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## STRATEGISING CHANGE IN ASIA

A stylized globe graphic composed of several curved, overlapping bands in shades of green and white, positioned to the right of the main title.

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### **BUILDING STRATEGIC TRUST IN ASIA**

**Building Strategic Trust: China and the Security Dilemma**

by

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ROUNDTABLE PAPER

## **Building Strategic Trust: China and the Security Dilemma**

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## Introduction

The People's Republic of China's turbulent experience during the Cold War (1949-1991) has been followed by a remarkably tranquil period. Although conflict and crisis have certainly not been completely absent in the post-Cold War era, the PRC has managed to undertake three decades of 'peaceful rise' or 'peaceful development.'<sup>1</sup> What explains this remarkably peaceful great power ascent? Has China been building trust with other states? Scholars such as Thomas Christensen, Iain Johnston, and Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell stress the utility of the security dilemma in understanding the PRC's security behavior since the end of the Cold War.<sup>2</sup> Can the PRC's peaceful rise in recent decades be attributed to a realization by Beijing of the centrality of the security dilemma in great power politics acquired during the Cold War? The answer seems ambiguous at best.

Is China learning to rise peacefully through building trust? Of course, whether China does rise peacefully is not simply up to China—what other countries do matters. But China plays a key role. For a peaceful rise to continue, China must look beyond its own immediate situation and try to put itself in the place of other powers—to understand how they view China. In other words, China must display empathy. The essence of the security dilemma is “failures of empathy.”<sup>3</sup> Does China have empathy? This is not to pick unfairly on China—other states, including the United States, are guilty of empathy deficits—but this paper is focused on China. Does China grasp the security dilemma? Does it matter?

Popularized by Robert Jervis in a 1978 article and subsequent book, the security dilemma refers to the reality that “many of the means by which a state tries to increase its security decrease the security of others.”<sup>4</sup> An a priori assumption of this writer is that both the United States and China are essentially status quo powers. If, however, mutual perceptions run contrary to the facts then it is because of the impact of a security dilemma spiral. If one or both states do not recognize that the dynamic of the security dilemma is operating then they are far more likely to perceive each other as threatening. According to Robert Jervis, “...it is very likely that two states, which support the status quo but do not understand the security dilemma will end up, if not at war, then at least in a

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this essay appears as Andrew Scobell, “Learning to Rise Peacefully? China and the Security Dilemma,” *Journal of Contemporary China* Vol. 21 (July 2012), pp. 713-21.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Thomas J. Christensen, “China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia,” *International Security* 23:4 (Spring 1999), pp. 49-80;; Alastair Iain Johnston, “Beijing's Security Behavior in the Asia-Pacific: Is China a Dissatisfied Power?” in J.J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carlson, eds., *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power, and Efficiency* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 34-96; Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China's Search for Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30 (January 1978) p. 181.

<sup>4</sup> Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” p. 169. See also Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), chapter 3.

relationship of higher conflict than is required by the objective situation.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is important to discern if these countries identify and understand that a security dilemma exists because “a heightened sensitivity to the security dilemma makes it more likely that the state will treat an aggressor as though it were an insecure defender of the status quo.”<sup>6</sup>

In a sense, the security dilemma spiral is a learned experience. That is, a state becomes socialized to interpret the behavior of another state as threatening. Iain Johnston contends: “...the China case suggests that security dilemmas can turn nonstructural conflicts into perceived structural ones: the socializing experience of security dilemmas consists of the amplification of threats and threat perceptions such that one side begins to only look for confirming evidence of the other’s predisposition to threaten.”<sup>7</sup> But if a security dilemma is created through learning, then it follows that a security dilemma can also be demolished through learning.

### **The Underdog Mentality**

The security dilemma is likely to be an alien concept for a weakling power, especially one that sees itself as the aggrieved power. China is such a power. From Beijing’s perspective, China has been wronged and bullied in modern era because it has been weak. Moreover, China is in the right—simply seeking to protect its legitimate interests because it has been severely threatened. China possesses an enduring underdog mentality which makes it extremely difficult to conceive of a security dilemma. In the case of US-China relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the security dilemma is especially alien because the United States is considered so much more powerful than China. How could the United States even remotely perceive China as a real threat? The presumption in Beijing is that the United States is hyping the threat for nefarious reasons. A survey of the genesis of the Chinese Communist movement underscores the entrenched nature of this underdog mentality.

#### *China Under Mao: Playing Defense with a Weak Hand*

During the Mao era, Beijing thought of itself as weak and vulnerable. China’s preoccupation was to protect itself against external (and internal) threats. Initially, the greatest external threat came from the United States. American support for the Kuomintang (KMT) predisposed the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to view the United States as hostile. The newly established People’s Republic of China (PRC) thus considered Washington to be its adversary. When U.S. forces intervened in Korea in 1950, especially following the success of the Inchon landing of September, Beijing felt increasingly under threat as U.S. forces moved up the peninsula and closer and closer to the border. Despite perceiving themselves as the proverbial David standing up to

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<sup>5</sup> Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” p. 182.

<sup>6</sup> Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” p. 183.

<sup>7</sup> Johnston, “Beijing’s Security Behavior,” p. 82. Johnston suggests that if viewed through a “constructivist-oriented lens” then a security dilemma can be seen as “potentially socializing experience.” Ibid., p. 36.

Goliath, Mao and his colleagues believed under the circumstances that offense was the best defense. The Chinese People's Volunteers, as these military units from the People's Liberation Army were officially labeled, thus surreptitiously crossed Yalu River in mid-October. The result was a three-year conflict in which Chinese soldiers demonstrated that they were brave and capable warriors who could hold their own against soldiers from the most powerful armed forces in the world. There was never any thought given to the possibility that China was viewed as a threat by the United States or other states. China was developing its defense capabilities and flexing its military muscles for self-defense purposes only. Given the low level of technology of its weapon systems and absence of significant power project capabilities how could any country consider China a threat?

Even in the aftermath of the Korean War, which Beijing portrayed as a victory, there was recognition that the result on the battlefield was not so much a win as it was a draw. So how could other states possibly view China as a threat? China had merely defended itself and in the process had fought the most powerful military machine in the world to a standstill. Moreover, U.S. backing for Taiwan was viewed as extremely threatening by China. Indeed, the superpower's support for Beijing's rival in the unfinished Chinese Civil War was more worrisome than U.S. actions on the Korean Peninsula. After the break with Moscow in 1960, Beijing was most fearful of a Soviet invasion. The proximity of the adversary and a sheer length of the common border made China feel extremely vulnerable.

Beijing viewed both superpowers as extremely powerful, especially compared to China. The assumption was that in a military conflict China could not hope to win outright. However, China could deter the superpowers by making the prospect of war costly and protracted—it would take a long time and a lot of lives and resources for one of the superpowers to defeat a populous and large country with dogged determination to resist. Even as China became militarily and economically stronger in the 1960s—developing nuclear weapons and recovering from the disaster of the Great Leap Forward—Beijing continued to see itself as a weakling. Other countries threatened China but not the other way around. As Deng Xiaoping told Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in May 1989, the newly established PRC had been “poor and weak” and remained so for a considerable time. Moreover, said Deng: “China did not invade other countries and posed no threat to them, but other countries threatened China.” According to Deng, these countries were the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

China's relationships with many other lesser powers in Africa and Asia tended to be good. Rhetorically at least, Beijing supported the aspirations of Third World anti-colonial movements and offered modest economic assistance to a number of these countries. Starting in the mid-1950s, Beijing promoted the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. But these principles seemed more propaganda aimed at enhancing China's

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<sup>8</sup> “Let us put the Past Behind us and Open up a New Era,” in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* Vol. III 1982-1992 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1994), pp. 286-87. The quotes are on p. 286.

reputation and stature in the Third World than it had to do with reassuring these countries that China did not pose a threat.

*China Under Deng: Open for Business*

Following the death of Mao and rise of Deng Xiaoping, China changed course. This was partly the result of a rethinking of national priorities and partly the outcome of a reassessment of the security environment. Deng concluded that China's fundamental problem was economic backwardness and the solution was systemic reform and opening to the world trading system. This was China's best hope to stimulate its economy and allow it to catch up with its more dynamic Asian neighbors. Deng also decided that the chances of a massive conflict with the Soviet Union were low and so China could afford to focus on economic development. Thus, Beijing was interested in expanding trade with and attracting investment from other countries. The assumption was that no country would feel threatened by China because it was committed to a defensive posture and after all was a weak military power. The presumption was that other countries—just like China—would perceive the main threat as coming from the Soviet superpower.

This mindset was apparent when Deng met with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore during a visit to the island state in late 1978. Lee recounts how he told a surprised Deng that Southeast Asian states viewed China as a threat. The Singaporean explained that Beijing's continued support for communist insurgencies in and radio propaganda broadcasts to the region made China look hostile to the governments of Southeast Asia. This realization that China could be considered a threat by outsiders may have been a revelation to Deng. In any event, within two years these broadcasts ceased and support for the guerilla movements ended.<sup>9</sup>

But did this episode mean that Deng clearly recognized the existence of a security dilemma and understood the dynamic? If so, were recognition and understanding of the concept limited to China and its smaller Asian neighbors? And did this mean that Deng's colleagues and his successors also firmly grasped the concept and were able to conceive of it in other situations and relationships?<sup>10</sup>

This writer's sense is that this revelation did not extend beyond the immediate situation. Certainly it did not extend to China's relationship with Vietnam. Hanoi was considered a disloyal ally who had betrayed Beijing's trust and generosity by defecting to Moscow. The possibility that Vietnam might have been responding to a perceived threat from China was never considered. And from Beijing's perspective, it was inconceivable that Moscow could be reacting to a perceived threat from China.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story, 1965-2000* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), pp. 599-601.

<sup>10</sup> These are all certainly asserted by two Chinese scholars. See Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping, "China's Regional Strategy," in Shambaugh, ed., *Powershift*, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> This judgment is based on Deng's rhetoric and writings from the time period. It is certainly consistent with his conversation with Lee Kuan Yew cited above.

On the contrary, Beijing was defending itself and its prestige. According to Deng, “The victory in our counterattack waged in self-defense on Vietnam has immensely heightened China’s prestige in the international struggle against hegemonism...” Moreover, China had worked to enhance ties with Third World states and significantly upgraded relations with the United States and Japan. These efforts had succeeded in “frustrating the Soviet hegemonists’ arrogant plan to isolate China internationally, improving China’s international environment, and heightening its international prestige.”<sup>12</sup>

*China Under Jiang and Hu: Reputational Power Trumps All?*

In the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, while the source of China’s greatest national security threat had disappeared, uncertainty surrounded Beijing’s relationships with the former Soviet republics, four of which shared land borders with China. China’s success at resolving land border disputes and demilitarizing their common borders reinforced the idea in Beijing that China threatened no one and no one could seriously perceive China as a threat. Thus, when concern over a “China threat” emerged in the mid-1990s, Beijing appeared genuinely surprised and upset. Since, in the minds of many Chinese this allegation was patently false, the hostile rhetoric must be a result of nefarious efforts to attack China—or at least tarnish its reputation. However, a handful of Chinese scholars explicitly acknowledged that there was a “contradiction” between debunking the “China Threat Theory,” and “the rapid rise of China’s national military power.”<sup>13</sup>

Beijing’s response was an effort to insist in the late 1990s that China adhered to a New Security Concept which was a reformulation of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence declared in the 1950s. This was followed in the early 2000s by articulating a “peaceful rise” strategy. Some scholars point to this as evidence of Beijing’s recognition of the security dilemma.<sup>14</sup>

Certainly, many Chinese scholars and analysts are familiar with the concept the security dilemma in the international relations literature. There is considerable mention of the security dilemma in their writings. The security dilemma emerges in particular, on certain topics such as Sino-Japanese relations.<sup>15</sup> Iain Johnston notes that some scholars

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<sup>12</sup> “Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles,” (March 30, 1979) in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* Vol. II 1975-1982 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), p. 168.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Huang Renwei, “*Shilun Zhongguo zai shiji zhi jiao guoji huanjingzhong de shenceng maodun* [On China’s deep contradictions in the international system at the turn of the century]” *Shanghai Shehui Kexueyuan Jikan* [Quarterly Journal of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences] No. 1 (1997), pp. 10-11.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Bonnie S. Glaser and Evan S. Medeiros, “The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy Making in China: The Ascension and Demise of the Theory of ‘Peaceful Rise’,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 190 (June 2007), p. 50.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Lin Xiaoguang, “*ZhongRi guanxi kewang jinyibu gaishen* [China-Japan relations could further improve]” *Heping Yu Fazhan* [Peace and Development] (May 2008).

recognized that China's policy toward Japan has been "counterproductive and Chinese actions may partly be to blame for problems in Sino-Japanese relations." Nevertheless, Johnston qualifies his assertion: he says that all this "implies" that Chinese leaders grasp the security dilemma.<sup>16</sup> In any case, does the awareness of China's actions carry over into US-China relations? Perhaps not. After all, how could the United States see China as a threat? China is far too weak and the United States is much too strong.

### Analysis

There is recognition and understanding in China about the security dilemma but this seems one step removed from decision-makers. The security dilemma is certainly on the radar screen—at least a topic of academic interest. Many academics and analysts include mention of the concept in their writings. But to what extent do these intellectuals communicate this to decision makers and to what extent does this resonate?

Iain Johnston observes: "...[S]ecurity dilemma arguments rarely have appeal inside China because they require recognition that China's own behavior has been counterproductive and has undermined its own security." Proponents risk being attacked as "naïve" or even unpatriotic Chinese.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, adherents are likely to encounter extreme hostility and vitriol since China, in the view of Thomas Christensen, "may well be the high church of realpolitik in the post-Cold War world."<sup>18</sup>

Are these initiatives—the promotion of a "New Security Concept" and "Peaceful Rise/Peaceful Development"—better viewed as efforts to defend China's international "reputation" or promote a desirable "image" in world? Arguably, reputation is important outside of China while 'image' is important inside China. Chinese leaders care about both. Ordinary Chinese people are sensitive to their country's *image*—they want it to be positive and be consistent with their own image of China. Chinese elites are more interested in China's *reputation* because they desire China to be respected.<sup>19</sup>

Beijing certainly views reputation as a vital dimension of Chinese power in the world. Status is critically important to China. Why? How others see China matters to that country's leaders and people. Being perceived by the rest of the world as a benevolent

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<sup>16</sup> Johnston, "Beijing's Security Behavior," p. 59. Similarly, Yong Deng states: "The Chinese policy elites seem to have understood that if their country were to achieve its great-power dream, a full-blown security dilemma surrounding its rise would have to be forestalled." Yong Deng, *China's Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> Johnston, "Beijing's Security Behavior," p. 76. See also elaboration in footnote 102 on p. 94.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas J. Christensen, "Chinese Realpolitik," *Foreign Affairs* 75:5 (1995), p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> For thoughtful discussion on these matters and the distinction between reputation and image, see Wang Xuedong, "Zhongguo canyu guoji zhidu de shengyu kaoliang-dui Chen Hanxi zhi xueshu piping de huigan [On China's reputation for participation in international institutions—Response to Chen Hanxi's critique]" *Dangdai Yatai* (20 March 2009), pp. 147-160.

rising power is important for China's self-esteem. Many Chinese elites and ordinary people crave international respect.<sup>20</sup>

However, it is not just about status. Beijing is concerned that rhetorical worries about China's growing power could translate into actual physical reactions to counter China's rise. But does this concern go further--to recognition of the security dilemma? In 1979, Deng Xiaoping spoke about "international prestige [*guoji weiwang*]." Two decades later, Chinese leaders speak of "international status [*guoji diwei*]."<sup>21</sup>

Why is it important whether or not China grasps the concept of the security dilemma? If one concludes that China is not a revisionist power or has relatively limited revisionist aims (e.g. unification with Taiwan) then one doesn't want it to become one. If Beijing doesn't grasp the security dilemma then, as Iain Johnston notes, it is more likely that China could essentially become a revisionist power, convinced that the United States is intent on China's demise. As Robert Jervis observes: "How a statesman interprets the other's past behavior and how he projects it into the future is influenced by his understanding of the security dilemma and his ability to place himself in the other's shoes. The dilemma will operate much more strongly if statesmen do not understand it, and do not see that their arms—sought on to secure the status quo—may alarm others and that others may arm, not because they are contemplating aggression but because they fear attack from the first state."<sup>22</sup>

#### *Bringing the Security Dilemma in from the Cold.*

Of course what we have not considered is the security dilemma dynamic in the United States. The question of security dilemma awareness in the United States is certainly a topic deserving a paper of its own. But anecdotal evidence suggests that a similar problem exists in the United States: that is, American scholars recognize the problem but

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Peter Hayes Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> For Deng Xiaoping's use of the first term, see *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan, 1975-1982* (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1983), p. 146. This Chinese version of the 1979 speech uses the official English translation cited in footnote 12. For use of the second term by other Chinese elites, see Deng, *China's Struggle for Status*, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, p. 181.

few policy makers do.<sup>23</sup> How do we deal with this as a policy challenge? One modest idea is to encourage senior policy makers on both sides to put the security dilemma on the agenda of US-China relations. They can ask each other: “Why does mutual distrust exist if neither side wishes the other ill?” If high-level political leaders get the topic out in the open and begin to discuss it then this would be an excellent start.

A second and related suggestion is for policy makers and analysts to recognize that they likely possess an empathy deficit. That is, individuals often find it hard to put themselves in the shoes of another person who comes from another country. It is easy to assume with the best of intentions that you are in the right and to be dismissive of another who challenges your position and/or harbors suspicions as to your motives. There is a tendency to mirror image rationality. In other words, if another person or set of leaders does not articulate the position that you think they logically should, then you are inclined to conclude they are irrational or malicious.

A third suggestion is to tone down the inflammatory rhetoric that only contributes to a security dilemma. Certainly, both the China and the United States have perpetrators but China in particular has established a particularly egregious pattern of extreme statements. During the past two decades Chinese soldiers, both active duty and retired, have routinely made bellicose sounding public statements directed at the United States and Taiwan in particular.<sup>24</sup> Chinese civilian leaders have also issued threats and intimidations. Moreover, a series of provocative military actions has seized the attention of the United States and other countries. Such rhetoric and activities may play well to domestic audiences but these harm China’s reputation and contradict Beijing’s “peaceful rise” slogan at the very least and, more dangerously, produce a spiral effect.

A fourth suggestion is for the United States and China to discuss frankly their national interests and identify their common interests. China must understand that different

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<sup>23</sup> These include James Steinberg, Deputy Secretary of State in the Obama administration. In 2009, he publicly noted the importance of the security dilemma. In a major speech on China policy, Steinberg stated: “Political scientists and IR theorists talk darkly of security dilemmas that lead nations to take actions to protect their own security against potential adversaries, and that, by taking those actions, fuel the very conflicts they were hoping to avert.

“These academic perspectives obviously have strong resonance in the political debates we hear not only in the United States, but in China today. So how do we square this circle? Adapting to the rise of China, as well as other emerging powers like India and Brazil, while protecting our own national interests. This, I believe, is one of the key strategic challenges of our time. And the key to solving it is what I would call strategic reassurance.” James Steinberg, “China’s Arrival: The Long March to Global Power,” speech at the Center for a New American Security, September 24, 2009, at <http://www.cnas.org/files/multimedia/documents/Deputy%20Secretary%20James%20Steinberg's%20September%202009%20Keynote%20Address%20Transcript.pdf>. Moreover, a leading contributor to the scholarship on China and the security dilemma, Tom Christensen (see footnote 2), served in the administration of George W. Bush as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Andrew Scobell, “Is there a Civil-Military Gap in China’s Peaceful Rise?” *Parameters* XXXIX: 2 (Summer 2009), pp. 4-22.

countries have different national security interests and view threats differently. For China, national security boils down to security of the homeland. National security for the United States is much more broadly defined. As a superpower, the national interests of the United States are global in scope to include security of the “global commons,” encompassing unimpeded international commerce. All four fundamental national interests in the 2010 U.S. *National Security Strategy*—“security, prosperity, values, and international order”—are defined on a global scale.<sup>25</sup> The scope of these “national interests” is difficult for Chinese leaders to grasp let alone accept. If Americans want to underscore to China the seriousness with which they view a threat this challenge must to be surmounted. Thus, during President Hu Jintao’s January 2011 visit to the United States, in order to convince his Chinese counterpart of the seriousness with which he viewed the threat from Pyongyang, President Obama emphasized that Washington saw this in terms of a direct threat to the American homeland.<sup>26</sup> Chinese officials can, of course, also educate Americans about China’s national interests. Moreover, it is important to identify common interests and explore how to cooperate to protect these.

## **CONCLUSION**

Is China learning to rise peacefully? Has 21<sup>st</sup> Century China grasped the security dilemma? The evidence from my preliminary analysis is ambiguous. Since its inception the PRC perceived itself as the victimized weaker power, perpetually bullied by other far more powerful aggressors. Imbued with this underdog mentality, the security dilemma has been an alien concept. This was certainly the case in Mao’s China. Since China threatened no one, a security dilemma spiral was inconceivable. Deng Xiaoping appears to have understood that China’s smaller neighbors may have perceived Beijing as threatening or at least hostile. But whether Deng recognized the security dilemma is not clear. What is clear is that he never seems to have commented on the concept. What about his successors? Certainly, Chinese scholars discuss it but they are one step removed from policy makers. Beijing’s campaigns to counter the China threat through articulations first of a “New Security Concept” and later of “Peaceful Rise” and “Peaceful Development” mantras seem to be more about promoting China’s status or protecting China’s reputation or image than they are indicators of Beijing’s recognition of the security dilemma.

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<sup>25</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), pp. 14, 17 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Obama explicitly stating that North Korean missiles would soon threaten the continental United States “rang their bells,” according to a “senior American official.” The official continued: “It doesn’t impress the Chinese much when you say the North Koreans might proliferate their technology. When you say they threaten your homeland, it means you are going to do whatever you have to do.” Cited in David E. Sanger, “Superpower and Upstart: Sometimes it Ends Well,” *New York Times* January 22, 2011, Week in Review Section, pp 1, 2. See also Mark Landler and Martin Fackler, “An American Warning to China Causes a Ripple Effect on the Korean Peninsula,” *New York Times* Washington Edition (January 21, 2011), p. A8.

How does China threaten the United States? From the perspective of many Chinese it is difficult to fathom that Beijing can be perceived as threatening to Washington. After all, China is weaker economically (albeit closing the gap rapidly). Moreover, China is far weaker in terms of military capabilities, with a small nuclear arsenal and limited power projection. China takes pains to articulate explicitly its intentions as largely limited to protecting national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. So how does this get translated into a threat to the United States? Is it because Washington doesn't grasp the security dilemma? These questions also deserve answers but they must be the subject of another essay.