

# 10

## **China's security problematique: critical reflections**

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The image of the People's Republic of China as an irresponsible power has been largely, though not exclusively, constructed by examinations and interpretations of what is purported to be China's security behaviour in regional and global international relations. The 'domino theory' associated closely with the threat from Red China in the 1950s and the 1960s and the 'China threat' debates in the last decade are just two primary examples. Issues and incidents such as China's participation in the Korean War, its support of Communist insurgents in Southeast Asia and involvement in the Vietnam War, its border wars with India, the former Soviet Union and Vietnam, its readiness to use force in territorial disputes in the South China Sea and its recalcitrance over the Taiwan issue, and its arms sale and export of nuclear technology to 'rogue' states such as Iran and Iraq, are among the evidence of China's irresponsible behaviour in world politics. This image has become etched in studies of China's international relations.<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising, perhaps, that the existing literature on regional security in the Asia Pacific has focused on China as the central security concern of the region, particularly with the much trumpeted rise of China's power. What is disconcerting, though, is the severe disproportion between the keen attention to China as a security concern and the intractable neglect of China's security concerns in the current debate.<sup>2</sup> In other words, China is regarded

as part of the regional security problematique, but China's security concerns have rarely been problematised. This is true historically and particularly in the post-Cold War discourse on Asia Pacific security, which is dominated largely by the Anglo-American international relations community.<sup>3</sup>

A particularly noticeable void exists, therefore, even in the small cottage industry of the 'China threat' literature.<sup>4</sup> Largely adopting an outside-in perspective, the existing studies have showed very little appreciation of the problems confronting China's security managers. Naturally, a large number of vital questions remain either unanswered or under-appreciated. How have China's conceptions of security, and by the same token, threat, changed over time? What do the Chinese élites perceive as the main problems for China's security and why? Where are China's security concerns generated, and what are generally perceived as China's legitimate security interests? How secure or insecure does China feel at any particular time and under certain circumstances, as for example when the structural changes of the international system take place? An appreciable gap between the security discourse within China and that outside China is therefore discernible.<sup>5</sup> While Chinese scholars find the 'China threat' claims perplexing and incomprehensible, many looking from outside-in find China's behaviour in regional international relations, particularly in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, inexplicable if they are not expressions of China's desire for regional hegemony. Different policy prescriptions, ranging from containment, to constraintment and to engagement, are but a reflection of this perception.

I propose to problematise China's security concerns in this chapter by looking from inside out through a sociological lens. By looking at three integral and transforming social processes in the PRC since 1949—revolution, war and reform—I argue that China's conceptualisation of security has been in constant flux. The irony is that in China revolution, war and reform as domestic political and social processes, which are meant either to guarantee or enhance China's security, have paradoxically accentuated the insecurity and vulnerability of the Chinese state and the regime

governing China. That is, an insecurity complex has been both generated and compounded in China by these pervading and penetrating social experiences. This is characteristic of China's security predicament.<sup>6</sup> No Great Power in recent history has had anything approaching this kind of security predicament.

This line of argument shares with realism and neo-realism one common starting point—security (defined more broadly in my discussion) as the central paradigm in understanding the international behaviour of states. It differs significantly, however, from both realism and neo-realism by arguing that it is neither China's national interest, defined in terms of power, nor structural features, such as the distribution of power in the anarchical international system that defines China's security problematique. It also goes beyond the liberalist perspective of internal politics in identifying important internal social processes—integral to China's transformation in the last fifty years—as independent variables that construct and reconstruct China's security conceptualisations and concerns. In a general vein, this is in agreement with claims made by Job and also to a lesser extent Alagappa that Third World states are faced with a particular and peculiar security/insecurity predicament, which emphasises the internal challenges to security and therefore to security conceptions of those states.<sup>7</sup> The difference is China's unparalleled experience in revolution, war and reform. Interacting in their own fashion and intensity with the same processes in the international system, they have resulted in a special social setting within which China's identities have been formed and transformed. As a result, China's security conceptions, and therefore behaviour, have been powerfully affected and sometimes determined by these forces.

## **Revolution**

By revolution, I refer not just to the transfer of state power but, most importantly, to a political and social process that redefines the political community and remakes the social order. Revolutionary changes in the international system thus refer to a fundamental transformation that redefines the nature and structure of the international order.

It is now a truism to say that the Chinese revolution has profoundly affected the regional and global international order as it has evolved in the second half of the twentieth century. It is, however, still a useful starting point to look first at how the success of the Chinese Communist revolution in 1949 affected China's security. Stephen Walt argues that 'revolutions usually disrupt the international system in important ways' because of the ensuing uncertainty about the balance of power, which results in security competition.<sup>8</sup> From the Chinese perspective, however, the responses of the dominant powers in the international system to the success of the Chinese Communist revolution were the determining factor in New China's security environment. The new regime felt threatened from the very beginning, not because of its weakness but because of the nature of the Chinese revolution and its professed ideological commitment to communism—the basis of New China's identity. Security competition, if any, was therefore defined more in terms of balance of threat than balance of power.<sup>9</sup> Mao clearly saw the Chinese revolution as part of a world revolution started by the Bolsheviks in 1917. Both before and after his proclamation of the PRC, Mao repeatedly warned of the distinct possibility of direct military intervention in the Chinese revolution by US imperialism. The 'lean-to-one-side' policy derived not so much from the weakness of the new regime as from New China's self-understanding of its identity in the Cold War international system as well as its perception of the Other.<sup>10</sup> China's entry into the Korean War was certainly not a step to redress the balance of power, particularly when it lacked explicit full military support from the Soviet Union. Mao's agonies over his decision in October 1950 reflected his uncertainty over the intentions of the Other.<sup>11</sup>

It is commonly argued that the Korean War and its outcome helped spread the Cold War to Asia.<sup>12</sup> The central thrust of US policy towards China—denial of the international legitimacy of the PRC—clearly identified Communist China as the Other, the archenemy of the United States. The containment policy and the military alliances in the Asia Pacific which arose as a result, on the other hand, helped China define itself as a major revolutionary, anti-imperialist force in world politics. The denial of the international

legitimacy of the PRC, as embodied in the US policies of non-recognition of the PRC and exclusion of the PRC from the United Nations and nearly all other inter-governmental organisations, solidified such mutual identification for many years. Symbolically, the politically correct reference to the PRC in the United States, and to a lesser extent in the West, was until 1970 'Red China'. Self-understanding on both sides, Revolutionary China and the Other, therefore drew a dividing line of friend and foe in their respective international relations.

The PRC's identity as a revolutionary state in its early years was therefore constructed and reproduced against the implacable hostility of the United States. China and the United States become, in Christensen's words, 'useful adversaries' to each other. At the same time, the survival of the Chinese revolution was threatened by internal subversion of 'reactionaries' inspired and supported by Chiang Kai-shek's rival regime in Taiwan. Political campaigns such as 'three antis' and 'five antis' were waged against attempts to subvert the revolution from within. The coupling of external and internal threat to Revolutionary China's security was cemented by the United States' wholesale military, economic and political support of Chiang Kai-shek. The Chinese revolution was therefore insecure because it constantly faced possible foreign intervention and vicious internal subversion.

China's credentials as an uncompromising revolutionary power were further enhanced by the Sino-Soviet split. To anti-imperialism (the victimisation of China in the hands of imperialism and social imperialism) was now added anti-revisionism (the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the only genuine defender of Marxism and Leninism). The threat construction by the Chinese leadership changed accordingly. Now imperialist intervention from without and reactionary subversion from within were not the only serious threat to the Chinese revolution, revisionism and its agents inside the CCP also threatened to undermine the essence of the Chinese revolution. The most dangerous threat to the Chinese revolution was the 'Khrushchevs sleeping beside us'—a rationale that Mao invoked to start the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In the 1960s, Revolutionary China staged open confrontations with both

superpowers on several fronts. Many have noted the radicalisation of Chinese foreign policy and domestic politics after 1957. The causal question; namely, the extent to which China's deteriorating international environment contributed to the radicalisation of domestic politics in the PRC; is yet to be comprehensively addressed.

Ironically, the most confrontational period of the PRC's international relations was also the period when the PRC was most vulnerable. Confrontations over the Taiwan Strait in 1955 and 1958 and Sino-Soviet border clashes in 1969 elicited direct and explicit nuclear threats to China by both superpowers. The escalation of the Vietnam War after 1964, which again brought a large-scale war to the borders of the PRC, was justified by the rationale of containing the fanatic and dangerous Communist expansion from China. As the Sino-Soviet contentions intensified and the US containment policy hardened, the PRC, in Richard Nixon's catch phrase, 'lived in angry isolation'.

The Chinese revolution violently transformed China's social order and redefined the political community in China. For this very purpose, many revolutions have taken place within the Chinese revolution.<sup>13</sup> None of them, however, has been as devastating and disastrous (nor, for that matter, as defining) as the Cultural Revolution. Whether the origins of the Cultural Revolution are to be found in Mao's megalomania/paranoia or are more deeply rooted in the CCP's political, economic and cultural experience is beyond the scope of our discussions here.<sup>14</sup> The Cultural Revolution introduced an ultra-revolutionary period in Chinese politics with the construction of a highly militarised state operating according to extremely radical and militant domestic and foreign policies. It destroyed the fragile state apparatus of the PRC, put into the question the legitimacy of the regime, and transmitted an image of a regime dominated by fanatics.

Yet, Revolutionary China's identity was redefined during this period. Pivotal to this development is that, in 1971, on the eve of the breakthrough in Sino-American relations, the PRC was admitted into the United Nations, replacing Taiwan in both the General Assembly and the UN Security Council. The international legitimacy

of the PRC was widely recognised for the first time after 1949. Diplomatic recognition of the PRC by many states followed in quick succession. PRC membership in a number of inter-governmental organisations was secured. A revealing indicator of the PRC's transformation from a revolutionary to a 'normal' state is the CCP's efforts throughout the 1970s to downgrade its Party-to-Party relations in order to carry out normal state-to-state relations, particularly with Southeast Asian nations.<sup>15</sup>

The direct military and physical threat posed by the former Soviet Union to China's territorial integrity after the 1969 armed conflicts along the Sino-Soviet borders forced the Chinese leaders to reassess China's major strategic threat. China was forced to acknowledge that the Soviet Union, notwithstanding shared ideology, represented the greatest threat to China's interests. It was also compelled to accept that the United States provided a counterweight to that threat, despite its ideological hostility. This strategic shift was a critical turn in the Chinese leadership's security thinking. Security, and by the same token threat, are now conceptualised in terms of balance of power, not compatibility of ideology. The referent of security is shifting from the Chinese revolution as part of the world revolution to the PRC as a state in the international system. The convergence of US and Chinese strategic thinking at this particular point, the idea that ideological considerations should give way to geopolitical considerations, is not entirely coincidental. Modern China has always been jealously territorial. By redefining Revolutionary China's vital interests, the Sino-Soviet conflicts may have inadvertently helped the formation of the PRC's state identity. Martin Wight once remarked that 'international revolution has never for long maintained itself against national interest. Doctrinal considerations have always within two generations been overridden by *raison d'état*'.<sup>16</sup> It is clear that by 1969 and within just one generation, *raison d'état* for the Chinese state had prevailed over ideological considerations in the security calculus of the Chinese leadership. If the confrontational approaches to international relations adopted by Revolutionary China in the 1950s and the 1960s often confounded realists and neo-realists

alike, they must have found China's balance of power behaviour in the 1970s and most of the 1980s pleasingly amenable to their analytical paradigms.

How do revolutionary changes as a social process in the international system affect China's security? Suffice it here to give two examples to illustrate the dynamics of the international systemic changes affecting China's (in)security. One is the anti-colonial revolution, which is sometimes also regarded as part of the 'revolt against the West' in this century.<sup>17</sup> As a revolutionary state, China diligently capitalised on what James Mayall called the 'restructuring of international society'.<sup>18</sup> In this 'revolutionary age', the PRC was able to find allies against the Western domination by identifying itself with anti-colonial revolutions, thus modifying its isolation from both the United States plus its allies and the Soviet-dominated socialist camp. China's revolutionary diplomacy was actively cultivated to serve its national security interests.<sup>19</sup> This systemic change also made it possible for the increased UN membership to vote the PRC into the United Nations in spite of persistent US resistance and maneuvering inside and outside UN fora. China's support for revolutionary violence in national liberation movements throughout the world and its limited, but widely distributed aid to Asian and African countries gave the PRC the semblance of a Great Power with global interests as early as the 1960s. It also projected the image of a revolutionary power bent on world revolution.

If anti-colonial revolutions and China's cultivation of them modified China's security environment, another set of revolutionary changes in the international system—symbolised by the end of the Cold War—has more varied complications for China's security. The disappearance of ideological and military confrontations between the East and the West and the diminishing prospect of an all-out nuclear war have appreciably reduced the structural violence of the international system. As widely acknowledged by even the Chinese leadership, China in the 1990s enjoys an unprecedented degree of security as far as external military threat is concerned. On the other hand, the end of the Cold War also redefines the



international political community. With the collapse of the East–West dichotomy, the collective identity of the West, the liberal democracy, is defined in opposition to non-democratic regimes. In civilisational terms, a divide emerges between the West vis-à-vis the rest. Either way, China, as belonging to ‘the rest’ and as the ‘last bastion of Communism’ and the ‘remaining Leninist state’, is certainly the Other. While China is broadly regarded as constituting a threat to liberal democratic values and peace, the Chinese leadership believes that there is a coordinated conspiracy of ‘peaceful evolution’ that aims to undermine the rule of the CCP and its legitimacy. The revolutionary turn of the post-Cold War international system has increasingly cast Communist China, once a revolutionary state, in the shadow of a counter-revolution. In this way, recent revolutionary changes in the international system have redrawn the enmity–amity line, and have reconstructed threat perceptions between China and the West.<sup>20</sup>

## **War**

The twentieth century is, as Hannah Arendt once remarked, a century of wars and revolutions.<sup>21</sup> Charles Tilly, in a sweeping review of revolutions through centuries, observed that ‘[t]he histories of wars and of revolutions have intertwined’.<sup>22</sup> This is truer for China than for most other states in international society. In the second half of the twentieth century, particularly before 1979, the Chinese experience of revolution was closely intertwined with that of war. China’s involvement in wars (as in the instances of its involvement in the Korean and Vietnam wars), in armed confrontations (as in the instances of the two Taiwan Strait crises in 1955 and 1958) and in what Johnston called ‘militarised inter-state disputes’<sup>23</sup> (as in the instances of its border wars with India in 1962, the Soviet Union in 1969 and Vietnam in 1979) are just part of that experience.<sup>24</sup>

That China has been involved in the use of force in intra-state and inter-state disputes and conflicts more than most other states in the last fifty years there is no doubt; the question is why. Stephen Walt’s theory of revolution and war offers partial explanation. His arguments that revolution causes a large shift in the balance of

threats and creates spirals of suspicion and misinformation that lead to war sit relatively well in explaining the initial period of hostility between China and the United States and China's eventual participation in the Korean War.<sup>25</sup> Iain Johnston's theory of cultural realism, in particular Mao Zedong's socialisation in that traditional strategic culture, attempts to identify a particular cultural context in which China's war-prone behaviour is made explicable.<sup>26</sup> We may also note Martin Wight's observation that '[a] revolutionary power is morally and psychologically at war with its neighbours all the time, even when legally peace prevails, because it believes that it has a mission to transform international society by conversion or coercion...'.<sup>27</sup>

Three other areas that constitute the specific cultural-institutional context that has conditioned China's social experience in war since 1949, I believe, need to be explored in search for more explanations. First, the PRC has been at the receiving end of collective military operations, threat, or both, first in the Korean War, the containment (of which the Vietnam War was a component), and then in the Soviet-orchestrated encirclement, real or imagined. More significantly, perhaps, China was subjected to repeated explicit nuclear threats in the 1950s and the 1960s by both superpowers, in the wake of war or during military conflicts.<sup>28</sup> War exposes the vulnerability of the PRC and constitutes a constant threat to its security and territorial integrity.

Second, the post-war international system has seen the culmination of what Anthony Giddens calls 'the industrialisation of war',<sup>29</sup> particularly in the advent of nuclear weapons and the eventual nuclearisation of war and peace. The post-war order, as embodied in the Cold War, was highly militarised and driven by an array of warring states. Great Powers, Kal Holsti noted, are 'war prone' in the post-war period.<sup>30</sup> Warfare 'as a virtuous exercise of state power'<sup>31</sup> was not seriously questioned. The Cold War, which represented the institutionalisation of social effects in international society after the end of the Second World War, therefore legitimised an inherently highly violent structural order from balance of terror to mutually assured destruction (MAD). More pertinent to our discussion here is the fact that Revolutionary China was to be

socialised into just such an international system in 1949. The PRC, like many other states, acquired its shared knowledge about the nature of this anarchic system, the meaning of power and functions of war, in its social interactions with this system. War therefore not only constitutes a threat to China's security; it is a vital instrument for maintaining China's security and territorial integrity.

Third, exploration of the sociological context must also look at the personal experience of Chinese leaders. China's national experience and the structural character of the post-war international system are, after all, mediated by Chinese leaders—their decisionmaking ultimately determines China's international behaviour. Traditional strategic culture, as Johnston notes, constitutes an important historical-cultural context for Mao's decisionmaking.<sup>32</sup> Equally, we should note that the first generations from Mao Zedong to Zhu De and Deng Xiaoping were all revolutionary warriors in civilian clothes. Fighting guerrilla wars before 1949 was an indispensable and invaluable social experience for them. The Revolutionary War and War of Liberation not only ensured their personal survival but also brought them to power in the first place. Their socialisation in war and the Marxist conception of revolutionary violence, which stayed with them when they became the new ruling élite, undoubtedly shaped their conceptions of war and the *realpolitik* view of power politics in international relations.

The intriguing questions are therefore how much Mao's personal experience of fighting revolutionary wars throughout his life, mostly at the receiving end of militarised violence, influenced his strategic thinking of *parabellum*? In which way did the nature of the highly militarised international system and the industrialisation of war inform Mao's post-1949 thinking about China's security? If definitive answers to these two questions continue to elude us, it is nevertheless clear that both influenced Mao's conception of war, his concerns about China's security, and his construction of the threat to China. Revolutionary violence is therefore an important means of achieving peace. World war is inevitable because of superpower rivalries around the world, which are the ultimate causes of regional conflicts. Military expenditures on building

China's nuclear bomb are therefore justified. It is also natural that 'military imperatives dominate the state in terms of their economic organisation'.<sup>33</sup> The build up of the so-called Third Front deep in China's interior reflects both Mao's acute concerns for China's vulnerability and his appreciation of the destruction that the industrialisation of war might inflict on China. Mao's fear for China's security because of its strategic weakness vis-à-vis the two superpowers, as confided by Zhou Enlai to Kissinger during their first encounter in July 1971, centred on a US-Soviet condominium to destroy China.<sup>34</sup>

One particular aspect of China's social interactions with the militarised order of the post-war international system alluded to earlier can further illustrate China's changing perceptions of war and security. This involves China and nuclear arms control. One simple fact, which is often under-appreciated, is that in the 1950s and the 1960s China was explicitly threatened many times with nuclear attack by the United States. In 1969, following the Sino-Soviet border clashes, the Soviet Union also threatened to carry out 'surgical attacks' on China with its nuclear arsenal.<sup>35</sup> No other Great Power has ever been subjected to so many explicit nuclear blackmails by both superpowers in such a short period. In addition, when the 'nuclear weapons taboo' was institutionalised in the 1960s and the 1970s, China, which became nuclear in 1964, was excluded entirely from the process. In this context, China's insistence on developing its own indigenous nuclear weapons and its denunciation of the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) and the 1968 Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) are not entirely inexplicable. The same logic can also help us make sense of the gradual convergence between China's nuclear arms control behaviour and international norms in the 1990s.

## **Reform**

China's economic reforms in the last two decades are often regarded as 'China's second revolution'.<sup>36</sup> Radical changes brought about by economic reforms in the social and economic life of China, as noted by many, have reconstituted the socio-economic order of

post-Mao China. Much has also been written about the rise of China's economic power, which, it is sometimes argued, has transformed China's international status and augmented China's economic, and therefore military, clout.<sup>37</sup> Economic reforms, however, have had profound impact on China's security in several other important ways. They have induced changed conceptions of security, exposed the vulnerability of the regime and the society, contested the priorities of security, and called for different means to achieve security. Most important of all, these changes have taken place while China is transforming from a revolutionary power to a post-revolutionary developmental state.

The economic reforms in China were launched in the wake of the devastating Cultural Revolution, at a time when the legitimacy of the CCP began to be questioned, if not contested, and when the economy, as acknowledged even by the Chinese government, was on the verge of bankruptcy. China's 'second revolution' was therefore launched to save the Chinese economy as much as to enhance the legitimacy of the regime. The shift of the CCP's central focus from political campaigns to economic construction in 1978 heralded, however, a new phase in the transformation of China as a revolutionary power. For most of the 1980s, 'reformist China' was regarded as 'friendly' by the United States as much because of its strategic value in the global balance of power as its political orientation—in sharp contrast to the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe.

The irony is, however, that the very success of economic reforms poses new threats to the security of the regime. By raising people's aspirations for, and expectations from, the economic reforms, the CCP has tied its claim to legitimacy to economic successes. Any failure to continue to deliver what people expect from economic reforms would cause widespread social discontent, which would in turn challenge the legitimacy of the Party and the government. In other words, the legitimacy of the Party and the regime no longer depends on its revolutionary credentials, but on its ability to deliver what it promises.

Economic reforms do not merely raise people's economic expectations in terms of improved living standards, economic prosperity, and more choices of, and access to, consumer goods.

China's opening up to the world economy and its gradual integration into international society have done more than its share to inform the Chinese people of what they could and should expect from a modern state. More than ever before, the Chinese people have been exposed to what Ayoob calls 'the existence of the modern representative and responsive states in the industrialised world' which, he argues, 'set the standards for effective statehood by their demonstrated success in meeting the basic needs of their populations, protecting their human rights, redistributing income, and promoting and guaranteeing political participation'. As these are increasingly accepted as norms of the standard state behaviour, 'they undermine the legitimacy of Third World states by prescribing standards and yardsticks of statehood in terms of the output functions of political systems that most Third World states will be incapable of meeting for many decades to come'.<sup>38</sup> Rising expectations among the people—economic, political or otherwise—which may lead to a revolutionary situation in China, therefore constitute a serious challenge to the state and regime security.<sup>39</sup>

Economic reforms, more than anything else, represent China's new drive for modernity. They have therefore exposed China's identity as a developmental state. China's catch-up mode has been, among other things, inspired and mobilised by the examples of the four little dragons—Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan. Like many other Third World states, however, the Chinese state now has to deal with the consequences of its march towards modernity. Increased labour force mobility means massive rural–urban migration foreshadowing the existence of an army of 'floating population'. 'To get rich is glorious' inevitably leads to an increasing gap between the wealth of the rich and that of the poor and between interior and coastal China, both of which create tensions that can fragment society. Economic prosperity fosters the emergence of a 'middle class' and the growth of civil society that would demand at least a limited opening of political discourse on democracy. Rampant corruption and other social vices erode the fabric of society. Increased awareness of global risks, such as environmental degradation, narcotics trafficking, and resource shortages, emphasises the vulnerability of China as a developmental state.

Economic reforms, perhaps naturally, have prompted important changes in the Chinese leadership's thinking about security. Coupled with China's re-evaluation of its improved external security situation in the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping deftly replaced Mao's assessment that an imminent world war was inevitable with his claim that peace and development are the two main trends in world politics.<sup>40</sup> During the late 1980s and the 1990s, the new thinking on security has been articulated through the emergence of two new security-related concepts—comprehensive security, and comprehensive national power. Briefly stated, the concept of comprehensive security seeks to emphasise the interface between domestic economic development and national and international security. The new thinking recognises that military security is insufficient; military capabilities alone cannot make China secure. China's security calculus should also incorporate economic, scientific and technological dimensions. Economic development is the key to increasing China's economic, scientific and technological capabilities. But economic development cannot be achieved without political and social stability. Deng's plea that 'China must avoid chaos' (zhongguo buneng luan)—either politically inspired or socially induced—thus smuggles domestic political and social stability onto the security agenda of the Chinese leadership.<sup>41</sup>

The concept of comprehensive national power, on the other hand, refers to 'the totality of a country's economic, military and political power in a given period' and further, 'economic power, including labour power, material resources and financial power, is the determinant and foundation of a country's military and political power'. Level of technological development has underlining importance in economic power.<sup>42</sup> In 1992, Jiang Zemin explicitly stated that competition in world politics in the post-Cold War period is 'in essence, a competition of overall national strength based on economic, scientific and technological capabilities'.<sup>43</sup> In these new formulations, security has become a much more inclusive concept. Accordingly, the perceived threat to China's security is from the external as much as the internal. Second, economic development is now seen as the key to China's security not only because domestic political and social stability is predicated upon

it,<sup>44</sup> but also because it enhances China's economic, scientific and technological capability, which is essential to make China secure. Third, non-military dimensions of power are emphasised. Military power is still relevant and important, but is downplayed substantially in favour of non-military power in China's security considerations.<sup>45</sup> Fourth, security concerns have been reprioritised in accordance with changed internal and external circumstances for China. Military security in terms of defending China's borders is no longer featured as a top priority. And fifth, naturally, 'the optimal approach to national security is to strengthen all the dimensions of national power—economic, technological, political, social and military', as noted by Wu Xinbo.<sup>46</sup> Recent discourse on China's grand strategy for the twenty-first century places economic and internal security higher than external and military security as conventionally understood.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, one must also consider the implications for China's security conceptualisation of reform that has taken place in the society of states. By reform I mean here in particular recent changing norms in international society. These include human rights norms, the obsolescence of large-scale inter-state wars, the retreat of sovereignty-based international order, and globalisation, among others. As with the structural change in the international system, changing norms in international society redraw the line of enmity and amity. If the former has induced the perception of China as 'the last bastion of Communism' and the 'remaining Leninist state' standing against liberal democracy and democratisation, thus defining China as the 'Other'; the latter stares blankly at China as a 'deviant' in international society, sometimes resisting and more often violating those norms in its behaviour. As Rosemary Foot points out in this volume, China's human rights record falls far short of meeting the new 'standard of civilisation'. Moreover, greater tolerance of, and sympathy for, the claims of ethno-nationalism manifested in the international community constitutes a new challenge to China's management of ethnic conflicts, which threaten the integrity of China. Changing norms of international society make new demands on internal governance of a state, and introduce new yardsticks of legitimacy for any state.



## Conclusion

Peter Katzenstein and others have argued recently that '[h]istory is a process of change that leaves an imprint on state identity'. He further stated that '[d]efinitions of identity that distinguish between self and other imply definitions of threat and interest that have strong effects on national security policies'.<sup>48</sup> All three integral social processes discussed above as China's historical experience have clearly left their imprints on China's identity either as a revolutionary power or a developmental state. By defining and redefining China's identity, revolution, war and reform have created a special set of social relationships between China and other states, and between China and international society as a whole. China's understanding of its own identity and of the Other is instrumental in its threat construction and therefore its security behaviour. This constitutes the social structure in which discussions and evaluation of the security problematique of China should be embedded.

It is beyond dispute that, in its international behaviour, China has often not lived up to the collective expectations of the international community—largely defined by the West. In that sense, China can be said to be irresponsible. But the more important question is why? Here there are several layers of questions that can be asked. First, if norms are no more than 'collective expectations about proper behaviour for a given identity' and if 'models of 'responsible' or 'civilised' states are enacted and validated by upholding specific norms', then inquiries as to how and why China shares and upholds some norms but not others by examining China's changing identity will surely yield necessary insights.<sup>49</sup> Second, if identity matters, then how and why does China assume a certain identity and not share identity with others? What are the domestic and international processes that matter in China's identity formation? Third, if identity construction is mutual, that is, if it is constructed by distinguishing self against the Other, then how does perceiving China as the Other constitute part of China's identity formation? Why should there be such a persistent dichotomy between China and the world (the West writ large)? The debates about whether China is a status quo or revisionist power, and whether China is irresponsible or

not, would be futile without an appreciation of the changing purpose and identity of the Chinese state; an appreciation that is shaped fundamentally by dynamic interactions between domestic social processes and those of international society.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See most recently, Mark Burles and Abram N. Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force: evidence from history and doctrinal writings* (Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, 2000), Thomas Christensen, 'China, the US–Japan alliance and the security dilemma in East Asia', *International Security*, 23, no.4 (1999); Alastair Iain Johnston, 'China's militarised interstate dispute behaviour, 1949–1992: a first cut at the data', *China Quarterly*, no. 153 (1998), and Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tillis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: past, present and future* (Santa Monica, California, Rand, 2000).
- <sup>2</sup> One important exception is Gurtov and Hwang, *China's Security: the new roles of the military* (Lynne Rienner, London, 1998). See also B. Glaser, 'China's security perceptions: interests and ambitions', *Asian Survey*, 33, no.3 (1993); and D. Shambaugh, 'The insecurity of security: the PLA's evolving doctrine and threat perceptions towards 2000', *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, 13, no.1 (1994). These studies suffer, however, from almost exclusive focus on the Chinese military and the PLA. In earlier debates, Gurtov and Hwang argued that studies of Chinese foreign policy need to 'look at the world as the Chinese leaders do—with sensitivity to their philosophy of history, their methodology, and their experiences as revolutionary nationalist fighters, liberators, and bureaucrats' and 'we also need studies that interpret China's foreign policy from the inside out'. See Melvin Gurtov and Byong-Moo Hwang, *China Under Threat: the politics of strategy and diplomacy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 4.
- <sup>3</sup> With apologies to my Australian colleagues, I subsume here the Australian IR scholarship largely under the Anglo-side of this community.
- <sup>4</sup> See Denny Roy, 'Hegemon on the horizon: China's threat to East Asian security', *International Security*, 19, no.1 (1994); Gerald Segal, 'East Asia

and the 'constraintment' of China', *International Security*, 20, no.4 (1996); Robert Ross, 'Beijing as a conservative power', *Foreign Affairs*, 76, no.2 (1997); and Avery Goldstein, 'Great expectations: interpreting China's arrival', *International Security*, 22, no.3 (1997).

- <sup>5</sup> For a sample of security discourse in China, See Wu, Xinbo, 'China: security practice of a modernizing and ascending power' in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Asian Security Practice: material and ideational influences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Thomas J. Christensen, 'China, the US-Japan alliance and the security dilemma in East Asia', *International Security*, 23, no.4 (1999), Wang Yizhou (ed.), *Quanqiuhua shidai de guoji anquan* [International Security in a Globalised World] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1998).
- <sup>6</sup> I use 'predicament' so that it won't be confused with the security dilemma as conventionally defined. As Alastair Iain Johnston observed recently, China may not understand what a security dilemma is (see Johnstone 'China's militarised interstate dispute behaviour'). There has certainly been little debate within China about the security dilemma and its implications for China in regional and global security.
- <sup>7</sup> See Brian Job (ed.), *The Insecurity Dilemma: national security of Third World states* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1992), Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: state making, regional conflict and the international system* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1995) and M. Alagappa (ed.), *Asian Security Practice*.
- <sup>8</sup> See Stephen Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1-36. Similarly, David Armstrong argues that revolutions have 'a profoundly disordering effect on international society in part because the revolutionary state and the established powers misperceived each other's intentions or because neither could understand the language being used by the other'. David Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order: revolutionary state in international society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6.
- <sup>9</sup> For the arguments of balance of threat, see Stephen Walt, *The Origin of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).
- <sup>10</sup> For further discussions about Mao's warnings of American intervention, see Yongjin Zhang, *China in International Society since 1949: alienation and beyond* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 50-51.
- <sup>11</sup> For more details, see Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: the making of the Sino-American confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), and Yufan Hao and Shihai Zhai, 'China's decision to enter the Korean War', *China Quarterly*, no. 121 (1990). For documentary

- sources on China's entry into the Korean War, see Zhihua Shen (ed.), *Mao Zedong, Stalin yu Han Zhan* [Mao Zedong, Stalin and the Korean War] (Hong Kong: Tiandi Tushu Youxian Gongsi, 1998).
- <sup>12</sup> See Akira Iriye, *The Cold War in Asia: a historical introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1974); Rosemary Foot, *The Practice of Power: US–China relations since 1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Steven Hugh Lee, *Outposts of Empire: Korea, Vietnam and the origins of the Cold War in Asia, 1949–1954* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).
- <sup>13</sup> Volume 15 of *Cambridge History of China* is aptly sub-titled: *Revolutions within a Revolution*.
- <sup>14</sup> Thomas Robinson argues that Mao's personality, including his 'megalomania and paranoia' informed much of foreign policy making before 1976. Thomas Robinson and David Shambaugh (eds), *Chinese Foreign Policy: theory and practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 557. See also Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 3 vols., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974–).
- <sup>15</sup> Zhang, *China in International Society*, 127–38.
- <sup>16</sup> Martin Wight, *Power Politics* (London: Leicester University Press/Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), 92–93.
- <sup>17</sup> See Hedley Bull, 'The revolt against the West', in H. Bull and A. Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 217–28.
- <sup>18</sup> See in particular James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), particularly chapter 3, 'The Third World and International Society'.
- <sup>19</sup> See David Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy—Chinese foreign policy and the United Front doctrine* (London: University of California Press, 1977), Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy: Peking's support for wars of national liberation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).
- <sup>20</sup> For the construction of threat on the Chinese side, see Sun Geqin and Cui Hongjian, *Erzhi Zhongguo: shenhua yu xianshi* [Containing China: myth and reality] (Beijing: China Yanshi Press, 1996).
- <sup>21</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 11. Similarly, Giddens, in discussing the consequences of modernity, also claims that 'The twentieth century is a century of wars'.
- <sup>22</sup> Charles Tilly, 'Changing forms of revolution', in E. E. Rice (ed.), *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 10.
- <sup>23</sup> See Johnston, 'China's militarised interstate dispute behaviour'.

- <sup>24</sup> One might add also the coercive use of force within China in the instances of putting down Muslim and Tibetan rebellions.
- <sup>25</sup> See Stephen Walt, *Revolution and War*, 1–39.
- <sup>26</sup> See Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: strategic culture and grand strategy in Chinese history* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- <sup>27</sup> Wight, *Power Politics*, 90.
- <sup>28</sup> For details of covert US nuclear threats to China in 1953, see J.W. Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 13–16; and G.H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: the United States, China and the Soviet Union, 1948–1972* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 88–89.
- <sup>29</sup> See Anthony Giddens, *The Nation–State and Violence: volume two of a contemporary critique of historical materialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), particularly Chapter 9, ‘Capitalist development and the industrialisation of war’, 222–54.
- <sup>30</sup> Kal Holsti, 1992. ‘International Theory and War in the Third World’, in B. Job (ed.), *The Insecurity Dilemma: national security of Third World states* (London: Lynne Rienner 1992), 38.
- <sup>31</sup> R. Jepperson, A. Wendt and P.J. Katzenstein, ‘Norms, identity and culture in national security’, in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), 1996. *The Culture of National Security: norms and identity in world politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 36.
- <sup>32</sup> see Johnston, *Cultural Realism*.
- <sup>33</sup> Giddens, *The Nation–State*, 245.
- <sup>34</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1982), 49.
- <sup>35</sup> See Zhang, *China in International Society*, 156.
- <sup>36</sup> See Harry Harding, *China’s Second Revolution* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1987) and Nicholas Lardy, *China’s Unfinished Economic Revolution* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1998).
- <sup>37</sup> See for example Susan Shirk, ‘Chinese views on Asia-Pacific regional cooperation’, *NBR Analysis*, 5, no.5 (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research 1994); William H. Overholt, *The Rise of China: how economic reform is creating a new superpower* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), and N. Kristof and S. WuDunn, *China Wakes: the struggle for the soul of a rising power* (New York: Times Books, 1995).
- <sup>38</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: state making, regional conflict and the international system* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 38.

- 39 David Shambaugh in a recent article claims that 'China's rulers face a new revolution—the revolution of rising expectations', *The Independent*, 1 October 1999. My difference with Shambaugh is that rising expectations do not in themselves constitute a revolution. Even if such expectations lead to a revolutionary situation in China, they may not lead to a revolution.
- 40 For Deng's reassessment of war and peace in world politics, see Zhang, *China in International Society*, 107–13 and Zheng Yongnian, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism: modernisation, identity and international relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 116–19.
- 41 For more discussions, see Wu Xinbo, 'China security practice', Yan Xuetong, *Zhongguo Guojia Liyi Fenxi* [An Analysis of China's National Interests] (Tianjin: Tianjin People's Press, 1995), and Melvin Gurtov, and Byong-Moo Hwang, *China's Security: the new roles of the military*, 4–12.
- 42 Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism*, 114–17. See also Huang, Shuofeng, *Zonghe Guoli Lun* [On Comprehensive National Power] (Beijing: China Social Science Press, 1992).
- 43 Wu, 'China: security practice', 127.
- 44 Jiang Zemin was explicit about this when he stated in 1992 that 'If we fail to develop our economy rapidly, it will be difficult for us...to maintain long-term social stability' (quoted in *ibid*, 127).
- 45 China's Defence Law of 1993, for example, has stipulated the military role in the 'internal pacification'.
- 46 Wu 'China: security practice', 140.
- 47 See Wang Yizhou (ed.), *Quanqiu hua shidai de guoji anquan* [International Security in a Globalised World] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1998) and Hu Angang, Yang Fan and Zhu Ning, *Daguo Zhanlue: Zhongguo de Liyi yu Shimin* [China's Grand Strategy: missions and interests] (Shenyang: Liaoning People's Press, 2000). The fact that Hu and other prominent economists are now actively participating in the debates about China's grand strategy is telling evidence of a changing security conceptualisation.
- 48 Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), 'Introduction: alternative perspectives on national security', in *The Culture of National Security*, 18–23.
- 49 Jepperson et al., 53–54.