1997) But this dissertation highlights another important source of false optimism due to miscalculation of the cost of war. When states overestimate the overall cost of war to be very high, they take solace in the renewed deterrence brought about by it. This false optimism about one's insulation from war renders the relative military capabilities calculation useless. This argument is generally used in nuclear deterrence literature where "deterrence by punishment" overshadows "deterrence by denial". The argument forwarded here argues that, certain states might feel more secured because they believe that the outcome of a war will be so appalling that the enemy will automatically get deterred. Overestimation of the cost of war (conventional war) can

be due to a number of reasons. It is not the prerogative of this dissertation to explore the causes of miscalculation but rather its effects. A state might believe that a war initiated between itself and an adversary cannot be limited in time and will quickly involve other states, thereby fuelling into a full blown war; which is not in the interest of the adversary since the object of conflict is cheaper than the cost of war it entails. The second part of the hypothesis suggests that, false optimism about deterrence will lead to underestimation of adversary's resolve to carry out its threats. This is inevitable since the balance of power calculation becomes irrelevant and robust deterrence (due to high cost of war) counters the adversary's will.

Hypothesis: 2

H₂: When a state underestimate's the adversary's will- that comes from H₁- it is more likely to undertake policies which is non-reflective of its relative power, thereby impeding diplomacy and leading to deterrence and coercion failure, escalation, and conflict.

This hypothesis explains how underestimation of adversary's will lead to escalation and conflict. Here the independent variable is underestimation of the adversary's will; the dependent variable is the outcome of the crisis, i.e. escalation or war; and the intervening variable is the ambitious policies which are deemed provocative by the adversary.

Causal Logic:

Jervis (2002:302) notes, "Since interpretation of indices depends on theories, perceivers are likely to go astray when these are incorrect." He farther elaborates that, this can lead the underestimating nation to think that that it is stronger than it really is. As a result, that nation may pursue more assertive policies than it would have if it correctly estimated it correctly estimates its adversary's capabilities. A large body of work has suggested this causal chain. (Blainey 1988) (Stoessinger 2001) This causal chain links false optimism to miscalculation of capabilities which in turn results in ambitious policies. The above hypothesis suggests, on similar lines, that a state under false optimism of impunity from adversary's attack will disregard any asymmetry that might exist in the relative power distribution (difference in capabilities) between

them, and embark on more assertive policies which leads to coercion failure and escalation of the conflict. In other words, false optimism gives even weaker powers the confidence to retain a hard bargaining posture and also undertake risky ventures to improve one's bargaining position. On the contrary, if a state can accurately assess the relative balance of power and will, then the policy decisions will reflect this reality, thereby minimizing unnecessary conflict.

The false optimism about the cost of war for the adversary stems from a nation's understandings about international relations, the adversary's intent and the value the adversary attaches to the object of conflict. States expect their adversaries to make decisions based on cost-benefit analyses, which in turn affects the state's understanding of the adversary's intent. That is if state A thinks its adversary, state B, believes that a particular conflict will lead to B's own destruction (an assessment made on the cost of war), then first state, A, is likely to expect restraint by B (a judgement about the adversary's intent). State A is likely to make this judgement about how A thinks B sees the outcome of the future conflict on the basis of A's own calculations about the cost of war. However, in B's actual assessment, B is likely to use its own calculations about the cost of war to make that determination, and the two side's calculations about the cost of war can be quite distinct. Intentions must always be informed by the costs and benefits of pursuing specific goals but, the problem occurs when each side makes cost-benefit calculations using its own understanding.

When strategic coercion fails, violence is often the result as states follow through on their deterrent or compellent threats for both reputational and intrinsic reasons. (George and Smoke 1974:523-26) Thus this dissertation predicts that when there is a disparity between the belligerents in calculating the cost of war for each other, due to a multitude of reasons, escalation and conflict is a likely outcome.

Moreover, when a nation disregards an adversary's capabilities, then signals that the adversary sends using its own capabilities will look relatively weak to the perceiving nation. Many scholars have argued about the exceptional clarity of military signals. (Arquilla 1992:146-47) However, when a nation completely discredits the capabilities angle, even loud military signals become mute.

Summary of the Entire Theory:

For international communication to be effective, both sides must understand the language of diplomacy. But effective communication depends on correct interpretation of adversary's signals. When states are under a false optimism that the adversary will exercise restraint, even weak states pursue assertive policies which are in turn interpreted by others as aggressive. This dissertation focuses on one type of false optimism which originates from miscalculation of adversary's expected cost of war. The following chapter will examine the instances and reasons for India's miscalculation of Chinese cost of war. Once a state follows a course of aggressive actions, based on premises of false optimism, it disregards even strong signals sent by the adversary, even worse misperceives them to corroborate their preconceived biases, the adversary is left with no option but to carry out its threat, either to evade negative repercussions from its domestic audience (audience cost) or retain its reputation in the international system.

Research Methodology:

These two hypotheses will be evaluated through the study of the Sino-Indian war of 1962. This section describes the grounds for choosing the specific case study after outlining several aspects of the research methodology, including a discussion of specific empirical predictions of the general theoretical hypotheses, consideration of alternate explanations, the manner in which the case is approached, and coding criterion.

Predictions:

These two hypotheses lead to nine predictions that should be apparent in the empirical record. These are essentially indicators of the validity of the theory and can be used to test it. (Van Evera 1997). First prediction about war and its cost (both for itself and the adversary) should exhibit underestimation of the enemy's military capability and resolve. Second, should prove that the state under false optimism demonstrates its belief by undertaking potentially risky ventures that are considered by the adversary. Third prediction does not have a direct contribution in validating the hypotheses but shows the actions taken by of the adversary in reaction to the opponent's moves. The

fourth prediction will demonstrate how the state misperceives even strong signals sent by the adversary.

- 1) One of the states should believe that a war will lead to outcomes unfavourable for both the belligerents. Due to this reason the national leaders of that state will downplay the likelihood of the other side getting involved in a conflict or further raising the stakes in it.
- 2) The state should undertake certain policies which are considered non-aggressive or neutral by the state but considered provocative by the adversary.
- 3) The military preparations undertaken by the state should be geared only for diplomatic mobilization, aimed at achieving a bargaining leverage, and not for actual war-fighting. On the other hand, the adversary's military mobilization should be private in nature which is aimed at achieving victory.
- 4) Signals sent by the adversary should be regarded as weak and to corroborate their pre-conceived notions about them. Even costly signals such as troop-deployment, skirmishes, public statements made by national leaders, etc. should be seen as cheap, with intent to bluff.

Investigations of the empirical record in the case study are centred on these predictions as well as the hypotheses more generally. These predictions focus on relatively operationalized factors stemming from the hypotheses, and thus ease the task of assessing the theory's validity. To the extent the cases do align with the predictions, the dissertation hypotheses are supported.

Case Procedure:

For the case study, the dissertation uses congruence tests and process tracing within it, to evaluate the hypotheses and associated predictions. Predictions derived from the hypotheses allow for detailed process tracing, to assess the causal force of the theory in the case study. Assessing these various ancillary predictions of the theory generally requires examination of leaders' statements, policies implemented, and reaction of adversary's behaviour.

After a brief summary of the relevant history, the case study evaluates the leadership's understanding about international relations and the way they believe the conflict will

eventually culminate. Efforts will be made to illuminate the origins of false optimism and demonstrate how they affect the accurate perception of adversary's perceptions. A thorough analysis of the signalling strategies undertaken by both the states will be undertaken, to examine the behaviour of these states during the crisis.

Case Selection and Merits of the Case Study:

The Sino-Indian war of 1962 tests these hypotheses in this dissertation. There are several reasons why this case is particularly attractive for study. First, this case is ideal for a plausibility probe for the theory proposed in this dissertation because both these states had prominent leadership who were considered to be outstanding statesmen. Moreover, Nehru was considered to be an apostle of peace and non-violence who was also the chief architect of the Non-alignment Movement (NAM); an alternative vision to cold war rivalry. Second, there existed significant differences in military capabilities of both these states, providing an ideal case scenario for strategic coercion to play out. Third, Sino-Indian relations continue to be fraught with tension and occasional recourse to attempts at strategic coercion. Learning more about the ways in which miscommunication and misperception occurred to the two in the past can help us to avoid them in the future. This is critical for the avoidance of nuclear and large-scale conventional war in an era where some prognosticate a long-term competition between these two countries.

The next chapter begins the task of testing the hypotheses.

Chapter-III

Sino-Indian War of 1962

The Sino-Indian boundary dispute was one of the most dramatic passages of international relations in mid-20th century. (Maxwell, 1970:11) It saw the world's two most populous states, Asia's new republics, which had seemed to be set on a path of amicable co-operation in spite of their opposed political characters, fall out over tracts of desolate, difficult and useless territory, and ultimately fight a short, sharp war. (Maxwell, 1970:11) It is important to mention that this case-study almost exclusively focuses on the Indian side because - an important goal of this dissertation is to explain the circumstances under which strategic coercion fails when a weaker state undertakes certain policies, under the influence of false optimism, which impedes the bargaining process and forces the stronger state to escalate the crisis to war. Since it is common knowledge that in the 1950's and early 1960's China had a significant military superiority over India, hence India becomes the primary focus of the analysis.

The historiography of the Sino-Indian war of 1962 has passed through three distinct stages. The earliest accounts viewed India as the victim of Chinese betrayal and expansionism⁸ According to these accounts, the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was too trusting of the Chinese and in his stupor of friendship based on ancient ties and post-colonial euphoria, he failed to access the true ambitions of China, which was essentially expansionist.

The second phase is personalized my Neville Maxwell's seminal revisionist account, published in 1970, which blamed Nehru for arrogance and obduracy in the face of Chinese efforts to seek a negotiated solution. Going against the dominant international understanding at the time of the war as an unprovoked aggression by China against India, Maxwell (1970:384) argued that China was in fact committed to a conciliatory approach to the problem of converting ambiguously defined borders into the boundaries of modern nation-states. He claims that, by contrast, Nehru had from the

⁸ See Kaul B.M. (1967) "The Untold Story, Bombay, Allied Publishers:1967 ; Mullik B.N. (1971), My years with Nehru: the Chinese betrayal Bombay:Allied Publishers

outset followed a policy of non-negotiation with regard to the India-China border and was implicitly committed to the use of force to impose India's territorial claims. Further, in a recent article, Maxwell argued that India effectively forced war on China through expansionist and irrational behaviour which, he speculates, was 'perhaps traceable to the psychological wound inflicted on Nehru and his generation by the sundering of India to create Pakistan, which imparted mystical or religious significance to territorial issues' (Maxwell, 2006: 677). Many later scholars have criticized Maxwell for attempting to prove that the Nehru government viewed the border issue in the same terms as he later saw it. For an account of Indian decision-making, he curiously interpreted Delhi's actions almost as Beijing would have viewed it. (Raghavan, 2010:227)

The advent of the third stage can be traced to the publication of Steven Hoffmann's post-revisionist account in 1990. Drawing on extensive interviews, Hoffmann provided an important corrective to the revisionist thesis by capturing Indian perceptions more closely. Hoffmann's study is guided by the International Crisis Behaviour (ICB) theoretical model developed by Michael Brecher and colleagues, which focuses on the link between perceptions and war and relies on 'objective behavioural data about conflictual interaction in the international system'. Hoffmann (1990: 265) argues that 'Indian decision-making in many ways followed what might be called "normal" practices, found in governments elsewhere...India's 1962 tragedy came about not just from practices that are peculiar to India but also from behaviours that may be quite usual in international affairs'. These 'behaviours' result from the level of perceived threat and takes place in the context of the fundamental worldview of the decision-makers and their semi-permanent images of international and domestic realities. As the threat perception changes, so do worldviews and images. In the case of the India-China war Hoffmann argues that due to a number of incidents during the 1950s, both India and China hardened their stances toward their border claims and soon the 'conflict spiral possessed a momentum of its own and culminated in the Indian-Chinese border war...' (Hoffmann1990:183). The essence of this chapter is to capture these very changes in perceptions of both India and China, and explain how these perceptions served as a lens, causing misinterpretation of signals, which lead to coercion failure and escalation of the crisis.

It is important to make it clear at this juncture that, this chapter will refrain from going into a detailed chronological narration of the events leading to unfolding of the conflict, but will instead focus on the evidences from secondary and primary sources that prove the seven predictions, mentioned in the second chapter, which will validate the two hypotheses. This treatment is given to this chapter for because the objective of this dissertation is not investigate into the causes of a particular conflict between two states, but rather, to explain the causes of strategic coercion failure and escalation of a crisis to war. For this purpose, a detailed analysis of events leading to the war is irrelevant. This chapter will focus its attention on the following aspects - first, to ascertain the origins of India's "false optimism" about its invincibility from a large-scale Chinese attack; second, to document policies taken by the Indian leadership, considered provocative by the Chinese; and third, to illuminate the way the Chinese leadership interpreted Indian signals to frame their own perceptions about India.

Many scholars have postulated two intertwined set of reasons motivating the decisions of Chinese leadership to wage a war with India- 1) a perceived need to punish and end perceived Indian efforts to undermine Chinese control of Tibet, Indian efforts which were perceived as having the objective of restoring the pre-1949 status quo ante of Tibet; and 2) a perceived need to punish and end perceived Indian aggression against Chinese territory along the border. (Graver, 2001:3) (Raghavan, 2010:227) Garver (2001:3) argues that in terms of deterrence along the border, Chinese perceptions were substantially accurate but the perceptions regarding Indian policy toward Tibet, however, were substantially inaccurate. From a careful read of the history of the Sino-Indian war, this paper is in conformity with the two reasons. The following chapter will focus in testing the hypotheses against evidences.

The first prediction made to test the hypotheses, mentioned in the second chapter states that: "One of the states should believe that a war will lead to outcomes unfavourable for both the belligerents. Due to this reason the national leaders of that state will downplay the likelihood of the other side getting involved in a conflict or further raising the stakes in it." The following evidences prove this prediction to be true. It is important to clarify at this juncture that most of the views presented in the evidences is of Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, but these beliefs were shared by most of the Congress leadership. Nehru was an overbearing figure in Indian politics and his knowledge about matters relating to international relations was considered

formidable. Most of the Indian politicians focused on domestic policy and left matters of external affairs and security to a core group headed by Nehru, where Nehru's observations were considered almost absolute. (Maxwell, 1970) (Palit, 1991) (Raghavan, 2010)

Nehru emphasized the dangers of the war, not only for India and Indians but for the world as a whole. (Maxwell, 1970:177) He mentioned in the Upper House of the Indian Parliament at the end of 1961 that, a war between India and China will be a major disaster for the world because it will not be possible to limit it in time since it will be impossible for China to defeat India and it will be impossible for India to march up to Peaking across Tibet. (Maxwell, 1970:177-78) One of the fantasies with which New Delhi hypnotizes itself into inactivity is the supposition that a Sino-Indian conflict on the border would plunge the entire world into a nuclear holocaust. (Maxwell, 1970: 178) Maxwell (1970: 179) argues that India's size, its geo-strategic position and the interest of the great powers in seeing that it did not fall under foreign dominion again, in Nehru's view, keep his country immune from significant external attacks. Nehru believed that no country will tolerate the idea of another acquiring the commanding position which England occupied for so long and if any power was covetous enough to make an attempt, all the others would combine to trounce the intruder. (Maxwell, 1970: 179) This mutual rivalry would in itself be the surest guarantee against an attack on India. (Kavics, 1967: 23) Raghavan (2010:279) states that the Prime Minister's view on the unlikelihood of an armed confrontation with China was based on political calculations; the Intelligence Bureau's (IB's) assessment only supplemented them. He claims that, at least since 1950 Nehru had discounted the possibility of a major attack by China owing to international factors; he thought an attack on India would invariably carry the risk of great power intervention. (Raghavan, 2010:279) He also cites another reason for Nehru's unshakable belief in India's impunity from a large-scale Chinese attack; Nehru may have thought that India's friendship would act as an additional restraint on China. But by late 1959 Nehru no longer set much store by Beijing's good will but still, he believed that "an out-and-out Chinese invasion" was improbable. (Raghavan, 2010:279) Maxwell (1970:179) states that Nehru continued to hold this rational and pragmatic view of the external threats to India after independence and indeed until the main Chinese assault in November 1962. In an interview given to Michael Brecher by the then Defense

Minister, Krishna Menon, observed that “I am not even now sure that the Chinese did not think we were much more powerful than we were (in 1962) - that the whole of America would be behind us with the threat to invade China from its underbelly. It may have been a foolish idea- but it was there.” (Brecher, 1968:152)

Since the belief of China not getting into conflict with India was so strong, and India had already made it clear that it is not an expansionist power; the likelihood of a war was almost unthinkable. Many authors have mentioned that India leadership, especially the political leadership, was so steadfast in its belief that there will be no war that it neglected many observations and recommendations made by the military leaders. This is evident from the fact that as early as 1950's the army's suggestion that an infantry manual on Chinese battle tactics should be prepared, drawing on American and British experiences in Korea, was summarily rejected. (Maxwell, 1970:181) As late as 1958, when frequent border skirmishes raised the tension between both the nations, a high-ranking Chinese military mission was taken on a tour of major Indian military establishments. (Maxwell, 1970:181) The feeling of unlikelihood of war was not just prevalent among the political leadership, but it also percolated down to the soldiers. Many military leaders such as D.K. Palit, J.P. Dalvi, B.M. Kaul, and IB Chief B.N. Mullik have mentioned in their war memoirs that the common soldiers were totally unprepared to fight a war and were hoping that India and China will find a peaceful settlement of their conflict. Even when the skirmishes along the borders became frequent in the late 1950's, Nehru kept the lines of diplomatic communications open and repeatedly undermined the possibility of war. As late as July 26, 1962 India sent, Indian Chargé d'affaires in Beijing, P.K. Banarjee to Beijing, instructing him to immediately inform Chinese leadership that the Government of India would be prepared to send a ministerial-level delegation to Peking to discuss, without preconditions, all bilateral problems and disputes. (Raghavan, 2010:290) Moreover the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi was given an official note which did not call for a withdrawal of Chinese forces from Indian claimed territory, but merely asked Beijing to restrain its forces from going beyond China's 1956 claim line “which is capable for easy and quick verification”. (Raghavan, 2010:290) Palit (1991) argues in his book that Indian soldiers were confused and demoralized because they were sent to the forward positions, facing the Chinese soldiers, whereas on the other hand, the Indian leaders were hosting Chinese delegations in New Delhi. Palit (1991)

observes that war and diplomacy cannot go hand in hand and Nehru's over-emphasis on finding a peaceful solution to the crisis convinced the simple Indian soldier that war was a distant probability.

The evidences presented above clearly demonstrates the fact that Indian leaders, particularly Nehru believed that India was immune from a large-scale Chinese attack because the nature of such a conflict will draw in extra-regional superpowers which will escalate the crisis to a full-blown nuclear war; a situation which is unfavourable for both the nations. This belief reinforced a secondary feeling; the unlikelihood of war. Vertzberger (1984:101) argues that, this feeling of impunity reinforced another belief among the Indian leadership which has drastic consequences for the overall security environment of Asia. He forwards the argument that this belief gave the confidence to India that it could use force wherever it had a military advantage and yet escape serious consequences. Nehru believed that the use of force to assert sovereignty over perceived territory can be easily justified to the international audience as mere "police-action" taken within one's own sovereign territory. If force could achieve its objective then well and good, and if Indian power proved to be inadequate, "the superpowers would intervene to prevent any large-scale war between India and China;" thereby bailing out India from a potential catastrophe. (Vertzberger, 1984: 101) Nehru used the strategy of "police action" in invading Goa in December 1961(Maxwell 1970: 176-77), and its brilliant success bolstered hopes for the success of such a strategy against China.

This brings us to the second prediction, which states that: "The state should undertake certain policies which are considered non-aggressive by it but considered provocative by the adversary." This happens when a state misperceives the intentions for another state's actions as aggressive or malign, when in reality they may be benign or even friendly.

Garver (2001) argues that the Chinese misperceived India's gestures in Tibet, as aggressive and aimed at undermining China's claim, whereas their perception about the aggressiveness of India's Forward Policy was quite accurate. Garver (2001:11) insists that according to the Chinese, an Indian desire to "seize Tibet," to turn Tibet into an Indian "colony" or "protectorate," or to return Tibet to its pre-1949 status, was the root cause of India's Forward Policy and the 1962 war. In other words, Chinese

beliefs about the nature of Indian objectives regarding Tibet deeply coloured Chinese deliberations regarding India's moves along the border. The official PLA history of the 1962 war argues that India sought to turn Tibet into a "buffer zone" (huanzhongguo). (Official PLA History of the 1962 War, 1994: 37-40) Creation of such a buffer zone had been the objective of British imperial strategy, and Nehru was a "complete successor" to Britain in this regard. Nehru's objective was creation of a "great Indian empire" in South Asia by "filling the vacuum" left by British exit from that region. Control over Tibet was, Nehru felt, essential for "mastery over South Asia, and "the most economical method for guaranteeing India's security." (Official PLA History of the 1962 war, 1994:37-40)

This section highlights certain actions undertaken by Independent India in Tibet. The aim of this section is to flag out certain action undertaken by India in Tibet which were deemed as unfriendly or aggressive by PRC. In 1949 and 1950 India covertly supplied small amounts of arms to the Tibetan government. (Garver, 2001) During the same period and while the PLA was preparing to move into Tibet, the Indian government sought via diplomatic protests to prevent or limit the new PRC government's occupation of Tibet. (Garver, 2001:9) New Delhi also initially sought to uphold Indian rights in Tibet inherited from Britain and embodied in treaties with the old Republic of China- these rights included trading missions, representative officers, telecommunications facilities, and small military contingents to guard these facilities in several Tibetan towns. (Garver, 2010:9) In mid 1957 the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began covert assistance to rebels in the Kham region of southeastern Tibet. Assistance rendered through this CIA program was actually quite limited totaling only 250 tons of munitions, equipment, and supplies between 1957 and 1961. (Garver, 2001) But when the CIA operations came to the attention of Chinese intelligence, it became a matter of grave concern for the China's government. Tibetan refugees that found asylum in northern Indian cities, (especially Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Gangtok) in the 1950s were mostly supporters of various resistance movements inside Tibet. (Garver, 2010:11) By late 1958 Beijing began demanding that India should expel the key leaders of the Tibetan resistance based in India, and suppress activities supporting opposition to Chinese policies within Tibet. Nehru sought a middle course, restricting Tibetan activities, but refusing to expel Tibetan leaders. Many scholars have argues that in the 1950's there was a lot of covert anti-

China activities were happening in certain North-eastern states but Prime Minister Nehru, although aware of them, was not supporting them. (Maxwell, 1970) (Mullik, 1971)

Beijing viewed these rights, demanded by India, as products of imperialist aggression against China and unilaterally abrogated the treaties upon which they were based when in seized Lhasa. Beijing condemned a large number of Indian moves that it said encouraged the rebellion. These Indian moves included: the Indian Consul General in Lhasa met with demonstrating Tibetans in the early days of the Lhasa uprising; granting asylum to the Dalai Lama; having official contact with the Dalai Lama; treating the Dalai Lama as an honored guest; permitting the Dalai Lama to meet with the media and foreign representatives; not quashing the Dalai Lama's appeal to the United Nations; granting asylum to ten thousand or so Tibetan refugees who followed the Dalai Lama to India; concentrating those refugees in camps near the Tibetan frontier; not suppressing "anti-China activities" conducted in those refugee camps; permitting or encouraging negative commentary by Indian newspapers about China's actions in Tibet; Nehru raising the "Tibet issue" in India's parliament and making critical comments about China's policies in Tibet; Nehru permitting the Indian parliament to discuss Tibet; allowing "anti-China activities" by protesters in Indian cities; not punishing Indian protestors for defacing a portrait of Mao Zedong; instigating an "anti-China campaign" in the Indian press; restricting trade between India and Tibet; and allowing the Dalai Lama to speak of "a Tibetan government in exile." (Garver, 2010:12) All these acts constituted, in China's view, "interference in the internal affairs of China" and ways in which New Delhi was attempting to "seize Tibet." (Garver, 2010:12) On 6 May 1959, Mao published "The Revolution in Tibet and Nehru's Philosophy" where he accused Nehru of openly encouraging Tibetan rebels. Zedong (1959) elaborated in his publication that: "So long as you do not end your anti-Chinese slander campaign, we will not cease hitting back. We are prepared to spend as much time on this as you want to. We are prepared too, if you should incite other countries to raise a hue and cry against us. We are also prepared to find all the imperialists in the world backing you up in the clamor. But it is utterly futile to try to use pressure to interfere in China's internal affairs and salvage the odious rule of the big serf-owners in Tibet."

Regarding Nehru's attitude toward armed Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule, and his knowledge of covert CIA operations in support of that armed resistance, is an important marker of India's intention in the region. The closest study of India's decision-making process during this period, by Steven Hoffman, concluded "It is unclear how much India's government knew in 1958 or 1959 about the major CIA program" to support the Tibetan armed resistance.(Hoffman, 1990:38) Nor does the official Indian history of the 1962 war, published in late 2002, shed any light on this question. Mullik maintained in his memoir that Nehru told him that armed Tibetan resistance would be suicidal, counter-productive, and insisted that peaceful, non-violent resistance was the best way. Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, in a study based on interviews of U.S. participants in those covert operations, concluded that Nehru and Mullik, at least, knew the general parameters of and tacitly condoned U.S. covert. (Conboy and Morrison, 2002: 95-96) Their guess is that Nehru, Mullik and perhaps a few other people in the Indian government understood at least the broad contours of U.S. covert operations into Tibet, but chose to turn a blind eye to them.

Garver (2001) mentions three possible reasons for Indian action in Tibet. First, Nehru envisioned a compromise between Chinese and Indian interests regarding Tibet, with Chinese respect for Tibetan autonomy combined with Indian respect for Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. In terms of Tibet, Nehru hoped that China would repay India's friendship and consolidate the Sino-Indian partnership by granting Tibet a significant degree of autonomy. (Arpi, 1999: 320) This "agreement," according to Nehru, accommodated India's "sentimental," "cultural" interests in Tibet, and China's security and sovereignty concerns in that region, and thus provided a foundation for Sino-Indian partnership. India's various moves to strengthen Tibetan autonomy in the mid 1950s (tutoring the Dalai Lama on the 17 Point Agreement and the ways he could use it to uphold Tibet's autonomy, etc.) had been in accord with the Sino-Indian agreement but, following the uprising in Lhasa in March 1959, and China's destruction of Tibetan autonomy "broke" this agreement. (Eekelen, 1964: 84) In 1959, Beijing still had its half of the bargain (Indian recognition of China's sovereignty over Tibet), but had demolished India's part (Tibetan autonomy). Nehru was clear that, Tibet was to return to its pre- 1959, not the pre-1949 status quo ante. Nehru was dismayed in 1959 by Beijing's breaking of what he believed was the agreement between him and Zhou Enlai regarding Tibetan autonomy. Nehru's objective, in other

words, was not to "seize Tibet" or deny Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. It was to persuade Beijing to respect India's limited interests in that region within the framework of Indian support for China's sovereignty over Tibet.

According to Garver (2001), a second Indian objective in Tibet was: minimizing the threat posed to India by Chinese military forces positioned on India's northern borders in Tibet. He argues that, while Nehru and other Indian leaders were not explicit about this; this concern almost certainly helped inspire their desire to maintain Tibetan autonomy. An autonomous Tibet would be one with fewer Chinese soldiers and Chinese military bases, but this does not equate to a desire to "seize Tibet" or cause Tibet to "leave China." (Garver, 2001) Rather, persuading Beijing not to militarize Tibet required reassuring Beijing that India respected and would help uphold, China's sovereignty over Tibet, and that there was, consequently, no reason for China to militarize that region. This point is also emphasized by R.K. Jain (1981:41-47) who mentions that Nehru communicated to Sardar Vallabhai Patel as early as 1949, when Patel pointed out to Nehru the adverse consequences of China's impending military occupation of Tibet, that since there was not very much that India (or any country for that matter) could do to prevent China from asserting sovereignty over Tibet, it was best for India to recognize Chinese sovereignty and work to secure India's interests within that framework. Nehru's policy for minimizing China's military presence in Tibet during the mid 1950s was to befriend China to the In other words,

Garver (2001) argues that a third reason based on Nehru turning a blind eye to U.S. covert activities in Tibet. He states that it was a way of persuading Beijing of the wisdom of securing Indian cooperation in upholding Chinese sovereignty. By ignoring U.S. activities against China from India, Nehru wanted to send a signal to China that if Chinese leadership did not have a friendly relation with India, the consequences could be serious. However, the motive was only to signal Beijing that it had no need for a large military presence in Tibet, rather than to undermine Chinese control of Tibet.

It is clear from the above passages that, Nehru sought to persuade and pressure Beijing to grant Tibet a degree of genuine autonomy. It is also probably true that Nehru sought to limit the level of Chinese military presence in Tibet for the sake of

India's own security. But it is erroneous to conclude that, since India recognized and acted on interests within Tibet, it was ipso facto attempting to undermine Chinese sovereignty; although this proposition certainly constitutes one element of the Chinese belief system. This demonstrates that a state might take actions, which it considers as attempts to enhance cooperation, friendly, or neutral but interpreted by the adversary as malignant and aggressive.

The third prediction states that: “The military preparations undertaken by the state should be geared only for diplomatic mobilization, aimed at achieving a bargaining leverage, and not for actual war-fighting. On the other hand, the adversary’s military mobilization should be private in nature which is aimed at achieving victory.”

According to Fearon (1995), states have to balance the desire to avoid the costs of war with the desire to obtain a favorable bargain with an opposing state. As such, they have incentives to misrepresent their private information about relative power and their values for the issues at stake, relative to the costs of war. By demonstrating that the issue at stake is worth more than the cost of war, states can demonstrate their willingness to fight over the disputed issue, prompting the opposing side to offer a more generous settlement. Unfortunately, states know that opposing states have incentives to misrepresent their capabilities and resolve, preventing diplomatic approaches from being able to reach suitable bargains. As a result, states need to undertake policies in a crisis to credibly demonstrate their resolve. This resolve can be communicated through policies too costly to be undertaken by less resolved states (Fearon 1995). These policies are costly because they can increase the likelihood of a war, generate domestic audience costs, and/or create real and immediate economic costs (Morrow 1989; Powell 1990; Fearon 1990, 1995). Often, these costs actually increase the likelihood of war, either through troop mobilizations or by creating audience costs that make backing down too politically costly (Fearon, 1995). Ironically, this means that states may actually increase the likelihood of a war in an attempt to achieve a favorable but peaceful bargain.

When a state mobilizes its military with the intention of signaling resolve in order to gain a bargaining advantage, it is likely to make the mobilization public, i.e. provide the adversary with private information. This type of mobilization is called diplomatic

or public mobilization. A state mobilizing for diplomacy is likely to make its mobilization efforts public in order to remove any uncertainty about its capabilities and generate bargaining costs to demonstrate its resolve over an issue. On the other hand, a state mobilizing its military for war is likely to try to conceal its mobilization efforts, launch quick strikes, and generally gain a military edge by preparing its forces before the other side does. The decision to opt for either mobilization strategy depends on a state's expected utility of war. According to Brain Lai (2004), private mobilization strategy is more likely to lead to war because it will be designed to maximize the tactical effectiveness of its forces, and the incentive to keep its mobilization efforts' private, denies the opposing side the opportunity to deter or prevent violence since it will be less likely to view the concealed mobilization of the adversary. The following section will categorize the mobilization efforts of India and China during the 1962 war and demonstrate the fact that different mobilization strategies adopted by the two states, due to differing expected utility of war, was responsible for the outbreak of hostilities.

In late 1959, there were some brief military skirmishes between Indian and Chinese troops in Longju and Kongka Pass. With these incidents, India became aware of the extent of Chinese penetration in Indian claimed territory. This drove home the realization that an intractable dispute might develop over the boundary question; making the expansion of the Army more purposeful and faster. (Maxwell, 1970: 182) The objectives of the forward policy was two-pronged: first, to block potential lines of further Chinese advances; second, to establish an Indian presence in Aksai Chin which would make Indian participation in the joint withdrawals proposed by Nehru more than theoretical, and thus give strength to that diplomatic lever for getting the Chinese out of the area. (Maxwell, 1970: 1974) Beyond that, implicit at the outset, was the intention to undermine Chinese control of the disputed areas by the interposition of Indian posts and patrols between Chinese positions, thus cutting their supply lines and ultimately forcing them to withdraw. (Maxwell, 1970: 174)

Maxwell (1970:174-75) argues that these objectives emerged after the policy was formulated, and were more a rationale; the forward policy really sprang from the conclusion that there was nothing else India could do. In my reading of the 1962 war, this conclusion derived by Maxwell seems erroneous because of the following

reasons- First, Maxwell himself mentions in his book that the forward policy was conceptualized in the beginning of 1960 but it was not really put into effect until the end of 1961, because of the Army's unwillingness to undertake a course for which the military means were wholly lacking. (Maxwell, 1970: 199) This delay between formulation and implementation shows that the forward policy was not completely ad-hoc in nature and was implemented when the probability of its success was deemed high. Secondly, the army chiefs assured Nehru that they could only handle a limited war with China, and since the prime minister did not foresee a major conflict; the forward policy, then, was based on loose assumptions by the civilian and military leadership which are mutually reinforcing. (Raghavan, 2010: 282-83) This proves that forward policy was not a reaction but rather an option for India. Maxwell's assumption about Nehru's policy decisions springs from the fact that he categorizes Nehru as a political idealist who would resort to force only as a last resort. But Raghavan (2010) has argued in this book that Nehru was an "out – an - out realist". A third reason to critique Maxwell's earlier assumption about India's forward policy being an ad-hoc policy stemming out of desperation rather than foresight comes from India's action against the Portuguese in Goa in 1961. The easy victory over the Portuguese encouraged the hope of a similar signal success against the Chinese. The supposition that the speed with which the Goa operation was completed reflected the fine fighting mettle of the Indian troops; bolstering the belief that such spectacular success could be duplicated in the high Himalayas too. (Maxwell, 1970:231) This demonstrates that, in the eyes of the Indian public (some leaders included), the forward policy was an effective strategy with proven efficacy.

After establishing the fact, that the forward policy was a conscious policy choice from a repertoire of other sub-optimal options, it is necessary to illuminate its underlying logic. Maxwell (1970: 175) argues that, according to the Indian leadership the forward policy was legalistic, assuming that as possession is nine-tenth of the law, India had only to go and stand on as many parts of Aksai Chin as possible to turn the tables on China, or atleast attain a position of equality with her. Breacher (1968: 151) states that, deterring piecemeal advances by the PLA was only one component of Nehru's approach, and he thought that, the border problem could only be solved through a negotiated settlement. Krishna Menon recalled, "We expected negotiations and diplomacy to play their part. The pressure of international opinion together with a

demonstration of India's resolve would help create the condition for such a settlement. But this would have to be done cautiously, to obviate the possibility of escalation.” (Breacher, 1968: 151)

It is clear from the above statements that the forward policy was a diplomatic mobilization aimed at bolstering India's bargaining position rather than provide any tactical advantage. Many authors have emphasized the point that India was militarily inferior to China, which was a first-class land army, and the Indian army would be no match for a large-scale Chinese attack. Indian mobilization efforts were insufficient compared to the Chinese efforts. Even the Indian official history of the 1962 war claims that “despite inducting an additional battalion into Ladakh the Indians could not match the PLA's numerical and logistical superiority. By September, 1962 India could install only 36 posts against 47 Chinese posts in Ladakh. The latter were also qualitatively superior; for they were sited on dominating heights whilst Indians had their posts on valley floors where dropping zones were available.” (Sinha and Alhale, *Conflict with China*, 69-70) The dismal status of Indian troops in Ladakh region was also emphasized by Kavic (1967: 169) who notes that, “The cautious and limited deployment of Indian troops in Ladakh proved inadequate as either a deterrent to or a bulwark against further Chinese advances.” If India's troop deployment in Ladakh was insufficient, it was even worse in the NEFA sector. Raghavan (2010: 292-93) states that, in the NEFA sector the Indian army did not cater for “major concentrations” behind the outer string of posts. In fact the 4th Division had only two brigades, 7 and 5 Infantry Brigades-in NEFA. The divisional commander, Major Niranjan Prasad, considered the operation “somewhat unrealistic” and believed that the platoon sized posts were of little tactical value; it would be more sensible to establish a company or battalion-sized positions further to the rear, from where regular patrols could be sent out to the McMohan Line. (Raghavan, 2010: 292-93) But given the lack of roads and the requisite airlift capability, supporting the forward posts was a logistical night mare. (Raghavan, 2010: 292-93) Kavic (1967: 169) notes, “The cautious and limited deployment of Indian troops in Ladakh and NEFA proved inadequate as either a deterrent to or a bulwark against further Chinese advances.” The Chinese forces on the other hand were quick to mobilize and had built up huge concentration along the border. They had secured lines of communication, hardened

bunkers, and stored huge stocks of food and medicines. They were definitely mobilized for war fighting.

The ultimate proof of India's military mobilization being a diplomatic one rather than for achieving a tactical advantage was demonstrated on 6th May, 1962 in the Chip Chap valley when about 100 Chinese troops, in "assault formation," approached an Indian post. The western army commander, Lieutenant General Daulet Singh, sought the army chief's permission immediately to pull back the post. But General Thapar and DMO Palit felt that if they withdrew the first post, it would signal a lack of resolve. Furthermore, it would encourage the PLA to adopt similar tactics against all other posts and so unravel the forward policy. The prime minister thought China's menacing move was "a show of force" to test India's resolution. He directed that the post should stand firm and be reinforced: this was necessary to study the "behaviour pattern of Chinese aggression". In the event the Chinese backed off without attacking. The Chinese soldiers did not attack the post and instead withdrew back. The army chief and the CGS concluded that the incident vindicated their assumption about Chinese reactions, and that the forward policy could be pursued without much risk. (Palit, 1991:175-76) Another similar incident happened on 4th July, when a platoon of Gorkhas, holding a post in the Galwan valley was surrounded by Chinese troops. The PLA this time not only surrounded the Indian post but also cut the lines of communication and advance within a hundred yards of the post. (Palit, 1991:178-79) The People's Daily carried a headline on 10th July that, "The Indian Government Should Rein in on the Brink of the Precipice." (Whiting, 2001: 78) The MEA warned the Chinese ambassador of grave consequences should their troops come any closer to the post. (Raghavan, 2010: 287) Following a cabinet meeting on 13th July, instructions were issued to the post to fire at the Chinese if they crept ahead. (Raghavan, 2010: 287) The PLA pulled back slightly the following day but continued to surround the post. The Indian press and some politicians portrayed the outcome as a major triumph. Palit (1991: 181) states that although the India rejoiced in their coercive success, the Chinese continued to surround more Indian posts and isolate them from their dropping zones; actions that led to a rash of shooting incidents. The peculiar Chinese behaviour proved the analysis made by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) on 26th September 1961 that, "the Chinese would like to come right up to their claim of 1960 whenever we ourselves were not in occupation. But where even a dozen men of ours are present, the

Chinese have kept away.” The “penny-pockets” that India opened were on the Intelligence Bureau’s (IB’s) recommendation; opening posts in the occupied areas of Ladakh and filling gaps along the McMohan Line. (Palit, 1991: 95-96) The tenor of the recommendation was that the Chinese would not react sharply to these moves. This assumption after being proved in Chip Chap valley and Galwan valley soon became an article of faith for military as well as civilian officials in Delhi.

Maxwell (1970:175) argues that the forward policy was reckless, ignoring the often repeated Chinese warning that assertion of Indian claims in the western sector courted retaliation across the McMohan Line. And at the bottom it was irrational, because its fundamental premise was that no matter how many posts and patrols India sent into Chinese claimed-and occupied-territory the Chinese would not physically interfere with them-provided only that Indians did not attack any Chinese positions. (Maxwell, 1970: 175) From the very beginning of the dispute in 1954, after the advance of Indian boundary posts in the middle sector brought them in contact with the Chinese, India had been ready to threaten force against Chinese who tried to maintain positions across the Indian claimed lines;⁹ but Nehru and his colleagues were absolute in their faith that the Chinese would not do likewise. Maxwell (1970:175-76) forwards an interesting argument explaining the rationale of India’s forward policy. According to him, “the forward policy smacked of Satyagraha, the passive civil disobedience movement which Indians employed against the British. In this case the satyagrahis would be armed troops, able to fight back if attacked; but the confidence in a kind of moral unassailability which would dissuade the Chinese from attacking recalled the belief that the British would be reluctant to use force, and that if they did it would rebound against them. It seems to have reflected Nehru’s perception of his country as one unique in the world experience for the depth of its pacific instincts, and his belief that the world-including China- shared that view. India’s reputation in the world would go with the patrols into Aksai Chin like a moral armor.” (Maxwell, 1970: 175-76)

⁹ For example, in a note of September 26th, 1956’, India informed Peking that the presence of Chinese armed personnel in territory India claimed would be regarded as aggression and resisted as such.

Maxwell (1970:176) states that if these assumptions were unreal, there was a deeper illogicality about the forward policy, because with its ultimate objective was to change the military balance in Aksai Chin to the point at which India could use force to eject the Chinese. Nehru mentioned in Lok Sabha in 1961, that to deal with the Chinese aggression, 'we will go on strengthening our position to deal with the situation whenever we think it is strong enough to be dealt with by us, and not from a weak position.' (Maxwell, 1970: 176) It is difficult to understand how the Chinese could stand idly while India gradually and laboriously built up positions of strength from which to attack them. Many authors have stated that the Indian leaders felt that the army headquarters had the whole winter to create sufficient logistical back-up using airlift. They appear to have drawn comfort in Mullik's assurance that China would not contest Indian moves with force. (Kaul, 1967:280) (Palit, 1991: 106) (Hoffmann, 1990:98)

In the ultimate analysis it can be said that Indian leadership was convinced of two facts: first, there will be no large-scale war with China; and second, China will not react to an Indian military build-up. With these assumptions in place, India got the courage to implement the forward policy, which as aimed at turning the tables in India's favour when a negotiation takes place. Maxwell (1970: 178-79) argues that the thought that, war might arise from Chinese reaction or anticipation of Indian moves never crossed civilian moves in New Delhi. From beginning to end, Nehru and his colleagues were unwavering in their faith that, whatever India herself did along the borders, China would not attack. (Maxwell, 1970:178-79) That was the basic assumption of the forward policy, a military challenge to a militarily far superior neighbour. (Maxwell, 1970:178:79) Maxwell (1970: 202) argues that the civilian administration in India saw the border problem with China as essentially a political problem, and the Chinese were to be ousted using political manoeuvre. The forward policy did not appear to them-as did to soldiers- as a military challenge to a far stronger power, but as a necessary physical extension of a subtle diplomatic game. By peaceful, even non-violent methods, seeding the disputed territory with Indian flag posts and criss-crossing it with patrols, Aksai Chin was to be won back for India, probably without the firing of a shot except in random skirmishes. (Maxwell, 1970:202) But the Chinese had no way to confirm the Indian intention of forward policy; to them it appeared to be a strong signal sent by a nation prepared to challenge

the Chinese status quo. Maxwell (1970) has implicitly argued throughout his book that the Chinese attack on India was a preventive war undertaken to maintain the status quo. In the end it can be said that when India went for diplomatic mobilization, the Chinese were also forced to mobilize its forces. Since unlike India, the Chinese opted for private military mobilization, it had a surprise attack advantage which made war more likely. Brain Lai (2004) argues that when a state gains a first strike advantage, it is more likely to use force before that advantage is lost, since it has no way to ascertain the nature of the adversary's mobilization.

The fourth prediction states that, "Signals sent by the adversary should be regarded as weak and to corroborate their pre-conceived notions about them. Even costly signals such as troop- deployment, skirmishes, public statements made by national leaders, etc. should be seen as cheap, with intent to bluff."

Maxwell (1970: 226) states that "for India the Chinese view of the situation (border conflict) could be ignored, and Chinese warnings dismissed as threats of an aggressor- the dismissal being all the easier because the Indians were convinced that such warnings were bluff." China had earlier warned in 1959 that Indian incursion in the Aksai Chin area will warrant retaliation across the McMohan Line. But India nevertheless went ahead with its forward policy which aimed at criss-crossing Chinese positions with Indian flag posts and cutting their supply lines. This move was understood by the Chinese as extremely provocative and aimed at undermining Chinese military presence in the region and challenging the existing status quo. Garver, 2001 The Chinese began to react vigorously on the ground in 1962; where the Indians set up posts overlooking a Chinese position, the Chinese would promptly take up more positions around it. In April, Peking informed India that border patrols, which china had suspended in 1959, were being resumed in the western sector from the Karakoram to Kongka Pass; and warned that if the Indians persisted in their forward movement, patrolling would be resumed everywhere along the frontier. (Maxwell, 1970: 236) Peking said that if such provocation continued, the Chinese troops would be compelled to defend themselves, and India would be responsible for the consequences. (Maxwell, 1970: 236) The Indian government dismissed such warnings as bluff and threatening Chinese moves on ground as bluster. (Maxwell, 1970: 236) Nehru explained to the Parliament that the Chinese had become 'rather

annoyed' because Indian posts had been set up behind their own, and reassured any member who might have thought the Chinese tone as dangerous. He mentioned that "there is nothing to be alarmed at, although the Chinese note threatens all kinds of steps they might take...if they do we shall be ready for them" (Maxwell, 1970: 235) In June 1962, Nehru mentioned in the Parliament that the position in the western sector was 'more advantageous to India than it was previously.' (Maxwell, 1970: 235) These statements by the Indian prime minister demonstrate a clear dismissal of Chinese verbal threats. If India took the Chinese verbal threats, which entailed costly audience cost as cheap, it was no different with cost-sinking threats such as troop mobilization and threats of limited war. The incidents in the Chip Chap and Galwan valley demonstrate the Indian reluctance to take the Chinese military threats seriously. Even when the Chinese soldiers completely surrendered the two Indian posts, and cut their supply lines, Nehru believed that the Chinese were merely making a show of force to test India's resolution and said that the posts should stand fast and be reinforced. (Maxwell, 1970: 237)

But why did the Indian leadership ignore such strong signals sent by the Chinese? The civilian administration and political leadership had no experience of military problems and technologies. (Maxwell, 1970: 203) The civilian leadership failed to grasp the logistics defined by the Army, and evolved their forward policy without giving due weight to the possibility of counter action from the Chinese side. (Maxwell, 1970: 202) Moreover, many authors have argued that the civil-military relations during the Nehru era were very strained and the civilian leadership often overruled observations and suggestions made by the military leaders. (Maxwell, 1970) (Palit, 1990) (Dalvi, 1969) (Palit, 1990) (Raghavan, 2010) Maxwell (1970) even argues that in the civilian leadership, especially the Defence Minister, Krishna Menon, was also suspicious of the military; he frequently referred to them as spies, working for the American intelligence agencies. The lack of military knowledge among the political leadership, coupled with distrust of the Congress leadership on its military leaders explains the failure of India to accurately perceive the signals sent by China.

Summary:

This case provides strong support for the dissertation's theory. The case study demonstrates that the Indian government had convinced itself that a large-scale Chinese attack was counter-productive not only for India and China but potentially catastrophic for the world at large. This belief gave India the courage to go forward with certain policies which were considered aggressive by the Chinese. But once India was 'locked-in' in the self-fulfilling prophesies of immunity, it disregarded all Chinese threats as bluff. The strength of India's conviction in its belief was so strong that it held on to it, until the last minute; and so pervasive that it influenced not only political decisions but also intelligence assessment and military planning. Because large-scale offensive operations by the Chinese were ruled-out, the Indian military formulated an aggressive forward policy which envisioned only small border incursions. The Indian politicians and military leaders felt secured by putting up "penny-pockets" manned by only 10 or 20 soldiers. These predictions were to be proved wrong in the first hours of the battle when large number of Chinese troops descended on these Indian posts and wiped them out.

Chapter-IV

Conclusion

The final chapter reiterates the research question, and summarizes the results of the case study, highlighting the strong arguments made in it, as well as acknowledging its key shortcomings. In short, the dissertation has found initial support for the proposed relationship between false optimism, misperception of signals, and failure of strategic coercion. Although additional concurring empirical work will bolster the confidence in these findings, the case of Sino-Indian war of 1962 provides tentative, initial support for the hypotheses.

The research question asked by this dissertation is: why are states, sometimes incapable of deciding their bargaining shares depending on their relative power distribution, below the threshold of war? The solution to this puzzle, provided by the dissertation is: national leaders have specific beliefs about how other nations will react to crisis between their state and an adversarial state. They also harbour beliefs about the adversary's stake in the crisis; i.e. how much the adversary values the object of conflict. These specific beliefs are a product of their specific understanding of international relations, and the adversary's behaviour and interest in the conflict. Sometimes these beliefs align in such a way that it creates an illusion, that in spite of the adversary's preponderant military capability, it will refrain from escalating the crisis situation to the threshold of war. When this happens then, the state under the illusion, believes that it can demand an increased share in the bargain. Since asymmetry in relative military capabilities is ignored by the state, it now becomes only a battle of wills, much like the game of chicken, where the most determined wins. Hence the state undertakes certain policies to demonstrate its will and also improve its position in the negotiation table. The state also ignores the signals sent by the adversary as weak and with intent to bluff. This impedes communication and diplomacy and often escalates the crisis to war since the adversary, who is not necessarily under similar illusions, deciphers the opponent's behaviour as aggressive and undertakes actions to maintain the status quo.

Summary:

The first prediction, explores the roots of false optimism on India's part. The case study proves that the Indian leadership, especially the political leaders, harboured a belief that India had a unique existence in the world and the great powers had an interest in preserving its sovereignty. Nehru through his statements in the parliament and public meetings emphasized that the world powers had an interest in the defence of India. Moreover, Nehru believed that the Chinese would launch an all out war against India, instead of a limited war with clear political objectives. Since the Himalayas was a formidable natural barrier, Nehru believed that the any war between the two states will be long drawn, giving enough time for the great powers to intervene. Once the great powers were locked in a conflict, the situation would rapidly deteriorate, leading to a confrontation of global magnitude, involving the use of nuclear weapons.

In retrospect, Nehru's doomsday predictions have been proved incorrect. When China eventually attacked India, America and Soviet Union stayed away from the conflict.¹⁰ Moreover, China fought a short, sharp war aimed at humiliating India and asserting its dominance in the Asian landmass instead of a total war aimed at India's annihilation. Many later scholars have argued that the Chinese cease-fire came at a time when India was maneuvering itself into a favourable position to launching damaging counter-attack in the plains of Assam where artillery fire and aerial bombardment could be used against overstretched Chinese supply lines. (Palit, 1990) (Mullik, 1967) These arguments give added proof to the claim that Chinese ambitions were merely political rather than military.

The second prediction documents the policies undertaken by India which were deemed aggressive by the Chinese. This dissertation argues that India's policies on Tibet were benign and in fact aimed at strengthening Sino-Indian cooperation. But the Chinese saw the Indian moves as aggressive and aimed at undermining Chinese authority in Tibet. This claim needs farther verification. One of the potential areas to look for, of India's true intentions and level of engagement in anti-China operation in

¹⁰ The Chinese coincided their attack on Indian positions with the outbreak of the Cuban Missile Crisis. This can be an alternate argument to the American and Soviet neutrality during the Sino-Indian war.

Tibet, would be to investigate the depth of knowledge Nehru and his close aides had about CIA operations carried out from Indian soil (especially from Darjeeling) against China.

Although there are clouds of doubt about India's intentions regarding Tibet, its intentions about the forward policy is crystal clear. Maxwell (1970) has correctly articulated that with the forward policy, India aimed at checking farther Chinese advances and by putting Indian troops, lay a tacit claim on Aksai Chin when joint withdrawals eventually takes place. Many scholars have cited another possibility, which is tactical in nature, by injecting Indian troops between Chinese supply lines, India hoped to choke Chinese posts and force them to withdraw. (Maxwell, 1970) (Palit 1990) (Dalvi 1967) These aims are clearly revisionist in nature and gives tacit validity to the second prediction. Scholars, such as Maxwell (1970) and (Vertzberger 1984) has referred to India's forward policy as deeply illogical and rash which deteriorated the security situation. These actions ofcourse looks illogical seen from a military angle, but makes perfect sense seen from a political angle, aimed at maximizing one's bargaining share. Nehru was deeply convinced that the Sino-Indian conflict will not end in a battlefield, but on a negotiation table, and the forward policy was aimed at giving India a diplomatic boost rather than a tactical advantage in war.

The third prediction does not have a direct relevance in validating the hypotheses but is useful in explaining the Chinese reaction to India's forward policy. It also explains the puzzle that many scholars such as (Maxwell 1970) (Dalvi, 1967) (Palit, 1990) have risen: why did Indian leaders take a strong stand in negotiations but made such slack military preparations for an eventual war? As explained in the previous chapter, India was geared only for diplomatic mobilization, with the sole purpose of demonstrating resolve and gaining a larger share in the bargain, rather than to gain a tactical advantage in the battlefield. Diplomatic mobilization only requires a token cost of mobilization as against private mobilization which is relatively costly. But the opponents have no way to determine the nature of mobilization undertaken by each other. China reacted to India's mobilization efforts by undertaking a private mobilization strategy. This gave China a definite tactical advantage in the battlefield and since mobilization requires the state to pay a part of the cost of war in advance, it lowered the threshold of war for China, giving it a first strike advantage. India, on the other hand, convinced that China would not dare to launch a war against it (false

optimism), believed that Chinese war-preparations were attempts to bluff. This landed India in a dangerous situation, where it was inciting a powerful enemy on one hand, and not adequately preparing to fight it. The prophecy came true when Chinese troops easily broke Indian defence lines and made their way towards the plains of Assam.

The fourth and final prediction demonstrates that a state under false optimism will underestimate the adversary's will and regard signals sent by it as weak or to corroborate their pre-conceived notions about it. This prediction is adequately validated by the evidences presented in the previous chapter. So strong was India's illusion that it held on to it even when Chinese and Indian troops engaged militarily in the high Himalayas.¹¹ One of the important questions rose while validating this prediction was that, how could military signals (generally regarded as strong signals because of its cost-sinking nature) be misinterpreted as weak? One of the explanations forwarded by the research is that, this could happen because the Indian political leaders had no experience of military matters and the civil-military relations was such that the military observations was often overruled, dismissed or ignored by the political leaders. Many military leaders who played a part in the 1962 war have stated in their memoirs that the political leaders had completely corrupted the standard military practices of the Indian Army, and military leaders were scared to speak their mind openly or contradict the views of the civil leadership. (Palit 1990) (Dalvi 1967) Because of the lack of independent and professional advice of the military, the political leaders at the helm of affairs were unable to decipher strong signals from weak. Moreover, DMO Palit, has mentioned in his book, "War in the High Himalayas" that the Indian Army's intelligence unit was almost useless and was heavily dependent on inputs from the civilian intelligence unit, the IB. This severely curtailed the military's ability to independently verify threats. They had to acquiescence with the view presented by the IB and plan their moves relying on second-hand intelligence. The IB advised the national leaders and the military that the Chinese were incapable of mounting a large-scale offensive operation against India and if Indian posts resisted then they would turn back and leave. The Chip Chap and Galwan valley incidents proved IB's predictions, thereby reinforcing India's optimism.

¹¹ The Chip Chap and Galwan post incidents in 1961.

In sum, the four predictions have provided some initial support for the proposed theory. False optimism on India's part indeed led to misperception, miscommunication and miscalculation. In turn these errors did play important roles in key deterrence failures in the Sino-Indian war of 1962. The conventional wisdom regarding deterrence failure that focuses on the "objective" clarity of the signals did explain the case as the proposed theory. Further research will deepen the understanding of these hypotheses more generally.¹² Until additional work is done, however, it is important to consider how this project might contribute to the understanding of international conflict, signalling and beliefs about war.

Implications for Policy:

It is remarkable how often wars break out between states with marked difference in military capabilities; something abhorred by the rational war theory. It has been seen throughout history that, very often states with even dramatically more powerful military capabilities fail to coerce weaker states and in some rare cases the weaker states are seen to try counter-coercion. This anomaly warrants explanation. This dissertation is an effort in that direction.

This dissertation also lays out a path for states to avoid the mistakes made by India that led to the war in 1962. Rational theory has long emphasized the importance of assessing the adversary's stake in the conflict, and its relative power distribution in order to decide the bargaining share. This dissertation points out that in the case of Sino-Indian war of 1962, these parameters were simply insufficient. India clearly neglected the skewed military balance and underestimated China's stake in the issue. Moreover, because of Nehru's unique understanding of international relations, he believed that extra-regional powers would be interested in guaranteeing India's security. Because of these reasons, India in spite being the weaker power undertook policies that were aggressive and highly provocative, forcing China to counter-react, thereby leading to war. False optimism, about its impunity from a large-scale Chinese attack, gave India the courage to act like a revisionist power.

¹² Several cases seem promising. The case of U.S.-Vietnamese war; the Indo-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971; the Arab-Israeli Wars of 1967 and 1973; and the U.S.-Iraq wars of 1991 and 2003.

Perhaps the most important policy implication of this study is simply that coercion of either form- deterrence or compellence is very, very difficult. State leaders must understand that and be restrained in their expectations about shaping other countries' behaviours. States under the influence of false optimism about its enhanced deterrence value will often misunderstand threats; possibly underestimate the threat as attempts to bluff. Deterrence theory argues that the latent use of threat in coercive diplomacy promises victory on the cheap: Rather than having to rely on brute force to achieve one's goals, threats backed up by limited uses of force might suffice. However, this dissertation warns that compellence and deterrence will often fail, leaving the threatening state in a position where brute force have to be used to achieve its goals.

States have to reconcile with the fact that not all states see the military capability of a state as it itself does. For example- Saddam Hussein is said to have remarked, "the United States relies on Air Force, and the Air Force has never been the decisive factor in the history of war."(McPeak, 2003) Although, this dissertation takes the military balance unproblematically, it is still important to highlight this fact. Mao also seems to hold similar beliefs about the efficacy of nuclear weapons; he often referred to them as "paper tigers". This proves that the very basis of coercion, i.e. military capability is not a homogeneous, and something as material and objective as 'weapons' are subject to perceptual biases. In other words, if capabilities assessment is so problematic then assessment of resolve and intent are far more complicated.

This dissertation will not elaborate the ways in which states can tailor their military signals so that the adversary can correctly interpret them because it is not its focus.¹³

The policy implications made by this dissertation are:

First, national leaders must have detailed discussions with other foreign leaders and also members of their own government so that they have a more accurate picture of the prevalent international order and that biases of one leader does not become the overriding view of the entire government. Second, the nation must have multiple intelligence agencies for intelligence gathering and analysis. This provides cross checking of data and helps in creating a more accurate analysis. Thirdly, civil-military

¹³ For this topic see, Shimshoini, Jonathan, "Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1970" (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1988);

relations should be smooth, and although the military is subordinate to the political leadership, its observations and professional advice should be taken seriously. Moreover, the civilian administration should not interfere with the military structure otherwise corrupt practices easily creeps in into its workings and it hinders the unbiased flow of information and advices. Fourth, the national leaders should “put themselves in their adversary’s shoes” to ascertain the adversary’s stake in the conflict. This point has been repeatedly made by other scholars. (Van Evera, 1999) (Twomey, 2005) This will also give the state an enhanced picture of what the adversary is likely to do if their interest is threatened. The aim here is two fold: to understand the limits the adversary is likely to go to protect its interest, and the strategy is likely to undertake to achieve its goal. Fifth, intelligence analysts and the military should be given the task of preparing worst-case scenarios and war-simulation exercises. This will give the national leaders a repertoire of possible scenarios, rather than getting locked-on in one assumption, which most likely is infected with false optimism.

The dangers that this dissertation highlights are severe and can lead to unnecessary conflict. However, they are not inevitable and can be reduced if given appropriate attention.

Implications for Theory:

This study speaks to several different theoretical literatures in political science. Most importantly, this dissertation speaks to the large deterrence literature. Its key conclusion is that deterrence is more difficult than many posit. Achieving successful deterrence is not simply a matter of making credible threats. Rather, it requires understanding how those threats will be interpreted. While substantial attention has been paid in the existing literature to the fact that strong signals deter wars, this dissertation demonstrates that this warrants additional study. In particular, understanding how a country suffering from false optimism and misperceives and underestimates even serious threats seems critical from the evidence presented here. The approach used in this dissertation is one of the many possible ways to examine these issues. Others will likely bear fruits as well. Regardless, the result of this dissertation suggests that net assessment and weighing the balance of power in particular dyads is insufficient. Rather focusing on the perceptions as they are

influenced by optimism-whether they are false or real- will likely enhance the predictive value of such analysis.

What this requires, however, is a detailed knowledge of the countries one is trying to analyze. Without strong language skills and deep understand of other countries, this knowledge will be impossible to obtain. This was one of the main hurdles faced by this research project, due to which a detailed analysis of the Chinese perceptions could not be done. However, the research relied on Garver's (2001) work on China's decision to attack India, which entails a detailed analysis of Chinese perceptions.

There is a substantial body of formal literature on the causes of war as a failure of bargaining.¹⁴ One of the primary sources of such failures in this literature is deliberately created informational asymmetries. Fearon (1995) argues that one of the reason rational leaders may be unable to locate a mutually preferable negotiated settlement due to private information about relative capabilities or resolve or incentives to misrepresent such information. This study draws attention to a different informational problem: opacity and the importance of perceptual bias. As the argument of this dissertation makes clear, there are times when informational asymmetries do not come from each side's incentive to misrepresent. Rather, each side's perceptual bias makes it very difficult for them to see information in the same way as its opponents does. This is the case even when one side is trying to communicate and not obfuscate by sending signals to communicate its capabilities and intent.

Finally, this project also highlights the importance of opening up the black box of the state. There is a view that most important insights into international relations comes from studying the international system and the relation among the units. (Waltz 1979) (Mearsheimer 2000) This project suggests that important elements in explaining the outbreak of war come from not only state level variables, but even sub-state level variables. Given that these factors have shown to be of critical importance in explaining a major war in the Cold War between the two Asian giants, then ignoring such factors sacrifices too much as the alter of parsimony.

¹⁴ Bruce Bueno Mesquitta, "An Expected Utility Theory of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 74 (1980)

Thus, the dissertation has important policy prescriptions and theoretical implications. When states under the influence of false optimism undertakes aggressive policies to demonstrate resolve and improve their bargaining position in the negotiation table, the risk of misperception and miscommunication in the conduct of their diplomacy and statecraft grows even higher. Mitigating these dangers will advance the case of peace and stability.

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