Motivated Reasoning in US-China Deterrence and Reassurance—Past, Present, and Future

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Abstract

This article discusses the application of motivated reasoning theory to deterrence and reassurance, explores the role of motivated bias in early US–People's Republic of China relations, and discusses the implications of motivated bias for contemporary US strategy and the future of the bilateral relationship. In doing so, it highlights the significance of psychological tendencies in sculpting Chinese responses to US diplomatic and military signals and demonstrates how confirming-goals unconsciously determine how Chinese leaders process new information. In light of these tendencies, it advocates a tailored approach to both deterrence and reassurance designed to exploit the vulnerabilities presented by motivated receptivity while circumventing the challenges created by motivated skepticism.

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The United States faces two daunting challenges in managing its bilateral relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC): it must simultaneously deter China from challenging US core national interests and reassure China that the United States poses no threats to legitimate Chinese interests as long as China behaves as a responsible power.[1] Recent events illustrate the difficulty of conveying these two core messages. On the one hand, the United States faces the challenge posed by China's unilateral enactment of an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) that overlaps with US allies' ADIZs. How is the United States to convince China that this type of unilateral revisionism is unacceptable and that it is committed to preserving regional order in East Asia? On the other

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hand, the United States recently faced strong pushback from China over US development of ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems targeting North Korea. Chinese leaders express concern that BMD systems threaten China's nuclear deterrent and indicate US intent to contain China's rise. These challenges are microcosms of much broader strategic problems the United States must address in its relationship with the largest, fastest growing non-Western power in today's international system.

To understand how the United States can successfully communicate deterrence threats and reassurances to China's leadership, we must have a firm grasp of the psychological biases that undergird how leaders interpret and process incoming information. In particular, we must acknowledge the role misperception can play in both impeding and facilitating deterrence and reassurance. This article investigates the role of "motivated reasoning" (also known as "motivated bias") in Chinese decision making, focusing in particular on confirmation-motivated reasoning. First, it presents a general overview of motivated reasoning as discussed by psychologists and political scientists. Then it illustrates the importance of this psychological dynamic by tracing its involvement in three major historical crises involving the United States and China: (1) the US reassurance attempt during the Korean War, (2) the US deterrence attempt during the 1950 blockade of the Taiwan Strait, and (3) the US deterrence attempt during the 1958 Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. Next, it examines an instance in which the United States overcame Chinese skepticism to reassure China and reduce strategic distrust: Pres. Richard Nixon's rapprochement with China in the 1970s. Finally, it considers how US policymakers and strategists should cope with motivated reasoning in Chinese decision making. In particular, a tailored approach to deterrence and reassurance emphasizes the need to gauge China's preconceptions about US strength, resolve, and intent and to adjust signals accordingly.

Reassurance, Deterrence, and Motivated Reasoning

Before discussing motivated reasoning and how it can influence Sino-US relations, we must briefly review conventional approaches to reassurance and deterrence in international relations theory. Classical deterrence theory, grounded in Schelling's work on nuclear bargaining, examines how states can dissuade challengers from undertaking

undesirable actions.[2] In general, classical deterrence theorists contend that successful deterrence depends on capabilities, credibility, and communication.[3] A deterring actor (the defender) must be able to manipulate the expectations of an aggressor (the challenger) so as to convince it to refrain from pursuing an action the defender finds intolerable. Defender capabilities matter because they affect the challenger's cost-benefit calculus when considering whether to escalate or back down. *Capabilities* here refer to the capacity of the defender to harm the challenger and generally are part of an explicit or implicit deterrent threat issued by the defender to the challenger. Essentially, the defender must make a threat with sufficient capabilities behind it to ensure the challenger prefers backing down to escalating.[4] These capabilities only matter, however, if the deterrent threat issued by the defender is credible in the eyes of the challenger.[5] Credibility is a matter of the challenger's perspective on the defender's cost-benefit analysis. The defender must convince the challenger that it would rather escalate and carry out its threat than accept the challenger's undertaking of an action it finds intolerable. Otherwise, the challenger will ignore the defender's deterrent threat. Theorists disagree on what makes an actor credible. Some argue actors' interests or reputations determine their credibility, and others argue actors can use risk manipulation strategies to convince challengers of their credibility.[6] These risk manipulation strategies include hands-tying through public statements that put actors at risk for audience costs or sinking costs through dedicating extensive resources (military, economic, or diplomatic) to back up the credibility of a commitment.[7] Finally, communication is a critical component of successful deterrence because the defender's capabilities, credibility, and commitment (what intolerable action the defender is trying to dissuade the challenger from undertaking) must all be signaled successfully to the challenger to have their intended effects.

Defensive realism focuses on reassurance rather than coercion as an aspect of interstate persuasion. Under conditions of defense dominance, which defensive realists believe are present throughout much of history, status quo states can signal benign intentions to one another.[8] This alleviates the security dilemma and reduces the likelihood of arms races. As in deterrence, states may be able to convince others of a credible commitment to a benign foreign policy through risk manipulation strategies, including sinking costs and tying hands. Such actions include adopting unilateral arms reductions and employing a defensive military strategy.[9]

While this article provides substantial insight into the prerequisites for successful deterrence and reassurance, scholars such as Lebow, Stein, Jervis, Danilovic, and others point out that these theories must be coupled with an appreciation for the cognitive processes and biases of leaders.[10] Jervis and Lebow in particular argue that motivated bias can render deterrence ineffective in certain contexts.[11] The basic reasoning by motivated bias is this: when leaders view certain courses of action as absolutely necessary, they are motivated to process incoming information in a way that confirms that they will succeed. In essence, policymakers desirous of a particular outcome engage in wishful thinking and process information—including deterrent threats from potential adversaries—accordingly. This can undermine successful deterrence, either by leading a challenger to initiate a conflict despite the presence of a credible deterrent threat or by leading a defender to fail to appreciate the need to issue a credible deterrent threat against a challenger.[12] By incorporating motivated bias, Lebow and Jervis identify a critical dynamic that can significantly influence the success or failure of a deterrent attempt.

Actors are driven by more than mere desired outcomes, however. They are also motivated by confirmation goals. *Confirmation goals* refer to individual or group objectives of arriving at conclusions that fit with their preconceptions and beliefs so as to achieve cognitive consistency.[13] This goal of avoiding cognitive dissonance motivates actors to process information differentially based on whether or not that information confirms their preconceptions. Individuals criticize information that is inconsistent with their expectations more extensively and receive it more skeptically than information that is consistent with their expectations.[14] They scrutinize information and actively seek out alternative information to counter or undermine the contradictory information if such information is available.[15] When they encounter information that confirms their expectations, however, they receive it uncritically and do not process it extensively.[16] In short, based on the existing literature on motivated reasoning, we should expect confirmation-motivated bias to influence deterrence and reassurance cases along with preference-motivated bias.

Understanding the role of confirmation-motivated bias in US-China relations is essential to understanding the relationship. Based on the psychological literature cited above, we can conclude that successful persuasion partially depends on the relationship between a message and the beliefs of the target actor (in this case, the Chinese leadership). A message

that is consistent with Chinese leaders' expectations is likely to succeed in persuading those leaders easily, regardless of the quality of the message or its objective credibility. A message that is inconsistent with their expectations will have far more difficulty succeeding. Any inconsistency or ambiguity in signaling by the United States will provide the Chinese leadership with information to counter or undermine the US message.[17]

Although information can confirm or deny a number of different beliefs actors hold, the most important set of preconceptions we must consider involves Chinese views of US strength and intentions. How do Chinese leaders see the United States? Is it perceived to be fundamentally bellicose or imperialist? What are its goals and preferred strategies? Are its leaders honest or duplicitous? How willing and able are they to employ force? These beliefs condition how China will respond to US persuasion attempts. Three historical cases provide an overview of how these preconceptions have shaped China's reception of US signals through confirmation-motivated reasoning.

"The Tiger Always Eats People": China Responds to Truman's Assurances

As US-led UN forces landed at Inchon and began to roll back the forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in September 1950 and pushed north of the 38th parallel in October, the Truman administration attempted to persuade China that the United States would not violate its interests along its border with the DPRK. In a classic example of failed reassurance, however, China reacted to the US signals with a high degree of skepticism and ultimately rejected wholesale the promises made by Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Mao believed that the United States would threaten China's border—that it would grow "so dizzy with success that they may threaten us"—and therefore he chose to intervene directly in the Korean conflict.[18] As People's Liberation Army (PLA) lieutenant general Du Ping later stated, "If imperialist America occupied all of Korea, it would retrace imperialist Japan's old path to invade our Northeast."[19]

Why did US assurances toward China fail? Motivated reasoning provides some compelling answers. Truman's and Acheson's messages contradicted the Chinese leadership's preexisting beliefs about international politics in general and the United States in particular. This meant China's leaders were highly skeptical of the incoming information. As they

processed the US reassurance signals, they actively sought alternative information and focused on critiquing the consistency of US signaling. Ultimately, they rejected the new information contained in the signals, remained committed to their preconceptions, and pushed for direct intervention in the Korean conflict.

The United States pursued a strategy of reassurance to attempt to alleviate Chinese concerns over their DPRK border as UN forces pushed the DPRK back. To carry out this strategy, Truman and Acheson sent a series of conciliatory signals to Chinese leaders in the form of public statements. On 1 September, Truman denied that the United States sought a wider war with China.[20] On 15 November, Acheson stated at a foreign policy conference that China's "proper interests will be taken care of" along the DPRK border.[21] On 16 November, Truman announced at the United Nations that the United States "had no intention of carrying hostilities into China."[22] Truman claimed that "it is the policy of the United Nations to hold the Chinese frontier inviolate, to protect fully legitimate Korean and Chinese interests in the frontier zone, and to withdraw the United Nations forces from Korea as soon as stability has been restored." He went on to argue that the United States had never planned "to carry hostilities across the frontier into Chinese territory."[23]

Mao and the Chinese leadership more broadly received these signals with a high motivation to process them thoroughly and skeptically, as they contained information that fundamentally contradicted their deeply held beliefs about the character of politics in general and the United States in particular. Mao and his inner circle believed the United States (the signaling actor) was an aggressive, imperialist country bent on expansion in East Asia due to the interests of its bourgeoisie. This was based on Chinese leaders' Marxist-Leninist beliefs about politics in general but also reflected their expectations about US character and intentions based on their interpretation of past US interactions with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).[24] US ambassador Leighton Stuart noted that "Huang Hua said frankly they looked on the U.S.A. as an enemy."[25] Historian He Di argues that in 1949, before the outbreak of the Korean War, "Mao was still worried that the United States might find an excuse to interfere in China's civil war" through "direct American military intervention."[26] In fact, even before US intervention north of the 38th parallel, Zhou Enlai argued that "the predatory behavior of the American government is well within the Chinese people's expectation"

and that there was a "US imperialist plot to invade China and to dominate Asia."[27] As Peng Dehui put it, "the tiger always eats people. . . it is impossible to make any concessions to a tiger."[28] These ideas reflected deeply seated beliefs about the basic nature of the United States as an implacable and unappeasable imperialist power.

The disconfirming information contained in Truman and Acheson's reassurance attempt motivated Chinese leaders to scrutinize the US signals skeptically and thoroughly, seeking alternative evidence to invalidate the US messages. Unfortunately, inconsistent signaling by the United States—driven by military errors and rogue officials' statements—provided Chinese leaders plenty of alternative information to draw upon. On 25 August, Secretary of the Navy Francis Matthews advocated "instituting a war to compel cooperation for peace . . . we would become the first aggressors for peace." GEN Douglas MacArthur, meanwhile, argued that "we can dominate with air power every Asiatic port from Vladivostok to Singapore" using Taiwan as a base.[29] Although the Truman administration rejected these statements, forcing MacArthur to retract his statement and firing the official behind Matthews' statement, they provided fodder for the CCP leadership to later reject Truman and Acheson's reassurance signals. Furthermore, in late August China charged that US planes strafed Chinese villages along the Yalu River.[30] Although US authorities proposed a UN investigation into the accident, this incident contradicted assurances from Truman that the United States would not threaten China's interests along its border with the DPRK.

Evidence indicates that Chinese leaders behaved as motivated reasoners in processing Truman and Acheson's reassurance signals, seeking out and utilizing other information to confirm their preexisting beliefs and undermine the new contradictory information. China's state-run press declared that the statements by Matthews and MacArthur demonstrated the real US intentions and argued that Truman was simply trying to conceal his intentions by repudiating them and pledging respect for China's borders.[31] After Truman and Acheson's statements, China's chief of staff Nieh Yenrong confided to India's ambassador to China, K. M. Pannikar, that "bombings by US planes, active support being given by the United States to [Chiang Kai-shek], and [the US attitude] on UN membership had convinced Peiping that [a] US attack on China is imminent and the Chinese must act accordingly."[32] In his recollection of

the lead up to the Korean War, PLA general Hong Xuezhi argued that China feared US intentions despite its assurances because "in late August, the American air force . . . began to invade our territorial sky in Northeast China continually."[33] As Chinese ambassador Wu announced to the UN, "the real intention of the US, as MacArthur has confessed, is . . . to dominate every Asiatic port from Vladivostok to Singapore."[34] Zhou similarly rejected US reassurances and drew on inconsistent signaling to confirm his preexisting beliefs and undermine the validity of Truman and Acheson's statements: "time after time, [the United States] sent its air force . . . to intrude into the air over the Liaotung Province in China, strafing and bombing," and highlighting that "MacArthur, commander-in-chief of American aggression against Taiwan and Korea, has long ago disclosed the aggressive designs of the US government."[35] Faced with new information in the form of US assurances that contradicted previously held beliefs, China's leaders sought out alternative information to reinforce their preexisting beliefs and undermine the new disconfirming information. Unfortunately, the strafing incidents along the Yalu and the statements from Matthews and MacArthur provided plenty of alternative confirmatory information for the CCP leadership.

It is important to acknowledge that motivated reasoning and reassurance failure alone do not explain China's decision to intervene. Reassurance failure was not a sufficient condition for the involvement of China in the Korean War. While none of China's top leaders were persuaded by US reassurance attempts, there was disagreement among them as to how to respond to the threat posed by the United States. Many of Mao's generals preferred a defensive strategy rather than preventive offensive action, and if Mao had been less optimistic about the prospects for the People's Volunteer Army's success, China might have chosen not to intervene. Still, reassurance failure was surely a necessary condition for China's involvement in the conflict. If Mao and his generals had been convinced by the United States that it had no designs on Chinese territory, there would have been no need for China to react defensively or offensively to US success in the conflict with the DPRK.

"The Americans Fear War": China Responds to Eisenhower's Threats

Starting on 23 August 1958, the United States sought to compel China to abandon its bombardment of the Quemoy and Matsu Islands

in the Taiwan Strait and to deter it from further aggression against Republic of China (ROC) forces. Despite President Eisenhower's and Secretary of State Dulles' threats, however, China did not back down and remained unpersuaded. Chinese forces reduced their bombardment only after they began to run short on ammunition. The US failure to compel compliance by the Chinese led to the brief escalation of the crisis and cost the ROC more than a thousand soldiers' lives.

Why did the United States fail to deter continued bombardment of Quemoy and Matsu by the Chinese forces? Although the aggressive US response alarmed Mao, he clung to his preexisting beliefs about US credibility and commitment which he had developed before the onset of the crisis and before Eisenhower's deterrence attempt. As in Truman's reassurance attempt, inconsistent signaling proved problematic for Eisenhower. Mao latched onto the ambiguity in Truman and Acheson's statements as evidence that the United States was neither committed to the defense of the islands nor powerful enough to prevent China's continued harassment of ROC forces there.

The Eisenhower administration attempted to persuade China to abandon its bombardment of the islands using a series of threatening signals, mostly military maneuvers and deployments rather than public statements. This decision was driven in part by the determination that although it was critical to deter China from taking Quemoy and Matsu, the US public would oppose any military involvement in this crisis. By avoiding clear public declarations, Eisenhower was attempting to shield himself from domestic political flak. As such, the United States held air defense exercises around Taiwan, reinforced the 7th Fleet, moved two aircraft carrier groups into the vicinity of the strait, and eventually provided howitzers to the ROC. Clear public deterrence statements toward China were noticeably absent. While Dulles and the State Department condemned China's attacks in a number of statements, it was not until 4 September that Dulles issued a public threat to China. "The United States is bound by treaty to help defend Taiwan (Formosa) from armed attack and the President is authorized . . . to employ the Armed Forces of the United States for the securing and protecting of related positions such as Quemoy and Matsu," Dulles declared. While not an explicit commitment to defend the islands or a direct threat to punish China if it continued to bombard the islands, this was intended as the definitive deterrent threat to clarify that the United States would defend the offshore

islands. When interviewed about the statement later, he suggested that "if I were on the Chinese Communist side I would certainly think very hard before I went ahead on the fact of this statement."[36]

The CCP leadership did think hard on the statement but came to the opposite of Dulles' desired conclusion, due in part to their preexisting beliefs about US commitment and capabilities. Just as they were motivated to process Truman's reassurances skeptically, so Mao and his inner circle received Eisenhower's threats with a high degree of skepticism. The CCP leadership understood that the United States was trying to communicate a commitment to defend Taiwan through Dulles' statement, and the US military maneuvers communicated (with varying degrees of clarity) a commitment to defend Taiwan and its control over Quemoy and Matsu. However, this message (the information conveyed by these signals) directly contradicted their preconceptions about the United States. Mao in particular believed that the United States was (1) weakened and (2) afraid of conflict with China. The United States could not, therefore, be seriously committed to Quemoy and Matsu; it was bluffing and unwilling to fight over the islands due to insufficient will and capabilities. As Mao had said before the crisis, China should "not be afraid of ghosts."[37] As political scientist Shu Guang Zhang notes, "Chinese leaders were confident that the international situation was favorable to China" in the run up to the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. "The East wind is over the West wind," Mao declared, and "fighting within the imperialist bloc" undermined US capabilities.[38] This was partially due to US involvement in the Middle East at this time; US power to respond to the bombardment "would be checked in the Middle East," according to Mao.[39] Wu Lengxi recalled that "Mao believed that the imperialists were more afraid of us [than we were of them]."[40] This attitude persisted even in the face of US signals, highlighting the resiliency of preexisting beliefs. Despite US signals, Mao reportedly remarked that "I really don't know how they can handle a war with us" over Quemoy and Matsu.[41] He remained convinced that "the Americans are afraid of fighting a war. . . . According to my opinion, it is Dulles who fears us more."[42]

Because of their preexisting beliefs, the CCP leaders received US signals with a high degree of skepticism; as a result, they sought alternative information to confirm their preconceptions and undermine the validity of the new information presented by Dulles' public statement. Unfortunately, due to the inconsistency of the Eisenhower administration's

signaling throughout the crisis, the CCP leadership found plenty of information to confirm its suspicions and to reaffirm its preconceptions.

Throughout the crisis, US signaling was inconsistent and presented plenty of evidence for CCP leaders to consider that hinted at US trepidation over the defense of Quemoy and Matsu. Immediately after the onset of the crisis, US officials in Taiwan were asked by ROC officials to communicate to Washington the need for a public deterrence statement committing to the defense of the islands. Evidence suggests that the CCP knew of these requests; therefore, the United States unintentionally signaled a desire to avoid commitment to the islands by rejecting the requests. This was largely born of a desire to avoid domestic political blowback rather than an actual lack of commitment by the Eisenhower administration. Still, the CCP latched onto this information. For the first week of the crisis, the United States continued to send signals that were not consistent with its goal of deterring the bombardment of the island. Rather than threatening China or clarifying US commitments, Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Department of State simply condemned Chinese aggression and remarked on how Quemoy and Matsu were increasingly important to the defense of Taiwan.[43] These veiled threats unintentionally provided information that, for China, could be interpreted as inconsistent with Dulles' later statement and the US military signals and was used to undermine the authenticity of the US deterrent threats. It was not until 4 September that Dulles issued the closest thing to a US public commitment to deter China's bombardment of Quemoy and Matsu, and even this statement was somewhat ambiguously worded.

True to the predictions of motivated reasoning theory, Chinese leaders latched onto these alternative sources of information because they were consistent with their preexisting expectations, and they used this evidence to scrutinize and invalidate US deterrent signals. Wu reveals that "Chairman Mao . . . paid close attention to the responses . . . to our bombardment of Quemoy, especially to America's response."[44] He goes on to recount that China's top leaders analyzed the US responses as follows:

> Both Eisenhower and Dulles made public speeches. They ordered half of their warships in the Mediterranean to the Pacific. . . . However, they seemed not to have made up their mind whether or not to defend Quemoy and Matsu. Both Eisenhower and Dulles slurred over this matter without giving a straight answer. The participants of the meeting agreed that the Americans feared a war with us. They might not dare to fight us over Quemoy and Matsu.[45]

Later, Wu reiterates, "The Americans in fact were afraid of having a war with us at the bottom of their hearts so that Eisenhower never talked publicly about a 'mutual defense' of Quemoy-Matsu."[46] Mao and his inner circle instead concluded that the statements and military maneuvers indicated that the United States was committed primarily to the defense of Taiwan rather than the smaller islands. Motivated reasoning led Mao and his subordinates to focus on the ambiguity and inconsistency in US deterrence threats, undermining this key persuasion attempt.

"The Plan Must be Abandoned": China Responds to Truman's Threats

Prior to his unsuccessful attempt to reassure the CCP leadership of US intentions north of the 38th parallel, Truman had sought to persuade China to refrain from invading Taiwan through a series of deterrent threats in August of 1950. While Truman's later efforts at persuasion failed to elicit the desired response from the Chinese, he was successful in persuading the CCP leadership to call off its attack on Taiwan. Although Mao and Zhou were preparing to invade Taiwan to finish off Chiang Kai-shek, massing 30,000 PLA soldiers to support the operation, Zhou announced that "the plan to liberate Taiwan must be immediately abandoned" following the US deterrent threat.[47]

The Chinese response was driven largely by the compatibility of Truman's deterrent threats with Mao and Zhou's preexisting beliefs about the United States rather than by the sunk costs incurred or audience costs involved in Truman's threats. The idea that it would commit to fight China over Taiwan and would attack the Chinese navy if it moved to invade Taiwan was fully compatible with Mao's view of the United States as an aggressive, imperialist power bent on dominating China and violating its territorial integrity. As mentioned above, Chinese leaders saw Truman's reassurance attempts during the Korean War as unappeasable capitalist aggression and a direct threat to China. That this imperialist power would take control of Taiwan, China's rightful territory, was not surprising for Mao and Zhou. In fact, CCP leadership had for some time worried that the United States would try to bring Taiwan under its control as a staging point for future attacks on the mainland.[48] Overall, China's leaders were not motivated to scrutinize Truman's military and diplomatic signals. Instead, they processed and incorporated the new information provided by these signals rapidly and adjusted their behavior

accordingly. It took only two days for the CCP leadership to decide that it would call off the planned amphibious assault on Taiwan.

Motivated reasoning is clearly at work in this case. A more careful and objective assessment of Truman's signals should have generated more skepticism about the US commitment to Taiwan. US signals were not particularly convincing in terms of military power. The 7th Fleet was never deployed in its full strength. Truman had signaled earlier in the year that the United States was moving "toward abandonment of Chiang Kai-shek."[49] The US statement declaring its commitment to defend Taiwan was also somewhat ambiguously worded. Nevertheless, the close compatibility of Truman's message with the CCP leadership's beliefs meant that these leaders accepted this message readily.

This presents an interesting case in which motivated bias by Chinese leaders actually favored the United States in its deterrence attempt and demonstrates that motivated reasoning is not always an impediment to successful deterrence. Cognitive biases themselves can, at times, make certain types of persuasion easier (even deterrence), and in this instance Chinese preconceptions about Truman's intentions significantly enhanced US deterrent credibility.

Convincing Motivated Skeptics: Nixon's Rapprochement with China

Motivated reasoning, while often skewing deterrence and reassurance, is not insurmountable. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Nixon administration undertook a protracted effort to persuade China to align with the United States. This involved an extensive reassurance campaign to convince China that it could depend on the United States to respect its vital interests and not bandwagon with the Soviets to threaten Chinese security. Despite the fact Nixon's message contradicted the CCP leadership's preexisting beliefs about US intent, this persuasion attempt succeeded. Part of this success can be attributed to the strategic context Chinese leaders faced. At least some of the credit for the success of this reassurance attempt, however, can be credited to Nixon's clarity, consistency, persistence, and strength in his signaling.

Nixon's signals focused on reassuring China of the US intention to become its partner and that it could trust the United States to not challenge the legitimacy of its claim to Taiwan. Additionally, the adminis-

tration sought to convey the message that the United States would not collude with the Soviets against China; rather, it would support Chinese security vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. These signals contradicted Chinese leaders' expectations. In the mid 1960s, when considering China's strategic situation, Zhou indicated a wider war with the United States was a distinct possibility: "when the US begins a war in the East, Korea will be part of it and Taiwan will be part of it . . . the US military might also come from the sea." Zhou believed that the United States had "aggressive policies toward the East."[50] Throughout the Vietnam War, China worried about a US invasion, suggesting that the CCP viewed the United States as decidedly hostile and aggressive. Initial responses to Nixon's overtures reflected Chinese leaders' motivated skepticism toward reassurance signals: "In our opinion, the American initiatives toward bilateral relations with China do not represent a new policy, but rather the new methods of the Nixon administration . . . in fact, Nixon's policy is still reactionary, warlike, and hostile toward China."[51]

Nevertheless, despite the predispositions and initial motivated skepticism of Chinese leaders, the United States succeeded in reducing strategic distrust and ushered in a new era of Sino-US relations, represented by the 1972 Shanghai Communique. This stands in stark contrast to the lead up to China's involvement in the Korean War, when Truman's assurances met motivated skepticism and failed, and the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, when Eisenhower's threats were unable to halt Chinese bombardment. What differed in this case that allowed Nixon's signaling to overcome Chinese predispositions?

It is important to note that China's strategic situation likely encouraged its leaders to be receptive to US reassurance signals. In the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and Sino-Soviet border clashes, China faced an imminent threat to its north. The Soviets now appeared to pose a far greater threat than the United States. Alignment with the latter to balance against Soviet aggression may have seemed like a strategic necessity.[52]

Although China's growing fear of the Soviet Union encouraged a search for allies, its leaders still needed to be convinced that the United States would not betray China's trust. Given the fact that China's top leaders increasingly saw both the Soviets and the United States as revisionist imperialists, there were concerns that both superpowers would pursue aggression against China. China also worried the United States

might support Taiwanese independence. Therefore, Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's signaling was essential to overcome these fears and reassure China.

While previous failed signaling attempts were characterized by inconsistency and ambiguity, Nixon's long rapprochement campaign was clear, consistent, and persistent. Nixon and Kissinger communicated their commitments to China clearly through multiple channels of communication and eventually in person through several face-to-face meetings. The administration unambiguously committed to (1) support the "one China" principle, (2) keep Japan from interfering in Taiwanese affairs, (3) prevent Taiwan from assaulting mainland China, (4) refrain from helping Taiwanese independence movements, and (5) ultimately remove a large portion of US forces from Taiwan.[53] Kissinger also explicitly told China that the United States would keep it informed of any deals made with the Soviets.[54] These commitments stand in stark contrast to the ambiguous signals sent by Eisenhower and Acheson during the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis.

The Nixon administration also strove for consistency in its signaling toward China. Nixon deliberately avoided actions and statements that might alarm the Chinese and undermine his attempt at rapprochement. The administration cut back on anti-China rhetoric and began to reduce the US military presence in Vietnam.[55] Nixon also rejected a Soviet proposal to jointly coordinate against a potential Chinese nuclear provocation.[56]

Despite attempts at consistency, however, the administration still committed a major error by escalating US involvement in Cambodia. This initiative provided information that allowed motivated skeptics, particularly Lin Biao, to discredit Nixon's earlier signals and resulted in a major setback in US-China rapprochement.[57] The administration recognized the disruptive role this policy played in its attempts at rapprochement and worked to remedy it. Kissinger stressed that the best course of action would be to forgo "unusually provocative" missions and sent a message to China that "the United States has no aggressive intentions concerning China."[58] When his incursion into Cambodia and Laos struggled and failed, rather than doubling-down, which would have likely been seen as further evidence of Nixon's revisionist intent by the Chinese, Nixon deescalated direct involvement.[59] After Cambodia, Nixon and Kissinger again strove for and accomplished a high degree of

consistency in signaling benign intentions to the Chinese. Unlike the Truman administration, which had no time to remedy the many errors and inconsistencies in its reassurance campaign toward China as UN troops pushed DPRK forces back, Nixon had ample time to reestablish consistency in his signaling.

In addition to clarity and consistency, the administration also employed a high-volume of both verbal and nonverbal signals to China, repeating and reinforcing the message that the United States was committed to rapprochement. The United States eased restrictions on the purchase of Chinese goods, permitted a General Motors deal in China, allowed oil companies to refuel merchant ships traveling to China, allowed China to use US currency, and reduced barriers to US travel to China. Nixon also suspended the 7th Fleet's regular patrols through the Taiwan Strait. Meanwhile, the Nixon administration issued scores of public and private statements expressing its desire for rapprochement with China from 1969 up to Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972.[60] The Chinese had to confront a larger volume of disconfirming evidence that challenged their preconceptions, eventually forcing a reevaluation of their beliefs and contributing to successful persuasion. This stands in sharp contrast to signaling in the Korean War and the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. Truman ignored calls by the State Department's Office of Public Affairs to engage in a protracted campaign of reassurance which would have repeated and reiterated his assurances to China, and Eisenhower similarly declined to repeat or reiterate his commitment to Taiwan's offshore islands.[61]

The Policy Implications of Confirmation-Motivated Reasoning

As mentioned in the introduction, the United States faces two potential challenges in its relations with China: deterring China and reassuring China. On the one hand, it must convince China that it is committed to upholding the regional status quo, particularly freedom of navigation in the East and South China Seas and the defense of its key allies, including Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Australia.[62] On the other hand, the United States must reassure China that it will not threaten the legitimate national interests of China if it behaves as a responsible stakeholder in the international system. A failure to reassure China that the

United States is a status quo rather than a revisionist power could lead to a costly arms buildup driven by an acute security dilemma.[63]

If motivated bias does play a significant role in how China interprets US signals, what are the implications for how the United States should tailor its deterrence and reassurance policy? Confirmation-motivated reasoning suggests that when the United States sends signals that contradict Chinese leaders' preconceptions, then consistency, clarity, and strength are critical. China will act as a motivated skeptic and scrutinize the US signals when those signals do not fit with how its leaders see the United States. Policymakers need to make these signals as strong, clear, and consistent as possible. Any ambiguity or irresoluteness, signaled intentionally or unintentionally, will be picked up by motivated skeptics and will undermine reassurance or deterrence.

Alternatively, when the United States sends signals that are consistent with Chinese leaders' preconceptions, it can afford to be less consistent and to send weaker signals. In these instances, China will be less likely to pick apart US signals and more likely to be easily persuaded, regardless of the objective quality of the signal. Therefore, it may be in the best interest of the United States to conserve resources or send weaker signals to avoid putting itself at risk for costs.

To truly appreciate how to the United States should tailor its deterrence and reassurance signals using the insights of motivated reasoning, however, we must appreciate the current state of Chinese leaders' perceptions. In particular, how do Chinese leaders see (1) US capabilities and (2) US intent? If China sees US intent as hostile and its military capabilities as threatening, then reassurance will be exceptionally difficult. However, if China sees US intent as benign and its capabilities as nonthreatening, reassurance will be simpler, but deterrence will be more daunting.

There is no real consensus among Chinese policy elites on the threat posed by US capabilities. In general, they hold one of two perspectives regarding US power—either focused on US absolute and relative decline or the persistence of the gap in relative power between the United States and China.[64] Some Chinese intellectuals believe the United States is increasingly weak; Wu Liming argues that "to be frank, US power is declining and it hasn't enough economic strength or resources to dominate the Asia-Pacific region."[65] Others feel differently; General Chen

claims that "a gaping gap between you and us remains" in terms of military power.[66]

Although there is no agreement among Chinese policy elites on the extent of US military power, recent research indicates they hold increasingly adversarial views of US intent. As Nathan and Scobell stated in *Foreign Affairs*, "most Americans would be surprised to learn the degree to which the Chinese believe the United States is a revisionist power that seeks to curtail China's political influence and harm China's interests."[67] Polls in a recent report by the Carnegie Endowment showed that less than 20 percent of Chinese government officials thought the United States could be trusted either a great deal or a fair amount. More than 60 percent saw the United States as a competitor, and more than 25 percent said it was an enemy. More than 50 percent of polled officials also argued that US efforts to contain China's rise presented a serious problem for China.[68] Although China has benefited tremendously from the regional stability provided by the United States and its allies, it appears to increasingly feel US intentions are less than friendly.

This presents immediate problems for US reassurance efforts and puts the United States at risk of falling into an acute security dilemma with China. While Chinese policy elites are split on the threat posed by US power, they view US intentions as threatening and will be inclined to scrutinize any signals that do not fit with this belief. China will likely be receptive to US deterrent threats which fit with its view of the United States as a revisionist, adversarial power, but it will be skeptical of US signals designed to reassure it that the United States has no intention of threatening China's interests if it behaves as a responsible power. This situation enables two alternative policy implications. The first is that deterrence will prove a more effective strategy for managing US-China relations than reassurance. The second is that deterrence will be easier and less costly than reassurance, but both strategies can be employed simultaneously and symbiotically provided the United States dedicates extensive resources to making its reassurance signals clear, consistent, and persistent.

A Deterrence-Centric Strategy

Broadly speaking, these trends in perceptions indicate that deterrence may simply be more effective than reassurance as a strategy for handling a rising China. US deterrence attempts toward China are likely to be

effective given China's increasingly adversarial views of US intent. Reassurance, on the other hand, may fall on deaf ears unless it is executed to perfection. Motivated reasoning, driven by the desire to achieve cognitive consistency, will make Chinese leaders discount and discredit US reassurance signals.

If this is the case, reassuring skeptical Chinese leadership would be difficult and possibly ineffective. Instead, the United States should utilize deterrence as the lynchpin of stable US-China relations. In regard to upgrading the US-Japan alliance, for instance, it should not prioritize convincing China that the alliance is not designed to contain China. Nor should it focus on sculpting the alliance in a way that alleviates Chinese concerns about Japanese remilitarization. Instead, it should rely primarily on deterrence to keep China from threatening Japanese security by reinforcing allied commitments to mutual defense, improving joint operational capabilities, and developing contingency plans for dealing with Chinese assertiveness in the East China Sea. Deterrence, rather than reassurance, will prove effective in upholding regional stability given Chinese predispositions to view US intentions as adversarial.

The Need for Stronger Reassurance

An alternative set of policy recommendations derived from these findings suggests that the United States should pursue both deterrence and reassurance toward China. Even though deterrence can be accomplished more easily, the United States should concentrate its efforts and resources on reassurance. This recommendation suggests that deterrence and reassurance are symbiotic rather than mutually exclusive strategies for managing stable US-China relations.[69] The case of Nixon's rapprochement with China demonstrates that—given the right mix of clarity, consistency, and persistence—determined signaling can overcome motivated skepticism.

How can the United States accomplish the unenviable task of reassuring a skeptical Chinese leadership? Based on the analysis presented above, three core recommendations exist for overcoming motivated skepticism in Chinese decision-making circles.[70]

1. **Clarity**. The United States should make sure when sending these reassurance signals to China's leaders that its message is clear-cut and unambiguous. The ambiguity in Eisenhower's signal to China in 1958 was immediately noted and used as a way of confirming

Chinese preconceptions, undermining the US deterrent threat. In the same way, the United States must be clear in its issuance of reassurance signals in the contemporary context. When it develops a BMD system, it should state clearly and explicitly to China that the system will not be developed in a way that threatens China's nuclear deterrent. Similarly, the United States should make it clear that it is opposed to any formal Taiwanese declaration of independence. Ending the ambiguity that has accompanied reassurance signals surrounding these two issues would help improve the quality of US reassurance and increase its chances of persuading China's leadership to abandon their preconceptions about US intentions.

2. **Consistency**. The United States must be sensitive to the fact that any actions it takes or statements it makes that are inconsistent with its reassurance signals will be used by a skeptical Chinese leadership as proof that its assurances are not genuine. The inconsistency in US actions and statements prior to China's intervention in the Korean War in 1950 clearly weakened Truman and Acheson's numerous reassurance statements toward the Chinese. The United States cannot expect to convince China that it does not intend to threaten legitimate Chinese interests while simultaneously developing offensive weapon systems like the prompt global strike system, for instance.
3. **Repetition/Persistence**. If the United States is to succeed in reassuring China, it must undertake a protracted and persistent campaign that will not threaten China's economic growth and legitimate national interests. Verbal signals must be repeated and reiterated by officials in different settings and forums. These verbal signals must in turn be reinforced by nonverbal ones. A few isolated signals, no matter how clear and consistent, may be insufficient; thus the United States must strive for repetition of its message.[71]

Conclusion

US policymakers must appreciate that leaders, especially in China, often fail to assess incoming information objectively. Instead, they behave as motivated reasoners, more readily accepting information that fits with their preconceptions while actively seeking alternative evidence to refute

information that contradicts their preconceptions. Understanding this mind-set is critical to US strategy in the Asia-Pacific region in managing relations with a rising China. Going forward, the United States must carefully monitor Chinese perceptions of US intentions and capabilities to determine how China will likely respond to deterrence and reassurance attempts and sculpt US policy accordingly. SSQ

Notes

1. James Steinberg and Michael O'Hanlon highlight these parallel challenges in their recent work, *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve: US-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

2. Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966).

3. Christopher Twomey, *The Military Lens: Doctrinal Difference and Deterrence Failure in Sino-American Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); and Jack Levy, "When Do Deterrent Threats Work," *British Journal of Political Science* 18, no. 4 (1988): 485–512.

4. Frank Zagare, *The Dynamics of Deterrence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

5. Ibid.

6. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*; Anne Sartori, "The Might of the Pen: A Reputational Theory of Communication in International Disputes," *International Organization* 56, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 121–49; Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); and Daryl Press, "The Credibility of Power: Assessing Threats during the 'Appeasement Crises of the 1930s,'" *International Security* 29, no. 3 (Winter 2004/05): 136–69.

7. James Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 1 (1997): 68–90; Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577–92.

8. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167–214; and Stephen Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War," *International Security* 22, no. 4 (1988): 5–43.

9. Andrew Kydd, "Sheep in Sheep's Clothing: Why Security Seekers Do Not Fight Each Other," *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (1997): 114–55; Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma"; and Charles Glaser, "Political Consequences of Military Strategy: Expanding and Refining the Spiral and Deterrence Models," *World Politics* 44, no. 4 (1992): 497–538.

10. Robert Jervis, Richard Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); and Vesna Danilovic, "The Sources of Threat Credibility in Extended Deterrence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 3 (June 2001): 34–69.

11. Robert Jervis, "Perceiving and Coping with Threat," in *Psychology and Deterrence*; and Richard Lebow, "Deterrence and Reassurance: Lessons from the Cold War," *Global Dialogue* 3 (Autumn 2001): 119–32.

12. Ibid.

13. Charles Taber and Milton Lodge, "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (July 2006): 755–69. Cognitive dissonance refers to the psychological discomfort felt by an individual when their beliefs,

preconceptions, and attitudes are undermined or invalidated. For the seminal work on the subject, see Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957).

14. Taber and Lodge, "Motivated Skepticism."

15. Paul Ditto and David Lopez, "Motivated Skepticism: Use of Differential Decision Criteria for Preferred and Nonpreferred Conclusions," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 63, no. 4 (1992): 568–84; Taber and Lodge, "Motivated Skepticism"; and Shailendra Jain and Durairaj Maheswaran, "Motivated Reasoning: A Depth of Processing Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Research* 26 (March 2000): 358–71.

16. Ditto and Lopez, "Motivated Skepticism."

17. An important question to consider is whether or not motivated reasoning is a culturally biased theory, mostly based on research conducted by Western scholars experimenting with Western subjects. Recent studies, however, have shown that cognitive dissonance affects individuals in Asian cultures as well; the key cultural difference is whether they feel discomfort when their individual selves are challenged or when their in-group is challenged. While Westerners experience discomfort when their own individual beliefs and decisions are challenged, individuals from Asian cultures experience discomfort more acutely when there is a threat or challenge to their in-group. For this reason, China's leadership should be expected to experience cognitive dissonance, driving them to motivated skepticism, when information contradicts the views, beliefs, and attitudes they hold in common. For a review of some of the differences and similarities in psychological tendencies of various cultures, see Etsuko Hoshino-Browne, "Cultural Variations in Motivation for Cognitive Consistency: Influences of Self-Systems on Cognitive Dissonance," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 6, no. 2 (February 2012): 126–41.

18. Michael Pearlman, *Truman and MacArthur: Policy, Politics, and the Hunger for Honor and Renown* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 125.

19. Du Ping, "Political Mobilization and Control," in *Mao's Generals Remember the Korean War*, eds. Xiaobing Li, Allan Millett, and Bin Yu (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 62.

20. Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 98.

21. Dennis Wainstock, *Truman, MacArthur, and the Korean War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 1999), 89.

22. Ibid.

23. "287. The President's News Conference, November 16, 1950," *Public Papers of the Presidents*, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=977&st&.

24. US support for Chiang Kai-shek in the early stages of China's civil war and indifference toward the CCP provided the basis for antagonism and deep distrust toward the United States among the CCP leadership. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 6–11.

25. Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 218–19.

26. He Di, "The Last Campaign to Unify China," *Chinese Historians* 5 (1992): 1–16.

27. Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950–1953* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 56.

28. Peng Dehui, "My Story of the Korean War," in *Mao's Generals Remember the Korean War*, 31.

29. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 96.

30. Ibid., 97.

31. Ibid., 100.

32. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950*, vol. 7, *Korea* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1976), 796.

33. Hong Xuezhi, "The CPVF's Combat and Logistics," in *Mao's Generals Remember the Korean War*, 114.

34. Russell Spurr, *Enter the Dragon: China's Undeclared War against the US in Korea, 1950–51* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1988), 244.

35. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 108, n 31.

36. M. H. Halperin, "The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis: A Documented History," memo, September 1975, http://www.dod.gov/pubs/foi/International_security_affairs/china/377.pdf.

37. Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949–1958* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 229.

38. Ibid.

39. Xiaobing Li, "Attacks and Operations during the Taiwan Strait Crisis," in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949,* eds. Mark Ryan, David Finkelstein, and Michael McDevitt (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), 159.

40. Wu Lengxi, "Inside Story of the Decision Making during the Shelling of Quemoy," Wilson Center Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117009.

41. Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture,* 229.

42. Mao Zedong, "Speech at the Fifteenth Meeting of the Supreme State Council," Wilson Center Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117013.

43. Halperin, "1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis."

44. Wu Lengxi, "Inside Story."

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Twomey, *Military Lens*.

48. Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 89.

49. Twomey, *Military Lens*.

50. "Record of the Third Conversation between Zhou Enlai and the North Korean Vice Prime Minister Ri Ju-Yeon," Wilson Center Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115344.

51. "Telegram from Aurel Duma to Corneliu Manescu Concerning the Information Passed to Chinese Foreign Ministry," Wilson Center Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117753.

52. Thanks to Jason Oaks for suggesting this key qualification.

53. See USC US-China Institute, "Getting to Beijing: Henry Kissinger's Secret 1971 Trip," 21 July 2011, http://china.usc.edu/ShowArticle.aspx?articleID=2483; Keren Yarhi-Milo, "Tying Hands behind Closed Doors: The Logic and Practice of Secret Reassurance," *Security Studies* 22, no. 3 (August 2013): 405–35; and Chris Tudda, *A Cold War Turning Point: Nixon and China, 1969–1972* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2012).

54. Yarhi-Milo, "Tying Hands behind Closed Doors."

55. Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*; and USC US-China Institute, "Getting to Beijing."

56. John Garver, *China's Decision for Rapprochement with the United States, 1958–1971* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982).

57. As others have pointed out, domestic power struggles between Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai may have played an important role in shaping the internal Chinese debates over rapprochement in the United States. Lin in particular was highly skeptical of US motives and favored rapprochement with the Soviet Union, while Zhao was considerably more receptive toward US overtures. See Garver, *China's Decision for Rapprochement*.

58. Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*.

59. The Chinese, particularly Zhao, saw this as a litmus test for US intentions. See Garver, *China's Decision for Rapprochement*.

60. Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*; and USC US-China Institute, "Getting to Beijing."

61. Steven Casey, *Selling the Korean War: Propaganda, Politics, and Public Opinion in the United States, 1950–1953* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 117.

62. Steinberg and O'Hanlon, *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve*.

63. Ibid.

64. Bonnie Glaser, "A Shifting Balance: Chinese Assessments of US Power," in *Capacity and Resolve: Foreign Assessments of US Power* (Washington: CSIS, June 2011), 3–19, http://csis.org/files/publication/110613_glaser_CapacityResolve_Web.pdf.

65. Wu Liming, "It Is Unwise for US to Contain China," Xinhua, 30 August 2012, http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2012-08/30/content_26377509.htm.

66. "China 'Will Not Match' US Military Power–General," *BBC News*, 19 May 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13450316.

67. Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell, "How China Sees America: The Sum of Beijing's Fears," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 5 (September/October 2012): 32–47, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138009/andrew-j-nathan-and-andrew-scobell/how-china-sees-america.

68. Carnegie Endowment for Peace, *US-China Security Perceptions Survey: Findings and Implications* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 2013), http://carnegieendowment.org/files/us_china_security_perceptions_report.pdf.

69. For instance, see Thomas Christensen, "The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Deterring a Taiwan Conflict," *Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Autumn 2002): 7–21.

70. The best and most well-developed reassurance strategy for handling the growing security dilemma between the United States and China is laid out in Steinberg and O'Hanlon, *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve*.

71. One of the key findings of motivated reasoning is that it requires a higher volume of high-quality information to persuade motivated skeptics. See Ditto and Lopez, "Motivated Skepticism."

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