Identities Among Nations:
Power and Politics in U.S.-China Relations
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ABSTRACT

Amidst studies attempting to fix the U.S., China, and their relationship into preconceived frameworks of international relations, presupposed definitions, and models of reality, this dissertation adopts an identity centric approach to understanding the nature of U.S.-China relations and, more generally, international politics. This approach involves utilizing an interpretive method to understanding, analyzing the narratives of self and other expressed by political actors and how their identities—expressed through narratives—interact with one another and thus how they influence or reflect social behavior. Striving for greater understanding and a more intellectually honest approach to the study of international politics, this study seeks not theory building or generalizability in a traditional “scientific” sense. Rather, informed by thinkers from Karl Popper through those more recent, this dissertation develops and outlines an in-depth, contextual approach to understanding, applying this approach to analyzing the nature of U.S.-China relations.

Ultimately, this study argues that U.S. and Chinese identities and how their identities interact influence the nature of U.S.-China relations, whether the relationship tends towards cooperation or conflict, and that in order to glimpse this nature researchers must delve into the details of their subjects of study. Attempting to do so, this study analyzes U.S.-China relations surrounding the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, relations regarding the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute between China and Japan as it pertains to U.S. relations with China, and relations regarding encounters between the U.S. and China in cyber space (paying special note to attempts to define this “space” itself).
To Lindsay and all those who have supported me along the way.
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Many deserve credit for their invaluable insight on this study and time devoted to reading and commenting upon iterations of it. For this reason, Professors Sheldon Simon, Richard K. Ashley, and Roxanne L. Doty deserve special recognition and much gratitude.

Despite a lifelong interest in international politics, as a Bachelor of Science undergraduate in the field of psychology at Arizona State University I had not entertained the idea of pursuing academic study of international relations until taking Professor Simon’s POS 364 course on National Security, Intelligence, and Terrorism. With no prior academic study in the field of political science, Professor Simon’s course inspired me to pursue graduate study in international relations. Presently, serving as chair of my dissertation committee, Professor Simon has offered extraordinary insight and guidance during my graduate studies at Arizona State University and valuable feedback in overseeing the completion of this study. I also greatly value having worked as his teaching assistant on multiple occasions, our discussions over the years, as well as all he has shared in the way of wisdom, advice, and encouragement.

Professors Doty and Ashley also deserve a great deal of recognition, not only for offering their thoughts on this study, but for the impact their courses and discussions with them have had on my own thought. In their own ways, both stimulated my intellectual growth through consideration of a more diverse representation of international relations theory and topics. Both (again, in their own ways) always encouraged a more open-minded, deeper consideration of topics within the field of international relations and of the discipline itself.
Last, Professors Michael L. McLendon and Scott R. Bowman of California State University, Los Angeles, too deserve credit. As their student, each influenced, challenged, and stimulated my intellectual development after embarking upon my pursuit of increased knowledge after my undergraduate education. For arousing my interest in theory and philosophy I thank them both. My thought today is much indebted to these Professors and their approaches to the material they teach. Studying early American political thought and political theory under Professor McLendon offered a familiarization with many classics of political and philosophical thought that continue to influence my thinking and the value I find in the rich and detailed, albeit often complex, understanding of social subjects generally offered by the classics in contrast to much contemporary theory in fields like international relations, where goals of parsimony and a commitment to “science” deter and detract from richer attempts at understanding. Studying the foundations of political thought—the philosophy of science—with Professor Bowman reinforced this distinction with insights from the likes of Popper and Kuhn, Lakatos and Feyerabend, and so on, unveiling the problematic foundations of and problems facing most contemporary theoretical approaches to social science.

I sincerely hope this study proves worthy of all those who have contributed to my intellectual growth. I also hope this study offers more than a contribution to the field of international relations itself, that it in some way contributes to greater understanding and improved relations between international actors themselves.
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Much of the work focusing on relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China remains speculative, attempting to ascertain what type of power China is and thusly the impact its rise will have on international politics. Attempts to pin down the nature of the People’s Republic of China or the nature of the U.S.-China relationship, however, too often result in misleading monotypes and what Harry Harding refers to as mutually exclusive scenarios.¹ Too often analysts and observers blind themselves to the complexity and nuance of U.S.-China relations in attempting to define (to box in and enclose) the current and future nature of this very relationship. U.S.-China relations are not solely cooperative, competitive, or conflictual, nor will they be so easily defined moving into the future. An obvious but oft forgotten insight bears great relevance with regard to examining this relationship and others in international politics: the complexity of social behavior and of social subjects. However unfortunate, researchers seldom deal with absolutes in the realm of social behavior and thus social scientists must turn to more open modes of inquiry if they truly wish to draw nearer to understanding their subjects.

In a region where historical animosities and unresolved territorial disputes remain important, many East and Southeast Asian states look askance at China and its rise, concerned over their security, independence, and economic prosperity. Uncertainty fuels this anxiety more than anything, uncertainty over whether China will become belligerent and challenge the existing regional or global status quo as restraints on its behavior.

decline, concomitant with its increasing power and influence. The United States views China much in the same way: speculation spurred by uncertainty over whether future relations between Beijing and Washington will be characterized more by cooperation, competition, or even conflict. This is more than a simple issue of academic intrigue, as the United States has many vested interests and important relationships in the Asia-Pacific and possesses the power projection capabilities that very much make it an important actor within the region.

For its part, the Chinese government reassures the world of the peaceful nature of China’s rise and of the harmonious nature of its society. At the same time, Beijing behaves in ways that lead many to question whether the Chinese government uses such professions to mask its true intentions, biding time while attaining greater economic clout and military strength to later reshape world politics in its favor. Do China’s relationships with North Korea or Iran, its opposition to the United Nations’ sanctions against Syria, its territorial dispute with Japan over islands in the East China Sea, or its disputes with Southeast Asian states over maritime territorial claims in the South China Sea coincide with a peaceful rise? What of China’s increased military spending and military modernization? Such concerns do not necessarily indicate China’s current or potential belligerence or portend the ultimately conflictual nature of its rise. Understanding these issues depends, in part, upon careful examination of whether such points of tension are emblematic of or are an exception to overall Chinese behavior. It also depends on the matter of perspective. Is China the driving force behind such points of tension or are other actors? Do any one state’s interests hold objective legitimacy over those of
another? In analyzing U.S.-China relations, this study argues that, most importantly, the nature of relations between the U.S. and China depend on how both countries view themselves, view each other, and view the international system; relations depend upon their identities. Through a process of discursive representation, U.S. and Chinese identities are expressed and shaped.

Demonstrating the relevance of what traditional international relations theories exclude in their analyses, this study adopts an identity centric approach to the study of international politics, seeking a stronger foundation for and more intellectually honest approach to understanding the nature of relations between international actors. While problematizing the role of identity in international politics is not new, this study differs from others in adopting a more interpretive approach to examining the role of identity, in elucidating the foundations upon which this approach rests, and in demonstrating the political nature of identity.

As argued throughout this study, identities underlie the nature of and provide the foundation for relations between actors, they underlie the nature of the international political system, and they underlie the various approaches to explaining international politics. For whatever it lacks in comparison to traditional approaches—desires for parsimony or (illusory) explanatory power—this approach makes up for in potential to offer detailed, context based understanding of important issues while providing a more intellectually honest approach to the study of international politics, an approach always wary of the danger of reifying social constructions and always cognizant of the effects produced by the theories and the worldviews held by actors and their observers.
Prologue

AMERICA’S ASIA-PACIFIC CENTURY

America and China have arrived at a critical juncture, a time when the choices we make—both big and small—will shape the trajectory of this relationship.†

–Hillary Rodham Clinton

On 16 November 2011, President Barack Obama and Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced a joint strategic decision reflective of the United States’ pivot toward the Asia-Pacific region. Holding a news conference in Canberra, Australia, the two leaders revealed their agreement to rotate deployments of U.S. Marines through Robertson Barracks near Darwin, located in Australia’s Northern Territory, and to allow the U.S. Air Force to access Royal Australian Air Force facilities in the area.² This decision came during a time of seeming decline in the United States’ preoccupation with the Middle East and nearby countries,³ refocusing its foreign policy and interests toward the “far east.” Though many expected the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to occupy much of the United States’ foreign policy interest at the start of the twenty first century, al-Qaeda’s 11 September 2001 attacks on the twin World Trade Center towers in New York.


³ As colloquial references to the “Middle East” often include states actually part of other nearby geographic regions.
York and on the Pentagon using hijacked U.S. commercial planes, a fourth plane brought down by its passengers in rural Pennsylvania before reaching its target, prompted a fundamental shift in the focus of U.S. foreign policy, security interests, and warfare strategy.

Shortly after these attacks, which stirred sympathy in support of the United States well beyond its borders, Washington struck at al-Qaeda’s sanctuary, invading Afghanistan with widespread international approval. The Bush administration’s original goal was to track down Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda’s leader, eliminate the terrorist organization’s training camps and ability to plan and conduct future attacks, and remove the Afghan Taliban from power, securing the country from serving as a refuge for future terrorist activity. Initially responding with a limited footprint, relying primarily upon Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Special Operations Forces personnel working with the Afghan Northern Alliance and supported by U.S. air power, the United States was unable to secure Afghanistan’s borders and prevent al-Qaeda’s retreat into the relatively ungoverned territory in northwest Pakistan. Despite having yet to achieve its goals, the United States soon shifted its focus away from Afghanistan as it undertook a preemptive invasion of Iraq in March of 2003 on the grounds (possibly the pretense) of the threat posed by Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.4

During its tenure, the Obama administration effected the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq set out in the Status of Forces Agreement signed towards the end of the

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4 Though the George W. Bush administration classified its invasion of Iraq as preemptive, many argue that it is actually an example of preventive war, as the U.S. did not face any imminent threat.
Bush administration and reemphasized focus on Afghanistan. Now, shortly over a
decade since the September 11 attacks, the future degree and length of U.S. force
commitments to Afghanistan remain uncertain while general U.S. interest in the war
grows increasingly tenuous. Even so, U.S. troop levels are declining, the surge forces
deployed to Afghanistan withdrawn at the end of September 2012, and the U.S.
increasingly eyes withdrawal from the country.

With declining U.S. commitments and interests in Iraq and Afghanistan, the
Obama administration is carefully reorienting the United States’ focus towards the Asia-
Pacific region. The joint agreement between the United States and Australia to rotate
U.S. Marines through Australia’s base near Darwin serves as one of the strongest
examples of this shift in U.S. foreign policy over recent years. It signals both the United
States’ commitment to the region and the importance of the region’s dynamics to the
future interests of the United States. Though many U.S. allies and partners throughout
the region welcome greater U.S. involvement, this development does raise concern for
some, particularly China. While the Obama administration is careful to assert that its
actions are not directed towards China, questions persist over whether the administration
indeed aims to contain China’s rise. Both countries hold varied interests in the Asia-
Pacific, many of them overlapping. Both countries also suffer from a fundamental lack
of mutual trust, driving uncertainty and speculation on both sides and often increasing the
degree of tension in U.S.-China relations. While the ultimate effects of the United States’
renewed interest in the Asia-Pacific remain concealed in the future, this renewed interest
nevertheless offers a unique opportunity to begin building a deeper understanding of U.S.-China relations.

To understand Washington’s pivot to the Asia-Pacific and broader U.S.-China relations, this study adopts an identity centric approach to examining international politics, arguing that doing so offers the greatest potential for understanding relations between the U.S. and China and the reorientation of U.S. foreign policy and strategic focus to the region. This approach focuses not on fixed, pre-given, monolithic identities and interests. Instead, it seeks to uncover the important identities at play in U.S.-China relations and how those identities interact with one another, utilizing an interpretive method of understanding. “Identity,” a cognitive concept explored later in greater detail, generally refers to individually or collectively held relational conceptualizations that distinguish the self from other (whether individuals or groups). Actors invariably hold many different identities. In order to understand the important identities in U.S.-China relations, researchers must turn to the narratives found on each side that speak to conceptions of the self and the other. Further, researchers must move to explore what these narratives do and how they, these conceptualizations or representations, influence the conceptualizations held by the other—how identities influence other identities. Essentially, researchers must explore the identities of the actors they study and how those identities interact. This requires examining how narratives and salient identities relate to one another and to actual international behavior in order to develop more comprehensive understanding of U.S-China relations. Analyzing the identities involved in U.S.-China
relations allows for the development of a more nuanced understanding of the nature of this relationship and the interests held by each side.

**Traditional Explanations**

Before exploring U.S. and Chinese identities relating to the U.S. pivot to the Asia-Pacific region, considering traditional explanations from the field of international relations is worthwhile, as these explanations themselves act and are adopted as identities of sorts. Though a single event in the ever-dynamic realm of international politics, the joint U.S.-Australian agreement of November 2011 serves as a microcosm for beginning to explore salient issues in and modes of understanding U.S-China relations. How might observers understand, explain, or interpret this agreement and overall renewed U.S. interest in the Asia-Pacific? For some time, reminiscent of the field of international relations itself, academics and analysts have debated how best to explain relations in the region, especially between the United States and China.

In 2006, John Mearsheimer, for example, contended that China’s rise will increasingly create a situation of security competition between Washington and Beijing, each side fearing the capabilities and intentions of the other, spurring both to strive for or maintain hegemony. Mearsheimer drew a parallel to U.S. relations with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, arguing that China will attempt to drive the United States from East Asia while predicting that the United States will “...go to great lengths to contain China and ultimately weaken it to the point where it is no longer capable of ruling the roost in Asia. In essence, America is likely to behave toward China much the way it behaved
toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War. This pessimistic view represents a “classic” power politics, realist narrative of international politics, interpreting states as predominantly interested in their own survival and security due to mistrust and desire for power fueled by the anarchic order in which they exist. Treating this view as a narrative rather than an explanation, as with other international relations theories, helps underscore the ability these theories possess to do much more than explain international politics. These theories possess the ability to influence international politics, as social theories do not truly represent reality but construct realities and influence the worldviews through which international actors interpret the world.

Other theoretical explanations of China and U.S.-China relations might emphasize the importance of cooperation when and where it occurs, holding potential to reduce conflict and promote cooperation between increasingly interdependent and interacting states. They might find important work being done in and some degree of influence extenuating from the Asia-Pacific region’s various multilateral institutions. Studies of such institutions offer mixed verdicts about their effectiveness in promoting cooperation, in producing meaningful decisions, and in implementing enforcement mechanisms. This betrays little surprise: much the same often holds for the institutions of international


7 Institutions including: the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum; the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF); the East Asia Summit (EAS); and even to some extent the six-party talks focused on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.
politics in general. Some might also herald the post-Cold War spread of democracy and law-like observation that democracies rarely enter into armed conflict with one another.\(^8\) This factor is worth remembering even if China itself is not a democracy. On one hand, foreign policy makers and analysts from various countries might ponder whether democratic transition will take place within China (if so, hopefully with little turmoil or unrest, unfortunately not often the case with transitions to democracy) and in turn have some insight into what relations will be like with the United States if it ever does. On the other hand, China’s economy has increasingly liberalized over recent decades, with greater market reforms and freedoms. These insights ultimately lead to questions over how the existence of various ideologies, deep history, and problematic (often undemocratic) governments in the Asia-Pacific influence relations between the region’s actors, offering insight into why neoliberal expectations might or might not hold.\(^9\)

Accompanying these approaches, which are often accepted as the predominant frameworks in the field of international relations, social constructivist explanations of


\(^9\) The broader region offers evidence of governments in states such as North Korea wanting much in the way of basic rights and liberties and lacking functioning democratic systems of governance, attracting views and proclamations that these governments are fundamentally at odds with Western values. Strong claims, as these are, should never be taken for granted, instead begging inspection into how, why, and to what degree such fundamental differences in identities and interests occur. Reports, such as those produced by Freedom House, offer a way to visualize at least some of these differences, evaluating and ranking governments based on level of freedom throughout the world. See, for instance, Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2012*. This provides more of an aid in beginning to visualize differences in the region and, as with data of any form and any source, analysts must always question how such results are derived.
China’s rise incorporate factors such as history, culture, and ideology that should accompany any attempt at understanding. By their very nature, these factors constitute, characterize, and otherwise influence the context of relational behavior, whether this means the nature of structures like the international system or the norms and expectations that exist between actors of various types. Many adopting this sort of approach to studying China or U.S.-China relations have aimed to determine whether Western theories of international relations, specifically realism, are applicable to China or the broader Asia-Pacific region. Ian Alastair Johnston and Feng Huiyun’s respective studies of Chinese strategic culture do just this.\textsuperscript{10} Despite differences in their findings, both studies implicitly hold that strategic cultures—worldviews—are neither uniform nor monolithic, derived from states’ unique histories and ideas. In other words, differences in such views exist between states as well as within them. David Kang’s argument in \textit{China Rising} follows similarly, positing that China’s foreign relations are best understood in terms of its historic role as the Middle Kingdom and its tributary relations with neighboring countries, offering a peaceful ordering of the region.\textsuperscript{11} Kang’s and similar arguments reflect the notion of Chinese exceptionalism, the view that China’s history and historic conduct are characterized more by peaceful relations than principles of power politics. Often this view is then projected onto present and future China to define the


nature of its rise. Paradoxically, such explanations often take homogeneity for granted, ignoring any possible variance in worldviews—essentially identities—within states, not to mention interaction effects impacting identities both within and between states, undervaluing the potential for change (even if the idea of change receives nominal attention) and undermining attempts to understand it.

The most promise for understanding China’s rise and its implications for U.S. interests results from those studies more indebted to social psychology (whether acknowledged) and tenets of social constructivism, focusing on the dynamism of identities, picking up where shallow constructivist explanations either circumscribe or abandon their own explanatory journeys. These more promising studies adopt deeper, thicker constructivist approaches. Assessing Chinese nationalism and relations with the United States in their respective studies, Peter Hays Gries and William A. Callahan place particular emphasis on the role of ideas and history in U.S.-China relations. Consider the humiliation narrative, recounting the historic abuses China suffered at the hands of Western powers and Japan for approximately a century from the early-mid nineteenth century forward, as well as China’s more recent optimism stemming from its impressive rise. How might such ideas and beliefs influence leaders and governed alike? What might be the effect of such factors on interactions between governments? When activated, typically summoned in response to circumstance, identities—the historic victim, the rising power, and others—possesses the ability to affect relations between

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actors and influence behavior. This is not simply the case for relations between states but for relations between all international actors, across and within state borders. Ultimately, Gries and Callahan similarly conclude that whether China and the United States treat one another as friends or enemies, partners or competitors, will greatly influence the nature of U.S.-China relations.

While offering much greater insight into U.S.-China relations than some approaches, these studies, essentially focusing on the role of identity in international politics, leave many fundamental issues and questions unexplored. As stated previously, the recent agreement between Washington and Canberra offers an opportunity to begin exploring identity in U.S.-China relations. The uneasy, indeterminate relations between Washington and Beijing suggest an interplay of corresponding and competing identities and interests. Beyond simple nationalism holding greatest sway over bilateral relations between these two countries, the existence of multiple identities and their differences require exploration. This exploration requires delving into the processes through which identities are constituted and expressed, implicitly or explicitly, consciously or not. It requires examining the narratives in which glimpses of identity may be gleaned. The Obama administration’s pivot toward the Asia-Pacific and China’s reactions offer an ideal point from which to embark upon this examination as well as explore any effects theory inspired worldviews might have on U.S.-China relations.

**U.S. Perspective of the “Pivot”**

With the announcement of plans to rotate U.S. Marines through Australia’s Robertson Barracks, starting with 250 personnel in mid-2012 up to 2,500 over subsequent years,
President Obama emphasized that the decision, coming on the 60th anniversary of the alliance between the two countries, was intended to increase both U.S. cooperation with Australia and U.S. commitment to the region.\footnote{Ladwig states that this joint-decision and the “pivot” will only bring U.S. Army and Marine personnel back up to their pre-Iraq war levels. See Walter C. Ladwig III, “The Best Defense is Dialogue,” \textit{The New York Times}, September 27, 2012.} According to the President’s statements, this commitment includes maintaining a regional leadership role, maintaining the region’s security architecture, and protecting lines of commerce and trade. When questioned about China, the President replied that the United States bears no fear of the country and welcomes a rising, peaceful China. At the same time, the President emphasized that China needs to play by the rules that have permitted its amazing economic progress over the past few decades.\footnote{White House, “The President’s News Conference with Prime Minister Julia E. Gillard of Australia in Canberra, Australia.”}

The next day, speaking before the Australian Parliament in Canberra and later in front of U.S. and Australian military personnel at the Royal Australian Air Force Base in Darwin, President Obama praised Australian troops and the importance of the U.S.-Australian Alliance. After alluding to their shared history—U.S. and Australian forces fighting together since World War II after Australia’s own “Pearl Harbor” in Darwin—he stated, “our alliance is rooted in the bonds between our people and the democratic values that we share and our commitment to stand with each other through thick and through thin, no matter what.”\footnote{White House, “Remarks to the Parliament in Canberra, Australia,” \textit{Administration of Barack Obama, 2011}, November 17, 2011. White House, “Remarks to United States and}
and the efforts of both the United States and Australia to promote and defend such freedoms when and where they are threatened. He also asserted the “fundamental truth” that the United States is and always has been a Pacific nation. Addressing regional concerns over cuts in the U.S. defense budget, President Obama reassured his audience, and in essence the world, that any cuts would not come at the expense of U.S. capabilities in and commitment to the Asia-Pacific region.

The Obama administration’s strategic decision to reorient U.S. focus to the Asia-Pacific presents what appears a unified effort by top administration officials that began not long after the President’s election, well before his trip to Australia after the November 2011 APEC forum. In July of 2009, for example, Washington hosted the first meeting of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) between the United States and China, initiated by President Barack Obama and President Hu Jintao. The S&ED (successor to the previous administration’s participation in the joint creation of the Strategic Economic Dialogue [SED] with China, focusing on economic and financial relations) offers a bilateral forum for high-level officials from Beijing and Washington to discuss and pursue mutual security interests and economic cooperation on issues around the world.16 At the 2010 S&ED meeting in Beijing, both parties began discussing the promotion of educational and cultural exchanges between American and Chinese

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citizens.\textsuperscript{17} Though much of the discussions at these meetings have focused on economic cooperation and international financial recovery after the 2008 global economic crisis, both countries have also reportedly participated in candid discussions about security issues, including, but not limited to, North Korea and Iran as well as U.S. support of universal human rights and what Washington sees as Chinese human rights abuses.\textsuperscript{18} Indeed, President Obama and his top officials continually stress that they candidly make the U.S. position on human rights abuses known to Beijing in both public and private. Nevertheless, Washington typically follows such public remarks with assurances that criticism over human rights need not obstruct cooperation with China in other areas.

Further demonstrating the Obama administration’s reorientation toward the Asia-Pacific, the Department of State, particularly Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, echoes the remarks from the White House. In November 2010, Secretary Clinton and then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates co-authored an op-ed in \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} on the importance of Asia to the United States’ future, especially in terms of economic growth security. Meeting in Melbourne to sign the “Space Situational Awareness Partnership Statement of Principles,” aimed at increasing cooperation in the areas of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, both secretaries took the opportunity to assert the United States’ identity as a Pacific nation ready to strengthen its regional alliances and face current and future security threats in pursuit of what the U.S. has


termed forward-deployed diplomacy. Discussing the overall state of the region during an interview conducted at that time, Secretary Clinton recalled, “…when China first told us at a meeting of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue that they viewed the South China Sea as a core interest, I immediately responded and said we don’t agree with that. So they were on notice,” this response directed specifically to Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo.

Mirroring these sentiments, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt M. Campbell has reiterated the centrality of the Asia-Pacific to the United States’ interests in the twenty first century. During his March 2011 testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Campbell stated, “Essential to our long-term national interests is to make sure that the United States remains true to its identity as a Pacific Power.” Perhaps not deliberately, Campbell intrinsically linked the concepts of both U.S. national interests and identity.

During his own testimony before the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review

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20 U.S. Department of State, “Interview with Greg Sheridan of the Australian,” Interview, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State, Melbourne Australia, November 8, 2010. Among Dai Bingguo’s previous positions include serving as Vice Minister of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs on two different occasions as well as holding other positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Committee of China’s Communist Party.

Commission the following month, Daniel Kritenbrink, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary to Kurt Campbell, emphasized many of the common themes found in narratives regarding the United States’ views of the Asia-Pacific region and of China. These themes include the view that the U.S. and China should pursue win-win cooperation—zero-sum theories making little sense in this new century, as Secretary Clinton often states—and the assessment that China’s foreign policy is driven by desires to maintain economic growth and domestic stability.22 Other common themes spanning top levels of the executive branch, topics often broached in forums with China, include the desire to prevent misunderstanding and miscalculation between both governments and the desire to build mutual trust. The United States’ also declares its abidance by the three joint communiqués, statements that facilitated the normalization of relations between the U.S. and China, and affirmation of the one China policy, recognizing the People’s Republic of China as the one and only China, Taiwan being a part of China. At the same time, the U.S. maintains its commitment to and the importance of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), necessitating that the United States maintain relations with Taiwan, provide weaponry through the sale of military equipment, and extend Taiwan a (dubious to some) security guarantee.23

22 U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Policy Toward the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.),” Testimony, Daniel J. Kritenbrink, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, April 13, 2011.

Unsurprisingly, given the editorial by Secretaries Clinton and Gates, the Department of Defense too emphasized these recurring themes. However, the U.S. Department of Defense Annual Report to Congress, Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2011, clearly expresses concern over China’s military modernization, especially in terms of ballistic missile development, anti-access and area-denial capabilities, and asymmetric capabilities designed specifically to counter U.S. power.\(^{24}\) On the region’s maritime territorial disputes, Secretary Gates, speaking at a media roundtable in Beijing during January of 2011, reiterated the lack of a U.S. position on the ownership of the disputed islands in the South China Sea or the dispute between Japan and China over islands in the East China Sea. This is characteristic of the U.S. stance on these disputes in general. However, Secretary Gates also noted that as long as the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands are administered by Japan, they are covered by the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty. Interestingly, responding to a question over whether he feels there is a gap between Chinese civilian and military leadership, Secretary Gates replied, “I’ve had concerns about that. And, frankly, it’s one of the reasons why I attach importance to a dialogue between the two sides that includes both civilians and militaries.”\(^{25}\) This comment tellingly illustrates the importance of internal state dynamics

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when considering relations between Beijing and Washington’s and inter-state relations in general.

Though often presenting an appearance of unity and often reified as unitary actors by academics and policymakers, states are not monolithic. They are composed of various actors, groups, and institutions with unique identities and interests. Different actors might not hold the same views and may not necessarily enforce or enact congruent policy decisions and actions. The interests and identities among various groups and actors within any state can and often do differ. Secretary Gates’ response to the military-civilian leadership gap question broaches the possibility of this within China. In the United States, though the Obama Administration and top-level officials present an overall unified approach to U.S. priorities in the Asia-Pacific and with regard to China, others within the United States hold differing views.

Many candidates in the 2012 U.S. election, as well as representatives from both parties serving Congress, argued that the United States, if not the Obama administration in particular, needed to adopt a tougher stance in its relations with China. Presidential candidate Mitt Romney echoed this in the second Presidential Debate, declaring he would, if elected, label China a currency manipulator during his first day in office.\textsuperscript{26} Issues of concern ranged widely from the current state of trade relations with China to U.S. military superiority and national security.

It is reasonable to consider whether the more impassioned sentiments directed at China reflect a form of scapegoating in a time of economic hardship, similar to U.S.

\textsuperscript{26} Though exactly what doing so would mean and what the effects would be remain unclear.
economic fears of Japan’s rise during the 1980s and early 1990s, or simply reflect the self-interested tools of political maneuver often attending the desire for individual and party influence in electoral politics. In light of economic tension between the U.S. and China, elected officials in Washington might have been grasping for a source upon which to partially affix blame for or deflect attention from the United States’ sluggish economic recovery since the 2008 global economic crisis, diffusing personal responsibility and offering an issue upon which to mobilize voters in their campaigns for election or reelection. Interestingly, a Pew Research poll indicated that a majority of American voters supported building a stronger relationship with China over adopting a tougher stance. Only individuals associated with what has come to be known as the Tea Party by majority supported adopting a tougher approach towards China, largely in hopes of achieving greater parity in trade relations and promoting U.S. economic and job growth.27 Though some might be tempted to disregard these political beliefs and behaviors as an emblematic misfortune of petty partisanship, observers would be remiss to do so absent considering the possible effects they might have on bilateral relations. Understanding how certain issues are interpreted, how they become politically salient, their political use, and how they are marketed to others offer clues to states’ interests and identities and

27 Michael A. Cohen “Panda Mugging: Can the 2012 candidates China-bash their way to victory?” Foreign Policy October 14, 2011. That adopting a tougher approach to the United States’ economic relationship with China would spur job growth is quite uncertain, especially considering that many of the type of jobs held by Chinese citizens working for U.S. companies in China had already long since been outsourced to other Asian countries before more attractive labor opportunities arose in China (another factor for consideration is the degree to which automation has and will continue to affect U.S. manufacturing jobs). It is also worth considering that even though the U.S. trade deficit with China has risen quite substantially since China’s “opening” and implementation of market reforms, the U.S. trade deficit with Asia has remained relatively stable.
allows for deeper understanding of political behavior for both domestic and international politics, for both individuals and groups.

By no means uniform in coverage or views expressed, especially in democracies like the United States, news sources also offer insight into general attitudes and components of identity, the nature of interactions between states, and accounts of foreign policy decisions. In November 2010, The Washington Post relayed that the Obama administration’s announcement of its decision to sell $6 billion worth of military equipment to Taiwan incurred a “furious response” from China and subsequent cancellation of planned military exchanges with the United States.28 The very same month Defense Secretary Gates divulged his views on whether there is a gap between China’s civilian and military leadership, another Washington Post article noted the opaqueness of the Chinese government, where “…some of China’s most powerful voices are heard only in secret.”29 The same article claimed that ideology no longer unites China. Instead, nationalism based on pride provides the foundation for unity, acting as the glue that holds China’s populace together.

Looking specifically to the joint U.S.-Australian decision to rotate Marines through Australia’s military base near Darwin, Michael Swaine told the media that though this development does diversify the United States’ strategic presence in the Asia-Pacific, the agreement itself is mostly symbolic, especially for the time being, sending a


message to other regional actors indicative of U.S. commitment to the region. Also capturing the dynamics of this decision, as well as the dynamics of the APEC forum held days earlier, Keith Richburg wrote that “China is feeling at once isolated, criticized, encircled, and increasingly like a target of U.S. moves.” Speaking to this, he noted that in advance of the East Asia Summit, China’s deputy foreign minister, Liu Zhenmin, declared that including the South China sea dispute on the agenda for discussion would be inappropriate, only to be followed by President Obama specifically stating during his speech to Australia’s parliament that cooperation over the South China Sea dispute would be one of the issues discussed at the session. In response to President Obama’s call at APEC for China to follow the established rules of international trade, a senior Chinese Foreign Ministry official was caught by the media, stating, “if the rules are decided by one or several countries, China does not have to observe them.” Despite U.S. calls for cooperation and multilateralism, Michael Green told The New York Times that multilateral endeavors are “…becoming an arena for subtle but, for the region, quite unnerving power plays and influence games between the U.S. and China.”

Leading up to the November 2011 APEC forum in Hawaii and his trip to Australia, President Obama continued to press China on allowing greater flexibility with

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32 Richburg, “U.S. pivot to Asia makes China nervous.”

the valuation of its currency, the yuan renminbi (RMB), improve domestic Chinese working conditions and human rights, increase imports of U.S. manufactured goods, and make headway towards greater governmental transparency. As previously indicated, these pressures created at least a small degree of tension with representatives from the People’s Republic of China. The joint U.S.-Australian announcement on November 16 and following tension stemming from President Obama’s discussion of the South China Sea dispute further increased tension between both sides.

Washington’s rhetoric regarding its agreement with Australia and, more generally, the U.S. pivot to the Asia-Pacific region form a mostly uniform narrative reflective of both U.S. identity and interests. Foremost, the U.S. (re)affirms its commitment to and presence in the Asia-Pacific region and its allies therein. Here, the U.S. draws upon its longstanding identity as a “Pacific” nation, supporting the legitimacy of its interests and actions within the region. Signaling its commitment to the region and friends and allies therein, the U.S. also asserts its identity as one of, if not the, key actors within the region (by extension of its worldwide influence and power). This narrative also works to affirm the U.S. identity as the guarantor of stability and status quo in the Asia-Pacific. The U.S. has indeed held important interests and maintained strong relationships within the Asia-Pacific. However, in refocusing its foreign policy, why has Washington decided to re-affirm and re-emphasize its commitment to the Asia-Pacific, as characterized by actions such as the joint U.S.-Australian agreement of late 2011?

\[\text{34 Issues part of a recurring theme of President Obama’s campaign during this time.}\]
Though the U.S. is careful in mentioning specific reasons for the its foreign policy reorientation, many indicators point to concerns over China and its rise. As indicated above, concerns include examples such as the region’s various disputes, uncertainty over China’s willingness to play by established regional and global rules, China’s military modernization, civilian control over the People’s Liberation Army, and even human rights issues. In light of these concerns, the U.S. is strengthening its presence within the region and its ties with countries of shared values, such as Australia. When the United States asserts its interest in maintaining stability within the region, China is implicitly identified as the other, as a potential threat to regional stability (despite the great care typically taken by the U.S. to avoid identifying China as a competitor or even enemy).

Despite aspects of the U.S. narrative regarding the “pivot” emphasizing cooperation with China and win-win diplomacy, tacit uncertainty influences U.S. views of China, situating China opposite the U.S. and identifying it as a potential source of instability. Thus, the U.S., however discreetly, situates itself and its identity—as provider of stability and upholder of human rights—opposite China. However, U.S. restraint in specifically identifying China as part of its focus or the reason behind its foreign policy reorientation does aid in preserving greater room for a working relationship between both countries.

Although U.S. narratives may indicate the country’s identities as a leading power in the Asia-Pacific region and guarantor of stability, often implicitly opposite China, consideration of the other deserves exploration as well. How does China view the U.S. “pivot” to Asia and what salient aspects of Chinese identity arise with its views?
Chinese Perspective of the U.S. “Pivot”

In the People’s Republic of China, media outlets provide important insight into views of the government. Typically, they either serve as a mouthpiece for the Chinese Communist Party—relaying official narratives and positions—or operate under tight regulation. Nonetheless, even official state media outlets offer deeper insights into Chinese views than provided by official government remarks alone, often voicing higher and more heated degrees of criticism. Frequently, these views originate from ministry spokesmen, rather than high-level officials, in response to events in international politics. In response to the joint U.S.-Australian agreement, The People’s Daily (Renmin Ribao), quoted Defense Ministry spokesman Geng Yansheng stating “Military alliances are a product of history. We believe any strengthening and expansion of military alliances is an expression of a Cold War mentality.” A China.org.cn article criticized the agreement, arguing that it undermines Australian neutrality and could put Australia in an “embarrassing situation” if conflict were to occur, going on to argue that the U.S.-Australia alliance “will deal a blow to Sino-Australian relations” and that the stationing of American troops near Darwin will pose a strategic challenge for China. The article’s

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35 Though various media sources, editors, and journalists often attempt (and succeed, at least for a time) to circumvent the restrictions and regulations imposed upon them. The proliferation of Chinese media outlets and bloggers also poses great threat to the Chinese Communist Party’s ability to control information.

36 Li Xiaokun and Li Lianxing, “US military base in Australia shows ‘Cold War mentality’,” People’s Daily, December 1, 2011.

author, Jiao Haiyang, serves as deputy director of the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, one of China’s top think tanks.\(^{38}\)

The Chinese media also directs much criticism towards U.S. military strategy. Commenting on the new U.S. National Defense Strategy in China’s *Jiefangjun Bao Online*, Lin Zhiyuan contends that the Obama administration has turned back to the threat-based national defense strategy the U.S. followed during the Cold War and away from its capabilities-based strategy directed towards countering terrorism under Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. Lin uses this argument to demonstrate that the United States is acting in accordance with what many, particularly those in China, term the “China threat theory.” As Lin states, “One could say that the United States is a country which cannot do without war. On the one hand, it is ‘withdrawing troops,’ while on the other it is ‘drilling soldiers and feeding warhorses’ (making preparations for war), strengthening its military alliance relationships, and completing preparations to fight the next war.”\(^{39}\)

\(^{38}\) Open Source Center, “Profile of MSS-Affiliated PRC Foreign Policy Think Tank CICIR,” *Report* August 25, 2011, 2. Though this report examines the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), it mentions the CASS as one of China’s top think tanks. However, the report does not divulge whether there are ties with China’s Ministry of State Security (MSS).

\(^{39}\) Lin Zhiyuan, “What Sort of Message Does the New US National Defense Strategy Convey?” *Jiefangjun Bao Online*, January 9, 2012, Open Source Center. An alternate explanation might contend that President Obama’s military strategy bears many similarities to that of former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld’s, such as restructuring the armed services in favor of light, adaptable forces, noting the President’s focus on drone use, for instance. Criticism over the U.S. warhorse is dubious, as China itself maintains and advances its own military. Fear over greater U.S. interest in the region may be interpreted in terms of Lin falling prey to the security dilemma or related interpretations of international politics.
Some do offer a more positive view. Diplomat Wu Jianmin contends that “Peace, development, and cooperation have become an irresistible trend of the era” and that there will only be a Cold War between China and the United States if both sides choose to fight. On this point, Wu expresses that China holds no aspirations for world hegemony and will never wage a new Cold War against the U.S. Ultimately, Wu states that “current Sino-US relations are fundamentally different from former Soviet-U.S. relations. Pursuit of hegemony in Soviet-American relations was dominant at that time, while seeking cooperation in Sino-US relations is dominant today,” closing with the recommendation that “We should absolutely not fall into the trap created by new Cold War inciters. This trap is a road that will lead the world to disaster, goes against the historical trend, and is doomed to failure.”

Beijing’s rhetoric regarding the U.S. “pivot” presents an interesting narrative and depiction of China’s own identity. To start, the rhetoric represents the “pivot” as part of a U.S. strategy to contain China, akin to strategies and thinking prominent during the Cold War. Officials in Beijing note that this sort of behavior and military alliances, such as between the U.S. and Australia, are unnecessary, as China does not seek hegemony or conflict. These officials assert the benign identity of China and their country’s rise while depicting the U.S. as a self-interested hegemon. At the same time, Beijing delivered close to what may be interpreted as a direct warning to Australia that its relationship with


41 Wu, “Will a New Cold War Break Out?”
the U.S. may have consequences. Such statements and forms of indirect pressure can and do influence social interactions and behavior. Regardless, China asserts its benign identity and does so opposite an other encumbered by a Cold War framework of viewing international politics, the United States.

On the other hand, as represented by Wu’s remarks, some officials in China do hold a more optimistic view of U.S.-China relations, focused on factors like cooperation. Such views better fit China’s own assertion of its identity as a benign rising power. This, however, creates complexity in determining China’s identity. Here, caution must be exercised, as China’s does not necessarily present a uniform identity or view of international politics. There appears to be relative agreement amongst Chinese officials’ assertions of the benign nature of their country and its rise. However, consideration of these assertions must be done in light of China’s actions within the region and elsewhere. Also, differences arise in Chinese views and depictions of the United States, its involvement in the region, and its relations with regional allies. The depictions, by some, of the U.S. as a power constricted by Cold War thinking with a desire to contain China identifies the U.S. as an other opposite Chinese interests, an other opposite China’s self-professed benign interests and rise. As neither side’s identities and actions exist in isolation, analyzing their interaction allows for a more complete representation of U.S.-China relations

**The Intersection of Competing Identities**

Interactions among identities offer mixed insights when attempting to understand contemporary U.S.-China relations, especially in light of the U.S.-Australian agreement
itself and China’s reaction. Rhetoric present in the narratives of each country indicates, on one hand, security driven, even traditional realist, concerns while, on the other, underscoring the importance of cooperation and peaceful interstate relations. Within these narratives, as discussed previously, it is possible to glean aspects of each side’s identities, attempts to fix and stabilize these identities, and the influence various frameworks and worldviews have on them. However, when considered together, these threads of identity interact and weave an altogether unique tapestry defiant of off the shelf, one size fits all theories and scholarship. Moreover, within the details and differences of each side’s narratives, deeper understanding emerges. Problematizing international theories as worldviews adopted by and in part constituting the identities of important international actors enlightens this approach to understanding. These worldviews and others serve as the lenses through which international actors view and attempt to understand one another similar to an academic’s application of theory to international politics, acting as a lens through which to explain worldly phenomena. Understanding how international actors view one another and international politics offers greater possibility of understanding their behavior. It also brings to light the relational nature of international relations, the fact that actors’ identities (including their worldviews and the outlooks or theories they hold) are dynamic, developing and changing based on interaction with one another—the actions they take, the rhetoric they speak, the intentions they signal—and the interpretations that result.

On the surface, at a superficial level, the behavior of China and the United States in some ways hearkens to realist notions of power politics found during the Cold War.
As Mearsheimer portended in 2006, Beijing and Washington, driven by distrust and preoccupied with security, seemingly seek to acquire power in order to protect themselves and their interests. Their internal composition, ideologies, and any broader preferences or interests matter little. According to this view, the United States, despite claims otherwise, is simply redistributing its focus and forces to protect against its greatest growing perceived threat, the People’s Republic of China. With waning interests in the Middle East and surrounding countries, the U.S. seeks to affirm a new identity as an authority in the Asia-Pacific, drawing upon its history of involvement in the region to support this identity while cautiously eyeing China’s rise. For its part, steadily accruing the resources necessary to acquire and maintain great power status, Beijing, uncertain of U.S. power and inclined to shift the regional or even global status quo in its own favor, is modernizing its military forces and should increasingly oppose U.S. interests and increased regional presence, eventually seeking to push the United States from the region and even possibly supplant it as the global hegemon. Along the way, China will surely enforce its territorial claims in the surrounding seas and take punitive measures against weaker regional actors that align themselves with the United States in a coming great power contest. Though the situation need not necessarily devolve to the point of armed conflict, it very easily might. Each side’s nuclear insurance helps—to the extent the logic of mutually assured destruction (MAD) holds—stand guard against this possibility. Economic interdependence might act similarly, though history reminds observers that conflict may occur regardless of high levels of interdependence:

Associating interdependence, peace, democracy, and prosperity is nothing new. In his much translated and widely read book, *The Great Illusion* (1933), Norman
Angell summed up the texts of generations of classical and neoclassical economists and drew from them the dramatic conclusion that wars would no longer be fought because they would not pay. World War I instead produced the great disillusion, which reduced political optimism to a level that remained low almost until the end of the Cold War. I say "almost" because beginning in the 1970s a new optimism, strikingly similar in content to the old, began to resurface. Interdependence was again associated with peace and peace increasingly with democracy, which began to spread wonderfully to Latin America, to Asia, and with the Soviet Union’s collapse, to Eastern Europe.42

Even so, realism offers little account of high levels of economic interdependence between the U.S. and China and the cooperation necessary to sustain their respective economies, despite an essentially fragile relationship. What of realism’s mutual distrust and a proclivity for self-reliance? Should not either of these concerns caution a rising power and global hegemon against sacrificing any degree of security resulting from dependence upon one another, especially a potential peer competitor? Trade is not the only concern; so is the vast amount of excess savings that China invests in the United States through purchase of U.S. treasury securities. A decrease or halt in this much-needed investment very much threatens the United States and the value of the U.S. dollar (USD). However, if China stops or even decreases investing substantially in the USD, let alone considers “dumping” its holdings of U.S. debt, the USD will decrease dramatically and China, due to its investments and inability to liquidate them all instantaneously, will suffer heavily as well, compelling the country to maintain, even buttress these investments.

Perhaps cooperation between the U.S. and China is a holdover from times when the world knew a weaker China, posing less of a possible future threat to the United

States. Then again, perhaps tension has always permeated the relationship—the outcome of the Chinese revolution, the Korean War, Vietnam, Tiananmen Square, crises in the Taiwan Strait, the 1999 accidental bombing of China’s Belgrade embassy, the 2001 EP-3E spy plane incident, Chinese relations with North Korea, relations with Iran, relations with Pakistan, human rights abuses, accusations by the U.S. of a lack of fairness in trade relations and currency manipulation, and China’s opposition to UN sanctions on Syria’s Assad regime all providing almost a century of examples of tension in U.S.-China relations. At a more basic level, it may make more sense to ask why these two countries fear one another more than others? China does not pose the greatest existential threat to the United States in terms of capabilities or intentions (at least this does not presently appear to be the case). China, for instance, could certainly pursue military modernization and weapons acquisition at a quicker pace with respect to the U.S. or Japan. What accounts for these realizations?

Holding contentious ideologies and views on fundamental issues such as human rights, observers might very well expect China and the United States to often find themselves at odds, a “clash of civilizations,” or at least governments, coming to head.43 On the other hand, perhaps increasing regional and global interaction and institutional engagement has effected a more cooperative or benign nature regarding U.S.-China relations. If the case, however, observers might expect lower degrees of insecurity and tension within the region, including greater progress towards resolutions to the region’s various territorial and other disputes. Theoretical approaches emphasizing cooperation

43 Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” Foreign Affairs 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993).
unfortunately do not delve into the foundations of the interests and identities of the U.S., China, or other regional actors, including how their identities, and in turn interests, are constituted. Often, approaches that supposedly pay heed to such factors, constructivist approaches of some report, in the end only offer superficial examinations that do not fully explore the social interactions of these concepts and the processes involved in their relation: social construction. Even if, as Alexander Wendt states, anarchy is what states make of it, by what process does this occur?

Adopting an identity centric approach to understanding the interaction of U.S. and Chinese identities regarding the U.S. pivot to the Asia-Pacific proves more illuminating than simple theoretical analyses. In justifying the pivot, the United States asserts its unbroken membership in the club of Pacific powers. The President and his top officials uphold official impartiality on most issues in the region in their official statements, typically referring only to an interest in maintaining regional stability, but simultaneously endeavor to strengthen alliances and relations with states party to some of the region’s disputes. Within the region, and in relation to China in particular, the U.S. also places great importance upon human rights issues. Though the United States trumpets respect for basic, universal human rights, it is worth considering to what extent doing so might possibly serve a political purpose, toward gaining moral superiority opposite China both on regional and international stages. Generally perceived as highly sensitive to human rights abuses, what does the United States’ own mistreatment of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq or even the comparatively minor mistreatment of domestic protestors composing the Occupy Wall Street movement do, if anything, to U.S. criticism
of human rights abuses by others? It is also worth considering to what extent either actor, if at all, trades on fear, even if only the prospect fear, to serve their own ends, consciously or unconsciously. To what extent do certain interpretations and characterizations—these narratives—serve particular interests and define them within or between the United States and China?

Responding remarks expressed in U.S. narratives, China frequently asserts that external forces should not interfere in other countries’ issues of national sovereignty or of domestic nature, including the East and South China Sea disputes. China also responds to U.S. human rights criticism by exclaiming its own support of human rights while criticizing the U.S. for the human rights abuses it commits, supposedly ignores, and does not take responsibility for. These abuses include high rates of domestic violent crime and gun ownership, decreasing privacy with relaxing legal restraints on law enforcement and other agencies, prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, and so forth. Yet, if U.S. criticism of China might in some ways serve as a ploy for moral superiority in international politics (or serve other purposes, which may very well include legitimate concern), China’s criticism of U.S. human rights certainly appears to do so, coming as a retort to U.S. criticism, a retort that in numerous instances appropriates sources of

44 “Full Text of Human Rights Record of the United States in 2010,” Xinhua, April 10, 2011. While the Chinese government remarks that the United States needs to face up to its own human rights abuses, of which it reportedly seldom does, the report on the United States goes on to cite numerous U.S. sources and organizations to back its statistics and claims, fully ignoring the role these institutions play and the role of freedom in speech in bringing these criticisms to light. In a roundabout way, the Chinese government often finds sources of criticism from within the U.S. only to report this criticism back to the U.S.
criticism of U.S. human rights abuses originating from within the U.S. while at the very same time arguing the U.S. ignores the issues cited!

Of more concern in regards to the U.S. “pivot,” China at times accuses the United States of attempting to encircle it in the Asia-Pacific, of attempting to contain China, and for engaging in balance of power, Cold War style politics. Strengthening its position in the Asia-Pacific region through its joint agreement with Australia, this narrative of U.S. behavior is at the very least plausible. As for China, the CCP asserts that they follow the path of a peaceful, harmonious rise and do not seek to become a world hegemon or disrupt international stability. On the other hand, maintaining relations with North Korea and Iran, opposing UN sanctions on Syria, and modernizing its military forces might also point to Cold War style politics, China opposing and balancing against the interests of the U.S. and other western powers throughout the world. This implies that China seeks to check and restrain U.S. power and influence more than directly confront it, reminiscent of the Cold War. This is but one interpretation of pertinent narratives and identities, but whether the foreign policy behaviors of either side represent Cold War style politics is nonetheless worth considering.

Though both sides frankly admit the need to develop greater levels of mutual trust, in doing so they tacitly admit the dearth of trust existing between them. While spotting evidence of this distrust takes little effort, both sides work diligently to maintain bilateral exchanges and cooperation whenever possible. One of the greatest shared interests between both the United States and China is economic growth. However, while both sides share an interest in maintaining the stability necessary to support this growth, their
interests in economic growth itself differs. Both sides clearly need the other in order to prosper but they remain foremost interested in their own economic superiority and prosperity. U.S. pressure on China to quickly enact financial and trade reforms and China’s reluctance to do so exhibit economic nationalism in practice, protectionism antithetical to a global free market but nonetheless endorsed, at least rhetorically, both for domestic and international purposes. Here, as in other cases, two powerful countries draw words rather than weapons in hope of influencing perceptions in international politics.

When working together in international politics or seeking the approval of others, image matters. States and their policymakers often wage these rhetorical battles to express and influence narratives regarding identities of themselves and others, in some cases with little regard for what may be legitimate or accurate, betraying their international jockeying and hinting at deeper motives. The same occurs within states. Recently, China faced a large-scale leadership transition beginning with the meeting of the National People’s Congress held on November 8, 2012, while the United States held its presidential and other elections on November 6. In the U.S., both presidential candidates promised to adopt or maintain a tough stance on China, especially concerning trade and economic relations. Such domestic statements serve certain interests and influence perceptions, whether and to what degree the interests are legitimate, self-serving, or otherwise. Concerns may be legitimate, but they may also offer an issue with which to incite or exacerbate fear and simultaneously offer a solution in the voting booth or from which to motivate already concerned voters. With the 2012 U.S. presidential
race, remarks were intended for a domestic audience but, nonetheless, have an effect on both domestic perceptions and on those between the U.S. and China. Both countries routinely monitor the domestic policies and statements of the other. Though both sides certainly understand the nature of hyperbolic political rhetoric, uncertainty nevertheless remains and the rhetoric itself always holds the potential to create commitment traps and reshape identities and perceptions.

It remains early to fully understand the recent actions and rhetoric stemming from both sides of the Pacific regarding the U.S. “pivot” and agreement with Australia. Of what might be understood at this point, while the United States does not define China as an enemy, it certainly does not define it as a close friend or ally. In many ways the U.S. views China as a competitor, as a potential source of instability, as an underhanded trading partner, as weak on human rights, and far from a liberal democracy. Opposite these views of China, the U.S. differentiates and defines itself. The U.S. is or sees itself as the world’s leading economic and military force, if not moral authority and stabilizing force, promoting systems of liberal trade and governance throughout the world while serving as an example for others to follow, valuing fundamental human rights and liberties and democracy. Beijing views itself as victim of undue criticism from Western powers and their allies, unfairly the focus of U.S. economic and security concerns with Washington’s pivot to Asia, as provider of an alternative to the Washington consensus, and as a returning great power, once the Middle-Kingdom, the center of the world, politically and otherwise, with ever increasing influence. The narratives and identities of each side interact to create a situation of heightened tension and mistrust despite desires
for improved relations. Both sides exhibit their own confidence and insecurity; both might be described in Callahan’s terms as “Pessoptimist Nations,” if in different ways and for different reasons.

Whatever else might be, the United States and China need one another. Understanding the intricacies of how and why lays the pathway to a more informed understanding of U.S.-China relations and the productive power of influence they bear upon one another. An attempt to understand U.S.-China relations and the inherent distrust therein requires an examination of the ways in which both countries constitute their identities and an exploration of the interactions between these identities both internally and externally. Developing the details of this approach and applying it to U.S.-China relations offers not only a way to understand this case, it also offers a specific approach generalizable to understanding international politics capable of illuminating details intrinsic to how international actors view and interact with one another.
INTRODUCTION: IDENTITY IN U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are.

–The Talmud

Some of the most interesting and pressing issues in international relations currently revolve around the relationship between the United States and China, this relationship itself poised to remain critically important in international politics moving forward through the twenty-first century. Both China and the U.S. view the other through a prism producing a spectrum of concerns that affect their relations with one another, whether in terms of national security or other national interests. While the nature and importance of relations between these two countries have varied throughout history, China’s continued rise and growing levels of economic interdependence between the U.S. and China have brought the relationship increasing attention for some time. This increasing attention is especially apparent considering the multiple points of tension permeating U.S.-China relations.

Taiwan, China’s maritime territorial disputes, North Korea, modernization of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), trade practices, environmental concerns, human rights issues, and even allegations of cyber espionage and attacks all serve as examples that, in different ways and to different extents, have caused friction in bilateral relations between Beijing and Washington over recent years.45 While these and other issues are interesting and important for their own sake, a more fundamental concern exists: what is

45 Not to discount friction in other bilateral and multilateral relations within the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere.
at stake as China rises closer to the power and influence possessed by the United States, especially where diverging interests come into contact? Will a new “Cold War” emerge or, perhaps, a hegemonic transition marked by conflict, as some have predicted? Understanding such questions (as only the future provides such answers) requires analysis of the identities at play on both sides of the Pacific. Identities characterize and contextualize social interactions, interests, and material factors. Essentially, identities characterize the very nature of relations between various actors, in this case the nature of relations between the U.S. and China. Examining the role and influence of identities on the nature of U.S.-China relations, this study seeks to improve and enhance understanding of this relationship, demonstrate the importance of considering the role of identity in international relations, and assist policymakers on both sides better understand and navigate their relations with the other.

Numerous analyses of China and U.S.-China relations have surfaced over the past few decades, often attempting to explain—to fix in time, at least for a time—the true nature of China as it rises ever closer to becoming a peer competitor to the United States. These studies toil on fertile ground, as the relationship involves differing ideologies,

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46 This question bears obvious ethnocentricity, a question implicitly cast in terms of U.S. interests. The following analysis does, however, strive for impartiality, doing so to develop greater understanding not only of U.S.-China relations but also the perspectives of each side free from as much bias as possible. In combination with this goal, this study also hopes to offer relevance beyond academia.


48 As outlined later, this study adopts the position that interests are neither homogenous nor exogenously given.
systems of governance, and seemingly endemic tension over important interests and issues. Despite the intent of these analyses, little consensus as to the nature of China’s rise has emerged and attempts to define China, largely the purpose of these analyses, remain little more than speculative. As in the field of international relations itself, interpretations, theories, and worldviews abound. This implicitly calls into question traditional modes of understanding and explanation in the field of international relations and the practice of fitting real world cases into preconceived frameworks and theories rather than attempting to understand the nuances of real world cases on their own terms and the influence of theories and frameworks on the real world. How, then, does this study propose to understand the nature of past, present, and future U.S.-China relations and, more generally, relationships between other international actors?

Paying heed to fundamental theoretical assumptions about how and under what conditions states and other actors interact, scholars in the field of international relations typically seek to explain and hope to predict international behavior. Following this endeavor, they ask many important and worthwhile questions. Why do international political actors behave in the ways that they do? What are the causes of conflict or cooperation in international politics? Are states constrained by existential fear to little more than rational, zero-sum calculations and power balancing behavior in a world where no more than self-help can be trusted? Is meaningful cooperation possible? Does the spread of political or economic liberalism mediate conflict? Do culture, soft power, or ideology matter? Is the international system (often taken as a system of presupposed anarchy of a specific nature) simply what states make of it? These all serve as examples
of predominant theoretical questions pondered within the field of international relations. With a seemingly trivial semantic shift from speaking of theories to worldviews—the actual views and outlooks held by social actors—drastically different and more complex questions emerge. Instead of asking about the state of the international system and actors within, focus turns to questions about how states and other actors view and interpret the international system and other actors—including themselves—in order to understand their interactions with one another. Theories become lenses not only through which to explain or predict international behavior but are themselves interpretations and perspectives—theories, worldviews, outlooks—that influence behavior, a notion denying researchers the ability (the choice) to ignore the realization that international relations is social in nature.

Regardless of the terminology adopted—theories, frameworks, approaches, worldviews, perspectives, strategic cultures, or otherwise—looking at the effects of identities and perceptions on international behavior treats theories more closely to what they actually are: social constructions product and productive of international politics.\textsuperscript{49} Beliefs about the international system and the interactions that occur within do not result from timeless, objective, systemic truths independent of the relations that constitute international relations, as some theories hold.\textsuperscript{50} International politics is the result of

\textsuperscript{49} Productive of international politics in the sense that social theories aid in producing—in constructing—reality.

\textsuperscript{50} Many scholars, taking it upon themselves to define the discipline of international relations and its scope—often based upon their own theories and not vice versa—minimize the importance of the object in the phrase “international relations” in favor of the adjective. In other words, some scholars minimize or ignore the relations in
interaction, learning, and interpretation among international actors and thus utterly dependent upon these actors’ unique, ever-changing natures—their identities. This dynamic process—interactions between international actors, the relations of international relations— influences the views international actors hold and thus influences their views of one another and the international system. The process flows to and fro; identities, how actors view others and themselves, are interdependent and inextricably linked, acting as both cause and effect. What, then, is identity and how does it influence international politics?

The concept of identity is inherently complex and refuses simple definition (not to mention operationalization). Identity is largely a conceptual notion; it is intangible and exists in the flow of social interaction and social relationships. Generally, identity refers to the conceptions actors hold of (or project onto) themselves and others. However, identity is much more complex than this simple definition allows. Glimpses of this elusive concept appear in the very process of social interaction as actors invoke the notion of identities, implicitly or explicitly. Identities result from actors’ unique histories, their beliefs, and their interests, factors all of which are interdependent and interact with other identities. That identity can be taken simultaneously as both cause and effect serves as a strength in emphasizing the role of this concept when analyzing international politics. It allows researchers to direct attention towards the formation of international relations, often turning to their own theories to justify doing so and to justify their attempts to define the discipline.

51 Not that operationalization is necessarily a worthwhile endeavor or that it will here be attempted. A footnote within the next chapter notes both Popper and Einstein’s thoughts on operational definitions.
identity and its constitution as well as its influence on behavior. As both are interrelated, identities are in a constant state of social flux. Choosing to treat them as such may not prove a neat or tidy endeavor but does avoid the explanatory limitations of theories restricted to one or the other. It allows researchers to consider the performative nature by which identities are constituted and expressed and their ability to both influence and be influenced when examining the narratives through which identities emerge.

This study contributes to a basis for and demonstrates the value of examining identity as a fundamental concept in international politics by both exploring its theoretical foundations and applying an identity centric approach towards analyzing and developing a richer understanding of the nature of U.S.-China relations. The decision to assess the United States and China is not arbitrary, the global importance of both countries, the unpredictable and often tense relations between them, and the evident importance of history, culture, and other factors—all important components of identity—support this choice. Since the 1980s, scholars have speculated about the rise of an Asian century. China’s rise and the current importance of the Asia-Pacific region, the fear often accompanying speculation concerning China’s rise, and Washington’s supposed pivot to Asia with the beginning of America’s self-proclaimed Asia-Pacific century all indicate the current importance of the relationship between Beijing and Washington. Further, the representational instability created by China’s rise, as this phenomenon alters the ever-dynamic fabric of the international system, also influences this choice in case selection; it

opens space for examining the role of identity at play in U.S.-China relations where identities and interests come into contact in a dance of power and politics.⁵³

Focusing on the identities at play in U.S.-China relations, this study primarily analyzes the “national” identities that influence or are endorsed by both countries in their interactions with one another and in their foreign policies, only devoting attention to more varied “sub-national” (or, better, sub-state) identities when they obviously influence bilateral relations. This decision is not made on the basis that more internal identities are any less important or interesting than national identities. They are, perhaps, more important and more interesting than the identities this study examines.⁵⁴ For example, despite being viewed by many “China watchers” and others as a monocultural entity defined by a predominant Han identity and nationalism, many different ethnicities, nationalities, and identities comprise the Chinese state, including Han and Muslims, China’s various Muslim nationalities,⁵⁵ urban and rural, rich and poor, and men and women. Of course, these more internal identities can influence international politics: consider the possible effects China’s treatment of its Muslim minorities might have on relations between predominantly Muslim countries and Beijing (many of which are

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⁵³ A degree of arbitrariness does exist in terms of why select the U.S. and China over other important relationships in international politics, as well as why many view this relationship itself as important (and the potential effect or productive power of such views). These concerns are inescapable in any study.

⁵⁴ And examining these more domestic identities, understudied as they are in terms of broader international politics, offers a fruitful path for future research and analysis.

⁵⁵ For an excellent examination of different Muslim groups within the Chinese state and in what ways their identities are expressed (nationality versus religion versus ethnicity), see Dru C. Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).
significant trading partners with or investors in China). Nonetheless, this study limits its focus primarily to foreign policy concerns, analyzing the identities that influence the interstate relations between the U.S. and China due to the seemingly growing importance of and tension exhibited by this relationship.

The stakes, as noted earlier, in relations between Beijing and Washington are high, all the more unnerving realizing the tensions that permeate an otherwise peaceful relationship. The possibility, for instance, of a military conflict between China and Taiwan that draws in the United States lingers with unrealized potential. In her book, *China: Fragile Superpower*, Susan Shirk (2007) opens by recalling her continual worry over the realization of this very possibility—even by accident—during her time serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs during the Clinton administration. The intricacies of whether and to what extent conflict might occur between the U.S. and China due to Taiwan are complex, from interpretations over what the language of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) actually requires of the U.S. in defense of Taiwan to how quickly the island might be overrun in the event of a cross-strait conflict. Regardless, the issue remains a potential flashpoint. What then of the high levels of economic interdependence (and wide social and cultural exchanges) shared between the U.S. and China, these two nuclear powers? What then of the security of other important trade relations and, especially, trade routes within the Asia-Pacific region?

China’s quarrel with Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands presents another volatile situation, one analyzed later within this study. Both China and Japan levy
competing sovereign claims to these islands, especially since the discovery of valuable natural resources within their proximity (particularly oil and gas deposits, rich fisheries, and trade route control). The United States officially maintains a neutral stance on the status of the islands but, as Japan’s ally, asserts that it is bound by treaty to come to Japan’s defense with regard to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands or otherwise. As with Taiwan, direct conflict between China and Japan need not be intentional. Accidents, uncertainty, and miscommunication may just as easily result in escalation and conflict.

China’s targeting of both a Japanese ship and aircraft near the islands with weapons radar in January 2013 demonstrates how easily the situation might unintentionally (if not intentionally) escalate to the point of actual armed conflict. Similarities exist between this dispute and territorial disputes in the South China Sea over the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, and the Scarborough Shoal. Though different issues involving different actors, natural resources and waterway control are likewise at stake and these spats too might result in broader conflict.

Pertinent in considering any potential conflict between China and the U.S. or another country, China’s efforts to modernize the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), particularly the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), presents another issue of concern. China is also focusing attention on developing asymmetric capabilities able to (assumedly) counter U.S. military strengths. China’s Dong Feng-21D (DF-21D) anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM), dubbed the carrier killer, offers one compelling example. In its annual report to Congress on China’s military, the U.S. Department of Defense notes that the PLA intends the DF-21D to provide the ability to attack large ships,
particularly aircraft carriers, in the Pacific Ocean. If successful, the missile system will be able to target U.S. ships and possibly avoid the defensive systems employed by carrier strike groups, posing a relatively low cost method to counter one of the United States’ foremost and expensive military strengths. Additionally, China recently commenced sea trials (August 2011) of its first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, an ex-Soviet carrier formerly known as the Varyag—purchased from Ukraine in 1998. China is also working on two stealth fighters, the J-20 and J-31, in addition to maintaining and upgrading other weapons systems in the unending fashion adopted by modern military powers. These activities certainly must be taken into consideration when contemplating the possibility of a regional conflict. Cyber space—especially allegations of Chinese cyber espionage and attacks—presents yet another asymmetric capability that has increased tension in U.S.-China relations and led the U.S. government to consider this space, existing inside the flow of electrons, as a new domain of warfare. While these various Chinese weapon systems and capabilities might not ultimately meet expectations and might not directly match U.S. capabilities, uncertainty proves enough to warrant caution and consideration.

56 The 2012 and 2011 reports mention little more than the development of the DF-21D and that it has a range exceeding 1,500km and a maneuverable warhead. See the 2011 and 2012 reports under the following: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Annual Report to Congress, Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China.

57 For a concise history of China’s aircraft carrier desires and the history of China’s problematic acquisition of the Varyag, see Ian Storey and Ji You, “China’s Aircraft Carrier Ambitions: Seeking Truth from Rumors,” Naval War College Review 57, no. 1 (Winter 2004).

58 If cyber space may truly be called a “space” at all. The extent to which it can be referred to as such, or even a domain of warfare, is discussed in chapter five.
With these various considerations in mind, how, then, does the nature of U.S.-China relations create a situation, a reality, with stakes high for both sides and teeming with potential for conflict? Adopting an interpretive approach to considering identity in international politics offers a method to develop a more detailed (though still subjective as most attempts at understanding and explanation), contextual understanding of the specific issues and phenomena salient in U.S.-China relations. The findings produced by this approach might not be generalizable, as they are context specific and the approach itself does not engage in the practice of theory building, but the approach to understanding here adopted is generalizable. Ultimately, this study argues that the identities and representational practices found on behalf of both the U.S. and China serve to construct, support, as well as influence the nature of relations between these two states, an argument applicable to relations between any actors in the broader international political system.

Adopting an identity centric approach to the study of international politics does not necessarily privilege social facts to the exclusion of so called material factors. Though social facts are highly important and of primary emphasis, their importance does not deemphasize the importance of material factors. Rather, examining identity allows researchers to place material factors in context in order to better understand their importance; they still play a major role in identify formation and affect both individual and group interests. Emblematic of this relationship, material factors, including critical resources and the tools of military power, hold the potential to influence identity formation, perceptions of others, and in turn behavior. Juxtaposing the nuclear
deterrence theory of mutually assured destruction (MAD) with international politics illustrates this point.

Nuclear arsenals, though the creation of man, do have an objective, tangible, existence.\textsuperscript{59} On their own, however, they pose little threat, lacking any objective purpose or intent.\textsuperscript{60} Only when combined with identities and how the identities of others are perceived do they become instruments of fear and deterrence (offering insight behind desires to possess nuclear weapons). This dependent relationship explains why the United States does not fear the nuclear weapons of the United Kingdom, but did fear the Soviet Union’s nuclear arsenal during the Cold War, as well as why the U.S. might now fear the nuclear arsenals of China or Pakistan.\textsuperscript{61} Of course, the United States also fears the potential for nuclear exchange between pairs of long time rivals, such as Pakistan and India. Identity also aids in explaining why Japan, a nonnuclear state, does not currently fear the nuclear arsenal of the United States, even though it is the only state to suffer the horrors of nuclear attacks—at the hands of the United States—while Iran might very well fear the United States’ (or Israel’s) nuclear arsenal. The point is simple, while identities are important, absent the objects of cooperation or conflict, both matter relatively little.

\textsuperscript{59} “Objective” leaving aside philosophical debates over ontology and epistemology.

\textsuperscript{60} But the potential for accidents still exists, as well as concerns over deterioration, both potentially leading to unintended radiation contamination.

\textsuperscript{61} The latter particularly, primarily out of concern for the security of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal and nuclear material in light of the identities and interests of those who might come to appropriate the country’s nuclear weapons or components in the event of government incompetence or dissolution.
Contention may exist that adopting such an identity centric approach to examining the role of identity in international politics (an approach akin to social constructivism) does not, in fact, operate within the realm of international relations theory, instead offering more of an approach to understanding foreign policy, concerned with state or individual level issues instead of those of the systemic level. While such a parochial view might favor parsimonious theorizing or reinforce the authority of more traditional approaches within the field of international relations, it does little service to the discipline or the policymakers and others who might pay heed to scholarly insights. Traditional approaches to international relations, often limited to analysis of systemic level issues and taking states as unitary actors, detach the political from political science and the relations from international relations. They arbitrarily limit their own applicability and ability to explore a wider, more diverse range of phenomena and observations, including the real world influence of social theories. They also often exert, as has at times been the case, a tyrannical agenda on the field of international relations, an agenda that limits and circumscribes scholarly goals of seeking greater knowledge and understanding by privileging certain methods of pursuing these goals over others. There is little mistake that the insights and explanations offered by traditional theories often prove intriguing and, in many cases, make intuitive sense. The fundamental problem lies in their limited applicability, the tendency for reification by their proponents, and the ability of social theories to influence social behavior. International behavior cannot be legitimately examined without paying deference to this fact.
Examining the role of identity in international politics does increase the complexity of explanations and understanding and require intensive study, often incorporating many factors. It also requires the cultivation of in-depth regional and country specific knowledge and a respect for and inclusion of history. Worrisome for some might be the potential for subjectivity that exists in conducting analyses that examine identity. However, potential for subjectivity exists with any research study and in the application of any theory. Adopting a traditional approach under the mantle of “science” often only masks this fact. Much depends on each particular researcher, their knowledge, biases, sources used, sources ignored, and even the sources of which they find themselves (or, rather, do not find themselves) ignorant. Even quantitative studies, boasting supposed greater objectivity provided by mathematical formulae and statistical analyses suffer bias and subjectivity in the interpretation of results, the selection and exclusion of variables, how variables are coded, how data is collected, and in the incorporation of underlying theory. The only remedy is to adopt an approach that admits potential subjectivity or bias and attempts to problematize it. Adopting an identity centric approach allows for tailoring to specific needs and allows for the examination of more specific questions to develop more specific, more in depth understanding of international politics.

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62 A privileging of qualitative methodology over quantitative does not follow from this argument. Unfortunately, as Mearsheimer and Walt note, quantitative studies too often come at the expense of underlying theory within the field of international relations. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “Leaving Theory Behind: Why Hypothesis Testing Has Become Bad for IR,” European Journal of International Relations (forthcoming).
Similar to studies of strategic culture and Chinese nationalism, this study argues that relations between international actors are best explained in terms of identity. Emphasizing the role of identity in international politics allows for an examination of not only behavior but the ways in which the identities actors hold influence the behavior and identities of one another. Traditional theories of international relations become worldviews with productive power that influence the social relations of international politics. That is, they are capable of influencing behavior, as actors adopt these views themselves while also assessing the worldviews others might hold. If these statements are misguided, how else might scholars explain why there has been so much focus on determining what type of power China is?

John Mearsheimer predicts that despite Beijing’s rhetoric to the contrary, China’s rise will ultimately not be peaceful. Instead, it will lead to regional and global rebalancing with the potential for conflict, a neorealist view. It is possible to interpret recent Chinese behavior in this light. Beijing often criticizes the U.S. and Japan, has embarked upon sea trials with its first aircraft carrier, has experienced heightened tension with Japan since the 2010 collision of a Chinese fishing trawler with two different Japanese coastguard vessels near the mutually disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, offers much needed aid to North Korea, and refrained from criticizing North Korea’s unprovoked sinking of the South Korean destroyer, the Cheonan, and shelling of Yeonpyeong, a South Korean island. Not necessarily interpreting these behaviors to portend the character of China now or in the future, Thomas Christensen argues that the

63 John J. Mearsheimer, “China’s Unpeaceful Rise.”
CCP was more or less compelled to respond to these situations in these ways due to behavioral constraints. In other words, even if Beijing desired to act in ways more agreeable to the west, it did not have the option to do so. If true, this explanation does not free China and its leaders from responsibility, especially as the behavioral constraints encountered are largely ideational, past rhetoric and behavior serving as influential factors either creating cognitive or bottom up commitment traps. However, if, as Christensen seems to suggest, China had no other option than to lie in the bed it made for itself in some of these situations, the leadership in Beijing is still responsible for the making of its bed. Of importance are the identities implicit in these explanations.

This study undertakes an analysis of three different cases in seeking greater insight into the nature of U.S.-China relations, in how this relationship functions, and in hopes of developing a greater understanding of relations between these two countries and offering a more intellectually honest approach the study of international politics. As such, this study focuses on what might be considered periods of transition or crisis. According to Roxanne Doty, “…rhetoric is intensified in times of crisis, when naturalized identities are at risk of coming undone, when authority is being questioned, and when the reproduction of identities takes place in different and permanently changing arenas.”

With this in mind, this study first assesses relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China before and after the 11 September 2001 attacks. Before the

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terrorist attacks on the American homeland, tension with China appeared on the rise, resulting from economic concerns as well as (to some degree) due to unfortunate accidents: the May 1999 U.S./NATO bombing of China’s Belgrade embassy and the April 2001 collision of a U.S. EP-3E reconnaissance aircraft with a Chinese fighter near the island of Hainan. After al-Qaeda’s attacks, China condemned terrorism and offered its condolences to the United States. Relations began to warm and China came to be seen, for a time, as a partner in the global “war” on terrorism, Beijing claiming to have suffered terrorist attacks in its Xinjiang region over the previous decade. Relations would soon cool with the U.S. invasion of Iraq and China’s continued rise and increasing military power—especially in terms of asymmetric, outer space, and cyber capabilities—as well as China’s continued support of international actors at odds with U.S. interests, such as North Korea. These shifts in relations are explained through analysis of the narratives of identities found in both the U.S. and China over this period, not only how they define themselves but also how they define one another and their interests.

The Diaoyu/Senkaku Island dispute between China and Japan serves as the second case study in this analysis. Though primarily an issue between these two countries, as Japan’s ally and having much interest in maintaining stability in the region, this issue also matters greatly to the United States. Thus, the dispute is examined through the interactions and posturing it has spurred between the U.S. and China rather than between China and Japan. The U.S. relationship with Japan undoubtedly influences U.S.-China relations, as do animosities and opposing interests between Japan and China.

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A claim not uncontested, whether any of the activities in Xinjiang or elsewhere in China represent terrorism and to what extent is an important question.
Last, this study examines the increasing number and nature of confrontations between the U.S. and China in the digital world, in cyber space. This includes the narratives and rhetoric adopted by each side in their representations of themselves and the other, as with the other cases analyzed in this study. Over the last few years, China has come under increasing criticism for conducting cyber attacks against the U.S. government, military, and business sectors. However, the nature of these attacks must be examined in light of the United States’ own cyber activities and interests. Linked to these issues is the matter of how both sides define the identity of the realm of cyber space itself. Complicating matters is the attribution problem, the difficulty of determining the origin of an attack in cyber space, which must also be considered, especially in how this affects the identity performances of both states and the narratives they adopt.

For each case this study draws upon relevant historical context, especially with regard to the Chinese humiliation narrative, with origins in the late nineteenth and, more so, the early twentieth centuries. Each case involves significant events and transitions that reflect important shifts in bilateral relations. Rather than treating either side as a monolithic, unitary actor or monocultural entity, this study explores the different identities at play on both sides and how these identities affect the nature of the U.S.-China relationship.

In analyzing each of these three cases, this study examines the salient narratives and aspects of identity for each actor, drawing especially upon primary sources in so doing, attempting to ascertain how, in their narratives, the U.S. and China define themselves, one another, and their relationship. The fluid concept that it is, identities will
shift, or at least the salience of certain aspects of identity will, due to the influence of actions and rhetoric from either side as well as internal, domestic factors.

Before analyzing each of these three cases, this study’s identity centric approach will be further outlined, as one of this study’s goals is not only to adopt an interpretive, identity centric approach to analyzing U.S.-China relations but also to provide a foundation for applying this approach to international politics at large. This discussion will necessarily include consideration of traditional international relations theory in relation to this approach as well as how the theories considered relate to the scientific endeavor in the social sciences and the supposed purpose of the study of international relations.
II
IDENTITY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

But in my view, the appeal to the authority of experts should be neither excused nor defended. It should, on the contrary, be recognized for what it is—an intellectual fashion—and it should be attacked by a frank acknowledgement of how little we know, and how much that little is due to people who have worked in many fields at the same time. And it should also be attacked by the recognition that the orthodoxy produced by intellectual fashions, specialization, and the appeal to authorities is the death of knowledge, and that the growth of knowledge depends entirely upon disagreement.†

—Karl R. Popper

In studying international politics, Hans Morgenthau stated that when examining the behavior of the statesman, “We look over his shoulder when he writes his dispatches, we listen in on his conversations with other statesmen; we read and anticipate his very thoughts,” doing so as if disinterested observers. 67 Though often differing on which actors and factors of international politics are important, researchers and the theoretical dispositions they adopt often agree with this notion of the disinterested observer: the objective analyst external to the subjects and systems under scrutiny, separate from the findings they uncover and from the explanations they formulate. But does not the statesman take note of the researcher’s shadow, peering over his shoulder? Does not knowledge of the studies of the statesman ultimately ring back to him in some way or


form? Does not the statesman perceive that his decisions—his actions—will bear scrutiny from peers and interested observers alike? These questions hint at important insights related to the study of international politics: the influence and productive power of not only social constructions but also of social theories (which are themselves social constructions) and the influence of self-reflective considerations about how behavior will be perceived by not only researchers but, more importantly, by other actors. Actors, whether the statesman or the researcher, whether consciously or not, find themselves engaged in the production of knowledge. According to Linus Hagström, “if knowledge is socially constructed, the possibility of reconstruction and reinterpretation follows.” This relates closely to the role of perception with regard to identity, itself a multifaceted concept. For the purpose of this study, perception is defined as the ability of social actors to become aware of the identities and interests of other actors (however biased these perceptions may be). Actors form their own perceptions, influence the perceptions of others, and contemplate the perceptions held by others. More than simply influencing behavior, perceptions and theories shape the identities that drive behavior.

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68 With regard to the study of systems rather than individual or groups of subjects, a similar but simpler rhetorical question might be asked about whether statesmen and others become aware of such studies.

69 By productive power, the ability of theories and other modes of understanding to influence and produce, to have an affect on, behavior is meant.


71 All of which is quite tacit in Morgenthau’s depiction of the statesman used above.
Focusing on the role of identity in international politics, this study offers an approach to understanding that prioritizes the cultivation of in depth knowledge of specific international issues and cases for use by scholars and policymakers alike. This approach bears similarity to that of Hagström, where the overall goal is to assess the narratives and dominant modes of explanation salient for the cases or issues under examination, not necessarily to offer competing or challenging narratives.\textsuperscript{72} The approach also bears similarity to that often adopted by those conducting area studies, the best of which prioritize the empirical over the theoretical with an almost obsessive attention to detail and context in order to best inform understanding and debate. It differs, however, in that it strives to understand international politics in terms of how the identities—the narratives of identities—influence and characterize the nature of relations between different international actors. Here, identity refers to individually or collectively held relational conceptions of self and other that influence how actors view themselves, others, and their worlds and how actors interact with one another. Identity is a purely conceptual notion, one researchers may partially glimpse through analysis of the narratives of self and other expressed by international actors. In examining—in problematizing—the role of identity in international politics, taking identities as fixed or entirely knowable must be avoided; neither represents reality. Not only does much important variation exist for the actors or within the groups—states, organizations,

\textsuperscript{72} Hagström, “‘Power Shift’ in East Asia?” 271. This sort of constructivist approach also avoids, as Hagström explains, the problem of selection bias, since the goal is not to validate any single framework, theory, or narrative.
nationalities, and so on—of possible study, identities are malleable and infinitely subject to change over time.

Analyzing identity, researchers are confronted with the intricate problem of gaining insight into the mind of their subjects—the other, the statesman or whomever else—a task at which they will never fully succeed. Thus, researchers adopting this approach are limited to the prospect of gaining as much insight as possible, typically through the narratives of various actors, and presenting their findings as informed interpretations of reality (their own narratives of sorts), analyses almost certain to be incomplete or tainted by their own viewpoints and an inability to fully know their subjects no matter how disinterested they endeavor to remain, rather than reducing the results of their studies to generalities or passing off their findings as composite of timeless, objective truths. Otherwise stated, in order to come as close as possible to understanding reality as it is, researchers must admit to and remind themselves that they will never truly “know” reality and not deceive themselves otherwise. Before detailing this study’s approach to examining the role of identity in international politics, what the approach does not entail as well as the fundamentals upon which it is based will first be discussed.

The approach set forth and adopted in this study does not set out to apply, test, or assess any specific or preconceived theory. However, nor are its aspirations and

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73 Reducing in terms of the amount and value of information offered, and perhaps degree of intellectual honesty.

74 The concept of knowing is here used in an epistemological (even philosophical) sense.
applicability limited to this study’s case of choice: the dynamics of contemporary U.S.-China relations. Instead, it offers an approach to understanding applicable to, at least informative for, the wider field of international relations, to cases beyond contemporary relations between Beijing and Washington. Within the field of political science and other social science disciplines, much is made of testing established theories, simple or complex, on novel cases—building or whittling away support for theories and research programs, filling gaps, puzzle-solving. However unexpressed, this sort of activity does not promote growth of knowledge, whatever that might mean, so much as promote individual scholarly objectives and interests.

With this study’s approach to international politics and identity, the crux of the matter, its essence, is that identity matters but that its role is unique to particular situations and dependent upon contextual factors. While some, like Ted Hopf, attempt to incorporate identity theory into what he considers the scientific approach to studying international relations, a problem in doing so exists derivative of constructivism as a whole, of which identity theory is part. The specific criticism often levied at constructivism is that it offers little more than a method or an approach to study rather than truly offering a theory of international relations. Constructivism seems neither able

75 Or, for the ambitious and creative, formulating their own novel theoretical insights to apply to problems and cases, old or new. This is distinct from the frequent practice of adopting established theories from other disciplines to support pretentions of novelty and interdisciplinarity. Novelty and interdisciplinarity are admirable, but not for their own sake.

to offer the conditions under which it is falsifiable nor specific, generalizable hypotheses or predictions. When inspecting the theoretical foundations of constructivism, the lack of a stronger, harder, more scientific theory is not for want but is instead the result of the constructivism’s theoretical tenets. Constructivism’s foundations and the largely unconscious practice of social construction prevent any grand, timeless, generalizable theoretical claims about social behavior. With its insights, researchers might at times posit explanations that hold under certain conditions, but constructivism’s strength lies in noting that those conditions are never fixed or stable. Despite valuable insights from the realm of psychology and social experimentation—which do not necessarily attempt to offer this sort of “scientific” theory—the same holds for identity. Whether constructivism or identity offer any sort of scientific theory or approach for the field of international relations depend upon understandings of the scientific endeavor.

**The Science of Social Science**

Political science quite clearly bears the mantle of science, situated within the realm of the social sciences. Nevertheless, whether political science is, in fact, scientific and to what extent the social sciences should (if at all) emulate the natural sciences remains contested. When speaking of science, reference is made to a very particular, systematic approach to understanding. The traditional explanation is that the scientific approach generally begins with an interesting observation or question that inspires exploration, the ensuing research adhering to specific standards of proof and falsifiability. More generally, theories are formulated and tested. This explanation, however, radically simplifies the scientific approach and thus leads to contestation over what is and is not scientific. In
order to understand the possibilities of scientific understanding, where this process begins, if the commonly held ideal of the scientific method holds irrevocably true, and what sort of effects it produces require discussion.

Widely held as one of the most influential contributors to discussions of science and rationality in recent history, Karl Popper’s thoughts offer great insight into the possibilities of scientific understanding. These thoughts, however, too frequently suffer misinterpretation and misrepresentation. Taken by many as an iconic positivist and one of the foremost sponsors of the scientific method, Popper adamantly defined himself as an anti-positivist and explicitly rejected the common conceptualization of the scientific method adopted during his time.\(^77\) Specifically, Popper rejected the notion that science does or should begin with induction. Instead, he supported a conceptualization of the scientific method based on what he called a critical approach to science. Rejecting the idea that science starts with empirical observations, Popper argued that all observation is biased and theory impregnated. According to Popper, science starts not with observation, but with a problem, a question, or a theory. The scientist cannot merely begin with observation without some inkling of what she is looking for. He further argued that the best theories—those of Newton, Einstein, and other great thinkers—originate outside of science itself, endorsing metaphysical and speculative thought. This, according to

\(^{77}\) Habermas apparently first applied the positivist label to Popper, originating this widely held misconception. This is intriguing, as Popper himself, criticized as a part of the positivist Vienna circle by those in the Frankfurt School, situated himself as an anti-positivist and criticized the Vienna circle from his anti-positivist, “realist” standpoint. Popper even described Hegel’s identity philosophy as an example moral and legal positivism. Popper, 67-8.
Popper, is big science, the revolutionary sort leading to growth of knowledge. Popper feared the opposite, that the growth of normal science would incur stagnation, and possibly even prevent or lead to a regression in growth of knowledge.\textsuperscript{78} Though holding some notion of growth of knowledge, Popper simultaneously rejected the notion that science leads to the uncovering of any sort of absolute truth.

Whether or not surprising, Popper claimed that observers neither experience the world as it truly exists nor can they ever ascertain absolute truth. In other words, researchers can never produce absolute, definitive scientific proof to support their theories or scientific explanations. Indeed, this general idea should not be surprising at all, as even the natural sciences deal primarily in the realm of theory, a term explicitly honest that it (theory) does not definitively represent reality or fact.\textsuperscript{79} Popper did, however, believe in objectivity. Objectivity, for Popper, stemmed from his view of the scientific method itself. The scientific method—Popper’s scientific method, not that of inductivists—hinged on a critical approach to understanding: engaging in a process of debating and testing theories in relation to one another. He rejected dogmatism and the prospect of any theory attaining dogmatic authority, of becoming an “intellectual fashion.” What Popper termed objectivity, what others might take greater comfort in

\textsuperscript{78} Popper, 72. Thusly, Popper feared the increasing trend of Ph.D. students being trained in technical methods instead of initiated into the scientific tradition of critical questioning, focusing on small, soluble puzzles instead of following the uncertainty of large riddles. Popper’s view correlates quite closely to Kuhn’s notion of puzzle solving.

\textsuperscript{79} Leaving aside a more philosophical exploration of theories and scientific laws.
terming inter-subjectivity, results from “mutual rational criticism.”\textsuperscript{80} Rationality, for Popper, represented little more than the ability to engage in critical discussion. Even though he contested the notion of ascertaining (absolute) truth itself, Popper viewed this method as a way to approach and achieve a better approximation of the truth, for this reason defining himself an epistemological optimist.

In response to criticism from certain relativists, and some of the striking similarities between aspects of Popper’s thought and relativism should be noted, Popper argued that a mutual framework is not pre-requisite for critical discussion or mutual understanding. Nonetheless, he did admit that fruitful discussion might not always result between those of differing modes of understanding, whether scientific theories, cultures, or even time periods. Whatever the case, he strongly opposed foreclosing this possibility altogether, believing that attempts at critical discussion at the very least broaden researchers’ knowledge and their understanding of those with whom they differ. Thus, Popper defined belief in the prerequisite necessity of a mutual framework for critical discussion as the myth of the framework.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{80} Popper, 70. In relation to other trends Popper opposed, he, in agreement with Einstein, opposed operationalism. That is, he opposed operational definitions, viewing this task as an exercise in infinite regress doing little more than divert effort from the true problem under scrutiny. Popper, 41.

\textsuperscript{81} For a full discussion of this myth, see Popper, 33-64. The similarities between Popper’s thoughts and those of, for instance, Kuhn are quite striking. The greatest difference likely comes in terms of the nuances of Popper’s myth of the framework, whether engaging in fruitful critical discussion with those of different frameworks is possible. Using Kuhn’s terminology, paradigms might be substituted for frameworks. Discussion across paradigms or frameworks relates to Kuhn’s consideration of whether the tenets of fallen paradigms or theories are mutually intelligible under a new paradigm after a “scientific revolution.” According to Kuhn, old or marginalized paradigms and
As far as he was concerned with the social sciences, Popper opposed the adoption of the methods of the natural sciences by social scientists. He did so with, however, one very important caveat. Popper voiced this opposition in terms of the traditional understanding of the scientific method found in the natural sciences.\(^8^2\) Popper’s opposition to adopting the scientific method in the social sciences mirrors his rejection of traditional understandings of the scientific method and the rationality on which it is based in the natural sciences. On the other hand, Popper indeed endorsed his own view of science and the scientific method as equally applicable to both the natural and social sciences. In all, Popper’s views and reconceptualization of the foundations of science rejected positivism and the inductivist notion that science begins with observation in favor of embracing unorthodox sources of theoretical inspiration and offering a scientific method cognizant of its shortcomings and deriving strength from rational—critical—discussion. An epistemological optimist, Popper believed that pursuing this approach offered the best chance to develop a closer approximation of truth and facilitate growth of knowledge.

What relevance does Popper’s thought hold in relation to the objectives of understanding and explaining international politics? Whether political scientists claim to embrace or reject his approach, looking past the frequent misunderstandings of it, the theories must be explained—essentially reinterpreted—in the terms of the new paradigm and that everything from the old paradigm is not always able to be explained by the new one. For a fuller treatment of this process, see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Third Edition* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1996 [1962]).

\(^{8^2}\) Popper, 155.
discipline of political science appears to at the very least follow something akin to it. Most academics within the field concede the inability of uncovering any absolute truth about the world or international politics. Many even appear to side with Popper on the topic of induction. Moreover, the discipline (as with the social and natural sciences in general) seems to embrace the notion of critical discussion and debate to determine the merit of the various theories routinely formulated, modified, or tested by scholars of political science.\(^8^3\) Other times, the field reflects the heights of positivism and dogmatism, even when simultaneously claiming otherwise (though the claims to positivism by those within the discipline are often dubious and intermixed with their misconstrued interpretations of Popper’s thought). Theory and models tend towards reification, often without realization; numbers speak truth and defray attention from underlying theory; certain frameworks and approaches to understanding receive higher regard over others not based on merit or open, critical scientific thought and discussion but out of a vested interest in and desire to hold to or defend specific research programs and theories or out of a devotion to (misunderstood) principles of science that supposedly possess an ability to objectively differentiate between scientific and unscientific, between which theories are productive and which are degenerative.

This process has the effect of marginalizing important criticism, marginalizing novel, revolutionary thought, and marginalizing the demand for scientific and intellectual accountability. At stake are authoritative claims to science and reality. At their worst,
dogmatic, “positivist” claims to science and to authority within the discipline of political science dictate which approaches are scientific and while declaring their own ability to objectively arbitrate reality. By appropriating science, they appeal to and deploy the authority associated with the concept of science to construct the discipline. At best, space is made for others adhering to less “traditional” scientific approaches, whether akin to Popper’s understanding of science or otherwise and whether they view their approaches as scientific or not. Somewhere in the middle, “traditional” scholars admit the limits of their theories and of adopting the traditional scientific method in the social sciences—the same limits noted by Popper (and others)—only to then strategically forget these concerns and adopt this method anyhow.

This all, of course, only reflects a general observation, one observers would be remiss to accept as authoritative, definitive, or representative of the discipline as a whole. Nonetheless, neoutilitarian\textsuperscript{84} theories of international relations, for example, continue to possess great influence and exhibit great persistence in the face of falsifying evidence and continue in attempts to define the “research programs” within the field of international relations.\textsuperscript{85} More importantly, they ignore the influence of theory itself in the social world. Conventional threads of constructivism pay heed to the role of social

\textsuperscript{84} John G. Ruggie’s term for the theories of neorealism and neoliberalism, due to their shared foundations. This term will be explored in more detail below.

\textsuperscript{85} Perhaps “better” substitutes for these theories have not emerged. Or, perhaps, substantial vested interest in these theories and their close ties to notions of “science” and “rationality” aid in defending against their fall from influence. Realisms persistence will be briefly discussed momentarily, though it is not this study’s purpose to engage in a debate over theoretical influence in the field of international relations.
constructions in international politics (and with regard to human relations in general) but frequently only pay little attention to the role of theory itself. Related and overlapping approaches—more resolute constructivism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and others—pay particular attention to doing so but often receive criticism for not offering their own alternative theoretical approaches to understanding international politics. They receive criticism for engaging in the critique of theory without offering any (“productive”) theoretical alternative. Yet such criticism compromises and forgets the critical spirit of debate inherent to the scientific method while ignoring the potential of these alternative approaches to produce a different sort of understanding. Did not E. H. Carr, often held as one of the founding fathers of realism, engage in this very same practice in his critique of idealism?

In *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*, Carr clearly outlined his belief in the subjectivity and historical conditionality of thought in his attack on idealism and utopianism. From this critique he made no attempt at offering an alternative theoretical approach or utopian vision out of his version of realism. Carr found his realism incapable of providing the basis for a new framework of understanding. Likewise, Carr did not see his realism as immune from its own weapons: the relativity of thought. Instead, he offered his realism as way to critique, undermine, and tear down theories that have become problematic or

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harmful, as reportedly became of idealism leading up to and ultimately with the onset of World War II. The idea inherent in Carr’s realism is not to undermine for the sake of undermining, it is to keep alive the realization of subjectivity, offer a mechanism to combat problematic theories and views of the world, and to encourage intellectual awareness. Such a view, such a critique absent an alternative, is an unlikely predecessor to the various theories bearing its same namesake today: realism—the mantle of dealing with and treating the world as it truly exists and not as observers wish it might be. The only lasting influence Carr’s realism seems to have imparted upon contemporary realisms, aside from its namesake, is an aversion to idealism. This aversion to moral and ideological influences, from Morgenthau through today, is quite interesting, as these realisms actually become their own ideologies of sorts: worldviews, lenses through which to interpret and interact with the world and its inhabitants, influencing behavior. Carr’s realism might also provide the core of realism’s pessimism. Ever since the horrors of World War II this pessimism has held great influence with international relations scholars, bordering on a form of neurosis. This neurosis has led to the rise of what might be considered (pessimistic) theory addicts. These are not addicts of theory in general, but of, relating back to Popper, their own particular dogmatic, intellectual fashions of preference, of which they cannot abstain and cannot clearly question from within, while under their own theory’s influence. Perhaps this, this neurosis, explains realism’s persistence over time and its obsession with the dangers of idealism manifest as the need

88 Carr’s realism likewise might not sit well with Popper’s idea of science, though Popper may be more apt to recognize the value of criticism by itself.
to take the world as it is (irrespective of whether realism actually does so), placing faith in the supposed methods of objectivity (not necessarily inter-subjectivity) and truth regarded as *scientific*. With the great import of the behavioral revolution and dogmatism based on fear, realism persists.

It requires little effort to find fault with neorealism, its neoutilitarian brethren, or even Wendtian style constructivism (that is, softer, often state-centric forms of constructivism). Nonetheless, exploring some of these limitations is instructive in exploring the benefits of adopting an identity centric approach to studying international politics as endorsed here. Taking states as atomic actors, for instance, and situating them at the center of analysis may offer great theoretical simplicity but doing so comes at the expense of developing deeper understanding of the differences between states and the particularities of their interests and interactions, factors intrinsically related to understanding the diversity of relations between different states and the wide range and importance of their behavior. States are neither irreducible nor by any means uniform. Moreover, states’ inner dynamics matter. Ignoring these dynamics prevents understanding such important phenomena as the Cuban Missile Crisis and the fall of the Soviet Union. The mantle of international relations itself does not presuppose a focus only on states of an unvarying nature with exogenously given interests. To the extent it creates any sort of demarcation, this mantle does so only in restricting the field to that which has some bearing on international politics. This broader conceptualization of the field’s scope allows for the inclusion of interesting factors and the study of international phenomena beyond the limitations imposed through a reification of theoretical states and
preoccupation with little more than limited notions of conflict. It escapes the attempts of theory, not the discipline, to dictate that which is of importance and that which is not, those questions on which researchers should focus and those they should ignore. It rejects the practice of admitting while simultaneously forgetting that theory does not reflect truth, it recognizes that theoretical frameworks themselves possess productive power and influence the world researchers aspire to understand. Theories are ideas, ones that once adopted influence, often unconsciously, perceptions and behaviors from the day-to-day lives of individuals and the groups they form to the studies conducted of them. If otherwise, what do observers make of the statesman (or even the scholar), while peering over his shoulder, who questions whether other states are realist powers or some other sort? Recalling Popper, all observation is biased and theory impregnated.

89 It is interesting that Waltz uses his structural theory, a theory found and formulated within international relations, to dictate which theories are theories of international relations and which are theories of foreign policy or are otherwise “reductionist” (this term is placed in quotation due to the somewhat diminutive, pejorative connotation it has come to represent). Certainly, just because Waltz delineates a structural theory of international relations, which defines and limits his scope of study, does not mean that the sub-discipline as a whole is likewise restricted. Assuredly, in *Man, the State and War*, before the later publication of his structural theory in *Theory of International Politics* (1979), Waltz notes the importance of first and second image (level) factors when examining international politics. Even so, for some reason he since referred to his own theoretical insights to define the scope of study for the field of international relations itself. It is uncertain whether anyone has noted the paradoxical nature of doing so. For more on Waltz’s discussion of his three images or levels of analysis in international politics, see Kenneth N, Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001 [1954]).

90 Such as the various attempts by policymakers and scholars to determine, define, and reveal to the world what sort of power China is, as noted previously.
Whatever terminology adopted—frameworks, approaches, worldviews, models—theories become part of the identities that shape perception and behavior.

Contemporary Worldviews: Of Categories and Caricatures

Despite the criticism it has received, realism, in some form, has arguably remained at the center of the field of international relations since its appearance as a response to idealism’s ostensible breakdown and supposed naiveté with the onset of World War II.\(^{91}\) Though it holds great appeal and has weathered much criticism, quite obviously not all scholars adopt a realist framework. For those that do, they do not necessarily do so uniformly. The particularities of any one scholar’s realism may easily differ from those of another. Regardless, realism maintains considerable authority in the field of international relations, perhaps most notably in the form of structural realism. From this perspective, that of structural realism in general, the anarchic nature of the international system and states’ desires to survive interact to incite mistrust, self-help, and balance of power politics. For its part, neoliberalism only expands upon neorealism (the expansion itself not insignificant), opening room for and seeking to explain the presence international cooperation that neorealism overlooks. This underlies Ruggie’s classification of both as neoutilitarian theories.\(^{92}\) Both view the international system as anarchic, both typically take atomic, unitary states as the system’s primary actors, and

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\(^{91}\) Certainly many trace the origins of realism farther back into history, to the thought of Thomas Hobbes, Niccolò Machiavelli, even Thucydides. Let it here suffice to recognize that such lineal tracings of the origins of realism are not uncontested.

\(^{92}\) Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity*. 72
both expect these actors to behave as rational utility maximizers primarily concerned with their own survival. They differ in their pessimism concerning the importance of institutions and likelihood of cooperation in the international system. In treating states as unitary actors, however, these approaches impose limitations on their own understandings of states and of international politics, referring to generalities instead of, to the extent possible, reality.

The level of generality derived from treating states as rational, unitary actors might be considered similar to a caricature of sorts. The general idea of any given state is represented, but some features are understated or, appearing normally, simply appear dwarfed by the exaggeration of others.\textsuperscript{93} In explaining international politics, structural realism’s caricature of states emphasizes survival, material capabilities, rationality, mistrust, and self-help while dramatically deemphasizing factors such as cooperation, ideas, values, and norms. Neoliberal caricatures give more emphasis to these factors, and even to some nonstate actors such as international organizations, but ultimately not to the same degree as the factors of survival, material capabilities, rationality, mistrust, and self-help.\textsuperscript{94} As caricatures distort reality, so too do neoutilitarian and other theories of social science. The difference is that the blatant distortions of the former are always blatantly obvious, demanding observers’ attention, even making them more self-conscious and self-aware of them, while the distortions of theories, despite their intention of increasing

\textsuperscript{93} Knowing that some states depart dramatically from this representation in terms of governance, stability, and so on, which supports the notion of a caricature.

\textsuperscript{94} Though neoliberal studies quite obviously focus on cooperation and other factors important within the particular, individual variations of neoliberalism.
explanatory power and offering generalizability, far too often come to unconsciously substitute for reality in academic practice and real world politics. Even when space exists to accommodate multiple caricatures, what results are essentialized categories of states, other actors, and important factors that detract from potentially informative, context specific understanding.

Constructivism offers a more “radical” alternative, viewing the international system of states as a social construct in itself. “Anarchy is what states make of it,” as Alexander Wendt once declared. In other words, the degree to which the anarchic international system is conflictual or cooperative and how it influences behavior depends on the beliefs and actions of states themselves and those who speak for or influence the state. State behavior and the norms and structures it produces define the international system. As noted earlier, however, constructivism often incurs criticism on the basis that it is less of a theory of international politics than a method or theoretically informed approach to understanding, which Ruggie himself admits. This criticism largely results from differences in views over theory and, more fundamentally, science between

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95 Interestingly, Stephen Walt identifies constructivism as a “radical” approach in his 1998 article on international relations theories in *Foreign Policy*, while Jack Snyder, in his own 2004 *Foreign Policy* article—basically an updating of Walt’s article—on international relations theories treats idealism as a form of constructivism. Prominent constructivists have refuted and questioned Snyder’s treatment and conflation of idealism with constructivism. Stephen M. Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories,” *Foreign Policy* no. 110 (Spring 1998) and Jack Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories,” *Foreign Policy* no. 145 (November/December 2004).

96 Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It.”

97 Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity*. 

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constructivist and traditional approaches, as explored earlier. This study contends that while constructivist and similar approaches to understanding may not provide the sort of theory or explanation offered by more traditional approaches, they still promote understanding and often offer a richer understanding of international politics than traditional approaches.

**Identities and Social Behavior**

Following Popper, this study begins with a problem, a problem best described in the form of a question: what influences or characterizes the nature of relations between international actors and how, by what process? The domain of international politics offers an endless array of potentially important factors to assess in exploring this question, factors that complicate some forms of explanation and understanding. The realm of possible international actors includes states, here taken as diverse and unique entities composed of groups and individuals possessing various identities and interests. Overall, this realm includes actors from the individual through international levels. The approach taken within this study contends that identities are fundamental to understanding international politics—more so, all social interactions—and influence the nature of relations between international and other actors. In order to understand why relations between actors are conflictual, competitive, or cooperative researchers must examine the identities and attendant interests of relevant actors and how their identities and interests are constituted and drawn upon. The narratives actors adopt and for what purposes are of particular interest in undertaking such an examination. Identities are political, perhaps not entirely, but political nonetheless.
In adopting an identity centric approach to understanding international politics, it is important to note that actors form identities not only relationally and through interaction but, as Felix Berenskoetter points out, also with deference to the future and the uncertainty the future poses.\textsuperscript{98} Additionally, this approach takes into account the role of theory itself in influencing behavior, illustrated by questions, for instance, over whether a state is a “realist power,” not uncommon of analyses of China, demonstrating the productive power of theory. Asking this question admits the variability in states’ views of the world and ultimately the variability of their identities and behavior. The answers are neither absolute nor fixed. The key to developing understanding of behavior lies in how identities arise, how they are drawn upon, and how they interact.

Some studies of China have adopted similar approaches, perhaps the most well known of them examining the notion of strategic culture. Strategic culture amounts to “ranked grand strategic preferences derived from central paradigmatic assumptions about the nature of conflict and the enemy, and [are] collectively shared by decision makers,” which roots “strategic choice in deeply historical, formative ideational legacies.”\textsuperscript{99} Such

\textsuperscript{98} The purported novelty of this observation easily diminishes when considering that future uncertainty and speculation have driven, even if implicitly, many studies of Sino-American relations. Felix Berenskoetter, “Reclaiming the Vision Thing: Constructivists as Students of the Future,” \textit{International Studies Quarterly} 55, no. 3 (September 2011).

\textsuperscript{99} Alastair Iain Johnston, \textit{Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), IX. Feng Huiyun offers a similar definition of strategic culture, arguing that it “is a cultural construct with operational dimensions that affect the behavior of individuals through the symbols, values or beliefs that it embodies, which affects the strategic thinking of leaders on war and peace, perceptions and assessments of threat, the utility of force and the possible outcomes. Though differing conceptually, the definitions provided by scholars usually consist of two parts in most of the conceptualizations: the political/philosophical part and
studies typically share a common desire to determine whether China conducts itself offensively, more in accordance with realism (at least offensive realism), or in a peaceful fashion, more in accordance with China’s historical and philosophical schools of thought like Confucianism. When Ian Alastair Johnston wrote *Cultural Realism* in 1995, examining the influence of China’s *Seven Military Classics* and Confucian-Mencian-Daoist thought on Chinese strategic culture during the Ming dynasty, he argued that China’s behavior during that time reflected more of a parabellum, more of a realist, strategic culture.\(^{100}\) Johnston’s approach, however, suffered an inherent flaw: though it placed great emphasis on the roles of history and culture, it flirted with creating historic monotypes to then be determined whether representative of China or not.\(^{101}\) If scholars stop once arriving at the answer they feel is most correct, they ignore the influence and interaction of other answers still present in domestic and international discourse. If, for sake of demonstration, Johnston’s conclusion that Ming dynasty China had more of a parabellum strategic culture is accepted, how and in what ways did the lesser strategic cultures still influence Chinese behavior and interact with the dominant parabellum strategic culture?

\(^{100}\) However, Johnston was cautious in drawing conclusions about contemporary or future Chinese strategic culture based on the past. Johnston, *Cultural Realism*.

\(^{101}\) There are inherent flaws in Johnston’s study itself in that he does not elaborate upon how and why strategic culture functions, in terms of a causal mechanism or otherwise, nor does he incorporate variance within his study, such as including within case comparisons. The latter flaw prevents concluding any support for a parabellum Chinese strategic culture over simply a neorealist explanation of international relations.
Feng Huiyun adopted a broader, more nuanced approach in her examination of modern Chinese strategic culture, finding that whether offensive, realist behavior or more benign, Confucian style behavior characterizes Chinese strategic culture varies dependent upon China’s leaders at a given time, even for specific leaders over time and in specific situations. This allows for a more dynamic representation of Chinese strategic culture and behavior. Ultimately, Feng finds that defensive, Confucian style behavior is most representative of Chinese international behavior, though there have been times when the country and its leaders have acted more aggressively, especially under Mao Zedong. Interestingly, however, Feng’s findings result in undermining the notion of strategic culture: the existence of mutually shared beliefs that are relatively stable over time. If “strategic culture” varies among Chinese leaders (not to mention other actors), to what degree is it really shared? Her findings support more of a strategic decision-making model or point toward the influence of identities in international politics rather than the importance of strategic culture as commonly defined. More broadly, Feng’s findings bear similarity to what some, including David Kang, term Chinese exceptionalism.

The notion of Chinese exceptionalism questions whether China fits into and behaves according to traditional Western conceptions of international political behavior, specifically, does China behave in accordance with balance of power politics? Kang

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102 It is also unclear how comparing Chinese leaders against a global norming group, as Feng does to determine the nature of Chinese leaders, indicates closeness to or deviance from Confucianism. If a lack of deviance from the norming group of world leaders indicates Confucianism, does this imply that, on average, world (not just Chinese) leaders exhibit Confucian qualities? Feng, Chinese Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Decision-Making.
argues that roughly six centuries of peaceful relations as head of the region’s tributary system characterizes Chinese history within East Asia, predisposing the country toward a peaceful rise with respect for the sovereignty of other states.\(^{103}\) Unfortunately, even though he notes the importance of international relations and history in constituting a state’s identity, Kang’s study creates the same sort of essentialized monotypes as Johnston’s, not allowing for the dynamism that Feng offers while, more importantly, ignoring the relational nature of identity. Aside from all but superficially neglecting the possibility of variance, his study also risks predictions about future behavior without taking into consideration significant contemporary issues and events both internal and external to, but likewise affecting, the Chinese state.

Though Feng’s study offers the greatest insight and depth of understanding among those aforementioned, they all suffer various flaws. Each essentially examines the role of identity as it pertains to China or relations between China and the United States, even if only focusing on limited aspects of the concept or a limited conceptualization of identity itself. Those that do note the relational nature of identity do not venture much beyond superficial recognition. Moreover, these studies do not emphasize the importance of interests, the effects of perceptual gaps on relations between international actors,\(^{104}\)


\(^{104}\) Gregory Moore goes into much detail on the role of perceptual gaps in understanding Washington and Beijing’s different reactions to the accidental U.S./NATO bombing of China’s Belgrade embassy and the impact of these differing perceptions on relations between the two. Gregory J. Moore, “Not Very Material but Hardly Immaterial: China’s Bombed Embassy and Sino-American Relations,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 6, no. 1 (January 2010).
illuminate the interplay of differences in identities and interests among influential individuals and groups within the state, or investigate why some cultural and historical facts appear more important in terms of identity than others. Certainly culture and history matter, but how, to what extent, and in what relation to other factors?

Peter Hayes Gries and William A. Callahan explore some of these issues in their respective assessments of Chinese nationalism and how it influences U.S.-China relations.\textsuperscript{105} Inherently related to the notion of identity, both studies effectively argue that with the end of the Cold War China sought a new nationalism to replace communism and maintain the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (hinting at the political nature of identity). Both China’s rise and optimism for the future as well as the abuses China suffered at the hands of western powers and Japan since the late nineteenth century, known as the century of humiliation or simply the humiliation narrative, serve as the basis for this new nationalism.\textsuperscript{106} As Callahan describes, the humiliation narrative in particular has taken on a life of its own in China, reproduced by the Chinese population in a bottom up fashion and proliferated through a market of consumer goods with, for example, pictorial depictions of specific abuses.\textsuperscript{107} Both studies provide an excellent transition to a fuller, thicker study of identity in U.S.-China relations, an approach more


\textsuperscript{106} These two components explain Callahan’s title, \textit{China: The Pessoptimist Nation}.

\textsuperscript{107} Callahan, \textit{China}. 

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broadly applicable to the field of international relations and allowing for deeper, more nuanced understanding of the relations between not only states, but individuals and groups as well. These studies act only as transitional for a few reasons. Neither study explicitly examines the role of competing identities and perceptions within China or the United States nor do they spend much time assessing the United States itself or the interaction between the nationalisms, the identities, of the two respective countries.

Studies examining the role of identity or applying identity theory to international politics help build upon those dedicated to U.S.-China relations and help clarify the fundamentals of this study’s approach. They also illuminate areas for improvement when discussing or problematizing the role of identity in international politics. In one such study, Ted Hopf, examining the role of identity in Moscow in Social Construction of International Politics, claims, “There is no canonical treatment of identity in political science,” and that his own understanding of identity was “…shaped by a great deal of happenstance, rather than the reading of a particular well-known consensually foundational literature.” While these statements ignore the various constructivist insights, both conventional and critical, that contribute to and overlap with the study of identity in the field of international relations, Hopf’s work does offer many important insights.

108 Though they serve these functions, different studies obviously do not adopt a uniform approach to identity in international politics.

Hopf’s approach unabashedly represents a conventional, more traditional oriented constructivist approach to the study of identity in international relations. His approach might even be more conventional than most other “mainstream” constructivist approaches, attempting to marry the interpretive account of identity he adopts with the mainstream social science methods to which he feels indebted. Thusly, he states, “I am deeply committed to inductive interpretivist recovery of empirical evidence, while simultaneously using that evidence to test hypotheses deduced from a theory of how identity might affect foreign policy choice.”\(^{110}\) Hopf’s outlined approach shares many similarities with the approach adopted within this study, arguing that actors hold multiple identities, that identities are relational and intersubjective in nature, and that various actors in addition to the state matter. However, Hopf also contends, “the only motive for the ubiquitous presence and operation of identities is the human desire to understand the social world and the consequent cognitive need for order, predictability, and certainty. Identities operate like cognitive devices or heuristics.”\(^{111}\) On this point the approaches begin to differ.

Hopf’s study itself is quite narrow, largely due to ignoring international influences on identity in favor of limiting the scope of his analysis to the domestic scene, but the social cognitive theory of identity that he adopts offers much that deserves commendation: problematizing identity rather than taking it for granted or simply

\(^{110}\) Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*, xi. He does later admit the impossibility of taking a fully inductive approach.

assigning it to actors; drawing upon empirical evidence and discursive representations in order to understand identity; drawing upon the identities uncovered to explain relations between actors; endogenizing interests as based upon identities; and making the important realization that attempts at theorizing and hypothesizing undermine attempts at understanding and explanation and that the identities he uncovers only hold as far as interpretation and intersubjectivity allow. But after making these important declarations, Hopf paradoxically proceeds with a conventional social scientific approach to the study of identity. Hopf justifies this move on the basis of the inductivist, phenomenological approach he adopts: searching not for particular Soviet or Russian identities but letting them “emerge” from the texts analyzed.\textsuperscript{112} He seems to want to placate both traditional political scientists—and perhaps his own traditional proclivities or other interests—as well as the criticism often heard echoing from more critical scholars. As a result, Hopf’s approach flutters between the two, situated fully in neither.

Hopf understands the untenable nature that the epistemological foundations of his approach create—the impossibility of a fully inductivist phenomenological approach—only to remedy this problem with an attempt to be as inductive and unbiased as possible. He does at least pay explicit attention to these problems, but after doing so and even while focusing on the role of identity in international politics Hopf seems to engage in the same practice of strategically recognizing while simultaneously forgetting such problems as so often done by many other scholars. While letting identities “emerge” through research rather than seeking out presupposed identities, even if problematic, is

\textsuperscript{112} Hopf, \textit{Social Construction of International Politics}, 23-4.
noteworthy, Hopf’s overall approach amounts to a confession of his intellectual sins when confession alone cannot bring intellectual salvation. Again note Hopf’s own understanding of what he hopes to achieve, that “My work produces what I call a relative, working truth, that is, claims to validity that I expect to be true only in relation to other interpretive claims, not to some objective reality” and that “Theorizing is a form of interpretation, and it destroys meaning. As soon as we begin to impose categories on evidence, that evidence stops meaning what it meant in its earlier context.”113 Despite spending so much time providing a beautifully nuanced discussion of the limitations not necessarily of social constructivist approaches but more so of traditional approaches (or, as he puts it, of “mainstream methods”) Hopf is adamant in conforming his “constructivist” approach to these “mainstream methods,” striving for some shred of generalizability or predictability despite his own admission of the impossibility of doing so and despite his previous critique (dithering between implicit and explicit) of mainstream methods. Hopf’s efforts result more in a mainstream, traditional approach masquerading as constructivism than otherwise, regardless of his tireless admissions of sin. Hopf’s study would have been better served by promoting the strengths of interpretive approaches to or even social constructivist theories of understanding on their own terms rather than attempting to fit identities into theoretical social cognitive structures that allow his approach to better fit within and placate the proponents of mainstream social science methods.

Some critics of Hopf’s *Social Construction of International Politics*, such as Angela E. Stent, use his study to critique the application of constructivist or identity theories to foreign policy as a whole. Despite inherent problems with Hopf’s study, such criticism is hollow at best. Stent, explicitly using Hopf’s approach as representative of social constructivism as a whole, most notably argues:

Finally there is a questionable relationship between social constructivism and the real world of foreign policy. Monocausal explanations are insufficient to explain international behavior, and Hopf’s approach is most productive when combined with explanations that include the external environment as a determining factor. Anyone who has worked in a ministry of foreign affairs or has advised officials on foreign policy knows that foreign policy actions are rarely the result of theories or grand strategies and are usually the product of bargaining among officials and a series of ad hoc decisions. Social constructivism is useful only in explaining the domestic context in which decision-makers understand their interests and view other countries.\(^\text{114}\)

The cavalier attitude with which Stent treats Hopf’s study and the applicability of social constructivism to foreign policy (if not international relations) is inexplicable. First, though Hopf limits his scope to the domestic level within Moscow, anyone typically versed in political science methods and theory knows that explanations limited to a single level of analysis do not imply monocausality. Stent is, however, correct in noting that Hopf’s approach might be more “productive” when considering the external environment. She also rightly notes that foreign policy actions taken by officials are rarely the result of theories—at least explicitly (which, unfortunately, is not her intention). Government officials serving in capacities dealing with foreign policy implicitly, at times explicitly, operate based upon certain views of the world, of specific

situations, and of specific others as do individuals in all realms. The same holds for notions of “grand strategies,” but Stent’s use of this concept begs clarification as to whether she uses it interchangeably with “theories” or if she means the explicit (contrary to her statements) strategies sometimes outlined by governments and other times implicitly followed by them, as recognized by analysts and foreign policy officials. Still, Stent’s most unconscionable line of criticism stems from her belief that apparently based on Hopf’s study alone—ignoring how much his study actually resembles a constructivist as opposed to traditional approach—that social constructivism is only useful in considering the domestic context related to foreign policy decisions. This claim blatantly ignores the constructivist studies of U.S.-China relations discussed previously that treat identity (in some form) as relational in the international setting and betrays a stark lack of familiarity with constructivism in the field of international relations.

Contrary to this view of constructivism, this study contends that constructivist, or simply interpretivist, approaches offers greater insight into both foreign policy and international politics than (perhaps most) other available options. Specifically, examining the narratives of the identities held by various international actors provides deeper contextual understanding of any given situation or relationship and escapes the essentialized, often reified, views proffered by adherents of traditional approaches and the general rather than detailed understandings and explanations they produce. The benefits of this approach bear similarity to empirically oriented area studies while paying special attention to the influence and ever-dynamic nature of identities and other social
factors. The goal is to understand the character of international politics and the meanings of social interaction.

In hopes of allowing for a deeper understanding of international politics, this study’s approach emphasizes the importance of both domestic and international factors with regard to the relational formation of and interaction between identities. It proceeds in light of the understanding that absolute truths will not be uncovered. The approach might lead to a better approximation of the truth, but at the very least it aspires to produce a more intellectually honest attempt at understanding. Very well, it may lead to little more than one possible interpretation among many. With this admission, there is something to be said of intersubjectivity and Popper’s idea of critical discussion. Through this process, researchers might expand and refine their understanding of the various issues they may wish to study. Does power loom, largely out of sight, in such discussions? Yes, but does it do so unequivocally and as the sole factor in such discussion? Not likely, for just as critical theorists hold some notion of what to critique, they also know that knowledge does not only serve power and that the role of power itself is varied. Knowledge itself can possess a kind of power, an emancipatory power. Whatever this study produces, it does not intend to foster or impose any particular viewpoint or framework nor does it seek to impose identities upon the subjects under study. This study seeks to understand identity and how it influences international politics and demonstrate the political nature of identity while encouraging critical discussion. Perhaps such an approach might, in some way, allow researchers to expose malign power at work and reduce the often conflictual nature of political difference.
The potential for this study’s approach to inform and refine understanding of important issues lies not only in examining narratives of identities themselves or even how they influence one another but also in exploring the existence of perceptual gaps (differences in perceptions and viewpoints) and drawing comparisons between competing or differing narratives. Drawing such comparisons helps to illuminate these perceptual gaps, the interests of different actors, and role of power in international politics, however indirectly.

As stated previously, this approach shares similarities with Hopf’s, as well as fundamental differences. This holds likewise in comparison to other studies of identity and constructivism in international relations. Developing a detailed understanding of (specifically) U.S.-China relations does, in many ways, require an act akin to Morgenthau’s observer, peering over the shoulder of the statesman. This study’s approach, however, realizes that its own views and expectations influence its findings while findings of previous studies and the findings of this study in turn influence the subjects examined, directly or indirectly. Later, examining relations between the United States and China, their perceptions of one another, how these perceptions differ and influence the perceptions of the other, and the nature of relations at any given time are all important. So too is the political aspect of identity. Interests and power are important, but not conceptualized so narrowly as Morgenthau’s interests defined in terms of power. Ultimately, social realities and identities are the key factors. Both of the states this study analyzes, as all others, are not merely products of the system they inhabit. Their actions
possess the ability to influence the system and the identities of others within it and, ostensibly, such actions serve some purpose.

This study places identity towards the beginning of causal chains of human behavior and interaction, as well as with regard to the formation and maintenance of the structures that govern and influence this interaction, irrespective of level of analysis. At its most basic, however, in what way is identity conceptualized? Identities themselves are relational by nature; they do not exist in a vacuum. Identities exist in a state of interaction with the identities held by others and with world in which they exist. Identities are neither fixed nor monolithic. If nuances are emphasized and detailed understanding striven for, studying identity offers a wealth of insight and understanding. The heart of this potential lies in uncovering the interests related to and political nature of any given narrative of identity, primarily through methods of comparison. This includes examining processes integral to identity formation and adoption, in other words, examining the process of the constitution of identity. Though researchers cannot trace the ultimate origin and evolution of identities, they can discern their salient features over periods of time by examining what political actors say, by looking for rhetorical inconsistencies, by observing their behavior, and finally by noting any discrepancies between rhetoric and behavior. Identities will always already exist in some form and will

Factors more basic than identity might include innate human traits, composite of what some might term human nature. An interest in self-preservation is often taken to be one such trait. Though such factors often offer interesting insights, they are not necessarily pertinent to the focus of this study. Further, determining the innateness of certain traits is in itself a difficult endeavor. This, however, has not prevented the use of conclusions drawn about human nature to serve as a basis for explanations of social interactions at the individual through international levels. With this, a certain danger lies in the reification of these conclusions.
always slightly differ with each passing moment. Being political in nature, they surface in the narratives relating actors’ conceptions of self and others as well as in relating their interests, their hopes, and their fears.

Berenskoetter aptly notes that uncertainty plays a central role in identity formation, the uncertainty of the future serving as an influential source of anxiety that influences identity (though his argument that uncertainty and the future often play only small roles in constructivist studies might be overstated).\textsuperscript{116} Drawing upon the work of Anthony Giddens, Berenskoetter relates the notion that individuals engage in “anxiety controlling mechanisms,” a process of allowing the self to conceive of itself as part of something bigger, transcendent of death, to cope with mortality.\textsuperscript{117} Not only does this notion recognize identity formation at work, it might also allow researchers to partially understand why individuals and groups seem to need some purpose, often in the form of an—but not just any—enemy, one able to pose a fathomable threat. By the same token, “anxiety controlling mechanisms” need not be negative or fear based; positive hopes and aspirations may serve the same function. However, along with these grander notions of identity exist those that are more common.

Every day individuals use, adopt, or construct various theories or frameworks in an attempt to understand, explain, order, and navigate the world in which they live. Despite these efforts, uncertainty is the only characteristic of the world that holds

\textsuperscript{116} Berenskoetter, “Reclaiming the Vision Thing,” 652.

\textsuperscript{117} Berenskoetter, “Reclaiming the Vision Thing,” 654.
Outcomes contrary to expectations are more than common. Outliers and statistically insignificant occurrences sometimes matter most in the real world and to its inhabitants. Frameworks and theories simply aid individuals and groups in navigating their relations with one another. The possibility always exists that these cognitive devices will fail. In the scientific sense, they are always falsifiable dependent upon quality and quantity of disconfirming evidence. Scholars recognize the lack of a one to one relationship between the world and experiences of it, the world mediated by each individual’s own unique, sensory based perceptions. From this, scholars know experiences are subjective. Experiences and understandings can only attain a state of intersubjectivity. Drawing a logical conclusion from the work of Thomas Kuhn, all knowledge—scientific and otherwise—fundamentally rests upon faith of some sort, at some level. Theories may be useful, researchers may place great confidence in them, but inductive logic prohibits ever proving any given theory true. The specter of disconfirming evidence lingers eternal. This does not prove as problematic for the natural sciences as it does for the social sciences. In the natural sciences scholars study subjects and phenomena more external to themselves and often inherently less prone to change when compared with the subjects of the social sciences. Understandings and

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118 Thucydides often noted the role of chance, the uncertainties the future might bring, in his account of the Peloponnesian War. Though by nature difficult to study, the role of uncertainty (not statistical probability) in international politics indeed deserves greater attention than it receives.

119 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

120 Both true induction and the “induction” researchers might engage in after conceding the impossibility of true induction.
theories may fade in and out of favor but the phenomena studied in the natural sciences remain relatively stable. Barring drastic changes to the Earth’s gravitational “force,” a ball dropped from a fixed height will likely fall at the same rate over repeated trials under similar, controlled conditions regardless of theoretical explanation. In the social sciences, on the other hand, the social world occupies scholarly focus, a subject which scholars are inextricably part of. This creates an interesting question of how, if possible, to study human behavior without influencing or being influenced by it.

In the social world, perceptions possess great influence. Whether studying individuals or groups, the perception of others as passive or aggressive, as cooperative or competitive, or a range of other characteristics will likely effect behavioral differences resulting from the interactions of the actors under scrutiny. The theories and models formulated to facilitate understanding of social interaction between individuals and their interactions with the social world never provide a true reflection of that world itself. Of greater importance, these representations actually possess the capacity to shape the social world. Contrary to the previous example of gravity and the natural sciences, social behavior does not necessarily hold constant in similar situations under similar conditions. To start, history matters. If walking down a dimly lit, desolate street in an area plagued by crime an individual finds himself approached by a stranger, past experiences will likely influence his behavior. Perhaps he was once mugged under similar circumstances, leading his muscles to tense, pulse to quicken, and ultimately to an attempt to avoid the stranger. Even absent this personal experience, an individual may have heard stories of others suffering such fate, eliciting a similar response. On the other hand, an individual
might not consider such a threat likely, especially depending upon perceptions of the stranger’s demeanor and intent. Perhaps the stranger is quite elderly and walking with a cane. Instead, of choosing avoidance, the individual might continue along, greeting the stranger with eye contact, a smile, even a courteous hello while passing. Though considering counterfactuals has limitations, they do aid in exploring the basic roles of identity and perception and the importance of knowledge and history when examining social behavior. But what of inherent human traits, what of human nature?

The diversity of social relations reveals few, if any, fundamental human traits upon which to firmly build an objective basis for understanding. If human behavior were characterized by intrinsic distrust and self-interest, how would observers account for the great societies of the world, of collections of individuals working in concert? On the other hand, if inherently peaceful and cooperative, the possibility of conflict and violence would instill little fear, and how, then, would observers account for the great horrors in world history? Any theory arguing both or emphasizing the rationality of behavior ultimately fails due to an inability to specify when and why certain behaviors appear instead of others and due to an inability to define preferences and interests without resorting to tautological practices. Though structural theories applicable to groups such as states emphasize the structural constraints that fundamentally influence behavior, they too fail to explain the diversity of social relations.

Despite these problems, such theories are not without worth. They do offer some insight into social relations. They also demonstrate how certain risks and caveats

121 Not to exclude or overlook historical examples of oppression and servitude.
 accompany any insights offered. The greatest danger with social theories, international or otherwise, extends from the tendency toward reification and ignorance of the productive power that theories possess. “Theory is always for someone and for some purpose.”

The very same applies to worldviews, which are little more than personally or collectively held frameworks through which to better understand and navigate social relations. They act as implicit guides for behavior and interaction. They are in many ways akin to stereotypes, cognitive timesaving mechanisms that allow individuals to assess and interact with their surroundings based on preconceptions without experiencing the cognitive overload of analyzing every specific detail they confront. At times they exist as an implicit sort of theory. Other times they are, or at least are the product of, more explicit theory, such as the foreign policy official that adopts a “realist” framework in examining the world. Worldviews are the product of both experience and social conditioning. The latter explains the productive power of social theories. When they become generally accepted as norms or institutions, these social constructions come to influence behavior. Human beings may not be inherently conflictual, but if individuals come to believe so they will likely tailor their behavior accordingly. Thinking in terms of international politics take, for example, states. States do not exist apart from human interaction and are neither an immutable fact of international relations nor of history, predated most recently by monarchical dynasties and religious rule. The modern state is merely a social construction. According to social theory, institutions, norms, and ideas

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are malleable. Though they may come to seem relatively fixed at times and come to be taken for granted, the potential for change never ceases.\textsuperscript{123}

Paying heed to social constructions and realizing that theory itself induces abstractions of reality does not offer much new insight. Conventional constructivists have well argued the former, more critical scholars the latter.\textsuperscript{124} It does, however, provide further ground for exploring an interpretive identity driven approach to understanding international politics. Doing so requires viewing states as more than unitary actors and allowing for the inclusion of non-state actors, whether individuals or organizations, as units of analysis. Thinking in terms of individuals and groups allows

\textsuperscript{123} Take, for instance, conceptualizations of the state. Increasing global interconnectedness allows groups and individuals residing within supposedly sovereign state borders to take action against other states on their own behalf, through acts of terrorism or even more peaceful methods (though not always peaceful) like the not infrequent anti-American protests found at times on the streets of Pakistan, in China, and elsewhere. The same applies to the influence states can wield inside the sovereign borders of other states, as seemingly benign as trade, investment, and foreign aid to outright provocative behavior—including the more clandestine and covert sort—and armed conflict. These realizations begin to unveil the myth of sovereignty. Though states supposedly exert sovereign control over their own territories and populations, likewise respecting the sovereignty of others, sovereignty only exists to the extent that states are able to actually control their own populations and actually defend their territories from physical intrusion and foreign influence. Sovereignty is not an unwavering fact of international politics. At best, sovereignty is an influential international norm; at worst, sovereignty serves as a façade for power, a rhetorical tool used to justify action or inaction, to justify intervening in some situations and refraining from doing so in others, and to defend rhetorically against foreign influence. The concept of sovereignty itself is, in short, porous, insecure, and political.

\textsuperscript{124} Neither constructivism nor post-positivism present a unified approach. The two approaches themselves are closely related to one another. Here, take constructivism is taken to represent the belief that many of the structures of our world are social constructions and that individuals hold unique views of these constructions and of the world. Post-positivism is taken as encompassing these notions in addition to more stridently reflecting the lack of epistemological objectivity, flirting with relativism.
for greater applicability for international politics over approaches that focus on states alone, especially states taken exogenously for granted. What are states, aside from groups of individuals with common beliefs adhering to some organizational structure?

Individuals find themselves member of or party to various groups existing at different levels. These groups can overlap or compose larger groups. They range anywhere from groupings of family and friends, to cities, states, and even to international organizations, with a plethora of possibilities in between. The existence of multiple and overlapping groups at various levels creates a system of nested groups, orders of higher and lower level groups within groups. The bonds between individuals and the groups of which they are part, even the bonds between groups themselves, are dynamic and variable. The strength of these bonds exist in a state of flux and are unique to each member of a group. Bonds may be stronger for some members than others. Looking to identities allows researchers to understand this variation by accounting for what constitutes a given identity and what aspects of identity or interests are most salient for a particular actor (or group) in a given situation.

Also important, institutions, norms, and ideas have received much attention in the field of international relations. Even some neoliberal scholars—including Joseph Nye, Robert Jervis, and Robert Keohane—have noted the importance of process in addition to structure with regard to learning and the transformation of interests and identities, though they still privilege structures.125 Wendt takes institutions to be relatively stable sets of

identities and interests, sometimes formally codified in terms of rules or norms that exist as cognitive entities. He argues that institutions are not simply beliefs. They come to exist over and above their constituents. Institutions come to exist through their constituents’ experience of them and institutions in turn exert influence. Especially important, Wendt notes that institutions are not solely cooperative. Conflictual institutions also exist. With this, Wendt views neorealism’s system of international self-help as an institution and not an inherent feature of an anarchic international order. Still, Wendt takes states as central and unitary actors in international politics and underemphasizes the great global diversity of actors, ideas, institutions, and norms. Stronger social constructivist approaches that analyze states and their internal composition greatly strengthen this type of approach. Examining U.S.-China relations, this study’s approach notes the importance of identities, perceptions, and interests not only for states but also important individuals and groups within the United States and China. Instead of attempting to determine what sort of model the behavior of states such as China and the United States best fit, this approach looks for indications of these states’ own unique views of themselves and others, how these perceptions differ, and how they interact.

An influential contributor to discussions of the role of identity and identity theory in understanding social behavior, Henri Tajfel defines identity in terms of individuals’ self-conceptions derived from membership in social groups and the value and emotional

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126 Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” 399.
significance attached to their membership in those groups.¹²⁷ This definition bears similarity to that offered by Wendt. However, Tajfel also places importance upon individuals’ desire to hold positive self-views and the effect this has on identity formation. Rupert Brown offers a similar argument, observing that individuals and groups are motivated to enhance their own status, as they are generally found to prefer holding positive over negative self-images.¹²⁸ These definitions easily relate to the views offered by Felix Berenskoetter with regard to the need for individuals to identify with purposes larger than the self when faced with the uncertainty the future brings and anxiety driven by mortality. While these definitions of identity and its importance add important insights to what constructivists such as Wendt offer, they still lack a firm explanation of how identities are constituted and of identity as a relational construct.

David Campbell might come closest in *Writing Security*, where he states:

Identity is an inescapable dimension of being. No body could be without it. Inescapable as it is, identity – whether personal or collective, is not fixed by nature, given by God, or planned by intentional behavior. Rather, identity is constituted in relation to difference. But neither is difference fixed by nature, given by God, or planned by intentional behavior. Difference is constituted in relation to identity. The problematic of identity/difference contains, therefore, no foundations that are prior to, or outside of, its operation. Whether we are talking of “the body” or “the state,” or of particular bodies and states, the identity of each is performatively constituted. Moreover, the constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an “inside” from an “outside,” a “self” from an “other,” a “domestic” from a “foreign.”¹²⁹


This explanation explicitly places fundamental importance on the relational aspect of identity and illustrates its performative nature. Campbell notes that identities are constituted relationally out of the identity/difference relationship. It may be more accurate to say that identities are constituted in relation to other identities. Either way, this simple notion offers the foundation for this study’s approach to identity, resulting in important distinctions with other conceptualizations and approaches to the study of identity in international relations.

Another important difference lies in the conceptualizations different approaches hold of institutions. Institutions are here taken as cognitive constructs expressed as subjective, relatively stable systems of structures or beliefs based upon the identities and interests of their architects. They are not simply a set of identities and interests themselves. Neither identities nor interests are objective and cannot give rise to objective institutions. Even if they become detached from individual identities to some degree as a result of representing their constituent parts, institutions serve some purpose and some members hold more influence than others. The only objectivity to be found is in the existence of any particular institution—the fact that it exists and is recognized as such. The purposes institutions are created to serve, how they are applied, and for what reasons make them inherently subjective.\(^\text{130}_1\)

\[^{130}_1\] Wendt does not elaborate on why or how institutions are objective. His characterization might match the one here provided but he does not make explicit whether he means institutions as objective in terms of being free from bias and any sort of predisposition or if he means objective in the sense of existing independently of individuals’ perceptions.
The institution of marriage, for example, might objectively exist but it also exists as a reflection of the beliefs of those that believe in it, regulating who is eligible to marry whom, for what reason, and under what circumstances. Even institutions recognized throughout the world may differ in their localized reifications. Conceptions of marriage in China or Iran are much different from marriage in the United Kingdom or the United States. Neither is the normative institution of “self-help” objective. It reflects a concern with personal survival founded on distrust, potentially to the detriment of others. Even an institution such as “education” deserves question as to why education is important, for whom is it important, and how students are to be educated. This reinforces the fact that institutions may promote both cooperation and a common good or inspire conflict, if not both simultaneously, all dependent upon interpretation.\footnote{Hearkening to whose interests any particular institution serves.}

Conceptualizing institutions in this way requires some clarification. Definitions of institutions often include organizations under this heading. This points out a difference between more abstract and more concrete institutions. In Ruggie’s terms, this relates to the distinction between social facts and brute facts: the former represents intersubjective or collectively held knowledge while the latter represents knowledge of the physical world. Institutions such as marriage, even though codified into laws and norms and governed by regulations, are more abstract than institutions of education or governance, both usually expressed through much more extensive physical infrastructure and facilities. Organizations also have members, employees, or some sort of more direct
relationship with individuals. Education itself might be defined as an institution but any particular realization of education takes shape as an organization. With this in mind, thinking of organizations as institutions formalized by groups reduces confusion between the two.

Another difference relates to how institutions, identities, and the process of cause and effect are treated. For Wendt, the actions of institutions, such as states, influence intersubjective understandings and expectations of other institutions. These then provide interpretations and definitions of a situation or actions of other institutions, which then compel action, which again influence intersubjective understandings and expectations. Before addressing the path of cause and effect, certain aspects require explanation.

Thinking of states as organizations, or better still as groups, rather than institutions reduces some confusion. Doing so more clearly denotes that these are subjective, formalized institutions serving some purpose or interest at the behest of a certain group of actors. Likewise, the identities of groups or individuals involved in any given scenario are of paramount importance. At their most basic level, identities are relational, as noted previously and as both Gries and Callahan argue in their respective studies of Chinese nationalism. In other words, identities are constituted in light of other identities. What constitutes any particular identity is just as important as what does

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132 Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity*.

133 Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," 406.

134 Gries, *China's New Nationalism* and Callahan, *China*.
not, and both require some reference point. Wendt too depicts identity as a relational concept, further arguing—drawing heavily from Peter Berger—that identities are “relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self,” cultivated through participation in collective meaning, formed within a socially constructed world, linked to institutional roles, and that individuals and groups possess multiple identities, going on to argue identity as the basis of interest. He appears to place less emphasis on the relational character of identities, placing more on the relationship between identities and institutions. Wendt’s implicit bias toward the importance of institutions and structural factors is also apparent.

The most fundamental aspect of identity is difference. Within this study, identity is defined as an individually or collectively held relational conceptualization that distinguishes the self from other individuals or groups and bestows either a positive or negative sense of self-worth on its holder. It makes no sense to limit identity to positive self-conceptions. Even though actors are most often found to take efforts that minimize cognitive dissonance, potentially preserving positive identity formations, nothing prohibits the possibility of holding negative self-conceptions. Admitting this reinforces the relational character of identity, how identities are formed and judged in relation to others. Additionally, not only individuals but groups too have identities. Moreover, individuals and groups may possess multiple identities. It does not follow, however, that all identities are reducible to individual identities. This is similar to Ruggie’s observation

\[135\] Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” 397-8.
that not all beliefs are reducible to individual beliefs.¹³⁶ Though an individual may identify with a group and group identity, nothing requires the individual to fully subscribe to any group’s identity.

Some principles informed by social psychology aid in further understanding the concept of identity. Many scholars, for instance, agree on the general belief that identities are somewhat stable and resistant to change. Two principles in particular support this belief. First, identities, especially group identities, are often times based on differences manifested in physical ways. Language, appearance, and territory all might, but need not, serve as partial bases for identity. Such bases are not prone to frequent or rapid transformation. The longstanding conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, both tenaciously identifying with specific territories and systems of beliefs, provides a compelling example (it does not, however, follow that identities and beliefs are objective or removed from serving political purposes).

Another possible explanation for the persistence of identity is the principle of commitment and consistency. This principle holds that individuals or groups are prone to act in accordance with both commitments they have made and prior behavior in order to avoid personal cognitive dissonance and public disapproval from others.¹³⁷ Thusly, consistency in social behavior is typically valued. This principle also lends


understanding to other phenomena noted by social psychologists, including self-fulfilling prophecies and commitment traps and even the notion of path-dependence, the latter more frequently noted in political science. Nothing, however, demands this behavioral norm to unwaveringly hold, nor that it holds in all situations and circumstances. The value accorded to individuals who keep their commitments and act predictably is likely itself a social construction. Interestingly, scholars and policymakers who study China often fear that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) will one day find itself in a commitment trap, forced to act or react aggressively to accidental or intentional injurious (physically or emotionally) behavior from, for example, the Republic of China (ROC, also known as Taiwan) or the United States, bound to do so by previous hard line rhetoric directed towards these countries but intended for Chinese domestic consumption. So the fear holds, if the CCP fails to respond adequately to any foreign affront to its legitimacy, Chinese citizens might engage in demonstrations against their own government or seek political upheaval, both of which pose obvious threats to the survival of the CCP.

With this in mind, how are identities actually formed? With regard to individuals, the self is distinguished from the other. There is more to identity than a link to institutional roles, as Wendt and others argue. Individual identity is constituted in comparison with others in terms of similarities and differences. It is difficult to discern whether this relationship is inherently competitive—in other words, conflictual. This holds even in Hobbes’ state of war, a state that he concedes may very well never have
existed in reality. Even if individuals are primarily concerned with self-preservation, they are not condemned to persistent conflict or to a state of war. Many other species live in relative harmony among their own kind, even operating within orders of hierarchical organization with varying degrees of cooperation. Competition and conflict exist but do not ultimately prevent cooperation. It is difficult to conceive of a situation where an individual encounters another for the first time predisposed to threat rather than inquisitiveness, harder still to conceive of a situation where an individual is born without ties to one or both of their progenitors. Experiments in the field of social psychology demonstrate that individuals identify with whom they share similar characteristics.

Hobbes’ later proclamation that, in the state of nature known as the state of war, every man has a right to everything, even one another’s belongings and own person, to the extent they can take them, also proves problematic. It is difficult to conceive of any other “right” than what power (of some form) affords. Absent this, it does not follow that each individual has a right to everything. It follows more logically that rights do not exist, except perhaps a right to thy own self resulting from the distinction between self and other. Aside from perhaps the self, individuals are neither entitled to nor prohibited from that which they encounter. Instead, and more in line with Hobbes’ reasoning elsewhere, possessions and “rights” only exist so long as one is able to preserve them. Still, this argument is tenuous at best, especially if the right to thy own self is accepted. The distinction between self and other leads to distinctions between what is mine and what is yours, equating possession to rights absent any legitimating, governing body. Nonetheless, force or theft may breach and abrogate this right in a Hobbesian world, the only recourse being the same. The distinction that possession equates to right in a state of war is moot, however, if this state of existence never actually existed, which Hobbes explicitly admits as to likely be the case. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc: Indianapolis, 1994), 77.

Cialdini, *Influence*. It is possible that identification with similar others is either a social construct or the result of an original, unique cause and effect relationship between individuals with ensuing path dependence. Neither precludes alternate possibilities. Psychological experiments conducted today cannot ascertain this (at least adhering to any semblance of ethical standards), as neither can history, unable to provide an account of human origin. More likely, it might be the extension of kinship, differences arising out of
This supports the idea of cooperation amongst members of the same species (further reducible to within species differences), opposite others or opposite nature itself. This provides a foundation for group formation.

Interests compel group formation. Desires, or wants, constitute interests, whether held individually or by groups, whether selfish or altruistic. Interests also compel individual, group, institutional, or organizational behavior. As previously described, groups are subjective and exist for some purpose, whether benign or malign. However, the identities and behaviors of other individuals and groups influence one another, thus influencing their respective interests. Identity is neither monolithic nor fixed. Identity can act as cause or effect and ultimately turns into a feedback loop of sorts.

There is no difficulty in conceiving that identities can both influence and be influenced by one another and by the outcomes of social interaction. The degree to which this happens and how this happens depends upon the context of particular scenarios. The outcomes of interaction then become part of history. These outcomes need not necessarily influence present identities of the actors involved. If not, they remain dormant in history, ready to be utilized, even manipulated, in the constitution of identity in terms of future interests and situations. Groups are subject to the same process as individual actors, group identities affecting one another and giving rise to interests and behavior. The only notable difference is that group identities are neither wholly representative of any single constituent’s identity nor a perfect amalgamation of each different evolutionary origins or the product of separation of kin over time, subject to different evolutionary paths, exacerbated by time.

140 Opposite, not opposed to, an important distinction.
constituent’s identities. This does not imply, however, that group identities cannot influence individual identities.

Within international relations, emphasizing the role of identity allows for greater understanding and insight compared with more traditional approaches. This study’s specific approach somewhat modifies the concept of identity as used by constructivists in terms of conceptualization, emphasis, and application. The overarching argument is that identities characterize the nature of social relationships between individuals and groups. Identities determine whether relationships are cooperative or competitive, peaceful or tense, and to what degree. The process of identity formation exists as a feedback loop, prior behaviors and interactions either reinforcing or directly influencing identities or lying dormant in history with the potential to have such an effect, to reverberate, at a later time. This conceptualization reinforces what both Gries and Callahan argue in assessing Chinese nationalism in terms of U.S.-China relations. Not only does it reinforce their overall arguments concerning nationalism, it provides a stronger theoretical base for their arguments, likewise reinforcing and complementing Campbell’s assessment of the United States in *Writing Security*, where he details the subjective use of history to constitute or reinforce certain identities or interests, legitimize behavior or legitimize the role of those in power (that is, legitimize their identity as rulers), and influence what issues are salient with regard to states’ interests and to their constituents.

This approach also bridges the divide between studies of international relations and studies of nationalism, typically identified as a subfield of comparative politics. According to Michael Hechter, nations (distinct from states) are relatively large groups of
individuals exhibiting a high degree of solidarity, realized as social constructions that are territorially bounded (this latter point distinguishing nations from ethnic groups).\footnote{Michael Hechter, \textit{Containing Nationalism} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 10-4.} In terms of identity, nations are groups of individuals sharing a common identity that happen to be tied, in part, to some physical territory, a spatial extension. Hechter defines nationalism, opposed to nation or national identity, as “…action designed to render the boundaries of the nation congruent with those of its governance unit,” reflecting the interests around which nationalism exists.\footnote{Hechter, \textit{Containing Nationalism}, 7-8. Sometimes, according to Hechter, patriotism, the desire to raise the relative prestige and power of one’s own nation in the international system, is considered nationalistic. However, under his definition of nationalism, this would entail that the boundaries of the nation and governance unit are already congruent, which rarely, if ever, happens, removing any impetus for nationalism and uncovering the flaw of such a characterization of patriotism. Instead, Hechter argues that what is often taken to be patriotism is actually state-building nationalism, advancing the interests of one nation at the expense of others in a multinational state. Thinking in terms of nations as territorially bound groups, however, where virtually any factors may serve as the basis for inclusion or exclusion, it is possible to think of the governing body of a state as a nation itself. They are indeed territorially bound and at the very least share in the fact of their privileged position of power and share an interest in preserving their power. If Hechter’s definition of nationalism is slightly modified, defining it as action designed to render or maintain the boundaries of the nation congruent with those of its governing body, this allows for patriotism defined as the desire to raise the relative prestige and power of one’s own state (rather than nation) in the international system. This also allows for the consideration of state-based nationalism, the interest in preserving the state, instead of finding nationalism almost inapplicable to states outside of state-building nationalism.} Identity serves as a more fundamental basis for studies of nationalism under these definitions.

Applying this approach to U.S.-China relations, this study primarily draws upon an interpretive approach to identity, drawing upon an examination of various primary
sources related to American and Chinese narratives for the cases analyzed. Reliance upon primary sources serves two purposes: to determine the constitution of identities and develop a historiography, of sorts, of the relations between China and the United States (as well as other actors where relevant). Examples of the primary sources utilized include current and archival government speeches, policy documents, reports, directives, public statements, and so on. Military sources indicating the importance of identities at play, of interests, and of history are also utilized, including defense white papers, official reports, and public statements. Sources emanating from other governmental bodies are also referenced, including legislative bodies and departments or ministries responsible for foreign relations, defense, economy, commerce, and trade. As the classification of materials poses a great challenge in conducting research on contemporary foreign policy interests, news and journal sources offering insight into official views supplement these sources.

For foreign language primary sources, English translations are used where available. However, for other Chinese language open sources, the U.S. Open Source Center (formerly the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS) offers translations of many Chinese language news and journal publications. More than supplementing official sources of information, the translations of these sources provided by the Open Source Center include official statements and offer general insight into sentiments into on the relationship between the U.S. and China as well as reactions to various bilateral and international issues. Examples include insight into the conflictual maritime encounters
between China and Japan and the various tense issues in U.S.-China relations, from trade to the development and deployment of military systems to military accidents.\textsuperscript{143}

In the following case studies, background information and a general overview of each particular case are first provided, at times including details on general identities or narratives to provide greater context. Afterward, U.S. and Chinese narratives and identities are individually analyzed with regard to each case. Last, the interaction between the identities of each side is considered.

\textsuperscript{143} The accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and the EP-3E incident provide examples of the latter.
Both sides assumed the other was out to get something materially from its policy, and both underestimated the importance of the ideational element in the other side’s policy. Material-driven assumptions about policy behavior seem to make these kinds of misunderstandings more likely.

—Gregory J. Moore

Despite increasing openness in China’s economy and society with the implementation of market and other reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, U.S.-China relations remained beset by varying degrees of tension moving towards the twenty-first century. Even as western and other foreign goods, investment, and people gained ever-greater access to the historic “Middle Kingdom,” trust between Washington and Beijing remained tenuous amidst strategic geopolitical concerns and fundamental differences in the identities of the two countries. Exacerbating existing differences, over the years various events transpired that negatively impacted the nature of U.S.-China relations. This was particularly apparent with the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident and later unfortunate events such as the 1999 accidental U.S./NATO bombing of China’s Belgrade embassy during the Kosovo War and the 2001 collision between a U.S. Navy (USN) EP-3E reconnaissance aircraft with a People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) fighter jet

approximately 70 miles southeast of China’s Hainan island. These type of events, namely each countries’ reactions to them, clearly illuminate the dearth of trust and competition of ideals and interests experienced by the governments and populations on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, feeding at times hostile sentiments and rhetoric from officials and citizens alike.

Approaching the turn of the century, before al Qaeda’s 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, the nature of relations between the U.S. and China appeared oriented to remain characteristically wanting if not embarking upon a path of increasing tension or deterioration, epitomized by growing levels of concern over China’s rise by some within the U.S. combined with the influence of the aforementioned incidents. With the 11 September 2001 attacks, however, U.S. focus quickly shifted from China to al Qaeda, Afghanistan, and the threat of international terrorism. While the Bush administration came to office poised to take a tougher stance towards China, al Qaeda’s attacks created an opportunity for a shift in and improvement of U.S.-China relations. China quickly expressed sympathy for the United States, offering support in the United Nations and encouraging Pakistan to work with the United States (along with other forms of support and cooperation) in the aftermath of the attacks, taking advantage of this opportunity opened by the United States’ new overriding security focus to potentially improve relations. Negative expressions of the other in the media outlets of both

144 Of course, this is not an exhaustive list of incidents negatively impacting U.S.-China relations over this period. The 1995-1996 events related to the Taiwan Strait missile crisis serves as an additional example.
countries waned significantly. Though abhorrent, al Qaeda’s attacks opened space for the formation of more cooperative U.S. and Chinese identities and a more cooperative relationship.

Though 11 September 2001 led to an immediate improvement in the nature of U.S.-China relations, this improvement has been little more than fleeting. Neither side has capitalized on the opportunity for improvement in ways leading to a lasting, fundamental shift in bilateral or broader relations. Instead, old concerns over the China threat in the U.S. and over U.S. containment and hegemony in China have resurfaced in seeming concurrence with the rise of multiple points of tension and conflict between both sides, as well as in conjunction with the waning of the United States’ predominant focus on terrorism—and Iraq—giving way to a reorientation of U.S. foreign policy concerns to the Asia-Pacific region. This reorientation of U.S. foreign policy has been termed the Obama administration’s “pivot” to the Asia-Pacific. Some of the points of tension and conflict between China and the U.S. include economic concerns, human rights issues, China’s maritime territorial disputes, allegations of Chinese cyber espionage and attacks, and Beijing’s stance opposite U.S. and western interests with regard to crises involving regimes in North Korea, Syria, and elsewhere. Differences in identities based on opposing perceptions and worldviews starkly similar to those found before September 11, 2001, have returned, doing so at a time when China appears not only stronger in the international system but also more assertive, thus in many ways adversely affecting the nature of U.S.-China relations.

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Examining the shifts in U.S.-China relations bracketing 11 September 2001 allows for an examination of the importance of identities and their constitutive elements in international politics. The significance of this tragic event opened space for—and for a time effected—a change in bilateral relations between Beijing and Washington by transforming the salience of U.S. foreign policy concerns and, importantly, allowing both sides to identify a basis upon which to emphasize cooperation and even common concerns over issues such as radical Islamic extremism (China long concerned over radical extremism in its Western province of Xinjiang, for example). Inimical, at times, narratives of the other and associated rhetoric became largely suspended in favor of increasingly common themes of cooperation coupled with actual attempts at increased cooperation and collaboration. U.S. and Chinese identities, or at least salient aspects of their identities, shifted, approaching closer congruence. As previously stated, however, attempts at increased cooperation and the suspension of negative views and adversarial narratives did not last, signs of this trend’s brevity appearing as early as the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq (a decision opposed by China and much of the rest of the world).

How the U.S. and China viewed one another in relation to their own identities and interests over the last few decades with respect to the various events that have occurred presents an interesting period for analysis. Notwithstanding their lack of permanence or persistence, the shifts in narratives and identities on both sides of the Pacific and their affects on U.S.-China relations demonstrates not only that identities matter and how they hold power and influence but also how their social construction represents the relational

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146 The case itself offers the ability to conduct a within-case comparison over time under the logic of a Most Similar Systems (MSS) comparative research design.
and at times political nature of the identities at play in international politics. Analyzing events in U.S.-China relations leading up to, including, and after 11 September 2001, this chapter demonstrates how the interactions between identities and between identities and international events influenced and characterized the nature of relations between Beijing and Washington over this period, shifts in this relationship over time allowing for a within-case comparison of sorts.

Undertaking this analysis, this section specifically analyzes relations surrounding the accidental U.S./NATO bombing of China’s Belgrade embassy in 1999, the April 2001 EP-3E collision incident, the changes in the dynamics of U.S.-China relations resulting from the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, and the relapse in relations that has occurred since. Not only did the first two of these events clearly exacerbate tension in U.S.-China relations, leading to bitter sentiments and malicious rhetoric on both sides, they also illuminate the gulf of difference existing between the perceptions—the perceptual gaps—of both sides extenuating from their own unique identities and interests, all with regard to two events considered by many (but not all) as unfortunate accidents. These events were so meaningful as to motivate anti-U.S. demonstrations among Chinese citizens—physical protests and cyber attacks against the U.S.—reflecting the possibility

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147 Though interpretation of these events is somewhat biased along ethnocentric lines and differing viewpoints do exist pertaining to whether either event was accidental and over which party was responsible for the in-flight collision involving the U.S. EP-3E aircraft and Chinese jet fighter. As noted by Moore in 2010 on the topic of the embassy bombing, “While Americans explained that the embassy bombing was a horrible mistake, most Chinese are convinced to this day that it was an intentional attack.” Moore, “Not Very Material but Hardly Immaterial,” 23.
and actual ability of perceptions and beliefs, thus identities, to influence actors’ behavior from both the top-down and from the bottom-up.

The improvement experienced in U.S.-China relations immediately after 11 September 2001 raises questions not only about how the identities on both sides shifted, but also as to why this shift took place. The following analysis will explore what affect the interests of either side had on this shift in relations, such as (but not limited to) the view that the attacks simply diverted U.S. foreign policy attention and security concerns from China to other actors, offering the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) the benefit of more time for undisturbed development and growth of power within the international system, perhaps even extending this period of time by taking advantage of the opportunity to draw closer to the United States.\textsuperscript{148} The regression away from the improvement in relations and increased cooperation after 11 September 2001 offers an opportunity to explore why improvement did not last as well as examine fundamental questions pertaining to the malleability of identity, its political nature, the importance of history, and to what extent international actors have control over their relationships.

The perceptions and narratives divulged through primary sources, including official policy statements and documents produced by both Washington and Beijing as well as reports from popular media outlets, provide the chief method for analyzing the identities of both countries (including their interests and perceptions) and thus the impact of these identities on behavior and the nature of U.S.-China relations over the period of time encompassed by the events outlined above. Depictions of these events and of “the

\textsuperscript{148} This view is laden with assumptions about Chinese identities and interests, which will be explored.
other” as well as the actual actions taken by Beijing and Washington provide a means of exploring the function and influence of identity and its affect on international politics.

**Accident or Intentional Attack: The Bombing of China’s Belgrade Embassy**

During 7 May 1999, a U.S. B-2 bomber attacked China’s embassy in Belgrade as part of the U.S. led NATO intervention in Kosovo, killing three Chinese journalists and wounding over twenty others. The U.S. claimed the bombing to be an unintentional mistake resulting from outdated maps and flawed targeting information, intending instead to attack the Federal Directorate of Supply and Procurement building of the Yugoslav Army.\(^{149}\) In essence, the U.S. accurately bombed the precise location desired but mistook the building occupying this space. After realizing the mistake, President Clinton and NATO issued official apologies for the accidental bombing. However, many Chinese citizens remained suspicious of whether the attack was accidental for various reasons. Regardless, the attack ignited widespread protests throughout China. Prominently, protestors demonstrated in front of U.S. facilities, going so far as to throw projectiles at the U.S. (and British) embassy and harass U.S. journalists.\(^ {150}\) Demonstrators also defaced buildings, burned the U.S. consulate in Chengdu, and defaced and boycotted U.S. fast-food restaurants such as Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) in what James Miles

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\(^{149}\) Moore, “Not Very Material but Hardy Immaterial,” 28.

described as “...the most widespread display of discontent over any issue in China since the Tiananmen Square unrest.”\textsuperscript{151}

Clearly, both China and the U.S. perceived and reacted to the Belgrade embassy bombing quite differently. Beyond the effect of China being the victim in this case, the identities and interests of both sides largely impacted their conflicting perceptions of the bombing. In other words, a gap existed with regard to each side’s perceptions: a perceptual gap.

\textit{U.S. Perspective of the Embassy Bombing}

For the United States, the bombing of China’s Belgrade embassy represented an unfortunate accident amidst its intervention in Kosovo. In the incident’s immediate aftermath, dominant aspects of the U.S. narrative concerning the event included expressions of apology, regret, and condolence, including a letter issued by President Clinton to Chinese President Jiang Zemin (as well as phone calls) and the U.S. Ambassador to China, James Sasser’s, expression of America’s regret over the accident. China postponed reporting these U.S. expressions of remorse in its newspapers.\textsuperscript{152}

Meanwhile, U.S. facilities and personnel within China experienced a barrage of protests and hostile reactions, from the throwing of projectiles to harassment of U.S. officials and reporters. Beijing both publicly rejected U.S. claims that the bombing was an accident and endorsed its citizens’ legal rights to lawful demonstrations.


The U.S. initially attributed the bombing accident to the possibility of outdated maps of the area, though during its official investigation the U.S. later identified the occurrence of “a long series of errors over time,” in addition to outdated maps, that were responsible for the mistake, outlined in an official account provided to Chinese officials in person by Under Secretary of State Thomas R. Pickering during June 1999. These errors included not only outdated maps failing to account for the change in location of China’s embassy in 1996, but also bureaucratic and targeting selection mistakes. Later, during July, the Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, divulged that the Central Intelligence Agency selected the target, the Federal Directorate of Supply and Procurement building of the Yugoslav Army, but did so using a “flawed technique” for locating it. Ultimately, the U.S. government agreed to pay China compensation for damage to its embassy and to the families of the deceased and those injured in the attack while the CIA dismissed one of its officers and punished six others as responsible for the mistake. However, almost a year after the bombing occurred, China continued to reject the official U.S. narrative and deemed the action taken by the CIA as inadequate.

The most salient aspects of U.S. identity regarding this situation are those of remorse and responsibility. The U.S. did not deny responsibility for bombing the

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Chinese embassy in Belgrade or delegitimize the situation’s importance. However, U.S. maintained the importance of its intervention in Kosovo and of its identity as a guardian of humanitarian concerns.

*Chinese Perspective of the Embassy Bombing*

On the other side of the Pacific, as already intimated, Beijing remained skeptical of Washington’s claims and explanations, rejecting the notion that the bombing was accidental on multiple occasions during talks with U.S. officials over the ensuing months. So being, Chinese officials remained persistent in demanding a full and transparent investigation of the incident by the U.S., that those within the U.S. government responsible for the bombing be held accountable, and that the families of the three journalists killed as well as the twenty or so injured receive compensation (The U.S. made a reciprocal claim for compensation covering damages to its embassy, burned consulate in Chengdu, and damages to other facilities resulting from Chinese demonstrations).\(^{156}\) Vice President Hu Jintao, on the Saturday after the bombing, stated that the bombing was both a criminal and brutal act, going on to say that “The Chinese people are people who uphold justice and love peace. We are willing, together with the people of other countries across the world, to support each other and strengthen cooperation, and work in concerted efforts for mankind’s great cause of peace and development.”\(^{157}\)

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Chinese officials and citizens cited many sources for their skepticism in response to the U.S. official explanation of the incident as an accident, ranging from the accuracy of the munitions used (how could the U.S. make such a mistake, especially in conjunction with its overall technical superiority) to the Chinese embassy’s unmistakable markings and blue glass to the improbability of the multiple different groups of actors involved not catching the error regarding the target’s identity before undertaking the military strike.\textsuperscript{158}

Upon news of the embassy bombing, hundreds of thousands of Chinese citizens participated in protests over a four day period, with the central government condoning and even assisting demonstrations during this time.\textsuperscript{159} During the second day of protests, on May 9, up to 100,000 people demonstrated outside the U.S. embassy.\textsuperscript{160} Elsewhere, as one example, over 15,000 students from local universities gathered in front of the U.S. Shanghai Consulate on May 8, many believing that the bombing was intentional, akin to attacking Chinese territory, and an affront to Chinese sovereignty.\textsuperscript{161} In many cases, demonstrators vandalized U.S. facilities by defacing them with paint or by hurling projectiles like bricks, rocks, and bottles to break windows. Demonstrators also set fire to the U.S. consulate in Chengdu. On the Tuesday morning following the embassy


\textsuperscript{160} Hong Kong AFP, “AFP Views Nationwide Fury in China Over Nato Bombing,” \textit{Hong Kong AFP}, May 9, 1999, Open Source Center.

\textsuperscript{161} Xinhua, “‘More Than 15,000’ Students Protest at Shanghai Consulate,” \textit{Xinhua}, May 8, 1999, Open Source Center.
bombing, Chinese media sources reported the apologies of President Clinton and NATO leaders that had been previously postponed, even though they were issued immediately after the incident (though the apologies reportedly did not make front page news in *The People’s Daily*—mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party—the cover instead carrying commentary referring to the incident as barbaric and criminal).\(^{162}\) Bringing “…an emotional close to the anti-American activity” over the previous days (that is, the widespread protests), on May 13 Beijing awarded the title of “revolutionary martyr” to the journalists killed in the embassy bombing and encouraged its population to focus on strengthening China.\(^{163}\) However, Chinese officials continued to demand a full account of the bombing from the United States government. Also in response to the incident, the Chinese government suspended its official human rights dialogue with the U.S., suspended other high-level contacts, and suspended discussion of China’s entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In the aftermath of the bombing of its embassy, China adopted a narrative identifying itself a victim not of an accident, but of a deliberate U.S./NATO attack. Chinese officials defined the incident as criminal and barbaric, implicitly extending these definitions to the U.S. and, in many ways, its intervention in Kosovo. Outrage spanned the country along with declining views of the United States and its actions in international politics. However, more than identifying itself simply as victim, China


identified itself as a victim unafraid of opposing the views of the world’s hegemon, the United States.

*The Intersection of Competing Identities*

Beyond the simple reality of the embassy bombing itself, China and the United States perceived the incident based on their own unique, identity based perceptions. These differing perceptions interacted to influence, in this case adversely, the already tenuous nature of U.S.-China relations in the aftermath of the bombing. While China’s outrage over the bombing may be justified to some extent, as China was legitimately the victim in this case, a history of mutual distrust, suspicion, and conflicting worldviews interacted to exacerbate the situation and China’s reaction. Instead of leaning towards acceptance of the United States’ narrative regarding the bombing as accidental, a number of factors composite of China’s identity and worldview predisposed the country to react more adversely and propose an alternate narrative.

Chinese nationalism presents one key factor influencing China’s response to the May 1999 U.S./NATO bombing of its Belgrade embassy. Since the fall of the Soviet Union and declining influence of communism, many have suggested that China sought a new issue around which to build Chinese identity and encourage support for and the legitimacy of the Chinese government as a replacement for communism. To replace communism as the solidifying factor of Chinese society, Beijing turned to a form of nationalism based on remembrance of the historic mistreatment of China during the 19th and 20th centuries—the century of humiliation, known as the humiliation narrative—and an emphasis on and pride in Chinese modernization and economic growth. During the
early 1990s, the Chinese government even initiated a patriotic education campaign in support of China’s so-called new nationalism.\textsuperscript{164}

China’s opposition to the U.S./NATO intervention in Kosovo further compounded the country’s reaction to the embassy bombing. While the U.S. narrative claimed the intervention was a humanitarian cause, China viewed the intervention as a way for the U.S. to pursue material gains: to strengthen its foothold in the region. For its part, the U.S. viewed Chinese opposition to the Kosovo intervention as materially driven to keep the U.S. from encroaching closer to its sphere of influence and to prevent the intervention from providing any sort of precedent for humanitarian intervention (of whatever sort) in China or support for separatist elements within its own country.\textsuperscript{165} This account of the differences in U.S. and Chinese perceptions and narratives and of their reactions to the incident, however, only begs further examination into the underlying characteristics of these differences.

The previous discussion has already indicated that differences in identities between the U.S. and China influenced their views of the May 1999 Chinese Belgrade embassy bombing and thus the nature of relations between the two countries. Endemic mistrust led many in the Chinese government and general population to view the bombing as an intentional attack and reject the U.S. claims and official narrative that it was an accident. This mistrust may be traced to at least a few sources, such as China’s century of humiliation and capitalization on the humiliation narrative to serve and


\textsuperscript{165} Moore, “Not Very Material but Hardy Immaterial,” 28, 39.
buttress Chinese nationalism and its overall identity. This aspect of Chinese nationalism possesses the ability to predispose Chinese officials and citizens toward mistrust, skepticism, and even animosity toward the United States and its allies, especially with and exacerbated by the occurrence of any sort of conflict. Further, as Gregory Moore notes, both parties believed they were acting in accordance with “…lofty ideals and norms of justice in their policy stands on the Kosovo intervention, [and] they saw the other as acting out of ‘baser’ material interests.”\(^{166}\) By extension, these narratives informed both sides’ views of and responses to the embassy bombing.

Here, the notion of Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE) helps inform understanding of the situation. As Moore relates from the work of Gries (who himself draws upon the concept from the realm of social psychology), FAE contends that in situations of conflict (or whenever differences arise), “we’ attribute ‘our’ group’s problems or mistakes to situational factors, while attributing other group’s problems or mistakes to dispositional factors like a flawed personality or ill intentions.”\(^{167}\) This coincides neatly with the difference in perceptions and narratives concerning the embassy bombing. For example, the U.S. attributed the bombing to a myriad of errors, ultimately regarding it as an unfortunate accident, while the Chinese viewed it as a barbaric, criminal, and quite possibly intentional attack based on U.S. interests.\(^{168}\) In the eyes of

\(^{166}\) Moore, “Not Very Material but Hardy Immaterial,” 37.

\(^{167}\) The notion of FAE applies not only to groups, but to individuals as well. Moore, “Not Very Material but Hardy Immaterial,” 27.

\(^{168}\) An alternate explanation also exists that the attack was deliberate due to evidence that the Chinese embassy was acting as a rebroadcasting station for Milosevic’s forces and
the Chinese, possible U.S. interests included gaining a stronger presence in the region and containing China (all the while, Chinese media sources “virtually ignored” Serbian atrocities and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo\(^\text{169}\)). In the U.S., some, such as Senator and then presidential candidate John McCain, voiced that China was orchestrating the anti-U.S. protests occurring at the time for political purposes.\(^\text{170}\)

The differing interpretations held by China and the United States over the embassy bombing demonstrate that in some ways each side viewed the other much in line with a realist worldview of international politics, or at least of their bilateral relationship. However, for the reasons discussed above, a more complete understanding recognizes that each side’s views of not only the other but also the self interacted to intensify tension in U.S.-China relations at the time. However, according to Dingxin Zhao, expressions of Chinese nationalism also occurred in a bottom-up fashion. The Chinese government felt the need to allow and condone the protests over the embassy bombing in order to avoid also concern that China was monitoring U.S. missile attacks with the aim of developing effective countermeasures. The veracity of this explanation is uncertain, but warrants mentioning. See John Sweeney, Jens Holsoe, and Ed Vulliamy, “Nato bombed Chinese deliberately: Nato hit embassy on purpose,” The Guardian, October 16, 1999, accessed December 29, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/oct/17/balkans. In recent years, Jiang Zemin supposedly admitted in an unpublished memoir to hiding Serbian military intelligence units inside the Chinese embassy. See Michael Sheridan, “Truth about ‘mistake’ bombing of Chinese embassy,” New York Post, February 12, 2011.


being seen as weak in response to the United States, despite but also due to worries that the protests might morph into expressions of grievances over the Chinese government and the CCP and into questioning its legitimacy.\(^{171}\) The demonstrations themselves may have been an outlet and guise for such feelings.

On the other hand, some, such as Simon Shen, argue that China’s primary goal in the aftermath of the embassy bombing was to save face and that the government’s behavior did not match the nationalist rhetoric that the incident inspired, primarily seeking an apology from the U.S.\(^ {172}\) However, this explanation does not account for issues such as China’s delayed reporting of President Clinton’s and NATO’s apologies for the bombing, suspension of high-level contacts, or official depictions of the incident as barbaric, criminal, and deliberate. In the world of international politics, rhetoric possesses the ability to mutually influence perceptions and behavior.

The perceptions and various other factors surrounding the bombing of China’s Belgrade embassy defy simple explanation. China and the U.S. might certainly have possessed competing interests, but the identities of both countries did more to influence their perceptions and responses to the incident. The century of humiliation predisposes China towards heightened sensitivity in response to any affront to its dignity or sovereignty. However, this sensitivity is also tied to the legitimacy of China’s rulers, as much of Chinese narratives of nationalism and identity since the fall of communism in


Eastern Europe are based on both the humiliation narrative and pride in and desire for increased modernization and economic growth. Even so, the politicization of the embassy bombing lurks in the midst of these other factors. China rejected U.S. claims that the bombing was an accident, imposing upon the U.S. (intentionally or unintentionally) the identity of a self-interested hegemon and aggressor in international politics. The Chinese government also chose to intentionally delay the release of President Clinton’s and NATO’s apologies for the embassy bombing while condoning and facilitating the demonstrations that occurred in response to the incident. David Shambaugh attributed this behavior to the Chinese government’s manipulation of popular emotions to bolster its own legitimacy. However, Chinese citizens do not lack autonomy, and the Chinese government may indeed have felt some need to respond to its citizens sense of indignation and outrage by allowing, even to some extent encouraging, their nationalist and anti-U.S. sentiments.

While China may have politically manipulated perceptions of the embassy bombing to some extent, dismissing the reactions of the Chinese government and its population based on this alone delegitimizes any true sense of grievance experienced by the Chinese while imposing little more than a material-driven, self-interested narrative of identity upon the country and its leadership. Similarly, China’s apparent first and foremost reaction to the incident as a deliberate act, characterizing it as barbaric and criminal, with little discussion otherwise and withholding U.S. and NATO expressions of apology and regret, exposes not only the mistrust existing between the China and the

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U.S., but indeed China’s politicization of the event. With already endemic mistrust and tension in the U.S.-China relationship, both sides perceived and interpreted the May 1999 embassy bombing according to their own identities and interests with little reflection (and little penchant for such reflection) on the views of the other. The intermixture of this international incident with existing discordant identities and political motives resulted in a more conflictual and tense bilateral relationship for some time.

Collision Material/Immaterial: The EP-3E Incident

Over time, relations between the U.S. and China began to stabilize after the May 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing.174 After the initial demonstrations by Chinese citizens, protestors largely heeded the central government’s advice to focus on strengthening China through study and hard work.175 Heightened tension and mistrust in U.S.-China relations would, however, soon resurface with the midair collision of a U.S. Navy EP-3E Aries II reconnaissance plane with a People’s Liberation Army Navy fighter jet near China’s Hainan Island on April 1, 2001. The collision resulted in the loss of the Chinese pilot’s life while the U.S. aircraft and crew made an emergency, though unauthorized, landing at a Chinese military base on Hainan Island. This incident occurred only months after President George W. Bush took office as 43rd President of the United States.

174 “Stabilize” more accurately depicts the decreasing tension in relations over time rather than the term “mend,” which suggests a more active attempt by one or both sides to improve relations after the embassy bombing. Though both sides came to an agreement with regard to monetary compensation and (China in particular) reduced the frequency with which they brought up the incident, China continued to reject U.S. explanations, demanding a more detailed account of what transpired.

Tension in U.S.-China relations was already rising, as President Bush came to office intent to maintain his presidential campaign pledges to take a tougher stance on China (upon taking office, the President made telephone calls to every major world leader except Chinese President Jiang Zemin). President Bush’s more adversarial approach to China included adopting a narrative defining the relationship as one of “strategic competition” rather than a “strategic partnership,” as defined during the Clinton administration. The midair collision between the two Pacific powers only further increased tension.

In terms of responsibility for the midair collision between the U.S. EP-3E plane and Chinese fighter jet, both sides perceived the incident differently. The U.S. claimed that its plane enjoyed freedom of navigation as it was flying over international waters. Beijing, however, “claimed that such freedoms are not absolute, and that such foreign aircraft flying over its EEZ should abide by China’s laws and ‘refrain from activities which endanger the sovereignty, security and national interests’ of the coastal country.” China also officially remarked that after the collision, the U.S. aircraft entered Chinese airspace and landed without permission. China detained the aircraft’s crew of 24 personnel, releasing the crew on April 11 and releasing the dismantled aircraft on July 3. Overall, China’s narrative of the event placed blame upon the crew of the


aircraft for suddenly veering while in proximity to the Chinese jet. Initially, the U.S. largely refrained from immediately assigning blame for the incident, referring to it as an accident while speculating on the role of how closely the Chinese jet fighter was trailing the slow moving and less maneuverable U.S. aircraft in the situation.\textsuperscript{179} After the midair collision, Foreign Minister Zhu Bangzao stated that the release of the U.S. crew depended on a U.S. apology and explanation of the incident, squarely placing blame on the United States and calling upon Washington to take full responsibility. The U.S. concluded that the accident most likely occurred due to a miscue by the “speedier” Chinese jet, trailing the U.S. aircraft at unsafe distances.\textsuperscript{180} However, the U.S. did express its regret over the situation.

\textit{Chinese Perspective of the Collision}

According to one analyst, “Having demanded and obtained an apology from the Bush Administration for the spy plane incident, China not only enhanced its image as a great power by demonstrating its will and capability to stand up to the sole superpower, but was also seen as defining the limits of U.S. power in the Pacific” (the “apology” actually more an expression of regret, though some sources within the Chinese media regarded it


as an official apology).\(^{181}\) As with the May 1999 embassy bombing, there are also indications that aspects of Chinese identity relating to its history during the century of humiliation influenced its perceptions and response to the midair collision between U.S. and Chinese aircraft. These sorts of incidents increase the salience of Chinese concerns over U.S. hegemony and the possibility of U.S. containment, seen in China’s narratives of the incident, pushing Beijing towards a state-centric foreign policy emphasizing national independence and sovereignty.\(^{182}\) As noted by Cheng and Ngok, “If the incident had occurred between the U.S. and one of its allies, it might have been an accident. But apparently the Chinese government and the Chinese people could not perceive it as an accident,” and that “On the basis of the series of unfriendly acts by the U.S. towards China, they easily came to the conclusion that the air collision incident had been the inevitable outcome of U.S. hegemonism provoking China and treating China with hostility.”\(^{183}\) Similar to the Belgrade embassy bombing, though to a lesser extent, China’s narratives served to define itself as a victim of (but not afraid to stand up to) the hegemonism of the United States.


U.S. Perspective of the Collision

The fact that the United States conducts reconnaissance missions off China’s coastal waters indicates that at least some elements within the United States view China as either a current or potential threat. Power-holders influenced by the “China threat” narrative (or simply the uncertainty thereof), to say nothing of whether such views and concerns are warranted, are disposed to undertaking actions such as reconnaissance flights and other activities that are in some ways adversarial in nature. Moreover, these views—quite logically—dispose officials towards some degree of conflictual interpretations of and relations with the People’s Republic of China. These views are primarily rooted in power-rivalry type notions of international politics fundamental to various forms of realism. These perceptions of international politics and specifically of China influence U.S. views of not only the midair collision but also views of the necessity for such activities as the reconnaissance flight in the first place.

Opposite China, U.S. narratives of the midair collision between U.S. and Chinese aircraft adopted a more measured approach in initially assigning blame for the accident, though U.S. officials directly hinted at the possibility it was the Chinese pilot’s fault. Ultimately, the U.S. denied responsibility and refused to issue China an official apology. The U.S. also maintained its right to undertake such reconnaissance flights. Ignoring U.S. rights to do so, U.S. perceived need to do so illustrates ways in which the U.S. views China and the world.

Washington adopted a hard line in response to China’s demands for an apology and overall interpretation of the midair collision. However, this incident did not lead to an increase in tension in bilateral relations on the same scale caused by the Belgrade embassy bombing. Still, though widespread demonstrations did not occur, both Chinese and U.S. “hackers” did participate in a “cyber war” of sorts, somewhat similar to the cyber attacks experienced by the United States after the embassy bombing. Not long after the collision, the United States also “approved a significant new arms package for Taiwan.” China viewed these actions and others, such as the U.S. granting a visa to former Taiwan President Lee Tenghui, as attempts by some U.S. politicians to launch an anti-China campaign.

As to the legality of the U.S. reconnaissance flight itself, looking to international law, the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea holds that countries have: a 12 nautical mile territorial sea where they retain sovereignty over most activities and where only innocent passage by others is allowed; and a 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) where countries maintain rights to resources but where others retain most of their rights to freedom of navigation. Though the U.N. Convention suffers some degree

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of ambiguity—and some countries maintain they retain more rights and a greater degree of sovereignty in their EEZs—many treat activities such as those conducted by the U.S. EP-3E reconnaissance plane as permitted under international law.\textsuperscript{188} Accepting this belief, the legal issue surrounding the midair collision disappears, leaving only the issue of responsibility for the collision. Here, both sides maintained their own views on the cause of the collision. However, instead of attempting to ascertain responsibility for the collision, it is more informative to examine each side’s responses and narratives related to the collision itself. Not only did two aircraft from two different countries collide, but so did these countries’ identities and interests, discernable through their conflicting perceptions of the event.

As the April 2001 collision demonstrates, as well as the May 1999 embassy bombing, views and discursive representations of the other in U.S.-China relations—both in general and with regard to specific events—directly impact the nature of the bilateral relationship. Both adopted adversarial and opposing identities due to the midair collision. With the relationship’s history of varying degrees of tension and the ability of historic points of tension or conflict to serve as salient aspects influencing its nature, much of recent U.S.-China relations has existed in a tenuous state, seemingly perpetually on the precipice of confrontation or conflict. This holds especially so since the fall of the Soviet Union. To some, China easily filled the void left by the Soviet Union in U.S. security concerns, becoming the United States’ new “enemy,” supported by ideological and other differences as well as international issues such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square

\textsuperscript{188} Valencia and Ji, “The ‘North Korean’ Ship and U.S. Spy Plane Incidents.”
massacre.\textsuperscript{189} With the occurrence of al Qaeda’s September, 2001, terrorist attacks, however, not only did a new threat emerge to occupy the United States’ security focus, an opportunity for more cooperative U.S.-China relations arose.

\textbf{11 September 2001 and U.S.-China Relations}

Perhaps most importantly with regard to U.S.-China relations, the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks perpetrated by al Qaeda against the United States diverted U.S. attention away from the so-called “China Threat.” Simultaneously, China expressed its condolences to and support of the United States, including supporting the American invasion of Afghanistan, despite long-held concerns over the U.S. strengthening its presence in Central Asia—around China’s periphery. Supporting the U.S. “war on terror,” Chinese leaders believed, would also offer them greater support in dealing with their own domestic threats. Interestingly, the Department of Defense \textit{Quadrennial Defense Review Report} released shortly after 11 September 2001, but composed before al Qaeda’s attacks, warned of the rise of an Asian competitor to the United States, one able to deny the U.S. access to East and Southeast Asian waters.\textsuperscript{190} By September of the next year, however, “the White House’s September 2002 \textit{National Security Strategy} emphasized ‘the emergence of a strong, peaceful and prosperous China,’ with additional calls for U.S.-China collaboration in areas of overlapping interest, including opposition to

\textsuperscript{189} Whether China presents an “enemy” or competitor of convenience or substantively so is debatable, necessitating further examination of the identities and values held by each side and what sort of political interests exist for both sides.

terrorism and the promotion of stability on the Korean peninsula,”\textsuperscript{191} reflecting the official shift in U.S. foreign policy concerns.

In contrast with China’s support for the U.S. after September 11, an opposing interpretation contends that China’s leaders saw in the September 11 attacks an opportunity to adopt, at the time, fashionable political cover—combating radical Islamic extremism—to exert greater domestic control over certain areas and aspects of its own society.\textsuperscript{192} There is much concern, for instance, over whether Chinese actions taken in response to violent extremism in places such as Xinjiang are justified or a guise for suppressing potentially justifiable domestic grievances and unrest. The extent to which Muslims in China’s western provinces self-identify primarily along religious rather than nationalistic lines is itself worthy of question, as is the extent congruence exists between China’s Muslims and Muslims elsewhere in the world, not to mention radical extremists.

In a way, the United States’ response to September 11 also re-illustrated its military superiority in relation to China, especially in terms of power projection capabilities, notwithstanding the difficulties the U.S. faced in terms of insurgencies and terrorism in Afghanistan as well as with its intervention in Iraq. With the state of events after September 11, China chose to support the U.S. and cooperate in ways such as sharing intelligence on terrorist threats and encouraging Pakistan to work with the United States. At the same time, China also enjoyed a reprieve from being seen as one of the


\textsuperscript{192} Friedberg, “11 September and the future of Sino-American relations,” 36.
primary potential threats to U.S. interests and security since the fall of the Soviet Union. Moreover, China sought to link the worldwide campaign against terrorism with its own efforts against separatism in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Taiwan.\textsuperscript{193}

\textit{The Intersection of Shared Identities}

According to previously used terminology, it might be argued that China and the U.S. experienced a sort of perceptual congruence with regard to their interests after the September 11 terrorist attacks (as opposed to perceptual gap). Thus, it makes intuitive sense to explore their identities in conjunction rather than individually.

On the surface, both sides appeared to find a new basis for cooperation after 11 September 2001. China became a partner in combating terrorism with the United States. The growing rift between the two countries, the mutual criticism expressed from both sides of the Pacific and even rising and proliferating open contemplation of the possibilities of armed conflict with the U.S. over issues such as Taiwan,\textsuperscript{194} largely ceased after September 11. For example, “In the US, the previous torrent of criticism and condemnation of China in the media suddenly became a trickle. While one still read hostile comments on and dire warnings about China from hardliners, the erstwhile deafening anti-China chorus dwindled to a few lonely tunes” and, “In China, the media,

\textsuperscript{193} Malik, “Dragon on Terrorism: Assessing China’s Tactical Gains and Strategic Losses After 11 September,” 267.

\textsuperscript{194} See John W. Garver, “The [former] Coming War with America,” \textit{Journal of Contemporary China} 12, 36 (August 2003), who noted the proliferation of the presence of such confrontational and nationalistic literature during his time in China.
which used to be quite critical of America prior to 9-11, began to churn out sympathetic
reports on US efforts to combat terrorism.”\textsuperscript{195} According to Jia Qingguo:

The single most important factor responsible for the improvement of the relations
between China and the US after 9-11 is the change in US foreign policy priorities
as a result of the terrorist attacks. The priority change provided room for China to
assume a more cooperative posture in managing its relations with the U.S. This,
in turn, generated goodwill on the part of the Bush administration and led to the
improvement in relations between the two countries.\textsuperscript{196}

Before the September 11 attacks, the U.S. hoped for, if not sought to influence,
political and other changes in China, while China first and foremost sought political
stability, pitting the two countries and their identities at odds with one another.

September 11 directed U.S. attention away from China, allowing China to adopt a more
cooperative approach in its relations with the United States as well as pursue other
concerns related to its own stability, such as focusing on separatist movements existing
within the Chinese mainland. In some ways, the United States’ quick and easy shift in
security focus away from China possibly demonstrates that the People’s Republic of
China and its policies were not necessarily considerable or imminent threats to the United
States prior to al Qaeda’s attacks, despite the previous tension in relations between both
countries. This also indicates the degree to which tense relations may have been the
product of social constructions and ill-conceived discursive representations.

In light of widespread international support of the United States immediately after
the September 11 attacks, whether China had any choice but to side with the United
States deserves consideration. Whether so is difficult to ascertain, though Beijing’s


closer relationship with Washington did pose certain benefits, those discussed previously. Primarily, these included the possibility for China to pursue further growth and modernization while weathering less criticism or opposition and the possibility of combating separatist movements within mainland China under the guise of the global “war on terror.” However, the U.S. and its allies largely opposed officially identifying Chinese separatist groups (primarily Uighurs from Xinjiang) as terrorist groups and President Bush cautioned President Jiang Zemin that “the war on terror ‘must never be an excuse to persecute minorities.’”

Even with the arrival of an opportunity for increased cooperation, China still reportedly perceived the U.S. pursuit of its war on terror as a way to strengthen its global hegemony, Chinese analysts clinging to worldviews and perceptions bound by power politics. In any event, the improvement experienced in U.S.-China relations soon dissipated.

**U.S.-China Relations Beyond 11 September 2001**

In the years after September 11, a resurgence in tension between the U.S. and China arose as a fundamental difference in each side’s identities and perceptions resurfaced.

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197 Malik, “Dragon on Terrorism: Assessing China’s Tactical Gains and Strategic Losses After 11 September,” 270. Related to this issue, there seems to be overwhelming evidence that Chinese Muslim ties to terrorism or radicalism are virtually non-existent and do not represent the crux of the issues or differences experienced between these individuals and their interests in relation to the central Chinese government (and even their own local governments). For further discussion of this important issue, see Marika Vicziany, “State response to Islamic terrorism in western China and their impact on South Asia,” *Contemporary South Asia* 12, no. 2 (June 2003): 243-62.

Moreover, issues exacerbating confrontation and conflict in U.S.-China relations continued to arise, from China’s maritime territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas to its support of North Korea to differences over humanitarian, economic, and other concerns. Further, as U.S. involvement and interest in its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq began to wane, a resurgence in tension in the U.S.-China relationship was readily apparent. The September 11 attacks and fleeting degrees of cooperation experienced afterward—including the decrease in official and public criticism of the other by each country, perhaps the greatest benefit to U.S.-China relations resulting from al Qaeda’s attacks—indicate the lack of resolution to not only the fundamental differences and issues existing between the U.S. and China, but the fact that any perceptual congruence experienced after the terrorist attacks was superficial at best. Actual perceptual gaps, and the tendency for them, in U.S.-China relations resulting from each country’s opposing identities and conflicting views of the other and the others’ interests were only temporarily shelved or overshadowed in the immediacy after September 11. Indeed, as some argue, the possibility exists that China may have only sought to buy time for unhindered modernization and development, politically taking advantage of the opportunity. The resurgence in tension in U.S.-China relations has largely continued through the present, as illustrated by the foreign policies of the governments in both countries. The following case studies of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute as it relates to U.S.-China relations and the conflicts between Beijing and Washington in “cyber space” further illustrate this argument.

THE DIAOYU/SENKAKU ISLANDS DISPUTE IN TERMS OF U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

To recognize that the dominant geopolitical map has been imposed on the world by power rather than simply emerging as an evolutionary historical inevitability, as the dominant consensual narratives would have it, one needs to achieve an effective conceptual distance, to think outside of the state system’s mode of global comprehension, outside of the spatial predicates of its structures of power, authority, and recognition.†

—Michael J. Shapiro

Within the East China Sea lie a small group of islands over which the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of China (ROC), and Japan each hold competing claims of sovereignty. Known as the Diaoyu Islands by the PRC, the Senkaku Islands by Japan, and Diaoyutai Islands by the ROC, the islands themselves lie approximately halfway between Taiwan and the Japanese Ryukyu islands.200 Despite Taipei’s own claims, this


200 Deciding how to refer to the islands itself can be a political decision or implicitly betray support for a given party to this maritime territorial dispute. For instance, consider that the U.S. Congressional Research Service report by Mark E. Manyin refers to the islands as the Senkaku Islands and only parenthetically as the Diaoyu/Diaoyutai Islands (reference listed toward the end of this footnote). Seeking to avoid promoting any position with regard to this territorial dispute, this study refrains from referring to the islands by any one name in this analysis. Instead, from here forward they are referred to as the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands out of respect for neutrality and convention, as most references to the islands adopt this approach. Here, this study treats the precedence of the Chinese name as alphabetic, not political. At one point Linus Hagström sought neutrality by referring to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in English as the Pinnacle Islands. However, he has since recanted this position, as “Pinnacle” is a direct translation of “Senkaku” and as the approach failed to be influential. This study’s approach to neutrality in referring to the islands follows and is informed by Hagström’s present approach. See Linus
territorial dispute has been most salient between China and Japan, especially since the Chinese fishing trawler, the Minjinyu 5179, collided with two different Japanese coastguard patrol ships near the islands on 7 September 2010, leading to the detention of the Minjinyu’s captain and crew by the Japanese.

Despite competing claims of sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, they remain uninhabited and are physically unremarkable, often referred to diminutively as islets rather than islands, simply as maritime features, or as insular formations. Mark E. Manyin notes that the islands are “sometimes described as five islets and three rocks.” These eight maritime features comprise the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, only two of which are larger than 1km$^2$—Diaoyudao, the largest at approximately 4.3km$^2$ and only

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362 meters above sea level and Huangweiyu at approximately 1.1km². Only the three largest of the islands have vegetation, the remaining five barren, and only Diaoyudao hosts fresh water. Despite their seeming insignificance, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands bear great importance to both China and Japan as well as the United States. Due to U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific, especially an interest in regional stability and relations with both Beijing and Tokyo, the dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands bears great influence on U.S.-China relations. To start, the United States shares a mutual security treaty with Japan and has been involved with the islands and the dispute since the end of World War II, when Washington took over administration of Japanese territories, negotiating the return of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands to Japanese administrative control with the Okinawa reversion treaty in 1971.

Understanding the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute and the effect it has on relations between China and the United States calls for a multifaceted approach. Claims to the islands result in narratives summoning notions of sovereignty, territoriality, materiality, and, most importantly, identity. This last factor, identity, is most important not only because it can—and does—encompass these other concepts but also due to the intense nationalism that the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute incites amongst China and

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204 In turn: sovereignty in terms of legitimate authority over the islands as well as the function and impact resulting from competing claims of sovereignty; territoriality as the islands occupy a spatial extension, one intimately tied to sovereignty and identity; and materiality due to the potential undersea natural resources surrounding the islands, the importance of exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and territorial waters, and the military forces that could be drawn into battle with one another if the dispute escalates.
Japan. The dispute involves a mixture of domestic and international influences—the interaction between these two levels only making separate distinctions between them problematic—and a number of competing narratives that, when analyzed, allow glimpses into the identities and interests involved in the dispute and how these narratives and related identities influence and interact with each other, ultimately characterizing the nature of U.S.-China relations. Due to the U.S. relationship with Japan, U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific, and how China views U.S. interests, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island dispute has important implications for the nature of this relationship. Likewise, U.S. views of China’s claims and behavior with regard to the islands also impact the nature of U.S.-China relations. Assessing the narratives of both sides in order to understand their identities demonstrates how the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island dispute does more than simply increase tension in relations between China and the United States; it demonstrates the differences in the dominant narratives related to the dispute and how the actors involved draw upon the issue politically.

The following analysis applies an identity centric approach to understanding the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute that focuses on U.S. and Chinese narratives in order to understand the dispute as well as gain greater insight into U.S.-China relations. Unlike other studies, even though Japan is one of the two major claimants in this dispute, Japanese nationalism, Japanese interests, and Japanese identities will only receive little examination. This study’s argument is that for Japan, the U.S.-Japan mutual security treaty provides the cornerstone of Tokyo’s resolute opposition to China’s claims to the islands while Washington’s desire for a peaceful resolution or, at least, maintenance of
the status quo ensures regional and global stability. Before engaging in this discussion, however, an examination of the background of the dispute itself followed by a discussion of traditional explanations follows.

Rocks in the Sea

Presently, claims to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands made on historical bases provide little objective support to any specific claimant. This is not to say that the history of the dispute and sovereignty over the islands is not important; it is, very much so. Rather, such historical justifications become a political game. Any given side cites evidence ready to refute the claims of the other and support its own claims, though the importance of the evidence in question, and thus legitimacy of the claims, rests on little more than subjective interpretation, another level of political gamesmanship. To provide two brief examples, observers might ask what sort of legitimacy or right to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands China’s centuries old claims to them—predating the founding of both the Republic of China and People’s Republic of China—really offer? And for Japan, what do observers make of the fact that the islands were not included in the original San Francisco Peace Treaty, only added months after the signing of the original? Adopting an international perspective, does the physical geographic insignificance of the islands betray a certain degree of triviality as far as more firm conceptualizations of sovereignty and territoriality are concerned? Does this betray the political foundations of the dispute?

China’s narrative concerning its claims to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands rests upon multiple premises, primarily that China discovered the islands no later than the thirteenth century and that the Ming Dynasty placed the islands under its coastal defense during the
dynasty’s early years, actually placing the islands under the authority of Taiwan. This assertion essentially strengthens Taiwan’s claims to the islands more than China’s, which in turn strengthens China’s claims as the People’s Republic of China asserts authority and sovereignty over the Republic of China on the island of Taiwan.205 The current Chinese government argues that Japan’s claims to the islands based upon annexation as “terra nullius” and based on the territory surrendered to Japan under Treaty of Shimonoseki at the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 are illegal. China also takes issue with the fact that after the end of World War II stipulations about the return of administration of the islands to Japan were appended to the Treaty of Peace with Japan (Treaty of San Francisco) on 29 February 1952, months after the signing of the original treaty on 8 September 1951.206 The People’s Republic of China fundamentally maintains its claim to the disputed islands based on the supposed Ming Dynasty, Taiwan, and later Republic of China rule and authority over the islands. However, after the U.S. agreed to revert administration of the islands to Japan with the 1971 Okinawa Reversion Treaty, China did not make a formal claim to the islands (based on historical justifications or otherwise) until six months later, on 30 December 1971.207

Like China, Japan claims indisputable sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, though Japan, unlike China, does not officially acknowledge that sovereignty

205 Though neither of these governments existed during the thirteenth century.


over the islands is under dispute. Japan’s narrative regarding its claims draws upon history and surveys of the islands during 1885 and shortly thereafter, showing them to be uninhabited with no signs of control by China or Taiwan. In 1895, Japan then decided to erect a marker on the islands, essentially annexing them to Japan’s overall territorial sovereignty. Japan rejects the importance of the Treaty of Shimonoseki altogether, arguing its irrelevance (not its legality, as disputed by China), as the islands were not considered part of Taiwan or the Pescadores Islands, which were ceded to Japan by China under the stipulations of the treaty. \(^{208}\) With the end of World War II, the Japanese government contends that the islands were thus not renounced by Japan and instead have been considered part of the Japanese Nansei Shoto Islands since annexation, hence rightfully placed under administration of the United States with the San Francisco Peace Treaty and subsequently reverted to Japan with the Okinawa Reversion Treaty.

Since the signing of the Okinawa Reversion treaty in 1971, the United States itself has maintained a narrative that avoids taking an official position on the sovereignty of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, instead adopting a stance of neutrality. \(^{209}\) Secretary of State Hillary Clinton noted as much in remarks made during October of 2010, shortly after tension rose between China and Japan with the fishing trawler incident near the islands during the prior month. However, Secretary Clinton also noted that while the U.S. encourages both China and Japan to resolve the dispute peacefully and through dialogue,


\(^{209}\) Manyin, “Senkaku (Diaoyu/Diaoyutai) Islands Dispute.”
the islands do fall under Japan’s administration and for this reason are covered by the United States’ mutual defense treaty obligations with Japan, a statement made by other U.S. officials before and since.\(^{210}\) Endorsing peaceful resolution to the islands dispute while emphasizing U.S. security commitments to Japan serve as key features of the U.S. narrative. This raises a question, turned to shortly, over whether the U.S. tacitly endorses Japanese sovereignty over the islands. The fact that the most recent U.S. Congressional Research Service report on the dispute refers to the islands primarily as the Senkaku islands and that the 2009 through 2011 Department of Defense annual reports to Congress on China’s military refer to the islands only as the Senkakus—the 2012 report notably refraining from referring to the islands by any specific name—further supports the importance of this question over U.S. neutrality.\(^{211}\) Before turning to this question, recent events leading to increased tension over the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands are explored.


The Clash of Nationalisms

Though both China and Japan (as well as Taiwan) have disputed the sovereignty of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands for quite some time, with the 1978 Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between Japan and the People’s Republic of China, both sides essentially decided to shelve the issue until a later point in time in order to facilitate normalization of relations and increase trade.\(^\text{212}\) Even though the dispute has experienced periods of tension over ensuing years—such as China deploying five naval ships in the vicinity of the islands during September 2005, one being a destroyer which happened to point its guns at a Japanese P3-C Orion surveillance plane, and “government backed” Chinese activists attempting to land on the islands—the conflict over this maritime territorial dispute reignited most prominently with the 2010 fishing trawler incident.\(^\text{213}\) On the morning of 7 September 2010, Japanese coastguard patrol vessels encountered a Chinese fishing trawler, the Minjinyu 5179 with a crew of 15, operating near the vicinity of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. After the Japanese ordered the fishing trawler to leave the area, the Minjinyu collided with one of the Japanese ships, the Yonakuni. Shortly after an


\(^{213}\) Wiegand relates knowledge of the 2005 incident, which bears similarity to the most recent developments of Chinese ships “painting” a Japanese vessel and aircraft with missile targeting radar. Wiegand, “China’s Strategy in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Dispute,” 170.
ensuing chase in response to the first collision, the Minjinyu then collided with the other Japanese vessel, the Mizuki, at 10:56 am.\textsuperscript{214}

After this incident the Japanese detained the Minjinyu 5179’s captain and fourteen crewmembers. The event elicited nationalistic protests in both countries. In China, thousands of college students took to the streets to protest the detention of the fishing trawler’s crew and captain in addition to protesting Japan’s general claims to sovereignty over the islands. Many Japanese stores had to close once demonstrators began breaking into them or attacking structures and personnel. Nationalist sentiments expectedly “reverberated around China’s leading Internet forums.”\textsuperscript{215} With the size of China’s population and growth in popularity and availability of the internet, message boards provide a popular way for Chinese citizens (and citizens throughout the world) to communicate with one another, including venting grievances. In response to the situation, Beijing cancelled many planned official and unofficial exchanges with Japan and enacted a temporary cessation of rare earth metal exports to Japan.\textsuperscript{216} In relation to the United States, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman expressed disapproval toward Secretary Clinton’s remarks that mentioned the disputed islands in the context of the

\textsuperscript{214} The incident was also caught on film. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Recent Developments in Japan-China Relations: Basic Facts on the Senkaku Islands and the Recent Incident,” and Hagström, “‘Power Shift’ in East Asia?” 272.

\textsuperscript{215} Li Jianmin, Li Meng, and Zhang Yue, “PRC Internet Users Assail Japan’s Continued Detention of Fishing Boat Captain,” \textit{Xinhua}, September 22, 2010, Open Source Center.

\textsuperscript{216} Hagström, “‘Power Shift’ in East Asia?” 273-4.
U.S.-Japan mutual defense treaty, even if the U.S. officially maintains a position of neutrality.\textsuperscript{217}

From each side’s respective viewpoint, the action of the other represented a violation of sovereignty with regard to a territory, while disputed (though Japan claims no dispute exists), where both sides maintain that their own sovereign claims are legitimate. The fishing trawler incident led to increasing tension between Beijing and Tokyo as well as discussion of the situation by both sides and their media outlets in terms of more than just competing centers of power in the Asia-Pacific but increasingly in terms of nationalism and nationalistic identities. As Pan notes, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute is relevant both internationally and domestically, both between and within Japan and China. The domestic importance reflects the legitimacy of the Chinese and Japanese governments.\textsuperscript{218} Though implicit in these thoughts, it is important to pay specific attention to the ways in which both of these levels—the domestic and the international—interact with and influence one another. Pan later goes on to state that though nationalism represents one important factor with regard to this dispute, “nationalists in China generally link Japan’s actions on the Diaoyu Islands with Japanese militarism and aggression, other than with [the] Chinese government’s legitimacy.”\textsuperscript{219} However, this


\textsuperscript{218} Pan, “Sino-Japanese Dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands,” 72.

\textsuperscript{219} Pan, “Sino-Japanese Dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands,” 86.
statement is somewhat misleading, as it neglects the importance of how Chinese nationalists view their country’s response regarding the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute.\textsuperscript{220}

Despite the ebb and flow of periodic flare-ups since the September 2010 incident, the island dispute did not reach such heightened tension again until two years later. This tension began to build when activists from Hong Kong, Macau, and China were detained by Japan after landing on one of the islands during August 2012. Unsurprisingly, this situation spurred protests in both countries. In China, protestors directed violence at Japanese citizens, businesses, and buildings. The situation in turn spurred attempts by Japanese citizens to land on the islands.\textsuperscript{221} Earlier, in April 2012, amidst increasing tension and heated nationalist sentiments, Tokyo’s governor stated he would buy three of the islands from their private owners. Governor Shintaro Ishihara reached this decision due to the perceived inaction of the Japanese government in resolving the dispute. As tension continued to rise, a few months later, on 11 September 2012, the Japanese government stated its intention to purchase three of the disputed islands from their private owners.\textsuperscript{222} The Japanese government claims it decided on this course of action to defuse the building tension that Tokyo’s nationalist governor Shintaro Ishihara had ignited by

\textsuperscript{220} For his part, Pan might also be betraying his biases with this statement, not to mention his reference to Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands explicitly as the Diaoyu Islands, possibly representing his own a priori conclusions on China’s sovereignty over the islands.


stating his own intent to purchase and develop the islands. The government’s decision spurred widespread outrage within China. Protests again ensued, with Japanese citizens and companies within China suffering attacks, necessitating their hiding or businesses to close their doors. China responded to Japan’s decision to purchase the islands by sending six surveillance ships to the vicinity of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. All the while, the United States, as stated by Defense Secretary Panetta, maintained its commitment to stand by Japan in the event of armed conflict while reaffirming Washington’s neutrality with regard to the dispute itself.\textsuperscript{223}

In the months following the flare in tension resulting from the purchase of the islands both sides have routinely sent ships within their vicinity. More recently, on 5 February 2013, Japan disclosed that on 30 January 2013 a Chinese ship used its fire control radar to target one of Japan’s naval vessels near the islands for at least a few minutes. Japan also made public that this was the second time China acted in this way, a Chinese frigate training its fire control radar on a Japanese helicopter earlier during that same month, on January 19, with no communication between the involved forces in either situation.\textsuperscript{224} Quite clearly, this sort of circumstance demonstrates the potential for miscalculation and unintended escalation based on reactions extenuating from perceptions of seemingly hostile behavior or simply due to overreaction to provocative behavior.


The maritime dispute between China and Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands raises the question about why the claimants care so much about the islands. Indeed, though they seem insignificant, there are reasons for each side’s interests in the islands. These reasons are best understood in terms of the dominant narratives of the parties involved. One reason for interest in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands is due to the reported presence of natural resources in the surrounding territorial waters. Another possible reason is for the security of and control over the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs). By no means a definitive list of possible reasons, another is the interaction of each side’s identities and the meaning they attach not only to the islands but also to their possession or loss of them. The United States is drawn into the dispute as an important actor due to its close relationship with Japan, its interests in the region, and the relationship between U.S. and Chinese identities. China views the U.S. pivot towards the Asia-Pacific, emphasis on Air Sea Battle, and other forms of influence in the region often as provocative.\textsuperscript{225} Specifically given the focus of this study, the dispute and its related narratives influence and characterize U.S.-China relations. After briefly discussing other important factors and possible explanations, particularly what might be considered the material importance of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, this study argues that the identities involved in the dispute are the most important factor, primarily those between China and the United States, influencing the nature of relations between the involved actors and that the dispute itself significantly influences relations between Beijing and Washington.

The Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Dispute

The waters around the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands are believed to hold large oil and natural gas deposits. These possible reserves were first discovered during the 1960s and the potential importance of this factor is not lost on observers noting that China trails only the United States in oil consumption. According to The World Factbook produced by the Central Intelligence Agency, 2011 Chinese oil consumption was estimated at 9,400,000 barrels per day (bbl/day), 2010 U.S. oil consumption was estimated at 19,150,000 bbl/day, and the 2010 oil consumption estimate for Japan, the world’s third single largest oil consumer, was 4,452,000 bbl/day. This leads some to the conclusion that the dispute over the islands is at least partly resource based, with China’s fast growing rate of oil and other natural resource consumption. Japan itself contends that China only started making claims to the islands after evidence of such resources emerged during the 1960s and 1970s. For their part, the Chinese officially reject this assertion and claim that the dispute is not over resources but instead over the issue of sovereignty.


Considering that concern over resources likely influences the importance of the disputed islands for Beijing, at least in part, takes little stretch of imagination. However, Chinese officials rarely discuss the potential resources located in the waters surrounding the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and reject that resources have anything to do with their claims. Instead, official narratives discuss the islands in highly nationalist terms. Instead of resources, officials discuss the islands as an issue of sovereignty, of territory, and even state China’s need to defend its claims in the face of Japan’s own claims or aggression. Unlike Japan, claiming that no dispute exists and that the islands fall entirely under Japanese sovereignty, China’s narrative publically recognizes that there is a dispute and calls upon Japan to do the same.230

**Chinese Perspective of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Dispute**

China interprets, at least rhetorically, Japan’s claims to and behavior with regard to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in militaristic terms. The dispute fits into Chinese fears of Japanese neo-militarism and fear of right wing Japanese politicians—supportive of more nationalist policies—as well as the periodic discussion within the Japanese government about reforming its constitution and current renunciation of warfare in pursuit of a greater international military and diplomatic role.231 China also worries about Washington’s desire for Japan to adopt a greater diplomatic and military role in global politics and become more of a “normal” power, noting the reforms Japan has on occasion passed to

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230 Xinhua, “China Urges Japan To Admit To Dispute Over Diaoyu Islands,” *Xinhua*, October 30, 2012.

do so, even deploying non-combat troops to the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.\textsuperscript{232} Interestingly, an article from \textit{Liaowang} states that “Although the US’s bottom line is not clear, it can be predicted that the United States will not allow Japan to step too far out of line, nor will the United States allow Japan to lose too much face.”\textsuperscript{233} This provides a slightly different interpretation from the narrative more often found in Chinese publications on U.S. involvement in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute.

Typically, Chinese sources condemn statements made by U.S. officials on coming to Japan’s aid in the event of a dispute with China over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands while claiming to take a neutral stance on their sovereignty. The more measured interpretation in the \textit{Liaowang} article mentioned above recognizes that U.S. behavior is directed more at maintaining the current status quo. At the same time, however, the Chinese military notes the need to develop and display military force opposite Japan and the United States in this dispute. Examining the mutual security relationship between Japan and the United States, the article also contends that the United States’ primary objective and its primary interest in the region is to contain China’s rise, explicitly linking the mutual defense treaty with containing China.\textsuperscript{234} This narrative also strives to identify the U.S. as an adversarial other opposed to China’s interests.

\textsuperscript{232} Zhang Wenmu, “Japan’s Intent is to Subvert Post-World War II Order of Peace in East Asia,” \textit{Liaowang}, November 6, 2012, Open Source Center.


\textsuperscript{234} Zhao, “A Perspective on the Falsity and Truth of the ‘US-Japan Security Treaty’.”
These notions begin to suggest the prevalence of power politics with regard to the U.S. and China in the Asia-Pacific. The United States, according to this sort of explanation, is reorienting its strategic focus and military might towards East Asia, home to the only immediately foreseeable potential peer competitor to the United States at present. This narrative explains the U.S. pivot, the agreement with Australia to rotate U.S. troops through Australian bases, and the shifting of 60% of U.S. naval forces as well as the deployment of radar early warning systems and ballistic missile defense to the region.\textsuperscript{235} The fact that Chinese officials explicitly state the need to pursue military modernization and demonstrate their capabilities with regard to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute and opposite the United States also may indicate that China too adopts more of a power politics view of the Asia-Pacific and of its relations with the United States. Other considerations, however, also exist.

Phil Deans contends that the symbolism of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands is particularly important to China. He does so based on the importance of nationalism to the CCP’s legitimacy and due to the historic abuses China has suffered at the hands of Japan.\textsuperscript{236} Deans basically links the significance of Chinese nationalism to regime legitimacy and explains the level of tension over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in terms of nationalist sentiments. During the 1990s, nationalism became increasingly important in China with the waning global influence of communism. While Deans notes that the


Chinese government both used nationalism and attempted to play it down in the 1996 lighthouse dispute with Japan on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, demonstrating competing interests within the Chinese government, today nationalism appears directed more at the United States, at times by way of Japan as a proxy or an additional source inspiring nationalist sentiment, and seems less controlled.

As presented earlier, Chinese news sources have contributed heated, nationalist sentiments to the narrative regarding the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute and the position taken by the United States. In 1996, domestic news sources such as the Renmin Ribao played down the dispute while other sources, such as Chinese military journals, were highly critical.\(^{237}\) These latter sources are directed more towards Chinese officials and armed forces than the Chinese populace, much less a global audience. Interestingly, some of the Jiefangjun Bao articles published recently express a more measured interpretation of tension over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute, though still critical of both the United States and Japan. Moreover, recently China has experienced widespread protests during periods of increased tension over the disputed islands, a situation Deans argues the CCP tried to prevent in the 1990s for fear of demonstrations against Japan spiraling into protests against the CCP itself. Quite the opposite during recent years, the Chinese government seems to have adopted a relatively open approach to allowing criticism of Japan and the United States while allowing widespread, large

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\(^{237}\) Deans, “Contending Nationalisms and the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Dispute,” 124. This is also interesting as worldwide accessibility to Chinese domestic news sources is greater than during the 1990s.
demonstrations—possibly even endorsing them—up to and often only reigning them in after they turn violent.

One plausible reason for recent attempts at fanning—or simply unbridling—nationalism with regard to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute may have been the beginning of the Chinese leadership transition in 2012. The island dispute provides “others,” possibly even enemies, on which the Chinese populace can focus and also with which they may construct positive self-conceptions in relation to—relative to the United States and Japan—possibly strengthening regime stability and distracting Chinese citizens from domestic issues. Consider how Chinese narratives attempt to assert moral superiority by referring to Japan’s militaristic past, raising notions of resurgent or neo-militarist Japanese sentiments, recognizing there is a dispute while condemning Japan for not doing so, and even (not infrequently) stating that Japanese actions, such as the detention of the fishing trawler captain and crew in 2010, hurt the feelings of China’s citizens. Appropriating the victim narrative in relation to much stronger others offers China a powerful political tool and source with which to build stronger internal and international identities relative to less “moral” others and possibly by which to derive international sympathy.

Explaining the heights of China’s provocative behavior, targeting Japanese forces with missile radars, is more difficult to understand. It could indicate signaling behavior meant to demonstrate China’s resolve and that it should not be expected to back down. However, such behavior is inherently risky and could easily be misinterpreted and lead to unintentional and unwanted escalation. This might indicate Chinese military forces
acting of their own accord for a variety of reasons, from a lack of experience to a desire to test their targeting systems, even to a lack of operational maturity. It could also indicate a more nationalist or hawkish stance amongst the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). Whatever the reason, these actions could indicate the presence of a gap between PLA and government decision making. Regardless, the ease with which such behavior might lead to unintended consequences and the fact that it has happened more than once is disconcerting. What is important to take away from this discussion and the preceding factors is the importance of domestic as well as international factors and the importance of how actors view themselves, others, and the situations they interact in.

It is notable that China’s defense white papers do not mention the islands. Contrary to what Deans noted during the 1990s, perhaps the opposite is true today. Perhaps the Chinese government is more concerned with maintaining a less provocative stance toward the islands in official sources that might be given more credence as to China’s intentions by the U.S. or Japan than its news sources. Nationalist Chinese rhetoric appears most often to be targeted towards the domestic population. This could reinforce the view that the island dispute is used rhetorically as a tool of political legitimacy and to serve other interests, such as stabilizing the leadership transition and buttressing overall governmental legitimacy. However, China does make direct responses to and criticism of the United States. It remains unclear whether the cancellation of Secretary Clinton’s meeting with Xi Jinping during her September 2012 visit to Beijing resulted from Xi’s supposed back injury, as officially claimed, or whether the abrupt cancellation resulted either from the need to take Xi out of the spotlight while
the Chinese government consolidated its views on China’s upcoming leadership
transition or if the cancellation was a direct snub to the United States in response to
increasing tension in the island Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute. Any of these three
explanations might hold, but it seems unlikely for such a high profile meeting to be
cancelled due to an apparent minor back injury. The latter two explanations seem more
credible. Both, in fact, may bear some truth. The cancellation of the meeting might have
been an intentional, though internationally ambiguous, snub to the United States in order
to demonstrate Xi Jinping’s character and ability to take a hard line opposite the United
States.

Overall, the Chinese narrative presents the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute in
terms of U.S. hegemonic interests, drawing on notions of the humiliation narrative
(especially sensitive due to Japan’s involvement) and China’s identity as a victim at the
hands of other powers. Doing so, however, China not only defends its claims to the
Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands rhetorically, but also by deploying ships within their vicinity.
This reflects China’s desire and ability to oppose others where its interests are concerned.

U.S. Perspective of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Dispute

The United States holds many interests in the Asia-Pacific, including the Diaoyu/Senkaku
Islands dispute. Judging from the relatively unified stance taken by high-level U.S.
officials, including the President and Secretaries of Defense and State, Washington’s
narrative of the dispute is most concerned with regional stability, perhaps to prevent
economic instability. The emphasis found in the U.S. narrative on maintaining neutrality
with regard to sovereignty over the islands and assertion that the dispute needs to be
resolved peacefully while simultaneously declaring that the islands fall under the administration of Japan, and thus under the U.S.-Japan mutual security treaty, most likely seeks to maintain the status quo. The United States cannot abdicate its security responsibilities to Japan without some measure of fear of losing hope for a peaceful resolution to the dispute or preventing it from devolving to the point of armed conflict. The uncertainty of this possibility is enough to compel the United States to maintain its current stance, as there is greater certainty in China avoiding direct conflict with the United States than with Japan alone, the former much more powerful as well as possessing nuclear weapons.

The United States also cannot extricate itself from the dispute due to domestic concerns. Though less heated than the Chinese or even Japanese media, much of the reporting on China from within the United States focuses on Chinese provocative behavior. This might result from a fear or China’s rise or, similar to the situation within China, the need for an “other” upon which to project fear and from which to construct positive self conceptions of identity. Narratives that portray China as such an other—from the top-down, bottom-up, or a mixture of both—work to increase tension in U.S.-China relations. A desire to maintain international stability is itself inherent to U.S.

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identity, for liberal or humanitarian reasons or, at the very least, when U.S. interests are at
stake (such as considering threats to global economic stability, from which the U.S.
benefits greatly). Regardless of failures to fully adhere to liberal values regarding human
rights, the United States also finds itself at odds with China on this issue.

The domestic political theatre within the U.S. exacerbates these factors, leading to
political posturing based upon speculation on the threat of China’s rise and specific
policies emanating from Beijing. When salient, U.S. politicians cannot afford to ignore
issues related to China where American electoral concerns exist. Doing so impacts their
legitimacy and electability as candidates for government office within the United States.
This is why the Diaoyu/Sekakau Islands dispute, at times (though less so than other
issues) becomes a domestic political issue.

U.S. neutrality over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands presents another interesting
aspect of the dispute and with regard to U.S.-China relations. Briefly noted earlier, the
2009 through 2011 Department of Defense reports to Congress on China’s military only
refer to the disputed islands by their Japanese name, as the Senkakus. The 2012 annual
report conspicuously refrains from referring to the islands by either their Japanese or
Chinese names.\(^\text{239}\) Also, while it does mention both names, the 2012 Congressional

\(^{239}\) Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress, Military and Security
Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2012*; Office of the Secretary of
Defense, *Annual Report to Congress, Military and Security Developments Involving the
Congress, Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China,
2010*; and Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress, Military
Power of the People’s Republic of China, 2009.*
Research Service report on the islands refers to them primarily as the Senkaku Islands.\footnote{Manyin, “Senkaku (Diaoyu/Diaoyutai) Islands Dispute.”} There are at least two possible explanations for why the United States primarily refers to the islands by their Japanese name, adding insight into the U.S. narrative related to the islands and the dispute. First, this convention may be nothing more than a holdover from when the United States administered the islands in place of Japan after World War II, adopting the Japanese name before any dispute over the islands became significant. However, this explanation ignores the fact that the majority of other sources within the Untied States refer to the islands by both names, as the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. This is especially true in the U.S. media, where discussion of the dispute has made frequent headlines over the past few years. It is unlikely that different sectors of the U.S. military and government are ignorant of this dual naming convention and failed to notice the disparity between this convention and the government’s practice of referring to the islands by their Japanese name.\footnote{It is interesting that somewhat frequently the U.S. Open Source Center translates domestic Chinese references to the Islands as the Senkaku Islands instead of the Diaoyu Islands.} In fact, it is surprising that China has not, at least more prominently, noted and criticized this practice. That the 2012 Department of Defense report fails to mention the islands by either name shows that there must be some awareness of this issue in the United States, at least recently.

This change in naming convention in the Department of Defense reports could signal an attempt by the United States to decrease tension with China over the island dispute. In addition to refusing to refer to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands by any name, the
2012 report pays even less attention to the issue than previous reports. This possibly demonstrates that the dispute over the islands is not necessarily a core issue for the U.S. military and that the U.S. wishes to prevent tension over the dispute from increasing and adversely affecting U.S.-China relations. However, the fact that the U.S. has, in many instances, referred to the islands primarily as the Senkakus seems to betray a de facto stance on the rightful sovereignty over them, fitting well with aspects of the U.S. narrative regarding the dispute such as coming to Japan’s defense over the islands. If the U.S. did not hold such a stance, even if tacit or implicit, how much would the U.S. otherwise care about the dispute? The United States primary goal might be to maintain the current status quo with regard to the islands until the situation can be resolved peacefully either in Japan’s favor or at least under terms accepted by Japan. It is less surprising that both China and Japan refer to the islands in their own languages, since both sides claim sovereignty over the islands.

The U.S. narrative of the disputed islands endorses maintaining the current status quo until a peaceful resolution to the dispute is possible. This has the effect of defining the U.S. as the region’s arbiter of peace and stability, especially in light of renewed U.S. interest in and commitment to the Asia-Pacific. However, the U.S. also appears to support Japan’s administration of the islands and tacitly endorse Japan’s sovereign claims to them. U.S. references to the islands primarily as the Senkakus and the U.S. alliance with Japan both intimate this possibility. Thus, the U.S. may not be an entirely disinterested mediator, though U.S. interests in stability likely outweigh any concern over ultimate control over the islands.
The Intersection of Competing Identities

Overall, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island dispute appears driven primarily by domestic factors, namely political posturing in support of electoral politics (in Japan and the United States) as well as legitimacy and stability (in China). These domestic factors are expressed in the narratives that speak to the identities of each side involved in the island dispute. These domestic factors then lead to complex interactions for these international relationships. China’s narrative depicts the dispute in terms of sovereignty and its humiliation narrative, the century of abuses it suffered at the hands of Japan and the West until after World War II. These depictions support China’s identity as both a victim and as a power standing up for its interests and its people opposite Japan and the United States, likely serving the purpose of promoting regime legitimacy and stability. However, these identities are then adopted by and reproduced by the Chinese populace, influencing the Chinese leadership in a bottom up fashion. This creates an interesting scenario where the narratives adopted by the leadership actually come full circle, in a feedback loop, to likewise influence their own behavior. There are also questions as to the positions of various groups within China. Deans pointed out a difference in stances on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute during the 1990s within the Chinese leadership, some leaders more nationalistic than others. This may apply to the current leadership or even the Chinese military, especially as the latter provocatively targeted Japanese ships and planes with missile radar during January 2013.

The Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute appears within domestic U.S. politics as well, but not with as much salience as within China. Other issues seem more important
for American elections and partisan posturing, such as the U.S. trade deficit with China and China’s currency manipulation. However, the dispute does gain some attention. In fact, it gains much attention in the U.S. media and from U.S. foreign policy officials. This attention indicates a narrative emphasizing maintaining stability in the region and preventing the dispute from escalating to the point of armed conflict between China and Japan, potentially drawing in the United States. Though the U.S. tacitly seems to endorse Japan’s sovereignty over the islands, seen in how the U.S. refers to the islands and includes them under the U.S.-Japan mutual security treaty, it more importantly attempts to maintain the status quo. In order to do so, the United States must demonstrate its own resolve with regard to the situation, specifically by indicating that it will come to Japan’s defense if needed. China would certainly be more wary of engaging in conflict with both Japan and the United States than the former alone, although the possibility of armed conflict with Japan itself is perhaps enough to deter escalation. However, China’s targeting of Japanese forces with missile radars demonstrates just how easily this game of brinkmanship practiced by all sides may spiral out of control. Miscalculations and missteps might easily exacerbate the uncertainty over the intentions of the “other,” especially when operating within such close proximity under scenarios of heightened tension. The situation definitely poses a dangerous potential flashpoint, perhaps at present even more so than Taiwan, as the latter depends largely on whether the government in Taipei makes any sort of indications or moves toward independence.

The interaction of U.S. and Chinese identities with regard to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute increases tension in this bilateral relationship. Drawing upon the
humiliation narrative and notions of its victimization, China identifies itself opposite Japan and, by extension, the United States. The United States identifies itself as a mediator of sorts, interested primarily in peace and stability (though U.S. impartiality may be questioned in light of its alliance with Japan). While U.S. involvement in the situation may decrease the likelihood of intentional armed conflict between China and Japan, this involvement also situates the U.S. at odds with China. So being, the situation increases and acts as a point of tension in the U.S.-China relationship, illustrated by desires of Chinese officials to refrain from discussing the dispute (or its disputes in the South China Sea) during multilateral forums while the U.S. specifically raises these issues during such forums.

**The Future of the Dispute**

Looking towards the future of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute, analysts might attempt to gauge current policy decisions and behavior and how shifts in relations or behavior may influence the future of the dispute. As noted, the situation could easily escalate to the point of armed conflict with little warning. To mediate this possibility, all sides should only consider highly measured military responses to what they interpret as provocations by the other. Measured military responses indicates taking a more cautious approach to deploying ships and other forces to the waters surrounding the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and implementing strict rules of engagement to prevent unwarranted provocative behavior and misinterpretation or overreaction to such behavior.

For its part, Japan’s interests might be best served by actually recognizing that a dispute over the islands’ sovereignty does exist. Doing so, both China and Japan might
then agree to arbitrate the territorial dispute at the international level and commit to accepting whatever verdict on their sovereignty may come to pass. Otherwise, both sides would best be served by reverting to the stance of shelving the issue until a later time when cooler or more adept heads prevail. This latter suggestion is, however, improbable, as internal nationalist sentiments and dynamics may influence the governments of either side in a bottom up fashion and force undesirable tension or behavior. To lessen this possibility, the governments on all sides should refrain from exacerbated the nationalist sentiments with regard to the islands, knowing that fundamental uncertainty about the future of the dispute could easily lead to conflict.

Instead of adopting a somewhat weak or misleading stance of neutrality, the United States should make more efforts to work towards a resolution of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute. The U.S. should do so not through bilateral discussions among top foreign policy officials or independent statements, but through brokering joint discussions with both China and Japan in order to come to a resolution. As the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute holds much less salience in domestic U.S. politics, this may be possible. However, the fact still remains that the issue may become more salient within for U.S., especially if attempts to broker a discussion between both sides came to be interpreted and defined as taking too weak a stance toward China. Some U.S. media outlets and many in Congress are already critical of the stance the U.S. takes towards China, advocating more of a hard line policy.

Whatever the future might hold, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute displays the importance of identities as expressed through narratives while offering glimpses of them.
Each party operates under specific conceptions of self and other, often privileging their own self-conceptions and interests, such as a need for political stability, legitimacy, or electability, in interpreting and drawing upon the dispute. Understanding these nuances offers a more detailed understanding of the dispute in addition to potential insights into a future approach to its resolution. This all depends, however, on how each actor, especially China and the United States, tailors their responses to the dispute and visions of one another.
V

THIEVES CALLING TO CATCH THIEVES: THE CONSTRUCTION OF CYBER “SPACE” AND CYBER IDENTITIES IN U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

Indeed, because of its greater dependence on cyber-controlled systems and its inability thus far to create national cyber defenses, the United States is currently far more vulnerable to cyber war than Russia or China. The U.S. is more at risk from cyber war than are minor states like North Korea.†

—Richard A. Clarke

Concern over cyber space and the notion of cyber warfare have grown in recent years, as has the frequency of discussion of these topics within the government and popular media. In the United States focus often lies on the People’s Republic of China and high profile hacking attacks undertaken against U.S. government and private sector targets, supposedly by the Chinese. In China, focus seems to rest primarily on refuting these claims, opposition to all forms of hacking and cyber warfare, and pointing to the number of cyber attacks that China itself suffers. Both sides build narratives raising concern over the activities of the other in cyber space. These narratives include aspects and identities such as the victim, the moral authority, the defender of freedom and intellectual property, the China threat theory, Cold War thinking, and so on. However, with increasing concern over the realm of cyber space, much of the representation of this concern too often proves misleading, misconstrued, and over exaggerated while becoming self-serving in support of these differing narratives. Indeed, China and the United States both certainly partake in cyber activities at the other’s expense (despite U.S. lack of public commentary about

its own cyber activities and despite Chinese claims that it does not endorse hacking or cyber warfare), all the while calling for the other to put an end to such behavior; a thief calling to catch a thief. They may not engage in direct cyber attacks against one another, but both countries assuredly engage in cyber espionage and, reportedly, the practice of laying the groundwork for future confrontations in cyber “space.”242 As discussed in this section, much misinformation exists concerning the realm of cyber “space,” which is no longer new and not so much a “space” as a compression of space, time, and mass. Due in part to lack of a fixed conceptualization of cyber space and the rules and norms that govern it, contestation over what these rules and norms should be has risen alongside tension and competition in U.S.-China relations, within cyber space and elsewhere, illuminating and opening space for examination of the identities at play on both sides and with regard to cyber space itself.

As cyber space no longer warrants references as a new or novel space, neither is the importance of this space itself new or novel. Some, including Richard Clarke, have raised warnings about the potential threats extenuating from cyber space for some time.243 While this is the case, the popular portrayal of the threats posed by cyber space and by the People’s Republic of China in particular (and other actors) present quite the opposite, a new and immediate threat of growing importance. The latter may be true,

242 Such as searching for exploits, vulnerabilities, and remote access to either plant logic bombs or at some point in the future utilize remote access in order to conduct cyber attacks, possibly targeting critical infrastructure or essential civilian services such as the financial industry or banks.

243 Clarke himself and Clarke and Knake provide a decent account of some such warnings by others, to say nothing of whether the specific warnings they raise are warranted, in Clarke and Knake, *Cyber War*. 
threats may be growing in importance, but cyber threats are by no means new. Promoting this realization and accounting for the increased interest in cyber space are at least three distinct but somewhat interrelated situations: the growing awareness of the threats that cyber space creates and facilitates; competition between the United States and China for domestic and international political purposes; and self interested attempts to appropriate, define, and govern the realm of cyber space. More generally speaking, the identity of cyber space is maturing while sources of power compete over influencing the identity of this space while in turn constituting and shaping their own identities in this supposed new “domain” of warfare. Examining U.S.-China relations in cyber space provides an opportunity to examine these identities in a state of flux as well as how they relate to overall U.S.-Chinese relations.

Recent media coverage in both the U.S. and China provides ample evidence for the importance of understanding how these two states relate to one another with regard to cyber space. This importance persists even if the situation—even if the perceptions of “threats” either side face from the other—is to some degree exaggerated. Casting the issue as a question might aid in clarifying and better understanding its importance: what is at stake in the competition over cyber space, over its identities, and the identities of those within it? Potential answers might offer insight into how this “space” is defined by its most influential actors, into decisions on the legitimacy of certain types of behavior within cyber space, into the roles of the important actors involved, and into limitations or lack thereof on their interests and capabilities.

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244 Which attests to the need for greater understanding.
Examining these questions and the general nature of cyber space in U.S.-China relations, this study argues that this space has come to represent a realm of competition largely due to the publicization of the threats within it. The primary threat faced by both sides is espionage, which cyber space facilitates in an unprecedented way by increasing the reward resulting from engaging in this behavior while reducing associated risks. However, this competition is mediated by simultaneous attempts on both sides to downplay the tension in relations not only in cyber space but in general due to shared American and Chinese interests in other areas, such as U.S.-China economic relations. This state of affairs bears similarity to other aspects of U.S.-China relations, speaking to David Shambaugh’s coining of the term “coopetition” to define the overall state of relations between both countries. More specifically, this dual conceptualization of U.S.-China relations demonstrates the complexity of not only this relationship, but relations between states in general and other actors. This complexity demonstrates a reality where not only one or two such conceptualizations might speak some truth to a situation, such as cooperation and competition (coopetition), but where conceptualizations, where identities, fluctuate and proliferate.


246 This dual conceptualization is misleading because it creates an arbitrary binary relationship that implies competition and cooperation are both of a defined and opposite nature. This may not be what Shambaugh intends, but thinking more in depth about the notion of coopetition quickly leads to a far more complex picture. The same holds for Callahan’s representation of China as a “pessoptimist” nation, a state that draws upon narratives of both its past victimization at the hands of the West and Japan while also drawing upon its historic greatness and recent economic success. Shambaugh, “Tangled
With the goal of further enhancing understanding of relations between the U.S. and China, this case study looks to cyber space through the prism of identity for general insights about U.S.-China relations as well as to specific insights about this much publicized “space” itself, examining the narratives and representational strategies engaged in on behalf of both sides. First, however, the realm of cyber space and the nascent theoretical attempts at understanding it will be explored. These attempts notably include drawing parallels to deterrence theory and the Cold War. Contrary to these attempts, this study argues that despite naming conventions and its treatment as an additional domain of warfare by the U.S. and the Department of Defense, cyber “space” is not so much a space at all, instead representing more of a factor—a collection of technological capacities—that facilitates behavior in other spaces. With this in mind, drawing parallels to the realm of intelligence offers more promise for understanding this “space” and how actors relate to one another within it. Rather than speaking in terms of cyber “space” and considering it as a new domain of warfare, analysts should speak in terms of how cyber capabilities facilitate warfare in other domains—air, land, sea, and space—and in terms of cyber intelligence (CYINT). This discussion will lead and lend itself to understanding cyber “space” and U.S-China relations therein from the vantage of identities, how they are coming to form, shape, and influence cyber space and both cyber and real world relations between the Washington and Beijing.

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Locating Cyber Space

Within the electronic signals transmitted through wire and air an artificial space exists, cyber space. Observers might as easily refer to this space as a virtual space, a virtual reality. Though it encompasses much of individuals’ contemporary lives—from work to pleasure, from social interaction to isolated endeavors—many interpret this space as intangible; it exists somewhere out there, as if independent of us while simultaneously surrounding us, yet dependent on our very existence. Such characterizations begin to demonstrate the mythic identity of cyber space and belie a certain lack of understanding among cyber savvy and cyber callow alike. This supposed domain of human interaction exists only by virtue of interconnectivity. As cyber expert Jeffrey Carr acutely argues, “Cyberspace as a warfighting domain is a very challenging concept. The temptation to classify it as just another domain, like air, land, sea, and space, is frequently the first mistake that’s made by our military and political leaders and policy makers.”

He goes on to offer an alternate metaphor: thinking of cyber space in terms of science fiction parallel universes in order to avoid the problems of thinking of cyber space along the same lines as “meat” space.

The term cyber “space,” considering it as a domain, is problematic for a number of reasons. Cyber space does not occupy much space at all in the traditional sense, nor does it exist “out there” on its own, as if in a (the) cloud. All of the information transmitted throughout cyber space—web pages, personal information, software, and more—exists within the storage capacity of interconnected computer systems and similar

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devices in our better-known physical world. Rather than replace one fictional representation with another—the current representation of cyber space with a metaphor of parallel universes—this study argues that it is prudent to refrain from thinking of cyber “space” as a space at all and instead to think in terms of the Internet and how cyber activities facilitate and threaten “real” world capabilities and lives.

The mythic construction, the romanticized understanding, of cyber space probably derives from a lack of understanding and lack of interest in understanding how the Internet functions. Invariably, this mythic construction detracts from the fact that the websites individuals visit, the emails they send, the online financial transactions they undertake, are little more than pieces of information stored as electronic data and transmitted from one physical site to another through physical communication infrastructure and stored at any number of points during its journey. According to the Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive (ONCIX), “Cyberspace is the interdependent network of information technology (IT) infrastructures, and includes the Internet, telecommunications networks, computer systems, and embedded processors and controllers in critical industries.”

What cyber space does is compress space, and, in a way, time and mass. Instead of transporting a physical book, for example, from one location to another hundreds of miles away, the Internet can allow for a digital representation of the book to traverse that same distance almost instantaneously with a

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248 The information routed across various systems and networks along the way from point of origin to destination.

file size allowing it to be store on the smallest of storage devices. This compression facilitates sharing information and presents this information to individuals through a novel (yet no longer too novel) medium—the computer.

To say that cyber space does not truly exist as a space goes against conventional writing and wisdom on the subject. However, this conventional narrative of cyber space is simply taken for granted and thus perpetuated without question. Cyber space bears similarity to the telephone networks that ultimately provided the Internet’s early foundation and platform for development. Both compress distances of thousands of miles—compressing space—and the time it would take to travel such distances to the here and now through networks of communication systems. The difference between the two is a difference in medium. While telephone systems preserve oratory conversation (though cellular phones and networks are now often part and parcel of the “cyber space”) the Internet, though over recent years it has made great advances in preserving oratory and video communication, takes information and communication and converts it largely into specialized text or graphical user interfaces. Thus, it makes no more sense to speak of a cyber “space” than it does to speak of a telephone or

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250 This shares much similarity with James Der Derian’s discussion of the impact of information networks and their increasing speed, stating, “Using networked information, global surveillance, and virtual technologies to bring ‘there’ here in near real-time and with near-verisimilitude, virtuous war emerged as the ultimate means by which the US secures its borders, maintains its hegemony, and brings a modicum of order if not justice to international politics.” James Der Derian, “Global Events, National Security, and Virtual Theory,” Millennium 30 no. 3 (December 2001): 676. For more on Der Derian’s notion of Virtuous War, see his book of the same title, James Der Derian, Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001).
telecommunication “space.” Instead, it is more accurate to speak of the Internet itself and cyber capabilities and activities.

The way that the Internet compresses time bears similarity to its ability to compress space. Not only can individuals undertake communication (even conducting business and other endeavors) over thousands of miles under a breakdown of many of the restrictions imposed by physical distance, they can do so nearly instantaneously. Individuals with high speed Internet access can chat with others across the world by text, speech, or video with little delay, accessing information and engaging in activities (such as telecommuting or taking online university courses) with the same benefits.

Compression of mass results not from the Internet but from the use of computerized systems and the methods used for converting physical to digital information and storing it. Libraries’ worth of digital information can fit onto removable storage media from about the size of a postage stamp to that of half a sandwich.\(^{251}\) This compression of physical mass to digital information (and further ability to often significantly compress digital information, especially for storing data or transmitting it over the Internet) coupled with increasing Internet speeds has resulted in an unprecedented capacity for accessing and sharing information, legally or otherwise. For instance, in 2009 the United States became aware of the downloading of several terabytes of information on the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) by what appeared to be Chinese

\(^{251}\) From, for example, SD cards to portable external hard drives (along with the other portable—as well as less portable—hardware used to store digital information, such as Compact Flash cards, USB Flash Drives, and more).


“hackers.” In the past, such attempts at espionage would require physically infiltrating an adversary’s government or defense industry to physically extract lesser but physically bulkier amounts of information—an endeavor carrying higher risk, likely with less payoff in terms of the amount of information able to be acquired.

Thinking of the Internet, instead of cyber space, and its ability to compress space, time, and mass in many important ways offers a significant first step to understanding and examining cyber relations between state and non-state actors. However, in addition to this hopefully more accurate understanding of the Internet (that is, cyber space), international actors possess a variety of cyber capabilities and may engage in a variety of cyber activities that can be used against one another towards various ends. These capabilities and activities might be broken down into different categories of behavior, realizing, however, that these categories are by no means definitive, fixed, or free from overlap or contestation.

The purpose of engaging in the categorization of cyber activities serves only to enhance discussion in the most basic of ways. For instance, while either physically spying on or physically attacking an other might both be seen as adversarial or as doing some sort of violence to the other (violence in a broader sense than solely physical harm), a doubtless difference between these two activities exists. This study’s attempt at a categorization of cyber behaviors (if the term categorization here even best fits this proposition) only seeks to illuminate some of these differences. The potential types of

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cyber behavior or activities include cyber crime, cyber hacktivism, cyber warfare, and cyber espionage. Each type of activity bears its own distinctions and each may be used by the realm of international actors against others and may be directed at government, military, or civilian sectors of society.

*Cyber Crime*

Cyber crime refers primarily to illegal activities undertaken for financial gain over the Internet. When it comes to those that undertake this sort of behavior, they are not “hackers,” a too poorly understood and misused term, but cyber criminals. As Clarke notes, “Originally ‘hacker’ meant just somebody who could write instructions in the code that is the language of computers to get them to do new things. When they do something like going where they are not authorized, hackers become cyber criminals. When they work for the U.S. military, we call them cyber warriors.”

Cyber criminals increasingly proliferate throughout the Internet.

A number of various activities might be included under the heading of cyber crime, from attempts to compromise individuals’ financial information through phishing attempts—the online tactic, often through email, used to acquire individuals’ account information by impersonating a trustworthy individual or institution—or security exploits, through scams directed at tricking unsuspecting individuals into transferring sums of money to the cyber criminals, and even through economic espionage directed at

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253 These categories follow those of Jeffrey Carr, though with the addition of cyber hacktivism.

254 Clarke and Knake, *Cyber War*, 72. Further on this point, many computer programmers, network specialists, and others opposed to illegal cyber activities call or consider themselves “hackers.”
intellectual property theft or gaining intelligence related to business negotiations and contracts. As the goal of cyber crime is to either steal money or gain favorable business or economic advantages, cyber criminals typically do not undertake attacks aimed at causing a denial or disruption of the services or cyber capabilities of others. Instead, cyber criminals make use of security exploits or human gullibility in order to gain the information or access needed to achieve their goals. Thus, the heading cyber criminals can include individuals, groups, and businesses.\textsuperscript{255} However, even though other sorts of behavior, such as participating in distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks, might break laws within or across state borders, discrepancies of purpose and intent differentiate this sort of behavior, what might in some cases might be called cyber hacktivism, from cyber crime.\textsuperscript{256}

\textit{Cyber Hacktivism}

Cyber hacktivism blurs the boundary with (and might be considered a form of) cyber crime. Though activities undertaken by hacktivists are often illegal, such as partaking in distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks or defacing websites through the use of

\textsuperscript{255} And possibly even states, if a business engaged in cyber crime happens to be a state owned enterprise.

\textsuperscript{256} Again, as discussed earlier, overlap certainly exists between these categories. Thus, these characterizations of different types of cyber behavior by no means imply or attempt to set fixed categories or definitions. With regard to cyber crime in particular, while cyber laws remain in a nascent state of maturation, the goal of this study is not to debate or define cyber law and classifications of legal and illegal cyber activity. Any cyber activity that breaks the laws of a country where the activity occurs, where the activity is directed towards, or even where the Internet traffic is routed through might be classified as an act of cyber crime. Here, the emphasis is on understanding differences of intent and purpose for different sorts of cyber activities and, to be discussed shortly, the role of power in attempting to define aspects of the Internet and the relations and behavior that occur within.
security exploits or remote access, these activities are, however, often undertaken for political purposes rather than financial gain, thus presenting a distinction between cyber crime and hacktivism. When these activities are not undertaken for such purposes and are instead engaged in as a form of challenge or entertainment, the behavior then represents little more than simple crime (albeit of a more innocuous nature compared to other forms of cyber crime). A 2013 Congressional Research Service report, distorting this important distinction, defines “cyberhacktivists” as “individuals who perform cyberattacks for pleasure, or for philosophical or other nonmonetary reasons.”257 This definition might characterize a large number of “hackers,” but the term hacktivist, composite of both hackers and activists, implies behavior for some purpose.

Hacktivists themselves often exist as groups of individuals seeking to promote specific social or political causes. Consider the attacks undertaken by the group Anonymous against the Department of Justice (DoJ), Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), and others after New Zealand law enforcement agencies took down the file-storage and sharing website Megaupload, and the attacks taken against MasterCard, Visa, and PayPal in support of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange.258 While different types of DDoS attacks exist, these


specific attacks used brute force to overload the systems and bandwidth of the targeted websites. This type of brute force DDoS attack makes use of hundreds or thousands of willing participants or compromised computer systems—part of what is commonly referred to as a botnet—to essentially make numerous and repeated web requests to the target in order to consume its bandwidth and thus block legitimate internet requests—and thus normal internet users—from accessing the targeted website or system.

Sometimes likened to numerous individuals simultaneously and repeatedly hitting their Internet browsers’ refresh button for a given webpage, a parallel that may clarify how a DDoS attack works might be the front door to an individual’s home. Imagine thousands of strangers knocking on an individual’s door, asking to be let in, and that the homeowner must respond to each of these requests. Likewise, the individual frequently host visitors to their home and these visitors attempt to visit amidst all of the strangers. All of the traffic to the homeowner’s door will strain his ability to respond to the various requests for entrance, not to mention his ability to single out and respond to legitimate requests from legitimate visitors. At some point, the homeowner might simply stop responding to any and all requests.

While this is but one type of cyber attack, and but one form of cyber hacktivism, this attack method has often been used to successfully disrupt the services and systems of those targeted.  However, this disruptive capability proves more of a nuisance than much more. While service to targeted websites or other systems might be temporarily

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259 For a useful introduction to types of DDoS attacks, see Vaughan-Nichols, “DDoS.”
disrupted, methods to stymie the attacks are typically undertaken quickly, or the interest of the attackers often wanes to the point where service once again continues as normal. While not inconceivable that such attacks might be used as part of a cyber warfare strategy to disrupt certain services of an adversary, such as the DDoS attacks against Georgian government and other websites during the 2008 Russia-Georgia War, intent differs as hacktivists seek to make a political or social statement more akin to protest rather than complement a broader warfare strategy.\textsuperscript{260}

\textit{Cyber Warfare}

Cyber warfare presents another type of cyber behavior, though it remains perhaps the most ill defined of those discussed within this study. Most official U.S. government documents dealing with cyber space (such as the U.S. 2011 \textit{International Strategy for Cyberspace} and the 2011 \textit{Department of Defense Strategy for Operating in Cyberspace}) do not speak in terms of cyber warfare so much as cyber security, cyber threats, and cyber attacks. The U.S. government does, however, treat cyber “space” as a new domain of war fighting. While this study argues that cyber “space” does not present a new domain of warfare, instead facilitating war fighting in other domains, it does make sense to speak in terms of cyber warfare as a type of behavior or tactic differentiated from other types of cyber activities.

A tendency among the media and policymakers to treat cyber warfare in an indeterminate way further complicates understanding this concept. The consensus that

\footnote{260 In January of 2013, the group Anonymous even attempted to create an online petition on the White House “We the People” petition website to protect DDoS attacks under freedom of speech. Debate definitely exists over the legality of DDoS attacks and whether they are properly classified as “hacking.”}
does exist seems to agree that cyber warfare is undertaken largely by state or state
sponsored actors to achieve their strategic objectives or complement other forms of
warfare. However, actors participating in cyber warfare do not necessarily need to be
states or state sponsored. Cyber terrorists can also undertake cyber attacks against their
enemies to further their own objectives. The commonality shared between these various
types of actors and cyber warfare is engagement in cyber attacks directed towards
harming an adversaries computer or network systems and infrastructure, disrupting
society, or preventing their ability to engage in warfare themselves. This includes cyber
activities undertaken towards effecting these sorts of outcomes at a later point in time,
sabotaging or compromising computer systems now to provide access or execute certain
actions in the future. Examples of this sort of behavior include the planting of logic
bombs—computer code set to execute when specific future conditions are met—or
ensuring remote access can still be attained at a later date. Computer hardware itself is
also a concern with regard to this sort of behavior, as hardware might be altered or
tampered with during production, transit, or otherwise for these same ends. Thus the
concern over the use of foreign manufactured hardware by the U.S. government and U.S.
military.

_Cyber Espionage_

While often conflated, there is no doubt that just as a distinction exists between physical
warfare and physical espionage a distinction exists between cyber warfare and cyber
espionage. All countries engage in espionage against enemies, competitors, and even
allies. Like advanced communications systems, the Internet facilitates espionage by
allowing for the ability to access and transmit massive amounts of information with little personal risk compared with the challenges and restrictions faced in the realm of physical espionage. Not only does the Internet compress space, time, and mass, it also offers a high level of anonymity. According to the U.S. Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive (ONCIX), “Cyberspace is a unique complement to the espionage environment because it provides foreign collectors with relative anonymity, facilitates the transfer of a vast amount of information, and makes it more difficult for victims and governments to assign blame by masking geographic locations.”

For victims of cyber espionage, this means facing the difficulties presented by the attribution problem, the difficulty of accurately identifying the source of cyber espionage and other cyber activities due to the very nature of the Internet and the ability of individuals to obfuscate their identities by conducting their activities from nearly anywhere in the world while also routing their internet traffic through various locales. For cyber spies, this means both a reduction in risk and consequences.

**Thinking of Cyber Space: The Deterrence or Intelligence Parallel?**

Before turning to U.S. and Chinese narratives and identities related to “cyber space,” this space itself deserves greater contemplation. Many are apt to liken cyber space and the threats posed therein to the Cold War, pointing to the need for a deterrence strategy to deal with cyber threats, hearkening to the nuclear deterrence strategy of the major powers during that period. However, depending upon the sort of cyber behavior analyzed and whether cyber attacks accompany a broader warfare strategy, deterrence proves an ill-
fitting strategy and the Cold War an ill-fitting parallel. The reasons for this are, at least, twofold: the fact that much state linked cyber activity falls under the domain of espionage and the fact that attribution of activities in cyber space often proves highly difficult. The Internet offers the ability for actors to undertake espionage, attacks, and other forms of malicious cyber behavior from virtually anywhere they have access to a computer and an Internet connection. This, combined with the ability of attackers to employ mechanisms to spoof or obfuscate their identity, routing their Internet traffic through various sorts of proxies, makes it difficult to determine both an attack’s origins and who to hold responsible. An inability to know the perpetrator of an attack undermines deterrence.

Rather than thinking of cyber “space” and cyber warfare in terms of the Cold War or along the lines of deterrence, this study argues that the realm of intelligence offers a more fitting parallel. Those concerned might even consider establishing a new domain of intelligence, cyber intelligence (CYINT), rather than a new domain of warfare. Intelligence represents practices aimed at the collection and analysis of information as well as covert operations, both activities directed towards identifying threats posed by other international actors and influencing actors to adopt policies or behave in ways that promote one’s own security and prosperity. States and other international actors typically undertake such activities clandestinely, seeking to at least maintain the prospect of plausible deniability when it comes to intelligence collection and covert operations. While no parallel will match perfectly, these same aspects are present in cyber “space.” One of the most prevalent cyber activities engaged in by states falls under the practice of intelligence itself: espionage. When cyber espionage is detected, such as Titan Rain in
2002 (discussed later), the nature of the Internet and the problem of attribution offer plausible deniability. While the U.S. government attributes Titan Rain to the Chinese government, publicly available information offers little in the way of a definitive conclusion.

Likewise, cyber operations share much similarity with covert intelligence operations. Take, for instance, the U.S. and Israeli use of the Stuxnet virus to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities, specifically the centrifuges used at those facilities in the process of Uranium enrichment. Though officials have supposedly taken credit for this attack off the record, the U.S. and Israel have not officially taken credit for this operation, maintaining plausible deniability.\(^2\) Moreover, the attack itself was not undertaken as part of a broader warfare strategy, but in a clandestine or covert way to, apparently, promote the overall strategic goals and security of both the U.S. and Israel. Rather than reflecting an act of cyber war, Stuxnet represents a covert cyber intelligence operation. Observers might question the fit of the intelligence parallel when it comes to the use of cyber capabilities during warfare, but in times of war intelligence agencies are typically involved in paramilitary capacities.\(^3\) In warfare, as intelligence becomes part of serving a broader warfare strategy, so too does cyber intelligence (CYINT). To better understand the poor fit between deterrence and Cold War parallels to cyber “space” and the


\(^{263}\) While military intelligence components are obviously also directly involved.
alternative of thinking of cyber “space” in terms of intelligence, both will be explored. Doing so will aid the following discussion of U.S.-China relations in cyber “space.”

Many physical assets and critical infrastructure rely on cyber capabilities: power grids, communication systems, banking and financial transaction systems, and so on. Fear exists that a successful cyber attack targeting critical infrastructure holds the potential to cripple a targeted state, or at least cripple certain aspects of it, potentially with little to no early warning. This may happen with no or little loss of life, but not necessarily. If an attacker targeted the U.S. electrical grid in part of the country experiencing a severe snowstorm many might die as a result. Illustrating the ability of hackers to inflict this sort of physical harm, in an experiment code-named Aurora the U.S. government set up a lab in Idaho connecting a power generator to a standard control network. Government hackers then succeeded in their attempt to penetrate the control system from the Internet and access the program for altering the generator’s rotational speed, coming only keystrokes away from causing the generator to fail and incur physical damage. Worse yet, such generators are basically made to order. According to Clarke and Knake, “They are not sitting around, waiting to be sold. If a big generator is badly damaged or destroyed, it is unlikely to be replaced for months.”264 Much of the same concerns hold if an attacker targeted U.S. water systems or other critical infrastructure. Undertaking cyber attacks against the U.S. financial industry might even result in societal disruption, riots, and potential loss of life.

264 Clarke and Knake, *Cyber War*, 100.
These possibilities and scenarios have gained growing attention over recent years. Fear exists that these potential threats may become a reality. While these possibilities might certainly accompany the warfare strategies of any parties involved in a direct armed conflict, a fear seems to exist that states and nonstate actors might be more likely to engage in such attacks for their own sake, not accompanied by broader warfare, to promote their own interests, owing to the uncertainty afforded by the attribution problem. That is, fear exists that international actors might be willing to engage in cyber operations that might severely disrupt various aspects of their adversaries’ public and private sectors thanks to the cloak of anonymity and deniability offered by the Internet. The response by the United States has been to classify cyber “space” as a new domain of warfare alongside air, land, sea, and space and to attempt to apply the notion of deterrence to this “space.” The applicability of the Cold War and deterrence to cyber “space” are interesting issues.

Attempts to overlay deterrence and the Cold War onto cyber “space” are apparent throughout the U.S. government and society. As stated by Singer and Shachtman, “Again and again in policy circles, cyber-security’s dynamics, threats, and responses are consistently compared to the technology of nuclear weapons and the standoff between the United States and Soviet Union. Former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, for instance, describes the Cold War and cybersecurity as ‘eerily similar,’ while journalist David Ignatius summed up his meetings with top Pentagon officials in a 2010 article titled ‘Cold War Feelings on Cybersecurity’” and that “Even network security firm
McAfee is susceptible to such talk.” The U.S. Department of Defense speaks of treating cyber “space” as one of its operational domains, in addition to air, land, sea, and space, in the public version of its *Department of Defense Strategy for Operating in Cyberspace*, supposedly announcing its doctrine of “equivalence,” treating cyber space equivalent to other domains of warfare while justifying responses to potential cyber attacks with responses in these other domains, in a classified version of this report. The DOD goes further in explicitly discussing deterrence and reserving the right to respond to hostile acts in cyber space as it would any other traditional threats to the United States in a 2011 policy report to Congress. The 2011 White House *International Strategy for Cyberspace* promotes this same cyber “space” policy, noting that “We reserve the right to use all necessary means—diplomatic, informational, military, and economic—as appropriate and consistent with applicable international law, in order to defend our Nation, our allies, our partners, and our interests.”

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As discussed earlier, there are problems in conceptualizing cyber “space” as a new domain of warfare rather than a facilitator of activities and relations in other domains. Just as a guided missile might facilitate destroying an adversary’s nuclear facilities, lines of malicious computer code might cause physical damage to the centrifuges used at those facilities, yet analysts do not speak of guided missiles as a domain of warfare, they facilitate warfare in other domains. Thus, observers should not speak of cyber warfare as a domain of warfare, as endorsed by official U.S. narratives, but simply as a type of cyber behavior.

On the similarities between the Cold War and the current state of cyber affairs, two lines of thought appear to underlie the reasoning behind this parallel. First, though the U.S. faces numerous cyber threats and attempts to probe and penetrate its systems from various state and nonstate actors every day, the threats posed by China receive primary attention among public officials and coverage by U.S. media sources. Even though official U.S. reports typically refrain from specifically identifying China or other nations as cyber threats, as Lieberthal and Singer note, “While it did not specify any individual nation, the Pentagon Strategy for Operating in Cyberspace was clearly keyed to China as among the many threats it foresaw in this realm. It sought to lay out an explicit cyber deterrence doctrine clearly targeting state actors, including leaving open the option for escalation to traditional military means in the physical realm if the U.S. ever felt it suffered too dearly in the cyber realm.”269 The second reason is the very focus

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on deterrence itself and its application to cyber “space,” invariably conjuring notions of Cold War nuclear deterrence.

To begin, concern surrounding China’s rise primarily fuels the parallel drawn between the Cold War and cyber “space.” This concern extenuates from U.S. views of China as a potential strategic competitor. Though Russia, for instance, rivals U.S. cyber capabilities and has the potential to pose a greater cyber threat to the United States than China according to U.S. intelligence officials, the threat posed by China receives more attention. Part of this may be due to the fact that China’s attempts at cyber espionage or attacks are easier to detect than those of Russia, thus they gain more attention. However, a more probable account involves a combination of this explanation with contemporary concern over China in U.S. foreign policy. This is seen not only in concern over the cyber threat posed by China but by the general concern over China’s rise within the U.S. government and society, especially in terms of the U.S. economy. U.S. elected officials, such as Representatives Mike Rogers and Dutch Ruppersberger (among others) have, for example, raised concern over China waging a trade war against the United States, conducting intellectual property theft through cyber “attacks,” including theft of critical defense information. While most official reports refrain from identifying specific states as cyber threats, a 2011 ONCIX report does note that much cyber espionage activity appears to originate from China, that China views itself as a strategic competitor to the United States, and that China engages in economic and

\[270\] Clark and Knake, Cyber War, 63.

technological espionage against the United States as part of its strategy of catching up to and surpassing the U.S.\textsuperscript{272}

Second, the focus on deterrence feeds into this “Cold War feeling” on cyber “space.” Not only do many in the U.S. fixate on China as a potential threat—leaving aside to what degree this fixation is founded—this potential threat possesses capabilities—cyber and otherwise—that pose a real and apparently severe threat to the United States that must be matched and deterred—leaving aside whether such threats are over-exaggerated. However, this parallel only holds to the extent that this narrative presents an accurate depiction of the current state of affairs with regard to U.S.-China relations and cyber “space.”

One of the greatest problems with the Cold War and deterrence parallel to cyber “space” is that the biggest threat posed is not cyber warfare but cyber crime and espionage. Singer and Shachtman put it quite well when they state:

\begin{quote}
Massive, simultaneous, all-encompassing cyberattacks on the power grid, the banking system, transportation networks, etc. along the lines of a Cold War first strike or what Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has called the “next Pearl Harbor” (another overused and ill-suited analogy) would certainly have major consequences, but they also remain completely theoretical, and the nation would recover. In the meantime, a real national security danger is being ignored: the combination of online crime and espionage that’s gradually undermining our finances, our know-how, and our entrepreneurial edge. While would-be cyber Cold Warriors stare at the sky and wait for it to fall, they’re getting their wallets stolen and their offices robbed.\textsuperscript{273}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{272} Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive, \textit{Foreign Spies Stealing US Economic Secrets in Cyberspace}.

\textsuperscript{273} Singer and Shachtman, “The Wrong War.”
As these authors note, the cyber attacks seen thus far, like the 2007 Russian cyber attacks on Estonia and cyber attacks accompanying physical attacks during the Russia-Georgia War in 2008, have been of little real consequence, taking government and similar websites down for a period of time, acting as more of a nuisance than major security or societal concern. However, Clarke notes that the Russians showed much restraint in these cases, probably saving their best capabilities for the United States or other adversaries. The world has also seen one of the foremost cyber powers, the U.S., show restraint in refraining from using cyber warfare as part of its overall warfare strategy during both of its wars with Iraq and in its involvement in Libya for fear of unintended consequences, such as accidentally affecting networks and systems more widespread than those targeted, and for fear of the precedent it might set.\footnote{Clarke and Knake, \textit{Cyber War}. The U.S. too might be guarding its better cyber tactics, saving them for a more formidable adversary. For reporting on Libya, see See Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, “U.S. Debated Cyberwarfare in Attack Plan on Libya,” \textit{The New York Times}, October 17, 2011. Demonstrating the possibility of unintended consequences, in 2008 the military did dismantle a Saudi Website suspected of facilitating suicide bombers in Iraq, which also disrupted over 300 other servers in Saudi Arabia, Germany, and Texas. See Ellen Nakashima, “Pentagon considers preemptive strikes as part of cyber-defense strategy,” \textit{The Washington Post}, August 28, 2010.} Even so, while cyber tactics might be used during times of conflict or war to actually do much more damage than the cyber attacks the world has so far witnessed, the same ends could be achieved by other means.

In warfare, targeting civil infrastructure with either cyber attacks or conventional kinetic weapons may cause similar disruptions to the targeted country, albeit with more physical destruction and the potential for longer-term effects expectedly accompanying the use of kinetic weapons. Any state considering such attacks would likely entertain a
similar calculus in deciding whether or not to undertake a cyber or physical attack to cripple their adversary’s critical infrastructure as part of a broader warfare strategy, as plausible deniability would certainly erode during a time of actual conflict. Cyber attacks may offer advantages in reducing the attacker’s risks and the costs associated with an attack, but little else. During times of relative peace, states are unlikely (but not unable) to engage in such attacks against one another, even with the levels of anonymity offered by the Internet and the attribution problem. Traditional deterrence and the prospect of uncertainty when it comes hiding behind the veil of the attribution problem should dissuade many states from engaging in large-scale cyber attacks against one another. Thus, deterrence need not be applied anew to cyber “space” or reformulated to cater to cyber attacks and cyber warfare (cyber attacks engaged in by terrorists and other criminals, on the other hand, prove a more significant challenge). 275

In its 2011 report to Congress on cyber space, the Department of Defense stated, “Deterrence in cyberspace, as with other domains, relies on two principal mechanisms: denying an adversary’s objectives and, if necessary, imposing costs on an adversary for aggression.” 276 As Lieberthal and Singer noted, in its *Strategy for Operating in Cyberspace* the Pentagon sought to outline a deterrence strategy allowing for escalation

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275 While exploring the issue of cyber attacks undertaken by terrorists or other nonstate actors and the applicability of deterrence to this sort of behavior is not within the scope of this study, it is an important problem worth further exploration. It seems that deterrence in such cases proves even more problematic, as the attribution problem can offer nonstate actors more protection than states engaged in conflict with one another. If terrorist groups or other nonstate actors claim credit for a cyber attack, there is still the problem of locating the perpetrators and the problem of pursuing them with respect to the international norm of state sovereignty.

to the use of traditional military forces in response to cyber attacks.\textsuperscript{277} These sorts of approaches to dealing with cyber space come despite remarks by those such as former Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn III that “Cold War deterrence models of assured retaliation do not apply to cyberspace, where it is difficult and time consuming to identify an attack’s perpetrator” going on to argue the need to focus more on denying any benefits to an attacker rather than focusing on imposing retaliatory costs.\textsuperscript{278} Assured retaliation definitely faces fundamental problems due to the attribution problem. However, focusing on denying benefits to potential attackers will also likely do little to deter malicious cyber behavior. While it is in the interests of the U.S. and others to mitigate the benefit of cyber attacks and espionage to would be attackers, doing so will not deter those with malicious intent from probing the networks of their adversaries, searching for exploits, and seeking out vulnerabilities since denying benefits does not impose any sort of increased costs for this behavior and thus does not function in the way of deterrence as traditionally understood. Governments certainly pursue strategies to minimize the effects of more traditional espionage, for instance, but this does not deter other governments from engaging in espionage. Moreover, thinking of deterrence in this way creates a slippage of sorts between cyber warfare and an emphasis on cyber attacks and cyber espionage.


\textsuperscript{278} William J. Lynn III, “Defending a New Domain,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 89, no. 5 (September/October 2010).
The greatest threat facing the U.S. and other countries is cyber espionage.279 Cyber espionage falls under the practice of intelligence and calls for broader thinking than solely in terms of deterrence to understand this threat and how to respond to it. With cyber intelligence, the retaliatory aspect of deterrence offers little benefit during times of relative peace due to the attribution problem and a lack of plausible retaliatory measures in response to acts of espionage. The denying benefit aspect of deterrence alone might prove beneficial to some extent but is not full proof. Regardless of actions taken to protect computer networks and information, this sort of defensive behavior, while worthwhile, will not put an end to or deter cyber espionage and other threats. Often vulnerabilities and threats only receive awareness and attention after they have been used or exploited. Thus, states and nonstate actors can engage in the use of zero-day exploits—new security exploits that have yet to be used or discovered by others—when available in order to achieve their goals. Also, with the low-risk associated with cyber espionage, the benefits of attempting to engage in this practice will persist.

In order to overcome more of the threat posed by cyber espionage states, businesses, and other groups need to work together to share information on espionage, attacks, security exploits, and vulnerabilities (rather than keeping such information to themselves out of a concern for their image) as well as promote international cooperation.

279 Though the U.S. most likely faces this threat disproportionately more so than most other countries due to how disproportionately reliant the United States is on the Internet than many other countries. Countries that do not rely heavily on the internet, like Afghanistan and even to an extent North Korea, need not fear cyber warfare to the extent of countries like the United States. Cyber warfare, in fact, presents an asymmetric capability with relatively low costs or other barriers for other states and nonstate actors to balance against or target U.S. strengths.
on sharing cyber forensic information related to acts of cyber espionage or to cyber attacks. International cooperation would aid in attempting to overcome the attribution problem. Since malicious cyber actors often route their Internet traffic through various countries, cooperation is needed to access the various system log files necessary to trace malicious cyber behavior as close to its origin as possible. Further, states and other actors should engage in denying benefits of cyber espionage to their adversaries and engage in cyber counterintelligence operations to mitigate the threats they face. Attempting to do so, however, requires not a deterrence strategy but one focused on international cooperation, law enforcement, and the practices of intelligence and counterintelligence. Cyber space presents not a realm of deterrence but a realm of intelligence and only has a “Cold War feeling” in rhetoric. As discussed below, though many comment upon the Cold War character of cyber space due to the apparent nature of relations between the United States and China, both sides do attempt to mitigate such concerns out of respect for their relations in other areas.

**U.S.-China Relations in Cyber Space: From Reality to Virtual Reality**

The relations between China and the United States in cyber “space” reflect the prevalent mistrust generally found between both countries. This mistrust leads Beijing and Washington to engage in practices that largely cast the identity of cyber space as a realm of competition in terms of national and economic security and increasingly define one another in an adversarial way. While some take this to imply a current or developing “Cold War” relationship with regard to cyber “space” or general U.S.-China relations, such thinking ignores the fact that both sides also attempt to mitigate the adversarial
aspects of their relations in cyber “space” and elsewhere. Take, for instance, that during U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry’s recent visit to Beijing (April 2013) both the U.S. and China agreed to set up cyber security working group to promote trust and cooperation between the two countries. Though still too early to tell what sort of effect this agreement will have, it indicates a more complex, nuanced relationship than simply a “Cold War” style relationship implies. Moreover, thinking of U.S.-China cyber relations akin to the Cold War inflates the perception of cyber threats and creates a sense of need for a cyber deterrence strategy even though espionage currently poses the greatest cyber threat to either side, a threat for which deterrence offers little remedy.

In their cyber relations, China and the United states engage in representational practices and adopt narratives that define the identity of cyber “space,” of each other, and of themselves. Their relations in cyber “space” demonstrate the mixed identity of cyber space and of both actors. Though often conflated with other cyber threats, cyber espionage presents the most salient and controversial issue facing the United States and China with regard to cyber “space.” In particular, the United States worries about Chinese technological and business espionage. It is more difficult to ascertain China’s specific concerns regarding cyber espionage but as the U.S. holds a technological and economic advantage, Beijing’s concerns most likely relate more to U.S. dominance in cyber space, general intelligence collection and, not trivially, their international image with respect to accusations of Chinese “hacking.” Where these concerns receive most

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attention is in the media outlets of both countries, which then increases the need for both sides to respond to publicized cyber threats or the accusations of the other.

The conflation of concern over cyber espionage with other forms of cyber threats and the frequent exaggeration of these threats plays into the Cold War identity of cyber “space,” despite the high levels of economic cooperation enjoyed by both Beijing and Washington and other key differences in their overall relations in both the real and cyber worlds. The narratives adopted by both sides serve to increasingly depict one another and U.S.-China relations competitively, though amidst attempts made to refrain from explicitly doing so. Both sides are essentially defining the identity of cyber “space” and one another while they engage in these practices. However, these definitions are anything but definite and unambiguous. While the U.S. and China are forming an adversarial identity of cyber “space” in their relations with one another, the attempts by both sides to mitigate the contrarian aspects of their relationship in cyber “space” and elsewhere show that they are not Cold War adversaries competing in a new Cold War (cyber) battle space. Instead, despite their adversarial relations in cyber “space,” the relationship and identities are ever fluctuating and somewhat indeterminate, exhibiting somewhat of a dual nature, at least for the time being.

Many issues and incidents promote the adversarial identity of cyber “space” in U.S.-China relations. Both sides increasingly focus on cyber “space” as it relates to their overall security and their ability to conduct cyber warfare. In 2009, the United States

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281 For instance, the fact that most official White House and military documents refrain from explicitly discussing China as a threat, as opposed to such discussions of China in the U.S. Congress and the U.S. media.
Department of Defense (DOD) went as far as to establish the very world’s first cyber command, CYBERCOM, to protect U.S. government and military computer networks from increasing cyber threats. Overall, however, the U.S. appears to be “quietly” developing its cyber warfare capabilities, as they receive little public discussion aside from relatively restrained information on defensive policies. This especially holds for U.S. development of offensive cyber capabilities. China does publicly indicate some high level focus and attention on developing and training a preponderant cyber warfare force, hoping to leapfrog past the United States in terms of military technology instead of attempting match the United States’ far superior traditional military capabilities, especially when assessing cyber espionage undertaken against the United States. As Susan Brenner states, China even “has already articulated plans for cyber warfare that involve using civilians and civilian entities in attacking foreign corporate and financial institutions.”

While both sides undoubtedly plan and develop offensive cyber capabilities, the actual activities undertaken by both sides remain primarily defined in terms of cyber intelligence and espionage. However, focus on cyber warfare—defense and offense—by both sides has a militarizing effect on the identity of cyber “space” in international politics.

**U.S. Perspective of U.S.–China relations in Cyber Space**

U.S. decisions to pay increasing attention to cyber space come largely due to the many cases of cyber espionage that the government and civil society have experienced over

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recent years, often reportedly originating from the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The U.S. government claims that its networks are “probed thousands of times and scanned millions of times” every day. “Titan Rain,” for instance, offers one example of what the United States faces: “‘Titan Rain’ is the informal code name for ongoing acts of Chinese cyber espionage directed against the U.S. Department of Defense since 2002. According to Lieutenant General William Lord, the Air Force’s Chief of Warfighting Integration and Chief Information Officer, ‘China has downloaded 10 to 20 terabytes of data from the NIPRNet (the DOD’s Non-Classified IP Router Network).’” It is also believed that China was behind the downloading of information related to the Joint Strike fighter, that China has targeted members of the defense industry, that China recently targeted major U.S. newspapers, and that China has even targeted the Internet search giant Google. In January 2010, Google experienced cyber “attacks” apparently originating from within China, “aimed, at least in part, at the Gmail user accounts of

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283 Which does not necessarily mean that the espionage is state sponsored, though there are strong suspicions of this in some cases.

284 Lynn III, “Defending a New Domain.” This article gives no indication into the difference between the probing and scanning of networks. Scanning typically refers to the practice of looking for open ports on target networks or systems through which to potentially gain unauthorized access. The practice of scanning itself exists in a legal gray area, almost akin to looking for unlocked doors to houses within any given neighborhood. Whether simply looking for open cyber doors alone, absent any attempts to exploit the openings, represents a crime remains somewhat indeterminate.

285 Carr, Cyber Warfare, 4.
Chinese human rights activists.” During June of 2011 Google again experienced “attacks” originating from China, with strong suspicions of links to the Chinese government, Google claiming it had been the target of a “cyberspying” campaign. China refuted these claims, though suspicion of the Chinese government is explicitly reflected in a Beijing embassy cable, classified Secret, from 2010 released by WikiLeaks. The cable states that the nephew of a Politburo Standing Committee member informed his contact that the Google attacks were coordinated out of the State Council information office with oversight by Standing Committee members.

Recently, the computer security firm Mandiant even released a report providing strong (but still not entirely conclusive) evidence linking the Chinese military, specifically Unit 61398 in Shanghai, to “hacking” aimed at the United States. Mandiant reports that this unit has stolen hundreds of terabytes of information from at least 141 different organizations throughout the world. These different cases demonstrate the cyber espionage threat faced by the United States and reasoning behind increasing concern over cyber “space” within Washington.

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For U.S.-China relations regarding cyber space, the United States adopts a narrative asserting its own identity as a victim at the hands of Chinese cyber attacks and belligerence. The U.S. has also asserted a correlation between cyber space, deterrence, and the Cold War. As such, the U.S. expresses the need and has taken action to define the identity of cyber “space” in terms of recognized domains of warfare, not only defining the identity of cyber space, but defining its own role in establishing this identity and the rules (informal as they may be) governing this domain. Even if arguably inaccurate or misguided, identifying cyber space as a domain of warfare serves to strengthen U.S. power and influence with regard to this space. Doing so also projects onto China the identity of a, to some degree, belligerent adversary while casting the U.S.-China relationship, at least in cyber space, in light of Cold War sentiments and views of international politics.

**Chinese Perspective of U.S.-China relations in Cyber Space**

In response to claims by U.S. government officials and private businesses that they are the victim of Chinese “hacking,” Beijing asserts that China itself is one of the world’s foremost “hacking” victims and that they oppose all forms of hacking and cyber warfare. Responding to the specific claims made by Mandiant, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei stated that the allegations were groundless, asserted China’s opposition to hacking, and reported that, according to China’s National Computer Network Emergency Response Technical Coordination Center, “73,000

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foreign IP addresses had been linked to attacks on 14 million Chinese computers.”

During the first two months of 2013, China’s Xinhua claimed that more than half of the attacks China experienced came from the U.S. Some in China attribute claims of Chinese hacking to political and commercial interests within the U.S. as well as the need for an enemy in order to justify building a strong cyber military force. Many also point to the significance of the attribution problem facing U.S. claims of Chinese hacking.

More pointedly, China often argues that U.S. claims of Chinese hacking are simply part of the U.S. China threat theory.

In addition to China’s unwavering denial of culpability in the face of U.S. and worldwide claims of Chinese hacking and China’s own statements that it faces numerous hacking attempts itself, Beijing also argues that the U.S. adopts a narrative identifying itself as the victim when it comes to “hacking” claims in order to serve its own purposes. Specifically, officials and academics in China argue that U.S. accusations represent hegemonic practices and a hidden purpose to reinforce and support the United States’ desires to build its cyber security forces, wage cyber warfare, and contain the China

291 Xinhua, “China Opposes Hacking Allegations: FM Spokesman,” Xinhua, February 19, 2013. This article does not indicate what constitutes an “attack.”


Assuming the role of cyber victim thus reinforces the need to pursue these desires. Similar claims also seem to demonstrate fear of the United States pursuing a strategy to “spur the international community into drawing up rules for cyber warfare, in order to put a cloak of legality on its ‘preemptive strike’ strategy in cyber warfare.” As part of its response to these characterizations of U.S. behavior, China’s Foreign Ministry states that it supports working towards international rules and cooperation in cyber “space” while promoting openness and peace.

China’s own narrative draws upon notions of openness and international cooperation in defining its own identity while defining the U.S. as little more than a self-interested hegemon with designs on strengthening its own cyber capabilities and shaping international cyber laws in its favor. Beijing implies the political nature of U.S. assertions of victimization with regard to cyber attacks, asserting China’s own victimization extenuating from U.S hegemonism and cyber attacks.

Intersection of Competing Identities

It is interesting that China simultaneously criticizes the United States for claiming victimization in cyber space while Beijing declares its own victimization. Beijing does

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often point to its own victimization in international politics. However, while the humiliation narrative—Beijing’s frequent remembrance of China’s historic abuse at the hands of Western powers and Japan, often rhetorically linked to present day issues—is often seen in Chinese rhetoric, claims of cyber victimization do not appear to be closely related to this narrative. Instead, China’s claims of cyber victimization seem to stand more independently of the humiliation narrative and as a direct response to U.S. claims of victimization.

Also noteworthy, even though China voices its opposition to “hacking” and cyber warfare, those within the country do discuss the importance of cyber warfare to some extent. In a 2012 article in China’s Jiefangjun Bao Online, Li and He discuss the importance of “the net” to modern combat operations and the importance of sabotaging the net in determining victors in combat.298 On the whole, however, relatively little public information exists on China’s cyber space policies or cyber warfare strategy. Beijing has not released any official reports on cyber space policy, as has the United States, and only the most recent of China’s defense white papers even mentions cyber space, devoting almost no attention to the subject.299

For its part, the United States indeed treats cyber “space” with increasing concern. In 2007, for example, Rex Hughes noted, “Since 2001, deep in the Pentagon, a small team of military visionaries has been quietly laying the ground work for the

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transformation of cyber space into a premier warfighting domain. The principal aim is to [establish] a military arena on a par with land, sea and air.” Since that time concern has only increased. Regardless of whether cyber “space” represents a new domain of warfare, the treatment of this space as such essentially militarizes this space while the U.S. asserts its role as arbiter of cyber activity in international politics. However, the U.S. does face significant threats in the form of espionage originating (to some indeterminable extent) from China. These threats serve to reinforce U.S. attempts to define cyber “space.” According to President Obama during a recent interview, some cyber attacks originating from China are indeed state sponsored. During this interview, the President does note that a difference exists between cyber espionage, attacks, and a hot war. Indicating the importance of cyber “space” to the U.S. government, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper also recently “told a Senate committee that cyber attacks and cyber espionage had supplanted terrorism as the top security threat facing the country” and that State Department officials report discussing hacking in almost every meeting they have with Chinese officials. The President has even reportedly raised the issue of cyber security directly with China’s new President, Xi

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301 Commenting on what extent cyber espionage originating from China is state sponsored remains highly speculative.
303 BBC News, “President Obama upbraids China over cyber attacks.”
In response to accusations of “hacking,” Chinese officials repeat the narrative that such claims are groundless, that China opposes hacking, and that China itself is a major target of global hacking, new Premier Li Keqiang being the highest ranking official to have apparently publicly commented on and refuted U.S. claims.

The U.S. does seem to have legitimate concern over Chinese cyber espionage, directed at the government and at private businesses. Whether malicious cyber activities originating from within China are state sponsored is difficult to determine, but the 2010 Beijing Embassy cable released by WikiLeaks, the Mandiant report, and official public statements by President Obama offer strong evidence that some cases of Chinese “hacking” are indeed state sponsored. However, it is also likely that China experiences cyber espionage at the hands of the United States government (and nonstate “hacking” originating from within the U.S.). In this sense, both countries are victims to some extent, though both are also likely guilty of cyber espionage (or attacks). On the other hand, how the U.S. and China respond to and interact with one another primarily serves their own interests, creating an increasingly adversarial and militarized cyber “space.”

In addition to the importance of cyber espionage and attacks, the U.S. narrative regarding cyber “space” also emphasizes the importance of Internet freedom. For example, in remarks made during 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton levied strong

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condemnation at the practice of Internet censorship in general. This position fundamentally rests on U.S. liberal ideals and notions of personal freedom and democracy. China responded to Secretary Clinton’s remarks with refutations and criticism of their own while also censoring her remarks and discussion of them on China’s Internet. This reflects another aspect of the interaction of identities related to cyber space and both the U.S. and China. U.S. desires to promote a free and open Internet stand at odds with China’s repressive Internet censorship. As Beijing censored Secretary Clinton’s remarks and discussion of Internet freedom, they also often censor other sensitive issues, from the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident to the Bo Xilai scandal and general criticism of the Chinese Communist Party. These actions stand opposite the Chinese narrative supportive of a free and open Internet. The U.S., on the other hand, adopts the role of moral authority on the issue of Internet freedom. This issue, however, is not currently as prominent as others in U.S.-China cyber relations. Even so, it adds another aspect to understanding these relations and the identities of both parties.

Moving Forward in a Connected World

The growing importance of cyber space in international politics and specifically in U.S.-China relations provides a novel area for assessing the identity of cyber space and the identities of these two countries. While many journalistic, academic, and government accounts attempt to define cyber space as a new domain of warfare and focus on cyber attacks and the need for a deterrence strategy, these accounts often create a distorted depiction of this “space.” Rather than presenting a new domain of warfare and realm

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where cyber attacks pose a significant threat, cyber “space,” while it facilitates warfare in other domains, is best thought of in terms of intelligence, where cyber espionage poses a far greater threat than cyber attacks, especially in inter-state relations.

Though fashionable, as of late, to liken the character of cyber “space” in U.S.-China relations to the Cold War with a need for cyber deterrence, this parallel misrepresents important aspects of cyber “space” and relations between China and the United States. First, this study demonstrated that deterrence would do little to impede attempts at cyber espionage. Second, likening cyber “space” to the Cold War ignores the fact that both the U.S. and China attempt to ease tension within their cyber and other relations when possible in order to avoid an escalation of tension or harm other aspects of their relations with one another. Even though Beijing and Washington are contributing to an increasingly adversarial and militarized cyber “space,” this is not the only aspect of this “space” or of U.S.-China relations. The identities of cyber “space” and of both actors are much more complex. Both sides proffer narratives attempting to exert authority over cyber “space” by pointing to their victimization at the hands of the other. In response to the threats it faces, the U.S. in particular draws upon its power in strengthening its cyber capabilities and taking a leading role in establishing its own cyber “space” policies and attempting to, at present to a large extent unilaterally, define international cyber “space” policy. However, both sides also, at least rhetorically, note the importance of and speak of the need for greater cyber cooperation. As both countries remain highly economically dependent upon one another, it is likely that these desires represent more than mere rhetoric.
The identities at play in U.S.-China relations in relation to cyber “space” in some ways depict the dual characters of both countries and their overall relationship: aggressors and victims, competition and cooperation, freedom and repression. However, to define U.S.-China relations and cyber “space” in terms of some binary combination masks, to a degree, the fluctuation and nuance of the identities on which this study focuses. Over recent years, U.S.-China relations in cyber space have become increasingly conflictual, motivating high level officials on both sides of the Pacific to engage in public criticism of the other. Much of this tension in U.S.-China cyber relations seems the result of Chinese espionage, pursued towards the end of catching up to the U.S. militarily and economically. But recently, growing tension with regard to and threats posed by cyber “space” have spurred both sides to consider increased cyber cooperation in order to reduce this tension and not adversarially affect other aspects of the relations between both countries.

For cooperation with regard to cyber “space” to be effective, both the U.S. and China need to work together with the international community to establish the norms, rules, and, eventually, laws governing cyber “space” and cyber behavior, particularly with regard to cyber espionage. Unfortunately, the nature of the Internet and the attribution problem pose a significant challenge to cooperation, instead incentivizing cyber espionage (government, military, or economic) due to a reduction in risk and increase in potential rewards with cyber “space’s” compression of space, time, and mass and the anonymity afforded by the Internet. Due to these reasons, cyber “space” exacerbates the problem of espionage many times over. In addition to paying increased
attention to securing and defending their networks and computer systems, a logical place for the United States and China to begin seeking greater cooperation is with regard to economic espionage and the protection of intellectual property. As China adamantly denies its involvement in state sponsored “hacking” in spite of strong evidence otherwise, working towards this sort of increased cooperation will either require a change in China’s public position or require efforts to reduce public criticism of China in order to work towards resolving issue more privately, allowing China to “save face” internationally and, perhaps more importantly, domestically.
VI

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

Foreign affairs thus expands to encompass a range of sovereignty performances; it emerges in social activities where people continually divide friends from enemies, domestic from foreign, East from West, and patriots from traitors in everyday life, as well as in the halls of power.†

—William A. Callahan

Rather than dismissing it as some sort of abstraction, even distraction, as many security scholars do, this study has sought to demonstrate identity’s importance as an influential concept in understanding international politics. The goal has not been to determine whether China’s rise is peaceful or even whether it threatens U.S. security interests. The goal has not been to pass off a neutral, passive description of reality absent the realization and admission that those who conduct research studies are never truly disinterested observers.307 China and U.S. identities, as well as the cases examined within this study, did not simply lie in wait of attempts at greater understanding. Social subjects, beyond the bilateral relationship of focus within these pages, elude simple attempts at understanding and hardly offer a straightforward explanations or findings in response to the queries observers pose and ponder.


307 As are also of the concerns noted in Pan Chengxin, “The ‘China Threat’ in American Self-Imagination: The Discursive Construction of Other as Power Politics,” Alternatives: Global, Local, Political 29, no. 3 (June/July 2004).
Unlike traditional approaches to understanding, this study explored the interplay of identities in U.S.-China relations by examining each side’s relational conceptions of self and other to understand how these conceptions mutually influence identities and thus how these identities influence the nature of the U.S.-China relationship in international politics. In doing so, focus was placed on the representations each country holds of both itself and the other, how these representations interact and influence one another, and on the related role of interests in this mix of politics and power. Doing so required exploring the glimpses into the worldviews held by each side offered by the narratives they adopt, gleaning insights into their identities based on these views, based on their perceptions of important international issues, based on their reactions to such issues, and based on the interaction of these factors.

At the outset, noting the importance of China’s continued rise and the U.S. “pivot” to the Asia-Pacific, this study outlined its hopes of contributing to a basis for and demonstrate the value of examining identity as a fundamental concept in international politics by both exploring its theoretical principles and applying this approach towards developing a richer understanding of the nature of U.S.-China relations. Doing so, a variety of cases have been analyzed, from U.S.-China relations bracketing the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States to the issues raised by the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute for U.S.-China relations to the somewhat recent emergence and impact of cyber issues on the relationship (as well as the impact of the U.S. “pivot” to the Asia-Pacific region itself, most prominently signified by the joint U.S.-Australian agreements in November, 2011).
While seeking to explore and understand the nature of U.S.-China relations and not simply the nature of China’s rise, this bias does obviously exist to some extent, and while this study seeks to inform policymakers in general, it likely does so more in terms of U.S. foreign policy and security interests. At the most basic level, however, this study aims to at least illuminate important aspects and questions pertaining to U.S.-China relations and offer greater insight into and a fuller understanding of this relationship.

As Gries explains, in relations between states observers often find attempts to either maintain or challenge the existing power hierarchy. In the recent decades of U.S.-China relations, claims of the “China threat” and attempts to contain China have gained widespread recognition. Some strands of conventional international relations logic hold that as China’s rise continues, it becomes more of a strategic competitor and threat to U.S. power and security in the international system. This may lead to increasing tension in bilateral relations between both countries and attempts by the United States to actually attempt to contain China’s rise. Changes in great power dynamics might also cause shifts in the balancing behavior of other states in the Asia-Pacific region. However, understanding how and why this might be the case requires more than deferring to simple notions of selfish security interests and swings in material capabilities. More so, the relationship and its future character depend on the multifaceted identities of the actors involved. It seems plausible, then, to consider Gries’ prescription for states such as the U.S. and China to refrain from treating one another as enemies or in

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conflictual ways when possible, to avoid fueling confrontational nationalisms and undesirable self-fulfilling prophecies.

Ultimately, this study has identified the nature of the U.S.-China relationship as beset by chronic mistrust and fundamental differences, with varying levels of tension dependent upon dominant issues in international politics. As Malik noted with regard to the effect of September 11 on U.S.-China relations, “Beneath the smiles and handshakes and talk of opening a new chapter in Sino-U.S. relations are the lurking fears of American encirclement and containment of China – a hot topic among Chinese strategists and foreign policy analysts.”\(^{309}\) In the U.S., concern over China’s rise does exist, especially with regard to any constraining influence China’s growth might have on U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific or elsewhere, on U.S. economic security and growth, and in addition to concerns over issues such as Chinese human rights abuses. Most importantly, however, are the ways in which both countries view each other and the behavior that these views stimulate. Both sides hold the potential to construct a new reality and improve their relationship by paying heed not only to their representations of one another and their own assumptions about the other’s interests and identities, but also by consciously avoiding politicizing issues and identities in adversarial or conflictual ways in their dominant narratives.

**Prescriptions for Improved U.S.-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century**

Whether the importance of U.S.-China relations remain a matter of much concern moving into the future remains unforeseen. Aside from and in addition to their relations with one

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another, both Beijing and Washington face a multitude of other pressing concerns and issues. The United States, for instance, has yet to fully recover from the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GCF) or fully extract itself and recover from its interventions and commitments in the Middle East and Central Asia. Terrorism, too, remains a perennial U.S. security concern. These issues have the potential to divert U.S. attention away from its relationship with China or even adversely affect the United States’ status and operational capabilities as the world’s sole superpower as the twenty-first century advances.\(^{310}\)

China faces issues as well, as its phenomenal economic growth has begun to experience a significant slowdown. The country also faces problems ranging from its ageing population, lopsided gender ratio due to the “one child” policy (a policy China recently relaxed beginning in December, 2013), significant levels of environmental pollution, rising labor costs, a commercial and residential real estate bubble, separatist movements/sentiments within the mainland, and so on. Any of these issues might significantly strain or derail China’s economic growth and continued rise in international politics. Moreover, any threat to China’s economic growth also threatens the legitimacy of the Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Facing these actual or potential concerns, working together, the U.S. and China have the potential to mitigate many of them through increased cooperation, especially in

\(^{310}\) Some might argue that the United States is already suffering adverse and constricting effects on its freedom of action and operational capabilities due to the impact of the Global Financial Crisis and cost of its interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, causing the U.S. reconsider its long ascribed to two major wars doctrine—the belief in the need for the U.S. to maintain the ability to fight two simultaneous large wars (a capability which may, in actually, never have truly existed in reality).
the realm of economics. However, pursuing a mutually collaborative and cooperative rather than competitive or conflictual relationship requires important shifts in how each country views the other. It requires new identities of the self and other and, of sorts, a new reality. Overcoming the endemic mistrust in U.S.-China relations presents a difficult goal. In order to effect lasting improvement in bilateral relations, Beijing and Washington must bridge the differences in their identities and views of one another and the perceptual gaps these identities and views often create. Of course, much of this depends on whether each side can either resolve or overcome fundamental differences in salient aspects of their current identities, such as differences in their views and treatment of human rights concerns. Improvement and change, however, need not be immediate. Small steps can lead to more profound future changes. Many opportunities exist for both sides to attempt to improve relations with the other and construct not only a more cooperative bilateral relationship but, as two of the world’s greatest powers, a more cooperative world.
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