Military Disobedience in China:
The Social Roots of Insubordination in the Sino-French War

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A note to participants: I have attached excerpts from both the introduction and theory chapter of my book manuscript, removing redundancies and attempting to keep the combination to a reasonable length. The introduction provides analytical and historical context for the project and explains the empirical strategy of the book; those most interested in the theory itself can safely skip it and read only the theory chapter. Thank you!
Project abstract: Dynamics internal to military organizations are central to decisions about when and how to use military force. However, we still lack a clear understanding of how individuals make decisions within military contexts. My book manuscript, *Military Disobedience in China: The Social Roots of Insubordination in the Sino-French War*, illuminates these dynamics by applying social network analysis to Chinese-language primary sources, in order to theorize when individual military commanders choose to disobey inappropriate orders and how they choose to do so. I argue that decisions about how to respond to inappropriate orders are based on whether commanders have competing military loyalties and whether they serve as brokers between otherwise unconnected individuals in their social networks. Maintaining competing loyalties makes disobeying orders that come from one among many valid authorities seem more legitimate. Serving in brokerage roles increases commanders’ power to manage the consequences of disobedience. Commanders who lack brokerage-derived social power and are solely loyal to the source of their orders will obey orders they think are inappropriate, but other interactions between networks and loyalties lead to responses that fall somewhere on the spectrum of disobedience: commanders can refine their orders in support of their superiors’ goals, defy their orders outright in opposition to their superiors, or exit their military roles altogether. The project thus links micro-level decisions about disobedience to meso-level outcomes like battlefield effectiveness, interaction with civilians, and civil-military relations, as well as to larger questions of wartime political dynamics, rebellion, nationalism, human rights, authoritarian politics, and state power.
Chapter 1: Introduction

War, the Military, and Disobedience

War drives both change and continuity in political systems, and has been implicated in phenomena as epochal as the rise of the modern state and changes in the ordering principles of the international system. The military organizations that fight these wars, too, have often been the subject of both scholarly and popular fascination, whether as a path to glory, a font of instability, a defender of national security, a mortal threat, a distinct social community, or a vital source of political stability.

While theories of culturally or nationally distinct strategic cultures or "ways of war" posit that war's character changes according to context, virtually all recent studies of war subscribe to the argument that obedience to the military chain of command is key to battlefield effectiveness. Military organizations themselves generally agree — much modern military training is designed to inculcate norms of obedience in recruits. While the forms military orders take can vary, there is widespread agreement that any orders issued must be obeyed in order to effectively and coherently project military force. A substantial body of research therefore explores the best ways to ensure this kind of obedience.

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1 On the rise of states, see especially Tilly, Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992. On the ordering principles of the international system, see especially Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics; Waltz, Theory of International Politics; Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics.
2 John Keegan notes, for instance, how the "chance to win glory" in combat with other men-at-arms (foot soldiers) made many such soldiers reluctant to engage with archers, their social inferiors. The Face of Battle, 98. In the U.S. case, the military has actively pursued this association, for instance by objecting to film "projects it believed would not reflect proper glory on the services and even on the very ideas of battle and war." Suid, Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film, xvi.
3 Jack Snyder, for instance, argues that militaries tend to prefer offensive strategies, a tendency that can lead states to adopt self-defeating strategies. Snyder, “Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984.”
4 For instance, multiple surveys of the American case highlight how the perceived benefits and prospects for success of military operations strongly influence public support for them. According to Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, "The public appears to be defeat phobic, not casualty phobic." Choosing Your Battles, 149. See also Larson, “Casualties and Consensus.”
7 Janowitz, Military Institutions and Coercion in the Developing Nations. This perspective is especially prominent in China today. See Ji, “The PLA and Diplomacy.”
8 The classic work on strategic culture is Johnston, Cultural Realism.
9 See, e.g., Weigley, The American Way of War; Rosen, “Military Effectiveness”; Scobell, “Is There a Chinese Way of War?”
10 “It is a deeply rooted belief that obedience in training is the prerequisite to discipline under fire on the battlefield.” Arkin and Dobrofsky, “Military Socialization and Masculinity,” 160. See also Bornmann, “Becoming Soldiers: Army Basic Training and the Negotiation of Identity”; Keijzer, Military Obedience.
Unquestioning obedience is not, however, uniformly positive or desirable even in military contexts. Furthermore, disobedience is common — "military organizations accommodate a much greater degree of 'horse trading' and negotiations on a wide variety of issues than the stereotypical image of 'blind, unquestioning obedience' would suggest."\(^{11}\) Jacques van Doorn describes this idea that "an order is an order" as one of the "current fictions" about military decisions to use violence; in fact, he notes, such an "artificial system of controls...disappears into the background in the case of a real armed conflict."\(^{12}\) Based as they are in assumptions that this "artificial system" persists, our theories of wartime dynamics and military organizations thus neglect an important class of individual behavior and distort our understanding of the ways in which militaries conduct themselves in war.

This focus on obedience in military organizations presents two major analytic problems. First, working from the assumption that obedience is an uncomplicatedly positive trait for military personnel means much scholarship on military organizations has neglected to investigate the incidence, causes, and types of disobedience in a sustained manner. This is puzzling, both because disobedience is anecdotally common in militaries — perhaps especially when they are at war — and also because the effects of disobedience extend far beyond battlefield effectiveness. Disobedience in a military at war implicates higher-level processes such as grand strategy, foreign policy decision-making, adoption of and adaptation to new technologies, civilian targeting, the application of torture, state-building, and civil-military relations.

Second, equating obedience with good behavior and positive battlefield outcomes leads researchers to ignore the ways in which disobedience itself can have desirable effects. The normative sentiments Sun Tzu expressed in the quote above are shared by other theorists of war: sometimes commands from a superior should be disobeyed. Disobedience on the part of an officer in the field can mitigate the efforts of an ignorant ruler in the capital, for instance, or lead to the discovery of new but unsanctioned uses for old tactics or technologies.

**Research Question**

In this dissertation, I aim to begin redressing these problems by investigating the causes of military disobedience and the forms such disobedience takes. Specifically, I ask how military commanders respond to inappropriate orders — for example, when are they insubordinate, and when do they obey orders they deem inappropriate? In the process of

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\(^{11}\) Lucas Jr., “Advice and Dissent,” 155.

answering questions like these, I also explore the different ways in which commanders can disobey — they can engage with their superiors in an attempt to refine their orders, simply ignore their orders and pursue outright defiance, or take the drastic step of exiting their military roles.

Two factors rooted in commanders' social network connections drive their responses to orders they see as inappropriate: brokerage and command centrism. Brokers are individuals who occupy social positions that link otherwise unconnected groups. For military commanders, brokerage serves both to enable disobedience and to constrain exit. Command centrism describes the strength of a commander's identification with the military command authority that issued the order under consideration. A command centric individual strongly and primarily identifies with this authority — in other words, such an individual is solely loyal to the entity that issued her orders. Strong and primary identification with the source of their orders leads commanders to pursue activities that support their understanding of their superiors' goals — such support can include simple obedience, but it can also include forms of disobedience like adapting one's orders. Figure 1 summarizes how brokerage and command centrism interact to produce commanders' responses to inappropriate orders.

![Figure 1: Responses to Inappropriate Orders](chart)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broker</th>
<th>Not a Broker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Command Centric</td>
<td>Refine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Command Centric</td>
<td>Defy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Further explanation of the theory and alternative explanations omitted here; see the attached theory chapter for more on both.]

**Methodology**

Developing a theory of individual commanders' responses to orders during war necessitates an especially careful research design, because many of the possible responses to orders are quite difficult to detect. Not only are some cases of disobedience of little impact and thus unlikely to attract attention, states and elites also often have compelling incentives to redefine more impactful instances of "bad," disobedient behavior (as, for instance, "heroism" or "innovation") or simply hide them altogether. For example, "In the United States, details
about the combat refusals in Vietnam are generally unavailable, the Department of the Army
commenting only that 'data on incidents of this nature are not maintained.' Russia also goes to
considerable lengths to discourage public discussion and analysis of mutinous incidents."¹³
As one scholar of mutiny puts it, "Both labor and management are reluctant to call a mutiny
what it actually is. This denial creates a large gray area in the concept that is mutiny…It also
allows a certain amount of flexibility in resolving the situation."¹⁴ There is thus no way to
gather a "universe of cases" or to pursue large-n, cross-national statistical analysis for this
kind of contestable, mutable behavioral outcome. Therefore, I apply the case study method in
combination with social network analysis to answer my research question.

Individual Focus

Another way in which this project departs from existing work is its focus on examining
the role decision makers at the individual level play in wartime dynamics. An individual
focus is merited for at least two reasons. First is the fact that individuals think about the
world in different ways; for example, state leaders "hold different and competing…theoretical
models of world politics. When confronted with the same information…they will make
different guesses based on those disparate implicit models and theories."¹⁵ Much existing
work argues that individual decision makers' "identification with the state is generally a
given," which amounts to arguing that differences between individuals' "models" are not
usually decisive.¹⁶ Especially in a military context where commanders have both the
firepower and the space needed to significantly affect the course of the war, this means that
we should not conceive of commanders as cogs in a military machine, subordinating their
judgment and initiative to that of the state, the military organization, or their service branch.
"There is a divergence between the individual and collective interests of those who make up
an army, which is a crucial ingredient in successful conduct of war."¹⁷

Assuming members of military organizations wholly and constantly identify with the
state and/or the military organization obscures the contingent, fluid, situationally determined
nature of identity — individuals' identifications with the state will vary in salience as well as
in degree, so the question of how strongly commanders identify with military command in

¹⁶ Renshon, “Losing Face and Sinking Costs.”
the case of a given order merits investigation.\textsuperscript{18} Commanders do not always obey their immediate superiors, much less the state or other higher-ups, and they often disobey in ways critical to the outcome of a war. Given the potential importance of this possibility, it cannot simply be assumed away or subsumed into explanations of group behavior. Commanders’ behavior is certainly constrained, but they nonetheless choose whether to obey (or not), so we must examine individual-level decision-making processes to fully understand the behavior of states, militaries, and commanders at war.

In addition, even if we were to accept a perspective in which individual commanders’ identification with the military command structure is unproblematic, doing so precludes productive examination of the pivotal events that fall outside the "general" state of affairs. Exceptional events in war are especially important, so striving to explain the broadest possible set of wartime dynamics is a worthy goal. This is the second reason I focus on individual-level decision-making processes in war: more often than is commonly assumed, individual-level choices impact behavioral outcomes of substantial interest to scholars, including states' foreign policy choices — including decisions about whether or not to start a war\textsuperscript{19} — postwar demobilization,\textsuperscript{20} spoiler behavior in negotiations,\textsuperscript{21} the adoption of risky tactics or innovative technologies,\textsuperscript{22} and in some cases even decisions to engage in or avoid war. For example, in Syria from 2011-2012, new armed groups participating in hostilities began as "small personal networks or groups of army defectors' who had transitioned into rebellion" — individual choices were critical in the dynamics of this conflict.\textsuperscript{23} Further, this is not only true of heads of state — it is also the case for individuals throughout an organization, especially in the military. This is especially true for members of a military organization at war, and it applies at all levels of organization, from enlisted men to theater commanders.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{18} On the ways multiplex identities can shift and vary in salience according to context, see especially Gould, \textit{Insurgent Identities}.

\textsuperscript{19} Saunders, \textit{Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions}; Cohen, \textit{Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime}.

\textsuperscript{20} See the cases of Bao Chao (鲍超) and Liu Yongfu (劉永福) in Chapter 5 for examples in which individuals could have undermined or shattered armistice agreements.


\textsuperscript{22} Grauer, “Moderating Diffusion”; Posen, \textit{The Sources of Military Doctrine}; Marcus, “Military Innovation and Tactical Adaptation in the Israel–Hizballah Conflict.”

\textsuperscript{23} Quote from Staniland, \textit{Networks of Rebellion}, Loc. 262 (Kindle version).

\textsuperscript{24} While an enlisted soldier, by nature of his limited responsibilities, is less likely to have this kind of impact, the possibility remains.
Relational Logic and Network Analysis

I also depart from much existing work on military organizations and decision making in my argument that individual military commanders are best seen in a relational light. I elaborate on this point further in Chapter 2, but in short, adopting this approach accepts the fact that individuals are not "independent" actors responding to external stimuli by, for instance, maximizing their individual utilities. A relational logic underlines the fact that individual actors are always embedded in a larger structure of social relationships — social networks — that influence both their characteristics and their actions to such a degree that "to construe them as independent is a grievous misunderstanding." ²⁵

I therefore apply social network analysis techniques to analyze each of my cases' brokerage positions.²⁶ Where possible this is done directly by mapping social connections among the groups of individuals most politically important to each; in one case that level of detail was not possible, so I instead pursued a qualitative analysis of his networks.²⁷ Because identification of the types of ties most relevant for each individual had to be developed inductively in my case studies, I leave further discussion of the particulars of each network — how connections are created, what they mean, and the types of information and resources that flow through them — to later chapters.

Network analysis was developed to handle precisely the type of relational analysis pursued here, but it also has another major analytical advantage for studying the dynamics of war. Because network analysis lends itself to analyzing "emergent properties of persistent patterns of relations among agents that can define, enable, and constrain those agents," it is particularly suited to simultaneously analyzing both individual decision-making dynamics and higher-level dynamics of the war under consideration here. This means that, viewed from a relational perspective, selecting four individual-level cases from the same war is actually an advantage — doing so allows me to test the individual-level implications of my theory in varied individual cases at the same time that I investigate broad, higher-level patterns of social dynamics in the same war. In other words, applying a network approach to these cases

²⁵ Granovetter, “Economic Action and Social Structure,” 482.
²⁷ For an excellent example of this kind of qualitative network approach, see Parkinson, “Organizing Rebellion.”
allows me to begin interrogating the ways in which individual- and national-level dynamics co-evolve in war.28

**Case Study Approach**

This is primarily a theory-building project coupled with a plausibility probe, an approach to which the case study method is especially well suited.29 Case studies allow me to examine the mechanisms central to my theory, while at the same time developing an understanding of each case sufficient to address alternative explanations — both of these goals require enormously detailed information on commanders’ judgments of their orders, social network positions, and their identification (or lack thereof) with command. Put another way, the case study approach allows me the space to pursue the "triangulated verification across diverse data"30 necessary to tease apart the (often substantial) impact of contingency and contextual factors unique to these cases from the operation of the mechanisms my theory identifies.

I combine two additional methodological strategies to maximize analytical purchase on my research question. First, I examine one case of each kind of individual-level response to inappropriate orders predicted by my theory — defiance, refinement, obedience, and exit — but I draw all four cases from the same war. The individuals responding to orders in these cases were chosen to be as different as possible on several dimensions: their responses to inappropriate orders are all different; they led widely divergent types of military organizations; they rose to command positions from widely varied family, educational, and regional backgrounds; and they operated in different theaters and time periods of the war. Nonetheless, these cases are not strictly independent in the statistical sense, since they all operated in the same national wartime context — in some cases they even knew each other. However, sacrificing formal independence between cases in this project comes with compensation: it allows me to interrogate the ways in which a single, national wartime context differently influenced the individuals participating in it — the linkages between macro and micro — while at the same time focusing on the micro- and meso-level dynamics of war that are often critical to commanders' decision-making processes. Additionally, the

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28 On co-evolution, see especially Padgett and Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets*. On network analysis as a method to analyze phenomena that cross levels of analysis, see Tichy, Tushman, and Fombrun, “Social Network Analysis for Organizations,” 2.

29 On the utility of case studies for theory building, see, e.g., George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*.

level of detail required for a robust social network analysis is very demanding, which makes a cross-national research design impractical for testing my theory.  

Second, I draw cases from a war which happened sufficiently long ago that sources for it are no longer sensitive or classified: the Sino-French War (1883-85). While any number of wars could fit this bill, the Sino-French War has several other critical advantages for my project. The military organizations and commanders involved in this war were unusually varied — the military organizations participating in the fighting against the French included the national military forces, local militia, former rebel groups, and Vietnamese allies, while the individuals commanding these forces included literary scholars, former bandits, career military men, and mercenaries. This variation — which mirrors the diversity of modern military organizations and conflicts — thus helps ensure my theory can provide insight into other times and locations. In addition, an unusually vast amount of primary-source data survives from this war, especially on commanders' social networks.

In sum, this project, in a sense, pursues nested case studies: one war, several individual-level cases. In terms of decision processes at the individual level, this is a multi-case design, with cases selected from each category of response to inappropriate orders that allow careful investigation of commanders' decisions to show they behave as my theory predicts. In terms of wartime dynamics, however, this is a single-case design that privileges depth over breadth. To pursue this approach, I carefully investigate the social, environmental, and other contextual factors in each individual-level case, drawing on both secondary sources and primary historical data (see below for more detail on my sources). By detailing this kind of context I am able to demonstrate the plausibility of my theory about individual-level behavior, eliminate potential alternative explanations, and begin linking individual-level behavior to higher-level dynamics of war. This is fundamentally a theory-building project, however – broader testing of my arguments in other national and temporal contexts must await further research.

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31 Network analysis is often extremely sensitive to data quality. For instance, "measures of network centrality are highly dependent on knowledge of all the nodes and all the linkages." Ward, Stovel, and Sacks, “Network Analysis and Political Science,” 247. Collecting network data is also more complex than collecting other types of data common in political science.


33 For an overview of sources available from the Qing dynasty (the Chinese dynasty during which this war was fought), see Fairbank, *Ch’ing Documents*; Griggs, “The Ch’ing Shih Kao”; Park and Antony, “Archival Research in Qing Legal History”; Wilkinson, *The History of Imperial China*; Ye and Esherick, *Chinese Archives*; Fairbank and Teng, “On The Types and Uses of Ch’ing Documents.”
The Sino-French War

Background

The Sino-French War (la guerre Franco-Chinoise or 中法戰爭), 1883-1885, originated in the French desire to expand its colonial possessions in Vietnam. As a "tributary" state of China, Vietnam had long received aid from its neighbor to the north, but France gained colonial concessions in Cochin China in the south of Vietnam in the early 1860s. Following the rise of "expansionist-minded republicans to positions of influence" in France in the early 1880s, Paris funded an armed expedition into Tongking in hopes of annexing all of northern Vietnam. Then, in April 1882, the French attacked Hanoi; the Chinese responded by occupying large swaths of northern Vietnam. Three-way negotiations to resolve the situation broke down in the spring of 1883, at which point an undeclared war began. By the fall of 1883, between 10-20,000 Chinese troops were facing roughly 9,000 French troops in Tongking. Over the next two years, the conflict expanded as French and Chinese forces fought — with mixed successes on both sides — in northern Vietnam, on Taiwan, and along the Chinese and Taiwanese coasts. The war officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin (中法天津條約) on June 9, 1885, although hostilities likely continued for a few months until word reached all of the troops.

This war has seen rather scant coverage in English-language scholarship, and while more prominent in Chinese historiography, it is still not seen as one of the critical components of the "century of humiliation" (百年國恥) China describes itself as enduring during the 19th century at the hands of outsiders. The author of one of the preeminent treatments of the war in English muses on the reasons:

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34 Some historians only date the war from 1884-1885 because "open" hostilities between France and China did not commence — with a French attack on Keelung, although many think of the French assault on Fuzhou as the start of the war — until after almost a year of covert clashes in northern Vietnam. Given that Chinese and French forces were already fighting each other in Vietnam in 1883 after negotiations broke down, 1883 seems a more reasonable starting point for the war.

35 Also sometimes termed "vassal state." On this system of international relationships, see Fairbank and Têng, “On The Ch’ing Tributary System.” For a critical take on this label, see Perdue, “The Tenacious Tributary System.” Regardless of the validity of the label, though, it is clear that in the late 19th century China felt it had a sufficiently special relationship with Vietnam to go to war over control of its northern half.

36 Eastman, Throne and Mandarin, 45.

37 Tongking, also spelled Tongkin, refers to the northernmost region of Vietnam, along the border with China's Yunnan and Guangxi provinces, east of northern Laos, and west of the Gulf of Tonkin. This was also the location of the Red River delta, where the French hoped to find a river route into China via Yunnan. “Tonkin”

38 Adelman and Shi, Symbolic War, 92.

39 On the communications limitations of the late Qing, see Yoon, “The Grand Council and the Communication Systems in the Late Qing.”

40 On the prevalence of this phrase in modern Chinese discourse, see Callahan, “National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism.”
"China was not much changed by the war. This is the reason, I think, why historians have tended largely to ignore this, the third war that the Chinese fought with Europeans. This tendency is unfortunate, for the controversy was historically significant precisely because it permitted the Chinese throne and mandarins to lapse again into apathy and self-contentment."

This assessment is in many ways correct. The Sino-French War had nothing near the impact on China's trajectory as did the earlier Opium Wars (1839-42, 1856-1860) — which thrust China, unwilling, into engagement with the colonial powers — or the ensuing First Sino-Japanese War, which shocked China into an earnest, albeit belated, attempt to adopt foreign-developed technologies and ideas. However, based on my close reading of Chinese primary sources from this war, we should avoid assuming that the war's low impact on China's historical trajectory means that Chinese at the time saw the war as unimportant.

To the contrary, this conflict with the French threw China into something of a panic. The war was seen as a clear threat to Chinese territorial integrity, necessitating a shift to a war footing in the early 1880s. China deployed its own troops in Vietnam as tripwires guarding against further French territorial grabs, began quietly supporting guerilla operations (despite the dynasty's financial struggles), began reshuffling officials in order to prepare defenses in the south — those without military experience were transferred away from the border, and "demonstrated a sudden interest in the efficiency of the post station system." The structure through which funds were assigned and disbursed changed, the political dynamic changed substantially as advocates of stronger resistance against foreigners agitated for great commitment to the war, and the empress dowager swapped out her Grand Council wholesale — amounting to what one scholar called her "April coup." Taiwan was blockaded for almost a year, the Chinese arsenal and navy in Fujian were annihilated, and the Chinese feared an attack on Beijing itself. This was no minor border conflict.

42 Quote from Yoon, "The Grand Council and the Communication Systems in the Late Qing," 124.
43 On general wartime changes during conflict in the Qing dynasty, see Dai, "Military Finance of the High Qing Period - An Overview." Many memorials from this war in the archives in Beijing and Taipei indicate special requests for funds, as well.
44 Rankin, "‘Public Opinion’ and Political Power," 457.
46 Dodd, *Journal of a Blockaded Resident in North Formosa*.
48 In mid-1884, a French fleet "had departed from Hong Kong moving northward along the China Coast. Ostensibly, it was bringing Fournier to meet with Li, but the Chinese knew that a refusal of the initial French conditions would cause Lespès' force to bare its cannons...Fournier was only dilatorily making his way toward
The Qing Chinese State

The structure of the Qing government at this point substantially influenced China's conduct in both fighting and foreign policy during the Sino-French War; while a full overview lies beyond the scope of this book, a brief introduction to three of the central characteristics of Chinese administration is necessary to clarifying the dynamics I discuss in ensuing chapters. First, governance was to a substantial degree localized; China's population explosion during the previous dynasty, the stagnation of central government revenue, and the disruptions caused by the Taiping, Nien, and White Lotus rebellions had together forced devolution of rule to local officials during the course of the 19th century. During the Sino-French War, therefore, of critical importance were cleavages and tensions between the young Guangxu emperor, his adoptive mother the empress dowager Cixi, and the recently established yamen foreign office on the one hand; and those commanders, officials, and politically active literati commentators who drew their authority from local connections on the other.

A substantial proportion of the most capable and prominent officials on both sides of the central/local divide, however, rose to prominence though China's examination system, which served as the primary gateway to official service. While in the 19th century the system loosened somewhat to allow men who had not passed through these examinations to rise to prominence, the examinations — which had local, provincial, and central tiers — remained central to Chinese life during the Sino-French War. As perhaps the most prominent scholar of education in the Qing wrote, "the examinations became a mass-based theater of social fantasies and economic exchanges, and could enjoy an imaginative prominence even in the

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Tientsin [the port outside Beijing]. But the passage of time did not ease the court's apprehensions. Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, 112.

49 As Stuart Heaver put it in his retrospective on the war, this was "by no means an obscure or minor historical event, either. It has been estimated that the war on land and at sea caused more than 15,000 casualties on the French, Chinese and Vietnamese sides; it stopped China's self-strengthening movement in its tracks; it brought down the expansionist French government of Jules Ferry; it defined future French colonial policy in Asia; and it almost brought France and Britain into conflict with one another." Heaver, “When China and France Went to War.”

50 Pamela Kyle Crossley summarises this devolution eloquently: "The dual cataclysms of the Opium Wars (1839-1842, 1858-1860) and the Taiping War (1853-1864) are frequently interpreted now as the codae of imperial control in the empire. **Thereafter, local structures and initiatives, always acknowledge to have been of great impotence in the management of civil life in China, became the source of mediation for provincial, regional, and in some cases national problems**” (emphasis added). Crossley, “The Rulerships of China,” 1470.

51 Eastman notes, for instance, that the yamen had substantially more influence than local officials at this time. Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, 83. It is probably best thought of as an arm of the court. On the yamen office more generally, see Horowitz, *Central Power and State Making*.

52 On regionalism in China during this period, see especially Spector, *Li Hung-Chang and the Huai Army*. 
poorest rural areas.” In 19th-century China, placing children in official careers was seen as the surest path to a family's security and advancement, so those who could invested substantial resources into education. Further, because passing successfully through the multiple levels of these examinations required years of arduous study (the tests themselves were also grueling, multiple-day affairs), those who succeeded in passing together became very close — they referred to themselves as "brothers."

Still another bifurcation in Chinese officialdom pervaded even these examinations, though: that between civilian (wen 文, or literary) and military (wu 武) officials. By statute, these realms were separate, with parallel ranks, pay structures, and even separate examination systems. By the time of the Sino-French War, however, the "official" military structure was substantially devalued — relatively few elected to take the military examinations, as they became seen as a dead end, and the official standing military forces of the Qing were largely defunct. This meant that military responsibilities rested on the shoulders of the literati; officials who had trained for years to write erudite commentary on (for instance) classical poetry thus often found themselves thrust into military command. Military responsibilities were thus often indeterminate during the Sino-French War in terms of whether a civilian-trained or military-trained individual would be in command. Furthermore, military responsibilities were also often unclear in terms of the command responsibilities associated with different posts. As Edward McCord put it, "the traditional organization of Qing armies blurred military authority and chains of command in such a way as to hinder the

53 Quote from Elman and Woodside, Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600-1900, 19:544. "Civil examinations reflected the larger literati culture because state institutions were already penetrated by that culture through a political and social partnerships between imperial interests and local elites." Elman, Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China, 318. On China's examination system more generally, see also Franke, The Reform and Abolition of the Traditional Chinese Examination System; Han, “The Punishment of Examination Riots in the Early to Mid-Qing Period”; Kracke, “Family Vs. Merit in Chinese Civil Service Examinations Under The Empire”; Miyazaki, China’s Examination Hell; Nivison, “Protest against Conventions and Conventions of Protest”; Purcell, Problems of Chinese Education; Watt, “Leadership Criteria in Late Imperial China”; Song Yang 宋杨, “Qingdai Keju Lüli Dangan Gailun 清代科举履历档案概论”; Chang, The Chinese Gentry.

54 Man-Cheong, The Class of 1761, 18.

55 For more on this relationship, see the Brokerage section of Chapter 3 below.

56 Gilbert, “Mengzi’s Art of War: The Kangxi Emperor Reforms the Qing Military Examinations”; Smith, “The Reform of Military Education in Late Ch’ing China, 1842-1895”; Zi, Pratique Des Examens Militaires En Chine; Miyazaki, China’s Examination Hell.

57 Many historians and other observers have interpreted this as a general devaluing of violence, but this was not the case. One need only glance at the pantheon of China’s most important officials during this time period to see that many of them had been granted such prominence precisely because of their prowess in battle.

58 Franke writes, for instance, “Because of the preponderance of civil authority in the Chinese political and social structure, the military examinations were far less important than the civil ones...” The Reform and Abolition of the Traditional Chinese Examination System, 4.

59 For instance, “In the organising of local corps, the upper [literary] gentry had a larger control while the lower gentry usually headed smaller units.” Chang, The Chinese Gentry, 196:7.
accumulation of military power in the hands of any one official or any one military officer."

Command responsibilities were accordingly often assigned on an ad hoc basis.

Rebellion, Foreign Pressure, and Regional Armies

While the examination systems, the parallel civilian/literary and military administrative tracks, and informal nature of each position's responsibilities persisted throughout the Qing dynasty, the 19th century was one of challenge and upheaval for China. The dynasty's finances started becoming precarious at the beginning of the century, a situation that worsened substantially after Britain won a "decisive" victory in the first Opium War, thus securing an indemnity payment, the right to continue selling opium in China, territorial concessions in Hong Kong, and access to five treaty ports on China's coast. This was China's first major encounter with the technologically superior military forces that the newly industrializing European powers could bring to bear, but strangely enough, the Chinese did not much change their own military forces or their view of the outside world.

Chinese views of outsiders, in fact, had not changed substantially by the time the Sino-French War began in 1883.

China was, however, forced to overhaul its military forces when one of the most violent rebellions in history broke out in central China in 1850. The forces of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (太平天國), led by the Christian convert Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全), nearly succeeded in overthrowing the Qing dynasty — for a time they controlled a large amount of territory in central China, established a new administrative bureaucracy, administered their own civil service examinations (a reflection of the classic Chinese system), and laid bare the weaknesses in the Qing armies.

While I go into further detail on the state of China's national armed forces during the Sino-French War in the next section, here I want to focus on the mode of reform through which China was ultimately able to suppress the Taiping uprising in 1864. Qing civilian officialdom had long been the province of individuals highly educated in the Chinese literary classics and selected through a grueling civil service examination system. Military men, on

62 Polachek, The Inner Opium War, 1.
63 On the Opium War, see especially Fay, The Opium War, 1840-1842; Waley, The Opium War through Chinese Eyes; Wakeman, Strangers at the Gate; Lovell, The Opium War; Chang, Commissioner Lin and the Opium War.
64 James Polachek explains this with reference to internal Chinese politics. The Inner Opium War.
65 For more on the role of examinations in Chinese society, see the Brokerage section of Chapter 3.
66 Platt, Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom.
the other hand, were for much of the dynasty actively discouraged from such study, instead focusing on riding and shooting. The influential leaders in the army were generals who had worked themselves up from the ranks and had shown their mettle in actual combat. The army was a special kind of society of its own, and men who had not experienced from the outset the hardships of military life were unable to handle the common soldiers."

This situation became untenable during the Taiping conflict, with monumental consequences for the ensuing trajectory of China's military, politics, and international relations. Two changes are especially pertinent here. First, the dynasty was forced to rely on local officials and society for funds, leadership talent, and soldiers. This led to the general localization of government described in the previous section, but it also allowed for the creation of new localized military forces. Second, the urgency of the Taiping conflict and the inability of traditional structures to manage it opened new pathways for individual careers — men who started without any education and found military success could find themselves in high-level civilian positions normally given to highly educated literati, while conversely, literati could cross over to became celebrated military leaders.

This combination of literati education and political clout with military prowess and locally-sourced, personally loyal military forces proved extraordinarily potent. One of the first — certainly the most successful — of these commanders was Zeng Guofan (曾國藩), who founded the Xiang Army or "Hunan Braves" (湘军). This force was wholly loyal to Zeng and for a time was the only force in China capable of resisting the Taiping forces. Zeng found himself in a unique position — he was a successful, high-ranking civilian official prior to the outbreak of the Taiping conflict, and his innovative approach to personnel selection and training made his force uniquely effective. He became so powerful towards the end of the conflict that he split his force in two, probably to help reassure the throne that he remained loyal.

Nonetheless, after the Taipings were suppressed, Zeng remained one of the most prominent and powerful officials in the empire until his death in 1872. He played a leading role in the "Tongzhi restoration" attempts to deal with China's myriad internal problems and external threats, and, "To the Ch‘ing [Qing] imperial court, [Zeng Guofan] was an

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67 Smith, “The Reform of Military Education in Late Ch‘ing China, 1842-1895,” 16.
68 Ibid., 16–17.
70 Smith, “The Reform of Military Education in Late Ch‘ing China, 1842-1895.”
71 Spector, Li Hung-Chang and the Huai Army.
outstanding official who personified Confucian statesmanship; to many of his contemporaries, he was a man who stood for a particular kind of integrity and competence."\(^{72}\)

In keeping with the relational perspective I adopt throughout this dissertation, though, it is important to underline that Zeng's power was not expressed in his official positions — it also flowed from others' attempts to imitate his forces' success, the individuals he mentored and helped rise to high positions, and the larger changes being wrought in Chinese society and foreign affairs in the latter half of the 19\(^{th}\) century. Even after his death, Zeng's "ghost continued to haunt the Chinese political world."\(^{73}\) Several of the cases covered in this dissertation will further explore just how important Zeng's legacy was for China.

China's Military Forces during the Sino-French War

Partially as a result of the dynasty's attempts to hinder localized accumulations of military power, China's national military forces were rather weak in this conflict. There were essentially two national forces at this time. The older force was the Eight Banners (八旗軍), the organizational and genealogical descendants of the predominantly ethnically Manchu forces that overthrew the ethnically Han Chinese Ming Dynasty rulers in the 17\(^{th}\) century. For a variety of reasons\(^{74}\) this force's fighting power declined quickly, and "soon became an expensive, cumbersome and almost useless haven of vested interest."\(^{75}\) By the 1860s, "Not only could the Westerners, with efficient military technology and training, defeat the Banner soldiers; so could ordinary farmers."\(^{76}\) Banner soldiers thus played only a very small role in the Sino-French War.

The newer of the two national forces was the Army of the Green Standard, which was similar in organizational structure to the Banner forces but was composed exclusively of Chinese soldiers.\(^{77}\) These forces retained their fighting power much longer than the Banners did, but they were also quite weak as early as the end of the 18\(^{th}\) century.\(^{78}\) They thus played a role in much of the fighting during the Sino-French War, but were not central to any of the social or political dynamics I discuss in this dissertation.

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\(^{72}\) Hsieh, “Tseng Kuo-Fan, A Nineteenth Century Confucian General,” 1.
\(^{73}\) Ibid.
\(^{74}\) In one telling, for instance, "The Banner garrison as a military and administrative unit gradually deteriorated because the quality of training and administration, as well as the criteria for promotion and recruitment, became dependent in large part on the moral character of the officers in charge rather than on enforced professional standards or a system of checks and balances." Im, “The Rise and Decline of the Eight Banner Garrisons in the Ch’ing Period (1644-1911),” 112.
\(^{75}\) Smith, “Chinese Military Institutions in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, 1850-1860,” 123.
\(^{76}\) Im, “The Rise and Decline of the Eight Banner Garrisons in the Ch’ing Period (1644-1911),” 121.
\(^{77}\) With some exceptions at low levels. Wade, “The Army of the Chinese Empire,” 252.
\(^{78}\) Ralston, Importing the European Army, Chapter 5.
In order to deal with the numerous rebellions and foreign incursions that occurred after the decline of both of these national forces, therefore, the Qing government was forced to adopt innovative approaches. The response that coalesced involved the militarization of local Qing society and the development of so-called "local armies" or militia by prominent holders of civil examination degrees. Each province had its own set of military (勇营 or yung-ying) and militia (團練 or t’uan-lien) forces, in addition to a small number of "braves" (勇). In addition, two major "regional armies" — the Xiang Army (湘军) and the Huai Army (淮军) — developed by prominent literati officials were available to the dynasty. The Xiang Army was most prominent during the Taiping rebellion in the middle of the 19th century, while Huai forces played a prominent role in the Sino-French War, as I show in Chapter 4.

Taken together, this setup means that Qing China fought the French using a "hub-and-spoke" constellation of military forces. Military forces like these all fought for the central government during this war, but while they were often ordered to coordinate among themselves, they were not institutionally integrated with each other. They were substantially independent, but because they were loyal to their leaders and their leaders remained loyal to China's rulers, they served as "Chinese" military forces. As Philip Kuhn put it in his classic study of local militarization in this time period, "the Chinese state...was enabled to survive because significant segments of the elite identified the dynasty's interests with their own and took the lead in suppressing the dynasty's domestic enemies." This is in fact one reason the Sino-French War is a good war for testing my research question about commanders' decision-making processes — it offers multiple cases of decision making in varied organizations within a single wartime context. This organizational setup is also similar to some modern alliance commands; in Afghanistan, for instance, the major alliance partners were assigned "areas of operations" within which they had substantial operational autonomy within the larger US-led command structure.

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79 Kuhn, Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China. Edward McCord agrees with Kuhn that these changes occurred, but unlike Kuhn he argues that they were temporary. “Militia and Local Militarization in Late Qing and Early Republican China.”
82 Kuhn, Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China, 7.
83 International Security Assistance Force, “ISAF Placemat.” Furthermore, the US-led command structure in this conflict has been criticized as lacking unity. Hope, “Unity of Command in Afghanistan: A Forsaken Principle of War.”
Sources

In order to evaluate commanders' assessments of their orders appropriateness and their command centrisity, I relied primarily on personal texts, including individual correspondence, internal government documents, military communiqués, media reports, and official pronouncements. For each case there are generally hundreds or thousands of pages each of these kinds of sources in classical Chinese — many have been published, while others I gathered from archives in Beijing and Taiwan. In conjunction with contemporary and historical secondary analyses, these sources have allowed me to reconstruct each commander's role, place them in relational and historical context, explain their judgment of the relevant order's appropriateness, and weigh the strength of their identification with the emperor's military command authority.

To examine commanders' social network positions and test for brokerage, wherever possible I gathered and coded detailed data on year-by-year changes in commanders' official positions and less formal ties from sources such as classmate lists, local military organizational histories, private correspondence, family histories, and biographical databases. Qing China was perhaps unique in the voluminous data it preserved on officials' careers, biographies, and writings. For three of my cases, I have therefore constructed a novel egocentric database of social network connections containing hundreds of nodes (individuals) and connections, allowing me to trace changes in both the structure of their social networks (brokerage) and the content of their social networks (command centrisity) from year to year in great detail. In my final case, for which the available data did not lend itself to a formal network analysis, I relied on detailed readings of his own diary, local officials' comments about him, internal government discussions of him, and comments from European observers to triangulate the nature of his brokerage position.

[Relevance section omitted for brevity here; it will be covered in my talk.]
Chapter 2: Theory

"It is necessary to take the lead in steadying ideals and beliefs, to unswervingly maintain the Party's leadership over the military...to strictly maintain political discipline and political rules, and to forever obey and follow the Party." - Xi Jinping speech to PLA troops in Xi'an, 17 February 2015.\textsuperscript{84}

"There are some roads not to follow; some troops not to strike; some cities not to assault; and some ground which should not be contested. There are occasions when the commands of the sovereign need not be obeyed." - Sun Tzu\textsuperscript{85}

\textbf{Research Question}

This project attempts to expand our understanding of the dynamics of disobedience and obedience in war by asking \textbf{how individual commanders at war respond to their orders}. As noted briefly above, existing work often de-emphasizes such commanders' agency or subsumes their individual choices into explanations of group-level (aggregate) behavior.\textsuperscript{86} In contrast, I emphasize the fact that even when at war, commanders maintain a substantial, important degree of latitude in their choices about how to respond to orders from their superiors. While it often goes unexplored, this kind of latitude is in fact implicitly acknowledged in most existing work on military organizations — for instance, discussions of the need to maintain cohesion,\textsuperscript{87} inculcate

\textsuperscript{84} Emphasis added, translation mine. Original Chinese text: "要带头坚定理想信念，毫不动摇坚持党对军队的绝对领导，深入学习党的创新理论，弘扬延安精神等优良传统，严守政治纪律和政治规矩，永远听党的话、跟党走". Cao Zhi 曹智, Fan Yongqiang 樊永强, and Zhang Yuqing 张玉清, "Xi Jinping Chunjie Qianxi Shicha Kanwang Zhu Xi'an Budui 习近平春节前夕视察看望驻西安部队.”

\textsuperscript{85} Emphasis added. Tzu and Griffith, \textit{The Art of War}, 111–12.

\textsuperscript{86} In other words, this kind of work focuses on pressures that operate on groups to make certain behaviors within a group more likely. In this conception, individuals may have latitude to choose how to respond, but the drivers of their behaviors are theorized as acting on the group identification, rather than each of them personally. For instance, Chenoweth et al find that such "group-level attributes" are less useful for explaining violence than are uncertainty and threat perceptions. \textit{Rethinking Violence}, 14.

\textsuperscript{87} Castillo, \textit{Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion}. 
professionalism, or train effective leaders all implicitly acknowledge how individuals can choose to, respectively, undermine organizational cohesion, act "unprofessionally," or abdicate their leadership responsibilities. In other words, the very pursuit of research on how to prevent these kinds of individual choices, ironically, highlights facts that most militaries would simply rather not discuss; individuals often do not act "cohesively," "professionally," or "effectively" from the perspective of the military organization. While commanders are in general quite likely to obey, they also maintain the choice to exit their roles in the military or pursue a variety of more or less dramatic strategies for avoiding obedience, including foot-dragging, reinterpretation, and suicide. For commanders at war obedience may be probable, but disobedience and resistance in all their forms remain eminently possible.

Scope

This study is, as mentioned in Chapter 1 above, intended to build a general theory of wartime behavior. However, its scope is bounded by the four primary components of the research question it poses: its focus on responses to clear orders, its focus on wartime responses to such orders, its focus on individuals, and its focus on the process of responding to orders rather than specific outcomes. I turn to brief discussions of each below.

[Literature Review: Decision Making in Military Organizations]

The academic literature focusing on processes of decision making and change in military organizations generally concerns itself with two basic themes: (1) achieving civilian dominance over the military; and (2) military effectiveness. I elaborate on each in separate sections below,

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88 The classic work on military professionalism is Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*. See also Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 1960. For a critique of the civil-military literature's focus on the concept of professionalism, see Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique."

89 Strachan, "Training, Morale and Modern War."

90 "Military disintegration is a story that, despite journalistic forays and the occasional historical study, most would prefer to ignore." Watson, *When Soldiers Quit*, 2.

91 Individuals in general have been shown to be generally likely to obey authority. For experimental evidence of this tendency, see Milgram, "Behavioral Study of Obedience."; Milgram, "Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority." This was also shown to be the case in an empirical study of the Spanish civil war, where "subordinated [military personnel] tended to follow the side chosen by their senior officers." La Parra Perez, "The Spanish Civil War: A New Institutional Interpretation of the Social Order and Military Factions During the Second Republic (1931-1939)." This has also been noted in studies of poor people's movements in the United States; see Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, 323. Soldiers, too, "can display a sheep-like docility under heavy fire." Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 44.
then highlight some of the limitations in these literatures that this dissertation attempts to address.

**Civilian Supremacy**

Civil-military relations remains the most prominent framework through which to study military organizations, and in many ways it remains rooted in the insights laid out in Samuel Huntington's massively influential *The Soldier and the State* in 1957. Huntington emphasized the distinctness of civilian and military spheres and the importance of achieving "objective," stable civilian control over the military by developing professionalism in individual members of the military organization.\(^92\) His work has served as the touchstone for an enormous literature focused on explaining the interactions between national militaries and their civilian masters — with a special focus on how to constrain the military — including the determinants of military coups,\(^93\) instances of civil-military "friction,"\(^94\) military influence in politics,\(^95\) the likelihood of military defection,\(^96\) the formation of military doctrine,\(^97\) and the likelihood of military support for unrest or rebellion.\(^98\) Put another way, research on civil-military relations focuses on answering

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\(^92\) As opposed to "subjective" control, which he argues is rooted in ordinary political contestation and thus less durable. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 83–84.


questions about when and why militaries obey their civilian masters: "Who will guard the guardians?"  

This literature speaks to questions about obedience and disobedience insofar as it explains how military actors — usually conceived of as corporate entities — respond to civilian authority. For example, some scholars have argued that militaries are most likely to obey civilians in cases where external threats are high, because civilians and the military have broader shared interests in such situations. Others argue that military obedience to civilians is driven by factors internal to the military, including training, organizational attributes, cohesion, or social representativeness. Still another body of work broadly argues that characteristics of civilian society, such as the attractiveness of its institutions, regime type, or quality of leadership determine how likely such a society is to have "good" civil-military relations in which the military obeys its orders from civilians.

However, the basic categorizations imposed by the term "civil-military relations" obscure the complex dynamics critical to understanding when, why, and how individual commanders disobey their orders. Members of a military organization do not sever their ties with the "outside

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99 Feaver, “Civil-Military Relations,” 211.
100 Huntington, The Soldier and the State; Desch, Civilian Control of the Military; Mcmahon and Slantchev, “The Guardianship Dilemma”; Staniland, “Explaining Civil-Military Relations in Complex Political Environments.”
102 Castillo, Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion.
104 Kadercan, “Strong Armies, Slow Adaptation”; King, “The Existence of Group Cohesion in the Armed Forces A Response to Guy Siebold”; Castillo, Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion; Shils and Janowitz, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II”;
105 Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymourn, “A Plague of Initials.”
world" — they remain children, husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, friends, classmates, and citizens even as they fulfill the responsibilities imposed by their military roles.\textsuperscript{108} This means that explanations of military obedience rooted in a corporatist conception of "the military," in which the organization has a more or less coherent set of interests, are unlikely to fully capture the dynamics that drive individual responses to orders. Individuals may choose to obey their superior commanders for any number of reasons, including identification with the military but also potentially including motivations like greed, cost-benefit calculations, rage, friendship, or self-preservation.

Work on civil-military relations is also limited by its origins in (and continuing focus on) democratic political theory and Western cases in which civil and military realms are relatively distinct.\textsuperscript{109} Even in such ideal cases, the clarity of distinctions between civilians and the military waxes and wanes; in the US, for instance, "at the most senior policymaking levels, the civil-military distinction is blurry and only awkwardly fits the neat categories of classical civil-military relations theory," and in less ideal cases the distinction can fall apart entirely.\textsuperscript{110} In Cuba under Castro, for instance, "there was no basis on which to distinguish between military and civilian authorities,"\textsuperscript{111} while in China after the Cultural Revolution, "military elites [were] also party elites...to analyse 'party-military relations' in dichotomous terms is misleading...The question mark surrounding Party leadership so effectively obfuscates civil-military relations in China as to render Huntington's model of professionalism as an index of civilian control all but meaningless."\textsuperscript{112} Existing conceptualisations of civil-military relations thus both obscure the role of individual agency and attempt to impose categories that may not fit some of the cases in which we are most interested.

\textit{Effectiveness}

The determinants of military effectiveness addresses two of the most important challenges military organizations are thought to face. First, the individual members of a military must coherently respond to threats. "In practice, much is delegated to units in the field, but always

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\textsuperscript{109} Feaver, “Civil-Military Relations.”

\textsuperscript{110} Feaver and Gelpi, \textit{Choosing Your Battles}, 3.

\textsuperscript{111} Albright, “Comparative Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations,” 558.

\textsuperscript{112} Paltiel, “PLA Allegiance on Parade,” 784, 788–89. China's military may be "professionalizing" in such a way as to make existing frameworks more useful, though the problem of explaining other cases in which the distinction is unclear remains. See Saunders and Kardon, “Reconsidering the PLA as an Interest Group.”
\end{flushright}
within the supreme command's general directives and always subject to be resumed by it should occasion arise...This centralization of authority derives from the basic object of the army — in military parlance it exists 'to be fought' by its commanders and for this it must respond to their commands as a single unit."113 Lacking such organizational cohesion, a military is little better than a well-armed mob.114 Scholars have therefore investigated both how to create such cohesion through training and socialization as well as why such cohesion (assumed to already be present) breaks down.115 Cohesion and its breakdowns are both thought to be rooted in factors such as institutional structure,116 material conditions,117 ideology,118 social ties,119 the relationship with civilian authority,120 the quality of leadership,121 or rational utility maximization.122

Second, assuming the requisite level of cohesion can be achieved, militaries must effectively address the challenges they face, both on the battlefield and off. Regime type,123 organizational capacity,124 civil-military relations,125 doctrine, training,126 co-ethnic ties,127 culture,128 civilian

113 Finer, The Man on Horseback, 7.
114 Indeed, in many cases militaries exist as such only in name. As military historian John Keegan notes, "Many armies, beginning as crowds, remain crowdlike throughout their existence. The great medieval hosts, tenuously bound together by links of kinship and obligation, were formidable only by reason of their size and because of the very variable military skills of their individual members." Keegan, The Face of Battle, 175.
115 Most work on cohesion studies how to create it, rather than when it breaks down, but the removal or absence of any factor that supports or creates cohesion should implicitly undermine cohesion.
120 Huntington, The Soldier and the State; Castillo, Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion; Brooks, Shaping Strategy; Avant, “The Institutional Sources of Military Doctrine”; Avant, Political Institutions and Military Change; Schiff, “Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered”; Talmadge, “Different Threats, Different Militaries.”
122 Albrecht and Ohl, “Exit, Resistance, Loyalty.”
125 Snyder, “Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984.”
126 Biddle, Military Power; Brooks and Stanley, Creating Military Power; Catignani, “Coping with Knowledge.”
society, and strategic assessment have all been found to influence military organizations' effectiveness against an enemy and in adapting to new challenges like technology or innovative tactics. However, there remains little agreement on how to define "military effectiveness" on the battlefield, even as studies of innovation, for instance, often define "successful" innovations on the basis of whether or not the changes under consideration improved battlefield effectiveness.

Both of these bodies of research have limitations, however. Studies of military cohesion have led to important advances in our understandings of both how to create cohesive militaries and of the drivers behind the numerous behaviors that can undermine such cohesion. However, both these bodies of work focus on characteristics inherent to entire military organizations or to groups within the military, and this "group-level" focus creates analytical blind spots. Studies of group behavior can rarely speak directly to individual motivations or decision-making processes, for instance, while studies of specific kinds of breakdowns in cohesion (such as surrender or mutiny) underemphasize the ways in which all such behaviors are linked through the ways in which they affect the military organization. Therefore, allowing for the fact that the interests of individual members of the military organization vary substantially, both within and across groups as well as over time, will help improve our understanding of the nature of organizational cohesion in military organizations and of the linkages between different types of disobedience.

Similarly, work on how militaries change in response to threats relies, in essence, on measuring military responses against a Platonic "optimal" strategy. Regarding characteristics of the military organization, for example, successful adaptations are seen as allowing the military to effectively meet a new threat or utilize a new tool, "appropriate" military doctrine is thought to enable the successful attainment of national security goals, leadership that effectively prevents despair is thought to help prevent mutiny, and successfully adopting new military innovations

128 Brooks and Stanley, Creating Military Power; Farrell, Osinga, and Russell, Military Adaptation in Afghanistan.
129 Rosen, “Military Effectiveness.”
130 Brooks, Shaping Strategy.
131 Alastair Iain Johnston has noted that his work on socialization in international relations underscores "the risks of starting one's analysis by assuming fixed preferences. Such an assumption not only rules out plausible alternative motives for human political behaviour, but also hinders thinking about motivation, behaviour, and social context in an endogenous, interactive fashion." Cultural Realism, 198.
132 Theo Farrell and his coauthors, for instance, highlight the possibility of a "failure to adapt," implying a consequentialist understanding of adaptation. Military Adaptation in Afghanistan, 4.
(whether technological or organizational) is thought to increase a state's military effectiveness vis-a-vis its potential opponents.\footnote{Horowitz, The Diffusion of Military Power.} Military behavior, too, is commonly argued to be driven by "strategic" concerns, meaning military organizations are thought to act as units attempting to maximize their rational utility, whether in choices to target civilians\footnote{Downes, Targeting Civilians in War.} or adopt different strategies.\footnote{Mearsheimer, Conventional Deterrence; Reiter and Meek, “Determinants of Military Strategy, 1903–1994”; Friedman, “Cumulative Dynamics and Strategic Assessment: U.S. Military Decision Making in Iraq, Vietnam, and the American Indian Wars”; Lyall and Wilson, “Rage Against the Machines”; Ron, “Ideology in Context.”}

Improving military effectiveness is unquestionably important, but theorizing the best way to achieve it by positing a "successful" outcome and then measuring how effectively actors reach the outcome creates two problems. First, an analysis that starts from outcomes and searches for their causes obscures the processes of experimentation, guesswork, gut reactions, and selfishness, for instance, that are all pervasive in histories of war. Second, it overstates the degree to which individual commanders (and scholars) are able to penetrate Clausewitz's infamous "fog of war,"\footnote{This saying is generally attributed to Clausewitz, but is in fact a paraphrase of his actual description of war, which says, "War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty." Clausewitz et al., On War, 117.} as Richard Betts has argued, correctly predicting the consequences of one's actions in war is far more difficult than many scholars of strategy commonly acknowledge.\footnote{Betts, “Is Strategy an Illusion?”} Furthermore, metrics for success can vary. As Eliot Cohen puts it, "The test of ultimate success, although one of the most important tests, is not the only one. No one can judge final results, for, as Churchill commented in his biography of his ancestor the first duke of Marlborough, 'It is not given to princes, statesmen, and captains to pierce the mysteries of the future, and even the most penetrating gaze reaches only conclusions which, however, seemingly vindicated at a given moment, are inexorably effaced by time.'"\footnote{Cohen, Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime, 174.} From this perspective, one general's strategic choices can be another's idiocy. This is another reason why a conceptual approach that emphasizes the processes through which commanders respond to orders — rather than specific outcomes — is called for.

\footnote{Horowitz, The Diffusion of Military Power.}{\footnote{Downes, Targeting Civilians in War.}{\footnote{Mearsheimer, Conventional Deterrence; Reiter and Meek, “Determinants of Military Strategy, 1903–1994”; Friedman, “Cumulative Dynamics and Strategic Assessment: U.S. Military Decision Making in Iraq, Vietnam, and the American Indian Wars”; Lyall and Wilson, “Rage Against the Machines”; Ron, “Ideology in Context.”}{\footnote{This saying is generally attributed to Clausewitz, but is in fact a paraphrase of his actual description of war, which says, "War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty." Clausewitz et al., On War, 117.}{\footnote{Betts, “Is Strategy an Illusion?”}{\footnote{Cohen, Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime, 174.}}}}}
Limitations

The above discussions should help clarify some of the reasons why the existing literatures on military decision making and change do not fully address the varied causes, forms, and consequences of individual military commanders' choices to obey or disobey their orders. The consequentialist approach adopted in much of this literature obscures the varied bases on which individuals can choose to pursue identical behavioral outcomes,\textsuperscript{141} while also papering over the fundamental uncertainty and confusion that characterizes the processes of warfighting. As Elizabeth Wood notes, "war may radically change the pace of existing processes, redirect them, or alter their consequences, with perhaps irreversible effects."\textsuperscript{142} Particularly in cases wherein such uncertainty makes the downstream consequences of a commander's (or a military's) actions in war impossible to predict, it may not even make sense to talk of strategy at all.\textsuperscript{143} A theoretical framework that highlights individual-level drivers of behavior, directs attention to the centrality of experimentation, failure, dissent, and uncertainty in war, and focuses on process rather than outcome thus has the potential to make valuable contributions to our understanding of the dynamics of war. Below, I detail the mechanisms of my theory in an attempt to provide such a framework.

A Relational Approach

My starting point for developing such a framework is closely related to the problems of limited rationality and perspective I highlighted in the discussion of Bao Chao's case above in the introduction to this chapter. I take a strongly relational perspective, which is rooted in the insight that all individuals are embedded in networks of social relations.\textsuperscript{144} This means that, for my purposes here, individuals are not independent actors responding in a straightforwardly rational way to external stimuli; instead, they should be viewed as actors embedded in network structures of social relations, which influence their characteristics and actions to such a degree that "to construe them as independent is a grievous misunderstanding."\textsuperscript{145} Using a relational logic, neither

\textsuperscript{141} As one study of the bases of decision making puts it, "...the underlying processes in which an individual engages when he adopts induced behaviour may be different, even though the result overt behaviour may appear the same." Analyzing process rather than outcomes is thus crucial to improving our understanding of war. Kelman, "Compliance, Identification, and Internalization," 52–53.


\textsuperscript{143} As Richard Betts puts it, "Strategy is not always an illusion, but it often is." “Is Strategy an Illusion?,” 46.

\textsuperscript{144} For a lucid introduction to the logics of this kind of relational perspective, see Hadden, Networks in Contention.

\textsuperscript{145} Granovetter, “Economic Action and Social Structure,” 482.
an assumption of individual independence nor an assumption that there is an objective perspective located "external" to and “independent of” social connections can hold. Social ties both constitute and convey information to individual actors.

This perspective underlines why it often does not make sense to assume that individual commanders would respond in any uniformly "rational" way to external stimuli; instead, commanders make decisions as relational actors fulfilling varied roles defined by the networks of social ties in which they are enmeshed. "We do not make unitarily conceived moves that are subsequently interpretable from multiple perspectives. We make multiply conceived (framed) and constructed moves that are interpretable from multiple perspectives." Social ties thus both convey and refract the information that commanders use to construct their "cognitive maps" or "models of the world,” their theories about the efficacy of violence, their assessments of the wartime environment, and their views of what a good order is. In other words, our understanding of the world is colored by the people with whom we experience it and through whom we receive information about it.

Furthermore, military orders must also refract through variable configurations of social connections to reach their target. As a military commander, for instance, receiving an order from an experienced elder statesman means something very different than receiving one from a green recruit who is a decade younger. Even clear, specific orders, therefore, acquire different shades of meaning as they flow through varied configurations of social network connections to reach individuals in different social positions. This means we cannot understand how individual commanders will respond to their orders without understanding the structures of social connections that channel their development, identities, and choices.

Delving into how the content and forms of these connections influence responses to orders helps me avoid assuming that all actors understand orders the same way — commanders receiving their orders will judge them using criteria that vary both across individuals and for the

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147 Axelrod, *Structure of Decision*.
148 As Herbert Simon noted, "The decision-maker's model of the world encompasses only a minute fraction of all the relevant characteristics of the real environment, and his inferences extract only a minute fraction of all the information that is present even in his model." My intervention here is to focus on the fact that it is social ties that structure the limits of this information as they convey it to decision makers. Simon, “Theories of Decision-Making in Economics and Behavioral Science,” 272.
149 For instance, the most prominent theory of strategic culture defines it as a system of symbols that formulates "concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs." Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 36.
same individual across time. Privileging the role of social connections also allows for more nuanced conceptualizations of civilian and military roles, because in a relational world they must be seen as enmeshed in and derived from variable configurations of personal ties.

Furthermore, in contrast to existing literature on cohesion, this relational approach highlights how such social bonds can vary not only in degree but also in type and focus — there is more than one way to make a cohesive military, just as there are any number of ways in which such cohesion could break down. A relational perspective, for instance, highlights cases in which cohesion can be counterproductive from the military organization's perspective — the relationships most important to a given commander may not be those with his superior officers or even inside the military organization, and a commander whose social ties are tightly bound up in a cohesive group that centers outside the military may be less likely to obey. In contrast to the literature's prevailing focus on group-level attributes and behavior, this relational approach highlights both how individual relationships impact decision-making processes and how social connections can affect the very bases on which the all-important metric of military effectiveness is assessed.

**Theory**

Within this relational framework, I argue that two factors drive the ways commanders at war respond to inappropriate orders: (1) the degree to which the commander serves as a *broker* within the structure of his most important social network connections; and (2) the strength of the commander's identification with the military command authority (whether organization or individual) that issued the order, which I refer to as *command centrism*. In keeping with the relational perspective described above, each of these drivers incorporates social mechanisms: brokerage is a function of the structures formed by a commander's social network ties; and command centrism is a function of the social distance from and the strength of identification with command.

My theory of commanders' responses to orders in war starts with the argument that disobedience becomes possible only once a commander judges orders to be inappropriate — in other words, if a commander feels an order to be appropriate, he will obey. Since unquestioning obedience is too often assumed and I am most concerned in this project with disobedience and transgression, my theory focuses on explaining commanders' responses to orders they have
judged to be inappropriate. However, commanders do not always disobey such orders — in fact, inappropriate orders are often obeyed.¹⁵¹ In cases where a commander has judged his orders to be inappropriate, his social network connections and the strength of his identification with command interact to determine whether he obeys or chooses one of three kinds of disobedience. In the sections below, I explain command centrism and brokerage, and show how command centrism and brokerage interact to lead to four possible sets of responses to inappropriate orders.

**Command Centrism**

*Command centrism* here refers to the strength of a commander's identification with the command authority that issued the order under consideration — put slightly differently, the degree to which a commander's social identification "centers" on the authority of the source of his orders (whether the president, a higher-ranked officer, or a theater command).¹⁵² Drawing on social identity theory, I argue that such identification with command leads to "activities that are congruent with the identity" — in this case, the source of the commander's orders — as well as to "support for institutions that embody the entity," meaning the relevant command structure.¹⁵³ Inculcating this kind of identification with the military is an explicit goal of initial training: "the process of identification with the military, going hand in hand with the internalization of its demands, its norms, its values, is yet one of the main objectives of continuous military training."¹⁵⁴ Acting in congruency with command and supporting military institutions will often mean obeying one's orders, even when they are thought to be inappropriate, but as I show below, certain types of disobedience and transgression can also work to "support" the military.

The intuition here is similar to that of the appropriateness logic above in the sense that conflict between different identifications creates tension, but as a mechanism command centrism is distinct in two ways. First, the locus of attention is different. In the assessment of appropriateness, commanders are assessing *orders* — while this assessment can implicate the judgment of one's superior officer, it is eminently possible to disapprove of an order while nonetheless primarily identifying with that officer and the military hierarchy supporting him.

¹⁵¹ There are many reasons individuals choose to obey authority. See Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*; Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*.

¹⁵² I deliberately use the verb "identify" to describe this type of association in an attempt to avoid the reification and static nature of social groupings implied by the term "identity." Brubaker and Cooper, "Beyond ‘identity.”’


Command centrism assesses a commander's identification with the source of any given set of orders. Second, the scope of potentially relevant identifications differs. In the case of appropriateness, orders can theoretically implicate virtually any part of an individual's social world, but in the case of command centrism, only identifications that bear on the military command structure or the management of violence can compete with command identification. It is thus, in a sense, more difficult to view command as contested than it is to see an order as inappropriate, since fewer identity groupings can effectively wield military authority.

This perspective on the importance of subordinate officers' relationships with and views of command authority draws on theoretical insights from both social identity theory and work on military command and training. In his overview of research on social identity theory, for instance, Rupert Brown notes that "identification itself has been found to be a primary predictor of propensity to participate in social movements for change;"\(^{155}\) especially since, like many of the most radical social movements, "bravery to the point of foolishness" is essential to participation in many military actions and organizations.\(^{156}\)

Conversely, one of the simplest claims of social identity theory holds that identity differences can cause conflict between members of two (or more) different identity groupings, which helps to explain the typical focus of military training on severing or decreasing the salience of extramilitary ties\(^{157}\) — militaries want their members to identify strongly and (ideally) solely with the military organization and thus support its goals. Similarly, theorists of command and leadership argue that leaders should issue clear orders,\(^{158}\) that subordinates must both understand and support clearly conveyed "command intent,"\(^{159}\) and that support for superiors often relies on superiors' personal characteristics such as emotional control and professionalism.\(^{160}\) Implicit in all such work is the argument that the relationship between subordinate and superior command authority is critical to making a military organization effective; if this kind of identification does not dominate subordinates' decision-making processes, they are less likely to support the source of their orders.


\(^{157}\) In China's People's Liberation Army, for instance, "Privates are not allowed to marry, must live in the barracks, and are discouraged from having their family visit." Blasko, The Chinese Army Today, 59. See also Donna Winslow on recruits to the Canadian Airborne, in which "initiates' former identity is stripped away and they are set apart and made very similar to one another." “Rites of Passage and Group Bonding in He Canadian Airborne,” 429.

\(^{158}\) Vego, Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice, IX-54.

\(^{159}\) Alberts and Hayes, “Power to the Edge”; Vego, Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice, X-19.

\(^{160}\) Ben-Ari, Mastering Soldiers.
Testing how strongly individuals identify with different social groups is a substantial empirical challenge; ideally we would be able to have our subjects explain such identifications in their own words, ask them to weigh their identifications against each other, and then verify them independently. Given the contested, constantly shifting nature of such group identifications, though, even such personal testimonies are likely to be unreliable unless somehow collected in the heat of battle. Furthermore, this kind of survey is not normally feasible.

I therefore use two sets of proxy measures for the degree to which a commander identifies with a military command authority. First, how strong does the command authority seem? Second, how distant is the authority from the recipient of the orders? Distance makes command appear less strong and can substantially undermine a commander's identification with a source of command authority.

The strength of the command authority can be measured using a variety of indicators. On the command side, one of the clearest is whether or not the command authority is divided. Divisions are often thought to reduce the strength of organizations.\(^{161}\) In the civil-military realm, for instance, Deborah Avant has demonstrated how divisions among civilian authorities make it more difficult to monitor and control military actors.\(^{162}\) Contested or unclear military command structures, too, are likely to make it more difficult to monitor and control subordinate members of the military organization.\(^{163}\) Similarly, the scope of the material resources on which the command authority can draw is an indicator of its strength.

On the commander's side, indicators of the strength his identification with the command authority can be drawn from the commander's other interactions with the same authority. Does he have a record of obedience? Has he acted professionally in previous interactions with the same authority? Has the same authority rewarded him in the past, and if so, how often and to what degree? How long or how many times has he worked with the same command authority?


\(^{162}\) “Divided civilian institutions not only enhance the possibilities for policy disagreements; they may also encourage distrust between different branches of government over the control of bureaucracy,” Avant, _Political Institutions and Military Change_, 13. See also Avant, “The Institutional Sources of Military Doctrine”; Avant, “From Mercenary to Citizen Armies.”

\(^{163}\) By, for instance, leading to unclear conveyance of "command intent" to subordinates. See, e.g., Vego, _Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice_, X-19.
How many levers does the authority have on him (in network terms, how much of his primary social networks have been "captured" by the command authority)?

A commander's distance from a command authority can be either physical or social. Physical distance matters primarily due to its correlation with the rate of information exchange between command and commander. *Ceteris paribus*, the further away a commander ranges from the command authority in question, the less frequently the two sides are likely to communicate.\footnote{As Mayfair Yang notes in her study of social relationships in the Chinese context, "Distance can weaken the bond of 'familiarity' and obligation." Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China*, 115.} Since information exchanged through such communication is the only way a commander can be confident in the strength of his identification with the command authority, distance and time will tend to weaken this identification in relation to those more immediately relevant to the situation at hand.

Social distance between leaders and led in militaries varies, and while potentially helpful in terms of maintaining a hierarchy,\footnote{Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, 7.} it is also thought to create problems such as decreased fighting effectiveness\footnote{Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power,” 95–96.} or increased mistrust between superiors and subordinates.\footnote{Caraccilo, “Micromanagement Can Cripple a Command.”} It thus is likely to diminish the strength of a commander's identification with any given command authority, and it can be measured in a variety of ways. Fewer social network ties between commander and the command authority would indicate greater social distance, as would a greater material independence on the command's part, a lower frequency of communication, and lower dependence on the military command authority (e.g. through a decreased need for logistical support).

The command centrism measure thus in many ways mirrors less explicitly theoretical discussions of commanders' loyalty and honor, while also highlighting the fact that loyalties can both be divided and vary in strength. As I attempt to demonstrate in the remainder of this dissertation, adopting such an approach offers many analytical advantages. It also, however, extracts costs. In addition to the empirical challenges associated with testing for command centrism, this approach sets "fairly clear limits as to what might reasonably be expected of theory,"\footnote{Schmidt, “Foreign Military Presence and the Changing Practice of Sovereignty,” 828.} both because a military identity "is no more than a relatively stable construction in an
ongoing process of social activity," and also because individuals move strategically through social networks to construct, maintain, and change their identifications with social groups, including the military. "Networks convey identities, but we also err when we succumb to the convenience of treating social network positions as simply determinative of identities. That would be to shortchange agency." Individuals can choose to alter or even jettison an identification with the military — albeit under the varying constraints of strength and distance discussed above — so to a limited degree their command centrism is a matter of choice. (I examine this aspect of command centrism more in Chapter 6 on Liu Yongfu.)

Brokerage

The second driver of commanders' responses to inappropriate orders that I have identified is social network brokerage. Recall that from a relational perspective, all individuals move through webs of social ties called social networks; individuals both affect and are affected by these ties, and the social networks these ties constitute demonstrate a variety of emergent structural properties that can impact outcomes as diverse as rebel group effectiveness, innovation, trust, social influence, and the likelihood of violent conflict. These structural properties also affect individuals within the network unevenly in the short term, even though, as Padgett and Powell put it, "In the short run, actors create relations; in the long run, relations create actors."
War, like all social endeavors, is itself "fundamentally relational," and commanders engage in it while moving through dynamic configurations of social ties that span multiple domains (network domains might include, for example, military, kin, and school ties). Because responding to inappropriate orders during wartime can have such enormous consequences — punishment in the case of some types of disobedience, rewards for loyalty in the case of grudging obedience — the question of how well a commander thinks he will be able to deal with any such consequences is critical to determining his ultimate choice of response. Furthermore, because military organizations so often emphasize the importance of blind obedience, members socialized into such an organization will only see other kinds of responses as possible if they have some other source of perspective on their orders.

Brokerage is one structural property of networks that I show strongly impacts military commanders deciding how to respond to inappropriate orders. As an ideal type, a brokerage role occupies a position in which it serves as the sole connection between otherwise unconnected groups of people; in another prominent conceptualization, a broker bridges "structural holes" in a network of individuals. Occupying a brokerage position provides three advantages critical to a commander's response to inappropriate orders: (1) better access to information, (2) increased leverage (over others who depend on you to broker introductions, for instance), and (3) "a vision of options otherwise unseen." Being a broker thus makes one respectively better informed, more powerful, and, in a limited sense, more creative.

These benefits adhere at the individual level, and there is thus little reason to believe brokerage would operate differently for military commanders. To the contrary, there are at least

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178 On brokerage generally, see Burt, *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*; Burt, “The Contingent Value of Social Capital”; Burt, “The Network Structure Of Social Capital”; Burt, “Structural Holes and Good Ideas”; Burt, *Brokerage and Closure*; Burt, *Neighbor Networks: Competitive Advantage Local and Personal*; Hafner-Burton, Kahler, and Montgomery, “Network Analysis for International Relations”; Stovel, Golub, and Milgrom, “Stabilizing Brokerage”; Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties”; Bonacich, “A Theory of Middleman Minorities”; Marsden, “Restricted Access in Networks and Models of Power.” The ideal-typical form of brokerage described here is rarely seen in the wild; instead, one can be either more or less of a broker. A variety of measures have been developed to measure the degree to which one is a broker; the most prominent so far refers to the number of pairs of others within a given network for which the broker is the only possible connection. For an overview, see Stovel and Shaw, “Brokerage.”

179 Burt, “Structural Holes and Good Ideas,” 349. This is because brokers are exposed to a broader variety of factors associated with coherent social groups, including different people, identity conceptions, information, and norms. Since making decisions in social dilemmas (such as the case of an inappropriate order) "hinges on recognition—on matching features of the situation encountered to features of other situations that are already (at least partly) understood," and because brokers are likely to have access to a broader set of information, norms, and experiences, brokers see more options. Weber, Kopelman, and Messick, “A Conceptual Review of Decision Making in Social Dilemmas,” 282.

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three reasons to believe they might be especially important to commanders responding to inappropriate orders. First, the view of multiple options is precisely what makes disobedience possible; the typical military organization would prefer that commanders see no option besides obedience, but brokers are the least likely members of the organization to be so limited. Second, brokers' increased leverage makes them harder to replace and increases their influence, thus placing them in better positions to mitigate any consequences of disobedience. For example, a commander with extensive ties to the local population might be irreplaceable from the perspective of a higher-level commander due to his unique access to information about conditions on the ground. Third, brokers' better access to information means commanders in such positions are likely to feel they are better-informed about how far they can push their superiors, the likely consequences of disobedience, and potential avenues through which to control such consequences.

However, commanders who find themselves in brokerage roles also find themselves subject to strong constraints associated with such roles. The most important constraint for my purposes here is that they will be reluctant to discard this power. This means that once a commander achieves a brokerage position, she is unlikely to deliberately choose to alter her network by exiting her role in the military, because doing so would risk forfeiting the three benefits of brokerage described above — these kinds of changes are very difficult to predict, relying as they do on the network structure built by the reactions of dozens to hundreds of other individuals. For example, exiting the military as a conscientious objector could cut ties with one's most patriotic friends while presenting new opportunities for ties with peace activists, but it is nearly impossible to predict whether one will be socially "powerful" in a brokerage sense after making such a move. This means that a commander who becomes a broker will be less likely

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180 These, however, often diverge from legally prescribed punishments. As Jim Scott puts it, "it is no simple matter to determine just where compliance ends and resistance begins," and further, "It is also extremely rarely that officials of the state wish to publicise the insubordination. To do so would be to admit that their policy is unpopular..." *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, 289; 36.

181 As Albert Hirschman argued, "a member who wields (or thinks he wields) considerable power in an organization and is therefore convinced that he can get it 'back on track' is likely to develop a strong affection for the organization in which he is powerful." *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, 78.

182 Not only do the individuals that constitute networks attempt to act strategically to their own advantage, new individuals can both enter and exit any given network, and "New entrants contribute to shifts in patterns beyond the control of most of all participants." McLean, *The Art of the Network*, 226. Emphasis added.

183 Something similar indeed happened in the case of Dov Yermiya, who became famous in 1984 for publishing his critical account of the Israeli assault on a refugee camp during the 1982 Lebanon War in defiance of censorship laws. He was removed from his post in the military, thus cutting off many of his preexisting ties, but gained...
to exit his role in the military organization, but more likely to resist an order. Furthermore, ambitious individuals will often need to shed their brokerage roles before they are able to achieve the highest-level positions. Precisely because brokers sit at the edges of two different social groups, they are less likely to be completely trusted by either — brokerage is not the role "most conducive to a clear social identity," and such clarity is often necessary for one hoping to be promoted.\textsuperscript{184} For instance, in his description of Wesley Clark, David Halberstam pointed out that, "In the military, someone who was...able to go to different meetings and seem to please opposing constituencies, was not regarded with admiration; he was regarded with mistrust."\textsuperscript{185}

In general terms, therefore, brokerage will have a strong impact on how military commanders at war decide to respond to their orders. This begs a further question, however: which brokers matter the most? Given the dynamic, flexible nature of social networks, which are "built, rebuilt, sustained, and transformed across time,"\textsuperscript{186} the potential for recategorization, reclassification, and splitting of constantly changing social groups means that virtually anyone could be a broker, to some degree, between some groups. Furthermore, "the prevalence and character of brokerage is closely connected to the macro-level structure of a time or place;" in other words, the possibilities for brokerage rest in local context, in both temporal and physical senses.\textsuperscript{187} I address this challenge in two stages: first by carefully scoping the networks I analyze based on their potential relevance to politico-military authority and on their relevance to the orders under consideration; and second by adopting sociometric criteria to group actors within the networks defined by my scope conditions.

Because the scoping of each individual's network rests in the particularities of each case, I leave further explanation of this stage to each of the empirical chapters below. My adoption of sociometric criteria merits further explanation here, however, because it is rooted in my theory of the way brokerage affects all commanders, not in the particularities of any given case. As mentioned above, I argue that brokerage conveys three basic advantages to military commanders at war: better information, increased leverage, and a broader perspective. Since none of these advantages are rooted in the specific qualities of groups or attributes — for instance, the role of

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\textsuperscript{184}Quote from Podolny and Baron, “Resources and Relationships,” 674. See also McLean, The Art of the Network, 10.

\textsuperscript{185}Cohen, Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime, 202.

\textsuperscript{186}McLean, The Art of the Network, 7.

\textsuperscript{187}Stovel and Shaw, “Brokerage,” 153.
brokerage in my theory is not confined to its capability to support a mediation role, and thus does not depend on defining the groups being brokered by the two sides of the conflict — I simply use established tests for the strength of brokerage roles between any groups that form within the networks I examine. In short, because my theory of brokerage is focused primarily on the fact of brokerage providing informational and other advantages, the question of which groups a broker connects is not central here.188

While a variety of measures of brokerage have been developed, I rely on Freeman's relatively simple measure of "betweenness," for two reasons. First, unlike more recent measures of betweenness that require the analyst to identify social groups in order to measure brokerage between them, Freeman's measure is agnostic as to the existence and composition of any groups within the network being analyzed.189 Since in many cases — and perhaps especially in imperial China — actual social ties vary in how closely they are related to a priori identifiable social groups, I prefer not to impose groups on my data. Second, as Katherine Stovel and Lynette Shaw note in their review of brokerage concepts, "Political power is well described by the network concept of betweenness centrality (Freeman 1977), where an actor is more central (more powerful) the more she lies on a path between other pairs of actors."190 Since this kind of political power is precisely the mechanism that I argue would enable commanders to obey, I adopt betweenness centrality as my primary metric for brokerage here. I also, however, provide results from a variety of other tests to help demonstrate the robustness of my findings.

**Outcomes**

These two critical drivers of commanders' responses to inappropriate orders in war combine to produce four possible categories of outcomes, which together capture the broad variation in commanders' responses to such orders. (See Figure 1 below.) The simplest response to inappropriate orders is obedience. The other three possible responses are for a commander to refine her orders, to defy them, or to completely exit her military role. Each of these three latter possible responses encompasses a swath of behaviors that entail resistance to orders — many of

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188 As Gould and Fernandez note, "if the broker is seen as a diffuser of information bridging otherwise unconnected groups...then it might be appropriate to adopt some sociometric criterion to group actors." "Structures of Mediation," 99.
190 Stovel and Shaw, “Brokerage,” 149.
them could be termed "disobedience," though in some cases they have been viewed more positively. In the four sections below, I explain each of these categories of response in greater detail.

**Figure 2: Responses to Inappropriate Orders**

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<tr>
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<th>Broker</th>
<th>Not a Broker</th>
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<tr>
<td>Command Centric</td>
<td>Refine</td>
<td>Obey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Command Centric</td>
<td>Defy</td>
<td>Exit</td>
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**Obey**

**Obedience** includes any response intended to straightforwardly and promptly implement the orders received — this could include, for instance, direct obedience, delegation, or certain types of buck-passing (depending on the formulation of the orders). While this concept is not new, its place in this theory of responses to inappropriate orders raises a crucial but often underappreciated point: while the argument that commanders will obey orders they find to be appropriate verges on tautology, it is important to remember the fact that commanders often obey orders they find to be *inappropriate*. This is the dynamic described in the Chinese case at the beginning of this chapter: Bao Chao personally detested his order and also faced strong pressure from his subordinates to disobey it, but he nonetheless obeyed.

I argue this kind of response to an inappropriate order is most likely when a commander (1) lacks brokerage power and (2) sees command as uncontested. Put simply, commanders who lack the stronger leverage, better information, and broader perspective provided by brokerage are both less likely to conceive of alternatives to obedience and also less likely to expect they would be able to mitigate the risks of disobeying. Furthermore, commanders who feel themselves subject to a single, uncontested command authority — who identify primarily with command — are unlikely to consider disobedience or exit legitimate in the first place.

[Example omitted for the sake of brevity.]

**Exit**

The next category of responses to inappropriate orders occurs when a commander lacks brokerage power, like those who obey in the section above, but unlike such obedient officers is
not command centric: such officers exit their roles in the military organization. This can mean either exit from the military altogether, in the cases of suicide,\textsuperscript{191} desertion,\textsuperscript{192} defection,\textsuperscript{193} surrender,\textsuperscript{194} or outright rebellion,\textsuperscript{195} but it can also be limited to exit from the military role in which the orders were received, as in certain cases of resignation,\textsuperscript{196} self-wounding,\textsuperscript{197} or "staying quartered."\textsuperscript{198} The defining characteristic of this category of response to inappropriate orders is the change in both network position and military role, which together offer the prospect of, for instance, sidestepping punishment or improving one's structural position. Resigning a commission rather than obeying an order, for instance, is likely to anger one's superiors and sever important network connections.

Commanders who choose exit, similar to those who obey, lack the perspective and social power provided by a brokerage position, so they are less likely to disobey in ways that will expose them to retribution based on the responsibilities associated with their existing military role (the role in which they received their orders). However, because they are not command centric, they are much more comfortable resisting those orders.\textsuperscript{199} Because commanders in this category combine relatively weak identification with the military command authority — essentially, their loyalties are divided even while at war — with a relatively powerless social position — in other words, they are not constrained by a desire to maintain their brokerage power and thus are more willing to risk dramatic change in their social network positions — they

\textsuperscript{191} However, suicides that are the result of obedience do not constitute "exit" from the organization. See, e.g., Orbell and Morikawa, “An Evolutionary Account of Suicide Attacks”; Pape, \textit{Dying to Win}.
\textsuperscript{194} Grauer, “Why Do Soldiers Give Up?”
\textsuperscript{195} Rebellions can arise in many ways, of which an individual instance of disobedience is only one. I do not attempt to theorise how downstream consequences of disobedience like rebellion occur here; I only aim to point out the link. On rebellion, see especially Humphreys and Weinstein, "Who Fights?"; Parkinson, “Organizing Rebellion”; Perry, \textit{Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China. 1845-1945}; Petersen, \textit{Resistance and Rebellion}; Gates, “Recruitment and Allegiance The Microfoundations of Rebellion”; Kuhn, \textit{Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China}.
\textsuperscript{196} The appropriateness of this kind of behavior has been hotly debated in the US. See Feaver, “Should Senior Military Officers Resign in Protest If Obama Disregards Their Advice?”
\textsuperscript{198} Pion-Berlin, Esparza, and Grisham, “Staying Quartered Civilian Uprisings and Military Disobedience in the Twenty-First Century.”
\textsuperscript{199} This kind of dynamic finds support in some existing work on specific kinds of disobedience. In his recent work on surrender, for instance, Ryan Grauer finds that it is more likely if soldiers expect good treatment from their captors. Insofar as "good treatment" indicates a legitimate military authority, in my terms, this finding is consistent with my argument about contested command. “Why Do Soldiers Give Up?”
are most likely to move laterally and exit their previous roles or the military itself. Doing so allows them to resist their orders in such a way as to potentially improve their positions and mitigate the risk of punishment — many modern militaries, for instance, at least technically allow for resignation rather than obedience.

[Example omitted for the sake of brevity.]

Refine

The obey and exit categories of response to inappropriate orders both involve commanders who were not social network brokers, and the existence of an obey category squares with the common finding that "bad" orders will not always meet with resistance. The opposite seems to be true, in fact — military officers are in general quite likely to obey authority. As military historian John Keegan put it in his classic study of the personal experience of battle, "All being in the same boat, a ship's company generally does as its captain directs." "We know...that large bodies of men can display a sheep-like docility under heavy fire, often for hours at a time — the infantry...are reported to have stood for two hours under point-blank artillery fire at Borodino [during the Napoleonic Wars] 'during which the only movement was the stirring in the lines caused by falling bodies.'"

The question therefore becomes: What factor(s) spur commanders to overcome this tendency to obey military authority? Insofar as we view exit as a form of disobedience, a lack of command centrism is one such factor. The other factor is social network brokerage. My theory predicts that when commanders responding to inappropriate orders are brokers, they will always

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200 Holger Albrecht and Dorothy Ohl's recent analysis of military organizations that refused orders from state authorities to repress civilian uprisings also identifies "exit" as an option for members of the military, but they define this to include "passive" reactions in which a soldier "remains in the barracks." I differ from them here, since simply defying an order without resigning one's role or fleeing leaves one exposed to an entirely different set of risks than do resigning or fleeing. "Exit, Resistance, Loyalty," 41.

201 Resignation nonetheless, however, appears rather rare in most contemporary militaries. In terms of the theory laid out here — and to the degree this is actually the case — this rarity most likely indicates military training is effective in making commanders identify with the military chain of command. In other words, training appears to often be quite effective in eliminating the possibility that subordinate officers will see command as contested.


203 Ibid., 44.

pursue disobedience. However, I also argue that our conceptualization of disobedience must expand. By "disobedience," I do not only refer to the most dramatic ways of responding to orders such as outright insubordination or mutiny; I also refer to subtler acts of resistance to orders such as foot-dragging, temporizing, reinterpretation of orders, and "adaptation." This conceptualization of disobedience thus includes behaviors that are both contrary to and supportive of the goals of the military organization.

My spectrum of brokers' resistance to inappropriate orders can also be broken down into two categories of response based on whether such brokers are command centric or not. I argue that commanders who are brokers and command centric will attempt to refine orders they see as inappropriate. This means that commanders will attempt to resist such orders by engaging with their superiors within the framework(s) laid out by the military organization and/or the chain of command in an attempt to make the orders more appropriate and acceptable. Such attempts could include arguing with one's superiors, forging compromises with them, pursuing adaptive or innovative responses, or reinterpreting one's orders in order to make them more appropriate without strictly "disobeying." Put another way, because commanders in such cases are brokers, they have enough social power to feel secure in being heard and/or protected when they resist their orders, but since they are command centric and identify primarily with the authority that issued the order, they are inclined to resist without exiting or undermining existing lines of authority. Refining orders involves pushing back against command, but remaining loyal to and aiming to support it.

[Examples omitted for the sake of brevity.]

Defy

The final category of responses to inappropriate orders in this typology occurs when commanders are brokers but not command centric. In this case, I argue that commanders will respond to inappropriate orders with defiance. Commanders in this kind of position will disobey inappropriate orders outright, without engaging with their superiors, while nonetheless declining to exit their military roles or the military organization. Examples of defiant forms of disobedience include reinterpretation, temporising/foot-dragging, mutiny, deception, and

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outright insubordination. Because commanders in such cases do not primarily identify with the military command authority that issued the order of concern, they are disinclined to engage with it, but because they have the social power that brokerage conveys, as well, they feel empowered to disobey rather than exit their military role because they see more options and feel better able to handle any consequences of disobedience. In other words, their loyalty to the military command authority that issued their orders is weak, and rather than attempting to alter their orders by engaging with their superiors, they feel powerful enough to simply defy them.

[Examples omitted for the sake of brevity.]

**Conclusion**

This chapter has laid out a theory of how commanders at war respond to clear orders. The theory proceeds in two stages. First, commanders judge whether an order is appropriate. If it is, they simply obey — given that my primary interest in this project is disobedience, I leave further exploration of the forms obedience takes to future research. The second stage of my theory thus focuses on how commanders respond to orders they have judged to be inappropriate. I argue that such responses are driven by two factors: social network brokerage and command centrism. The interaction between brokerage and command centrism leads to four categories of response to inappropriate orders: obey, exit, refine, and defy.

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208 See, *e.g.*, Hundman and Parkinson, “Rogues, Degenerates, and Heroes: Insubordination and Identity in Military Organizations.”


Elman, Benjamin A. Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.


