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Title

Measuring Threat Perception: Theory and a Case Study of Taiwan

Abstract

Threat perception is a ubiquitous element in international relations theory and security studies. Despite the ubiquity of this theoretical construct, the field has had less success providing practical guidance for the operationalization and measurement of threat perception. In fact, how to assess and measure perceptions of threat remains one of the thorniest problems for the field of IR due to the intangible nature of this theoretical construct. Drawing on the theoretical discussion on spiral and deterrence models as well as interstate reconciliation, complemented with the literature of social psychology, I construct a new measure of threat perception. This new measure conceptualizes threat perception as an assessment a state makes concerning the possibility of loss due to the actions of another state. I categorize perceptions of threat into three different types: perception of active threat, perception of dormant threat, and perception of unlikely threat. I generate clear observable implications for each type of perception of threat so that this measure is empirically falsifiable and practically useful. I separate threat perception from the strategic behavior induced by it so that I measure perceptions of threat in a way that is not tautological. By developing this vital new measure of perceptions of threat, my article fills one major lacuna in the IR theoretical literature.

The analytical issue with threat perception carries more than theoretical implications. It also affects how scholars and decisionmakers should think about the implication of China's rise. Do East Asian countries perceive an imminent threat from China, and if so, how do we know? Although

seemingly straightforward, this question is difficult to answer in any systematic manner precisely because we do not have a uniform way of measuring the existence of and change in threat perception. I apply my new measure of threat perception to Taiwan—a most-likely case for the conventional wisdom that China's rise has led to deep-rooted fear in East Asia. Using 2,733 legislative candidate manifestos as data source, I carefully describe the configuration of Taiwan's perception of threat toward China. I find that Taiwan's perception of China as an active threat has declined significantly over the past two decades, not strengthened. While this paper does not propose any decisive causal argument to explain for the change in Taiwan's threat perception toward China, I offer some discussion on how economic factors possibly affect Taiwan's threat assessment toward China. With the new measure of threat perception and the empirical finding derived from Taiwan, this article contributes to both the theoretical literature and the study on East Asian security.

Relevance to the themes of the workshop

This paper resonates well with the first theme (the economic-security nexus) of the workshop. The strategic and economic environment in which the state finds itself will determine the type of perception of threat the state forms and my paper provides an opportunity to examine the consequences of different configurations of economic and security parameters.

Resonance with GRADNAS ethos

This paper contains conceptual innovation because it provides a novel measure of threat perception that avoids some analytical pitfalls commonly seen in the literature. The paper pursues empirical rigor by measuring the concept of threat perception in an empirically falsifiable and systemic manner.

China's Ambiguous Sanctions: Three 'Classic Cases' Revisited

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Abstract

There is a widespread perception that China's international influence and assertiveness have grown since the 2008/2009 financial crisis, particularly under the Xi Jinping administration. China's increasing military assertiveness over maritime and territorial disputes has been a cause for concern for many countries. However, China's use of coercive economic measures does not appear to be as clear-cut, particularly since economic relations have continued to grow between China and countries with which it has political and territorial disputes.

Given the conventional belief that economic sanctions are a middle-ground between diplomatic and military/para-military action, an empirical puzzle arises: *Why has China – widely perceived as an assertive rising power – appeared relatively restrained in its use of economic sanctions?* This paper examines the extent to which China has employed economic sanctions as a political tool, as well as the factors influencing China's sanctions behaviour.

I argue that China has perceived itself as a continuous target of Western sanctions and stigmatisation, and has used rhetoric to counter-stigmatise the US and its allies by suggesting that their approaches to sanctions are illegitimate. Chinese decision makers' attempts to balance between pursuing immediate political goals and not appearing as blatantly deviating from their longstanding opposition to the use of unilateral sanctions has a constraining effect on its behaviour, resulting in its inability to employ sanctions in complete alignment with its immediate political and economic interests. This has resulted in ambiguous, anomalous, and contradictory sanctions behaviour emerging from Beijing.

To test my argument empirically, I examine three 'classic cases' that have been widely accepted as examples of Chinese sanctions: China-Japan dispute over trawler collision in mutually-claimed waters (2010); China-Norway dispute over the Nobel Peace Prize award to Liu Xiaobo (2010); and China-Philippines dispute over the Scarborough Shoal (2012).

Title:

The political economy of economic coercion: China's retaliation against South Korea over THAAD

Authors:

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Abstract:

What explains variation in industry vulnerability to informal economic coercion? While Keohane and Nye's (1977) concept of asymmetric interdependence has dominated this research program, very little scholarship has sought to identify industry variation within the targets of informal coercion, nor probe the sources of that variation. We argue that unpacking this phenomenon requires a more nuanced understanding of the nature of economic interdependence, including recognising that economic coercion is distinct from traditional military coercion because the coercive act—imposing (or threatening to impose) economic costs on an adversary—requires government intervention in markets.

We outline a theoretical model specifying a broader set of interests and considerations shaping the choice of a would-be economic coercer, and the constraints and opportunities created by the structure of the economic relationship with its target. We argue that variation in the industries targeted by coercion is shaped both by regulatory tools available to the coercing state, as well as how the political tensions shaping the coercive attempt interact with the opportunistic behaviour of market actors. We unpack the nature of vulnerability arising out of asymmetric interdependence, but also incorporate (i) the impact of informality—the need to employ policy tools and pursue disruptive behaviours discreetly, maintaining plausible deniability to avoid the possibility of formal legal sanction—and (ii) the way that coercive impact may be attenuated or amplified by the actions of autonomous actors (firms, consumers and even local governments), motivated by their own interests and reacting to changed incentives.

We test the plausibility of our model against a new case—apparent economic coercion pursued by China against the Republic of Korea (South Korea) in the wake of Seoul's decision to deploy the United States-supplied Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system in July 2016. To understand both industry variation and the specific instruments of coercion deployed requires comprehensive sourcing, and so we present a new qualitative dataset, based on publicly available media reporting, with our analysis being informed and supplemented by in-person interviews conducted with former and current senior government officials, researchers and others with industry knowledge based in South Korea.

Workshop relevance:

This proposal speaks to the very heart of the economic-security nexus, in focusing on states' use of economic tools to advance security objectives. Our premise is that the "political economy" of the nexus is under-studied, and we seek to understand how domestic factors shape the use of economic coercion. The proposal also links to the theme of domestic drivers of foreign policy, based on the theoretical claim that economic interests shape the nature and extent of states' deployment of (coercive) economic statecraft.

GRADNAS resonance:

Our conceptual innovation a "microfoundations" (Kirshner 1997) approach to understanding the dynamics of informal economic coercion, and how variation in targeted industries is shaped by constraints and opportunities faced by market actors within the coercing state, rather than simply the availability of alternatives for the target. We extend recent contributions emphasising the role of commercial actors in Chinese economic statecraft (Norris, 2016; Reilly, forthcoming). Empirically, we present a new qualitative dataset, constructed using an exhaustive range of publicly available media reporting (both English and translated Korean sources) on the industries affected during THAAD tensions, informed and supplemented by information gathered from in-person interviews.

**Playing Chicken with Firecrackers:
When Do Nationalist Protests Serve as Credible Signals in International Crisis
Bargaining?**

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Abstract: Do nationalist protests at home affect crisis bargaining abroad, and if so, how? Existing accounts ignore the home government's fear that nationalist protests will spontaneously turn into anti-government protests, and the foreign government's uncertainty that nationalist protests are genuine costly constraints of the home government. In this paper, I formally analyze how these two uncertainties influence international crisis bargaining. Results show that the uncertainty of transitioning into an anti-regime mobilization is a liability but also an asset, or even a necessity, for nationalist protests to be a credible signal at the international level. Specifically, there exists a non-monotonic (U-shaped) relationship between the probability of a protest to be an anti-regime mobilization and the probability of war. When the probability is low, nationalist protests are not costly enough, thus failing to credibly reveal information regarding the home government; the high probability, on the other hand, is likely to result in repression of all protests, forestalling them being observed as a signal. Thus, nationalist protests can only decrease the ex ante probability of war with middle levels of uncertainty. Here, nationalist protests are costly so as to allow for credible information transmission, while the home country elites are not so averse that they resort to repression. Empirically, I test the theory against original datasets on nationalist protests and state behaviors in East Asia, gathered via natural language processing of a large corpus of social media text. The paper ends with an illustration of the (in)effective signaling with the 2014 anti-China protest in Vietnam.

Relevance to Workshop Theme: This paper clarifies *when* and *why* nationalist protests at home influence the bargaining abroad, thus resonating well with **the theme “domestic drivers of foreign policy.”** The latest scholarship views nationalist protests as a *potential* signal in international bargaining, however, the scope conditions of nationalist protests to be a credible signal, and its overall effect on bargaining still remains unspecified. Thus, nationalist protests is not a panacea for the information problems that impede negotiated settlements, and a better understanding of the scope conditions has fundamental implications for extant theories on nationalism and foreign policies, and enduring implications for contemporary East Asian regional security.

Resonance with GRADNAS Ethos: Consistent with the GRADNAS approach, this paper advances the literature with both conceptual innovation and empirical rigor. A formal analysis provides greater precision and clarity of complex linkages between multiple factors, while the scope conditions generated by the model allow us to account for the inconsistent empirical evidences on the effect of nationalism documented in extant literature. Empirically, with original data on both independent variable (nationalist protests) and dependent variable (states' aggressive behavior in the South China Sea), I hope to assess the generalizability of the theoretical insights from the model on the white-hot issue: maritime disputes in the SCS.

Yusuke Ishihara, PhD Candidate
Australian National University

A Paper Proposal for GRADNAS International Workshop
On
Asian Security Research

Yusuke Ishihara
The Australian National University

1. Title

Japan's Renegotiation of the Postwar Bargain in the 1970s

**This paper is a draft Chapter One of the author's PhD thesis, due in March 2020, that explicates the whole research design.*

2. Abstract

This thesis investigates the sweeping transformations of Japanese foreign policy in the 1970s which had a deep impact on the country's identity and the East Asian regional order for the ensuing decades. Particularly significant are the following four policy changes: (1) Tokyo's explicit decision to consolidate its security policy centred on the bilateral treaty with the U.S., (2) Japan's willingness to restrain its trade and macroeconomic policy in order to manage America's growing frustrations against Japanese economic strength, (3) Japan's choice to acknowledge the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a focal point of regional multilateral diplomacy, and (4) Tokyo's expeditious decision to normalise its relations with Beijing and support communist China's enmeshment into the international order among non-communist countries. The central research question of this thesis is: why did Japan choose to transform its foreign policy so significantly in the 1970s? While the mainstream approach of the existing literature is to examine discrete policy areas such as defence, economic policy and regional diplomacy separately, this thesis criticises such compartmentalised investigations as failing to account for a bigger picture, of which each specific policy change was a part. To overcome this discrepancy, the author proposes to analyse and conceptualise the sweeping transformations of Japanese foreign policy in the 1970s as the renegotiation process of the foundational bargain by which Japan originally agreed with the U.S. and many non-communist partners at the end of the U.S.-led Allied occupation in the early 1950s so that its devastated wartime enemy could be rehabilitated into international society and economically nurtured therein. As Japan was no longer an underdeveloped country but became a preeminent economic power by the 1970s, the country started to renegotiate the terms of the bargain for the new purpose of ensuring that its growing strength would be

accommodated in international society.

3. Relevance

The renegotiation of the bargain was a difficult and divisive process for Japanese society. On the one hand, many Japanese preferred the maintenance of the bargain, under which the country had been so successful in realising its national prosperity and security. On the other hand, many other Japanese simultaneously understood that the terms of the original bargain were increasingly out of touch with the emergent reality of a strong Japan. The thesis' investigation of such dualistic domestic sentiments would make a direct contribution to workshop's discussions on domestic drivers of foreign policy.

4. Resonance

This thesis is neither a theory building exercise nor a detailed historiographical description. Instead it conducts a concept-based analysis of Japanese foreign policy. By using the International Relations concept of the bargain as an analytical framework, it aims to make sense of the historical evolution of Japanese foreign policy in the broader context of the East Asian regional order and international society.

The Pursuit of Identity: Global Identity Formation and Xi's China

In general, international relations (IR) scholarship can be said to have established that identity 'matters' in international politics. Yet, concerning *how* identity has come to matter—in particular, how state identities emerge and then persist or change—is a subject that is less well understood. This is an important issue because before we can fully grasp the significance of the relationship between state identities and foreign policy, we must first understand what these identities are, where they come from, how they get produced, and why they change or are sustained.

This paper will attempt to grapple with these issues by focusing on and theorizing the notion of a state's global identity. Specifically, *how does a state's identity, in particular its identity in relation to international society, form or develop?* There is a tendency to treat such identities as given, while there is little within IR literature that offers ready-made guidance on the matter.

Drawing on Ernst Haas's 'pragmatic constructivism' and adapting social psychological research, the paper develops a theory of global identity (GIT) to specify in greater substance: (i) the processes and mechanisms through which global identity develops; and (ii) the drivers and logics that inform this formation. GIT proposes the following general arguments about global identity development. First, the formation of a state's global identity can be understood as a process of role negotiation between the state Self and relevant Others, underwritten by the mechanisms of role categorization, role socialization and role appraisal. Second, global identity formation can be informed by both a social and material basis. Third, this process is connected to the collective rationales of self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-consistency.

Applying GIT to a study of Chinese global identity, the paper will map and explain the construction of China's 'responsible power' identity in the Xi era. Empirically, the paper builds on and contributes to existing debate on China by showing that, contrary to assumptions that perceive Xi's China as marginalizing or discarding the responsible-power identity, the regime has in fact actively pursued this role imagination even as its content is being revised in the envisioning of China's place within international society.

Relevance to GRADNAS Workshop

The proposed paper addresses the underexplored issue of identity in Chinese foreign policy which, I suggest, squares with one of the workshop's themes of 'the domestic drivers of foreign policy.'

Resonance with GRADNAS Ethos

The paper represents an attempt to develop a theoretical account of global identity formation. Its particular theoretical contribution is that, in addition to social identity theory (SIT) which has been adapted to IR studies,¹ it also draws on identity theory (IT) to provide a new, complementary perspective.

Empirically, the paper challenges recent arguments that contend China is now a 'post-responsible power.'² A deconstruction of Chinese great power identity in the Xi era suggests such arguments oversimplify the actual situation.

¹See, for examples, Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, 'Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to US Primacy,' *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (2010).

² Yong Deng, 'China: The Post-Responsible Power,' *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2015).