From Offensive to Defensive Realism

A Social Evolutionary Interpretation of China's Security Strategy

Tang Shiping

This chapter has two principal goals, one theoretical and one empirical. The theoretical goal is to advance a social evolutionary approach for understanding states' security strategy (or foreign policy in general). The empirical goal is to offer a new interpretation of the "grand theory" or belief system that is guiding China's strategy today and may guide it tomorrow, using the social evolutionary approach.

I argue that China has decisively evolved from an offensive realist state under Mao Zedong to a defensive realist state under Deng Xiaoping and thereafter. By underscoring the major mechanisms behind this evolutionary process, I further argue that China is unlikely to revert to the offensive realism mindset in its past.

The opening section of the chapter offers a brief critique of nonevolutionary approaches toward state behavior. The second section introduces the basic theoretical framework, stating explicitly what constitutes an evolutionary approach toward states' security strategy. The third section briefly outlines the fundamental differences between offensive realism and defensive realism and explains why it is important whether a state practices offensive or defensive realism. The fourth section examines China's security strategy first under Mao and then under Deng and his successors, underscoring the fundamental differences between the two strategies through the lens of offensive defensive realism. The fifth section advances an evolutionary explanation for the transformation of China's security strategy. The sixth section draws some policy implications from the foregoing discussion.

Nonevolutionary Approaches to State Behavior:
A Critique

Understanding state behavior under anarchy, or developing an adequate theory of foreign policy, remains an important goal of the science of international relations.

Because of the enormous implications of getting China's strategic orientation right, there has been no lack of debate on the nature of China's security strategy. From this debate a major difficulty emerges—that of dealing with "the problem of time." This difficulty can be posed simply as the follows: Can time bring about transformational changes in state behavior (and the international system at large)? Put differently, even if one's reading of a state's past or present behavior is correct, how can one know that it will be the same today (or tomorrow)?

I contend that the fundamental reason behind this difficulty and, consequently, our inability to reach a firmer understanding about China's or any other state's security strategy has largely been that we have been employed *socially* nonevolutionary approaches in understanding states' strategic behavior and international politics in general. Because the international system has always been an evolutionary system and states are like organisms operating within the system, and states and the system co-evolve, a socially nonevolutionary approach for understanding state behavior cannot but be inadequate, if not misleading or totally wrong. To understand states' behavior in an evolutionary system, a genuinely socially evolutionary approach is required.[1]

The concept of social evolution is based on the premise that human society has always been an evolutionary system. Moreover, the evolution of human society has not been driven by material factors alone but by a combination of material and ideational factors. This prominent role played by ideational factors in social evolution is what most distinguishes social from natural evolution. As a result, a social evolutionary approach toward social change (including the evolution of international politics) must be both materialist and ideationalist, although it must give material forces the ontological priority.[2] Moreover, a social evolutionary approach must also bring material forces and ideational forces into an *organic* synthesis.[3]

---

1. I elaborate on the social evolutionary approach elsewhere. Here, it suffices to say that the social evolutionary approach is not biological reductionism, sociobiology, or social Darwinism.

2. John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 55–56, 110). I prefer the dichotomies of material forces vs. ideational forces and materialist vs. ideationalist because idealism already figures in the dichotomy of realism vs. idealism and idealism can mean "utopianism."

3. For lack of a better word, I am adopting Schumpeter's usage of "organic" to describe Marx's analysis of capitalism: Marx brought historical, political, and economic analysis together to arrive at a holistic understanding of capitalism. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), 82.

This section offers a brief critique of nonevolutionary approaches toward states' behavior, thus laying the ground for advancing a genuinely evolutionary approach. As will become clear, although many explanations (or theories) of foreign policy seem almost poles apart, they are actually fundamentally similar because all of them are nonevolutionary or only semi-evolutionary.[4]

The Nonevolutionary Approach

The nonevolutionary approach toward state behavior has two major variants: the (structural) realist theory–driven approach and the historical or cultural legacy approach.

The first variant holds that international politics is essentially repetitive. Waltz provided the clearest statement on this assumption: "The texture of international politics remains highly constant, patterns recur, and events repeat themselves endlessly."[5] As a result, states' behavior will not (and cannot) change that much either: they will balance, seek hegemony, and largely eschew cooperation.[6] Overall, these realist theory–driven analyses tend to make rather gloomy predictions of state behavior, usually with little empirical support.[7]

The major reason is, of course, that structural realism pays scant attention to the role of ideas in shaping human societies. As K. J. Holsti points out, "realism is essentially a materialist explanation of political behavior. . . . Without them [ideas], you cannot see change in history, and therefore you tend to see international politics as a very static game."[8] In essence, the realist theory–driven approach denies the possibility of social evolution through ideational changes. Social evolution is all material, and there is no *independent* role for learning, especially social learning.

---

4. Other than the nonevolutionary and semi-evolutionary approaches discussed here, there has also been a pseudo-evolutionary approach in international relations literature: the long-cycle approach. This approach is pseudo-evolutionary because it merely employs evolution as an analogy or metaphor, and an evolutionary system does not go through cycles. George Modelski, *The Long Cycles in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

5. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 66. See also John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 2. While Waltz and Mearsheimer may represent the extreme end of a spectrum, realism overall is a nonevolutionary approach.

6. Waltz actually relies on a selection mechanism to explain these behaviors, see Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* 74–75; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics" in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 331. Waltz's theory is nevertheless nonevolutionary because selection in his framework merely eliminates behaviors that are inconsistent with the imperatives of anarchy without generating new behaviors (e.g., cooperation).

7. For instance, some analyses of China's security behavior were carried out by scholars with almost no knowledge of China or even East Asia in general, and the supporting "evidence" for their analyses, other than theoretical arguments, largely consists of citing one another's work.

8. Kalevi J. Holsti, quoted in Adam Jones, "Interview with Kal Holsti," *Review of International Studies* 28 (2002): 629–30.

—-1
—0
—+1

The second variant of the nonevolutionary approach can be labeled the historical legacy approach or cultural determinism. This approach basically holds that historical legacy or culture largely determines a state's behavior.[9] More recently, this approach has metamorphosed into the more fashionable "strategic culture" approach. Despite being "more rigorous in conceptualization and methodology" (at least in the latest of its three waves as defined by Johnston), however, this approach faces the same difficulties as its predecessors—its inability to explain why a particular culture (but not another one) is important in understanding a state's strategic behavior and how that particular culture was selected and adopted—and works with this approach (old or new) tend to simply assert that a particular culture matters.[10] As a result, these works remain largely "speculation rather than scholarly inquiry,[11] and reflects perhaps their authors' preconceived convictions that a state must have some kind of strategic culture rather than a real strategic culture per se, despite all the archives and original texts cited.

The major problem of this variant of the static approach is essentially the same as that of the first variant, albeit the two set out from completely opposite starting points.[12] The historical legacy or culturalist approach is fundamentally a purely ideationalist one. It insists that cultural (ideational) factors largely determine states' strategic behavior (although when pushed hard, it may claim that culture is shaped by material forces, at least somewhat). As a result, this approach inevitably faces the unpleasant prospect that it needs a new strategic culture to explain each change in a state's strategic behavior, without telling us why that state's culture has not remained the same or changed.

Because of their fundamentally nonevolutionary nature, these two approaches cannot deal with the challenges posed by changes. They have to

9. Culture is usually defined as a social habit that is shaped by history and thus deeply ingrained (and hence also relatively resistant to change) within a community. Therefore, the historical legacy and the cultural approaches often reinforce each other and can be taken as identical.

10. Johnston differentiated the strategic cultural approach into three waves and claimed that the third wave is "more rigorous in conceptualization and methodology" without recognizing (or admitting) that the first and third waves essentially arrive at the same conclusions. See Alastair Iain Johnston, "Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 221 n. 8. For a critique of this new culturalism, see Douglas Porch, "Military 'Culture' and the fall of France in 1940: A Review Essay," *International Security* 24 (spring 2000): 157–80; Jack Snyder, "Anarchy and Culture: Insights from the Anthropology of War," *International Organization* 56 (spring 2002): 7–45.

11. Norton S. Ginsberg, "On the Chinese Perception of a World Order," in *China in Crisis*, ed. Tang Tsou, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 74,

12. Because of their fundamental similarity (both are static and emphasize one side of the social system), the two approaches have often been brought together to arrive at an even more static and grim assessment of states' strategic behavior (e.g., Gilpin's theory of hegemonic war and power transition theory, plus China's *parabellum* strategic culture), regardless of the incompatibility between them. Robert Gilpin, *War and Changes in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

either deny changes or to explain changes with a list of "cultures" without telling us how those cultures came into existence. Neither position is satisfactory or tenable.

The Semi-evolutionary Approach

The semi-evolutionary approach is prominently represented by constructivism, with neoliberalism as its milder form.[13] Constructivism is more evolutionary than the nonevolutionary approach in that constructivism gives more weight to the transformational power of ideas in shaping human societies.[14]

In other words, the semi-evolutionary approach recognizes ideational change, or the evolution of ideas, as a major driver behind social evolution. Unlike the realist theory–driven approach, the constructivist approach holds that social evolution is not all material and that an important force behind social evolution is ideational change. Unlike the culturalist approach, the constructivist approach does not take culture as something that can stay static but as something that is constantly evolving. Indeed, constructivism actually seeks to explain cultural changes.

The problem with the semi-evolutionary approach of constructivism, however, is that it tends to lose balance in two respects. First, it tends to overemphasize ideas and deemphasize material forces (e.g., power, geography, and technology). As Wendt has put it explicitly: "The most important structures in which states are embedded are made of ideas, not material forces."[15] As a result, social evolution has now become mostly, if not purely, ideational: "Ideas all the way down."[16] Such a position, however, is simply untenable because the fact that "material circumstances . . . affect the intellectual evolution and policy choices of political decision markers is not in dispute."[17]

Secondly, whereas neorealists like Waltz emphasize only selection at the level of state survival and deemphasize (social) learning, constructivism now

13. Jennifer Sterling-Folker, "Competing Paradigms or Birds of a Feather? Constructivism and Neoliberal Institutionalism Compared," *International Studies Quarterly* 44 (2000): 97–119.

14. Indeed, Emanuel Adler's manifesto for his constructivist approach has the title "Cognitive Evolution." See Adler, "Cognitive Evolution: A Dynamic Approach for the Study of International Relations and Their Progress," in *Progress in Postwar International Relations*, ed. Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 43–88. Wendt's discussion on different anarchies also has a primitive evolutionary element embedded in it. Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Makes of It," *International Organization* 46 (1992): 391–425.

15. Alexander Wendt, *Social Theories of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 309. Wendt here contradicts his earlier approving citation of John Searle that "brutal facts have ontological priority over institutional factors." Searle, *Construction of Social Reality*, 55–56; Wendt, *Social Theories of International Politics,* 110.

16. Wendt, *Social Theories of International Politics*, 90.

17. Robert G. Herman, "Identity, Norms and National Security: The Soviet Foreign Policy Revolution and the End of the Cold War," in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, 276.

—-1
—0
—+1

emphasizes social learning (especially positive learning) and deemphasizes selection, both at the level of learning and at the level of state survival. At the learning level, constructivism emphasizes positive learning, while neglecting the fact that learning is essentially an evolutionary process in which selection through negative learning plays a fundamental role. Regarding state welfare, constructivism emphasizes the reward of being positively socialized by certain ideas, while neglecting the impact of (negative) selection of ideas despite the fact that selection is a major mechanism through which states learn—states will be punished if they do not learn certain ideas (e.g., self-help).

Because constructivism emphasizes certain aspects while neglecting other aspects of social evolution, it is only semi-evolutionary.

A Social Evolutionary Approach to State Behavior

In this section, I introduce the social evolutionary approach to understanding states' strategic behavior. It differs from nonevolutionary and semi-evolutionary approaches in three key aspects.

First, in the social evolutionary approach, material forces (the objective world) and ideational forces (the subjective world) work together organically rather than independently to drive social changes.

More specifically, although ideational forces do reciprocally influence the evolution of the material world, material forces retain ontological priority because the objective world serves as the ultimate testing ground (or the source of selection pressure) for ideas. Ultimately, humans must anchor their ideas (or learning) to the objective material world although their knowledge may not capture objective reality all the time. Moreover, at any given time, neither material forces alone nor ideational forces alone can determinate a state's foreign policy, although states' security strategies tend to reflect objective reality in the long run (because states will be punished, sometimes severely, if they persist in adopting wrong ideas).[18]

In the context of making security strategy, the material world consists of at least the following dimensions: the geographical environment of the state; the total power of the state; the international (including regional) structure (i.e., the distribution of power); the relationship between the state and other states; and the nature of the international system (i.e., whether it is offensive realist system or a defensive realist system).[19] The ideational world consists of at least the following dimensions: ideologies, culture, beliefs, habits, and memories.

18. The statement that the objective world is the source of selection pressure on ideas is meant that human societies tend to adopt ideas that can benefit them in the objective world. Such a formulation does not deny the possibility that societies often adopt ideas that are bad for social welfare. Otherwise, the whole world would be developed and the world would have been far more peaceful.

19. I elaborated on the first four of these dimensions in great detail in Shiping Tang, "A Systemic Theory of the Security Environment," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27 (2004): 1–32. The

-1—
0—
+1—

Ideational forces influence a state's choice of strategies through two primary channels. They influence how a state learns about the objective world, and hence also the pool of possible ideas for making strategies as well as the ideas that eventually win the competition for the right to make strategies.

Second, the social evolutionary approach accepts as self-evident that the process of human learning itself is an evolutionary process.[20] In the context of making security strategies, the process usually goes like this. At the beginning, there are multiple ideas for a possible strategy, and states do not simply pick one idea and deploy it as a strategy. Instead, these ideas engage in a competition for the right to be adopted as the strategy through debates and political struggles. Eventually, some ideas are excluded and some ideas emerge as winners, and only ideas that win become part of a strategy.[21]

Third, the social evolutionary approach adopts a far more inclusive definition of learning.[22] For instance, the social evolutionary approach considers the differentiation between adaptation to environment (i.e., structural adjustment) and learning fundamentally flawed.[23] This is so because for human beings, adaptation is a form of learning. At the very least, adaptation requires assessing the (strategic) environment and assessment requires learning. Likewise, our evolutionary approach also rejects the dichotomy of tactical learning versus strategic learning, because all processes of learning are strategic.

Moreover, the social evolutionary approach pays equal attention to both negative learning and positive learning. Since the rise of constructivism (or ideational theories of international politics), it is positive learning that has received the most attention in IR literature.[24] Yet, because human beings tend

---

last dimension is discussed in Shiping Tang, "Social Evolution of International Politics," forthcoming.

20. Karl Popper developed the original thesis that knowledge is an evolutionary process. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1963); *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

21. An evolutionary process must have three distinctive stages: generation of diversities (mutations), followed by selection and then stabilization of the selected genotypes and phenotype traits. As such, the selection of ideas is a typical evolutionary process. Legro documented this type of evolutionary process without using the label "evolution." See Jeffrey Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

22. For a review of the literature on learning in international relations, see Jack S. Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield," *International Organization* 48 (1994): 279–312.

23. Ibid., 296–98. For an application of this dichotomy to China's foreign policy, see Alastair Iain Johnston, "Learning Versus Adaptation: Explaining Change in Chinese Arms Control Policy in the 1980s and 1990s," *China Journal*, no. 35 (1996): 27–61.

24. Negative learning means that one learns from one's own and others' failure (trial and error) while positive learning means just the opposite. Negative learning typically takes the form of disproving existing conjectures, perceptions, and hypotheses. Positive learning typically takes the form of the spreading of good ideas. Good ideas and bad ideas, of course, can be differentiated only by testing them in the objective world.

Table 6.1. Major types of learning

Individual learning	Social learning
Negative learning (trial-and-error)	Positive learning
Learning from one's own experiences	Learning from others' experiences

to continue to do what has worked (due to inertia), it is highly likely that negative learning has played an equally, if not more, important role in shaping human behavior than positive learning has. "Failure is the mother of all success." Indeed, it has been this process of negative learning (and only then positive learning) that makes human knowledge an evolutionary process.[25]

As a result, the social evolutionary approach brings together various forms of learning (table 6.1). At any given time, all forms of learning processes may be at work. While it may be difficult or impossible to assign weight to any particular form of learning, it is possible to trace the overall learning process and assess its outcome.[26] More importantly, the learning process does not just happen in a vacuum. It happens within the international environment, with both material forces and ideational forces in play.[27] The whole evolutionary process is captured in figure 6.1.

The differences between the social evolutionary approach and the nonevolutionary approaches are summarized in table 6.2, the most obvious difference being that the causal chain to a particular strategy in the social evolutionary approach is much more lengthy and complex than that in other approaches.

Offensive versus Defensive Realism

The Differences

In the second half of the past century, an important division inside the realism camp emerged.[28] Offensive and defensive realism, despite starting from roughly the same set of bedrock assumptions of realism in international

25. Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, 261–65. Levy also noted that individuals and organizations tend to learn more from failure than success. Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy," 304. Legro examined the process of ideational changes through the collapse of old ideas and the consolidation of new ones without using the phrase "negative learning." Legro, *Rethinking the World*.

26. I leave it to the discretion of other authors on how many types of learning they want to focus on to understand a particular issue or process.

27. I thus concur with the constructivist claim that the ideational environment is an integral part of the international environment although I strongly disagree with the claim that the bulk of the international environment is ideational. Wendt, *Social Theories of International Politics*, 96, 309.

28. This section draws from Tang, "Defensive Realism: A Systematic Statement" unpublished book manuscript), in which I examine the differences between the two realism in greater detail.
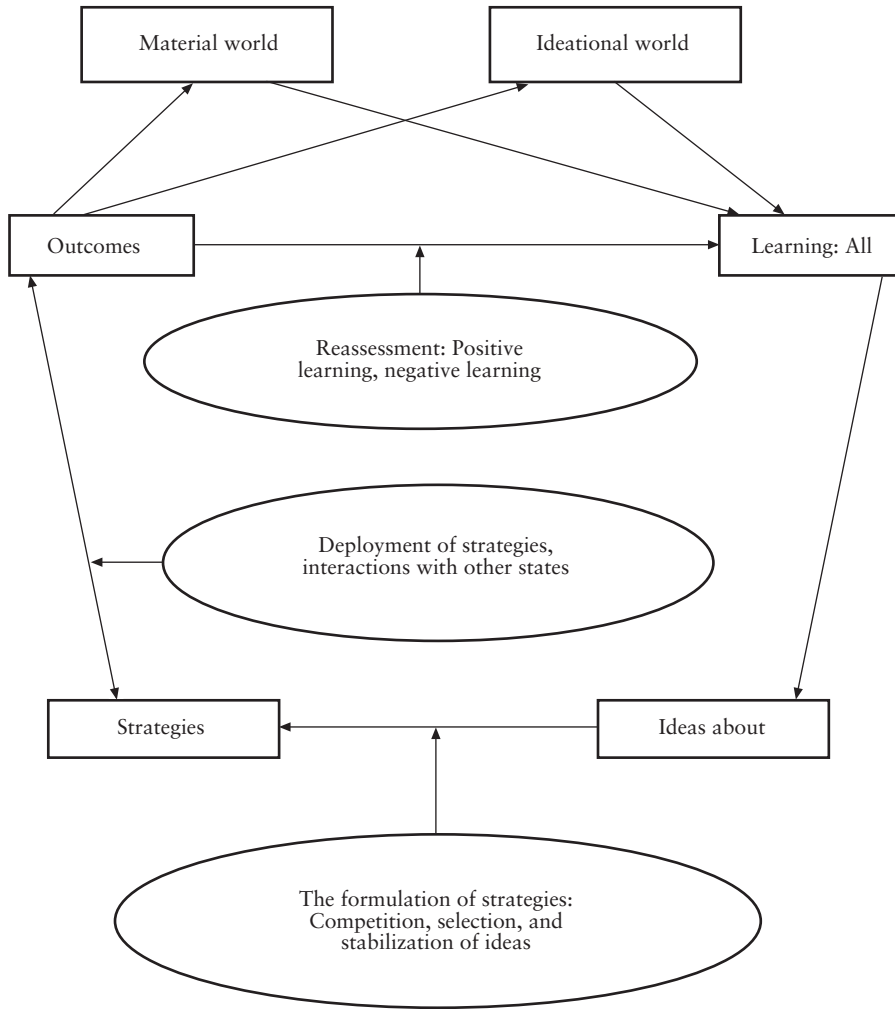
-1—
0—
+1—

Fig. 6.1. The social evolution of strategy

politics,[29] arrived at fundamentally divergent conclusions about the nature of international politics.

For our discussion here, two aspects of these differences are worth emphasizing.

29. Elsewhere, I show that offensive realism actually needs an extra bedrock assumption—the worst-case assumption over others' intentions—to drive its logic. Shiping Tang, "Fear in International Politics: Two Positions," *International Studies Review* (forthcoming June 2008).

Table 6.2. Nonevolutionary versus evolutionary approaches

Nonevolutionary approaches		Semi-evolutionary approach	Evolutionary approach
Realism	Culturalism	Constructivism/ Neoliberalism	
Material world	Ideational world	Ideational world+ material world	Material world+ ideational world
Assessing, learning	Operational code	Process: Interaction and socialization	Assessing, learning
		Identities/Interests	Ideas about strategies Competition, selection, and stabilization
Security strategies	Security strategies	Security strategies	Security strategies
Deployment of strategies	Deployment of strategies	Deployment of strategies	Deployment of strategies
Process leading to outcomes: Interaction	Process leading to outcomes: Interaction	Process leading to outcomes: Interaction and socialization	Process leading to outcomes: Interaction and socialization
Outcome: Mechanism of feedback: Selection	**Outcome:** Mechanism of feedback: None, culture determines	**Outcome:** Mechanism of feedback: Unclear	**Outcome:** Mechanism of feedback: Selection and learning

First, an offensive realist state seeks security by intentionally decreasing the security of others, whereas a defensive realism state does not seek security in this way.

Second, two offensive realist states threaten each other's security intentionally. As a result, the conflict of interest between them is not only genuine, but also genuinely irreconcilable. An offensive realist state believes not only that the nature of international politics has always been fundamentally conflicting, but also that conflict is necessary in international politics ("either I kill you or you will kill me"). There is very little or no common interest among states other than temporary alliance in an offensive realist world. As such, offensive realist states see no possibility of genuine cooperation among themselves other than (temporary) alliances. Instead, it dedicates all of its available resources to the preparation for the inevitable conflict (and, ultimately, war).

In contrast, two defensive realist states do not threaten each other's security intentionally. As a result, while there may be genuine conflicts of interest between them, some of these conflicts are not genuinely irreconcilable. Hence, while defensive realism also believes that the nature of international politics has been fundamentally one of conflict for most of human history and some of these conflicts are genuinely irreconcilable (e.g., when facing a Hitler),

defensive realism does not believe that states must necessarily end up in actual conflicts whenever they have conflict of interests. Cooperation is another option for resolving conflict of interests. In other words, defensive realism believes that at least some conflicts (with size unspecified) are avoidable and unnecessary. Moreover, defensive realism believes that states can under many circumstances indeed overcome the obstacles posed by anarchy to achieve cooperation.[30]

Differentiating Defensive Realist and Offensive Realist States

Because of the fundamental differences between offensive realism and defensive realism, which of these two stances China's actions are grounded in has critical policy implications for other states. If China is guided by the former, it is threatening or will eventually threaten other states' security intentionally. As such, the rational choice for other (defensive realist) states is "containment": to maintain a robust deterrence and defense position with regard to China, while waiting for a regime change that embraces defensive realism to take place there.[31] In contrast, if China is guided by defensive realism, then it will not intentionally threaten other states' security. In this case, the rational choice for other states is "engagement": to seek cooperation with China, and eventually integrate China into the global order, making it a "stakeholder." In other words, planning a sound China policy depends on figuring out what grand theory of international politics is guiding and will guide China's security strategy.[32]

So how do we tell whether a state's security strategy is guided by offensive or defensive realism? Kydd suggests four criteria: ideology (intolerant or tolerant); policy towards its domestic minorities; policy towards its weaker

30. Charles Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-help," *International Security* 19 (1994–95): 50–90; Robert Jervis, "Realism, Neoliberalism and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate," ibid., 24 (1999): 42–63. Andrew Kydd, "Sheep in Sheep's Clothing: Why Security Seekers Do Not Fight Each Other" *Security Studies* 7 (1997): 114–55.

31. Here, I am assuming that most states in today's world are defensive realist states themselves. Even when facing an offensive realist state, the approach of a defensive realist state will be very different from that of an offensive realist state. The later will at least adopt a hard containment approach, if not actively prepare and eventually launch preventive wars. For a more detailed discussion, see my "Defensive Realism."

32. This exercise of assessing other states' intentions is performed only by defensive realists because offensive realists simply assume all states to be aggressive. Thus, the containment versus engagement debate makes an explicit or implicit assumption about other states' intentions. Moreover, the debate also reveals different individuals' general assumptions about the nature of international politics and their preferences for security strategy. Those who hold a pessimistic view about the nature of international politics are more likely to be offensive realists (i.e., hawks) and support containment, while those who hold an optimistic view are more likely to be defensive realists (i.e., doves) and support engagement. For a more detailed discussion, see my "Defensive Realism."

—-1
—0
—+1

neighbors; and military and arms control policy.[33] I believe the following two criteria are more suitable for differentiating a state that embraces offensive realism from one that embraces defensive realism, and they subsume Kydd's criteria.

The first criterion is whether a state recognizes the existence of the security dilemma and understands at least some of its (defensive) implications.[34] A defensive realist state understands the dilemma: states cannot escape from it simply by accumulating more and more power; states can only try to alleviate it by pursuing cooperation. In contrast, an offensive realist state either denies the security dilemma or tries to escape from it.

The second criterion is whether a state exercises self-restraint and is willing to be constrained by other countries.[35] These two measures are the basic means to send costly signals of reassurance (thus alleviating the security dilemma) and demonstrate benign intentions.[36] An offensive realist state does not exercise self-restraint and is not willing to be constrained by others because it has to constantly seek and exploit opportunities of weakening others. In contrast, a defensive realist state exercises self-restraint and is willing to be constrained because it does not seek or exploit opportunities of weakening others.

With these criteria and clarification, we can now move on to assess the nature of China's security strategy from Mao to Deng, and then to Jiang and Hu.

China's Security Strategy: From Offensive to Defensive Realism

There is little doubt that China's security strategy is still firmly rooted in realism.[37] In seeking to overcome the memory of "a century of national

33. Kydd, "Sheep in Sheep's Clothing," 141–47.

34. For the security dilemma, see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 67–76, 349–55; "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma" *World Politics* 30 (1978): 167–214. Again, much confusion exists regarding the security dilemma. I clarify these confusions in my "Defensive Realism." Of course, most decision-makers do not understand the whole complexity of the security dilemma dynamics.

35. Exercising self-restraint and being willing to be constrained are two sides of the same coin because being willing to be constrained is a form of self-restraint. When a state accepts the constraint *even if* it has the power to overthrow those constraints, it is exercising self-restraint. See Charles Glaser, "Political Consequences of Military Strategy: Expanding and Refining the Spiral and Deterrence Models," *World Politics* 44 (1992): 519–27, 530–32; Jeffery W. Talioferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited," *International Security* 25 (2001): 129, 159–60; Tang, "A Systemic Theory of the Security Environment," 6, 27–28.

36. Tang, "Defensive Realism."

37. This section draws partly from Shiping Tang and Peter Hay Gries, "China's Security Strategy: From Offensive to Defensive Realism and Beyond," *EAI Working Paper* no. 97 (October 2002), East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore.

humiliation" (*bainian guochi*) at the hands of the West and Japan, generations of Chinese have strived to build a strong and prosperous China. Many Chinese elites believe that because of its size, population, civilization, history and, more recently, its growing wealth, China should be regarded as a great power (*da guo*). This strong belief in the utility of power and the motivation to accumulate power firmly anchors China's security strategy within the realist camp.

The more important question is whether China is an offensive realist or a defensive realist state.[38]

Mao: Offensive Realism

China's security strategy under Mao was largely offensive realist in nature.[39]

China under Mao expounded an intolerant ideology of overthrowing all imperialist or reactionary regimes in Asia and the world at large. More importantly, China under Mao (together with the former Soviet Union) actively supported revolutions (or insurgencies) in many developing countries, thus intentionally threatening those countries that it had identified as imperialists or their lackeys (*zougou*) and proxies (*dailiren*). This sense of being threatened was perhaps most severe among China's neighboring states that were allies of the United States and its Western allies (e.g., Southeast Asian countries).[40]

Second, as a staunch Marxist-Leninist, Mao believed that conflicts in international politics were necessary and inevitable. To transform the world into a socialist world, struggles—including armed struggles—against imperialists and their proxies were necessary. As a result, despite having settled some major disputes with several neighboring states (e.g., Burma, Mongolia, Pakistan), seeking security through cooperation was never high on the agenda of China's strategy at that time.

38. Many may question whether it is appropriate to label Mao an offensive realist and Deng a defensive realist. As long as one admits that there are fundamental differences between the two men's approaches towards security, the evolutionary interpretation outlined below should hold. Also, to label a state one of offensive realism or defensive realism does not mean that the state will behave exactly as theory advocates. The labeling exercise is best understood as an approximation.

39. Johnston argued that Mao was an offensive realist, while Feng challenged Johnston's conclusion. Both Johnston's and Feng's papers have serious theoretical problems because they do not fully grasp the difference between offensive and defensive realism, as well as the difficulty involved in determining whether a state is an offensive or a defensive realist when that state faces a clear and present danger. See Huiyun Feng, "The Operational Code of Mao Zedong: Defensive or Offensive Realist?" *Security Studies* 14 (2006): 637–62; Johnston, "Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China."

40. I do not differentiate offensive realism based on ideological calculation (e.g., Maoism, the Bush doctrine) and offensive realism based on power calculation (e.g., imperialism). In the first decade after the founding of the PRC, both China and the United States were offensive realists towards each other. China was supporting decolonization in Southeast Asia while the U.S. was engaging in subversion inside China (e.g., Tibet) to destabilize the PRC government.

—-1
—0
—+1

Third, China under Mao largely believed that all of the People's Republic's security problems were due to other countries' evil policies,[41] rather than the interactions between China and other states. In essence, China under Mao had little understanding of the dynamics of the security dilemma.[42] As a result, other than the "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence,"[43] China under Mao initiated few measures to assure regional states of China's benign intentions.

Deng: The Transition to Defensive Realism

Among China hands, there is little disagreement over the largely defensive realist nature of China's security strategy today, whether China is labeled an "integrationist" power, a "globalist" power, a nonrevisionist and nonimperial power, or simply a state embracing "defensive realism and beyond"; or whether China's grand strategy and diplomacy is characterized as neo-Bismarckian, "New Diplomacy," or "engaging Asia."[44] At the very least, most analysts reject the notion that China is an offensive-realist state (i.e., an expansionist, revisionist, or imperialist one) today.

There are at least four strands of evidence supporting the argument that post-Mao China has gradually transformed itself into a state embracing defensive realism.

The first is perhaps the most obvious. China has toned down its revolutionary rhetoric and has backed up its words with deeds. Most clearly, it has stopped supporting insurgencies in other countries, even if they were initiated by communist elements.

41. Such a belief would be correct for much of China's modern history, at least until the end of World War II and the anti-Japanese war. After the founding of the PRC, however, some of China's security difficulties could no longer be attributed solely to other states' policies. Almost every state tends to see itself as a victim of others' (evil) behavior, and this tendency is an important psychological factor that exacerbates the security dilemma.

42. China, of course, was not the only country that did not recognize the security dilemma at that time. The concept of the security dilemma was not taken seriously in international relations literature until Jervis's two path-breaking studies, and the concept has perhaps remained largely unabsorbed by policymakers in most countries, including the United States. See Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, and "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma."

43. The "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence" is a defensive realist doctrine.

44. Chen Mumin, "Going Global: Chinese Elite's View on Security Strategy in the 1990s," *Asian Perspectives* 29 (2005): 133–77; Avery Goldstein, "An Emerging China's Emerging Grand Strategy: A Neo-Bismarckian Turn?" in *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, ed. G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, 57–106; Justin S. Hempson-Jones, "The Evolution of China's Engagement with International Governmental Organizations," *Asian Survey* 45 (October 2005): 702–21; Alastair Iain Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?" *International Security* 27 (winter 2003): 5–56; Evan Medeiros and Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* 82 (November–December 2003): 22–35; David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security* 29 (2005): 64–99; Tang and Gries, "China's Security Strategy."

-1—
0—
+1—

The second is that China has now clearly recognized some of the most critical aspects of the security dilemma and its implications.[45] Touring several Southeast Asian countries in 1978, Deng Xiaoping was given his first lesson on the security dilemma. He was surprised to find that China's earlier policies of exporting revolution and its unwillingness to resolve the issue of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia had made many Southeast Asian countries suspicious of China's intentions.[46] As a result, Deng realized that China's security conundrum in the 1960s and 1970s had not been the work of external forces alone but was rather an outcome of the interaction between China's behavior and the outside world. This interdependent and interactive nature of security is, of course, one of the major aspects of the security dilemma.

The third strand of evidence is that China has demonstrated self-restraint and willingness to be constrained by others. This aspect is perhaps most prominently demonstrated in China's memberships in international organizations and institutions as well as its increased presence in treaties since 1980s.[47] Because international organizations, institutions, and treaties are all rule-based, China's increasing membership in them and its compliance with the rules there were in place before its entry (i.e., that were made by others) unambiguously signals its willingness to be restrained by others.[48]

Finally, security through cooperation, the hallmark of defensive realism, has become a pillar of China's security strategy under Deng. Two aspects of this dimension are worth noting. The first is that China has pursued a strategy of maintaining amicable relationships with its neighbors (*mulin youhao, wending zhoubian*) since Deng, mostly through reassurance and building

45. Alastair Iain Johnston, "Socialization in International Institutions: The ASEAN Way and International Relations Theory," in Ikenberry and Mastanduno, *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, 130. Of course, one should not expect states to grasp all the (defensive) implications of the security dilemma.

46. Lee Kuan Yew, former prime minister of Singapore, may have played a pivotal role in transforming Deng's understanding. See Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story 1965–2000* (Singapore: The Straits Times Press and Times Media, 2001), 663–68.

47. Hempson-Jones, "The Evolution of China's Engagement with International Governmental Organizations"; Johnston and Paul Evans, "China's Engagement with Multilateral Security Institutions"; and Margaret M. Pearson, "The Major Multilateral Economic Institutions Engage China"; both in *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power*, ed. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross (London: Routledge, 1999), 235–73, 207–34.

48. Whether these institutions have changed China's preferences for outcomes or preferences for strategies, or whether China's behavior in this arena is due to rational calculation or ideational socialization is not crucial here, and one can easily imagine that both factors play a role. Instrumentalist (or realist) institutionalism (or neoliberalism) is quite common among states and defensive realism is instrumental when it comes to the role of institutions in international politics. For defensive realism's stand on institutions, see Glaser, "Realists as Optimists"; Jervis, "Realism, Neoliberalism and Cooperation." For instrumental neoliberalism, see G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

—-1
—0
—+1

cooperation.[49] While such a strategy certainly has a dose of hedging against the bad times of U.S.-China relations embedded in it, the strategy still reduces the anxiety among neighboring countries about China's rise, thus helping to alleviate the security dilemma between China and regional states. The second is that China has also ventured into multilateral security cooperation organizations and institutions, mostly prominently the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Shanghai Cooperative Organizations. While these security cooperation institutions may or may not have changed states' choice of goals, they have institutionalized a degree of (security) cooperation among states, thus changing states' preferences for strategies. As a result, the security dilemma between China and regional states has not been exacerbated but rather alleviated.[50]

Overall, there is ample evidence to support the interpretation that China's current security strategy is firmly rooted in defensive realism, with a dose of instrumentalist institutionalism.

A Social Evolutionary Interpretation of the Shift

So how do we make sense of China's gradual but yet undeniable shift from a security strategy based on offensive realism to one based on defensive realism?

A (structuralist) realism–driven (i.e., a purely materialistic) approach explains this shift by arguing that China has finally learnt the lesson that it is simply not capable of challenging the hegemon-centric international order (i.e., the status quo). Thus it is merely biding its time. A semi-evolutionary approach makes the case that China has indeed been socialized by the norms and institutions of the international order. They both got something right, but not the whole picture.

The following narrative reconstructs the history of this fundamental shift.

The Meaning of the Material World: Getting the Environment Right

On the material front, four aspects are worth emphasizing. The first is the geographical location of China. China has many countries as its neighbors, and the region has a high concentration of great powers (i.e., the United States, Japan, Russia, and India). Second, the "unipolar" moment proves to be lasting and there is no clear sign that the United States is in decline. Third, China is still a poor country with very limited capabilities, although its power has been increasing rapidly for the past three decades. Finally, the international system has firmly evolved from a Hobbesian to a Lockean world, and

49. Reassurance is part of cooperation-building. I elaborate on reassurance in detail in "Defensive Realism." For a brief discussion, see Shiping Tang, "Correspondence: Uncertainty and Reassurance in International Politics," *International Security* 32 (2007): 180–83.

50. Alan Collins, *The Security Dilemmas of Southeast Asia* (London: Macmillan, 2000), chap. 5; Goldstein, "An Emerging China's Emerging Grand Strategy," 86.

expansion and conquest are no longer a legitimate option for advancing a state's security interest.

The meaning of these material factors for China's security strategy has been gradually recognized (or learned) over the years.

Regarding geography, from its security difficulties in the 1950s to 1970s China has come to recognize that its geographical location dictates that it cannot afford to adopt an offensive realist strategy because other countries can easily form a countervailing alliance (i.e., balancing of a Chinese threat).

So far as the international system is concerned, China flirted with the idea of accelerating multipolarization in the early 1990s, partly because it had envisioned that the "unipolar moment" would really be just a moment. China soon realized, however, that different international structures have often been the result of unbalanced economic growth and unintended consequences, and structural changes cannot be easily accelerated. One cannot escape from the structure; one can only live with it.

With respect to national power, after three decades of robust growth, the Chinese elite could generally feel that China's power is on the rise, and this growing power has given China more confidence in managing its grand transformation. As a result, China feels more secure perhaps than at any other time in the past two centuries, giving it more reason to stay on its current course and behave moderately. A more self-confident China is thus more likely to be a responsible power.[51]

Regarding the nature of the international system, most Chinese elites recognize that times really have changed. There is very little chance that China can take back its lost territories by force even if it becomes powerful enough, because territorial expansion and conquest are no longer a legitimate option.[52] Hence, most Chinese elites harbor no illusion of reconquering its lost territories, and they accept that China has to make peace with its traumatic modern history, or at least to live with it.

Learning and Ideas

As expected, all forms of learning have been at play in the process of generating potential ideas for making China's new strategy.

China has certainly learned from its past experiences. Two major lessons deserve special mention. The first lesson is that "self-reliance" is equivalent to self-isolation and will not get China anywhere.[53] The open-and-reform policy,

---

51. Zhang Yunling and Tang Shiping, "More Self-confident China will be a Responsible Power," *Straits Times*, October 2, 2002. For the theoretical argument that the more secure a state feels, the more likely it will behave moderately, see Glaser, "Political Consequences of Military Strategy"; Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma."

52. Mark W. Zacher, "The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force," *International Organization* 55 (2001): 215–50.

53. Friedrich W. Y. Wu, "From Self-reliance to Interdependence? Development Strategy and Foreign Economic Policy in Post-Mao China," *Modern China* 7 (1981): 445–82; Yan

—-1
—0
—+1

of course, necessitates that China maintain a working, if not always cordial, relationship with the outside world.

The second lesson is literally "anarchy is what states make of it," in the sense China is not merely a passive consumer, but also an active shaper, of its security environment. From its own experiences, China has gradually come to recognize that its own behaviors were at least partly responsible for its security conundrum in the 1950s and 1960s. This lesson helps China recognize the interdependent nature of security and part of the dynamics and implications of the security dilemma. As a result, Chinese leaders now understand that, because of China's vast size and power potential, most small and medium-sized regional states do have reasons to feel uneasy about China's growing power and to demand Chinese self-restraint, even if China does not intentionally threaten them. Today, Chinese leaders and its elite are more nuanced and rational when it comes to dealing with the various versions of the "China threat" theory.[54]

Other than learning from its own experiences, China has also learned from the experiences of others. In the past decade, Chinese leaders and foreign policy experts have undertaken a major project that seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of other rising powers in history so as to draw appropriate lessons and avoid mistakes made by other great powers.[55] As a result of this project, the idea of a direct confrontation with the incumbent hegemon (i.e., the United States) and overthrowing the existing international system has been firmly ruled out. Consequently, many have recognized that the only viable option is for China to rise within the system. By doing this, China will not only have more say and influence in reshaping the future of the system as it continues to grow, but will also be more likely to make its rise a peaceful one.[56] A further lesson from this project has been that one of the major reasons why Great Britain was able and

Xuetong, "The Rise of China in Chinese Eyes," *Journal of Contemporary China* 10 (2001): 34–35.

54. Tang Shiping and Zhang Jie, "Zhongguo weixielun he yu zhongguo gongchu" (Introduction: China threat versus living with China), in *Lenzhan hou Jinjin Guojia duihua zhengce yanjiu* (The evolution of regional states' China policy after the Cold War), ed. Tang Shiping, Zhang Jie and Cao Xiaoyang (Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2005), 1–7.

55. In November 2006, China broadcast a prime-time TV series called *Daguo Jueqi* (The rise of great nations). This series can be understood as a by-product of the project for the general public, aiming to stimulate further debates and educate people on the subject. For a news report about the series, see http://news3.xinhuanet.com/english/2006–11/27/content_5394691.htm (accessed December 8, 2006).

56. The strategy of "peaceful rise/development" can be understood partly due to this recognition. For early expositions of this notion of rising within the system, see Tang Shiping, "Zailun zhongguo de da zhanlue" (Once again on China's grand strategy), *Zhanlue yu Guanli* (Strategy and management), no. 4 (2001): 29–37; Zhang Baijia, "Gaibian ziji, gaibian shijie" (Change oneself, Change the world), *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue* (China social science), no. 1 (2002): 4–19. Goldstein also noted that China tried to learn lessons from the experiences of the Soviet Union. See Goldstein, "An Emerging China's Emerging Grand Strategy," 70.

the United States has been able to remain a leading power has been that both states supported an open trading system and served as a large market for the world.

Finally, there is social learning. On this front, the ASEAN Regional Forum has been a major platform for China to learn the benefits of multilateralism and the ASEAN Way, and its transformational impact on China's strategic thinking and behavior has been well documented. As a result, China now has an "epistemic community" of defensive realists (and instrumental neoliberals) when it comes to promoting security cooperation and multilateralism.[57]

The Competition of Ideas and Outcomes

With so many competing ideas, how has China been able to come up with a more or less coherent security strategy in the past decade or so? The answer, again, is that this has been an evolutionary process: one of filtering certain ideas out and certain ideas in. I illustrate this process with the important debate on "peace and development," which restarted after the 1999 U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and continued to around 2002.[58]

The debate was important because it was about whether China's earlier more or less optimistic assessment of its security environment was really sound. In other words, has human history really entered into an era of "peace and development" or was this assessment simply a Chinese pipe dream? Put differently, is the outside world (mostly the United States and regional states) generally friendly or fundamentally hostile towards China?

There were basically two camps in the debate. The pessimist camp held that the 1999 U.S.-NATO intervention in the former Yugoslavia (and the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade) symbolized the return of the world to a Hobbesian state in which the strong dictate what they want, and the weak suffer what they must. If so, then the whole grand strategy of open-and-reform would have to be greatly modified, if not totally rejected. In contrast, the optimist camp held that despite small to medium-sized states' sovereignty being challenged if they did not conform to certain rules dictated by the Western states, world politics per se was not going to return to a Hobbesian state.

In the end, despite prominent dissenting voices, the optimist camp carried the day. Along the way, certain ideas were eliminated or weakened during the process while others were selected (or strengthened).

For instance, the idea that China should rise within the system is in, while the idea that China rise outside the system (or challenge the system) is out. Hence, China will integrate further with the international system, not withdraw

---

57. For an assessment of the ASEAN Regional Forum's impact on China's security thinking and policymaking bureaucracies, see Rosemary Foot, "China in the ASEAN Regional Forum: Organization Process and Domestic Models of Thought," *Asian Survey* 38 (May 1998): 425–40; Johnston, "Socialization in International Institutions."

58. The journal *Shijie Zhishi* (World affairs) devoted two special issues to this pressing question. See *Shijie Zhishi*, nos. 15 and 16 (April 2000).

—-1
—0
—+1

from it. The more recent rise of the "peaceful rise" doctrine can be understood as a further manifestation that the optimistic view still retains the upper hand.

Likewise, the idea of strengthening China's relationships with regional states through greater assurance and cooperation is further strengthened (partly because of the uncertainty associated with the U.S.-China relationship). The rationale is that as long as regional states do not go along, the United States will be hard pressed to effect a hard containment against China even if it wants to. As a result, China initiated the process of building a free trade area with ASEAN, joined the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation of ASEAN states, and further institutionalized the Shanghai Cooperation Organizations.

Undoubtedly, there have been several developments in the real world that tend to lend more support to the optimist camp. For instance, the success of China's economy in the past three decades provides justification for continuing the present policy. Likewise, the reluctance of most regional states to adopt the hard containment advocated by the neocon hawks in Washington, as outlined in the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review, also strengthened the view that most regional states were not hostile towards China even when Washington was.

Therefore, the net result from the debate has actually been that China emerged from it with greater confidence rather than with a bleak picture of its future and the outside world. Such a result is extremely important because those who hold an optimistic view of the outside world tend to be defensive realists whereas those who hold a pessimistic view tend to be offensive realists.[59] With the optimists winning the debate, the probability that China will continue with its presently defensive realist strategy increases.

Conclusions

My evolutionary interpretation of the development of China's security strategy points to the conclusion that while any one of the driving forces discussed may not be enough to propel China into its present security strategy and keep it there, the combination of these driving forces has been able to transform China into a firm defensive realist state and there is a high probability that China will remain such a state.

The social evolutionary interpretation of China's security strategy here has implications for both research and policy. Research-wise, my approach offers

---

59. Indeed, whether a state holds an optimistic or a pessimistic view about the outside world is related to the fundamental difference between the two strains of realism that can be captured by a single question: Are there fellow defensive realist states out there? For offensive realists, there are few, if any, genuine security-seeking states. In contrast, while not denying there may be offensive realist states, defensive realists believe that there are some, if not many, genuinely defensive realist states. See Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 29, 34; Glaser, "Realists as Optimists," 60, 67, 71–72; Tang, "Fear in International Politics."

a more organic and thus more nuanced account of the evolution of states' security strategy.

Since the Waltzian structural revolution, students of international politics have embraced parsimony as a guiding light for advancing our understanding of international politics. Too often, pundits have pitted some variables (e.g., power, structure) against others (e.g., ideas). Yet, as Waltz himself has argued, "the explanatory power of a theory, not its parsimony, is the criterion of a theory's success."[60]

The social evolutionary approach implicitly rejects the notion that seeking parsimony when it comes to understanding complex phenomena is always a virtue, and consequently also rejects the practice of seeking mono-clausal explanations. This is merely a candid admission that the world is really very complex, rather than an unwanted challenge to the goal of attaining parsimony in scientific research.[61] In the end, the social evolutionary approach calls for a more empirical, systemic, and evolutionary approach to understanding states' behavior. Following the competing ideas within a state is a good way to start understanding that state's strategy and behavior.

Moreover, consistent with the nonteleological nature of the evolutionary approach, the social evolutionary approach calls for modesty in our goal. The best that we can aim for when it comes to a theory of foreign policy can only be a probabilistic theory, not a determinately predictive theory. Trying to impose a determinately predictive theory on states' behavior can only lead us to the abuse (or misuse) of history.

Furthermore, the social evolutionary approach takes an important step towards theorizing the stubbornly undertheorized interaction between the material and ideational worlds,[62] partly because of the polarizing and unproductive debate between extreme materialist positions (i.e., structural realism) and extreme ideationalist ones (i.e., "radical" constructivism).

Policy-wise, the social evolutionary interpretation *reduces* uncertainty about China's future behaviors. While many have complained that it is difficult to apprehend China's strategic intentions because of the murkiness of China's policymaking process, I contend that China's security behavior has projected a rather clear picture of its security approach and its future direction. China's general security strategy is firmly rooted in defensive realism and is gradually adding a dose of (instrumental) neoliberalism. Moreover, the

60. Kenneth N. Waltz, "Theory of International Politics is not Theory of Foreign Policy," *Security Studies* 6 (1996): 57.

61. While the notion that the world is really complex seems so obvious, not everyone keeps this in mind. For instance, Colin Elman failed to recognize it as a potential cause of why we cannot reach a determinate theory of foreign policy. Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why not Realist Theories of Foreign Policy?" *Security Studies* 6 (fall 1996): 13, 22–32. For a recent study of complexity in social life, see Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

62. Herman, "Identity, Norms, and National Security," 276.

—-1
—0
—+1

social evolutionary interpretation points to the conclusion that China's security strategy is most likely to remain one of defensive realism and it is unlikely to go back to an offensive realist mind set.

If China's security strategy is now firmly rooted in defensive realism, the principal implications for the United States, the Asia-Pacific region, and the world are that the outside world can afford to take a more relaxed approach towards China's rise and that engagement with China is the way to go. While China may become more powerful, it is unlikely that it will use its newly gained power to intentionally threaten other states. And if there is a security dilemma between China and another state, two genuine defensive realist states can find a way to signal their true benign intentions and work out their differences. On that account, both China and the world have something to celebrate.