



Chinese Perceptions of Threats from the United States and Japan

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I. Research Questions

- ◆ How much threat did Chinese perceive from the U.S. and Japan in the late 1990s?
- ◆ Why did Chinese perceive threats from the U.S. and Japan?
- ◆ What implications do Chinese perceptions of foreign threats have for China's domestic and foreign policies?

II. Defining and Measuring Foreign Threat

◆ Two conceptual components:

- The perceived adversary's *intention* to harm the perceiving party
- The perceived adversary's *capacity* to harm the perceiving party .

◆ Measures of perceived threat:

- Statement 1: "Each of the countries listed below, in your view, has hostile intentions against our country's vital interests and security."
- Statement 2: "Each of the countries listed below, in your view, has the military and/or economic power that poses a real and immediate danger to our country."

III. How Much Threat was Perceived?

Threats perceived from the United States and Japan,
Beijing, China, 1999

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	Mean score
Statement 1: <i>Intention</i>					
U.S.	4.7	20.9	54.0	20.3	2.85
Japan	5.9	26.7	52.9	13.9	2.74
Statement 2: <i>Capability</i>					
U.S.	1.8	9.2	69.4	15.2	3.01
Japan	1.8	20.7	62.7	7.3	2.81

IV. Why Did Chinese Perceive Foreign Threats?

- ◆ Values and opinions influencing perception
 - ■ Support for the political regime and its official ideology (5 items)
 - ◆ Political system and its institution (3 items)
 - ◆ Official norms, including nationalism (1 item)
 - ◆ Assessment of human rights conditions (1 item)
 - Beliefs about China's role in the world (2 items)
 - ◆ Role in Asia
 - ◆ Role in the world
 - Confidence in national capability (2 items)
 - ◆ Military capability
 - ◆ Economic capability
 - Interest in politics (2 items)
 - ◆ National issues
 - ◆ International issues

IV. Why Did Chinese Perceive Foreign Threats?

Multivariate Models of Threats Perceived from the United States and Japan, Beijing, China, 1999

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Threat from the U.S.</i>	<i>Threat from Japan</i>
Support for the regime and official ideology	.090**	.039
Beliefs about national role in world affairs	.193**	.232**
Confidence in national capability	-.163*	-.240*
Interest in national and international affairs	.150**	.118**
<i>Constant</i>	-1.691**	1.488**
<i>R</i> ²	.231	.270
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²	.203	.253
<i>N</i>	674	646

Note: Entries are unstandardized coefficients. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

VI. Conclusions and Implications

◆ Major findings:

- Perceived threat:
 - ◆ Most people perceived the U.S. and Japan threatened China, in terms of intentions and capabilities.
- Who perceived threat?
 - ◆ Those who supported the regime and its ideology, who had strong belief in China's strong role in world affairs, who were less confident in China's relative capabilities, and who were more interest in politics.

◆ Implications

- Government propaganda influences perception (interest in politics)
- The “universal” impacts of subjective values on perceived foreign threat (impacts of all independent variables)