

To the Editors:

In "Posing Problems without Catching Up," Thomas Christensen criticizes balance-of-power arguments that highlight the United States' relative military superiority and proclaim that China is not a military threat. Instead, he argues that asymmetric strategies (waiting until the U.S. military is bogged down elsewhere, undermining the United States' Asian alliances, emphasizing information and electronic warfare, etc.) allow China to pose major problems for U.S. security interests without the need to catch up militarily. He also suggests that Chinese policymakers view the United States as weak-willed (the Somalia analogy), thus increasing the likelihood of misperception and conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Christensen therefore recommends that the United States deter Chinese belligerence through enhancing its military capabilities and demonstrating that it has the political will to fight.¹

Christensen's approach to Chinese motivation is too narrow. Intentions should not be inferred from power alone, whether relative or asymmetric. The actions of other states and a variety of emotions (pride, anger, etc.) also influence decisionmakers. Christensen's policy prescriptions are also problematic. In arguing that the United States build up its military capabilities and demonstrate resolve to disabuse the Chinese of notions about an American lack of will, Christensen is overly optimistic about the ability of the United States to control Chinese interpretations of its behavior. What Americans view as defensive displays of resolve, Chinese may view as acts of belligerence, provoking the very aggression that the United States seeks to deter. Even more ominously, credibility arguments play into the hands of China-bashing hawks, undermining the U.S. national interest in stable bilateral relations.

DRAGON DIVINATION

Is China a peaceful, status quo power seeking to incorporate itself into the world system? Or is it a revisionist state with a chip on its shoulder, out to settle old scores with the West?

Peter Hays Gries is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder; Co-Director of the Sino-American Security Dialogue; and author of Saving Face: Pride and Passion in China's New Nationalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming).

Thomas J. Christensen is Associate Professor of Political Science and a member of the Security Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

1. Thomas J. Christensen, "Posing Problems without Catching Up: China's Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 5-40.

Because intentions are not self-evident, foreign policy analysts have generally focused their attention on China's material power. One group infers intent directly from capabilities. The *Washington Times's* Bill Gertz, author of *The China Threat* and leader of the Blue Team of China bashers on Capitol Hill, points to every Chinese arms acquisition as evidence of Chinese revisionism.² The Brookings Institution's Bates Gill and Michael O'Hanlon also infer intent from capabilities, but reach the opposite conclusion: China does *not* pose a threat. It is not a superpower, and in a head-to-head fight the United States would win hands down. Americans can therefore sleep easy.³

Responding to Gill and O'Hanlon, former U.S. Ambassador to China James Lilley has argued that China nevertheless has the capacity to threaten U.S. interests in Asia. He paints a sinister picture of Chinese intentions: China has ambitions for Taiwan that superior American conventional forces cannot deter.⁴ Christensen joins Lilley in criticizing those such as Gill and O'Hanlon who deploy "simple realist notions" (p. 6) about the balance of power and suggest that the United States has nothing to worry about. As a structural realist, however, Christensen distances himself from Lilley's assertions about Chinese motives, basing his argument instead on more solid rationalist ground: China's asymmetric military strategies. Christensen's logic is contradictory, however. He opens by arguing that U.S. military capabilities will not necessarily deter China, but paradoxically concludes by prescribing an American and Taiwan arms buildup to deter China.

Christensen is right that U.S. military superiority will not necessarily deter Chinese aggression. His rationalist focus on asymmetric strategies, however, does not advance debate very far. The broader problem is that mainstream international relations theory is ill suited to address the issue of intentions. Scholars of both the neorealist and neoliberal traditions have despaired of ever understanding the motives that drive policymakers; they therefore focus their attention on material power. For instance, in *Engaging China*, Randall Schweller explores the question of what policy a hegemon such as the United States should adopt toward a rising power such as China. He does an admirable job of cataloguing potential policy options: preventive war, balancing, bandwagoning, binding, engagement, buck-passing, and so on. In his conclusion, however, Schweller concedes that the choice of an appropriate policy hinges on the "accurate recognition of the rising power's true nature." "In the end," Schweller writes, "the best that can be hoped for is that the established powers will properly identify the challengers' long-term goals . . . [to] avoid over-reacting or under-reacting to the developing situation."⁵

2. In military exercises, the United States is usually represented as the Blue Team, while China is the Red Team. See Bill Gertz, *The China Threat: How the People's Republic Targets America* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2000).

3. Bates Gill and Michael O'Hanlon, "China's Hollow Military," *National Interest*, No. 56 (Summer 1999), pp. 55–62; and Bates Gill and Michael O'Hanlon, "China's Military, Take 3," *National Interest*, No. 58 (Winter 1999/2000), pp. 117–119. See also Michael O'Hanlon, "Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Fall 2000), pp. 51–86.

4. James Lilley and Carl Ford, "China's Military: A Second Opinion," *National Interest*, No. 57 (Fall 1999), pp. 71–78.

5. Randall L. Schweller, "Managing the Rise of Great Powers: History and Theory," in Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, eds., *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 25, 26.

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

By shying away from the complexities of human motivation—specifically, its dynamism and emotional component—realist approaches such as Christensen's and Schweller's are ill equipped to answer Schweller's own pivotal question: How can policymakers identify a challenger's intentions?

Realists such as Christensen and Schweller may be right that states have fixed goals and a "true nature" (to use Schweller's phrase), but then again, they may not. What if intentions are dynamic? I suggest that just as personal identities and intentions evolve through interpersonal relations, national identities and goals emerge through international encounters. The search for Chinese intentions, however, usually treats China in isolation from the international context. Metaphorically putting China "on the couch," safely debating from afar whether China is strong or weak, benign or malign, dangerously dismisses the role that other nations play in shaping Chinese behavior. For example, U.S. China policy profoundly influences Chinese views of the world system: The new Bush administration's hard-line foreign policy shaped Chinese responses to the collision on April 1, 2001, of a Chinese jet fighter and an American spy plane over the South China Sea. During the presidential campaign, George W. Bush repudiated Bill Clinton's policy of engagement, declaring that China is America's competitor—not its partner. Such words have been matched with action: Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld have been aggressively pursuing a national missile defense initiative that, I contend, will undermine American security by threatening China's. Combined with Bush's initial callous disregard for the life of the lost Chinese pilot, such hostile actions contributed to Chinese attributions of U.S. belligerence following the plane collision. Chinese intentions, I maintain, evolve in dynamic relationship with American actions.

To understand Chinese intentions, analysts must also broaden their approach to human motivation beyond a narrow rationalism. With the dominance first of behaviorism and then of rational choice theory, emotions were largely excluded from twentieth-century social science. International relations theory was no exception. There are signs, however, of a revival of research on emotion. Neta Crawford, for instance, has recently argued that "the perceptions of others and the attribution of their motives will depend on actors' preexisting emotions."⁶ Emotions will also affect decisions on how to respond to such perceptions. Foreign policy analysts would be foolish, therefore, to ignore them. For example, considerations of both power and passion informed April's Sino-American "apology diplomacy." Apologies affect power. The form that an apology takes depends critically on the relative status of the parties involved. April's apology diplomacy—What kind of apology is necessary?—revealed that Beijing and Washington are jockeying for position in the post-Cold War international order. Apologies (re)establish hierarchies. But they also involve equally powerful passions. Both the 1999 U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and the 2001 plane collision fit perfectly into an emerging Chinese "victimization narrative" of Western aggression and Chinese suffering. Many Chinese thus saw these two events as but the latest in a long

6. Neta C. Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Spring 2000), p. 119.

history of American insults. In the hopes of restoring their self-esteem, some Chinese sought to heal their wounds through retribution, taking to the streets and to cyberspace to vent their frustrations.⁷ Many Americans, meanwhile, were offended by the imputation that the United States intentionally bombed China's embassy and rammed its plane. Such events suggest that Chinese foreign policy cannot be reduced to the rational calculation of China's relative or asymmetric military capabilities. Indeed Christensen implicitly acknowledges the influence of emotions on Chinese policymakers, speculating about the impact of "emotional historical legac[ies]" (p. 35) and feelings of "humiliation" (p. 15). But in the end, such emotions are only epiphenomenal within his rationalist framework.

THE GHOSTS OF MUNICH

More dangerous, Christensen's counsel that the United States demonstrate its resolve to belie Chinese talk of American weakness harkens back to the Cold War, threatening to lead the United States down the same path that took it to Vietnam. After World War II, American cold warriors, haunted by the "lessons of Munich," vowed not to appease potential rivals. Traditional deterrence theorists argued that the protection of strategic interests required the maintenance of reputational interests. Henry Kissinger and other U.S. policymakers deployed the rhetoric of deterrence theory and the "domino effect" to justify American military interventions around the globe. "If you let a bully come into your front yard one day, as Lyndon Johnson put it, "the next day he'll be up on your porch and the day after that he'll rape your wife in your own bed."⁸

It is now clear, however, that the propositions of deterrence theory were flawed. Ted Hopf has ably demonstrated that the Soviets did not learn the lessons that the United States thought it was teaching them in the third world.⁹ More fundamental, the United States cannot control how others will construe its actions: What Americans see as a demonstration of resolve, others may interpret as anything from bluffing to belligerence. "Preventive" posturing may therefore backfire, inciting the very aggression it is designed to deter. Moreover, the lessons that Americans think that they have taught others in one situation may not translate to another. As Jonathan Mercer has convincingly argued, "Resolve is not a poker chip that can be stored up or spent in successive hands of international politics."¹⁰ Resolve, in other words, is not fully fungible.

Christensen argues that some Chinese kid themselves into believing that Americans do not have the will to fight. He is likely right, but there is little that the United States can do about it. Where Christensen maintains that demonstrations of American resolve will disabuse Chinese of such delusions and "reduce the likelihood of war" (p. 36), I

7. Peter Hays Gries, "Tears of Rage: Chinese Nationalism and the Belgrade Embassy Bombing," *China Journal*, No. 45 (July 2001), pp. 25–43.

8. Quoted in Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 258.

9. Ted Hopf, *Peripheral Visions: Deterrence Theory and American Foreign Policy in the Third World, 1965–1990* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

10. Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 227.

suggest that such displays are at least as likely to prove counterproductive, provoking Chinese retribution and increasing the probability of conflict. It is perhaps American illusions of control that most require disabusing. Furthermore, as Christensen himself notes, "Under certain conditions Beijing will likely be fully undeterrable" (p. 36). For example, should Taiwan declare independence, popular nationalists could compel Beijing to act. If the Communist Party's nationalist legitimacy were at stake, no amount of American military posturing would be likely to deter a Chinese response.¹¹

Where Christensen views Chinese military strategists as deluded by the Somalia analogy (pp. 17–20), however, I see them as more levelheaded. Even the National Defense University's Zhang Zhaozhong, author of the sensationalist nationalist tracts *Who Is the Next Target?* and *Who Can Win the Next War?*, declares as ignorant (*wuzhi*) the view that China can triumph over the United States by force of will alone.¹² Indeed, since Bush replaced Clinton (and Christensen penned his piece), Chinese pundits have not been debating about how weak-willed the United States is, but about how reckless the new administration is likely to be.¹³

And although Christensen certainly does not have this in mind, hawks frequently co-opt the rhetoric of "demonstrat[ing] American resolve" (p. 34) to rationalize their temper tantrums. Following the release of the American plane crew last April 11, for instance, Robert Kagan and William Kristol declared the Bush administration's handling of the affair "a national humiliation." Writing in the conservative *Weekly Standard*, they decried Bush's "groveling" as a degrading loss of face. Warning of the dangers of appeasement and raising the specter of a domino effect, Kagan and Kristol demanded vengeance: China must now "pay a price."¹⁴

Within days, Bush declared that he would do "whatever it takes" to defend Taiwan from a Chinese attack. Was this a calculated effort to demonstrate U.S. resolve? Or was it an emotional outburst—a reaction to Beijing's earlier taunting? (A public letter from the Chinese pilot's wife had called the president a "coward.") The White House's immediate efforts at damage control, backtracking on Bush's declaration, suggest the latter: Bush likely spoke impetuously, seeking to defend his macho self-image. One thing

11. As Richard Ned Lebow has argued, foreign policy decisionmakers under intense domestic pressures frequently resort to wishful thinking, underestimating the resolve of their foreign adversaries. See Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 169–192.

12. Zhang Zhaozhong, *Xia yige mubiao shi shei* [Who is the next target?] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2000), p. 196; and Zhang Zhaozhong, *Shei neng daying xia yichang zhanzheng* [Who can win the next war?] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1999).

13. According to the China Center for International Affairs' Pang Zhongying, a new "international hardships" (*guoji youhuan*) school has recently arisen to oppose the "peace and development" (*heping yu fazhan*) school. The former advocates developing worst-case scenarios to cope with the Bush administration's "new Cold War" (*xin lengzhan*) strategy. See Pang Zhongying, "Xinshijichu guoji xingshi de jige tedian" [A few characteristics of the international situation at the onset of the new era], posted May 14, 2001, on Pang's web page at <http://www.peopledaily.com.cn/GB/guoj/209/4115/index.html>. My thanks to Yu Bin for this link.

14. Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "A National Humiliation," *Weekly Standard*, April 16–23, 2001, pp. 11–16.

is certain, however: By leaning to one side, Bush heightened tensions across the Taiwan Strait, effectively undermining U.S. national security.

A professed need to demonstrate resolve to the Soviets led the United States to armed conflict with Vietnam in the mid-1960s; similarly, a desire to “teach ‘Little Brother’ a lesson” led China to invade Vietnam in the late 1970s. Both paid a heavy price for their arrogance. Let us not repeat past mistakes.

—Peter Hays Gries
Columbus, Ohio

The Author Replies:

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to Peter Hays Gries’s commentary on my spring 2001 article in *International Security*.¹ Unfortunately, it is a difficult task, because his critique often addresses topics other than the main themes of my article. Gries categorizes me falsely in a debate between structural realists and antirealists in international relations theory, and then miscasts my arguments and oversimplifies my policy prescriptions. He critiques the piece with reference to issues that either were not covered in the article, such as the Vietnam War and national missile defense, or that could not have been covered in the article—namely, the China policies of President George W. Bush and his advisers, who took office after the article was written. Gries seems more concerned with how political actors of whom he disapproves might use my article than he does with the arguments in the article itself.

Gries begins his critique by falsely labeling me a “structural realist.” He faults my article in particular for having “inferred [Chinese intentions] from power alone” and for having “reduced [Chinese foreign policy] to the rational calculation of China’s relative or asymmetric military capabilities.” Gries even suggests that I intentionally pitched my article in a certain way to defend that intellectual church. He writes: “As a structural realist, however, Christensen distances himself from Lilley’s assertions about Chinese motives.” Readers of my other work and of the article in question should be puzzled by Gries’s conclusions. Almost all of my publications emphasize the role of domestic politics, misperceptions, and emotionally charged historical legacies in international politics.² I am neither a structural realist nor an antirealist, and I believe that the debate

1. Thomas J. Christensen, “Posing Problems without Catching Up: China’s Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy,” *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 5–40. Subsequent references appear in parentheses in the text.

2. See, for example, Thomas J. Christensen, “China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia,” *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 49–80; Thomas J. Christensen, “Pride, Pressure, and Politics: The Roots of China’s Worldview,” in Yong Deng and Feiling Wang, eds., *In the Eyes of the Dragon: China Views the World and Sino-American Relations* (Boulder, Colo.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999); Thomas J. Christensen, “Chinese Realpolitik,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 5 (September/October 1996), pp. 37–52; and Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, “Progressive Research About Degenerate Alliances,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (December 1997), pp. 919–922.

between these groups has long been fruitless. I do take seriously leaders' concerns about distributions of power and their beliefs about offensive or defensive advantages in warfare. Of course, believing that those things matter hardly makes one a structural realist, while rejecting the notion that they matter simply means that one ignores history and defies common sense.

This article is no exception to my general theoretical tendencies. In fact, the article starts by explicitly rejecting the simple, realist logic that drives the "peer competitor debate" regarding the future of Sino-American relations. That debate, I argue, has clouded American thinking about the potentially dangerous implications of a militarily inferior China with increasing coercive capacity. The danger is not the weapons in isolation, however, but the weapons combined with domestic political problems and strategic perceptions in Beijing. Ignoring my clear rejection of structural realism in favor of these other variables, Gries falsely treats as "epiphenomenal" or "paradoxical" some of my core arguments about the historical, psychological, and domestic political roots of Chinese nationalism that make deterrence difficult and, under some conditions, impossible. To put it most simply, in his commentary Gries is slaying theoretical dragons of his own creation.

Gries also demonstrates a common and fundamental misunderstanding of what he calls "traditional deterrence theory." He then, in a related fashion, oversimplifies my policy prescriptions, when he states that I prescribe only demonstrations of U.S. resolve and "an American and Taiwan arms buildup" to deter China. Gries fails to recognize that, in traditional deterrence theory, reassurance is half of deterrence, not an alternative approach to security politics invented by the theory's critics. Rather than "shying away from the complexities of human motivation," sophisticated deterrence theorists accept that actors can behave out of motivations ranging from panic to naked opportunism, and that is why they worry not just about the credibility of threats but the credibility of assurances. For example, in his foundational work, Thomas Schelling discusses how to mix credible threats and credible assurances in an artful way so that the deterring nation avoids appearing either too weak and exploitable or too aggressive and provocative in the perceptions of the target country. Schelling writes: "The need for assurances—not just verbal but fully credible—emerges clearly as part of 'deterrence.'"³ For this reason, I argue in my article that reassurance of China's core interests, not just increased U.S. or Taiwanese military capabilities, is an essential component to any deterrent strategy. I reject explicitly any U.S. military commitment to a Taiwan that declares independence, and I oppose transferring to Taiwan either offensive weapons or systems—such as future upper-tier theater missile defense (TMD) systems—that might be seen as implying an unconditional U.S. commitment to Taiwan. Gries disregards these parts of the article without explanation.

Gries does begin to address one core argument of my article regarding the importance of Chinese perceptions and misperceptions of American resolve. Gries offers three theoretical statements that are relevant to this issue but that cannot all be simultaneously true: (1) Americans' interactions with China affect Beijing elites' worldview; (2)

3. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 75.

Chinese perceptions of American resolve are so fixed that “there is little that the United States can do about it”; and (3) reputation for resolve is not fungible across cases. I have no problem with the first proposition, but I cannot see how one can believe that and also believe that the United States can do nothing to disabuse Chinese elites of fundamental misperceptions about the United States. The third proposition is the most interesting, but this is largely an empirical question, and Gries brings almost no evidence to bear to support his arguments.

As I stated in the article, there is a debate about U.S. resolve in China. Fortunately, not everyone agrees that American resolve is very weak. But a disturbing number of Chinese government analysts seem to believe that U.S. staying power is quite limited, partially because of American casualty aversion in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Rather than addressing that empirical question seriously, Gries cites one Chinese author who hardly refutes the themes presented in my article. According to Gries, that author, Col. Zhang Zhaozhong, claims that China cannot rely on American lack of resolve “alone” to defeat the United States. This piece of evidence is totally consistent with my article. The danger is not underestimation of U.S. resolve alone; it is that factor combined with two others: increasing Chinese coercive capacity over the next decade and the possibility of a growing sense of domestic desperation in Beijing if the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is unable to gain accommodation from Taiwan over the next several years. If I were worried about Chinese estimations of U.S. resolve alone, I would be much less sanguine than I am that peace can be maintained over the next few years. Moreover, we already know that Colonel Zhang has a dangerously low estimate of U.S. resolve, because I quote him saying so in the article (p. 18).

In lieu of additional evidence from China, Gries praises as “convincing” theoretical work on other cases by Jonathan Mercer, who argues that potential adversaries do not draw “dispositional” conclusions about each other’s resolve from past behavior.⁴ Mercer’s book is brilliantly crafted, but I, for one, am not convinced by his arguments. Not only have I found multiple cases where Chinese security analysts have made negative assessments of U.S. resolve based on their impressions of other instances of American casualty aversion, but I would posit that many of the leaderships that the United States has fought during and since World War II have drawn mistaken conclusions about the resolve of the United States, its allies, or both: They include Tojo, Hitler, Kim Il-sung, Saddam Hussein, Mohammed Farah Aideed, and Slobodan Milošević. Saddam Hussein referred to American withdrawal from Vietnam and from Lebanon after the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut as reasons he would prevail in the Persian Gulf.⁵ Mohammed Farah Aideed himself based his military strategy in Somalia on the following logic: “We have studied Vietnam and Lebanon and know how to get rid of Americans, by killing them so that public opinion will put an end to things.”⁶

4. Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

5. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

6. Quoted in Barry M. Blechman and Tamara Cofman Wittes, “Defining Moment: The Threat and Use of Force in American Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 114, No. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 1–30, at p. 5.

Milošević reportedly evoked the Vietnam analogy as a reason the United States would not risk casualties to defeat him.⁷

My solution to the problem of similar lessons being drawn by elites in China is to manufacture consciously what is supposed to occur automatically under Mercer's thesis: a Chinese understanding of the "situational" differences between Somalia and China in U.S. strategic thinking and a correction of false "dispositional" conclusions about lack of U.S. resolve drawn by Chinese elites from one or two exceptional cases. My suggested correctives to this misperception have to do with increasing transparency and engagement: introducing Chinese government visitors to a broader, more representative slice of American society than they get by visiting academic institutions and coastal metropolitan centers, and through military-to-military exchanges. In this context, Gries's evoking of the Vietnam analogy is odd and inappropriate. I am not sure what Gries means when he says that I argue for "preventive posturing," but one thing should be clear: Nowhere in the article do I prescribe fighting in third areas to impress upon Beijing U.S. resolve on the Taiwan issue.

Gries argues that Beijing's underestimation of U.S. resolve is not now a problem; rather fear of U.S. recklessness is, at least under President George W. Bush (who, again, took office after my article was written). But even if Gries were right about current perceptions in Beijing of a reckless Bush administration, there is no contradiction between believing that a nation is reckless and believing that the same nation lacks resolve. That is the standard psychological profile of a bully after all. I explicitly address a similar instance in my article, the war over Kosovo, in which CCP analysts were impressed by what they perceived as U.S. recklessness and by the United States' apparent obsession with casualties.

Gries argues correctly that external actors can change leaders' attitudes and even emotions about the international environment. But, in my opinion, a core problem in the constructivist and political psychology literature is present in Gries's critique of my article. There is an implicit bias against tough behavior and in favor of accommodation. Rarely does one see arguments in that literature stating that tough treatment might transform a bad actor into a good one. Similarly, accommodation seemingly never tempts actors into becoming more greedy, nationalistic, and arrogant than they otherwise would be. So, in his pathbreaking article, Alexander Wendt suggests that even Hitler's Germany and the Soviet Union could have been appeased. Moreover, in his account, the Soviet Union transformed itself under Mikhail Gorbachev because Soviet leaders became convinced that the United States would not exploit Soviet weakness or accommodation, yet this occurred at the height of Ronald Reagan's and Margaret Thatcher's military buildup.⁸ I agree with Gries that actors' intentions and policies are shaped in part by external interaction, but there is no reason to reject the notion that

7. Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, "Defeating U.S. Coercion," *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer 1999), pp. 107–120, at p. 110.

8. Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 391–425, at pp. 409, 420.

both sticks and carrots can have a transformative effect on others, and that wise diplomacy involves both, not either in isolation.

In his commentary Gries offers no policy prescriptions of his own, making it impossible to compare the potential costs and benefits of the policies that I prescribe with those of the policies that Gries would prefer. He rejects as a destabilizing “arms buildup” my prescription that the United States should diversify its military capabilities in the region by adding more robust defensive systems to avoid overreliance on offensive strike weapons, preemptive doctrines, and Japanese assistance at the front. All of these, I believe, would increase the likelihood of escalation should a crisis or conflict occur. We do not know what U.S. weapons systems, if any, Gries believes should be prevalent in the Pacific. Should the United States continue to rely heavily on strike weapons instead of also adopting the defensive systems I prescribe? Should the United States simply unilaterally disarm so that China does not feel so emotionally threatened? Should the United States leave the region entirely? Gries also rejects my suggested transfer of relatively low-profile, purely defensive systems to Taiwan, such as lower-tier missile defense systems, P-3 ASW patrol planes, and mine-clearing assets. Are all Taiwanese weapons always destabilizing? Should the United States stop all arms sales to Taiwan? Finally, Gries argues that my preferred conditional commitment to Taiwan’s security sets the United States on the path to another Vietnam, but he does not say to what, if anything, the United States should commit. Should the United States abandon Taiwan under all circumstances and simply allow China to coerce a democratic Taiwan into an agreement against Taiwan’s will? Precisely because I believe that outside actors can have a transformative effect on China, I think that the answer to all of these questions is no.

Gries warns through his commentary that one of the most “dangerous” aspects of my article is that it might be used by various people who want to push programs that Gries himself considers unwise, such as NMD, or who want to “bash China” and participate in “temper tantrums.” Academics should never shape their analysis out of fear of who might adopt or distort their arguments. In fact, there are great ironies in Gries’s position on these allegedly “ominous” aspects of my article. One is that a “China-bashing hawk” who wanted to use my argument to support his or her agenda might choose to ignore all the statements I make about Beijing’s defensive political motivations and the need for reassurance as well as toughness in U.S. policy toward cross-strait relations. Such hawks should be grateful to Gries, because he provides them precisely such a redacted version of my argument in his commentary. A second irony is that, by emphasizing the irrational emotional aspects of Chinese security decisionmaking, Gries provides the strongest argument to date for national missile defenses capable of capturing all of China’s intercontinental ballistic missiles.⁹ If Gries succeeds in convincing the public that Chinese leaders can be highly emotional

9. For an argument in favor of missile defenses, which is partially founded on concerns about emotions, see Keith B. Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

and those leaders can take out twenty American cities and some overseas U.S. bases with nuclear weapons, I would expect funding for NMD and TMD to skyrocket, not decrease.

But as scholars we cannot constantly worry about who might use our work and for what purpose. I agree with Gries that there is room for more research on emotions in political science.¹⁰ Although it is different, such an approach need not be entirely at odds with traditional deterrence theory. Poorly crafted coercive diplomacy might increase the likelihood of dangerous emotional responses in target nations. On the one hand, if one appears weak and ineffectual in the face of a target nation's bullying, thus appearing to reward aggression, this might fuel emotional hypernationalism in that target nation and make peace and stability harder to maintain in the future. On the other hand, if one fails to reassure a target nation that its core interests will not be violated if that nation complies with one's own demands, this might lead to political desperation and panic, thus making the maintenance of peace in the future very difficult. A focus on emotions in international politics might strengthen, not undercut, a major conclusion of traditional deterrence theory: Prudent security policy requires both credible threats and credible assurances. Finding the right balance between the two will always prove challenging. My article is simply one attempt at finding such a balance in contemporary U.S.-China relations.

—Thomas J. Christensen
Cambridge, Massachusetts

10. See, for example, Roger Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).