



U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Hearing on China's Narratives Regarding National Security Policy

Opening Statement of Commissioner Jeffrey L. Fiedler March 10, 2011 Washington, DC

Thank you, Commissioner Shea. I would like to second that warm welcome to all of you who have joined us here this morning, and particularly to the witnesses who will be sharing with us their expertise and insights on these issues. Today we will be discussing a topic that has not received attention equal to its importance: understanding the policy implications of the messages that the Chinese government promotes to international audiences regarding its own national security policies.

As has been pointed out by Commissioner Shea the Chinese government has invested great effort in providing reassuring messages to foreign audiences: particularly, that its fundamental concern lies in the peaceful development of its own domestic economy, and that China will never pose a threat to its neighbors. While it is certainly the hope of all sensible people that this will prove to be true, prudence demands a more careful examination of China's course as an emerging world power. Underlying this is a simple question, but one that has no easy answer: Can China's reassurances be taken at face value?

This is not to assume that the narratives promoted by China's informational bureaucracy are necessarily false – in many cases, they may be accurate expressions of policy intent. However, the Chinese government's manipulation of information does mean that its narratives should not be taken uncritically at face value, and that these narratives must be made subject to a comparison of the Chinese government's words against its deeds. This is particularly true in the case of China's narratives regarding its foreign and national security policies – for either successful deception, or simply the spread of mutual misunderstanding, could both have a severely detrimental impact on future U.S. national security.

It is imperative that U.S. policymakers and the U.S. public have an accurate understanding of China's future intentions. It is our hope that today's hearing, and the testimony of the distinguished speakers who have joined us here today, will make a modest contribution towards this goal. With that, we will now turn to our first panel.