

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Powerful Patriots:
Nationalism, Diplomacy, and the Strategic Logic of Anti-Foreign Protest

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
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in

Political Science

by

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To my parents

In regard to China-Japan relations, reactions among youths, especially students, are strong. If difficult problems were to appear still further, it will become impossible to explain them to the people. It will become impossible to control them. I want you to understand this position which we are in.

Deng Xiaoping, speaking at a meeting with high-level Japanese officials, including Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Agriculture, and Forestry, June 28, 1987¹

During times of crisis, Arab governments demonstrated their own conception of public opinion as a street that needed to be contained. Some even complained about the absence of demonstrators at times when they hoped to persuade the United States to ease its demands for public endorsements of its policies.

Marc Lynch, Voices of the New Arab Public²

¹ Whiting (1989), p. 164, in translation from *Cankao Xiaoxi*, June 30, 1987.

² Lynch (2006), p. 75.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Powerful Patriots:
Nationalism, Diplomacy, and the Strategic Logic of Anti-Foreign Protest in China

by

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How do public opinion and nationalist sentiment affect the foreign policy of China and other non-democratic states? I argue that by allowing nationalist protests against foreign states, non-democratic leaders can use domestic politics for international gain. In China, anti-Japanese protests were tolerated in 1985 and 2005 but banned in 1990 and 1996. Anti-American protests were permitted in 1999 and 2003 but repressed in 2001. Similar patterns of repression and facilitation are readily apparent in Egypt, Iran, Syria, and other non-democratic regimes. Why, when, and how do authoritarian governments give their citizens a green, yellow, or red light to protest against foreign targets?

I develop a theory of anti-foreign protest that suggests that Chinese and other authoritarian leaders have incentives to allow anti-foreign protests in order to gain

diplomatic bargaining leverage. A large body of literature has argued that domestic constraints provide advantages in international negotiations. In particular, democratically-elected leaders often state that their hands are tied by constituents or parliamentarians who will punish them at the polls if they back down during negotiations. These potential “audience costs” represent a bargaining tool in international negotiations. Although authoritarian leaders are not constrained by the same electoral institutions, I argue that anti-foreign protests provide an alternative mechanism by which domestic politics can be leveraged in international bargaining. Because anti-foreign protests may turn against the government, allowing such protest makes it costly for the government to make diplomatic concessions and demonstrates resolve in international bargaining.

To evaluate the theory and its implications, I draw upon quantitative and qualitative data gathered over 12 months of field research in China, Hong Kong, and Japan, including more than 100 interviews with government officials, nationalist activists, protest leaders and participants, and foreign policy experts. I also make use of Chinese government documents, press reports, and internet archives. Three case studies, a comparison of anti-Japanese protest in Hong Kong and mainland China, and computerized content analysis of official and commercial Chinese media provide rich support for the theory.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Deng Xiaoping was an authoritarian leader who infamously ordered the 1989 crackdown on the Tiananmen Square protests. If Deng was able to suppress nationwide anti-government protests, what explains Deng's statement to Japanese officials? More broadly, when and how are authoritarian leaders able to utilize public opinion to advance their foreign policy goals? I address these questions by focusing on one simple puzzle: why do authoritarian leaders sometimes allow and sometimes repress nationalist anti-foreign protests, and what are the consequences of this choice for international relations?

In China, anti-American protests were allowed in 1999 after NATO bombed the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia but were repressed in 2001 after a U.S. reconnaissance plane and Chinese fighter jet collided. Anti-Japanese demonstrations were tolerated in 1985 and 2005 but were repressed in 1990 and 1996. When the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, antiwar demonstrations broke out in countries as far flung as Egypt, Russia and Indonesia. Yet Chinese authorities banned antiwar demonstrations, only to relent two weeks later.¹ Popular demonstrations have never been allowed over the issue of Taiwan, the issue of greatest concern to Chinese nationalists. Similar patterns of repression and facilitation are readily apparent in Egypt, Iran, Syria, and other non-democratic regimes. Why, when, and how do authoritarian governments give their citizens a green, yellow, or red light to protest against foreign targets? What explains this variation in government response to demands for nationalist protest?

¹ Willy Lam, "China bans antiwar protests," CNN.com, March 12, 2003; "Antiwar Demonstrations Approved by Beijing Police," Wen Wei Po, March 29, 2003.

I present a somewhat counterintuitive argument to explain this variation, suggesting that autocrats can benefit internationally by allowing anti-foreign protests that pose a risk to domestic instability and are increasingly costly to suppress. I argue that Chinese and other authoritarian leaders have incentives to allow anti-foreign protests in order to gain diplomatic bargaining leverage. Imagine an autocrat sitting down to negotiate with a democrat. The democratic president or prime minister can point to Congress or Parliament and say, “I can’t budge—they’ve got me pinned.” With anti-foreign protesters in the streets, however, the autocrat can say, “You might lose a few points at the polls, but I could be thrown into exile or much worse. You may have Congress, but I have mobs!” In short, autocrats can use anti-foreign protests as an alternative mechanism to leverage domestic politics at the international negotiating table.

Because anti-foreign protests may turn against the government and are costly to suppress, the autocrat’s decision to allow such protests demonstrates resolve in international bargaining and makes it difficult to offer international concessions. In the pages that follow, I develop a theory of anti-foreign protest as a public commitment strategy in international bargaining and identify the domestic and international variables that make authoritarian leaders more or less likely to permit anti-foreign protest. To test the theory, I draw upon qualitative and quantitative data gathered during 12 months of field research in China and more than 100 interviews with nationalist activists, protest participants, and government officials in China, Japan and Hong Kong.

In bargaining terms, anti-foreign protests serve as both a signaling and a commitment mechanism. Protests, once begun, can trigger the sudden realization that protest is acceptable, even safe, leading more and more people to join the protest.

Citizens who join an anti-foreign protest may discover common cause against the regime itself. Because nationalist protests may spiral out of control, the decision to allow protests and take this risk sends a credible signal of resolve.

At the same time, anti-foreign protests make it more difficult for authoritarian leaders to back down at the international negotiating table. Since it is easier to nip protests in the bud than suppress protests once they have grown in size and spread to multiple cities, the escalation of street protests ties the autocrat's hands, making it more likely that he will stand firm, risking an international standoff, rather than face the wrath of mobs at the palace gates.

In this way, the decision to allow anti-foreign protests is a calculated risk-return tradeoff. Although anti-foreign protests have the potential to get out of hand, the decision to allow them also makes the foreign government more likely to concede the dispute. Anti-foreign protests create international bargaining leverage by giving the foreign government an incentive to make concessions, salvaging the international negotiations and saving the autocrat's skin. This incentive, however, rests upon a critical assumption. The foreign government must prefer the incumbent autocrat to its probable successor. Given that anti-foreign, nationalist protests are likely to bring to power a more hawkish, belligerent regime, this assumption is generally justified. Where this assumption does not hold, the theory predicts that anti-foreign protests will not increase the authoritarian government's bargaining leverage.

To date, no study has systematically examined the causes and consequences of nationalist protest. Previous work in various literatures has suggested that anti-foreign protests are allowed for three primary reasons: 1) *Government incapacity* in the face of

spontaneous popular demonstrations (Perry 2002; Tanner 2004; Gries 2004, 2005a).² In this view, anti-foreign protests occur as the spontaneous eruption of nationalist sentiment against a foreign provocation, where the government is unable or unwilling to prevent protests before they erupt, perhaps out of fear of appearing unpatriotic. 2) *Government mobilization of nationalistic sentiment* to divert public attention from domestic ills and bolster popular support (e.g. Waldron 1999; Chang 2006; He 2007b; Coser 1956; Mueller 1973). By this logic, anti-foreign protests are ginned up by the government as a way to rally support and provide an outlet for pent-up grievances in society. 3) *Factional or bureaucratic competition* (Allison 1969; Nathan 1973). In this view, bureaucratic or factional interests within the government are responsible for mobilizing or giving the green light to nationalist protests, seeking to use public opinion and/or the threat of instability to gain the upper hand during internal power struggles.

Although these explanations contain important insights, they have difficulty accounting for the variation in when anti-foreign protests are allowed and when they are prevented. Although these explanations may explain why protests sometimes occur, they have difficulty explaining why protests are at other times prevented by the government—for instance, detaining activists the night before a protest or dispersing crowds as soon as they materialize. In the spontaneous view, protests occur without the government's knowledge or consent. In the diversionary view, protests are beneficial to the government. Neither can account for the repression of protest. The bureaucratic or factional view is also problematic because it fails to specify why internal competition—a constant feature

² Here, “incapacity” includes descriptions such as “too hazardous for the government to try to disallow student protests altogether,” (Perry 2002, p. xiv) and “unable to suppress the protestors, authorities were forced to plead with them for calm” (Gries 2004, p.131).

of politics—only sometimes takes advantage of popular sentiment and produces a decision to allow nationalist protests. Commonly asserted but rarely substantiated, factional and bureaucratic theories are often plausible but tend toward the conspiratorial.

Understanding the conditions that lead authoritarian leaders to allow or repress nationalist protest represents a step forward in unpacking “autocracy,” which has languished as the “residual category” in much of international relations and comparative politics. Although it was once widely believed that institutions of participation and contestation put democracies at a disadvantage in dealing with their tighter-lipped authoritarian counterparts (Wright 1965), recent scholarship has emphasized the advantages of democracy for the conduct of international relations. Democracies are purported to have the advantage over autocracies in upholding their international obligations (e.g. Gaubatz 1996; Schultz and Weingast 1996; Mansfield, Milner and Rosendorff 2002), selecting and winning wars (e.g. Lake 1992; Reiter and Stam 1998, 2002; Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson et al. 1999, 2004), and sending credible signals in crisis bargaining (e.g. Fearon 1994; Schultz 1998, 1999, 2001), with only a few cautionary counterarguments (e.g. Tomz 2002; Slantchev 2006; Weeks 2008; Archer, Biglaiser and DeRouen 2007). The drive to find theories that can both explain the democratic peace and generate new testable implications has encouraged scholars to study democracies. Given that the vast majority of interstate wars are fought in autocratic and mixed dyads, illuminating the foreign policy decisionmaking of authoritarian leaders is important to improving our understanding of international conflict.

I focus on the recent body of literature in international relations that has shown that domestic constraints provide an important source of ammunition in international

disputes. Democratically-elected leaders often state that their hands are tied by constituents or parliamentarians (Schelling 1960; Milner 1997) who will punish them at the polls if they back down during negotiations. These potential “audience costs” represent a bargaining tool in international negotiations (Fearon 1994; Schultz 2001b). Although authoritarian leaders are not constrained by the same electoral institutions, anti-foreign protests provide an alternative mechanism by which domestic politics can be leveraged in diplomatic negotiations. Because anti-foreign protests may turn against the government, allowing such protest makes it costly for the government to make diplomatic concessions and demonstrates toughness or “resolve” in negotiations. It is in pursuit of this international leverage that authoritarian leaders allow anti-foreign protests, not in spite of—but because of—the risk to domestic stability. The “double-edged sword” of nationalist protest represents a useful bargaining tactic, a hands-tying mechanism uniquely available to authoritarian leaders.

Yet anti-foreign protest is hardly a one-size fits-all instrument for diplomatic wrangling. Like a short-range missile, protests are but one weapon in a large arsenal and better suited to certain missions than others. In the theory developed below, I identify the conditions under which authoritarian leaders are more likely to allow anti-foreign protests, specifying the domestic as well as international variables that affect the government’s decision.

I use the term “nationalist protest” and “anti-foreign protest” interchangeably, defined here as:

A public manifestation by a group of people of disapproval or dissent, containing hostile feeling towards a foreign government or people, and

rooted in advocacy or support for the nation's interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of other nations.

I follow Haas in defining nationalism as an ideology that makes “assertions about the nation's claim to historical uniqueness, to the territory that the nation-state ought to occupy, and to the kinds of relations that should prevail between one's nation and others” (Haas 1986:727-8).

It is particularly important to distinguish the phenomenon of “protest” from an official rally or other state-organized demonstration. Official rallies are organized under government or party auspices and attended by a select group of pre-screened participants. Protests—including demonstrations, petitions, marches, and strikes—may receive official permission but are organized and attended by individuals acting in a private capacity, or as part of an independent organization. Thus, the theory developed here does not encompass state-orchestrated mass demonstrations such as those in North Korea or in China during the Mao Zedong era, as those protests did not carry the same risk of turning against the regime.³

The remainder of this dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 develops the logic of anti-foreign protest as a bargaining tactic in a two-level game. The core intuition is that anti-foreign protests are threatening to the government as a risk that might get out of hand. If not nipped in the bud, protests are also increasingly costly to suppress. These features render anti-foreign protests analogous to audience costs, enabling authoritarian leaders to signal resolve and tie hands in international bargaining.

³ This does not preclude the possibility of cases in which an official rally is substituted for protest in an attempt to appease citizens. If opposition groups succeed in taking over the rally, then the rally has marginally decreased the costs of collective action against the government. But this presumes a failure of state capacity to control even its own activities, which is a special circumstance and not the general case.

After presenting the theory, I then utilize a comparison of Hong Kong and mainland China to test the hypothesis that anti-foreign protests should be rarer in autocracies because they pose a risk to authoritarian stability. Comparing the incidence of anti-Japanese protest in “democratic” Hong Kong and “autocratic” China allows us to examine the effect of regime type while controlling for other factors. At first glance, China and Hong Kong may not appear to be a good match. After all, China is the world’s most populous nation and Hong Kong is a city-state. Nevertheless, I contend that this difference in size, along with other potential confounding variables, do not present significant threats to the validity of the analysis. In fact, adjusting for these variables may actually strengthen the observed relationship between regime type and anti-Japanese protest. This simple comparison suggests that nationalist protests would increase if China were to become more democratic.

Chapter 3 demonstrates support for the core assumption that protests are risky for authoritarian leaders via a case study of the 1985 anti-Japanese protests in China, illustrating how nationalist protests can turn against the regime. A careful tracing reveals four critical links between the 1985 anti-Japanese protests and the wave of pro-democracy protests that began in 1986 and culminated in the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations. Key networks and other collective action resources were mobilized during the anti-Japanese protests, gaining strength as the government first allowed and then suppressed the anti-Japanese protests. Although the wave of protests ultimately failed to topple the regime, the leadership paid dearly. Two General Secretaries of the Chinese Communist Party were removed from office for “mismanaging” the student protests: Hu Yaobang in 1987 and Zhao Ziyang in 1989.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how the incentives and mechanisms specified in Chapter 2 influenced decisionmakers during the 2005 anti-Japanese protests in China and the international negotiations over the expansion of the United Nations Security Council. Evidence from this case study strongly supports my primary hypotheses about the timing of anti-foreign protests and their impact on international bargaining. I demonstrate that the anti-Japanese protests affected the U.N. negotiations in two ways: prompting the Chinese government to take a tougher public stance against Japan's bid and leading the United States to reach an agreement with China to block the proposed membership of Japan, Germany, India, and Brazil. The final result of the negotiations was closer to China's preferred outcome than the counterfactual, i.e. the probable outcome of negotiations if anti-Japanese protests had not been allowed. In addition, I utilize computer-based content analysis of Chinese online news coverage to illustrate the strategic timing of the anti-Japanese petitions and protests. I focus on two major internet portals: the *People's Daily* website, the government's mouthpiece, and *Sina.com*, one of the most popular commercial news sites in China.

Chapter 5 shows that the decision to allow or prevent anti-foreign protests depends on the international bargaining context—namely, whether anti-foreign protests are expected to yield sufficient benefit at the international level to offset the domestic risk of allowing street protests. The chapter contrasts the Chinese government's response to two unanticipated, “near crisis” events that stirred popular anti-American sentiment in China. In 1999, U.S. planes bombed the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia during a NATO air strike. In 2001, a U.S. reconnaissance plane collided with a Chinese fighter jet. In 1999, the government allowed and even encouraged anti-American protests. In 2001,

would-be protesters were quickly escorted away and the official media told to keep down their rhetoric. I argue that the critical difference between these two crises was the bilateral bargaining context. The Chinese government viewed the 1999 bombing as a deliberate provocation to test China's resolve at a time of acrimonious negotiations over China's entry into the World Trade Organization. By contrast, the 2001 plane collision occurred soon after George W. Bush took office, when Chinese diplomacy was aimed at reducing the perception that China posed a threat to the United States. However, fearing that anti-foreign protests would lead to anti-government protests in 1999, the Chinese government orchestrated the anti-American demonstrations with a visible hand and undermined the perception that the protests posed a genuine risk. As a result, U.S. officials discounted the protests and warned the Chinese government not to use the bombing to gain leverage on other issues, such as China's entry into the WTO or U.N. negotiations over Kosovo. The case study thus illustrates the risk-return tradeoff: the lower (higher) the risk to the regime, the smaller (larger) the potential international benefit. By stage-managing the protests, the Chinese government reduced the efficacy of the bargaining tactic along with the risk to the regime.

Chapter 6 concludes by summarizing the theory and the assembled empirical evidence. It also addresses "the dogs that did not bark," namely, the striking absence of popular protest in China regarding the issue of Taiwan and Tibet. Given the large risk that protests against Taiwanese and Tibetan independence would turn against the government, I suggest that the Chinese government has taken great pains to prevent such protests. On the Taiwan issue, the government has resorted to alternative measures, such as missile exercises, to establish the credibility of its international negotiating position.

On the Tibet issue, the government has redirected nationalist sentiment toward Western politicians, businesses and media outlets, accusing them of supporting Tibetan independence. The chapter also considers the broader implications of the theory and evidence assembled here for international relations, authoritarian regimes, and Chinese politics. Will China's rise be peaceful? Would a democratic China be more or less aggressive in world affairs? From Egypt to Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, many authoritarian leaders are buttressed by aid from the West. How will incentives to nurture nationalist sentiment and tolerate anti-American protest affect American relations with these regimes?

Chapter 2: Anti-Foreign Protest as an International Bargaining Tactic

Why do authoritarian governments sometimes allow and sometimes suppress nationalist, anti-foreign demonstrations? What are the international consequences of this choice? This chapter develops a theory of anti-foreign protests as an international bargaining tactic. This theory has important implications for research on domestic politics and international relations, since it suggests a mechanism by which authoritarian regimes can utilize public opinion to advance their foreign policy ends.

I draw inspiration from the recent body of work that suggests that democratic leaders are better able to use the threat of electoral punishment for backing down—i.e. “audience costs”—to tie their hands in international negotiations (e.g. Martin 1993; Fearon 1994; Smith 1998; Schultz 2001a; Gelpi and Griesdorf 2001; Leventoglu and Tarar 2005). Citizens are said to punish leaders for backing down after making a public threat, viewing concession as national humiliation. As a result, leaders who make public threats will be perceived by their adversaries as being relatively resolved, or else they would not have taken a public stance.¹

According to the conventional wisdom in this literature, the probability that authoritarian leaders will be punished for appearing incompetent or weak on foreign policy is quite small, even though the magnitude of the punishment may be quite large in the event of a coup or other irregular turnover (Fearon 1994; Schultz 2001). Which effect dominates is a moot point if the audience costs are invisible to outsiders. Unless authoritarian leaders can convince foreign negotiators *ex ante* that the adverse

¹ Further research has explicitly examined the decision to go public or private, e.g. Baum (2004).

consequences are real and are not part of a bluffing strategy, these audience costs will have no bite. The king's hands may be tied, but the bonds are invisible.

I argue that anti-foreign protests give authoritarian leaders a way to communicate credibly that they face domestic punishment for backing down and conceding to foreign demands. In bargaining terms, the decision to allow anti-foreign protest represents a credible commitment to stand firm as well as a costly signal of resolve. On the one hand, anti-foreign protests visibly raise the costs of diplomatic concession, increasing the government's incentive to stand firm even under complete information. On the other hand, because anti-foreign protests may escalate to anti-government protests, the government's willingness to run this risk differentiates it from a government that is only bluffing about its value for the disputed issue.² As Schelling (1966:94) notes, "international relations often have the character of a competition in risk-taking, characterized not so much by tests of force as by tests of nerve." Anti-foreign protests provide a mechanism for authoritarian leaders to communicate resolve under conditions of incomplete information and incentives to bluff.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I identify my theoretical assumptions and derive several hypotheses. I then test the prediction that anti-foreign protests, although useful to authoritarian leaders as a bargaining tactic, are less frequent in autocracies than democracies because of the risk they pose to autocratic stability. To do so, I compare the incidence of anti-Japanese protest in "democratic" Hong Kong and "autocratic" China over the period 1978-2005.

² Willingness to take risks is only one method of demonstrating resolve. See Morrow (1989), p. 942.

2.1 Theoretical Assumptions

The theory developed here makes four basic assumptions about the nature of protest and authoritarian politics: 1) international outcomes affect domestic outcomes; 2) authoritarian leaders seek to retain office; 3) nationalist anti-foreign protests are risky in the authoritarian context; and 4) protests are easier to nip in the bud, i.e. the costs of suppression are higher *ex post* than *ex ante*. The first two are fairly uncontroversial; the third and fourth assumptions are the core assumptions driving the theory.

The first assumption is that international outcomes affect the domestic standing of leaders and vice versa. Authoritarian leaders are no exception to the “two-level game” of strategic interaction between international and domestic politics (Putnam 1988). Although autocrats are not held accountable to the citizenry via open and competitive elections, they are nevertheless accountable to a certain “selectorate” or “winning coalition” (Shirk 1993; Roeder 1993; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999). In ordinary times, authoritarian leaders may be accountable to the military, the bureaucracy, or some other constellation of powerful actors. Below, I argue that anti-foreign protests give potential force to the evaluations of protestors and ordinary citizens outside the selectorate or winning coalition.

The second simplifying assumption is that authoritarian leaders seek above all else to maximize their probability of survival in office. Authoritarian leaders strive to retain power as a first-order preference, just as U.S. politicians seek re-election (Mayhew 1974). Politicians may have other goals, including ideological or policy objectives, but holding office generally makes it easier to achieve those goals.³ The process of rising to

³ An exception may be “tin-pot” or “bandit” leaders, whose strategy is to steal resources, flee the country, and enjoy the illicit gains during retirement.

power also tends to favor those who have an appetite for it, weeding out those who do not (see Geddes 1991:374). Once in power, autocrats may have even stronger incentives than democrats to stay in office, given the irregular and violent manner in which autocrats are often removed (Goemans 2000).

An implication of this assumption is that authoritarian leaders prefer to suppress or co-opt potential challengers rather than make political concessions. This assumption does not preclude the possibility that liberalization can be part of a strategy to maximize long-term survival, if the costs of concession are less than the expected increase in long-term “rents” from holding office. Although regimes vary in the level of repression and exclusion, it is not too great a simplification to assume that political concessions such as popular elections or consultation mechanisms are costly to authoritarian leaders, at least in the short run. To the extent that authoritarian leaders value popular participation, they prefer to guide it, not be guided by it—“to have every citizen organized as a cheering, active member of a party-controlled organization” (Pool 1973: 464).

The third assumption is that nationalist, anti-foreign protests pose a risk to regime survival in authoritarian societies. Protests in general present a risk to authoritarian stability for several reasons identified in the literature:

- *Demonstration effects, tipping points, and information cascades*: Protests, once begun, can trigger the sudden realization that protest is acceptable, even safe, leading more and more people to join the protest. Once a critical mass has gathered in the streets and authorities have not suppressed the protest, the protest can rapidly swell to a size unimaginable the day before (Schelling 1978; Kuran 1991; Lohmann 1994; Laitin 1998).
 - *Resource mobilization*: Protests beget protests by lowering the costs of collective action for other groups that have fewer resources, activating
-

new networks and facilitating the spread of protest techniques and repertoires from hard-core activists to previously passive groups and individuals (Tarrow 1998).

- *Elite splits*: Protests may expose weaknesses in the government that may not have been widely apparent, revealing sympathetic allies among the elite (Tarrow 1998:87) and potential regime-threatening fissures between hardliners and moderates (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). As Pool notes, “The kind of unity and cohesion created by [authoritarian] methods is fragile. Whenever the structure of controls breaks down, the apparent unanimity collapses quickly” (Pool 1973).
- *Countermobilization by other groups in society*: Protests by one group may spark fear among other groups, leading those groups to mobilize to protect their interests (see Tarrow 1998:145). This phenomenon has been the subject of both theoretical and empirical research on ethnic conflict (e.g. de Figueiredo and Weingast 1999) as well as “outbidding” among terrorist groups (e.g. Bloom 2005). When groups cannot count on the state to protect their interests—and may even fear that the mobilizing group will be bought off by the government—the logic of the security dilemma applies, and groups that feel threatened may thus mobilize counter protests.

Nationalist protest is especially risky because it has the potential to shake the foundation of state legitimacy, particularly those that rely upon nationalist mythmaking to bolster their credentials with the public (see Snyder 1991; van Evera 1994). Nationalist protests are particularly risky because they have broad appeal. As historian John Breuilly notes, “Even if nationalist movements do not have active popular support, they claim to speak for the whole nation” (Breuilly 1994:19). Nationalist protests advance goals that may challenge the foundation of the government’s legitimacy, goals that may be beyond the reach of the existing government, such as “the historical mission of the nation, ranging from quiet self-perfection to conquest or the restoration of some golden age,” including “how the nation ought to be governed” (Haas 1986:727-8). Nationalism promotes love of the nation, not love of the government, meaning that nationalist protest can easily escalate to demands for revolution if the public feels that the government has

failed to defend the nation from foreign depredations. As Jack Snyder notes, “Often, nationalists claim that old elites are ineffective in meeting foreign threats and that a new, popular government is needed to pursue national interests more forcefully” (Snyder 1993:16; see also Shirk 2007:256).

The magnitude of this risk, which may be termed the “fragility” of the system at a given moment, depends on a range of factors. These include the level of societal discontent, the level of resources and organization among opposition groups, and the strength of the elite pact against defections. Here it is not necessary to assume that any given protest has a large likelihood of turning against the regime, only that there be some probability—exogenous to the government’s handling of foreign policy and the outcome of the international negotiations—that protesters will change direction, for example, and picket government offices rather than foreign offices. Nevertheless, the magnitude of this risk—especially as perceived by outsiders—is an important variable that affects the expected utility of anti-foreign protest as a bargaining tactic. I return to this issue later.

The fourth assumption is that protests are easier to nip in the bud than to suppress after they have begun. That is, the government must go to greater effort and absorb higher costs when curtailing a protest that has become large or widespread. Repression is always costly, but dispersing a large crowd is more costly than hauling away a few “early risers” at the scene (Tarrow 1998) or warning off activists on the eve of protest. The costs of suppression take three forms: physical, psychological, and reputational. Physically, more manpower is required to deal with a large crowd, whether by force or persuasion. More government resources must be mobilized to corral protesters and clear the scene without bloodshed. Psychologically, the crowd’s willingness to resist suppression is

likely to increase with the experience of protest. By the logic of prospect theory, people care disproportionately about what they stand to lose than what they stand to gain (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). The implication of loss-aversion is that people will fight harder for what they have than for something they do not yet have. Accordingly, participants will place greater value on the right to protest after they have joined the demonstration than when it is still hypothetical. The psychological cost of suppression thus increases once a protest has begun.

The government also faces higher reputation costs of suppression once protests have attracted domestic and international scrutiny. The larger and more prominent the protest, the more likely international and domestic observers are to condemn the government for violating human rights. Once a large crowd has assembled, the government's handling of the protests becomes more visible. The government is thus more likely to face censure for suppressing protest once it has grown in size and scale. Domestically, even members of the public who disagree with the protesters' demands may be spurred to defend the right to protest, e.g. liberals who favor political reform and openness to popular participation. Nationalist protests are especially costly to suppress in this regard because suppression can often appear anti-patriotic, a betrayal of the national myth. Clever protesters seeking to gain sympathy and avoid suppression have often used this to their advantage. In China, for example, nationalist protesters often chant the slogan, "Patriotism is innocent!" The reputation costs of suppression thus increase once protest has begun, varying with the extent to which observers view the protests as legitimate.

It is important to note that the assumption of escalating costs implies that anti-foreign protests are unlikely to "fizzle out" in the absence of satisfaction—in the form of

foreign concessions or a positive change in the status quo—or suppression. That is, the government cannot wait out the protests and assume that people will go home once they are tired, regardless of the outcome. This assumption is reasonable in the short term, particularly during the initial “rapid diffusion” phase of the protest cycle (Tarrow 1998:141). Over the long term, protests may subside as exhaustion sets in.

I thus take a relatively instrumental view of protest. Protestors may participate for many different reasons, including thrill-seeking and blowing off steam, but many are also purposive, seeking to effect policy change. Although some participants will satisfy their appetite for protest after a short period of participation, others in the crowd will find that the experience has whetted their appetite for protest, stirring them and others to continue pressing their demands. I thus make the simplifying assumption that the “mobilization” effect of protest dominates the “venting” effect. That protestors act instrumentally holds even if nationalist protest is insincere, a mask or outlet for anti-government grievances. In an insincere protest, protesters are still unlikely to disperse without achieving their objectives, in this case domestic concessions rather than foreign policy demands.

2.2 The Strategic Logic of Anti-Foreign Protest

Building upon these assumptions, the logic developed here describes a two-level game in which the international and domestic levels are interdependent. Negotiations at the international level are described by a standard model of crisis bargaining between two states (e.g. Morrow 1989; Powell 1990; Fearon 1994; Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow and Zorick 1997), one of which is comprised of a government and a domestic public. At the international level, the two states negotiate over the division of some good, which may

represent anything from natural resources to territory to a particular policy. The source of conflict is distributional: which state will get the better end of the bargain if a deal is reached. Each state is uncertain about the other state's willingness to hold out for a better deal and risk the collapse of negotiations. In canonical models of crisis bargaining, the failure to reach agreement implies escalation to war. Here, the war outcome can simply be thought of as the absence of cooperation, i.e. a Pareto-inefficient outcome that leaves both states worse off than if they had reached an agreement (see Milner 1997; Powell 2002).

Given incomplete information, both states have strategic incentives to misrepresent their willingness to stand firm, making credible communication difficult (Fearon 1995). To signal resolve, however, "cheap talk" will not suffice; states must take costly actions that distinguish their statements from mere bluffs. One way to signal resolve is to take actions that increase the risk of bargaining failure (Powell 1990; Schelling 1960; Fearon 1997). A recent body of literature has suggested that public posturing is one way for state leaders to send a costly signal of resolve during diplomatic negotiations (e.g. Martin 1993; Fearon 1994; Smith 1998; Schultz 2001a; Leventoglu and Tarar 2005). By "going public" before domestic audiences, the government increases the potential costs of subsequently backing down. These "audience costs" make it harder for the government to offer concessions, increasing the risk that the government will be locked into a position it cannot yield. The decision to go public signals resolve; the ensuing threat of incurring audience costs ties the government's hands.

The microfoundations of audience costs have recently been the subject of some controversy (e.g. Schultz 2001b; Smith 1998; Slantchev 2006). In a seminal article,

Fearon (1994) suggests that domestic audiences punish leaders who back down for betraying the “national honor.” Audience costs are assumed as an exogenous parameter; the public does not actually have the opportunity to act. This raises two questions about the credibility of audience costs. First, is it rational for citizens to punish their leaders for backing down? Second, under what conditions are citizens able to impose punishment?

Most work on the microfoundations of audience costs has focused on *why* citizens would punish their leaders. Smith (1998) argues that backing down during a crisis reveals a lack of leadership competence. If failure to follow through with past commitments reflects poorly upon a leader’s competence, then voters may rationally punish leaders for backing down in a crisis despite being content with the outcome, i.e. having avoided war or some other form of “foreign entanglement” (Smith 1998: 623). An alternative line of argument suggests that being caught bluffing destroys a country’s reputation for honesty (e.g. Guisinger and Smith 2002; Sartori 2002). In this view, voters have incentives to remove leaders who back down in order to restore the nation’s credibility. Nevertheless, as Schultz points out, it is unclear why citizens would punish their leaders for getting caught bluffing, since bluffing can be an optimal strategy (Schultz 1999:237).

A smaller subset of literature on audience costs has addressed *how* institutional conditions affect the ability of citizens to punish their leaders. In order to threaten punishment credibly, citizens must be able to obtain reliable information about the foreign policy performance of their leaders. In Schultz’s (1998) depiction of democracy, competition between the leadership and opposition is public, unrestricted, and informative. However, Ramsay (2004) and Slantchev (2006) point out that the information-revealing properties of democratic competition rest upon a critical

assumption, namely, that the opposition speaks credibly. This point remains controversial. On the one hand, Ramsay (2004) argues that opposition babbling is reduced by assuming two-dimensional preferences, incorporating policy goals as well as office-seeking goals to discipline the opposition. On the other hand, Slantchev (2006) contends that office-seeking incentives bias the signal that the opposition sends to citizens, preventing them from learning anything about the competence of the incumbent leadership.

Despite this unresolved debate, audience costs have been marshaled to explain international cooperation (Leeds 1999), crisis behavior and outcomes (Partell and Palmer 1999; Eyerman and Hart 1996), compliance with trade agreements (Mansfield et al. 2002), monetary policy credibility (Lohmann 2003), and even democratic consolidation (Pevehouse 2002). The use of audience costs to address such a range of issues underscores the need to substantiate their theoretical underpinnings. In doing so, I depart from the traditional focus on electoral institutions and turn instead to the strategic interaction of citizens and leaders in authoritarian states.

In the logic presented here, the negotiation begins with some international provocation or challenge. The first stage describes the domestic interaction between an authoritarian government and its citizenry. The second stage describes the international negotiation between the authoritarian government and the foreign government. In the first stage, the government has the opportunity to allow or repress anti-foreign protests. If the government allows anti-foreign protests, the public can then choose to protest or not protest. If the public decides to protest, there is a risk that anti-foreign demonstrations will turn against the government with some exogenous probability, which is common knowledge. In the second stage, the foreign government has a chance to withdraw or

press its challenge. If the foreign government presses its challenge, the home government then decides whether to stand firm or back down. Standing firm increases the probability that negotiations will break down, but backing down requires the government to concede the issue and suppress protests if they have occurred.

In deciding whether to allow anti-foreign protests, the government thus faces a risk-return tradeoff. Although anti-foreign protests have the potential to get out of hand, the government's decision to allow them also makes the foreign government more likely to concede the dispute. That is, the decision to take a domestic risk makes international victory more likely. I hypothesize that allowing anti-foreign protests increases the probability that authoritarian leaders will achieve diplomatic victory in two ways: by raising the cost of concession, and by signaling resolve. I present each of these arguments in turn.

Anti-Foreign Protest as a Commitment Tactic

Although autocratic leaders are not constrained by the same electoral institutions as democratic leaders, anti-foreign protests represent an alternative mechanism by which domestic interests can be leveraged in international negotiations. By raising the cost of diplomatic concession, anti-foreign protests serve as a commitment tactic in international negotiations, enabling authoritarian leaders to claim credibly that they cannot maintain the status quo or meet foreign demands. Analogous to audience costs, anti-foreign protests represent one method by which leaders can “tie” their hands, generating expectations of retrospective sanctions if they fail to follow through with their commitments or threats.

Anti-foreign protests raise the cost of diplomatic concession by generating a credible threat of domestic punishment. In order to back down and meet foreign demands in the presence of anti-foreign protests, the government would have to suppress the anti-foreign protests or suffer an anti-government backlash. As the costs of suppression escalate, the government has less and less incentive to make diplomatic concessions. Rather than concede and face the wrath of protesters, the government can minimize the costs of dispersing protest by taking a firm foreign policy stance. If nationalist protesters see progress toward their objectives, they will be more easily persuaded to disperse without blaming the government. In sum, when nationalist protests occur, authoritarian leaders face incentives to placate protesters with a hawkish foreign policy stance and evidence of diplomatic triumph.

To illustrate, consider the nature of foreign relations with and without nationalist anti-foreign protests. Without protests, autocracies have a relatively free hand to set foreign policy. If the authoritarian government pursues a conciliatory foreign policy that is perceived by the public as betraying the nation's interest, domestic resentment may build against the government. If protests do not occur, foreign observers cannot readily observe the extent of this discontent. Though netizens and independent newspapers may publish dissenting views, foreign observers may conclude that domestic opposition is limited to a vocal minority and is unlikely to influence foreign policy. Even if official pronouncements declare that the "feelings of the people" have been hurt by foreign transgressions, as Chinese diplomats often claim, it is difficult for outsiders to determine whether this is "cheap talk" or grounds for a stiffer foreign policy.

With protests, the domestic costs of pursuing a conciliatory foreign policy become visible. The government faces two options for restoring order once protests begin: appeasing demonstrators by adopting a more hawkish foreign policy stance, or using coercion to disperse the demonstrators. As protests escalate, so do the physical, psychological, and reputation costs of using coercion to restore order. Moreover, by raising the salience of the international dispute among the public, protests increase the size of the audience costs incurred if the government backs down (see Baum 2004; Miller and Krosnick 2000). The escalating costs of concession and suppression thus reduce the government's negotiating flexibility by making a tough stance on foreign policy increasingly attractive to the government. If the costs of concession and suppression grow large enough, the government will stand firm with certainty. Unfortunately, like other bargaining tactics that "lock" in a tough bargaining stance, anti-foreign protests can cause negotiations to collapse despite the government's intentions to the contrary, leading to escalation or simply the failure to achieve cooperation.

Anti-Foreign Protest as a Signaling Tactic

Second, the decision to allow anti-foreign protests demonstrates a willingness to bear risk, namely, that protests may turn against the government. Although the government can take security measures to mitigate this risk—e.g. sending police to accompany the protest march or prohibiting protest on sensitive domestic anniversaries or in focal locations—there remains some probability that the protests will spiral beyond their intended scope and target the government. The government's willingness to run this risk sets it apart from others that would not run this risk, signaling a relatively high value for the dispute relative to concession.

The magnitude of this risk is independent of the government's actions on foreign policy, that is, it is exogenous to the international negotiations, determined entirely by the "fragility" of the authoritarian system or the latent instability of the regime. This element of risk renders anti-foreign protests analogous to the "threat that leaves something to chance" (Schelling 1960, 1966). The innovation here is that the potential for disaster is not mutually assured destruction, but domestically assured destruction. The act of allowing protests thus shows that the government is willing to approach the "brink." Whereas traditional models require actions that increase the risk of war to signal resolve (Schelling 1960; Powell 1990; Fearon 1992, 1994), I suggest that actions that increase the risk of regime instability can also serve this purpose.

To illustrate, consider again the nature of diplomatic negotiations with and without protests. Without protests, the government's resolve over the issue is mainly conveyed via public rhetoric and private comments. While official spokesmen may calibrate their rhetoric to convey a consistent hierarchy of national priorities, outside observers have little hard evidence to evaluate the weight of official remarks. Given that government officials have incentives to bluff, their statements lack a certain degree of credibility and may therefore be discounted.⁴ By consenting to anti-foreign protests, however, the government demonstrates that it is willing to run a risk of domestic instability for the sake of the dispute, thereby sending a costly signal. As the cliché goes, actions speak louder than words. By allowing protests that appear potentially

⁴ On the efficiency of private and public rhetoric as credible signals, see Sartori (2002), Leventoglu and Tarar (2005), and Kurizaki (2007). At a higher level of escalation, economic sanctions and military mobilization are alternative methods of signaling resolve, e.g. Slantchev (2005).

destabilizing in the eyes of foreign observers, authoritarian leaders communicate the gravity of their concern.

2.3 Predictions

Three primary implications follow from the theory:

H1 (Bargaining Advantage): On average, given the occurrence of anti-foreign protests, the international outcome should be more favorable to the government. Once the government has tied its hands and demonstrated resolve by allowing anti-foreign protests, the burden of conciliation falls to the foreign government. On average, therefore, anti-foreign protests should lead to a more advantageous bargain for the authoritarian government. However, the nature of strategic interaction means that although anti-foreign protests give authoritarian leaders bargaining leverage, the ultimate outcome depends on the resolve and actions of the other parties. Negotiations may also collapse, leading to escalation or simply a lack of cooperation.

H2 (Tying Hands): Given the occurrence of anti-foreign protests, the government is more likely to take a hawkish stance. Unless foreign negotiators back down or threaten to impose sanctions that will be more costly to the government than suppressing protests, the government should take a tougher foreign policy stance in order to placate and disperse protesters.

H3 (International Timing): Anti-foreign protests are more likely to be allowed by authoritarian governments before or during negotiations, not after a settlement has been reached. As signals of resolve, nationalist protests are useful during the stage of negotiations when parties are trying to reveal preferences, establish reservation levels,

and locate a bargain. Once a deal has been struck and the negotiations have moved into the implementation phase, anti-foreign protests no longer increase bargaining leverage. When reassurance and compliance are the objective, anti-foreign protests cease to be useful tactics. Thus, we should not observe anti-foreign protest after a settlement has been reached.

Three secondary hypotheses follow from the assumption that protests pose a risk to authoritarian regimes:

H4 (Regime Type): Anti-foreign protests are less frequent in autocracies than democracies. Although authoritarian leaders may allow nationalist protests when it suits their bargaining interests, on the whole, such protests should still be less frequent than under democratic rule. Nationalist protest is both riskier for regime survival and less costly to repress under autocracy than democracy. In democratic systems, nationalist protest is less likely to become a movement for revolution. As Tarrow (1998:84) puts it, “The ease of organizing opinion in representative systems and finding legitimate channels for its expression induces many movements to turn to elections.” In addition, the cost of squelching protests is higher in democracies, where constitutional protections for freedom of assembly are stronger. In sum, authoritarian leaders have greater motivation and capacity to repress nationalist protest.

H5 (No dovish protests): Authoritarian governments tend not to allow dovish protests. We should not observe permission granted to protests that are more dovish or conciliatory than the government’s position on foreign policy (if bargaining is underway) or the status quo (if negotiations have not yet begun). That is, protesters need not be more hawkish than the government, just more hawkish than the status quo. Dovish protests are

domestically disruptive but provide the government with no extra leverage in diplomatic negotiations. In fact, pro-foreign protests may actually reduce bargaining leverage, giving foreign negotiators an incentive to stand firm and hope that regime instability will bring a friendlier, more dovish government to power. If, on the other hand, nationalist protests are perceived to be more hawkish than the government itself, foreign governments will face incentives to strengthen the authoritarian regime by making concessions that will appease protesters.

H6 (Domestic Risk): The larger the risk that an anti-foreign protest will turn against the government, the less likely the government is to tolerate or encourage such protest. By implication, the riskier the protest, the greater the signaled level of resolve.

The magnitude of this domestic risk is in turn a function of a variety of factors, including state strength, the level of domestic discontent, and the extent of anti-foreign sentiment among the public. Proxies for the level of domestic discontent may include indicators such as inflation, unemployment, corruption, and anti-government incidents. It is worth noting here that this hypothesis contravenes the predictions of diversionary or “gambling for resurrection” theories, which posit that leaders are more likely to saber-rattle when their domestic future is shaky (Downs and Rocke 1994; Smith 1996a; Dassel and Reinhardt 1999; Coser 1956; Mueller 1973).

State strength is more problematic. On the one hand, the weaker the state, the less likely the government is to undertake the risk of allowing anti-foreign protest. On the other hand, state weakness makes it more likely that a protest will happen without the government’s knowledge or ability to prevent it. This observational equivalence means that when outsiders observe anti-foreign protest, they do not know whether to infer that

the government valued the international outcome highly enough to allow protest despite the risk to regime stability, or whether the government was simply too weak to prevent protest. Nevertheless, the implications for the government's foreign policy are the same.

Whether the government allowed the protest or was caught by surprise, the government still has incentive to take a more hawkish position in international negotiations. The weaker the government, the less it can afford the costs of suppression, and the greater the incentive to choose escalation over capitulation. The only requirement here is that the costs of suppressing protest are visible to outsiders, i.e. the protests cannot be perceived to be the carefully stage-managed, "rent a crowd" variety. In sum, state weakness makes the signal of resolve noisier, but the hands-tying advantage still operates, provided that suppression costs are apparent to foreign observers.

A slew of recent work has suggested that attempts to systematically test models of strategic interaction will inevitably run into problems of selection effects (Smith 1996b; Fearon 1994, 2002; Morrow 1989b; Achen & Snidal 1989; Signorino 1999; Lewis & Schultz 2003). Selection effects arise when the process of selection into the sample is nonrandom. Schultz (1999) demonstrates that if a leader is able to generate very high audience costs, then the other side is likely to back down and the leader will not be punished. Alternatively, if the other side does *not* back down (perhaps having generated its own audience costs), then escalation is more likely and we will still not observe the audience costs.

Similarly, selection effects make it difficult to observe the true risk and suppression cost associated with nationalist protests. The larger the risk to the government, the less likely the government is to allow protests; the greater the cost of

suppression, the more likely the government is to choose placation (via a tough foreign policy stance) over suppression. In both cases, high observed values of risk and suppression costs are likely to be censored because they are “off the equilibrium path.”

However, selection effects are weaker when state capacity is low. Where state capacity is high, the government can nip protests in the bud. Therefore, selection effects imply that a strong government will either prevent protests in the first place or take a hawkish foreign policy stance. Where state capacity is low, the government may be unable to prevent protests from occurring. Therefore, we are more likely to observe the full range of outcomes – suppression as well as foreign policy placation – when state capacity is weak.

2.4 A Quasi-Experiment: Anti-Japanese Protest in China vs. Hong Kong

To test the regime type hypothesis, I compare the occurrence of anti-Japanese protest in Hong Kong and China over the period 1978-2005. The comparison of “democratic” Hong Kong and “autocratic” China allows us to examine the effect of autocracy on the incidence of anti-foreign protest while controlling for other factors. The results of this comparison provide support for the hypothesis that autocracy is associated with a decrease in the incidence of anti-foreign protest. Here, I have chosen to examine anti-Japanese protest as a subset of the universe of anti-foreign protests. The rationale for examining anti-Japanese protest is that it is one of the most prevalent types of anti-foreign protest in Asia, owing to Japan’s invasion and occupation of many Asian nations in the first half of the 20th Century.

At first glance, China and Hong Kong may not seem like a good comparison, primarily because China is the world's most populous nation and Hong Kong is a city-state. I argue below that this difference in size, along with other potential confounding variables, do not present important threats to the validity of the analysis. In fact, adjusting for these variables may actually strengthen the observed relationship between regime type and anti-Japanese protest.

Unlike laboratory or field experiments, a quasi-experiment involves the comparison of groups where the “treatment” is not randomly assigned. For an evaluation of this sort to be valid, the researcher must demonstrate that the groups are similar on the relevant covariates. To establish that China and Hong Kong are a good match, it is necessary to show that the two are similar along relevant dimensions other than regime type. “Relevant” dimensions are those which affect both the treatment and outcome variables. This process seeks to eliminate potential sources of bias and determine that there are no omitted variables driving the observed relationship. Below, I argue that there are no variables which make Hong Kong distinct from China in ways that also influence the incidence of anti-Japanese protest in the direction predicted by the hypothesis. I do, however, find variables which influence the relationship in the opposite direction, meaning that the relationship is likely to be even stronger than what we observe. Before addressing these issues, I first describe the “control variables”—the similarities which make China and Hong Kong an apt comparison.

The China-Hong Kong comparison allows us to control for two factors which influence anti-Japanese protest activity. The first is the character of Japanese occupation in World War II, which should affect the level of anti-Japanese grievances and the

propensity of the citizenry to stage anti-Japanese protests. Although Hong Kong was occupied for a shorter period than mainland China, the experiences of Japanese rule in Hong Kong and China were more similar than, say, those of Taiwan and South Korea. The Japanese occupation of Korea was more brutal and exploitative than the occupation of China and Hong Kong, whereas Taiwan's experience was benign by comparison with Hong Kong and mainland China. Hong Kong is thus a better "control group" than Taiwan or South Korea, each of which has also had dozens of anti-Japanese protests.

Second, Hong Kong's strategic interests are much closer to those of China than either Taiwan or South Korea, and the return of Hong Kong to mainland China in 1997 furthered this alignment. Taiwan and South Korea both have bilateral territorial disputes with Japan and security agreements with the United States. By contrast, virtually all anti-Japanese protests in Hong Kong have championed the interests of greater China. Indeed, Hong Kong activists often explicitly urge the Chinese government to take a stronger stance in bilateral negotiations with Japan. For example, Hong Kong activists have expressed consternation at Taiwanese activists for advancing Taiwan's and not China's claim to the hotly contested Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea. According to Lew Mon-hung, spokesman for the Hong Kong Action Committee for the Protection of the Diaoyu Islands, there had been "confusion" during previous collaborative attempts by Hong Kong and Taiwanese activists to land on the islands. In future seaborne protests, he said, the Hong Kong vessel would sail directly for the islands without stopping at Taiwan.⁵

⁵ *Agence France Presse*, January 8, 1997.

Turning now to potential confounding factors, the most obvious and perhaps relevant difference between China and Hong Kong is size. All else equal, one would expect that the larger the population, the more numerous the protests. Hong Kong today has a population of roughly seven million; China has a population of over 1.3 billion. If one restricts the relevant population to the number of citizens living in urban areas, China has roughly 560 million urban residents,⁶ whereas Hong Kong has approximately seven million. If the relevant comparison is not urban residents but the number of cities with a critical mass of people living in close proximity to one another (implying that further increasing the size of a city does not affect the likelihood of protest), the number in mainland China is still much greater. Take, for example, the number of cities with a population of over 4 million. Hong Kong has one such city; China has thirteen. If the relevant metric is cities of population over 1 million, Hong Kong has 1; China has 113.⁷ One would expect this difference in population size to increase the relative incidence of protest in mainland China.

Another factor to consider is the patriotic education campaign in mainland China, launched by the government in 1994 to bolster its nationalist credentials (see Zhao 1998, 2004; Shirk 2007). For more than a decade, mainland citizens have been inundated with propaganda celebrating the role of the Chinese Communist Party in World War II, known in China as the War of Resistance against Japan. This campaign has been widely blamed for the oft-noted fact that mainland Chinese citizens under age 30 tend to be more hostile toward Japan than their elders, whose actual memories of the war are stronger. The effect

⁶ All population data as of 2005. *2006 China Statistical Yearbook*, National Bureau of Statistics, available at <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2006/html/D0401e.htm>.

⁷ Also as of 2005. *2006 China Statistical Yearbook*, National Bureau of Statistics, available at <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2006/html/K1101e.htm>.

of nationalist propaganda in mainland China should be to increase the incidence of anti-Japanese protest in mainland China relative to Hong Kong. In sum, both population size and nationalist propaganda should increase the incidence of anti-Japanese protest in “authoritarian” China relative to “democratic” Hong Kong. These two factors thus influence the relationship in the *opposite* direction of the hypothesis, tending to mask the effect of autocracy. If we still find evidence to support the hypothesis that anti-foreign protests are rarer in autocracies, the actual effect is likely to be much stronger than the observed effect.

Many other factors set Hong Kong and mainland China apart, but it is not clear that these factors necessarily influence anti-Japanese protest activity. One such variable is the relative wealth of Hong Kong. As of 2006, per capita GDP in Hong Kong was roughly \$27,000, whereas per capita GDP in mainland China was only \$2,000.⁸ But it is unclear whether wealth affects the incidence of anti-Japanese protest. On the one hand, one could argue that citizens with larger incomes pay a greater opportunity cost for protesting; wealth may thus be associated with a decrease in the incidence of protest. On the other hand, one could argue that higher wage earners have greater resources to mobilize protest, including the education and access to information needed to recognize and react to foreign provocations. Which effect dominates is unclear. Moreover, even if wealth and education do have a (positive or negative) effect upon anti-Japanese protest, the apparent discrepancy between mainland China and Hong Kong is considerably reduced when one considers the relevant population of potential protestors. In both Hong

⁸ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/18902.htm> (mainland China) and <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2747.htm> (Hong Kong).

Kong and mainland China, anti-Japanese activists tend to be college educated, white-collar urban residents. Although educated urbanites are a larger percentage of the population in Hong Kong, in terms of absolute numbers, China dominates even in this regard.

In addition to confounding issues, there are two more potential threats to consider: diffusion and movement between groups. First, there may be a diffusion or imitation effect by which news of a protest or perceived Japanese transgression spreads from Hong Kong to mainland China, increasing the likelihood of copycat protests. If this dynamic is present, it should minimize the observed difference between Hong Kong and China. In particular, diffusion from Hong Kong to the mainland will blur the effect of “autocracy” in China, making it more difficult to conclude the impact of regime type. Second, citizens from mainland China may travel to Hong Kong to stage a protest and vice versa. In 2005, for example, activists from Hong Kong crossed into Guangdong, China to attend an anti-Japanese protest. On the other hand, mainland Chinese activists might travel to Hong Kong because it is easier to protest there. If activists traveled regularly from mainland China to Hong Kong, this would inflate the number of protests in Hong Kong, even though the underlying reason for this movement is consistent with the theory. Regardless, activists do not seem to travel between China and Hong Kong very frequently. In creating the dataset, I excluded the few cases in which Hong Kong activists staged protests in mainland China and vice versa.

The “treatment” variable in this analysis is regime type. Hong Kong is not an electoral democracy, but it has a much higher degree of political freedom than the rest of the People’s Republic. Although Hong Kong reverted to Chinese rule in 1997, individual

liberties and the freedom to protest in the former British colony have remained robust. Demonstrations for greater democracy are not suppressed in post-handover Hong Kong as they are in mainland China.

The outcome variable is the incidence of anti-Japanese protest. I coded the occurrence of anti-Japanese protests using Lexis-Nexis and FBIS databases, as well as several anti-Japanese activist websites operating out of mainland China and Hong Kong.⁹ For protests that occurred within the last five to seven years, interviews with anti-Japanese activists, protestors, and domestic observers allowed me to corroborate the reports of secondary sources. In accordance with the definition presented above, I coded an anti-Japanese protest as having occurred if it met the following criteria: 1) two or more people were involved; 2) Japan was the primary target of the demands or objections expressed; and 3) the activity was held in a public location and sought to attract the attention and/or participation of bystanders. Thus, I excluded the following types of events from the dataset: 1) seminars and meetings to commemorate or evaluate the history of Japanese wartime atrocities; 2) protests that made demands of the Chinese, British, or American governments to pressure Japan to change policy; and 3) excursions by sea to the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. In addition, I excluded several Hong Kong protests where the issues were specific to Hong Kong and not mainland China, such as the visit of a Japanese official to Hong Kong and Japan's refusal to honor the military *scrip* used in Hong Kong during its occupation in World War II. I also excluded one case in which Hong Kong activists attempted to stage a protest in mainland China, and another case in which two mainland activists staged a protest in Hong Kong.

⁹ Search strings included "protest," "demonstrat*," etc.

Spanning the period 1978 to 2005, anti-Japanese protests occurred on 44 days in mainland China and 86 days in Hong Kong, with protests occurring in both China and Hong Kong on 11 days (see Figure 2.1 below). Including anti-Japanese street petitions¹⁰ increases the number of days in which mainland China experienced protest to 55, still considerably fewer than in Hong Kong. As is always the case with historical research, missing data are a problem, particularly in an authoritarian country where transparency is low. The number of protest-days in mainland China is thus likely to understate the true figure. I also coded 16 cases in which protests in mainland China were prevented by the government, whether by arresting participants at the outset of a protest or by taking special measures to curtail the movement of key organizers.

The roughly two-fold difference in the incidence of protest between Hong Kong and mainland China is striking, lending support to the hypothesis that autocracies allow fewer anti-foreign protests than democracies. The relative scarcity of anti-Japanese protest in mainland China is even more impressive when one considers the vastly larger population of mainland China, as well as the impact of more than a decade of nationalist propaganda in the People's Republic. It is thus all the more remarkable that we still observe fewer protests in China than in Hong Kong.

¹⁰ Street petitions are typically public gatherings in which a small group of activists seeks to elicit signatures from passers-by.

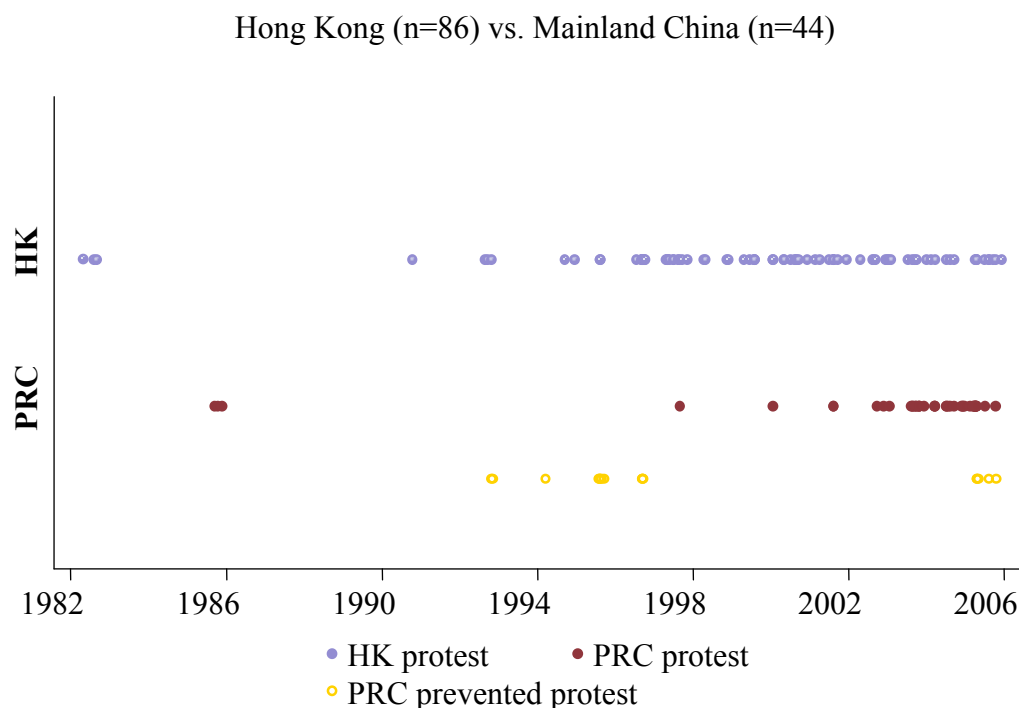


Figure 2.1: Incidence of Anti-Japanese Protest, 1978-2005

The comparison with Hong Kong is important for establishing the universe of potential protests in mainland China. When the government prevents protest, it is often not reported in the press. Because detecting non-events is difficult, having Hong Kong as a comparison group helps identify the “zeros” in mainland China. This simple comparison with Hong Kong suggests that if China were to become democratic, we would see an increase in nationalist protest. However, nationalist protest under a democratic rule may not have the same effect on foreign policy.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the outlines of an answer to a puzzling phenomenon in the study of authoritarian regimes and international conflict: why do authoritarian leaders sometimes allow and sometimes repress destabilizing nationalist protests? If anti-foreign protests are costly signals of resolve in international bargaining, then it is not necessarily the case that democracies have the advantage in creating credible commitments vis-à-vis audience costs. In the literature that links democratic politics and international relations, conventional wisdom holds that democracies have the advantage over autocracies in crisis bargaining. For democracies, the need to retain electoral support makes it difficult for democratic leaders to back down from positions taken publicly. The logic of audience costs holds that it is precisely this domestic vulnerability that enables democratic leaders to send credible signals about their intentions and resolve to foreign decision makers.

It is generally assumed that democratic leaders are more easily held accountable than autocratic leaders. Whereas regular elections enable democratic publics to remove leaders at relatively little cost, in autocracies, citizens are assumed to be nearly powerless to punish leaders that act against the national interest.¹¹ Although Fearon (1994), Schultz (2001), and Goemans (2000) note that autocratic leaders may face harsher punishments in the event of a coup or other irregular change of leadership, this probability is assumed to be either very small or not visible *ex ante* to foreign decision makers. This, then, is the signature role of anti-foreign protests: enabling authoritarian leaders to send a visible and

¹¹ Typical models such as Schultz (1998) and Slantchev (2005) assume that the electorate has homogenous preferences and that the issue in dispute has the non-rivalrous, non-excludable properties of a public good. This raises the question of how the electorate is able to overcome the collective action problem inherent in punishing a leader (Olson 1965). This is typical in problems of diffuse costs vs. concentrated benefits.

costly signal of their domestic vulnerability, and generating incentives to stand firm in international negotiations.

Chapter 3: From Anti-Japan to Pro-Democracy: The Road from 1985 to 1989

This chapter seeks to provide support for a core assumption of the theory, namely, that anti-foreign protests are dangerous to authoritarian regimes. The case study below traces the links between the 1985 anti-Japanese protests in China and the pro-democracy movement that began in 1986 and culminated in the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations. Since much ink has been spilled over the 1989 demonstrations and their tragic end on June 4th, I will not belabor them here. Rather, what this case study seeks to illuminate are the connections between the 1986 pro-democracy protests—the precursors to the 1989 democracy movement—and the anti-Japanese protests that swept the country a year earlier in the fall of 1985.

Consistent with the theory developed above, I suggest that the 1985 anti-Japanese protests contributed in four ways to the pro-democracy protests that followed in 1986 and 1989. Taken together, these linkages provide evidence to validate two critical assumptions identified in Chapter 2, namely, that protests in the authoritarian context are a) risky to regime stability, and b) increasingly costly to suppress if not nipped in the bud.

Three of the connections between the 1985 anti-Japanese protests and the subsequent pro-democracy protests illustrate the risk to regime stability:

1. *Demonstration effects, tipping points, and information cascades:* Protests, once begun, can trigger the sudden realization that protest is acceptable, even safe, leading more and more people to join the protest. Once a critical mass has gathered in the streets and authorities have not suppressed the protest, the protest can rapidly swell to a size unimaginable the day before (Schelling 1978; Kuran 1991; Lohmann 1994; Laitin 1998).

Consistent with this argument, I suggest that the events of 1985 revealed a lenient government attitude toward protests, making it more likely that activists would organize and others would join future protests. Even after anti-government slogans began to dominate the 1985 protests, the government continued to exercise restraint, setting a precedent that would embolden pro-democracy activists in 1986.

2. *Resource mobilization*: Protests beget protests by lowering the costs of collective action for other groups that have fewer resources, activating new networks and facilitating the spread of protest techniques and repertoires from hard-core activists to previously passive groups and individuals (Tarrow 1998).

In this vein, I argue that the 1985 anti-Japanese protests helped activate student networks and other collective action resources that would be used in the 1986 and 1989 pro-democracy protests.

3. *Nationalist protest is especially risky because it has the potential to shake the foundation of state legitimacy*, particularly those that rely upon nationalist mythmaking to bolster their credentials with the public (see Snyder 1991; van Evera 1994). Nationalist protests are particularly risky because they have broad appeal. Because nationalism promotes love of the nation, not love of the government, nationalist protest can easily escalate to demands for revolution if the public feels that the government has failed to defend the nation from foreign depredations.

Below, I show that the patriotism featured in the 1985 anti-Japanese demonstrations also played a role in mobilizing the pro-democracy demonstrations of 1986 and 1989, attracting broad-based sympathy for the student protests.

The case study also validates the assumption that protests, once begun, are increasingly costly for the government to suppress. As stated in Chapter 2, protests are easier to nip in the bud than to suppress after they have grown in size and/or spread to multiple cities. Repression is always costly, but dispersing a large crowd is more costly

than hauling away a few “early risers” at the scene (Tarrow 1998) or warning off activists on the eve of protest. The case study illustrates the psychological costs of suppressing protest in particular:

4. *Psychologically, the crowd’s willingness to resist suppression is likely to increase with the experience of protest.* By the logic of prospect theory, people care disproportionately about what they stand to lose than what they stand to gain (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). The implication of loss-aversion is that people will fight harder for what they have than for something they do not yet have. Accordingly, participants will place greater value on the right to protest after they have joined the demonstration than when it is still hypothetical. The psychological cost of suppression thus increases once a protest has begun.

As I demonstrate below, the 1985 anti-Japanese protests increased the salience of protest as a civil right. Moreover, the eventual suppression of the 1985 protests generated greater disillusionment with the government. This disillusionment would play a role in motivating pro-democracy activists to take to the streets in 1986 and 1989.

Although the 1980s protest movement ultimately failed to topple the regime, the leadership paid dearly. Two General Secretaries of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) lost their posts for “mismanaging” the student protests: Hu Yaobang in 1987 and Zhao Ziyang in 1989. Just as Chinese leaders in the Republican and Nationalist eras found out in the May 4th movement of 1919 and the December 9th movement of 1935,¹ respectively, Chinese Communist leaders learned in the 1980s that nationalist protests against a foreign power can easily snowball and turn against the regime.

¹ For instance, see He (2007), p. 56, where she writes: “Excessive public animosity against foreigners also carries the risk of undermining political stability, which had been the case in both the May Fourth Movement of 1919 and the Xi’an Incident of 1936, when anti-Japanese mass demonstrations rapidly turned into anti-government movements.”

Within the extensive body of literature on the 1980s democracy movement and its roots, comparatively little attention has been paid to the connection between the anti-Japanese protests of 1985 and the pro-democracy protests of 1986. Important exceptions include Schell (1988), Chuan (1990), Wasserstrom (1991), Xu (2002), and Shirk (2007). Xu, for example, claims that “the 1985 movement opened the gate to more student activism.”² However, the specific links between 1985 and 1986 have not been well-identified or documented. To the best of my knowledge, this chapter represents the first attempt to trace systematically the ways in which the anti-Japanese protests fed into the pro-democracy protests of 1986, which in turn laid the groundwork for the 1989 movement.

That said, I should emphasize that the aims of this chapter are modest. I do not claim that the democracy protests of 1986 and 1989 would not have happened without the anti-Japanese protests of 1985. Many different factors and events combined to produce this sequence of events. In short, the 1985 protests were neither necessary nor sufficient to bring about the 1986 protests, much less the dramatic events of 1989. Nevertheless, the evidence below provides substantial support for the claim that the 1985 protests made the 1986 protests more likely, and therefore helped set the stage for the 1989 democracy movement.

In the end, what matters for the strategic game is not what happened but what actors in the game perceive to have happened. Thus, I pay special attention in the case study below to how the 1985 protests were perceived and represented, and what lessons were drawn at home and abroad.

² Xu (2002), p. 120.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I present a narrative of the 1985 anti-Japanese protests and the pro-democracy protests of 1986. A third wave of democracy protests began in 1989, nearly toppling the regime. Since entire books have been written on this movement, I will not attempt more than a cursory summary but will focus instead on the connections between 1985 and 1986, which Wasserstrom has termed “a kind of dress rehearsal” for the democracy movement of 1989.³ Next, using evidence from the narrative, I trace the four main linkages between the anti-Japanese protests of 1985 and the pro-democracy protests of 1986 and 1989. Finally, I assess how the 1985 protests were perceived at home and abroad, and conclude.

3.1 The 1985 Anti-Japanese Protests

The demonstrations of 1985 were the first display of popular anti-Japanese sentiment that had been allowed in mainland China since the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations in 1972.⁴ On September 29 of that year, China and Japan agreed to normalize relations in a joint communiqué between the two nations. The document reflected a strategic decision by China’s leaders to relinquish demands for war reparations in exchange for an implicit agreement to help resist Soviet “hegemony” in Asia.⁵ According to He (2007b), Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai believed it more important

³ Wasserstrom, “Why China Was So Worried About Those Student Protests”, HMN.us, May 4, 2005.

⁴ For a discussion of anti-foreign protests in China during the Cultural Revolution, see Liao (1976).

⁵ The joint communiqué states: “The Government of the People’s Republic of China declares that in the interest of the friendship between the Chinese and the Japanese peoples, it renounces its demand for war reparation from Japan.” The document also sets forth a statement of remorse by the Japanese side, establishing a formula that has often been repeated by Japanese officials: “The Japanese side is keenly conscious of the responsibility for the serious damage that Japan caused in the past to the Chinese people through war, and deeply reproaches itself.” Joint communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People’s Republic of China,” September 29, 1972, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/joint72.html>.

to achieve rapprochement with Japan and the United States in order to counter the Soviet threat than to focus on old bilateral grievances.

In 1978, negotiations with Japan over a Treaty of Peace and Friendship were nearly disrupted by the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands issue. When a group of anti-treaty Japanese parliamentarians proposed that the disputed islands be included in the treaty negotiations, China's response was to send an armed flotilla of roughly 100 fishing boats to the region. According to Tretiak (1978:1242), "there is little doubt that the vessels were under formal PLA naval command or that they embarked with Politburo approval." Following this display, the Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda and Foreign Minister Sunao Sonoda moved to separate the territorial dispute and the treaty negotiations.⁶ On August 12, 1978, China and Japan signed the treaty. Two months later, Deng Xiaoping visited Japan. At a press conference in Tokyo, Deng said that the territorial dispute would "be handled better by the next generation."⁷ The following year, Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira visited China and agreed to provide first round of Japanese government loans to China.

Troubles again arose in 1982, when the Japanese media reported that instructions had been given to soften the language used by Japanese history textbooks to describe Japan's actions in World War II. Chinese official media responded with a two-month campaign, recounting Japanese wartime atrocities in lurid detail. On August 15, the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, the official *People's Daily* ran a front-page signed editorial warning of resurgent Japanese militarism. According to Whiting

⁶ Tretiak (1978), p. 1243-44.

⁷ Whiting (1989), p. 69.

(1989), “the simultaneous treatment in all media indicates direction from above despite the assertion of one official that ‘this was wholly spontaneous; we couldn't control the anger of the people.’”⁸ Nevertheless, China’s recriminations were limited to the media. No demonstrations were allowed in mainland China, even as thousands of protesters staged anti-Japanese demonstrations in Hong Kong, Seoul, and New York.⁹ China warned that Japanese Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki might have to cancel his upcoming visit to China if the textbook issue was not settled first. Bowing to international pressure, Suzuki promised to review the disputed textbooks and resolve the issue “in a manner suitable to China.”¹⁰ Once again, Japan responded positively to China’s call for restraint. Suzuki’s concession facilitated his successful visit to China, which marked the 10th anniversary of normalized relations.

In November 1982, Suzuki was succeeded as prime minister by the hawkish Yasuhiro Nakasone. In his previous post as chairman of the LDP executive council, Nakasone had attempted to stymie the peace treaty negotiations in 1978 by suggesting that the disputed islands should be included in the talks (Tretiak 1978:1244). As prime minister, Nakasone began challenging the status quo on the Yasukuni Shrine issue. Since the end of World War II, almost all Japanese prime ministers had visited Yasukuni, which since 1978 has enshrined the spirits of 14 A-class war criminals along with 2.5 million other war dead. The custom of visiting the shrine in an unofficial capacity began in 1975, when Prime Minister Takeo Miki signed the guestbook “as a private person.”

⁸ Whiting (1989), p. 47.

⁹ Reuters, August 16, 1982; *New York Times*, September 23, 1982; Leung, Benjamin K.P. (2000) “The Student Movement in Hong Kong: Transition to a Democratizing Society,” in *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong*, eds. Stephen Wing-Kai Chiu, Dale Lü, Tai-Lok Lui, Hong Kong University Press, p. 224.

¹⁰ Reuters, August 24, 1982.

Following Miki's example, the next three prime ministers—Fukuda, Ohira, and Suzuki—declared that their visits were made as private individuals.¹¹

In 1983, Nakasone made three visits to Yasukuni but refused to answer when asked whether his visit was official. In 1984, Nakasone appointed a private advisory council to determine whether official visits to the shrine would violate the separation of state and religion as set forth in Article 20 of the Japanese constitution. In August 1985, the advisory council concluded that official visits to Yasukuni did not violate the constitution. On August 14, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman stated for the first time that a visit by Nakasone to the shrine would “hurt the feelings of Japan's Asian neighbors.”¹² Nakasone did not heed China's warning. On August 15, 1985, the fortieth anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, Nakasone and his cabinet ministers paid an official visit to Yasukuni Shrine.

China reacted with official condemnations. Deng Xiaoping obliquely criticized Nakasone in a meeting with a visiting delegation of the Japan Socialist Party, stating his unease about “Japanese militarist elements.”¹³ A Xinhua editorial was more blunt, accusing Nakasone of trying “to obscure more or less the wicked nature of the war of aggression unleashed by the Japanese militarists—an intention that makes a mockery of the sentiments and aspirations of the Chinese and other Asian peoples.”¹⁴ Throwing oil on the fire, Xinhua also reported on two further Japanese provocations: a small protest by

¹¹ Shibuichi (2005); See also Hielscher (2004).

¹² Okazaki, Hisahiko. “Koizumi need not think twice about Yasukuni visit,” *Yomiuri Shimbum*, July 29, 2001.

¹³ Kyodo News Agency, August 29, 1985.

¹⁴ Associated Press, August 22, 1985.

right-wing Japanese activists in front of the Chinese embassy in Tokyo,¹⁵ and a decision by the Japanese Ministry of Education to make an anthem “eulogizing the Japanese emperor” mandatory at public school ceremonies. Quoting Japanese critics, the Xinhua editorial stated that recent events in Japan have revealed “a dangerous undercurrent towards resuming the system which prevailed before World War II.”¹⁶ On September 3, 1985, the Chinese government convened a mass rally to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Japan’s defeat in World War II. High-level leaders, including Peng Zhen, Chairman of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee, addressed an audience of nearly 10,000. Most participants were cadres from various levels of government, along with veterans of the war, foreign diplomats, and journalists.¹⁷

Nakasone’s visit to Yasukuni came at a time when the Chinese leadership was less inclined to put bilateral conflicts aside for the sake of broader geopolitical goals. According to Michel Oksenberg, who served on the National Security Council during the normalization of Sino-U.S. relations, China was no longer as concerned about uniting with Japan and the United States against Soviet expansionism:

In the early 1980s China’s leaders concluded that the Soviet Union was heavily burdened with a laggard domestic economy, the war in Afghanistan and assistance to its Vietnamese, Cuban and various African clients.... Thus, although the Soviet military posture in the Asia-Pacific region has improved, its ability to exercise leverage and its interest in doing so have at least temporarily diminished. China has determined that there is less immediate need than in the late 1970s to seek an alignment with the United States and Japan against the Soviet Union. (Oksenberg 1986:4)

¹⁵ Xinhua News Agency, August 20, 1985, translated by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, August 22, 1985.

¹⁶ Kyodo News Agency, September 7, 1985.

¹⁷ Xinhua (in English), September 3, 1985.

This strategic shift was paralleled by growing popular resentment against Japan. By 1985, China's trade deficit with Japan had reached \$5 billion.¹⁸ Japanese goods flooded the Chinese market, leading to accusations that Japan was launching a "second invasion" of China. Anti-Japanese sentiment was further fed by the dramatic portrayal of one family's sufferings during the Japanese invasion and occupation in *Four Generations Under One Roof*, a popular television series that aired nationally in the summer of 1985.¹⁹

Meanwhile, grievances over living conditions and inflation were running high, particularly among university students. In 1983, there were 36 incidents of campus unrest at various universities across the country; about half of these concerned the quality of cafeteria food.²⁰ Over the summer of 1984, universities stopped providing stipends to students who returned home over school breaks, and in late 1984, the Ministry of Education announced that student stipends would be converted into a select number of competitive scholarships.²¹ In December, more than a thousand students at Beijing University demonstrated on campus to protest a lights-out policy at 11 p.m., enacted in part by the university to save electricity.²² In January 1985, students at Beijing Normal University and Teachers' College of Beijing threatened to strike, criticizing high recreation fees, poor cafeteria food, and shoddy medical care. The backlash did not subside until university authorities agreed to give subsidies to students with financial difficulties.²³ As Beijing University Professor Kong Qingdong recalls: "Everyone knows that the 1980s generation of university students, especially those at Beijing University,

¹⁸ Whiting (1989), p. 6.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 195.

²⁰ Xu (2002), p. 118, fn. 13.

²¹ See Zhao, Dingxin (2001), p. 87.

²² See Cherrington (1991), p. 73.

²³ Chuan (1990), p. 101.

were pretty crazy. There were 8,000 students at the time, known as 8,000 of the country's elite. And they felt that responsibility for the nation rested on their shoulders. Having such high expectations, they often raised a ruckus. Lights-out policy, they made trouble. Bad *baozi* (steamed buns), they made trouble. At the time, their requests seemed reasonable, but others today seem a little childish.”²⁴

In May 1985, concerned about the overheating economy, the government implemented a new round of price reforms, increasing the price of meat and other food stuffs. According to Xu (2002:119), prices were 11.8 percent higher in the first half of 1985 than in 1984. These grievances mingled with anti-foreign sentiment for the first time on May 19, 1985, when a riot broke out in Beijing after a soccer match between China and Hong Kong. During the vandalism and mayhem, the rioters harassed foreigners and shouted anti-foreign slogans. Barmé (2005) describes one account of the riot, in which author Liu Xinwu

spoke not of hooliganism as much as the mass anti-foreign sentiment that had been welling up in the capital for years as rich foreign investors, especially other Asians, flooded into the city and vaunted their superior material lifestyles. He also wrote in detail of the mounting sense of outrage people felt at the corruption and political opacity of the party rulers, as well as of the general disquiet people felt towards a government that seemed to be pandering to foreign interests, in particular Japan.²⁵

According to Fang (2002:30), “what was most remarkable about the riot was that it escaped government control and to a certain extent went against the established order, taking on a fierce and potentially adversarial form.”²⁶ The next day, the city government

²⁴ Quoted in “Ding Shisun’s reforms began in Beijing University’s cafeterias,” transcript of CCTV interview on *Da Jia*, March 24, 2006, available at <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2006-03-24/12419434078.shtml>, last accessed April 14, 2007. Author translation.

²⁵ Barmé (2005); Liu Xinwu (1985) *Wuyijiu Changjingtou* (Long Camera Lens on May 19).

²⁶ Fang (2002), p. 29, author translation.

moved quickly, declaring that the perpetrators would be severely punished and condemning the riot as the gravest incident to take place during a sporting event since the nation's founding in 1949. Nine days later, the national Chinese soccer team was suspended temporarily.

This explosive mix of anti-foreign and anti-government sentiment would reignite a few months later, sparked by Nakasone's August visit to Yasukuni Shrine. On September 13, nearly a month after Nakasone's visit and ten days after the official commemorative rally, a big-character poster appeared at Beijing University.²⁷ The poster denounced the revival of Japanese militarism and called for a commemoration of September 18, the anniversary of Japan's invasion of northeastern China. A second poster soon joined the first, this one calling on students to take action and admonishing them for being only brave enough to protest the school's lights-out policy. That evening, the university authorities took down the big-character posters, which had been banned since the tightening of political freedoms in 1979 and 1980.²⁸ The next day, a new poster appeared, calling the university's actions "unpatriotic (*maiguo*)" and suggesting that students hold a demonstration in Tiananmen Square on September 18. A flurry of postings followed, debating how to commemorate the anniversary.

The government responded with a strategy of partial appeasement. In light of the "obvious extremist tendencies" among students and the approaching National Communist Party Congress, which would take place from September 16 to 23, the Beijing party

²⁷ The following account draws primarily upon the following sources: Xu (2002); Chuan (1990); Whiting (1989); and Fang (2002).

²⁸ In 1978, China adopted a new constitution that guaranteed the "four great freedoms," namely the right to speak out freely, air one's views fully, write big-character posters, and hold great debates. The new constitution presaged a brief period of political liberalization that resulted in the "Democracy Wall" movement, which the government suppressed in 1979. In 1980, the "four great freedoms" were repealed.

leadership instructed university authorities to put a stop to the big-character posters and prevent a demonstration in Tiananmen Square.²⁹ To placate the students, however, the party-led graduate and undergraduate student unions would organize an official commemoration on campus. On September 15, a poster signed by “some young professors and graduate students” appeared. Though written in a sympathetic tone, the poster warned against “blind anti-foreign sentiment (*mangmu paiwai qingxu*)” and the risk that nationalism might be a cloak for more harmful forces:

If nationalism is used to conceal (*yangai*) many internal contradictions—if it covers up those issues which will decide the survival (*shengsi cunwang*) of our country—then we should not give it our support. Within the last few days, many of our classmates have proposed to hold a memorial in Tiananmen Square and have called universities around the nation in the name of more than 10,000 Beijing University students, discussing Japanese militarism and other issues. We understand but cannot support this activity. We believe that a campus-wide symposium on September 18 to discuss the “September 18 incident” and China’s historical situation and reality will be even more meaningful.³⁰

On September 16th, the student unions announced that a campus-wide assembly would take place on September 18. At the ceremony, students would have the opportunity to make speeches, and the student unions would present a proposal to the National People’s Congress to designate September 18 a “Day of National Humiliation (*guochi ri*),” along with a letter from the students of Beijing University to Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone.

New posters continued to appear, many criticizing the government and the university administration. One read, “Commemorate the martyrs, overthrow the corrupt

²⁹ Chuan (1990), p. 104, author translation.

³⁰ Ibid.

cadres (*dadao tanguan*), strengthen the nation scientifically, and respect knowledge.”³¹

Another attacked the student unions for being puppets of the university administration and called the campus assembly “an offer of ‘amnesty to rebels’ (*zhao an*)—an attempt to lock our fervor within the small confines of campus and let it run its course.” A third poster announced that he would go to Tiananmen Square as an individual citizen and called upon others to join in, proclaiming: “This is our civil right and freedom!” Others condemned the “pro-Japanese faction” in the government and called for students to take action and “sweep away the traitorous running dogs who are selling out our country.”³²

On September 17, Beijing University president Ding Shisun addressed an assembly of 2,000 student cadres at length, urging them to refrain from extreme behavior for the sake of social stability and the National Party Congress. Student activism continued to spread, however, with posters appearing on nearby campuses and students making phone calls to rally support from universities in other cities, including Shanghai, Nanjing, and Hefei. On September 18, a large group of students assembled in front of the Beijing University library. Party and Youth League authorities continued to exhort the students not to march. When the students attempted to set forth, the university locked the campus gate, separating the students from the large crowd of citizens gathered just outside. A few students continued to give speeches, accusing the school authorities of acting unconstitutionally by closing the gate and violating their freedom of speech, protest, and assembly. Addressing the students via loudspeaker, Ding Shisun told students that the school authorities had forbidden any off-campus commemorative

³¹ Ibid, p. 105.

³² Ibid, p. 107.

activities, and that this decision had been approved by the central and city party authorities. He urged students to attend the official commemoration on campus, ending his speech with a warning: “Guard against a small minority of bad people who would take advantage of your patriotism with serious consequences.”³³

Meanwhile, several hundred students who had managed to leave campus gathered at Tiananmen Square. There they were met by security guards who told them that a demonstration without government approval was not allowed. When asked to leave the square, the students refused. After consulting with higher-level city authorities, the security guards allowed the students to file into the square and march around the square, laying wreaths at the Monument to the People’s Heroes. Some students shouted slogans, such as “Down with the second [Japanese] occupation!” and “Patriotism is innocent! (*aiguo wuzui*)”³⁴ before leaving the square and dispersing peacefully.

Rather than mete out punishment, the government sent top-level officials to university campuses to persuade students through “dialogue” to redirect their patriotism into more productive channels.³⁵ Moreover, the Foreign Ministry appeared to defend the sentiments expressed by the student demonstrators. The day after the protest, September 19, the Foreign Ministry spokesman stated that “the Japanese side did not heed our friendly warnings and insisted on paying a formal visit to Yasukuni Shrine, severely hurting the feelings of the Chinese people.”³⁶ On September 28, two high-level officials, Hu Qili and Li Peng, met with students in Zhongnanhai, the leadership compound, and “praised the basic motivation behind the demonstration as patriotic and consistent with

³³ Ibid, p. 110.

³⁴ John Burns, *New York Times*, September 18, 1985; Chuan (1990), p. 111; Xu (2002), p. 119.

³⁵ John Burns, *New York Times*, November 21, 1985; Whiting (1989), p. 7.

³⁶ *People’s Daily*, September 20, 1985, author translation.

university tradition” (Whiting 1989:69). These statements—combined with the government’s lenient attitude toward the demonstrators—fed speculation that the government had tacitly approved the demonstration. “If students were allowed to demonstrate in Tiananmen Square at the time of the National Party Congress, it must have had approval at the highest level,” said a Western diplomat.³⁷ According to Whiting (1989: 6-7),

Few observers accepted the contention that the students acted spontaneously on the basis of genuine anti-Japanese sentiments.... [while] Chinese officials hastened to reassure the Japanese that indeed the students were acting spontaneously...it would be impossible for any such event to occur without someone in authority learning of the preparations in advance; therefore, if it had not been prevented, it must have been acquiesced in, if not quietly encouraged. Moreover, because the regime’s declared policy was to promote closer economic relations with Japan, leading ultimately to ‘friendship,’ the real purpose of the protests must have been something other than what was uttered.

Perhaps taking these developments as a green light, more than one thousand university students in Xi’an participated in an anti-Japanese demonstration on October 1, denouncing Nakasone and protesting Japanese imports.³⁸ Similar protests were rumored to have occurred in other cities across the country, including Kunming and Wuhan. Students from Beijing were active in distributing flyers to other universities, even visiting campuses in other cities to encourage demonstrations.³⁹ Meanwhile, big-character posters at Beijing University called for a “return to democracy,” railing at the university for its dictatorial behavior on September 18. One poster read, “Should the crashing waves of our

³⁷ Julian Baum, “China reins in youth to prevent wave of anti-Japanese sentiment,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 13, 1985.

³⁸ British Broadcasting Corporation, October 4, 1985.

³⁹ Whiting (1989), p. 70

blood be chilled and frozen, what will we have gotten from all this? Just police and refrigerators!”⁴⁰

On October 9, Japanese newspapers reported that Prime Minister Nakasone had yielded to Chinese criticism and canceled his upcoming visit to Yasukuni during the autumn festival. Some observers interpreted the move as calming the waters before Japanese Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe’s visit to Beijing on October 10.⁴¹ In his meetings with the top Chinese leadership, Foreign Minister Abe was repeatedly asked to consider the feelings of the Chinese people.⁴² On October 11, Deng Xiaoping told Abe that the recent textbook issue and visit to Yasukuni had created “a big problem for us.” Deng warned:

The people of China and of Asia—including East Asia and Southeast Asia—have feelings. In order to continue developing friendly Sino-Japanese relations, I suggest that the Japanese leadership pay attention to this problem. If these difficult problems arise again, the situation will change. This is the truth. [On the other hand] if there are no further problems, no harm will have been done, and our economic and political relationship can continue developing peacefully and stably. This is where a true understanding should be reached.⁴³

According to Shirk (2007), Deng and Abe “reportedly reached an informal agreement that the Japanese prime minister would no longer visit the Yasukuni Shrine. In exchange, the Chinese government would no longer attack Nakasone.”⁴⁴ Although this “gentleman’s agreement” has never been confirmed by the Japanese side, Nakasone did not visit Yasukuni again, nor did any other prime minister until Ryutaro Hashimoto in

⁴⁰ Schell (1988), p. 130.

⁴¹ Kyodo News Agency, October 9, 1985; Clyde Haberman, “Nakasone, Giving In, Will Shun Shrine,” *New York Times*, October 9, 1985.

⁴² Associated Press, October 10, 1985.

⁴³ “*Deng Xiaoping Sixiang Nianpu* (Chronology of Deng Xiaoping’s Thinking): 1985,” available at <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/69112/69113/69683/4723405.html>, last accessed July 2, 2008.

⁴⁴ Shirk (2007), p. 163.

1996. This abrupt departure from the established pattern of prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni suggests that an agreement was reached after the anti-Japanese protests in 1985. Though Nakasone later denied the existence of such an agreement, his newfound restraint in not visiting Yasukuni was clearly an attempt to mollify China.⁴⁵ On August 14, 1986, Nakasone's chief cabinet secretary explained that the prime minister had made a "prudent and independent" decision to forego visiting the shrine on August 15 in light of "criticisms of neighboring countries...we must stress international ties and give appropriate consideration to the national sentiments of neighboring countries."⁴⁶ According to retired Japanese ambassador Hisahiko Okazaki, "outcries over the Yasukuni issue gathered momentum to the extent that Nakasone found it impossible to make any further visits to the shrine before stepping down in 1987. Ever since that time, China, having presumably been pleased with its success, has been interfering in the Yasukuni issue as part of the Chinese foreign policy."⁴⁷

On October 16, an anti-Japanese demonstration of more than three thousand students in the southwestern city of Chengdu turned violent. Protestors stoned Japanese cars and smashed Japanese radios. The local party newspaper *Sichuan Ribao* blamed a small group of "lawless elements" for the vandalism. The editorial emphasized the importance of stability and unity, condemning those comrades who "advocate putting up

⁴⁵ Nakasone denied the existence of a Sino-Japanese "gentleman's agreement" when Chinese ambassador to Japan Wang Yi mentioned it during a speech in Tokyo in 2005. See Agence France Press, April 27, 2005; Agence France Presse, April 28, 2005.

⁴⁶ Whiting (1989), p. 62.

⁴⁷ Okazaki, Hisahiko. "Koizumi need not think twice about Yasukuni visit," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, July 29, 2001.

big character posters at will, establishing ties and exchanging experiences with various localities.”⁴⁸

On October 18, at a meeting of the Japan-China Friendship Committee for the 21st Century, CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang again warned Japan to “give earnest consideration to the friendly suggestion and reasonable demand of the other side and strive to avoid any action which may hurt the feelings of the people of the other side.”⁴⁹ Three days later, on October 21, the Japanese Foreign Ministry announced that it would grant China 700 million yen worth of agricultural machinery to help China modernize rice production.⁵⁰ On November 5, the Japanese cabinet released a statement saying that Nakasone had no intention of making official visits to Yasukuni a formal institution and that his objective in visiting Yasukuni was not to rehabilitate Japanese war criminals.⁵¹ Chinese official media publicized and welcomed the Japanese statement. On November 8, *People’s Daily* quoted Japanese Foreign Minister Abe as saying that “paying formal homage to A-class war criminals is inappropriate.”⁵²

Despite these diplomatic victories and exhortations by the official Chinese press to “cherish the hard-won friendship between China and Japan,”⁵³ students continued to mobilize on campuses, focusing their attacks on the government as well as Japan. On November 4, Fang Lizhi, vice president of the Chinese University of Science and Technology in central Anhui Province gave a lecture at Beijing University, encouraging

⁴⁸ “Editorial condemns beating, smashing and looting,” BBC Monitoring Service: Asia-Pacific, October 21, 1985.

⁴⁹ Xinhua News Agency in English, October 18, 1985.

⁵⁰ Kyodo News Agency, October 21, 1985.

⁵¹ Kyodo News Agency, November 5, 1985; Hielscher (2004), p. 203.

⁵² *People’s Daily*, November 9, 1985, author translation.

⁵³ *People’s Daily*, October 27, 1985, author translation.

students to continue fighting for social and political change. According to Schell (1988:132), the audience listened with rapt attention as Fang spoke: “There is a social malaise in our country today, and the primary reason for it is the poor example set by Party members...this is a situation that clearly calls for action on the part of intellectuals....Some of us dare not speak out. But if we all spoke out, there would be nothing to be afraid of.”

Not long after Fang’s stirring lecture, a circular appeared at Beijing University calling upon students to gather in Tiananmen Square on November 20. Urging students to “save the Chinese nation from its decay,” the circular accused high-level officials of inviting the Japanese “wolf to the door” for personal gain.⁵⁴ November 20 was chosen because a Sino-Japanese volleyball match and chess game would take place that day, so “national patriotism will be at an unprecedented height.” But the actual purpose of the protest would be to “celebrate ‘Democracy ’85,’ precede commemoration of ‘December 9,’ and accomplish the unfinished tasks of the ‘September 18’ gathering.”⁵⁵

On November 20, several hundred students gathered at Tiananmen Square, where they demonstrated for two hours before being dispersed by police with bullhorns and jeeps.⁵⁶ Afterwards, there were rumors of student arrests for the first time since the anti-Japanese demonstrations had begun in September, although the Minister of Public Security later denied that any students had been arrested.⁵⁷ At the time, U.S. Ambassador to China Winston Lord wrote in a confidential cable:

⁵⁴ Quoted in Whiting (1989), p. 73.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 74.

⁵⁶ John Burns, *New York Times*, November 21, 1985; Kyodo News Agency, November 21, 1985.

⁵⁷ See “New Minister Discusses Security Problems,” *Beijing Review*, Vol. 28, No. 52, December 30, 1985, p. 15.

Public security authorities interviewed more than one hundred student demonstrators and arrested twenty-three considered to have been ringleaders. The authorities knew whom to look for because they had infiltrated both preparations for the demonstration and the demonstration itself. [An Embassy official] was told that public security officials are taking student demonstrations very seriously and that one armed police installation, shortly before last week's student demonstration, "looked like it was preparing for a war"....The extent to which the public security organs are drawn into controlling students reflects the extent to which the Communist Party has lost the initiative on campus.⁵⁸

Tensions continued to build as the 50th anniversary of December 9 approached.

Along with May 4, December 9 marks the anniversary of the largest student demonstrations in Chinese history. On December 9, 1935, more than a thousand students took to the streets of Beijing to protest Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government for failing to resist Japan's invasion and occupation of Manchuria. Within a year, the movement had spread to most of China's cities and ultimately pushed the Nationalists into an alliance with the Communists.

In preparation for this sensitive anniversary, the government began a more active campaign to persuade students to fall in line, commending their patriotic impulses but stressing the need to follow the Party's leadership. More high-level leaders were dispatched to speak with students on campus. Rumors circulated that students who continued to participate in protests would find their career prospects limited.⁵⁹ According to one report, "armed guards are now stationed at all entrances to Peking's universities as the Chinese government nervously awaits student unrest planned for December in what diplomats here see as the most serious challenge to the Government's authority since

⁵⁸ "Government Arrests Student Demonstrators," Confidential, Cable, 27939, November 25, 1985, Digital National Security Archive, CH00755, available at http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:dnas&rft_dat=xri:dnas:article:CCH00755, last accessed July 3, 2008.

⁵⁹ Daniel Southerland, "Chinese Official Warns Students; Protesters Cautioned Against Following 'Capitalist Road,'" *Washington Post*, December 9, 198; see also Wiedemann (1986).

1979.”⁶⁰ To counter calls for nationwide demonstrations on December 9, including another protest in Tiananmen Square, the Communist Youth League and other party organs organized indoor campus commemorations as well as a mass gathering of several thousand high school students in Tiananmen Square.⁶¹ In this way, the government succeeded in preventing protests on the December 9 anniversary, although some anti-government slogans were reportedly shouted during the official ceremonies.⁶²

Over the next several months, localized protests continued to occur at campuses across the country, in cities such as Changsha, Taiyuan, Jinan, and Xi’an.⁶³ Temporarily eschewing anti-foreign and pro-democracy slogans, students protested over food quality and campus-specific policies. According to Xu (2002:120-21), Beijing alone witnessed 23 protests on various university campuses between the end of 1985 and early 1986, including one in mid-December that drew more than a thousand students at Beijing Agricultural University.⁶⁴

There is evidence that students who were active in the 1985 demonstrations continued to meet in 1986 despite attempts at “corrective dialogue” by university authorities. An officer at the U.S. Embassy at the time wrote:

After the anti-Japanese demonstrations last year, the administration organized political-ideological work teams to study and categorize all wall posters put up during the demonstrations, and to identify those students who have “thought problems.” Despite administration efforts, some students do continue to meet regularly in small groups to discuss political issues. (Wiedemann 1986)

⁶⁰ Jasper Becker, “Peking alert for student protest,” *The Guardian*, December 6, 1985.

⁶¹ Jim Mann, “Student protest movement spreads in China,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 1985.

⁶² Reuters, December 20, 1985.

⁶³ Cherrington (1991), p. 84-5.

⁶⁴ Reuters, December 20, 1985.

Perhaps fearing that a new spark could ignite these simmering grievances, when new Japanese textbook revisions were approved in May 1986, the Chinese government instructed the media to exercise restraint and avoid the strident rhetoric used during the 1982 textbook controversy and 1985 commemoration of the war's fortieth anniversary.⁶⁵ China's foreign ministry responded by sending an official protest note urging Japan to honor the pledge made by Prime Minister Suzuki in 1982. According to Japanese officials interviewed by Whiting at the time, Chinese officials asked for Japan's "'help' with internal divisions rather than 'making demands.'"⁶⁶

By December 1986, however, student activism had once again focused on the issue of democracy and the pace of national political reform. The first protests in 1986 to make such demands took place on December 5 in the city of Hefei, capital of Anhui Province, spearheaded by students from the Chinese University of Science and Technology. It was not a coincidence that this was the same university where Fang Lizhi, who had enraptured students during his speech at Beijing University, was vice president. On December 5, several thousand students from the Chinese University of Science and Technology marched off campus and surrounded local city and provincial offices. Decrying the lack of democratic nomination procedures for the local people's congress, they carried posters with slogans such as "No democratization, no modernization!" and "Give me liberty or give me death!"⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Whiting (1989), p. 57.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Schell (1988), p. 213.

On the anniversary of December 9, pro-democracy protests took place again in Hefei but also spread to Wuhan, the capital of neighboring Hubei Province. According to Pepper (1987:11),

One poster put up at Wuhan University symbolized the merger of the 1985 and 1986 movements: it called among other things for more independent student associations and more student self-government, as well as the celebration of December 9, so as not to repeat the shame of having failed to do so on the 50th anniversary [in 1985].

Within a month, student demonstrations had spread to roughly 150 campuses in cities across the nation,⁶⁸ including Tianjin, Nanjing, Kunming, Hangzhou, Suzhou, and Guangzhou.⁶⁹ The largest demonstrations occurred in Shanghai on December 19, 20, and 22 and in Beijing on December 23, 26, and 29, with some estimates of the December 19 and 23 protests growing as large as 30,000 participants. According to Wasserstrom, “Tongji [University’s] and Jiaotong [University’s] position in the vanguard of Shanghai’s pro-democracy struggle was no accident. Fang Lizhi had given guest lectures at these two schools earlier in the fall of 1986, and (in part because of these lectures) students at Tongji and Jiaotong had established informal study groups before the Anhui protests to discuss methods for bringing about political change.”⁷⁰ The message Fang Lizhi delivered to Shanghai students in 1986 was the same message that he had delivered at Beijing University in November 1985, according to Kelly (1987): “Fang’s now notorious doctrine that ‘democracy is something to be struggled for, not conferred from above’ was,

⁶⁸ Schell (1988), p. 241; Kwong (1988), p. 972 (see fn.8).

⁶⁹ Kwong (1988), p. 970.

⁷⁰ Wasserstrom (1991), p. 297.

significantly, aired in the wake of the earlier round of student demonstrations of late 1985.”⁷¹

The government responded by banning demonstrations without advance written approval. On December 26, city authorities in Beijing issued new restrictions on the approval of protest permits. The media published criticisms of the disruptive protests and appealed for calm. Despite these efforts, several thousand students from Beijing University defied the ban on New Year’s Eve and marched to Tiananmen Square, arriving early in the morning on January 1st. The students carried placards and posters with slogans such as “freedom of press and speech!” and “against tyranny!”⁷² The police dispersed the crowd and arrested several dozen participants, only to free them when a new wave of student protesters marched to Tiananmen Square to demand their classmates’ release.

January 1, 1987 marked the end of the 1986 protests and the beginning of a new campaign against “bourgeois liberalism.”⁷³ Fang Lizhi and a handful of liberal intellectuals were expelled from the Communist Party, accused of leading astray the nation’s patriotic but impressionable students. Shortly thereafter, on January 16, the resignation of Hu Yaobang, CCP General Secretary, was announced on the evening news. At a special meeting of the Politburo on December 30, according to Schell (1988:269), Deng Xiaoping had attacked Hu for “having failed to control dissident intellectuals and having been unable to prevent the student demonstrations.” Kelly (1987:131) writes that

⁷¹ Kelly (1987), p. 133.

⁷² Xu (2002), p. 124.

⁷³ This was the third anti-bourgeois liberalism campaign since the end of the Cultural Revolution. The first took place in 1980-81; the second, termed an “anti-spiritual pollution” campaign, occurred in 1983. See Zhao (2004), p. 211.

“Hu’s cardinal error, arguably, was, having whipped up support for his reforms, to have been seen to lose control of it, to have created ‘chaos.’”

A chilly calm returned with the launch of the anti-bourgeois liberalization campaign. Party members were instructed to participate in group criticisms of Fang Lizhi’s speeches, although Schell suggests that many cadres wound up agreeing with Fang after having the chance to read his speeches. According to one party member that Schell spoke with, “Before the student demonstrations people were much more careless. Now, at least in public, most people have started to act obediently to the Party, even though they no longer believe in it.”⁷⁴ Meanwhile, students continued to meet secretly on campus to organize and discuss political issues.

Small-scale protests began to occur at Beijing University in the spring of 1988 and again in 1989.⁷⁵ Wasserstrom writes:

The student organizations of 1989 were much more sophisticated than those of 1986-87, in part simply because campus activists had spent the intervening years meeting together informally...the ‘democracy salons’ that evolved out of these informal gatherings were crucial to the growth of the 1989 movements....Key figures in the [1989] People’s Movement—Wang Dan, Wuer Kaixi, and Shen Tong—were active participants in or leaders of campus study societies before they emerged as heads of student protest leagues.⁷⁶

On April 15, 1989, Hu Yaobang died of a heart attack. Two days later, students in Beijing marched to Tiananmen Square to lay wreaths, marking the start of the 1989 movement. The government initially tolerated the protests, as it had in 1986 and 1985, but in an editorial on April 26 declared the movement “counterrevolutionary.” In defiance, students protested again on April 27. A few hundred students began hunger

⁷⁴ Schell (1988).

⁷⁵ Zhao (2001), p. 139-40.

⁷⁶ Wasserstrom (1991), p. 310.

strikes, which spread to thousands within a few days. The government conceded its willingness to hold a dialogue with student protest leaders, but these attempts “ended in chaos.”⁷⁷ Dingxin Zhao summarizes the tragic conclusion to the movement: “In the end, the state leaders were left with only two choices, either to repress the students or to face the prospect of eventually stepping down, as the communist leaders in Eastern European countries had done.”⁷⁸ The government chose the former, and the confrontation ended in bloodshed on June 4.

Although the Communist Party survived the events of 1989, victory came at a high price: the deaths of hundreds, some say thousands, of the country’s young elite, in addition to the shattered illusions of many more who supported the movement. CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang was removed from his post (like Hu Yaobang before him) for being too soft on the students and remained under house arrest until his death in 2005. Zhao’s last public appearance was on May 19, 1989, when he made a surprise visit to Tiananmen Square and spoke sympathetically to the students. As revealed by the *Tiananmen Papers*, Zhao was purged at a high-level Party meeting on May 22, at which several members of the Politburo Standing Committee criticized Zhao. At the meeting, President Yang Shangkun concurred with Deng Xiaoping in stating that the troubles of 1989 had originated in 1985 and 1986:

The disturbances have grown out of [Zhao] Ziyang’s years as premier [from 1980 to 1987]. Comrade [Deng] Xiaoping has already told us “the trouble didn’t start just last year; it started five years ago.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Zhao (2001), p. 169.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 212.

⁷⁹ Nathan and Link (2001), p. 270.

3.2 Analysis

Drawing upon the narrative above, I suggest that the 1985 anti-Japanese protests provide evidence to validate two critical assumptions in the theory, namely, that protests are both risky to authoritarian stability and increasingly costly to suppress. Not only did anti-government sentiment surface amidst the anti-Japanese protests, but the 1985 protests also made the pro-democracy protests of 1986 and 1989 more likely in four ways:

- 1) *Demonstration effects*: The 1985 anti-Japanese protests revealed a new level of tolerance in the government's attitude toward public protest, suggesting a shift in the "political opportunity structure."
- 2) *Resource mobilization*: The anti-Japanese protests of 1985 activated student networks and collective action techniques that would be used in 1986 and 1989.
- 3) *Patriotism as a rallying cry*: The 1985 anti-Japanese protests rallied students and public opinion behind the banner of nationalism/patriotism, which would continue to play a role in the pro-democracy protests.
- 4) *Psychological costs of suppression*: The 1985 anti-Japanese protests increased the salience of protest as a civil right and led to greater disillusionment with the government for first allowing and then suppressing protest.

1. *Demonstration effects: Revealing government tolerance*

The government's lenience toward the anti-Japanese protests in the fall of 1985 made it more likely that students would continue to mobilize by lowering the expected risk of punishment for future protest. The 1985 protests were the first time that students had attempted to hold a protest off-campus since the suppression of the Democracy Wall movement in 1979. Although university officials attempted to dissuade students and scheduled an on-campus alternative to the proposed September 18 march to Tiananmen Square, several hundred students who made it to the square on September 18 were allowed to demonstrate, even as the National CCP Congress met nearby. Afterwards,

high-level officials praised the students for their patriotism but encouraged them to strengthen the nation by focusing on their studies. None of the students were punished, and similar protests began to occur in other cities. In late November, a protest flyer appeared in Beijing, denouncing corruption at the highest levels of government and urging the celebration of “Democracy ’85.” Despite this shift in attack from Japan to the government, students were again allowed to protest in Tiananmen Square on November 20. Although police may have initially detained some students, soon thereafter the Public Security Minister publicly denied that any students had been arrested.

Both at home and abroad, this restrained attitude left the impression that the Chinese government had supported the protests and might do so again. Writing in 1987, Pepper suggests: “The suspicion remains that the critical student mood in 1985 could not have swept the country as it did without powerful encouragement somewhere within the Party.”⁸⁰ Similarly, Wasserstrom notes: “The 1985 anti-Japanese demonstrations had an unusually high degree of régime support.”⁸¹

The government’s soft handling of the 1985 protests, even after protesters took aim at corruption and the leadership, set expectations that it would be safe for students to organize protests in 1986. According to Whiting (1989:67), the anti-Japanese demonstrations were

the first time since Mao’s death that widespread public demonstrations had challenged authority. Mindful of the students’ potential power and anxious to avoid violence, much less create martyrs, the leadership reacted ambivalently but prudently, mixing minimum force with maximum persuasion. As such, the confrontation provided a precedent for the much

⁸⁰ Pepper (1987), p. 10.

⁸¹ Wasserstrom (1999), p. 66.

larger and more critical challenge posed by student demonstrations in December 1986.

Wasserstrom, who was in Shanghai at the time of the 1986 protests, remarked: “One thing that had emboldened youths in Shanghai and other cities was a feeling that powerful figures within the CCP leadership might look favorably upon [their] activities....The youths who marched on December 19 did not feel, therefore, that they were taking any great risk by protesting.”⁸² Statements by Deng Xiaoping himself fed this belief. “Bureaucratism must be eliminated and the enthusiasm of the people and of the basic level units aroused,” Deng was quoted as saying on September 4, 1986, three months before students took to the streets in 1986 to demand political reform.⁸³ After demonstrations broke out in December 1986, Deng was quoted by the *People’s Daily* as declaring that “daring and determination should come first, prudence second.”⁸⁴ According to Schell, “some students even imagined that Deng and Fang [Lizhi] were in league, working together to push the democratization of China forward over the protests of the hard-line Maoists” (1988:214).

These suspicions, combined with the overall pattern of government restraint, probably contributed to the decision by several thousand Beijing students to defy the newly imposed ban on protests and march to Tiananmen Square on December 31, 1986. After the police dispersed the crowd and arrested students, a new crowd assembled, this time to demand their classmates’ release. Once again, the government exercised forbearance, quickly releasing the students. In Schell’s words:

⁸² Wasserstrom (1991), p. 302.

⁸³ Pepper (1987), p. 12.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

What was so curious about this denouement—and other events during this spate of nationwide demonstrations—was that despite the obvious anger of the leadership...the Party proved so cautious in its actions. As awesomely powerful as it was, when it came to dealing with the disaffection of its students and intellectuals, again and again the Party, at both the local and national levels, refused to take strong punitive action.⁸⁵

This caution and ambivalence would play an important role in leading students to march in 1989. To quote Wasserstrom again, “The June 4th Movement was not one created or orchestrated by members of the CCP, but one thing that encouraged people to take the risk of marching was a belief that to do so might at least be tolerated.”⁸⁶ By setting a precedent of handling protest gently, the government had created the perception that protest was safe, making the escalation of student protests more likely. In the words of Alexis de Tocqueville:

When a people which has put up with an oppressive rule over a long period without protest suddenly finds the government relaxing its pressure, it takes up arms against it...the most perilous moment for a bad government is one when it seeks to mend its ways.⁸⁷

By accommodating student demands and refusing to mete out punishment, the government made it less likely that future warnings would succeed in persuading protesters to desist. In this way, the 1985 protests created a *demonstration effect*, revealing official ambivalence toward protest, which would come back to haunt the regime in 1986 and 1989.

2. *Resource mobilization: Activating collective action techniques*

In addition to mobilizing networks among students and campuses, the 1985 anti-Japanese protests also provided a new generation of students with the experience of being

⁸⁵ Schell (1988), p. 240.

⁸⁶ Wasserstrom (1999), p. 66.

⁸⁷ Tocqueville (1856/1955), p. 176-77.

political, activating patterns and repertoires of protest that would be used in the 1986 and 1989 protests. In Wasserstrom's words, "the events that occurred between 1985 and 1988...helped reacquaint students with the collective action repertoire [and] generally prepared the ground for the June 4th Movement."⁸⁸ Here, I focus on three techniques that were highlighted by the 1985 anti-Japanese protests and subsequently featured in the pro-democracy protests of 1986 and 1989.

The first of these was the act of demonstrating in Tiananmen Square, which Beijing students accomplished on September 18 and again on November 20. The significance of this act cannot be understated. As Schell writes:

Traditionally, the mere act of reaching the square had a legitimizing effect on any protest movement in Beijing. It was in Tiananmen Square that China's first mass student demonstrations touched off the May Fourth Movement in 1919. Students returned again in 1935 to launch the nationwide protest against Chiang Kai-shek's policy of non-resistance to Japan. In 1949 Mao stood atop the Gate of Heavenly Peace looking out across this square and proclaimed that the Chinese people had 'stood up.'" (Schell 1988: 238)

By demonstrating in Tiananmen Square, students in 1985 laid claim to a time-honored source of legitimacy, setting a benchmark for the protests that would follow in 1986 and 1989. Students would again march to the square on December 23 and 31, 1986, and on April 17, 1989, occupying the square until June 4th.

Second, the anti-Japanese protests reactivated the December 9 anniversary as a focal point for protest. As the 1985 protests gained momentum, students targeted December 9 as an important date to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1935 anti-Japanese student movement. When the government prevented protests on this sensitive

⁸⁸ Wasserstrom (1999), p. 63.

anniversary, student activists used the “shame of having failed” to protest on December 9, 1985 to mobilize protests in 1986. As a Hong Kong commentator noted,

The protests of September 18 were a foreshadowing of things to come. When the September 18 student movement was suppressed, a slogan appeared at Beijing University: “Stage a comeback on December 9.” Although the authorities used both carrot and stick to ensure that the December 9 protests would be stillborn, student leaders persevered, waiting for their opportunity to arise again.⁸⁹

Third, the protests in 1985 revived the use of patriotic slogans as a shield against official attacks. “Patriotism is innocent!” shouted students on September 18, 1985. Four years later, an editorial in the official *People’s Daily* noted: “Many students didn’t realize that their actions were illegal. Those that did, defended themselves by saying ‘patriotism is innocent.’”⁹⁰ In all three protest waves, students who took to the streets often held up their patriotism as a shield, deflecting suggestions that they were causing harm to society.

3. *Patriotism as a rallying cry*

The patriotism featured in the 1985 demonstrations also played a role in mobilizing the 1986 and 1989 protests, facilitating linkages between campuses and generating broad-based sympathy for student activism. Evidence from the narrative suggests that Nakasone’s visit to Yasukuni and the flooding of Japanese goods into China provided a unifying theme for previously localized student protests. Whereas students at Beijing University had demonstrated over campus living conditions in 1983 and 1984, in the fall of 1985 they were making phone calls and sending flyers to students at campuses around the country, urging them to take part in the campaign to “save the nation”

⁸⁹ *Cheng Ming*, January 1987, p. 12. Author translation.

⁹⁰ *People’s Daily*, August 30, 1989. Author translation.

(*jiuguo*). As protests spread around the country, the movement began to attract sympathy from the public, as Chuan (1990) and Pepper (1987) have suggested. Pepper writes:

The grievances expressed in 1985 clearly struck a responsive chord among other sectors of the urban population. And those grievances are far from dead. On the contrary, they showed themselves in December 1986 and constitute a potentially dangerous identity of interests between students and others.⁹¹

Although the protests of 1985 and 1986 were confined primarily to the student population, by 1989 the demonstrations had attracted sympathy and support from other key groups in society, notably workers, intellectuals, and journalists.

Moreover, in mobilizing students to action during the 1986 protests, protest organizers made explicit references to the famous anti-Japanese movements of 1919 and 1935. “Even though anti-foreign and anti-imperialist slogans were absent this time, educated youths continued to define their struggle as a patriotic one, an effort to ‘save the nation’ (*jiuguo*) from corrupt officials,” writes Wasserstrom.⁹² Wall posters on Shanghai campuses in 1986 “contained allusions to youth movements of the Republican era and calls for contemporary students to show as much bravery and patriotism as the heroes of 1919 and 1935.”⁹³

All three waves of protest—1985, 1986, and 1989—were rooted in concerns that government leaders (with their wives and offspring) were selling out the nation’s interests to line their own pockets. To be sure, there were major differences in orientation. The 1985 protests criticized the open-door economic reforms for having let in the Japanese wolves; by contrast, the 1986-89 protests clamored for the importation of Western

⁹¹ Pepper (1987), p. 14.

⁹² Wasserstrom (1991), p. 313.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

institutions. But while the protests advocated different solutions, the underlying diagnosis of China's illness was the same: corrupt, unaccountable officials who had failed to protect China's interests from foreign depredations. As Barmé writes:

Although it has been common for people to talk of the mass national protests of the spring of 1989 which led to the bloody repression of 4 June, as a "democracy movement," for those who were witness to it, and who heard the slogans and read the pamphlets produced by the protestors in Beijing, there was also a powerful undercurrent that was pointedly anti-corruption, anti-privilege, and *critical of a government that was perceived as having given in to major foreign nations on trade deals and issues of national pride*. In particular, Japan. Indeed, Zhao Ziyang, the Premier turned Party General Secretary, was directly targeted during the early weeks of the 1989 protests as being a man deeply involved in the incursion of foreign, in particular Japanese, capital in China.⁹⁴ (emphasis added)

This bitterness towards Japan was evident in *River Elegy*, a television series that captivated public attention in 1988 and was later denounced by the Party as having contributed to the 1989 demonstrations:

Over the past century we have continually been losers. First we lost to England, then to the Eight Powers during the Boxer Rebellion, then to the Japanese. Having finally gotten rid of the Japanese, New China enjoyed a short period of pride and achievement. Who was to guess that when we finally woke up from the thirty-odd years of internal turmoil we had created, we would find ourselves in the company of nations like Tanzania and Zambia? Even South Korea and Singapore were ahead of us. And as for the Japanese, they were the ones laughing, now that they were back with their Toshibas, Hitachis, Toyotas, Crowns, Yamahas, and Casios.⁹⁵

In the last line, *River Elegy* references Japan's "second invasion" of China, the same complaint voiced during the 1985 anti-Japanese protests.

⁹⁴ Barmé (2005).

⁹⁵ Quoted in Barmé (2005); see also Craig C. Calhoun, "Science, Democracy, and the Politics of Identity," in *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, ed. Jeffrey Wasserstrom and Elizabeth Perry, 2nd ed., 1994, p. 100.

Western and Chinese scholars have often overlooked the strong current of nationalism in the 1986 and 1989 protests, tending to focus instead on the pro-West, pro-democracy features of the two movements. Students seeking international sympathy certainly played to this perception, erecting a “Goddess of Democracy” statue in Tiananmen Square that looked very much like the Statue of Liberty. However, as Wasserstrom notes,

Some students certainly had a lot to say about the need to democratize China, but even they often argued that democracy was needed not just or even primarily because it was a good thing in and of itself but because it would help strengthen the nation....In thinking about the place of the June 4th Movement within the general history of student activism during the Reform era, the downplaying of the role of patriotism in 1989 by many Western analysts and PRC commentators alike becomes even more problematic. It sets the June 4th Movement apart from, rather than locating it within, important trends. It helps obscures the connection between events such as the anti-Japanese protests of 1985 and the demonstrations of 1989.⁹⁶

Even *River Elegy*, which criticized traditional Chinese culture and advocated wholesale Westernization, was fundamentally concerned with strengthening the nation, not kowtowing to Western powers. Suisheng Zhao writes:

The mood of *River Elegy* was assertively nationalistic. It represented the soul-searching of a new generation of Chinese intellectuals about their nation's destiny at a time when China's reform reached critical cross-roads.... However, in spite of its enthusiastic call for learning from the West, the series actually portrayed it as an aggressive, hostile power that had attacked, exploited and humiliated China. The challenge for China was to revitalize itself to compete with the West.⁹⁷

As these anecdotes suggest, the patriotism and nationalism that drove the anti-Japanese demonstrations in 1985 played an important role in establishing linkages among

⁹⁶ Wasserstrom (1999), p. 60.

⁹⁷ Zhao (1997), p. 728-29.

campuses and providing a common subtext for the grievances and demands espoused by the 1986 and 1989 protests.

4. *Escalating costs of suppression: The right to protest and further disillusionment*

The 1985 protests helped lay the groundwork for the pro-democracy protests that would follow in 1986 and 1989 by increasing the salience of the right to protest. By allowing and then curtailing protests in 1985, the government created more anger among students than if protests had been prevented in the first place. Although the wall posters that appeared at Beijing University in the fall of 1985 had from almost the beginning demanded recognition for the right to protest, this belief spread as protests in Tiananmen Square and in several cities around the country gave it visibility. According to Chuan (1990:107), a survey later found widespread popular support for the students' actions as "a mark of student patriotism and a 'citizen's right.'" This theme—freedom to protest—would become the centerpiece of the 1986 demonstrations. As Wasserstrom notes:

From poems to a lengthy essay comparing the current 'December 19th movement' to the great youth struggles of 1919 and 1935....The one element common to most if not all these posters was the idea that the main goal of the present movement should be to fight for the right to protest itself.⁹⁸

Resentment at the government's handling of the protests and its policies in the aftermath festered among students throughout 1986. According to a U.S. Embassy officer stationed in Beijing at the time,

Students were dismayed by the government's failure to fulfill promises made following last year's demonstrations, and have become increasingly cynical about the regime's promises of greater freedom and political reform. There is a groundswell of anger and bitterness at Beijing

⁹⁸ Wasserstrom (1991), p. 300.

University, the student said, that could spark larger, more confrontational demonstrations in the future. (Wiedemann 1986)

By tolerating student protests in September, October, and November but preventing protests on the anniversary of December 9, 1985, the government had made the situation worse. The experience of participating in the anti-Japanese demonstrations set students up for greater disillusionment with the government when the movement was curtailed in advance of the sensitive December 9th anniversary. When protests erupted in December 1986, one of the wall posters put up at Wuhan University explicitly referred to “the shame of having failed to [celebrate] the 50th anniversary” of December 9th in 1985.⁹⁹ Soon afterwards, Whiting wrote:

Tens of thousands of university students in China have risked their future careers by demanding democratic freedoms that are guaranteed in the Constitution but denied by China's leaders. Why?Part of the disillusionment began in September 1985 when students, in their first demonstrations in this decade, protested Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone's homage to Japan's fallen soldiers....Several hundred demonstrators managed to parade publicly in Beijing, but on most campuses meetings were confined indoors. Anxious officials conciliated student unrest with better food, increased allowances and lengthy discussion of grievances, including Japan's dominant role in China's economic modernization. But the bottom line was clear: no more demonstrations.¹⁰⁰

There is also evidence to suggest that some students who were disillusioned by the curtailment of protests in 1985 later became pro-democracy activists. A Western human rights record on Beijing University graduate Chen Xiaoping reads:

[Chen] reportedly was active in student demonstrations in late 1985, at which time he criticized a government ban on demonstrations as unconstitutional....Chen [later] emerged as a leader of the pro-democracy movement in May-June 1989. He was instrumental in forming the Beijing

⁹⁹ Pepper (1987), p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ Allen S. Whiting, “Why China’s Students are Demonstrating,” *New York Times*, December 29, 1986.

Citizens Autonomous Union and often was seen using a bullhorn to exhort Beijing citizens to support the student protestors.¹⁰¹

These anecdotes provide evidence to support the claim that people care more about the right to protest once they have had the experience of protesting. As suggested in the theory chapter, by the logic of prospect theory, once people have something, they value it more. By allowing the anti-Japanese protests in 1985 but then curtailing them before the December 9th anniversary, the government created greater disillusionment among students than if the September 18 protests had been prevented in the first place, adding to the grievances that would erupt in 1986 and 1989.

3.3 Lessons learned

Here, I present additional evidence that suggests that the Chinese government as well as foreign observers viewed the anti-Japanese protests as having contributed to the instability of the late 1980s, which divided the Chinese elite and required the People's Liberation Army to suppress. When possible, I have sought out direct statements by government officials, but with few exceptions (such as the *Tiananmen Papers*) these represent the conclusions that the Chinese government wished to make public, rather than the lessons the leadership drew privately. These public conclusions are nevertheless useful for this analysis, as they bear upon the claims presented here and provide a window into the party line.

Before turning to these public conclusions, it is worth highlighting evidence that the Chinese leadership *privately* discussed the link between the 1985 protests and the pro-democracy protests of 1986 and 1989. According to the *Tiananmen Papers*, a collection

¹⁰¹ *Asia Watch*, January 30, 1991.

of internal government and Party documents secreted out of China country after June 4th, PRC President Yang Shangkun—citing Deng Xiaoping himself—asserted that the 1989 protests had been brewing for five years.

The public version also draws a link between the anti-Japanese protests of 1985 and the pro-democracy protests later in the decade. The difference is that the public version blames a few “bad elements” for conspiring to use nationalism as a protective cloak for anti-regime mobilization. By this logic, these “bad elements” like Fang Lizhi preyed upon the naïve but patriotic impulses of university students to mobilize opposition to the regime. A week after the June 4th crackdown, the *People’s Daily* wrote:

Fang Lizhi has two cloaks: “patriotism” (*aiguo*) and “democracy.” He appears to be an intellectual concerned for the nation and the people, holding salons, lectures, symposia, talking about human rights, democracy, freedom—influencing the artlessly naïve young students... in reality, the cloak of “patriotism” has already been stripped away.¹⁰²

Published in 1990 and written in December 1989, the account by Chuan provides a reasonable representation of the official verdict on the 1985 anti-Japanese protests.

According to Chuan,

The distortion of patriotism was the first mistake made by the September 18 student protests...Not understanding that success is meaningless if premised upon the destruction of social stability was the second.¹⁰³

Chuan goes on to describe the usurpation of the movement by a few dissidents intent on undermining the Party:

The overall topic of the “September 18” student protests was love of country (*aiguo*), so it quickly gained support among students and resonated with their naïve patriotism (*danchun de aiguo reqing*)....But a few students believed that under the banner of nationalism, anything was

¹⁰² *People’s Daily*, June 13, 1989. Author translation.

¹⁰³ Chuan (1990), p. 126-30. Author translation.

acceptable....Later on, a few bad elements seized the banner of nationalism to beat their own drum (*jieti fahui*)...attacking the government's foreign policy for "selling out the country" and inciting the students with misguided and reactionary speech, such as "look at the corruption in Beijing" and "Judgment Day is coming for the corrupt government."¹⁰⁴

Couched in this sort of language, the official verdict on the protests of 1985-89 approaches a conspiracy theory, seemingly farcical in its dogged determination to blame a few evildoers and absolve the naïve but patriotic student participants.

There are nevertheless elements of the official story which map onto the linkages described in the analysis above, particularly the use of patriotism as a rallying cry and banner to unite various groups. Writes Chuan, "Especially after September 18, the 'suppression of the patriotic student movement' was seized upon by a few bad elements as a slogan to agitate and protect themselves."¹⁰⁵ It is also true that Fang Lizhi was influential in inspiring and motivating students to organize. In 1985 and in the lead up to the December 1986 protests, Fang Lizhi crisscrossed the country, giving lectures on democracy and political reform. It is probably no coincidence that Fang Lizhi's lecture at Beijing University occurred just two weeks before the November 20 Tiananmen demonstrations in 1985. As noted above, Schell writes:

The only nonstudent voice to speak up on behalf of the [September 18] demonstrators was that of Fang Lizhi. On November 4, 1985, in a stirring, free-ranging and sometimes even humorous talk that held his Beida audience spellbound, Fang encouraged the students to hold on to their social concern and political activism."¹⁰⁶

Not only did the 1986 pro-democracy protests begin at Fang Lizhi's home institution, the Chinese University of Science and Technology in Hefei, but his guest

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁰⁶ Schell (1988), p. 132.

lectures also inspired students around the country to organize discussion groups and “democracy salons.” As cited earlier, Wasserstrom notes that:

Tongji’s and Jiaotong’s position in the vanguard of Shanghai’s pro-democracy struggle was no accident. Fang Lizhi had given guest lectures at these two schools earlier in the fall of 1986, and (in part because of these lectures) students at Tongji and Jiaotong had established informal study groups before the Anhui protests to discuss methods for bringing about political change.¹⁰⁷

Whether or not Fang Lizhi took advantage of student patriotism to plant the seeds of a movement hostile to the regime, as the Chinese government has publicly asserted, the evidence above suggests that the anti-Japanese protests provided fertile ground for pro-democratic sentiment and activism to take root. Privately, the Chinese leadership also acknowledged that the confrontation at Tiananmen in 1989 had begun years earlier, with the first wave of student protest in 1985.

Also important for the theory is how the Chinese government represented the 1985 protests to foreign observers, along with how foreign observers in fact perceived the protests. Because the 1985 protests were targeted at Japan, I focus primarily on communications between Chinese and Japanese officials and commentary by Japanese analysts.

The 1985 anti-Japanese protests were widely viewed as attempts to gain leverage over Japan in bilateral trade negotiations. “The Japanese Government suspects that the protests have been instigated to put pressure on them to make trade concessions,” wrote the *Guardian*.¹⁰⁸ “It was the extensive coverage given in the Chinese press of all these Japanese issues which led many observers to conclude initially that the September

¹⁰⁷ Wasserstrom (1991), p. 297.

¹⁰⁸ Jasper Becker, “Peking alert for student protest,” *The Guardian*, December 6, 1985.

student protest was officially sanctioned to exert further pressure on Japan to improve its trading practices,” Pepper (1987:8) notes. When high-level Chinese officials appeared on campus to dissuade students from planning further protests, according to Whiting (1989:7), “these activities, however, did not convince the skeptics in Japan and elsewhere, who saw them as part of a complicated maneuver to gain leverage against Tokyo.”

Following the protests, “stability” became a common theme in conversations between Chinese and Japanese officials. When Japanese textbook revisions were approved in May 1986, Chinese officials asked for Japan’s “‘help’ with internal divisions rather than ‘making demands,’” according to Japanese officials interviewed by Whiting at the time.¹⁰⁹ And on June 28, 1987, at a meeting attended by several Japanese cabinet members, Deng Xiaoping stated:

In regard to China-Japan relations, reactions among youths, especially students, are strong. If difficult problems were to appear still further, it will become impossible to explain them to the people. It will become impossible to control them. I want you to understand this position which we are in.¹¹⁰

Remarks such as these indicate that China’s leaders were indeed trying to utilize domestic nationalism to wrangle concessions from Japan, hoping to convince their Japanese counterparts that popular protests could get out of hand and threaten bilateral relations if not appeased. Some analysts suggest that Chinese officials were successful in using this tactic. In *Japan Echo*, analysts Ryuosei Kokubun and Jie Liu write that “Deng

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Translated and cited in Whiting (1989), p. 164. Deng’s remarks appeared in Chinese in *Cankao Xiaoxi* on June 30, 1987.

Xiaoping was remarkable....he linked China's stability with the interests of the world [so that] no other country wanted to destabilize China or rock the [CCP] regime.”¹¹¹

According to CIA briefing materials for President Reagan before his meeting with Prime Minister Nakasone, the Japanese government was eager to buttress a moderate regime in Beijing—fearing that a change of leadership would lead to more hawkish policies toward Japan and closer ties with the Soviet Union:

Some in Tokyo are concerned that a radical leadership could reemerge in Beijing....[but] Japanese officials nonetheless are generally optimistic about future bilateral relations. They view support for China's modernization as a way to improve prospects for the survival of a moderate leadership in Beijing, help to reinforce China's "opening to the West," and reduce incentives for a Sino-Soviet rapprochement. The mutual strategic and economic benefits of the relationship probably will encourage continued close ties.¹¹²

If Chinese officials shared this assessment, then they might have also concluded that Japan would make trade concessions in order to prevent Chinese street protests from spinning out of control and bringing a more hawkish leadership to power. Although I have gathered insufficient evidence at this time to conclude that international bargaining was the rationale behind the government's tolerance of the 1985 protests, I suspect that it played a role.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to illustrate two key assumptions of the theory, namely, that anti-foreign protests in authoritarian settings pose a risk to regime stability and are

¹¹¹ Kokubun and Liu (2004), p. 53.

¹¹² Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, "Briefing Materials for the President's Meeting with Prime Minister Nakasone, 2 January 1985," December 1984, p. 21, Digital National Security Archive, JA01246, available at http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:dnsa&rft_dat=xri:dnsa:article:CJA01246.

increasingly costly to suppress. The case study of the 1985 anti-Japanese protests illustrates how these risks and costs—which may often appear hypothetical—can become reality. Once allowed to begin, a protest can set in motion a sequence of events that is difficult to rein in. As Sidney Tarrow notes, “The power to trigger sequences of collective action is not the same as the power to control or sustain them...A good part of the power of movements comes from the fact that they activate people over whom they have no control.”¹¹³

The forgoing analysis has identified four ways in which the anti-Japanese protests of 1985 made the pro-democracy protests of 1986 and 1989 more likely: revealing a tolerant government attitude toward protest; reactivating collective action techniques; rallying public opinion and establishing linkages among campuses under the banner of nationalism/patriotism; and increasing the salience of the right to protest and generating disillusionment with the government when protests were curtailed.

The connections between the anti-Japanese protests of 1985 and the pro-democracy protests of 1986 and 1989 have served to remind leaders of the Chinese Communist Party that anti-foreign demonstrations can easily change direction and target the government itself. Indeed, the government appears to have taken the experience to heart. Since the early 1990s, it has closely monitored the activities of anti-Japanese activists, treating them with nearly the same level of scrutiny as democratic activists, although the nationalists are rarely punished. Tong Zeng, for example, graduated from Beijing University law school in 1989 and took up the cause of war reparations from Japan in 1990, achieving notoriety in 1991 with a petition to the National People’s

¹¹³ Tarrow (1998), p. 23.

Congress. His activities garnered so much attention that in 1993, the central political and legal affairs system (*zhengfa xitong*)¹¹⁴ issued a notice saying that the “actions of Tong Zeng and his reparations group are nominally directed against the Japanese government, but their true target is the Chinese government.”¹¹⁵ This lesson—that anti-foreign protests are a double-edged sword, easily swinging back to cut the hand that holds it—has remained central, not only in the eyes of the Chinese leadership, but in the eyes of foreign observers as well.

¹¹⁴ The *zhengfa xitong* includes the Ministries of State Security, Public Security, and Justice, the People’s Armed Police, and the Supreme Court and Supreme Procurator.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Liu, Ning. 2005. *Bingqi “Zhongri Youhao” de Xiangchou (Abandoning Our Nostalgia for “Sino-Japanese” Friendship)*, p. 36. Author translation.

Chapter 4: The 2005 Anti-Japanese Protests and U.N. Reform Negotiations

Policeman A: How many are coming? Thirty?
Policeman B: No, twenty.
Policeman A: When do they arrive?
Policeman B: 10:00 A.M. is the official start time. They'll arrive around 9:45.
Policeman A: Has it been approved?
Policeman B: Definitely not approved, but the government has given tacit consent.¹ This group plays by the rules. Before coming, they call the government and say, "tomorrow at 10?"

— Overheard by the author, waiting for protesters to assemble at the Japanese Embassy, June 2007

To speak plainly, the government uses us when it suits their purpose. When it doesn't suit them, it suppresses us. This way the government can play the public opinion card. After all, Japan is a democracy and respects public opinion. Even in a non-democratic country like China, the government can still point to the public's feelings.

— Anti-Japanese activist, Shanghai (Interview 81, April 2007)

This chapter illustrates the logic of anti-foreign protest as a bargaining tactic by presenting a case study of the 2005 anti-Japanese protests in China and the negotiations over U.N. Security Council reform. The chapter asks: why did the Chinese government allow anti-Japanese protests in the spring of 2005, and what impact did these protests have upon international negotiations over the expansion of the U.N. Security Council membership? The collected evidence suggests that the Chinese government gave tacit consent to the anti-Japanese protests in order to undermine Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council and mitigate the international reputation costs to the Chinese government of making an eventual veto threat. The protests were instrumental in

¹ In Chinese: *Mei pizhun, juedui mei pizhun, zhe shi zhengfu moren.*

shifting the negotiations in China's favor—compelling the United States to concede its support for Japan's candidacy and work jointly with China to block the proposed reform.

In examining the anti-Japanese protests that swept China in the spring of 2005 and tracing the concurrent negotiations over the expansion of the United Nations Security Council, I find strong evidence to support the three primary predictions outlined in Chapter 2:

- **Hypothesis 1: On average, given the occurrence of anti-foreign protests, the international outcome should be more favorable to the government.** On average, anti-foreign protests should lead to a more advantageous international outcome for the authoritarian government. However, the nature of strategic interaction implies that although anti-foreign protests give authoritarian leaders bargaining leverage, the ultimate outcome depends on the resolve and actions of the other parties.
- **Hypothesis 2: Given the occurrence of anti-foreign protests, the government is more likely to adopt a tough foreign policy stance.** Unless foreign negotiators back down or threaten to impose sanctions that will be more costly to the government than suppressing protests, the government should take a more hawkish foreign policy stance in order to placate and disperse protesters.
- **Hypothesis 3: The decision to allow anti-foreign protests should coincide with a perceived window of opportunity in international negotiations.** Anti-foreign protests are more likely to be allowed by authoritarian governments before or during negotiations, not after a settlement has been reached. As signals of resolve, nationalist protests are useful during the stage of negotiations when parties are trying to reveal preferences and locate a bargain. Once a deal has been struck and the negotiations have moved into the implementation phase, anti-foreign protests no longer increase bargaining leverage. When reassurance and compliance are the objective, anti-foreign protests cease to be useful tactics. Thus, we should not observe anti-foreign protest after a settlement has been reached.

The case study also provides validating evidence for two key assumptions of the theory:

- Anti-foreign protests are risky in the authoritarian context
- Protests are easier to nip in the bud, i.e. the costs of suppression escalate as protests grow larger and more widespread

Below, I first present a narrative of events as they unfolded, weaving together the domestic and international levels, and then analyze the case through the lens of the theory.² My purpose is to shed light on the following questions: *What role did the government play, and what channels did the government use to communicate with protesters and activists? Why did the protests occur when they did and not at some other time? What effect did the protests have upon foreign perceptions and positions in the negotiations over U.N. Security Council reform?* I then discuss several alternative explanations and their limitations, and conclude.

4.1 The 2005 Anti-Japanese Protests

In the spring of 2005, anti-Japanese protests occurred over a period of three weeks, clustered mainly on the weekends: April 2-3 in the cities of Chengdu and Shenzhen, April 9-10 in Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and others, and April 16-17 in Shanghai, Shenyang, Shenzhen, and other cities across China. By my count, at least 38 cities held anti-Japanese demonstrations, including protest marches and street signature campaigns. Others have estimated that 280 organizations and units, 107 universities, 41 technical schools, and 28,230,000 internet users signed petitions against Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.³

As illustrated below, the anti-Japanese protests and petitions were timed to coincide with a critical period of negotiations over the expansion of the U.N. Security Council (UNSC). Although discussion of UNSC reform had resumed in September 2004, with Japan, India, Germany, and Brazil campaigning for permanent seats as the "Group

² For other academic discussions of the 2005 anti-Japanese protests, see Gries (2005b); Zhao (2005); He (2007a); and Xu (2007).

³ *Chengming*, May 2005, p. 7, citing the State Council General Office bulletin.

of Four” (G4), it was not until March and April of 2005 that the negotiations intensified. For China, this represented a window of opportunity to kill Japan’s bid and the G4 proposal in the framework stage, while proposals were still under discussion in the U.N. General Assembly. If the G4 proposal had been put to a vote and received at least two-thirds support, an amendment to the U.N. Charter would have been raised for ratification, requiring unanimous consent by the permanent UNSC members and two-thirds of the General Assembly. Under such circumstances, China would have been faced with a painful decision: to veto an amendment passed by two-thirds of the General Assembly, or to live with Japan as a permanent member of the Security Council.

The case study presented here seeks to show that the anti-Japanese protests and petitions in China were influential in altering the course of the negotiations, reducing uncertainty about China’s stance on the G4 proposal, eliciting symbolic concessions from Japan, and prompting the United States to take an active role in blocking the G4 proposal. Although Japan and the G4 continued to seek a two-thirds majority for their proposal, Japan declined to press China for an apology over the anti-Japanese protests, instead offering an apology of its own for Japan’s historic misdeeds. Moreover, the anti-Japanese activities were instrumental in convincing the United States to switch its stance from “unambiguously” supporting Japan to publicly opposing the G4 proposal. In the end, on the eve of a potential vote in the General Assembly, the United States and China struck a deal to join efforts and block the G4 proposal.

4.2 Protests and Negotiations: A Two-Level Game

The anti-Japanese protests occurred against a backdrop of growing economic interdependence and political friction in Sino-Japanese relations. In January 2005, China surpassed the United States as Japan's number one trading partner. On February 9, 2005, the Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary announced that a lighthouse on the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands would be put under Japanese "state control" and managed by the Japanese Coast Guard. On the morning of February 15, a group of fifty Chinese activists staged a two-hour protest in front of the Japanese Embassy in Beijing.⁴ At the February 19 "two plus two" meeting between American and Japanese foreign and defense ministers, the issue of Taiwan was for the first time listed as a common strategic objective, which was bound to anger the Chinese government and citizens.

Since the opening of debate on UNSC reform in 1993, Japan had made multiple attempts to gain a permanent seat. Although four non-permanent seats were added in 1963, the composition of the permanent, veto-wielding seats had not changed since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. Today, as in 2005, the UNSC is composed of five permanent members with veto power and ten non-permanent seats without veto power. Although the need for reform has been almost universally acknowledged, disagreement over the appropriate formula has stymied previous rounds of debate. In the late 1990s, Japan and Germany's efforts to expand the Council's permanent membership met with strong opposition from a group of nations dubbed the "Coffee Club," led by Italy, Mexico, South Korea, and Pakistan. Moreover, U.S. opposition to expansion of the

⁴ As reported on the Patriots Alliance Network, the protest was organized by the China Federation to Defend the Diaoyu Islands, Patriots Alliance Network, and the Anti-Japanese Goods Alliance. See also *People's Daily*, "Chinese protest against Tokyo's move on islands," February 16, 2005.

Council beyond 21 seats, which a majority of U.N. members believed was too small, had effectively halted progress on reform. As Yukio Satoh, Japan's Ambassador to the United Nations at the time, noted: "...it was pointless to discuss Security Council reform as long as the United States remained rigid on that position, which [most member states] considered a non-starter."⁵

In 2000, an abrupt shift in the U.S. position gave impetus to a new round of debate on Security Council reform. Richard Holbrooke, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, declared that the United States was "prepared to consider proposals that would result in a slightly larger number of seats than twenty-one."⁶ By the end of the year, Ambassador Satoh recalled, "well over two-thirds" of U.N. member states had expressed support for expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership (Interview 10, April 2006).

In September 2004, Japan and the other members of the G4 began jointly campaigning to increase the number of permanent and non-permanent members, attracting support from about 120 member states. China's official reaction was mild and obliquely sympathetic, although domestic analysts privately admitted that China was "satisfied with the current situation in the United Nations. China doesn't want reform, and it certainly doesn't want Japan to be a political power on the international stage" (Interview 93, May 2007). P.R.C. Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan told reporters at a regular press conference: "Regarding Japan, I can make clear this principled stance,

⁵ Satoh (2001), p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 4.

that we understand Japan's aspiration to play a greater role in international affairs.”⁷

Within China, his remarks were prominently reported on official and commercial news sites, with headlines such as “Foreign Ministry takes a stance on Japan’s bid for a permanent UNSC seat.”⁸ The statement provoked a backlash among nationalist netizens. On September 18, the anniversary of Japan’s invasion of China in 1931, thirty members of the Patriots Alliance Network, a nationalist non-governmental organization, gathered in front of the Japanese Embassy in Beijing to protest Japan’s UNSC bid and the “Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ vague expression of ‘understanding.’”⁹ Rather than bow to public pressure and take a more hawkish stance on the G4 proposal, the Foreign Ministry decided to avoid mentioning the topic altogether. According to a prominent Sino-Japanese expert, “Starting in October 2004, the Chinese government did not mention Japan’s bid again, because there was such a large gap between the phrase ‘we understand Japan’s aspiration’ and the public mindset at the time. We had to be cautious” (Interview 107, July 2007).

Discussion over UNSC reform gained momentum in December 2004, when the expert panel convened by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan released its findings and recommendations, outlining two models (A and B) for expansion. Consistent with the G4 proposal, Model A would create six new permanent seats and three new non-permanent seats. Model B would create eight semi-permanent seats of four-year renewable terms as well as one new non-permanent seat, a proposal closer to the position of the Coffee Club.

⁷ FBIS, CPP20040909000157, September 9, 2004. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China WWW-Text* in Chinese.

⁸ E.g. <http://news.tom.com/1002/20040909-1299026.html> and http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2004-09/10/content_1964696.htm, last accessed August 14, 2007.

⁹ In Chinese, “*Zhongguo Waijiaobu ze mohu de duice biaoshi lijie.*”

<http://www.thechinapress.com/yaowen/ywimg/200409190066.htm>, last accessed August 14, 2007.

Both models would expand the size of the Council from 15 to 24 members. Within days, Model A gained the support of three of the five permanent members whose approval would be needed to expand the Council. France and Russia expressed support for adding permanent members with veto power, and Britain stated support for adding permanent members without veto power.¹⁰

On December 14, 2004, a U.S. official for the first time expressed support for giving Japan a veto-wielding permanent seat. In a farewell speech, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Howard Baker stated that the United States would back a UNSC seat with veto power for Japan. Previously, the United States had twice stated its support for a permanent seat for Japan. In 2001, two weeks after the inauguration of President Bush, he and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori issued a joint statement supporting Japan's bid for a permanent seat, a commitment reiterated by Bush to Mori's successor, Junichiro Koizumi.

Over the next three months, both camps continued to mobilize support for their respective formulas for UNSC expansion, preparing for the General Assembly debate to be held on April 6 and 7. Opposing the G4 proposal was the newly-formed "Uniting for Consensus" movement, a spin-off of the Coffee Club, whose members included Italy, Spain, Mexico, and Pakistan. In mid-February, the "Uniting for Consensus" movement scheduled a meeting for April 11th, to be led by Italy's foreign minister. The April 11th meeting would be used to gauge support for a "consensus"-based decision on UNSC expansion, rather than a vote in the General Assembly, which the G4 favored. In early March 2005, the 53-member African Union reached a unanimous decision to seek two

¹⁰ Jiji Press, December 8, 2004; Agence France-Presse, March 7, 2005; see also Shinichi (2005).

permanent seats with veto power, along the lines of Model A.¹¹ By announcing their preference for expanding the permanent membership of the Council, the African Union strengthened the G4's position.¹²

Two events in mid-March appeared to tilt the board in favor of the G4 proposal, prompting fear among official and popular circles in China that the G4 proposal might succeed in getting a two-thirds majority if put to a vote in the General Assembly. On March 19, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated at a speech in Tokyo that the United States “unambiguously supports a permanent seat for Japan on the United Nations Security Council.”¹³ And on March 21, U.N. Secretary-General Annan endorsed Japan's candidacy by suggesting that “those who contribute most to the United Nations financially, militarily, and diplomatically” should be given increased “involvement in decision-making.”¹⁴ Furthermore, Annan sided with the G4 in stressing that he wanted a decision—by vote if necessary—in time for the 60th anniversary celebration of the United Nations in September. In his words: “It would be very preferable for Member States to take this vital decision by consensus, but if they are unable to reach consensus this must not become an excuse for postponing action.”

His remarks were warmly welcomed by Japan and the G4 but produced consternation in other states that opposed the expansion of permanent membership. “As

¹¹ Agence France-Presse, March 7, 2005.

¹² “Answering China's Japan Bashers,” *Japan Echo*, Special Issue (June) 2005, pp. 12-17; available at http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/EJN_no1.htm.

¹³ Agence France-Presse, March 19, 2005. Although Annan's sweeping announcement quickly eclipsed Rice's statement in the attention of the public and the media, some Chinese observers have concluded that her statement was one of the “true reasons” that the anti-Japanese protests “erupted” in China. See Zhang Yu and Zhao Junfeng, “Meiguo meiti dui Zhongguo fanri youxing baodao de pianjian fenxi (The American media's biased analysis of anti-Japanese protests in China),” *Xinwen Zhishi (Journalism Knowledge)*, 2005, no. 6., p. 13.

¹⁴ Report of the Secretary General, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights for All*, March 21, 2005, p. 42-43, available at <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/>.

the report of the Secretary General gives momentum toward the realization of the reform in line with Japan's position, the Government of Japan welcomes and supports the report,” said a statement released by Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura.¹⁵ With only two weeks remaining before the General Assembly debate on April 6-7 and the Uniting for Consensus meeting on April 11, Annan’s March 21 statement had a galvanizing effect upon the Chinese government and public. As Japan’s Deputy Permanent Representative to United Nations, Kitaoka Shinichi, later reflected:

This was the outcome we had expected, and it seemed to be a major blow to the Uniting for Consensus Group. In all likelihood it also spurred China, which opposes Japan's inclusion as a permanent member, to make serious plans to derail Tokyo's bid and to begin implementing that strategy. This, then, [was] the background to the Internet petition and the anti-Japanese demonstrations that broke out in China.¹⁶

Although the reaction from the Chinese Foreign Ministry was mild, stressing the importance of “broad consensus” on the basis of “unanimity through consultation,”¹⁷ the website of the *People’s Daily*, the Party’s mouthpiece (*houshe*), ran a story about the internet petition against Japan’s bid that had been launched by overseas Chinese associations in San Francisco and New York in late February.¹⁸ The news article also listed the names of the participating mainland sponsors: two nationalist websites based in Beijing and Shanghai, whose servers were quickly overloaded. One of the nationalist webmasters sought help from Sina.com.cn, China’s largest commercial portal, and the signature campaign immediately spread to the other major commercial portals, Sohu, and

¹⁵ Statement by Machimura upon publication of the report of Kofi Annan, March 21, 2005, available at <http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/english/html/pressreleases/2005/032205b.htm>.

¹⁶ “Answering China's Japan Bashers,” *Japan Echo*, Special Issue (June) 2005, pp. 12-17; available at http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/EJN_no1.htm.

¹⁷ FBIS, CPP20050322000209, March 22, 2005.

¹⁸ <http://news.sina.com.cn/w/2005-03-22/06285425255s.shtml>.

Netease (Interview 81, April 2007). According to a news editor at one of the portals, permission to host the signature campaign had been verbally requested from and granted by the State Council Information Office, the government agency in charge of managing China's international image and monitoring the content of all internet news sites.¹⁹ "The government wanted this petition to happen among the public," said the news editor. "You have to understand the political context."

Official websites joined the fray, with even Xinhua.net creating a petition to "resolutely oppose Japan's bid for a permanent UNSC seat."²⁰ Government support for the internet petition was all but made explicit by Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao on March 24, two days after the quasi-official launch of the internet campaign in mainland China. Liu defended the online petition, stating: "I do not think that this is anti-Japanese feeling; on the contrary, it is a demand that Japan take a correct and responsible attitude toward historical problems."²¹

Street petitions began to take place in cities large and small across China, sponsored by the China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands (*Zhongguo Bao Diao Lianhehui*) and its partner organization, the Patriots Alliance Network (*Aiguozhe Tongmengwang*), hereafter collectively referred to as the Bao Diao network. "Once the internet petition took off, we organized a series of street petitions all over the country," said a Bao Diao leader (Interview 106, July 2007). On March 29 and 31, Foreign

¹⁹ The author would like to thank a source who wishes to remain anonymous for this information. For background on the role of the SCIO, see Shirk (2007), pp. 92-96; Shambaugh (2007); and Xiao Qiang (2007), available at http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2007hearings/written_testimonies/07_07_31wrts/07_07_31_qiang_statement.php.

²⁰ http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2005-03/25/content_2741791.htm.

²¹ "Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman Liu Jianchao Answers Journalists' Questions at Routine News Conference on 24 March 2005," FBIS, CPP20050324000145.

Ministry spokesman Liu again defended the internet petitions and boycott of Asahi beer that had begun in two provinces, spearheaded by a supermarket chain. Even the Chinese Embassy in the United States posted news about the signature campaign on its website.²² On March 29, Liu stated: “We have noted that many Internet users have signed their names online to show their objection to Japan's wish to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. This once again demonstrates that the Japanese side should adopt a responsible attitude toward historical issues, so as to win the trust of the people of Asian countries, including China.”²³ Asked on March 31 about the boycott of Japanese products that had begun, Liu stated that “the dissatisfaction of some Chinese people regarding this question is expressed through various forms. It is directed not at the Japanese people but at Japan's wrong attitude.”²⁴

The Foreign Ministry's remarks, broadcast over the internet by both official and commercial news portals, were taken as a green light to continue organizing street petitions. One student in Huizhou, Guangdong posted a notice on the university BBS announcing a petition campaign on April 3, asserting that “this is precisely the view and attitude held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”²⁵ As a Japanese embassy official recounted to me, “Xinhuanet reported on the boycott, and then many people copied and pasted this other places online. Even though it was only two or three stores that participated in the boycott, you wouldn't have known from the publicity it received. The government secretly supported this—it was pasted all over the internet” (Interview 28, June 2006).

²² <http://www.china-embassy.org/chn/zmgx/t189682.htm>.

²³ FBIS, CPP20050329000169, March 29, 2005.

²⁴ FBIS, CPP20050331000178, March 31, 2005.

²⁵ <http://bbs.hzu.edu.cn/mainframe.php?tid=357245>

On the ground, the street petitions occurred with government consent if not active support. Typically, activists would “negotiate” (*shangliang*) with the local Public Security Bureau over the timing, content, and location of the petition drive. For example, a few dozen Bao Diao activists held a signature drive in Beijing’s Chaoyang Park on March 31.²⁶ According to one of the leaders, the police wanted the protest to be held in Chaoyang Park because the space was large and generally empty. “We could have held it in front of the Japanese embassy, but it would have had to be shorter, with fewer participants” (Interview 43, July 2006).

The first street petition to turn violent occurred on Saturday, April 2nd in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province in the southwest. Not far from where a dozen Bao Diao activists were collecting signatures, a large crowd smashed the windows of Ito Yokado, a Japanese supermarket, before riot police dispersed the protest. According to first-hand accounts by netizens on the Patriots Alliance Network website, organizers of the street petition telephoned the Public Security Bureau multiple times to discuss the location of the signature drive and the slogans to be used on the banners. However, according to Lu Yunfei, head of the Patriots Alliance Network, “Those who participated in the attack on Ito Yokado were not gathering signatures but venting (*fa xie*). Our members had no way to stop them. Even if this were to happen in Beijing, we would have no way to stop them. Under such circumstances, we must immediately stop collecting signatures and draw a clear demarcation between us and them.”²⁷ Another netizen asserted that the vandalism was done by people with “ulterior motives” and should not be used to smear the members

²⁶ <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2005-03-31/20215520075s.shtml>

²⁷ Post to the Patriots Alliance Network website, April 3, 2005.

of the Patriots Alliance Network. With the Chengdu protest, it became clear that even small-scale street petitions could easily escalate into protest marches or riots. Queried about the vandalism, however, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang merely expressed hope that “the Chinese people will use rational methods to express their feelings and wishes,” continuing to legitimize the protests by blaming Japan’s “wrong stand on history and other issues” for generating “strong resentment” (*qianglie buman*) among the public.²⁸

No news of the Chengdu protest was reported in the local or national media, prompting criticism on nationalist websites. One netizen on the Patriots Alliance Network BBS stated, “I am extremely disappointed with the Chengdu media!” Another netizen noted that the local commercial newspapers, *Huaxi Dushi Bao* and *Chengdu Shang Bao*, had been ordered on April 1 not to report on the protest in order “to give the government leeway” (*yudi*).²⁹ When a raucous demonstration took place the next day in Shenzhen, one of China’s youngest and wealthiest cities, no domestic media reported on the protest. Demonstrators gathered for a one-hour rally and signature drive, followed by a four-hour march through the city. More than 200 police prevented several protesters from entering a Japanese-run Jusco supermarket, prompting some demonstrators to throw garbage at the police, crying “beat down the traitors!” (*dadao hanjian*)³⁰ The same weekend, thirteen other cities held anti-Japanese petitions. The street and internet petitions were widely reported, but any mention of a protest march or demonstration was conspicuously

²⁸ Transcript of PRC FM Spokesman News Conference on 7 Apr 05, FBIS CPP20050407000218

²⁹ Author’s translation, <http://bbs.1931-9-18.org/viewthread.php?tid=170515&extra=&page=3>, April 5, 2005; <http://bbs.1931-9-18.org/viewthread.php?tid=170515&extra=&page=3>, April 6, 2005. Author translation.

³⁰ *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 4, 2005 and April 6, 2005; Hong Kong *Sing Pao*, April 4, 2005.

avoided.³¹ “We reported on the internet petitions against Japan’s UNSC bid,” said a senior reporter at the *Global Times*, a commercial subsidiary³² of the *People’s Daily* with a nationalistic bent. “Those were entirely different from the anti-Japanese activities” (Interview 103, July 2007).

Meanwhile, Japan’s UNSC bid continued to gain momentum. On March 31, 134 nations attended a meeting in support of the G4 proposal, well over the two-thirds necessary to pass in a General Assembly vote. When Japanese education officials approved new history textbooks on April 5 that were widely viewed in China and Korea as glossing over Japan’s wartime atrocities, “it was like pouring oil on fire,” said a leading Bao Diao activist (Interview 106, July 2007). As state-run media lambasted Japan’s approval of the new textbooks,³³ Chinese netizens expressed their anger over the government’s failure to take a harder stance against Japan’s bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. One netizen wrote directly to the public BBS of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying that “the Chinese government should clearly take a stance opposing Japan’s bid to become a permanent member on the UNSC.”³⁴ Another netizen, posting to the Patriots Alliance Network, stated that

To this day, the government has not taken a clear stance opposing Japan’s permanent membership. If the Chinese government doesn’t veto Japan’s entry into the UNSC, this government will be no different than the Qing government. If the government doesn’t veto Japan’s permanent membership, we will know in our hearts that the government is weak and useless. How can the government continue to rule and hold its head up,

³¹ E.g. <http://tech.sina.com.cn/i/2005-04-02/1334569566.shtml>,

³² For a discussion of the commercialization of the Chinese media, see Shirk (2007); Shambaugh (2007); and Stockmann (2007).

³³ *People’s Daily*, April 6, 2005.

³⁴ BBS post by Li Weixing, April 5, 2005.

losing face for the Chinese people! What ability can it have to reunify with Taiwan?³⁵

Perhaps in response to this flurry of criticism, China's U.N. Ambassador Wang Guangya "took the unusual step of expressing his position" on April 4 and 6 in support of "consensus." His statements were interpreted by Japan as "strongly suggesting that China has allied itself with the Uniting for Consensus Group."³⁶ Nevertheless, China had still not explicitly stated whether it would support Japan's bid, leaving the issue open to speculation. In the Japanese press, one report stated that Wang had "indicated cautiousness about Japan's bid" and that China had "not made a decision on whether to support or oppose a specific country's bid for a permanent council seat."³⁷ In China, the media suggested that the success of the G4 proposal hinged on China's stance, while stressing the potential international repercussions of taking a negative stance. On April 6, a news article widely reposted on the internet stated that the Chinese government's stance would "directly influence the outcome" of the G4 proposal, but that "to this day, the Chinese government has not declared where it stands...in order to avoid directly provoking Japan."³⁸ On April 7, the major internet portals all reposted an article by Singapore's *Lianhe Zaobao*, which stated that the likelihood of two-thirds support for the G4 proposal was "quite large" (*xiangdang da*), but since all of the other permanent members had expressed support for Japan's bid, it would be "extremely difficult (*feichang kunnan*) for China to exercise its veto power."³⁹

³⁵ Posted to the Patriots Alliance Network website on April 5, 2005.

³⁶ Shinichi (2005).

³⁷ Tokyo Jiji Press, FBIS JPP20050405000020, April 5, 2005.

³⁸ <http://japan.people.com.cn/GB/35469/35478/3302180.html>, author translation.

³⁹ <http://japan.people.com.cn/GB/35464/35488/3305600.html>,
<http://news.sohu.com/20050407/n225070485.shtml>, author translation.

The first indication that the G4 proposal was in trouble came on April 7, when U.S. Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli, senior adviser on U.N. reform to the Secretary of State, stated that “the United States would like to move forward on the basis of broad consensus” and “without artificial deadlines,” noting that “there are areas where agreement will not be reached quickly or easily.”⁴⁰ Her statements prompted dismay in Japan and delighted speculation in the Chinese media. “Is the United States dumping (*paoqi*) Japan?” wrote China Newsweek.⁴¹ The next day, her remarks were eclipsed by headlines that quoted former U.S. National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, a member of Annan’s High-Level Panel, as saying “the likelihood of Japan becoming a UNSC member is very small.”⁴² As Japanese Deputy Permanent Representative Shinichi recalled, “Washington was clearly displeased with the fact that reform had picked up momentum with little US involvement. In any case, the opposition of two permanent members of the Security Council to the secretary general’s timetable could not but have a powerful impact.”⁴³

That weekend, tens of thousands of protestors attended demonstrations in Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Chengdu. In Beijing, what began on the morning of April 9 as a rally in the northwest university district became a march that ended several hours later outside the Japanese embassy and ambassador’s residence in the eastern business district. Demonstrators shouted slogans against Japan’s UNSC bid and claim to the Diaoyu Islands, urging a boycott of Japanese goods. At least four leading Bao Diao

⁴⁰ Statement by Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State on UN Reform, on the Secretary General’s Report on UN Reform, in the General Assembly, April 7, 2005, http://www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov/05_063.htm or http://www.un.int/usa/05_063.htm

⁴¹ <http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/HIAW/842131.htm>.

⁴² <http://news.sina.com.cn/w/2005-04-08/11346327744.shtml>.

⁴³ Shinichi (2005).

activists were told to stay home on the day of the protest, according interviews with the *New York Times*. Tong Zeng, head of the China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands, said that “we were told this was an entirely spontaneous event, so the people leading the movement must have no role.”⁴⁴ According to Japanese Embassy personnel, the Public Security Bureau notified them on Thursday that a protest would take place on Saturday (Interview 21 and 28, May/June 2006). On the day of the protest, “the police told us that protesters were coming, and that we should move our cars if they were parked out front.” According to another Japanese Embassy official, who was trapped inside the building until the following morning, “It was definitely tacitly approved, but many more showed up than expected. The organizers didn’t know how large it would be. Neither did the police. It was organized over the internet, after all” (Interview 22, April 2006).

According to estimates by the Beijing Public Security Bureau, over ten thousand protesters took part.⁴⁵ Riot police stationed at the embassy and ambassador’s residence prevented demonstrators from entering but otherwise did not interfere with the protest. Demonstrators threw stones and empty water bottles, and a few cars were overturned and smashed. As a Japanese official who snuck outside the Embassy to observe the crowd recalled: “The demonstrators were smart, chanting ‘Patriotism is innocent!’ (*aiguo wuzui*) and ‘Don’t forget our national humiliation!’ (*bie wang guochi*) They said to the police, ‘You are our friends. We are demonstrating against Japan, so if you stop us that means you are supporting Japan’” (Interview 22, April 2006). Buses were provided to take

⁴⁴ Joseph Kahn, “China is pushing and scripting anti-Japanese protests,” *New York Times*, April 15, 2005.

⁴⁵ Estimate by Beijing Public Security Bureau Public Order Department Chief Zhang Fengjie in “Crisis Management of Mass Incidents: Analysis of Evidence from Beijing” (“Quntixing Shijian de Wei Ji Guanli: Ji Yu Beijingshi Anli de Shizheng Fenxi”), in *Police Early Warning and Emergency Mechanisms (Jingcha Yujing yu Yingji Jizhi)*, ed. Yu Lingyun, China People’s Public Security University Press, March 2007, p. 184.

students and protesters back to the university district, but many students refused offers of transportation. Other participants were local to the area, including migrant workers who lifted bricks from construction sites in the neighborhood to throw at the embassy.

The evening of the April 9 protest, the government held a series of emergency meetings. As a well-known professor at Tsinghua University recounted to me:

That evening the university ordered that there be no more demonstrations. Party Secretary Liu called me at 11 P.M. to tell me that a certain number of Tsinghua students were involved in the anti-Japanese demonstrations—and that the central leaders have held a meeting and decided that there should be no more demonstrations. He asked me to tell my students not to participate in the demonstrations. I told him that really this should not be my responsibility, but the school administration's responsibility. He said that they already told the student leaders at a meeting not to participate in any more demonstrations, but he said, "We are afraid they will not listen to us, but they will listen to you." So at around 11:20 P.M., I sent a text message to my secretary, telling her to send a message to my students to heed the school administration's request. You see, the way it works in the Chinese system is that the central leaders have a meeting and make a decision, and then there is an interagency meeting of the relevant ministries: the dean, party secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Public Security. Then there is a meeting of the department chairmen, deans of schools, and the vice party secretary in charge of student affairs. This meeting would have taken place sometime between 7 and 9 P.M. that night. (Interview 24, May 2006).

Similar instructions were given to a professor with whom I spoke at People's University, but there the message was communicated the next morning (Interview 52, February 2007).

Following the protest, Japan's foreign minister summoned the Chinese ambassador to Japan and demanded a formal apology and compensation for damages. The Chinese ambassador criticized the vandalism but did not apologize. As the diplomats met, tens of thousands of demonstrators protested in Shenzhen, one of the cities where the first wave of protests had erupted, and in Guangzhou, where protesters surrounded the

Japanese consulate. In Japan, politicians across party lines criticized China's response—or lack thereof—to the protests. Ruling party secretary Tsutomu Takebe said, "Throwing stones at the Japanese Embassy is almost equal to attacking Japan." Opposition party leader Ichiro Ozawa stated, "It's unforgivable that the Chinese government gave the demonstrators silent approval."⁴⁶ In the United States, State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher said that it was "very regrettable that this one did turn violent and was not under control."⁴⁷

On April 11, official statements by the United States and China strongly indicated that Japan's bid was unlikely to succeed. Referring to the anti-Japanese protests in China, incoming U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton stated at his confirmation hearing that it would be "politically very difficult to make any change in the composition of the permanent membership," in light of the "things that were going on in China over the weekend, combined with public statements made by senior Chinese officials."⁴⁸ At the United Nations, China's ambassador attended the meeting of the Uniting for Consensus movement and declared China's opposition to a vote before reaching a consensus. "Let us not kid ourselves: Everyone knows that a consensus on this issue is impossible," said Germany's U.N. ambassador. More than 110 countries attended the Uniting for Consensus meeting, casting doubt on the ability of the G4 to achieve two-thirds support. In Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi acknowledged the negative turn of events but expressed qualified optimism: "It is true that things are not going very

⁴⁶ *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 11, 2005.

⁴⁷ *Associated Press*, April 12, 2005.

⁴⁸ Yoshikazu Shirakawa, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 13, 2005.

smoothly, [but] the momentum for reforming the United Nations has never risen this high. It is a chance in that sense.”⁴⁹

On April 12, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao publicly stated his opposition to Japan’s candidacy, telling reporters during his visit to India that “the strong responses from the Asian people should make the Japanese Government have deep and profound reflections....Only a country that respects history, takes responsibility for its past, and wins over the trust of the people of Asia and the world at large can take greater responsibility in the international community.” Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang again blamed “Japan’s erroneous attitude and actions on issues such as its history of aggression” for causing the protests. Qin added: “As to how to prevent the situation from *getting out of control*, this too is something on which the Japanese side needs to conduct earnest self-examination” (emphasis added).⁵⁰

Following the Chinese premier’s remarks, bilateral relations between China and Japan deteriorated further. Domestic sentiment in Japan split between criticizing China for using the anti-Japanese protests as a “political card” to pressure Japan⁵¹ and faulting Koizumi’s “complete failure in Japan’s foreign policy.”⁵² As Chinese netizens saluted their Premier for taking a stronger stance,⁵³ the domestic popularity of Koizumi and the ruling LDP declined. According to a survey by the *Mainichi Shimbun*, 76% of respondents felt that Koizumi had not made sufficient efforts to improve Japan’s

⁴⁹ Kyodo News Agency, April 12, 2005.

⁵⁰ FBIS, CPP20050412000218, April 12, 2005.

⁵¹ Jiji Press, April 12, 2005; *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 14, 2005.

⁵² *Asahi Shimbun*, Apr 12, 2005, FBIS, JPP20050413000119.

⁵³ As one netizen wrote on the “Strong Nation Forum” of the People’s Daily website: “Resolutely support Premier Wen Jiabao’s remarks made in India on the large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations in China, urging Japan to review its history of aggression and treat the issue correctly,” FBIS, CPP20050413000141, April 13, 2005.

worsening relations with China and South Korea. In one month, popular support for the LDP dropped eight points to twenty-five percent.⁵⁴

Koizumi proposed a meeting with the Chinese president on the sidelines of the Asia-Africa summit on April 22-24 but otherwise held firm. On April 13, as working-level talks between China and Japan were held in Beijing, the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry announced that it would grant oil and gas test-drilling rights to companies in the East China Sea, a move that the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman called “a serious provocation of China's rights and international norms.”⁵⁵ On April 14, Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura told a parliamentary committee that he would take a tough line during his visit to Beijing that weekend. Moreover, Machimura publicly criticized the Chinese government’s role in the protests: “The Chinese foreign ministry saying that it (the protest) is tolerable and natural means the government approved it,” Machimura said.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Japan took steps to retool its UNSC strategy, which was in danger of foundering. On the heels of the Chinese premier’s remarks, Russia’s foreign minister told Japan that “consensus is needed” and expressed reservation about putting the issue to a vote.⁵⁷ Speaking in Germany, Malloch Brown, chief of staff to Kofi Annan, stated: “Demonstrations against the Japanese embassy and consulates reminds one [that] there is a China-Japan dimension to which Germany’s membership is hostage....Germany and Japan and India really need to listen to their regions and give their regions assurance that

⁵⁴ *Mainichi Shimbun*, April 18, 2005, FBIS, JPP20050418000013.

⁵⁵ James Brooke, *New York Times*, April 14, 2005.

⁵⁶ Agence France-Presse, April 12, 2005.

⁵⁷ *Nihon Keizai*, April 14, 2005, FBIS, JPP20050414000020.

they are not going to use their membership to settle scores within the region.”⁵⁸ With three permanent UNSC members in support of “consensus” rather than a vote in the General Assembly, Japan’s prospects looked grim. In the run-up to the Asian-African summit, where Japan would try rally support among the 100-odd nations attending, Japan’s U.N. Ambassador Kenzo Oshima stated that Japan would consider expanding the number of non-permanent seats in the G4 proposal. Oshima said, “We will listen to many countries’ views and adopt the views that we think are acceptable. By doing so, we will increase the number of nations supporting our resolution.”⁵⁹

In China, netizens began planning for a third round of protests over the weekend of April 16-17, timed to coincide with the visit of Japanese Foreign Minister Machimura.⁶⁰ One widely circulated flyer called for demonstrations in at least 12 cities, including one in Tiananmen Square.⁶¹ There can be little doubt that the Chinese government knew well in advance about the location and time of the protests. In Shanghai, for example, one young woman who had never heard of the Bao Diao network but decided to design several banners for the protest march told me that she had called the Public Security Bureau on the 12th to ask if a protest had been approved for the 16th. When the police said that no one had applied, she decided to submit an application herself, but the police told her there would not be enough time to process her application (Interview 74, April 2007). Moreover, the Shanghai Public Security Bureau BBS received 30 posts in the three days prior to the protest, asking if the rumors were true and if permission to protest had been granted. Several of the posts mentioned the time,

⁵⁸ Ray Marcelo and Hugh Williamson, *Financial Times*, April 13, 2005.

⁵⁹ *Asahi Shimbun*, April 13, 2005, FBIS, JPP20050413000004.

⁶⁰ Agence France-Presse, April 14, 2005; Xinhua Financial News, April 15, 2005.

⁶¹ <http://media.people.com.cn/GB/4777497.html#>, last accessed August 16, 2007.

location, and route of the protest march. The response from the bulletin board monitors was nearly uniform:

Saturday's protest is pure rumor. According to the P.R.C. Law on Assemblies, Processions, and Demonstrations, it is illegal to hold a protest march without a permit from the Public Security Bureau. To obtain a permit, a written application must be submitted five days in advance. We fully understand your patriotic enthusiasm. Our government has already taken a clear stance through diplomatic and appropriate media channels. We hope that you will remain calm, rational, and reasonable, and uphold social stability as you set forth.⁶²

Similar guidelines were sent out via text message. Another Bao Diao activist in Shanghai who had participated in previous anti-Japanese protests said that on the day of the protest, the Public Security Bureau sent a plainclothes policeman to accompany him all day. They were “worried that I would participate [in the protest] and inflame (*naoda*) the situation,” he said (Interview 85, May 2007).

In Beijing and Guangzhou, heavy police presence and paramilitary vehicles parked outside diplomatic compounds were effective at preventing protests. In Beijing, authorities began detaining anti-Japanese activists on Friday night,⁶³ and additional police patrolled Tiananmen Square. Tong Zeng attributed the quiet in Beijing to “effective publicity by the government.... The authorities have made sufficient publicity about protests which receive no approval by the government.”⁶⁴

Despite the quiet in Beijing and Guangzhou, large protests broke out in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Tianjin, and other major cities. On April 16, more than ten thousand protestors gathered in Shanghai in a march that began on the riverfront and processed to

⁶² BBS archive of the Shanghai Municipal Public Security Bureau, available at <http://gaj.sh.gov.cn/webcases/zxzx/list.asp?deptid=2#>, last accessed August 16, 2007, author translation.

⁶³ Josephine Ma and Leu Siew Ying, *South China Morning Post*, April 17, 2005.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

the Japanese consulate. Demonstrators shouted anti-Japanese slogans and vandalized buildings and signs with Japanese characters on them. According to the *New York Times*, several thousand riot police surrounded the consulate but “looked on passively. Asked by a reporter whether anything could be done to rein in the violence, a Chinese officer answered, ‘By whom?’ and then walked away as if annoyed. In several hours, there appeared to be only one arrest.”⁶⁵ Tokyo Fuji Television reported that “Instead of stopping the demonstrators, the police even guided the demonstrators to the Japanese Consulate General.” In video footage shown by Fuji Television, a police officer told a female protestor, “Turn right at the street in front of you. It is easier to take that street to go there.”⁶⁶ In Hangzhou, it was reported, “The protesters marched in orderly files in downtown streets, singing the national anthem of China and chanted slogans....Local policemen were seen guiding the public to ensure traffic is not disrupted.”⁶⁷ Although the march through the city was orderly, one high school participant said that the crowd became frenzied once the protest reached the consulate and nearby businesses. “We were like animals,” he recalled (Interview 59, March 2007). Another student told me, “Emotions were really running high. If the police had tried to stop the protesters, I think there might have been bloodshed” (Interview 79, April 2007).

The next day, April 17, visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Machimura was received in Beijing by PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan. Although Machimura demanded an apology and compensation, Li only offered assurances that Japanese nationals would not be harmed. On the contrary, the statement

⁶⁵ “China allows more protests against Japan,” April 17, 2005.

⁶⁶ April 17, 2005. Reported by FBIS on April 19, 2005.

⁶⁷ Xinhua, April 16, 2005;

released by the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated that Machimura had “expressed deep reflection and apologies.”⁶⁸ Machimura later denied that he had apologized, saying that he had only expressed regret. Although Li reportedly told Machimura that “I do not want to see vandalism caused by the demonstrators. I want to take countermeasures,”⁶⁹ street protests continued throughout the day. Thousands of protestors attended demonstrations in Shenzhen, Shenyang, Chengdu, Nanning, Guangzhou, Dongguan, and Zhuhai.⁷⁰ In an interview, a junior officer with the People’s Armed Police in Shenzhen told me that the protests in Beijing, Shenzhen and other cities had all been authorized in advance. “The protest routes had all been examined and approved (*shenpi*) beforehand. The routes were set (*guiding*) by the government,” he said as he showed me the video footage he had taken during the protest—with a Sony camcorder, no less. “Before going on duty, we received orders: ‘don’t strike back, don’t yell back’ (*da bu huan shou, ma bu huan kou*)” (Interview 92, May 2007). As before, the protests were not mentioned in the Chinese domestic press, which chose instead to put a positive spin on the foreign ministers’ meeting.

The day after the ministerial meeting, Prime Minister Koizumi requested a meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao on the sidelines of the Asia-Africa Summit in Indonesia on April 22-24. Agence France-Presse reported that Koizumi “held out an olive branch to China,” suggesting that he would not repeat demands made by Foreign Minister Machimura for an apology, stating that “it is better not to make it an exchange of

⁶⁸ Kyodo News Agency, April 18, 2005.

⁶⁹ *Mainichi Shimbun*, April 20, 2005.

⁷⁰ Hong Kong *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, April 17, 2005.

accusations....it is fine if the summit meeting is different from the foreign ministers' meeting."⁷¹

Following Koizumi's signal, the Chinese government began a concerted effort to bring an end to the wave of anti-Japanese protests. On April 19, PRC state-run television gave prominent coverage to a large meeting presided over by Foreign Minister Li, attended by officials from the Propaganda Department, People's Liberation Army, and the central government. Li emphasized that the "only correct option" was "friendly coexistence and win-win cooperation" with Japan, and that the party and government were "completely capable" of upholding China's "fundamental interests" and "properly handling" problems with Japan.⁷² On April 20, *People's Daily* reiterated the call for calm, this time mentioning Japan specifically. Former diplomats were sent across the country to speak at universities and local government offices, including police units (Interview 41, July 2006). On April 21, Chinese President Hu Jintao stated that "we must always remember that nothing can be accomplished without social stability."⁷³ The Public Security Bureau and provincial security departments released a statement expressing understanding for the patriotic sentiment of the students and general public, while issuing a stern warning against the undesirable and illegal actions that took place during the protests.⁷⁴ Cell phone users in Beijing received a text message from the Public Security Bureau saying that in expressing patriotism, citizens should not participate in protests.⁷⁵ In fact, cell phone users were unable to send text messages with phrases such as "Japan,"

⁷¹ Agence France Presse, April 18, 2005.

⁷² Xinhua, April 19, 2005, FBIS translation.

⁷³ Josephine Ma and Shi Ting, *South China Morning Post*, April 22, 2005.

⁷⁴ Zhang and Zhao (2005).

⁷⁵ Kyodo News Service, April 28, 2005.

“anti-Japan,” or “protest” for over a week (Interview 29, June 2006). Applications to hold protests over the weeklong May holiday were denied, and students in Beijing and Shanghai told me that security on university campuses remained strict through the May holiday, with campus guards denying entry to anyone without a school ID. Several dissidents suspected of being involved with the anti-Japanese protests were detained. One activist, Guo Feixiong, better known for his radical political views, was arrested and held for sixteen days after applying for permission to hold a 1,000-person protest on May 4th, the anniversary of the anti-Japanese protest in 1919, which led to the sacking of three government officials who signed the pro-Japanese Versailles Treaty.⁷⁶

On April 22, at the Asia-Africa summit in Indonesia, Koizumi stated his “deep remorse and heartfelt apology” for Japan’s historical wrongdoings, closely following the apology delivered by Japanese Prime Minister Murayama in 1995. Simultaneously, Koizumi pressed forward with the G4 proposal on the sidelines of the meeting, which a senior Japanese diplomat called “a golden chance” to regain support for Japan’s bid.⁷⁷ At the meeting between Koizumi and Hu, both leaders spoke in restrained generalities and made no pointed demands. Bilateral relations remained strained, however, and worsened again in June when Vice Premier Wu Yi cancelled her meeting with Koizumi in protest at his remarks over Yasukuni Shrine at a legislative committee meeting.

Negotiations over UNSC reform continued through the summer, but statements in July by China and the United States—and an agreement in August between China and the United States to jointly oppose the addition of permanent members—finally brought an

⁷⁶ Kyodo News Service, May 16, 2005.

⁷⁷ Naoko Aoki, Kyodo News Service, April 23, 2005.

end to the debate.⁷⁸ On July 1, Chinese Ambassador Wang stated that China would veto the G4 plan if submitted. On July 14, U.S. Ambassador Tahir-Kheli said, “Let me be as clear as possible: the U.S. does not think any proposal to expand the Security Council—including one based on our own ideas—should be voted upon at this stage.”⁷⁹ On the eve of an emergency summit called by the African Union to decide whether to drop demands for two veto-wielding seats or to support the G4 proposal, which had been modified to eliminate the veto power of new permanent members for 15 years, the United States and China reached a deal to oppose the G4 proposal. On August 5, the African Union voted to reject the G4 proposal, effectively putting an end to the possibility of a vote in the General Assembly before September.

4.3 Anti-Japanese Protests as a Bargaining Tactic in the UN Negotiations

The account above supports the view that the Chinese government gave tacit consent to the anti-Japanese protests in order to undermine Japan’s bid for the U.N. Security Council while reducing the costs to the Chinese government of having to block or veto the G4 proposal.⁸⁰ When Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced in March that he would like a decision by September and endorsed Japan’s candidacy, there was uncertainty over what positions the permanent UNSC members would take on the G4 proposal, particularly that of China and the United States. Although *realpolitik* would suggest that neither government desired the addition of veto-wielding permanent members to the UNSC, both governments sought to avoid the international reputation

⁷⁸ Associated Press, August 4, 2005.

⁷⁹ <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=July&x=20050712184505adynned0.5566522>, July 12, 2005.

⁸⁰ China has scrupulously avoided using its veto power in the UNSC, typically preferring to abstain.

costs of blatantly disregarding the majority opinion of the General Assembly. The evidence presented here suggests that the anti-Japanese petitions and protests were part of a campaign by the Chinese government to undermine global support for Japan's candidacy in the lead up the General Assembly debate on April 6-7 and the Uniting for Consensus meeting on April 11, as well as to mitigate the costs to the Chinese government of making an eventual veto threat, if necessary. As Kim (1999:61) notes, "Given its long-standing assault on the veto as an expression of hegemonic behavior, China [has] tried hard—and successfully—not to allow itself to be cornered into having no choice but to cast its solo veto."

The anti-Japanese protests presented a visible risk to the Chinese government and would have led the Chinese government to take a more hawkish foreign policy stance. Therefore, both Japan and the United States ultimately made concessions that enabled China to claim diplomatic victory and restore public order without paying large suppression costs. Koizumi made a rare apology instead of pressing China's leaders to apologize for the anti-Japanese protests, and the United States changed its position on UNSC reform to one that was more aligned with China's interests.

The events of spring 2005 lend strong support for the assumptions of the theory and the hypotheses listed above. I start by justifying two key assumptions of the theory and then present evidence to evaluate the hypotheses. Next, I discuss the shortcomings of alternative explanations suggested by the collected evidence.

Assumption 1: *Nationalist protests pose a risk to regime stability in authoritarian systems.* The 2005 narrative suggests that the anti-Japanese protests posed a risk to the government and that this risk was evident to foreign observers. "At the very beginning,

the government wanted to use public opinion as a bargaining tool in their diplomacy with Japanese and to win sympathy from the international community,” said a Sino-Japanese expert at Beijing University. “But now they’re finding some unintended consequences are showing up and this has begun to worry them. The protests turned out much bigger than they expected, and also much more complicated. Not everyone took to the street to voice their resentment of the Japanese.”⁸¹ Japan’s largest daily, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, reached a similar conclusion: “What the Chinese government fears most now is that anti-Japanese protests could turn to criticism that its diplomacy is weak-kneed and develop into antigovernment demonstrations. Add into the mix pent-up frustration among labor groups and farmers, and the Chinese government could be facing a shakeup.”⁸² As one former Japanese ambassador recounted, “When protests occurred, the [Chinese] leadership was surprised—though some may have wanted them—by the magnitude and momentum of the protests” (Interview 20, April 2006).

The police officer who was on duty during all three protests in Shenzhen described to me the difficulty of maintaining order during the protests:

You don’t know who is a good person and who is a bad person. The troublemakers also carry “Boycott Japan” banners. In such a large protest march, there will inevitably be a small minority of people with different objectives, even some who are intent on destruction and inciting the masses to make trouble – and not against Japan. (Interview 92, May 2007)

Internal police publications suggest that the government is well aware of the potential for protests in general to spiral out of control. According to one such study:

During mass incidents, emotions spread from person to person via suggestion and mimicry. Mutually infecting one another with emotion, the

⁸¹ Josephine Ma and Shi Ting, *South China Morning Post*, April 22, 2005.

⁸² Satoshi Saeki and Masahiko Takekoshi, April 12, 2005.

element of irrationality among participants gradually increases, even to the point of fanaticism. Once emotions have passed a critical level, they must find an outlet. In the context of certain social and environmental stimuli, people's emotions will spill over, leading to out-of-control behavior.⁸³

Historically, nationalist slogans have been used as a cover for pro-democratic activists. In 1985, the first anti-Japanese protests in the post-Mao era led to the pro-democracy protests of 1986, which in turn laid the foundation for the 1989 movement (see Whiting 1989; Wasserstrom 1991).⁸⁴ Today, this risk is still pertinent, even if most observers inside and outside China do not foresee another Tiananmen. During interviews, both officials and activists in China stated that anti-Japanese events, even small gatherings of fewer than 100 participants, pose a risk to social stability. As one Bao Diao activist in Shanghai put it, "There's no 100% guarantee that something will happen that the authorities can't control. If they say yes [and allow an event], they have to be on guard in case something arises. But if they say no, they can sleep easily" (Interview 81, April 2007). The government has reason to fear that anti-foreign protests could snowball into anti-government, pro-democracy protests. "Nationalism and democracy are inseparable in my mind," said a prominent nationalist author (Interview 42, July 2006). In 1998, a petition called on the National People's Congress to elect as president the anti-Japanese activist Tong Zeng, who was told to stay home on April 9, 2005 because the protest was supposed to be "spontaneous."⁸⁵

Assumption 2: Protests are easier to nip in the bud. The narrative also demonstrates that as protests increase in number, size and intensity, so do the costs of suppression. A common observation among interviewees in Shanghai and Beijing was

⁸³ Tan (2006), p. 467. Author translation.

⁸⁴ This link is the focus of the third chapter of my dissertation.

⁸⁵ Agence France Presse, March 13, 1998.

that the protests were much larger than expected. Many participants joined the protest march along the way, often because a friend in the march had called and said, “It’s not just a rumor—it’s actually happening.” Another participant said that he had heard the march moving past his apartment, so he went downstairs to join the protest (Interview 70, April 2007). At the macro level, the extent and intensity of anti-Japanese activity also increased over the course of the month. “Without the online petition, there wouldn’t have been street petitions, and without the street petitions there wouldn’t have been protest marches and vandalism. This is the natural course of things,” said one Bao Diao activist (Interview 81, April 2007).

The figure below illustrates the pattern of escalation from street petitions to protest marches. The street petitions were largely stationary events, held at a city square or park, with a core group of five to fifty activists collecting signatures and distributing leaflets. Street petitions tended to be smaller in size than protest marches, which typically processed through the city center, growing in size as protesters called upon bystanders to join in, and often ended in a confrontation with the police over the vandalism of Japanese businesses or diplomatic buildings.

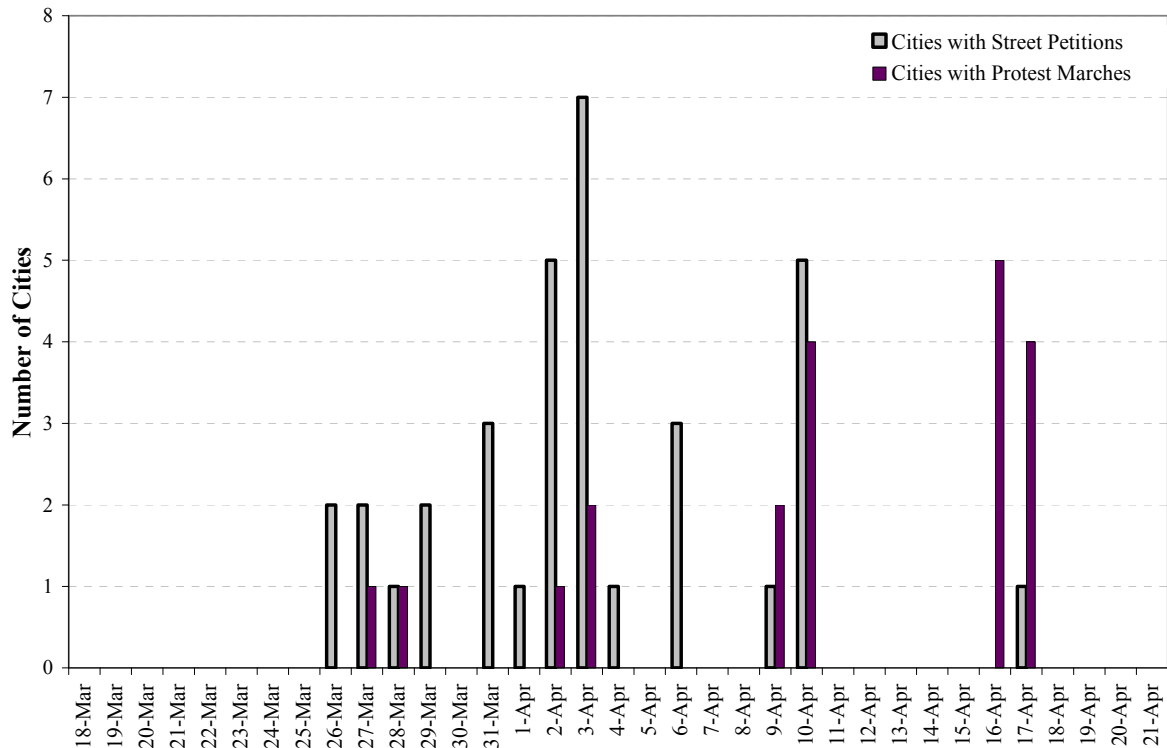


Figure 4.1: From Petitions to Protest Marches, March-April 2005

Following the semi-official launch of the internet campaign on March 23, street petitions were the first offline activities to take place, peaking on the weekend of April 2-3. Over the following two weeks, petitions were increasingly replaced by protest marches as the modal form of anti-Japanese activity. Had the government not intervened, it is highly likely that another wave of protests would have taken place on May 1 and May 4, based on messages circulating on internet forums at the time.

As the number of protests increased, so too did the public's determination to hold additional protests. By the third weekend, netizens in Shanghai said that Shanghai must

hold a protest in order to be like Beijing and Guangzhou. Moreover, for some participants the experience of protest lent force to the belief that protest was a right. One Bao Diao activist was moved to anger when his application to hold a protest on May 4th was rejected. He said: “The people are exercising their legal rights to assemble and protest and this should not be suppressed because they serve to uphold the country's sovereign rights externally and Chinese people's human rights internally.”⁸⁶

Hypothesis 1: Anti-foreign protests should lead to a more favorable outcome for the government. The narrative suggests that the anti-Japanese protests caused a shift in the U.S. position on UNSC reform. Prior to the protests, in mid-March, senior U.S. officials made public statements that strongly supported Japan’s candidacy. After the protests began, in early April, the United States rejected Annan’s calls for a swift decision on reform, stressing the need for “consensus,” the catchphrase used by opponents of the G4 proposal. Following the second week of protests, John Bolton, the newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, explicitly referred to the protests in stating his doubts about Japan’s chances for success in the negotiations. Ultimately, the United States reached an agreement with China to jointly oppose the G4 proposal. By standing with China in blocking the G4 proposal, the United States spared China from solely shouldering the blame for blocking UNSC reform and appearing internationally isolated. The timing of the shift and Bolton’s reference to the protests both lend support for the hypothesis.

Ideally, there would be more evidence to illustrate the mechanism by which the anti-Japanese protests led the United States to switch sides in the U.N. negotiations. The

⁸⁶ Leu Siew Ying, *South China Morning Post*, April 27, 2005.

simplest interpretation is that Washington perceived Beijing's decision to tolerate the anti-Japanese protests as a signal of resolve over the UNSC issue. Rather than risk a confrontation with China over the UNSC issue, the United States backed down, conceding its support for Japan's candidacy and agreeing to take a public stance against the G4 proposal. In the theory presented above, I also suggest that it is the risk that protests could bring about a more hawkish foreign policy which places the burden of conciliation on foreign governments. For this mechanism to operate, protesters must be at least as hawkish as the government. The evidence I have collected suggests that this was the case during the 2005 protests. According to a senior expert on Sino-Japanese relations, "The gap between the people and the government is really large on Japan. For example, the Chinese government definitely doesn't support the boycott of Japanese goods. Japan is very important to China's economic development. But the public feels more strongly than the government about Japan" (Interview 34, July 2006). In fact, if China were to become more democratic, said a prominent nationalist author, "It would obviously be more hardline. Right now, foreigners have special privileges that would not be allowed in a democracy" (Interview 42, July 2006).

Hypothesis 2: *Nationalist protests make it more likely that the government will stand firm in international negotiations.* The narrative demonstrates that the escalating costs of suppression were instrumental in leading the government to choose a tougher foreign policy placation. A Foreign Ministry official described the change in China's stance on the UNSC issue in this way:

China had to make its stance clear because other countries were no longer being so active. The uncertainty over the outcome of the G4 proposal was too great. Domestically, the atmosphere was intense (*qianglie*). There

were signature campaigns and online petitions. The government had to respond (*dafu*), or it would be seen as too soft and weak (*ruanruo*). The people want the government to uphold certain principles. If the government didn't take a stand on the UNSC issue, it would lose public confidence. (Interview 100, June 2007)

According to a senior analyst on Sino-Japanese relations at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the government was able to curtail the demonstrations through two mechanisms: 1) education efforts, which persuaded people of the need to use peaceful means, and 2) the clear stance taken by the government in opposing the G4 proposal. "Taking a stance greatly heartened the public," he said, adding that "if the government ignores the people, the people will rise up against the government. The government will be thrown out" (Interview 32, July 2006). The government was aware of the international costs of threatening to veto the G4 proposal, but not vetoing the bid would have been domestically more costly. As Shi Yinhong, an international relations scholar at People's University, commented:

As for the masses, the resolute opposition to Japan's bid for a UNSC permanent seat has already become a form of fixed mentality. In fact, China's attitude toward Japan's bid for a UNSC permanent seat already has not much leeway for concession....China has no alternative but to cast a veto under the grim situation. Faced with strategic interests and sentimental factors, China has weighed the pros and cons and must pay the price for exerting diplomatic pressure on Japan....This may have a negative impact on the prospect of Sino-Japanese ties and the security and stability of the Asia Pacific region. At the same time, China will also offend Germany, India, Brazil, and other countries bidding for a UNSC permanent seat. However, under the present circumstances and after weighing the pros and cons, China must use this way to block Japan.⁸⁷

By taking a tougher stance against Japan's UNSC bid, the government appeased the public's demands, thus minimizing the costs of bringing the protests to an end. The

⁸⁷ *Ta Kung Pao*, FBIS, CPP20050603000054, June 3, 2005.

strategy was apparent to the Japanese media, which noted that the Chinese press highlighted Hu's tough stance during the Indonesia summit: "Hu's call for Japan's reflection on history does not run counter to his eagerness to rectify the aggravated relations because Hu's call was probably intended to calm down anti-Japanese feelings....from now on, China will probably promote its relations with Japan while placating the public's anti-Japanese feelings by publicizing what President Hu Jintao asserted in the summit talks," wrote the conservative *Sankei Shimbun*.⁸⁸

Interviews with protest participants and Bao Diao activists also suggest that the government's stance on the UNSC issue was effective at easing pressure for further protest. One nationalist intellectual commented: "The protests certainly brought pressure to bear on the government...On the issue of Japan's entry into the UNSC, the government's position changed dramatically. Before the protests, the government was very vague (*mohu*). Afterward, they clearly opposed Japan's entry" (Interview 42, July 2006). Bao Diao activists, perhaps as part of their tacit understanding with the government, know that once the government has taken a clear stance, it is time for the activists to back off and allow the government to take the upper hand. Remarked one Bao Diao activist in Shanghai: "We can only push the government to take action in areas where the government has not taken a clear (*bulang*) position. Afterwards, we must withdraw (*tuibu*)" (Interview 81, April 2007).

Hypothesis 3: *Anti-foreign protests are more likely to be allowed before or during negotiations.* The timing of the protests coincided with a key window of negotiations over UNSC expansion. Statements by U.S. Secretary of State Rice and U.N. Secretary-

⁸⁸ FBIS, JPP20050424000002, April 24, 2005.

General Annan, along with the support of three permanent UNSC members and roughly 120 members in the General Assembly, created the perception in China that Japan might succeed in gaining a permanent seat. When the internet petition began to take off on activist websites, the government gave permission to commercial net portals to host the petition. By contrast, when the same websites hosted an internet petition in August 2004 against the use of Japanese bullet train technology, the government shut down the petition after 22 hours. “It’s the social instability factor,” said an activist with the Patriots Alliance Network at the time. “So they closed the website.”⁸⁹

In the spring of 2005, the Chinese government made no effort to shut down the internet petition even after protests erupted. In fact, the Chinese government did not make a concerted nationwide effort to prevent further protests until Koizumi requested a meeting with Hu at the Asia-Africa Summit and indicated that he would not reiterate demands for an apology. The government may have tried to mitigate the risk that the situation would spiral out of control by preventing protests in Beijing and Guangzhou on April 16, but large protests occurred in Shanghai and other cities that same weekend, even though the police knew about the protest plans well in advance. Moreover, those in charge of maintaining order at the scene of the protests seemed to be under the impression that protest had been given the official stamp of approval. A junior officer with the People’s Armed Police in Shenzhen claimed that the protests were approved in advance by the government. This suggests that if no formal protest permit was issued, perhaps the government’s rationale was to leave room for plausible deniability when confronted with international accusations. Another possible explanation for the uneven

⁸⁹ Kyodo News Agency, August 31, 2004.

handling of protests on the third weekend is that there was uncertainty or disagreement within the government over when “enough was enough.”

Although the curtailment of protests at the local level may have been uneven, the extent of the government’s control at the national level is further illustrated by a comparison of internet news coverage during the anti-Japanese protests on two internet portals, one official and one commercial. Despite the commercialization of the media and the proliferation of online news sites, the most prominent internet portals are still closely monitored and given direction by the State Council Information Office. Evidence from the 2005 anti-Japanese protests suggests that the government is quite capable of guiding news coverage and imposing a media blackout when a topic is deemed too sensitive. The figure below traces the fluctuation in online coverage of the anti-Japanese petitions on People.com.cn, the portal site of the official *People’s Daily*, and Sina.com.cn, one of the three major commercial portals that hosted the internet petition.⁹⁰ I chose Sina.com.cn because it is arguably the most popular of the three large portals among both citizens and officials. As one Foreign Ministry official told me, “I read the *People’s Daily* when I have the time, when work is slow. But I read Sina all the time” (Interview 100, June 2007).

As seen in the figure below, the anti-Japanese petition was covered more heavily on the Sina.com.cn than on People.com.cn until the weekend of April 2-3, when street petitions in Shenzhen and Chengdu escalated into violent riots. That weekend marked a turning point. Afterwards, coverage on People.com.cn was heavier than on Sina.com.cn,

⁹⁰The data shown here were collected using the Chinese news search engine at http://news.baidu.com/advanced_news.html. I counted the number of unique articles (URLs) that mentioned “petition” (*qianming*) and “permanent UNSC member” (*changren lishiguo*) that were posted each day to Sina.com.cn and People.com.cn.

suggesting that a blackout order had been imposed on all but official reports, which the commercial sites could carry. Moreover, Sina.com.cn was completely silent on the anti-Japanese petition on the second and third weekends (April 9-10 and April 16-17), when tens of thousands of protesters demonstrated in Beijing, Shanghai, and numerous other cities.

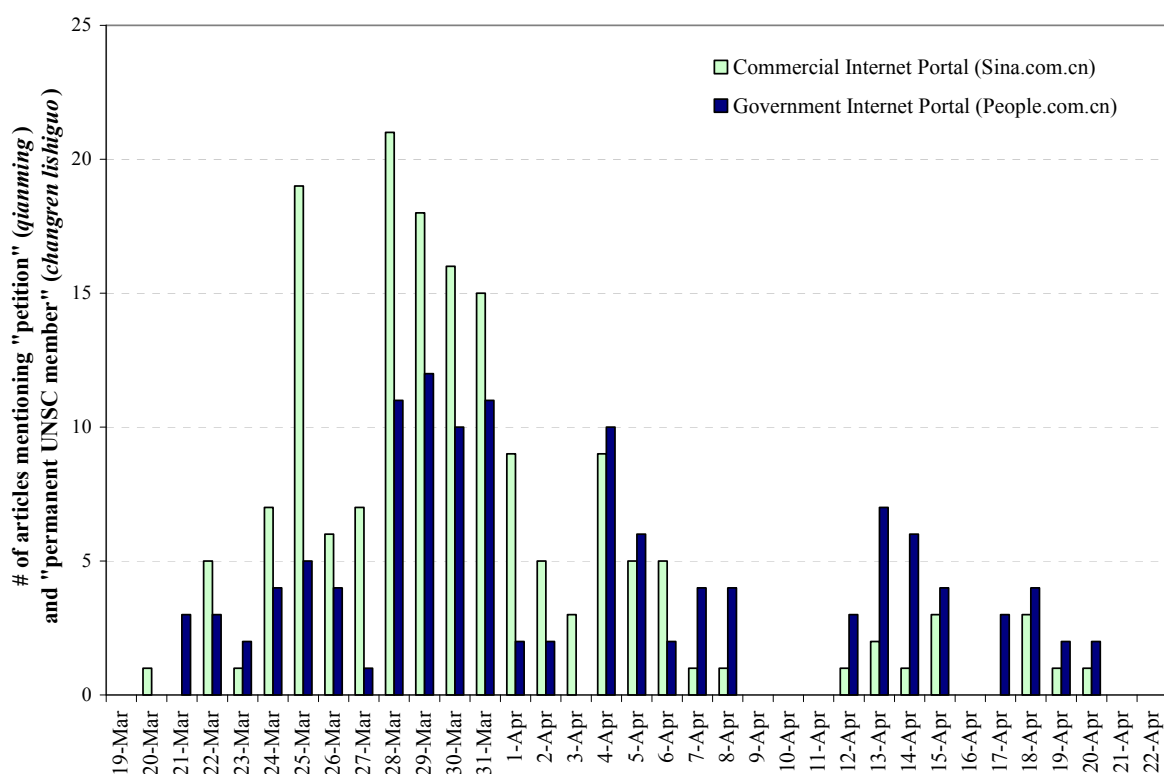


Figure 4.2: Online News Coverage of Anti-Japanese Petitions, March-April 2005

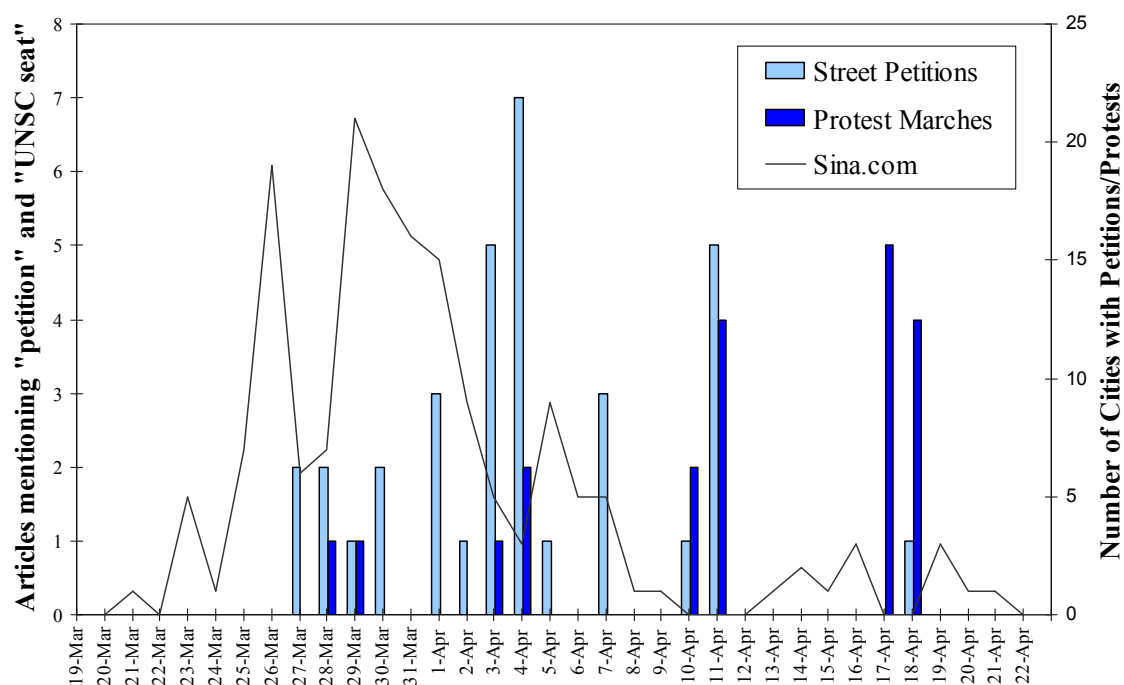


Figure 4.3: Online News Silence During Major Protest Marches

4.4 Alternative Explanations

The 2005 case study is also useful for evaluating the merits of alternative perspectives on nationalist protest in authoritarian regimes. Here, I argue that the three most common explanations in the literature—government incapacity, diversionary incentives, and bureaucratic or factional interests—do not adequately account for the 2005 anti-Japanese protests.

The first class of explanations argues that nationalist protests occur without the knowledge, consent, and/or encouragement of the government. In this view, protests arise from government incapacity or paralysis in the face of spontaneous popular sentiment (Gries 2005a). The government may lack the ability to respond effectively, particularly to protest movements that develop rapidly and through channels of communication that the

government cannot readily monitor (Tanner 2004). Alternatively, the government may fail to act out of fear of a popular backlash, particularly on prominent anniversaries of historic protests (Perry 2002). While I do not deny the sincerity of nationalist grievances or the costs of suppression, this perspective does not address when the government will seek to prevent or curtail anti-foreign protests. Moreover, the 2005 narrative demonstrates that the government explicitly allowed the internet and street petitions and tacitly consented (*moren*) to the anti-Japanese protests—whereas on previous occasions the government has suppressed anti-Japanese activities, e.g. the bullet train petition in 2004. The ability of the government to repress anti-Japanese protests is also illustrated in the comparison of anti-Japanese protest in Hong Kong and mainland China presented in Chapter 2.

A diametrically opposite approach suggests that anti-foreign protests are mobilized by the government as a diversionary tactic, as “pressure valves” for citizens to vent their frustrations and release pent-up anger that might otherwise turn against the government. By stage-managing anti-foreign demonstrations, the government can “buttress its popular nationalist credentials” (Tanner 2005; see also He 2007b), encourage citizens to “rally around the flag” (Coser 1956; Mueller 1973), and promote regime stability. This logic overlooks evidence that nationalist protests have a tendency to turn against the government. For example, Yukio Okamoto, advisor to Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi on foreign affairs, made the following observation about the 2005 anti-Japanese protests: “The government is losing its ability to control events. Taking the lid off to release pent-up pressure is one thing, but the authorities are finding that they can’t

get the lid back on.”⁹¹ As Okamoto’s comment illustrates, the risk of instability posed by anti-Japanese protests was readily apparent to foreign observers. Moreover, my interviews revealed a general concern among both government officials and nationalist activists that anti-government elements might utilize anti-Japanese protests as an opportunity to “instigate trouble.” Rather than decreasing social unrest by providing an outlet for frustration, anti-foreign protests create new opportunities for discontented citizens to mobilize and network.

In addition, the diversionary or “venting” perspective ignores the costs of suppressing demonstrations after they have begun and gained momentum, namely, the disenchantment of protest participants and activists with the government for cracking down.⁹² In 2005, these costs were not very large, because the government took a tougher stance against Japan and was able to claim victory in the UNSC negotiations. Nevertheless, the evidence presented above suggests that *without* a diplomatic victory and a tougher foreign policy stance, suppression would have been very costly, as momentum built for a fourth round of protests over the May holiday, including the anniversary of the May 4th movement.

Relaxing the assumption that the government is a unitary, rational actor, a third perspective suggests that factions and/or bureaucratic units within the government are often at odds over policy and may thus have difficulty coordinating upon a coherent strategy to deal with protests. These arguments are problematic because they lack specificity, i.e. multiple versions of the factional or bureaucratic logic can be generated to

⁹¹ Okamoto and Tanaka (2005).

⁹² For an illustration of this phenomenon during the 1999 anti-U.S. protests, see Zhao (2003).

explain the same outcome. For instance, two mutually exclusive versions of the factional logic have been used to explain the 2005 protests. In one version, the anti-Japanese protests were stoked by supporters of the former leader, Jiang Zemin, to discredit the new Hu-Wen administration.⁹³ In the second version, the Hu-Wen administration sought to strengthen their populist credentials against the Jiang Zemin clique by giving nationalist groups more space to organize activities.⁹⁴

Moreover, the bureaucratic and factional arguments run into trouble as systematic explanations for the government's response to protest over time. If anti-foreign protests are costly for stable economic relations and potentially disruptive to social stability, central decisionmakers have incentives to overcome their coordination and/or collective action problems (Geddes 1994) and anticipate the consequences of too much propaganda and too few riot police. Indeed, in a study of anti-Japanese protest in the 1990s, Downs and Saunders (1999) suggest that the Chinese government does consider the impact of nationalistic propaganda on the likelihood of anti-foreign protest. Furthermore, the Chinese government has repeatedly been able to prevent anti-Japanese protests from occurring, suggesting that bureaucratic and factional obstacles have not been insurmountable in China.

4.5 Conclusion

The evidence presented here strongly supports the argument that authoritarian leaders face strategic incentives to allow anti-foreign protests in order to gain international bargaining leverage. In the spring of 2005, anti-Japanese protests in China

⁹³ See Shimizu (2006).

⁹⁴ See *Cheng Ming*, No. 311, May 1, 2005; Justin McCurry and Jonathan Watts, "China's angry young focus their hatred on old enemy," *The Guardian*, December 30, 2004; and Tanner (2004), p.150-1.

were instrumental in changing the course of the diplomatic negotiations over U.N. Security Council reform. In addition to eliciting an apology from Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, the protests prompted the United States to shift its position on Japan's bid dramatically: from supporting Japan's candidacy to reaching a joint agreement with China to block the G4 proposal. Above, I have argued that it was this *international* benefit that led China to allow the anti-Japanese petitions and protests, despite the potential cost and risk to the regime. Indeed, the possibility of a regime backlash is precisely why the anti-Japanese protests provided the government with international leverage on the UNSC issue.

The analysis here thus disagrees with two common views of the 2005 anti-Japanese protests. One view holds that the government used the protests for *domestic* purposes, such as shoring up the regime's popularity. The anti-Japanese protests were in fact tolerated, but it is unclear that the benefits to regime stability outweighed the potential costs of suppression and the risk that protests might turn against the government. A second view holds that the protests occurred spontaneously and were mobilized without the government's consent, ultimately forcing the government to take a public stance against Japan's bid. The protests were indeed sincere manifestations of popular outrage against Japan, but the demonstrations were also orchestrated and guided by the government. The protests did push the government to oppose Japan's bid, but this pressure was *desired* as a source of bargaining leverage. The government chose to allow the internet and street petitions and then opted not to intervene when protests erupted nationwide.

Given the “success” of the 2005 anti-Japanese protests as a bargaining tactic in the UNSC negotiations, it is likely that the Chinese government will at some point in the future resort to “playing the public opinion card” by allowing anti-foreign protests. Nevertheless, the delicate balance between protests that are risky enough to send a signal of resolve and yet not too risky to outweigh the international benefits suggests that nationalist protests will not soon become a substitute for “normal” diplomacy. Nevertheless, if China becomes more democratic, it is likely that nationalist protests will become more, not less, frequent.

Chapter 5: A Tale of Two Crises: Anti-Americanism in 1999 and 2001

In this chapter, I contrast the Chinese government's response to two events that stirred popular outrage against the United States and precipitated attempts by Chinese citizens to hold anti-American protests. In 1999, U.S. planes bombed the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia during a NATO air strike, killing three Chinese journalists and wounding 20 others. In 2001, a U.S. reconnaissance plane collided with a Chinese fighter jet, killing the Chinese pilot and making an emergency landing on Hainan Island, China's southernmost province. In 1999, the government allowed and even encouraged anti-American protests. In 2001, would-be protesters were quickly escorted away and the official media told to keep down their rhetoric. This chapter shows that the decision to allow or prevent anti-foreign protests depends on the international bargaining context—specifically, whether anti-foreign protests are expected to yield sufficient benefit at the international level to offset the domestic risk of allowing street protests. The chapter also illustrates that anti-foreign protests must be perceived as genuinely risky, or else the protests will be dismissed as a bluff.

In the analysis presented below, I suggest that the Chinese government's decision to allow protests in 1999 was the product of a strategic calculation: that the United States was relatively likely to back down. In 2001, on the other hand, the Chinese government believed that the United States was likely to stand firm or counter-escalate. Fearing that anti-foreign protests would lead to anti-government protests, as they had over the period 1985-1989, the Chinese government in 1999 proceeded to orchestrate the anti-American demonstrations with a visible hand. However, the government's stage-management of the

protests undermined the perception that the protests posed a genuine risk. As a result, U.S. officials discounted the protests and warned China that the United States would not make concessions on China's entry into the WTO or U.N. Security Council negotiations over Kosovo.

The purpose of this chapter is to look at these two events through the lens of the theory presented earlier. In doing so, I hope to illuminate aspects of history that may have been overlooked in existing accounts. The comparison of these two events is not a true exercise in theory-testing, but the analysis does follow the path of scientific inquiry in two ways: first, the theory was developed without reference to these cases; and second, the cases were chosen to achieve variation on both the independent and dependent variables. In other words, the international context differed between 1999 and 2001, and protests were allowed in 1999 but not in 2001. However, because several of the independent variables differ between the two episodes, the assessment here falls short of a straightforward comparative static analysis. Furthermore, the two episodes are similar along several dimensions, giving credence to the comparison. These similarities include factors which are unique to the U.S.-China relationship (and would thus vary if compared to a different dyadic relationship), the sudden onset of each crisis and resulting public outcry, as well as temporal proximity (being separated by only two years). But the two episodes are different on several other relevant dimensions, which do not all point in the same direction.

The approach of this chapter will thus be to identify the independent variables in each episode and the direction of change. Doing so will require a substantial degree of subjective judgment, as the variables are difficult to operationalize. As difficult as it is to

detect whether a protest was allowed, encouraged, or prevented, the independent variables are even more difficult to measure. This is in large part because the independent variables are *beliefs* that government decisionmakers hold about a) the risk that protests will get out of hand, and b) the likelihood that protests will have a positive effect on the government's international bargaining position and the settlement of the crisis.

Discerning beliefs is difficult, especially after the crisis has concluded, and new events, along with hindsight, conspire to alter the recollections of decisionmakers. Thus, in assessing the perceived risk and benefit of allowing protests, I rely on a combination of sources: public remarks by officials made at the time; retrospective accounts by policymakers and experts with knowledge of the decisionmaking process (as retold in interviews and memoirs); and commentary at the time in the news media, which reflects the public debate and may weakly proxy the beliefs of decisionmakers.¹

Unlike the anti-Japanese protests of 2005, these two crises are well-known incidents. The 1999 protests, in particular, have been the subject of some scrutiny, (e.g. Gries 2004; Shirk 2007; Zhao 2003; Wu 2005) and both episodes have drawn the attention of scholars and analysts interested in crisis management (e.g. Wilkenfeld 2006; Campbell and Weitz 2006; Blair and Bonfili 2006; Zhang 2006; Swaine 2006; Wu 2008). However, the puzzle of why protests were allowed in 1999 and prevented in 2001 has never been explicitly examined, nor the connection to Beijing's foreign policy objectives. The goal of this chapter is thus to shed light on aspects of these incidents that may have

¹ The strength of this proxy is likely to be greater for democracies than for autocracies. In the former, the news media may reflect the public debate, whereas in the latter the news media largely reflect what the government wishes its citizens to know, which may or may not reflect the government's own beliefs. On the other hand, an authoritarian government may utilize the official media to communicate with lower level officials. For these reasons, I rely very little on China's media to infer the beliefs and perceptions of the Chinese government.

been overlooked by others, and simultaneously to probe for confirmation or disconfirmation of my theory.

5.1 Theoretical expectations

In 1999 and 2001, the Chinese government faced a decision: to allow or prevent anti-American protests. According to the theory developed in previous chapters, the decision to allow protest is a calculation of risk versus return. Namely, would the international benefit of allowing protest be large enough to offset the domestic risk that protests might get out of hand? Three primary variables thus enter the calculation: 1) the value of the international stakes; 2) the probability of success, i.e. the likelihood that the foreign opponent will back down; and 3) the magnitude of the domestic risk. Anti-foreign protests are like a strategic bet, whose expected return depends on the reaction of the opponent: will she fold, call, or raise? The comparison of these two episodes allows us to evaluate the following three hypotheses, derived from the theory presented in Chapter 2:

- A. **The *greater* the stakes, the *more* likely government is to allow such protest.**
- B. **The *greater* the belief that the foreign opponent will back down, the *more* likely the government is to allow such protest.**
- C. **The *riskier* the protest, the *less* likely the government is to allow such protest.**

As I will argue in the analysis below, the stakes were roughly equivalent in 1999 and 2001. Both episodes were perceived as crises involving American infringement on Chinese sovereignty,² but neither appeared to be linked with specific demands or plans for military campaign against the Chinese mainland. Indeed, neither episode is regarded as a full-fledged international crisis as defined by the authors of the International Crisis

² See Wang and Xu (2006), p. 137.

Behavior Project. As Jonathan Wilkenfeld has noted, the embassy bombing and EP-3 incident are better understood as “near crises”—that is, conflicts in which “each involved actor perceives a threat to basic values and a finite period for response but not an increased probability of military hostilities.”³ In this sense, both were perceived as tests of China’s mettle, where the Chinese leadership’s reputation for toughness was primarily at stake, rather than a specific set of policies or material interests.

If the stakes were roughly equivalent, what differed between 1999 and 2001 were the government’s perception of U.S. resolve and the risk that protests would get out of hand. These point in opposite directions, however. Perceived U.S. resolve was low in 1999 and high in 2001, suggesting that the government was *more* likely to allow protests in 1999 than in 2001. The risk that protests would spiral out of control was high in 1999 and low in 2001, suggesting that the government was *less* likely to allow protests in 1999 than in 2001. How do we reconcile these opposing predictions?

In the analysis below, I suggest that it was indeed the perception that the United States would concede in 1999 but stand firm in 2001 that led the Chinese government to allow protests in 1999 but not in 2001. But the Chinese government was very concerned about the risk that protests could get out of hand in 1999 and thus took pains to mitigate the risk that demonstrations would get out of control. The government miscalculated. Its visible stage management of the demonstrations undermined the perceived risk posed by the protests, thus undermining the signal of resolve being sent to the United States.

The rest of the chapter will proceed as follows. First, I will provide a short narrative of each episode, detailing the onset of the crisis, the Chinese government’s

³ Wilkenfeld (2006), p. 111.

decision to allow or prevent protests, and the outcome of the crisis. The narratives will summarize the international and domestic contexts surrounding each crisis, drawing attention to the Chinese government's perception of the bilateral relationship at the time, along with the perceived risk that protests, if allowed, might get out of hand. Second, I will evaluate the two crises through the lens of the theory. I will then address alternative explanations for the government's behavior and conclude.

5.2 The 1999 Embassy Bombing

At 5:45 a.m. on Saturday, May 8, 1999 (Beijing time), two U.S. B-2 bombers dropped five precision-guided bombs on the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia, killing three Chinese journalists and wounding twenty Chinese citizens. The bombing occurred during a NATO air strike, part of Operation Allied Force in Kosovo, which sought to compel an end to Serb atrocities in Kosovo. The bombing campaign had begun in late March over the objections of Beijing and Moscow. The Chinese leadership viewed the Kosovo war as a violation of Yugoslavian sovereignty. In light of China's own difficulties with Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan, the NATO air strikes appeared to set a troubling precedent for international intervention in secessionist disputes.

As news of the embassy bombing reached China on the morning of May 8, university students in Beijing began putting up posters condemning the United States and applied for permission to demonstrate outside the U.S. Embassy.⁴ At around 10:00 A.M.,

⁴ According to various accounts, permission was granted by the Beijing Public Security Bureau (see Zhao, Dingxin (2003), p. 15) and by university authorities (see Wu (2006), p. 362). See also John Wong and Zheng Yongnian, "Nationalism and its Dilemma: Chinese Responses to Embassy Bombing," in *Reform, Legitimacy and Dilemmas: China's Politics and Society*, ed. Wang Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian, 2000, p. 333.

the Chinese leadership convened an emergency meeting to decide how to handle the crisis. According to Chinese analyst Wu Baiyi,

After the high-level meeting of leaders on the morning of May 8, the relevant security departments issued a circular: to intensify reporting on domestic public opinion, to give guidance to the youth and students, and to prevent chaos or the loss of control....Officials decided to adopt a policy of persuasion rather than coercive prevention.”⁵

Following the meeting, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yingfan summoned U.S. Ambassador James Sasser to lodge China’s strongest protest against the bombing, demanding an immediate halt to NATO air strikes in Yugoslavia.⁶ Sasser, who contacted the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs upon learning of the bombing from the White House, had expressed his condolences for the “terrible mistake.”⁷ At noon, the Chinese government released a statement strongly condemning the bombing, carried by Xinhua and CCTV:

US-led NATO brazenly (*hanran*) used three missiles to attack the embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from different angles....This act of NATO is a gross violation (*cu bao qin fan*) of China's sovereignty, and a willful trampling of the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations and the norms of international relations...The Chinese Government and people express their utmost indignation and severe condemnation of the barbarian act and lodge the strongest protest (*zui qianglie de kangyi*).⁸

That afternoon, tens of thousands of students took part in anti-American demonstrations in cities across China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Nanjing and Shenyang. Some of the demonstrations were authorized by public security

⁵ Wu (2005), p. 4 and Wu (2006), p. 362.

⁶ “Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Lodges Strongest Protest,” *Beijing Zoubao (Beijing Review)*, May 24, 1999, p.13.

⁷ Suettinger (2003), p. 370.

⁸ “PRC Issues ‘Text’ of Statement on Embassy Bombing,” FBIS translation, FTS19990508000044, May 8, 1999.

authorities and organized by official student associations; other protests occurred without official consent. Although we lack systematic data, it appears that student-organized protests outnumbered university-organized protests on the afternoon and evening of May 8. According to a report later released by the graduate student association at Beijing University, only five of the eleven major demonstrations by Beijing University students were legally registered (Zhao 2003:16). In keeping with the government's orders to "give guidance" and "prevent chaos or the loss of control," however, party-led student associations attempted to co-opt unofficial demonstrations as soon as they arose. As one student union leader recounted:

We sent student government cadres to every corner of our campus. As soon as they saw the formation of a crowd of several hundred students, they called us immediately....To protect the students and to keep the demonstrations in a better order, the cadres in the graduate and undergraduate student government decided to follow the students when some demonstration activities were initiated. In the process, we tried to take control of the demonstration by controlling such resources as the university flags and by encouraging students to shout slogans that we had prepared. (Yu and Zhao 2006:1772)

As protests raged that evening, the residence of the Consul General in Chengdu was set on fire. According to a senior White House official at the time, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing was nearly overrun, and sensitive documents were destroyed as a precautionary measure. An urgent message from U.S. personnel inside the Embassy stated that protesters were likely to breach the compound within a few hours. If Chinese security forces did not intervene, U.S. officials warned, the Chinese government would have an international incident on their hands (Interview 109).

At 2:35 A.M. Beijing time (1:35 P.M. on May 8 in Oklahoma), nearly 24 hours after the bombing, President Bill Clinton spoke on television, stating that the bombing

was a “tragic mistake” and offered his “sincere regret” and “condolences to both the leaders and the people of China.”⁹ In his remarks, Clinton defended the NATO airstrikes in Kosovo and refused to describe the bombing as “barbaric,” as China and Russia had. NATO Secretary General Javier Solana echoed Clinton’s remarks, saying that “the bombing of the Chinese Embassy was a deeply regrettable mistake.”¹⁰ That morning, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen and C.I.A. Director George Tenet had released a joint statement that said, “We deeply regret the loss of life and injuries from the bombing,” which was termed a targeting error.¹¹ That evening, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright personally delivered a letter of apology to the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C., which offered her “sincere apologies and condolences.”¹² Both Albright’s letter of apology and the statement released by the State Department emphasized that the United States would continue to strive with China “to build a constructive strategic partnership for the 21st century.”¹³

On Sunday, May 9, protests grew in number, as more organized demonstrations took place and word spread that protests had official support. Moreover, the statements by U.S. and NATO officials were not mentioned by the Chinese media. The front page of the official party mouthpiece, *People’s Daily*, featured a photograph of the May 8th protests in Beijing and stated that the demonstrations had been approved by the Beijing City Public Security Bureau. Official coverage of the protests served as a green light to

⁹ “Remarks on Departure From Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma,” available at <http://frwebgate1.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=623040148392+6+0+0&WASAction=retrieve>

¹⁰ http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/jan-june99/nato_briefing_5-8.html

¹¹ William S. Cohen and George J. Tenet, “U.S. Deeply Regrets Bombing of Chinese Embassy,” joint statement, May 8, 1999, quoted in Campbell and Weitz (2006), p. 342.

¹² “Letter to Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China,” available at <http://secretary.state.gov/www/statements/1999/990508.html>.

¹³ <http://secretary.state.gov/www/briefings/statements/1999/ps990508.html>.

those who had been apprehensive about participating. As anthropologist Vanessa Fong noted:

Many people I knew in Dalian reacted with anger as soon as the news was reported on television, but they did not dare to channel their anger into organized protests until the news media suggested that such protests would be deemed patriotic by the government. As soon as they saw the sympathetic newspaper and television coverage of college students protesting in Beijing, however, college students in Dalian knew that their protests would have the Chinese government's tacit approval (Fong 2007).

In Beijing, one student cadre at Tsinghua University told me that he had been reluctant to participate on the night of May 8, when hundreds of Beijing University students had come to mobilize students, shouting, "Come out and join us—don't be chicken!" The next day, however, he and other student association leaders were deputized to organize a protest at the embassy, choosing students to fill the quota for his department and arranging for bread and water (Interview 47).¹⁴

By the afternoon of May 9, the government began to take measures to rein in the protests. According to Chinese analyst Wu Baiyi, "the focus had clearly turned toward domestic stability" during the meeting of the top leadership on the afternoon of May 9 (2005:4). On the 6 o'clock evening news, Hu Jintao, China's vice president at the time, stated that the government "firmly supports and protects" all "legal protest activities" but urged that "we must prevent overreaction, and ensure social stability by guarding against some people making use of the opportunities to disrupt the normal public order."¹⁵

The next day, on Monday, May 10 in Beijing, the Chinese government suspended talks with the United States on human rights and nonproliferation. Chinese Foreign

¹⁴ See also Zhao, Dingxin (2003), p. 16.

¹⁵ Full text available at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/jan-june99/china_statement_5-9.html.

Minister Tang Jiaxuan met with U.S. Ambassador James Sasser and demanded that the United States make an open and public apology, investigate the bombing, promptly publicize the results, and severely punish the perpetrators. The Chinese media continued to feature blanket coverage of the embassy bombing but highlighted Hu Jintao's speech and the importance of social stability, with headlines such as "Workers Turning Anger Into Motivation."¹⁶

Organized protests continued to take place in front of the U.S. and British embassies, but the demonstrations were more orderly. Universities and work units were instructed to wind down the protests.¹⁷ According to Ambassador Sasser, "The situation has stabilized somewhat and we feel like we can last the siege through." White House press secretary Joe Lockhart stated that "it is considerably calmer at this point."¹⁸

Back in Washington, President Clinton apologized again, both on camera and in a letter to Chinese President Jiang Zemin. On May 9 (U.S. time), Clinton wrote a message to Jiang in which he stated his "apologies and sincere condolences."¹⁹ Speaking from the White House on May 10 (U.S. time), Clinton said "I apologize, I regret this," and reaffirmed his commitment to strengthen U.S.-China relations.²⁰ Clinton also tried unsuccessfully to reach Jiang by phone.

On Tuesday, May 11, the Chinese media reported on the apologies by President Clinton, NATO Secretary General Solana, and Secretary Albright. The official media not so subtly urged citizens to return to their normal duties. According to Xinhua, Jiang

¹⁶ Xinhua News Agency, quoted in Gries (2004), p. 131.

¹⁷ *South China Morning Post*, May 12, 1999.

¹⁸ Associated Press, May 10, 1999.

¹⁹ Suettinger (2003), p. 372.

²⁰ Associated Press, May 10, 1999; http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/jan-june99/bombing_5-10.html.

Zemin praised the “great patriotism of the Chinese people” but stated that “the whole country is now determined to study and work harder, so as to develop the national economy continuously, enhance national strength, and fight back with concrete deeds against the barbaric act of U.S.-led NATO.”²¹ One model student was quoted, “We believe the party and the government can appropriately handle the current situation, and we college students should redouble our efforts to gain knowledge and master skills. This is true patriotic conduct.”²²

Protests outside the U.S. Embassy and consulates dwindled to a fraction of the size of crowds on the preceding three days, even as thousands of protesters marched in Hong Kong.²³ Western media quoted Ambassador Sasser in Beijing as saying, “We may go to bed early and get a good night's sleep.”²⁴ Although the curtailment of protests may have appeared smoothly orchestrated to outsiders, Dingxin Zhao notes that many students were outraged when told by officials that demonstrations were now illegal. According to Zhao, party officials detained a group of several hundred university students en route to protest at the U.S. Embassy. First university officials and then a high-level city official threatened students with disciplinary action for participating in a demonstration that had not been approved by the security authorities. Although half the group of students was persuaded to return to campus via buses provided by the government, several student

²¹ Xinhua, May 11, 1999, quoted in Zhao (2004b), p. 81; see also “New WTO Hopes Despite Crisis,” *Hong Kong Standard*, May 12, 1999.

²² “Students Turn Indignation into Motivation,” Xinhua Domestic Service in Chinese, FBIS, FTS19990512000854, May 11, 1999.

²³ *South China Morning Post*, May 12, 1999.

²⁴ Associated Press, May 11, 1999.

union leaders became defiant and told students to ignore the officials.²⁵ The remaining students were allowed to proceed to the Embassy district.

The crisis continued to de-escalate over the next several days. The streets were quiet on May 12, which Ambassador Sasser had called “a critical day” because of concerns that a new wave of protests would be sparked by the repatriation of the remains of the Chinese journalists killed in the bombing.²⁶ That day, the U.S. Embassy and consulates lowered their flags to half mast in respect for the dead. On May 13, President Clinton signed the official book of condolences brought to the Oval Office by Ambassador Li Zhaoxing. On May 14, President Clinton and President Jiang spoke directly by telephone, during which Clinton expressed his regrets for the tragic bombing, promised an investigation into the matter, and reaffirmed his commitment to bringing bilateral relations back to normal.²⁷

On June 16 (Beijing time), presidential envoy and Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering presented the results of the U.S. investigation into the bombing. Ambassador Li responded that China had “taken note of the apology” but rejected U.S. explanations for the “so-called mistaken bombing” as “anything but convincing.”²⁸ On July 30, the two governments reached an agreement whereby the United States would pay \$4.5 million in compensation to the victims of the bombing and their families. Although compensation for damages to the Chinese Embassy in

²⁵ Zhao, Dingxin (2003), p. 24-25.

²⁶ Associated Press, May 11, 1999.

²⁷ “Chinese and U.S. Presidents Held Phone Conference,” P.R.C. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://test.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/2649/t15797.htm>

²⁸ “U.S. President’s Personal Envoy in China to Present the U.S. Government’s Report on Its Investigation into the Bombing of the Chinese Embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia-- The Chinese Government Emphasizes that the U.S. Side Must Give Satisfactory Account and Explanation of the Incident,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, June 16, 1999, available at <http://www.international.ucla.edu/eas/NewsFile/bombing05-99/9906-cmfa1.htm>.

Yugoslavia and U.S. diplomatic facilities in China was not agreed upon until December, by September relations between the two governments were “back on track,” in the words of U.S. National Security Adviser Samuel Berger.²⁹ After five rounds of negotiations, China in December agreed to pay \$2.8 million to the United States for damages to U.S. diplomatic facilities caused by the protests, and the U.S. government agreed to pay \$28 million to China for damages to the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade caused by the bombing.³⁰

5.3 The 2001 EP-3 Incident

On April 1, 2001, shortly after 9:00 A.M. (Beijing time) , a U.S. EP-3 reconnaissance plane collided with a Chinese F-8 fighter over the South China Sea, about seventy nautical miles to the southeast of Hainan Island, China’s southernmost province. The Chinese fighter and pilot were lost in the sea, and at 9:33 A.M., the U.S. aircraft made an emergency landing at Lingshui Military Airport on Hainan Island. At noon, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing made telephone contact with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, requesting to meet or speak with the EP-3 crew. That afternoon, the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) released a statement on its website, requesting that the Chinese government “respect the integrity of the aircraft and the well-being and safety of the crew.”³¹ Upon learning of the collision from PACOM, U.S. Embassy officials attempted

²⁹ Edward Chen and Mark Magnier, “U.S.-China Relations ‘Back on Track’ After Clinton, Jiang Mend Fences,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 12, 1999.

³⁰ Campbell and Weitz (2006), p. 342.

³¹ Blair and Bonfili (2006), p. 380.

to reach their counterparts in the P.R.C. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but their phone calls were for the most part not answered or returned.³²

Meanwhile, the Chinese leadership met and put the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of coordinating the relevant domestic departments.³³ At 9:30 P.M., approximately 12 hours after the collision, Assistant Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong met with U.S. Ambassador Joseph Prueher. Zhou stated that a sudden turn by the U.S. aircraft was the direct cause of the collision and demanded that the United States take full responsibility; Prueher stated that the Chinese version of the events was “physically impossible”³⁴ and requested a meeting with the crew and an opportunity to inspect the plane.³⁵ At 10:00 P.M., the Chinese Foreign Ministry released its first public statement regarding the collision, asserting that responsibility for the incident lay “entirely with the U.S. side.”³⁶ PACOM chief Admiral Dennis Blair refuted the Chinese version of events at a press conference in Hawaii, saying that it was “pretty obvious as to who bumped into whom” and that Chinese fighters had been intercepting U.S. aircraft in a pattern of “increasingly unsafe behavior.”³⁷

The next day, April 2, Ambassador Prueher told reporters in Beijing that “it is inexplicable and unacceptable and of great concern to the most senior levels of the US government that the air crew has been held incommunicado for over 32 hours.” Prueher warned that the crisis could negatively affect other aspects of U.S.-China relations: “The

³² Keefe (2001), p. 6.

³³ Zhang (2006), p. 395.

³⁴ Keefe (2001), p. 5.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Xinhua Cites PRC FM Spokesman's Remarks on Military Aircraft Incident,” Xinhua Domestic Service in Chinese, FBIS, CPP20010401000069, April 1, 2001.

³⁷ United States Pacific Command, Transcript, Camp H. M. Smith, April 1, 2001, available at <http://www.pacom.mil/speeches/sst2001/010401blairplane.htm>.

downside potential, if we do not resolve this well, is fairly high because it can bleed over into some other areas.”³⁸ Perhaps responding to this veiled threat, Assistant Foreign Minister Zhou that evening called an emergency meeting with Prueher and told him that U.S. officials could meet with the EP-3 crew the next day.³⁹ Zhou also demanded that the United States accept full responsibility and apologize for the collision.

News of the collision was broadcast by the Chinese media in a restrained manner. *People's Daily* ran a single story on the 4th page of the newspaper, with the simple headline: “Foreign Ministry spokesman comments on crash of U.S. reconnaissance plane into Chinese military aircraft.” The Beijing Youth Daily, which had been given an award by the Propaganda Department for its extensive coverage of the Embassy bombing in 1999, had by April 3rd carried only two short syndicated Xinhua stories.⁴⁰ By contrast, online commentary was incendiary. The website of *People's Daily* ran a story with the headline: “Reconnaissance Plane Violated Rules, Bumped Against and Destroyed Our Fighter Plane; the United States Is Like an Ant in a Hot Frying Pan Because It Is in the Wrong.”⁴¹ Some netizens, cursing U.S. surveillance and intrusion into Chinese territory, called for a boycott of U.S. products.

The Chinese government also repressed public displays of outrage in the form of street protests or rallies. According to a senior Chinese foreign policy advisor, the leadership was tempted during the first several days of the crisis to hold large public rallies and take a dramatic public position, but “Jiang was clear from the beginning about

³⁸ Agence France Presse, April 2, 2001.

³⁹ Zhang (2006), p. 396.

⁴⁰ John Pomfret, “New Nationalism Drives Beijing; Hard Line Reflects Public Mood,” *Washington Post*, April 4, 2001.

⁴¹ “Renmin Wang Special Dispatch Discusses US Plane Incident,” FBIS, CPP20010402000080, April 2, 2001.

not doing anything to negatively impact the long-term relationship with the U.S.”⁴²

According to a PLA colonel, “If the university authorities hadn’t stopped the students from taking to the streets, there would have been demonstrations everywhere.”⁴³

On April 2 (Washington time), President George W. Bush released a public statement, demanding “immediate access” to the EP-3 crew and saying that “failure of the Chinese government to react promptly to our request is inconsistent with standard diplomatic practice, and with the expressed desire of both our countries for better relations.” He also stated that the U.S. military was ready and willing to help in the search and rescue effort for the Chinese pilot and aircraft.⁴⁴

In response, Chinese president Jiang Zemin released a statement of his own on April 3 (Beijing time), demanding that the U.S. side bear full responsibility for the incident and stop reconnaissance flights near China. Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao further stated that the United States should apologize (*daoqian*). According to Blair and Bonfili, “It seemed unlikely to the U.S. side that China intended to drag out the issue long enough to create the perception of a hostage crisis. At the same time, however, there was no initiative coming from the Chinese side. The demand for an apology seemed to be the only Chinese position.”⁴⁵ On April 3, the Chinese leadership also met and “issued clear guidelines, policies, and objectives for the handling of the incident...to engage in a resolute struggle against the erroneous behavior on the part of the United States as well as [to] strive for an early resolution of the event.” (Zhang 2006:396) After

⁴² Shirk (2007), p. 236.

⁴³ Shirk (2007), p. 236; see also Zhao (2003), p. 13-14.

⁴⁴ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/04/print/20010402-2.html>.

⁴⁵ Blair and Bonfili (2006), p. 382.

the meeting, the Propaganda Department issued a series of guidelines to the domestic media regarding coverage of the collision.

Back in Washington, President Bush countered Jiang's statement by taking a tougher public stance. Speaking in the late afternoon from the Rose Garden, Bush stated:

We have allowed the Chinese government time to do the right thing. But now it is time for our servicemen and women to return home. And it is time for the Chinese government to return our plane. This accident has the potential of undermining our hopes for a fruitful and productive relationship between our two countries. To keep that from happening, our servicemen and women need to come home.⁴⁶

As noted by Zhang (2006:397), "Bush had been rather low-key when he spoke for the first time, but now he sounded much tougher." However, Secretary of State Colin Powell for the first time mentioned his "regret" for the loss of the Chinese pilot in a press briefing.⁴⁷

On April 4, Jiang reiterated that the United States should apologize and do something to benefit the development of bilateral relations, even as he departed for a scheduled two-week visit to Latin America.⁴⁸ Jiang's departure was perceived by some U.S. officials as an indication that the storm would blow over.⁴⁹ According to a Chinese general, "Jiang could take his trip after the EP-3 collision and handle the crisis by remote control because he had already decided not to do something too big [and] had already formed a decision about how to handle the crisis."⁵⁰ In keeping with the orders issued by the Propaganda Department, the Chinese media remained muted, although Xinhua did

⁴⁶ "Statement by the President," Office of the Press Secretary, April 3, 2001, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/04/20010403-3.html>.

⁴⁷ Department of State, "Briefing for the Press Aboard Aircraft En Route to Andrews Air Force Base," April 3, 2001, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/1932.htm>.

⁴⁸ *People's Daily*, April 4, 2005, p. 1, author translation.

⁴⁹ Elisabeth Rosenthal, *New York Times*, April 5, 2001.

⁵⁰ Interview by Susan Shirk, October 2004.

run a story on anti-American protests outside the U.S. consulate in Hong Kong. Many reports also lauded the heroism of the martyred pilot. Nevertheless, on April 4, the front page of *People's Daily* carried a lengthy article on public security, in which the word “stability” (*wending*) appeared eleven times, “overall stability” was mentioned six times (*wending de daju*), “unity and stability” (*tongyi yu wending*) was mentioned 3 times, and “social stability” was mentioned two times. In another column, a local Hainan cadre was quoted: “We are angry at the behavior of the American plane and concerned about the life and safety of the lost pilot. More importantly, we must stand guard at our posts and be diligent at our work, and uphold the practical actions of the central government in resolving this incident.”⁵¹

Following Jiang’s statement, Secretary Powell on April 4 again expressed his regret for the loss of the Chinese pilot and plane—both in remarks to reporters and in a letter to PRC Vice Premier Qian Qichen. Speaking to reporters, Powell said: “We regret that the Chinese plane did not get down safely, and we regret the loss of the life of that Chinese pilot. But now we need to move on and we need to bring this to a resolution.”⁵² Following Powell’s statements, “Chinese leaders decided to resolve the issue of the U.S. crew departing the country as soon as possible by prompting an explicit apology from the United States,” suggests Zhang (2006:399). This shift was apparent to U.S. negotiators the following morning. When Ambassador Prueher met with Assistant Foreign Minister Zhou on April 5, “It became clear to the U.S. side that an arrangement could be negotiated that would end the impasse,” according to Blair and Bonfili (2006:382). “For

⁵¹ *People's Daily*, April 4, 2001, p. 4, author translation.

⁵² Department of State, “Remarks Following Meeting with King Abdullah of Jordan,” April 4, 2001, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/2006.htm>.

the first time, it appeared that China was more interested in solving the problem than it was in holding to its version of the collision and attempting to extract an admission of responsibility from the United States.” When several Chinese demonstrators attempted to hold up anti-American banners in front of the U.S. Embassy, police quickly escorted them away.⁵³

At the April 5 meeting, Prueher and Zhou drafted a five-step plan, according to John Keefe, then-special assistant to Ambassador Prueher. The first step would be to publish a paragraph from Powell’s letter expressing regret for the loss of the Chinese pilot; the second would be a formal letter from Ambassador Prueher expressing regret for the loss of life and U.S. intrusion into Chinese airspace; the third would be the release of the EP-3 crew; the fourth would be a meeting to discuss the prevention of future accidents; and the fifth would be the return of the aircraft.⁵⁴

Between April 5 and April 11, American and Chinese diplomats held a series of consultations over the wording of the formal letter from Prueher, even as officials from both sides continued to make public statements. On April 5, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi reiterated that the United States should make an official apology (*zhengshi daoqian*) to the Chinese people.⁵⁵ That afternoon, President Bush echoed the regrets expressed by Powell but refrained from making a stronger apology, saying: “I regret that a Chinese pilot is missing, and I regret one of their airplanes is lost....The message to the Chinese is, we should not let this incident destabilize relations. Our

⁵³ Associated Press, April 5, 2001, and Willy Lam, “China gains leverage in U.S. spy plane incident,” CNN, April 6, 2001.

⁵⁴ Keefe (2001), p. 7.

⁵⁵ “PRC FM Spokesman Demands US Formal Apology,” Beijing Zhongguo Xinwen She, FBIS, CPP20010405000125, April 5, 2001.

relationship with China is very important. But they need to realize that it's time for our people to be home.”⁵⁶ The Chinese media publicized Bush’s words of regret “with unusual speed,” portraying his statement as a softening in the U.S. stance.⁵⁷ On April 7, President Jiang told reporters in Chile that “when people have an accident, the two groups involved always say ‘excuse me.’”⁵⁸ This was translated by the Chinese media as *duibuqi*, a more colloquial and ambiguous form of regret than *daoqian*—the more weighty term that the Chinese government had initially insisted upon.⁵⁹

On April 8, Secretary Powell used the word “sorry” for the first time. Speaking on a Sunday morning news program, Powell said: “We have expressed regrets and we have expressed our sorrow, and we are sorry that the life was lost.”⁶⁰ On April 9, President Bush warned that bilateral relations could suffer if the crew were not brought home now, using variants of the phrase “our relations with China could become damaged” three times within the space of four minutes.⁶¹ The same day, U.S. officials snubbed a reception at the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C., a move that Keefe suggests “may have finally awakened the Chinese government to the costs of its handling of this incident.”⁶²

On April 11, Ambassador Prueher delivered the letter to Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan. The letter stated twice that the United States was “very sorry,” once for the

⁵⁶ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks by the President at American Society of Newspaper Editors Annual Convention,” April 5, 2001, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/04/20010405-5.html>.

⁵⁷ Willy Lam, “China gains leverage in U.S. spy plane incident,” CNN, April 6, 2001.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, April 7, 2001. Except for the phrase, “excuse me,” Jiang’s statement was in Chinese.

⁵⁹ *New York Times*, April 7, 2001.

⁶⁰ “U.S. secures fourth visit with spy plane crew,” CNN, April 9, 2001, quoting an interview by Fox News Sunday.

⁶¹ The White House, “Remarks by the President in Photo Opportunity with the Cabinet,” April 9, 2001, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/04/20010409-6.html>.

⁶² Keefe (2001), p. 9.

loss of life and aircraft, and once for the unapproved entering of China's airspace. Tang then told Prueher that the U.S. aircrew was free to leave. Although the meeting went smoothly, U.S. negotiators were quite concerned beforehand that the Chinese side might do something to embarrass Ambassador Prueher publicly, such as allowing the Chinese media to be present during the handover and signing of the letter. Under such circumstances, the U.S. side warned, Ambassador Prueher would leave without giving Tang the letter or even taking a seat.⁶³

The next morning, on April 12 (Beijing time), the U.S. aircrew left China aboard a chartered Boeing 737 for Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii. Meetings to discuss responsibility for the collision, how to prevent future incidents, and the return of the U.S. aircraft began on April 18 in Beijing. The U.S. delegation was headed by Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Peter Verga, with only a few State Department officials in attendance. The Chinese delegation, while including several military officials, was headed by Lu Shumin, director general of the Bureau of North American and Oceanic Affairs of the Foreign Ministry. Although the Chinese side had previously stated an intention to negotiate the reduction or termination of U.S. reconnaissance flights near China, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage on April 13 stated on a television program that the United States, along with China, had a right to fly in international airspace and that "six other countries in Asia, including the Chinese, fly reconnaissance flights in international airspace."⁶⁴

⁶³ Keefe (2001), p. 11.

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State, "Interview of the Deputy Secretary of State on China, The News Hour with Jim Lehrer," April 13, 2001, available at <http://www.state.gov/s/d/former/armitage/remarks/2001/2297.htm>.

On May 7, U.S. reconnaissance flights near China resumed. In retaliation, the Chinese side informed the United States that the EP-3 plane would not be allowed to fly out of China. On May 17, the American side proposed to disassemble the plane and return it in parts via a commercial plane, and on May 28, Assistant Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong agreed in principle to let the dismantled EP-3 return to the United States via a Russian cargo plane.⁶⁵ On July 3, the EP-3 left China in five pieces aboard the Russian cargo plane.

5.4 Analysis

In my analysis of the Chinese government's decision to allow anti-American protests in 1999 but prevent similar protests in 2001, I focus on three primary variables: 1) the international stakes; 2) the anticipated response or "resolve" of the United States; and 3) the magnitude of the risk that anti-foreign protests turn against the government. As noted above, I argue that the critical difference between 1999 and 2001 lies with the second variable: the perceived likelihood that the United States would back down rather than stand firm or counter-escalate. Below, I seek to show that the Chinese government in 1999 believed that the United States would back down and apologize in the face of anti-American protesters. In 2001, the Chinese government was not nearly so confident that the United States would capitulate if anti-American protests were allowed. Rather, China's leaders were quite fearful that the United States would be willing to escalate further, prompting a downward spiral in U.S.-China relations. In sum, it was this difference in the expected international outcome that led the Chinese government to

⁶⁵ Zhang (2006), p. 407; Kan et al (2001), p. 7.

allow anti-American protests in 1999 but prevent them in 2001. This finding is consistent with Hypothesis B: **The greater the belief that the foreign opponent will back down, the more likely the government is to allow such protest.**

However, the risk that protests would get out of hand was high in 1999 relative to 2001. Below, I show that the Chinese government took pains to reduce the risk that protests would get out of hand in 1999. Fearing that anti-American protests would get out of hand just a few weeks prior to the 10th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests, the government managed and even organized many of the anti-American demonstrations via party-led student associations. In doing so, the government overcorrected for the lesson of the 1980s, when anti-Japanese protests in 1985 gave momentum to the pro-democracy protests of 1986 and 1989. By stage managing the protestors in 1999, the government reduced the risk that protests would get out of hand but also undermined the signal of resolve being sent to foreign audiences. This accords with Hypothesis 6, presented in the first chapter: *the riskier the protest, the greater the signaled level of resolve; conversely, the less risky the protest, the weaker the signal of resolve*. As illustrated by the narrative and analysis below, U.S. officials ultimately discounted the risk posed by the protests and took a firm stance against further concessions.

1. *International Stakes*

Hypothesis A. The greater the stakes, the more likely government is to allow such protest.

The international stakes in 1999 and 2001 were roughly equivalent, thus allowing us to “control for” the international stakes in this comparison and draw conclusions about the impact of other factors. Both episodes fall into the category of “near crisis,” defined

as conflicts in which “each involved actor perceives a threat to basic values and a finite period for response but not an increased probability of military hostilities.”⁶⁶ Both incidents were perceived by the Chinese government as transgressions against Chinese sovereignty, but neither appeared to be part of a broader campaign of military escalation. Rather, the incidents were perceived as tests of China’s mettle. In the words of a Chinese military expert, the U.S. objective in bombing the Chinese Embassy was “to probe the Chinese government’s reaction to international crises, especially sudden accidents, as well as its mass reaction, public opinion, and related policies.”⁶⁷ Similarly, Michael Swaine writes: “Many Chinese analysts believe that the United States has at times precipitated or manipulated political-military crises to reaffirm or preserve its dominance [and] may also want to test the resolve of potential adversaries, especially major powers.”⁶⁸ In this sense, the two episodes are roughly comparable. Both were “near crises” in which the Chinese government’s reputation for toughness was at stake, rather than specific material or policy interests.

Within the category of “near crisis,” the embassy bombing may have been regarded more seriously than the plane collision. My interviews suggest that, at least within China’s foreign policy community, the embassy bombing was more widely regarded than the plane collision as an intentional act by the United States. Only a small minority of foreign policy experts in China appeared to believe that the bombing was an accident, while more believed that the plane collision could have been an accident.⁶⁹ If these views represent an unbiased proxy for the beliefs held by the Chinese leadership at

⁶⁶ Wilkenfeld (2006), p. 111.

⁶⁷ *Southern Weekend*, May 11, 1999, quoted in Shirk (2007), p. 218.

⁶⁸ Swaine (2006), “Understanding the Historical Record,” p. 17.

⁶⁹ Interview 71, April 2007; Interview 99, June 2007; see also Wu (2006), p. 364; Zhao (2004b), p. 71.

the outset of each episode, then the perceived international stakes would have been higher in 1999 than in 2001. If so, the government would have been more likely to allow protests in 1999 than in 2001. However, it is unlikely that interviews with Chinese experts afterwards will accurately reflect beliefs held by the leadership at the beginning of the crisis, given that the post-crisis measurement of beliefs is likely to have been affected by the spin and information released during the crisis. In short, the decision by the Chinese government to keep the lid on media rhetoric and emphasize the technical aspects of the mid-air collision probably contributed to the perception that the plane collision was an accident.

2. *Perceived U.S. Resolve*

Hypothesis B: The greater the belief that the foreign opponent will back down, the more likely the government is to allow such protest.

The most important difference between 1999 and 2001, I contend, was China's perception of U.S. resolve. The 1999 embassy bombing occurred toward the end of Clinton's second term in office, whereas the 2001 plane collision occurred at the beginning of George W. Bush's first term, before September 11. Clinton was a pro-engagement, centrist Democrat; Bush was a right-leaning, hawkish Republican. These facts were crucial in the Chinese government's assessment of how the United States would react to escalation of the crisis vis-a-vis anti-American protests. In 1999, it appeared that the Clinton administration would be likely to make concessions; whereas in 2001, it appeared that the Bush administration was likely to stand firm and even counter-escalate. In the analysis below, I present evidence when possible of the Chinese

leadership's perception of U.S. resolve. Since this data is extremely difficult to obtain, however, the analysis relies heavily upon public statements by Chinese officials, the opinions and writings of Chinese scholars and foreign policy advisors, and public statements by U.S. politicians.

When the embassy bombing occurred in May 1999, relations with the United States were basically sound. Despite early indications that Clinton would take a tough stance on human rights in China, relations by 1997 had improved such that Clinton and Jiang held a presidential summit and issued a joint statement agreeing to build a "constructive strategic partnership."⁷⁰ According to Yongnian Zheng, the summit produced "a good feeling about the United States....Many Chinese began to regard President Clinton as the first American president who was willing to accommodate China's emergence as a major power."⁷¹ In the month leading up to the embassy bombing, however, relations suffered when Clinton refused to sign an agreement on China's entry into the WTO during Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to the United States; insult was added to injury when the U.S. Trade Representative's office posted on the internet the terms that China had agreed to, but which Clinton's economic advisors had deemed insufficient. Nevertheless, the Chinese leadership knew that Clinton had realized his mistake. Several days after rejecting the WTO deal, Clinton had telephoned the Chinese premier, who was preparing to leave New York, to see if the deal could still be salvaged before he returned to China.⁷²

⁷⁰ Congressional Research Service, Issue Brief, "China-U.S. Relations," May 17, 2002, p. 2, available at <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/10892.pdf>.

⁷¹ Zheng (1999) *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, p. 130.

⁷² Shirk (2007), p. 230; Suettinger (2003), p. 368.

By comparison, relations between China and the United States were considerably worse when the plane collision occurred in April 2001. During his campaign for presidency, George W. Bush had said that China should be regarded as a “strategic competitor” and that Clinton had “made a mistake [in] calling China a strategic partner.”⁷³ Whereas Clinton had taken a P.R.C.-friendly stance on the issue of Taiwan, articulating the “Three No’s” regarding Taiwan in 1998, Bush had emphasized the United States’ commitment to defending Taiwan, a remark that Chinese Ambassador Li Zhaoxing called “a very dangerous statement.”⁷⁴ According to a report by the Congressional Research Service,

The George W. Bush Administration came to office in January 2001 promising a tougher approach toward the PRC than that of any of its predecessors. Seeking to distance themselves from the policies of “engagement” with China favored by American Presidents since 1979, Bush Administration officials promised to broaden the focus of American policy in Asia, concentrate more on Japan and other U.S. allies, de-emphasize the importance of Sino-U.S. relations in American foreign policy, and look more favorably on issues affecting Taiwan’s status and security.⁷⁵

Relative to 1999, the atmosphere in 2001 was tense, said a Chinese analyst in Beijing. “In 1999 the general atmosphere of Sino-U.S. relations was better because of the ‘strategic partnership’ and Clinton’s visit to China. So the bombing was a much bigger surprise than the plane collision” (Interview 94, May 2007).

Faced with a hawkish new president in 2001 and uncertainty over the future of U.S.-China relations, the Chinese government appeared anxious to establish an understanding with the Bush administration. In March 2001, Vice Premier Qian Qichen

⁷³ Thomas W. Lippman, “Bush Makes Clinton’s China Policy an Issue,” *Washington Post*, August 20, 1999.

⁷⁴ Thomas W. Lippman, “Bush Makes Clinton’s China Policy an Issue,” *Washington Post*, August 20, 1999.

⁷⁵ Congressional Research Service, Issue Brief, “China-U.S. Relations: Current Issues for the 108th Congress,” June 12, 2003, p. 3, available at <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/22165.pdf>.

visited the United States, meeting with President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and other officials. President Bush was quoted as saying to Qian, “I am going to look you in the eye and tell you we can have good relations with China.”⁷⁶ According to a Chinese scholar in Beijing, the Vice Premier was “quite pleased by how he was received.” (Interview 93, May 2007) The success of Qian’s visit led to cautious optimism that U.S.-China relations might weather the new Bush administration. “People [thought] for a time that the Bush administration would make a great change in U.S. policy toward China and that Sino-U.S. relations would retrogress,” wrote Liu Jianfei, professor at the Central Party School. With Qian’s visit, however, “the relations between the two countries finally continued to move forward.”⁷⁷

When the mid-air collision occurred, the Chinese leadership quickly decided not to risk this fragile warming of relations. According to a foreign policy scholar in Shanghai:

In contrast with the embassy bombing, the mid-air collision occurred shortly after Bush had taken office. Qian Qichen had visited the United States and things were going all right. China’s leaders didn’t want the airplane collision to derail U.S.-China relations. They wanted to let a little frustration out, but they didn’t want the incident to escalate and affect the broader relationship. (Interview 71, April 2007)

Allowing anti-American protests would have antagonized the Bush administration at a time when the Chinese government was more interested in preventing the deterioration of relations. According to a Chinese military officer, “Jiang Zemin didn’t want things to get out of control. The upper level was very cautious in this crisis. They didn’t want to harm

⁷⁶ Agence France Presse, March 23, 2001.

⁷⁷ “Create Conditions for the Development of Sino-US relations,” *Liaowang*, FBIS, CPP20010402000107, April 2, 2001. Ironically, Liu’s article was published the day after the plane collision, in a weekly magazine that presumably went to press before the incident occurred.

Sino-American relations.”⁷⁸ This message got through to the U.S. side. John Keefe, special assistant to Ambassador Prueher at the time, recounted: “Interestingly, in contrast to the tensions and hostility on the surface of these negotiations, Chinese officials repeatedly stressed to the Ambassador and other Embassy officials that this event should not be seen as a major affair in U.S.-China relations and should not have lasting impact on the relationship.”⁷⁹

The difference in perceived U.S. resolve between 1999 and 2001 is further illustrated by comparing the initial U.S. response to each crisis, i.e. before the Chinese government decided to allow or prevent protests. In 1999, Ambassador Sasser expressed his regret for the “terrible mistake” that had been made in Belgrade as soon as he learned of the news, a few hours before anti-American protests began. In 2001, it was not until the third day of the crisis that a U.S. official expressed “regret” for the loss of the Chinese pilot. Combined with Bush’s hawkish reputation, this reluctance to express concern for China’s loss probably bolstered the impression that the United States would be more likely to stand firm in 2001 than in 1999.

Another way of phrasing this is to say that the U.S. president faced high audience costs after the 2001 plane collision relative to the 1999 embassy bombing. From the American perspective in 2001, the U.S. aircrew was detained in China for over a week after a collision caused by a recklessly aggressive Chinese pilot. In 1999, the United States knew it was at fault for the bombing of the Chinese embassy, even if it had not

⁷⁸ Quoted in Shirk (2007), p. 237.

⁷⁹ Keefe (2001), p. 10.

been intentional. In 1999, moreover, the U.S. side sustained no damages until Chinese protestors attacked American diplomatic buildings.

One might suppose that it was the asymmetry between the two incidents that caused the Chinese government to believe that the United States was more likely to back down and apologize in 1999 than in 2001. After all, it was obvious to both parties that the United States was responsible for the embassy bombing (whether accidental or not), whereas responsibility for the plane collision was less clear, with many voices in the United States claiming that China bore entire responsibility. To see why the background political context mattered, however, consider the counterfactual: what if the embassy bombing had occurred at the beginning of the new Bush administration, and the plane collision had taken place at the end of the Clinton administration? The Chinese government would have been much more likely to view the bombing as an act of intentional escalation by the United States, in which case the United States would be unlikely to back down and apologize for bombing the Chinese embassy.

3. *Risk of Getting out of Hand*

Hypothesis C. The riskier the protest, the less likely the government is to allow such protest.

The risk that protests would get out of hand was greater in 1999 than in 2001. Had the international stakes and perceived U.S. resolve been equivalent, the risk differential between 1999 and 2001 would suggest that the Chinese government should have been more likely to allow protests in 2001, when the risk was low, than in 1999, when the risk was high. However, as the preceding section has shown, perceived U.S. resolve was

greater in 2001 than in 1999. Since the United States was likely to back down in 1999, the Chinese government could allow protests, take a tough stance vis-à-vis the United States, and be reasonably assured of getting sufficient concessions to satisfy the protestors' demands. At the same time, the Chinese government chose to orchestrate the protests and preemptively minimize the risk that protests would get out of hand. This stage-management had the unintended consequence of undermining the signal of resolve sent by the protests, which no longer posed a credible risk to the government. U.S. observers quickly tagged the protests as being orchestrated—even manufactured—by the Chinese government.

The risk that anti-foreign protests would turn against the government was particularly high when the embassy bombing occurred, less than a month before the tenth anniversary of June 4th, 1989, when students and workers calling for political reform had been brutally suppressed in Tiananmen Square. Moreover, two weeks earlier, 10,000 supporters of the Falun Gong organization staged a demonstration outside the leadership compound in Beijing. By all accounts, the April 25 demonstration took the government by complete surprise, sending the Chinese leadership into a state of high anxiety. Government units were instructed to be vigilant and not allow workers to participate in Falun Gong protests over the weeklong May 1st holiday.⁸⁰

Given the proximity of June 4th and the recent Falun Gong protest, the Chinese government had good reason to fear that anti-foreign protests might spiral out of control. Numerous interviews and reports suggest that government officials, from university

⁸⁰ *New York Times*, May 1, 1999.

authorities to policemen on the street, acknowledged this risk. As Dingxin Zhao notes: “As a senior official in a major university (informant no. 62) recalled, the Chinese government was actually very concerned about *the possibility of losing control* if it allowed a large-scale anti-U.S. demonstration to break out.”⁸¹ As a foreign policy advisor in Beijing recounted to me, “The demonstrations were allowed for one, two, three days—but then the government stopped them for fear that the demonstrations would get out of control.” (Interview 24, May 2006)

It was for this reason that the Chinese government decided to take a proactive role in managing the protests—“to give guidance to the youth and students, and to prevent chaos or the loss of control.” (Wu 2005:4). In addition, some in the Chinese government were concerned that the West was trying to cause instability in China by bombing the Chinese embassy—thus demonstrating the feebleness of the Communist Party as defender of the national interest. The government feared that if any evidence of anti-government sentiment were seen lurking beneath the cloak of nationalist protest, the United States might further escalate the crisis in order to highlight the Chinese leadership’s weakness and thereby strengthen an emergent anti-CCP movement.

However, the government erred too far to the side of controlling the demonstrations, giving the United States the impression that the protests were manufactured and therefore not a real risk to the Chinese government. As stated in Hypothesis 6, *protests must be perceived as risky to the regime in order to be effective bargaining instruments; otherwise, they will be dismissed by foreigners as incredible threats*. In 1999, the protests increasingly appeared to be government-organized, leading

⁸¹ Zhao, Dingxin (2003), p. 14; see also *Washington Post*, May 10, 1999.

U.S. observers to question the credibility of the protests as hands-tying mechanisms. As a result, I argue, the United States stood firm when it seemed that the Chinese leadership wanted to use the bombing as leverage on other issues.

Initially, the protests seemed spontaneous and appeared to carry a risk of getting out of hand. Besieged inside the U.S. Embassy, Ambassador Sasser told CBS' *Face the Nation* by telephone: "The problem...is that this whole thing could spin out of control. We're just hoping that the police can continue to control them."⁸² By the second day, however, the protests were more clearly being organized by the government. The official Chinese media reported that the protests had been approved. Indeed, the protests by the second day looked very organized, following a seven block route, with students in uniforms carrying pre-printed school banners. And on state television, Hu Jintao said that the government "firmly supports and protects" all legally approved demonstrations.

On the third day, U.S. officials were quoted as saying that the anti-American protests were intentional and had to stop. Various administration officials and Congressional leaders warned China not to take advantage of the crisis and voiced suspicions about the role of the Chinese government in fomenting the protests. Secretary of Defense Cohen told a Senate committee that there is "a distinction between righteous indignation and calculated exploitation and I think we have to be very concerned about that."⁸³ Secretary of State Albright noted that the demonstrations had received government approval, saying: "The vice president of China made a statement in which he in fact said that the demonstrations could be carried on within legal means. That is

⁸² "Chinese in Belgrade, Beijing protest NATO embassy bombing," *CNN*, May 9, 1999, transcript available at <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9905/09/china.protest.03/>.

⁸³ Agence France Presse, May 12, 1999.

definitely an indication of their support.”⁸⁴ Congressional voices from both parties condemned the government’s hand in the protests. “What is happening in Beijing and throughout China today is intentional,” said Democratic senator Joseph Lieberman. “This is, unfortunately, going to be a very serious test of our relationship, whether the Chinese exploit this terrible accident.”⁸⁵ Republican senator and presidential candidate John McCain told reporters that “it is clear that the Chinese are orchestrating this for some political reason. It should stop immediately.”⁸⁶ Republican congressman Christopher Cox stated, “Barely disguised stage management of the riots and demonstrations displays the manipulative nature of the Chinese government.”⁸⁷

Consistent with my hypothesis that protests must be risky and/or costly to suppress in order to be effective, the leverage generated by the protests diminished with U.S. incredulity. The bluff had been called, it seemed, and with it faded China’s bargaining advantage. Initially, low U.S. resolve over the embassy bombing and fears that the situation would get out of control prompted a spate of U.S. apologies. But once protests appeared to have been manufactured and were then turned off after four days, the U.S. stance hardened. The destruction of American diplomatic property during the demonstrations also contributed to American censure and the stiffening of U.S. resolve. As a result, the United States signaled to China that there would be negative consequences if China tried to “exploit” the incident and refused to make further concessions beyond a formal apology and compensation for loss of life and damages. A

⁸⁴ http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/jan-june99/bombing_5-10.html.

⁸⁵ Associated Press, May 10, 1999.

⁸⁶ “Hit on Chinese Embassy Laid to Bad Intelligence: NATO 'Regrets' Accident but Presses Air Campaign,” Brian Knowlton, *International Herald Tribune*, May 10, 1999.

⁸⁷ E.J. Dionne, Jr., “China Pall; A Revealing Reaction to Embassy Bombing,” *Washington Post*, May 14, 1999.

Washington Post editorial on May 11, three days after the bombing, illustrates the changed U.S. mood toward China:

China has reacted to the mistaken NATO bombing of its Belgrade embassy suspiciously like a totalitarian nation. The state-controlled media, which is to say China's only media, have whipped people into a fury with inaccurate and incomplete reporting. Newspapers have failed to report U.S. explanations or apologies. The government has provided buses, placards and lists of pre-approved slogans to demonstrators. In so doing, it has generated precisely the response it wanted: a frenzy of nationalistic protests that distract people from their domestic discontents while, the regime hopes, increasing China's leverage abroad. The Clinton administration and NATO should not allow China thus to bully them into any unwise concessions, either in Kosovo or in relations with Beijing.... China's cynical manipulation of this event may have consequences that its regime does not foresee. One of those might be a clearer understanding among outsiders of the true nature of the Chinese regime.

As U.S. resolve hardened, China appeared to soften its stance on the issue of a U.N. Security Council resolution that would approve a peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. In the immediate aftermath of the embassy bombing, China had taken a tougher stance on Kosovo, threatening to obstruct a UNSC vote as long as the U.S.-led air campaign continued. On May 10, as orderly protests took place in China for a third day, President Jiang Zemin told Russian President Boris Yeltsin that the continued bombing would make it “impossible for the U.N. Security Council to discuss any plan to solve the problem.”⁸⁸ The other permanent UNSC members were not swayed. Later that day, Secretary of State Albright rejected the idea that NATO would temporarily suspend its air campaign, stating that the bombing would continue until Milosevic agreed to meet all of

⁸⁸ John Pomfret, “The Reaction in Beijing; China Says Bombing Halt Is Condition of U.N. Settlement,” *Washington Post*, May 11, 1999; see also Jane Perlez, “Crisis in the Balkans: Diplomacy; Embassy bombing may badly impede Kosovo diplomacy,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1999.

NATO's demands.⁸⁹ Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering dismissed China's objections as a "temporary setback," noting that "It doesn't seem to me in light of where the Chinese have been that they would veto a peace settlement."⁹⁰ Even Russia, who stood with China in calling the bombing a "barbaric action," nevertheless sent an envoy to Beijing with the message that the incident should not derail the Kosovo negotiations.⁹¹ In June, when the matter was put to a vote in the U.N. Security Council, China abstained and let the resolution pass.

U.S. skepticism over the stage-managed protests also affected negotiations over the resumption of talks concerning China's entry into the WTO. In the immediate aftermath of the bombing, China had announced the suspension of bilateral talks on human rights and nonproliferation, but the WTO talks had not been mentioned. Indeed, a Chinese negotiator on the WTO was quoted on May 10 as saying, "I don't think the talks will be cancelled, but do not expect us to make any concessions; in theory, politics and business should not mix, but it is hard to separate the two."⁹² In response, Western officials said that China should not link protests against the embassy bombing to the WTO negotiations. "To link [the attack] to the WTO is the beginning of the end," said Sergio Marchi, Canada's trade minister.⁹³ On May 11 and 12, Chinese and Western diplomatic sources were quoted in the Western media as saying that China expected

⁸⁹ Transcript, "Albright on Kosovo Ethnic Cleansing Report," May 10, 1999, available at <http://www.usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/press/state/archive/1999/may/sd4511.htm>.

⁹⁰ Brian Knowlton, "Hit on Chinese Embassy Laid to Bad Intelligence: NATO 'Regrets' Accident but Presses Air Campaign," *International Herald Tribune*, May 10, 1999.

⁹¹ Associated Press, May 10, 1999.

⁹² "Stand toughens on US demands after NATO missile strike destroys Belgrade embassy; Beijing rejects WTO wish list," *South China Morning Post*, May 10, 1999.

⁹³ Associated Press, May 11, 1999.

concessions by the United States in order to get relations back on track.⁹⁴ “The Chinese leadership hopes the moral high ground it has attained after the embassy accident might strengthen its hand at the WTO negotiation table,” said a diplomatic source in Beijing. “Beijing hopes Washington would not be pushing too hard on a number of trade concessions.”⁹⁵

On May 12, the day that anti-American protests in China were “turned off,” American trade officials explicitly warned China against pressing for concessions. U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky stated:

It is very dangerous for China, in any way, to link the tragic events in Yugoslavia with WTO accession, particularly when one considers that it is China that has insisted on absolute political de-linkage from WTO of an array of other issues like human rights, nonproliferation and the like.... The only possible rationale in China's mind for the notion that leverage has shifted...is that U.S. negotiators will feel guilty. Negotiations don't involve guilt.⁹⁶

Likewise, Secretary of Commerce William Daley indicated that the United States would not relent on the terms of China's admission into the WTO, saying: “This is not a political deal. This is not a political statement about how far China has come or how important they are. This is a commercial deal and these are commercial terms.”⁹⁷ By the end of the month, negotiations over the WTO had not resumed, and USTR Barshefsky warned China that time was running out. According to the *Financial Times*, Barshefsky stated that the talks would “take as their starting point the concessions agreed by China in

⁹⁴ *Financial Times*, “China seeks U.S. concessions: Beijing says Washington must act to bring relations back on track after embassy attack,” May 12, 1999; “Beijing Said Seeking US Concessions,” *South China Morning Post*, May 12, 1999.

⁹⁵ Willy Wo-Lap Lam, “Politburo says crisis must not be allowed to damage trade ties,” *South China Morning Post*, May 11, 1999.

⁹⁶ Knight Ridder, May 12, 1999.

⁹⁷ Associated Press, May 12, 1999.

early April and will go further,” implying that China would be asked to make more concessions.⁹⁸

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister of Trade Long Yongtu responded on May 26, rejecting the idea that China would make further concessions and stating that the WTO talks would not be resumed until the United States had made a “thorough and complete” explanation of the embassy bombing. Long said that the embassy bombing had “damaged the whole atmosphere” of the WTO talks and stated that “If our negotiating partners are determined to push us further, we will have to say: ‘Sorry, we are not in a hurry, we will wait.’ China can survive without the WTO.”⁹⁹

The following day, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Stanley Roth reiterated that China should not attempt to use the bombing as leverage on other issues. In his testimony before a Senate hearing, Roth stated:

I understand that the Chinese word for "crisis" is a combination of the characters for "danger" and "opportunity." There are those who undoubtedly speculate, both in China and the United States, that perhaps the crisis of the last few weeks, this trough in the U.S.-China relationship, represents an opportunity for China to press for concessions from the U.S. on issues such as the terms for China's WTO accession, human rights, Tibet, and non-proliferation. These speculators are dangerously mistaken. U.S. policy in these areas is determined by clear and long-standing assessments of U.S. self-interest and fundamental values. Our standards will not change in reaction to either the bombing error in Belgrade or the Chinese reaction to it.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ “U.S. expects talks soon with China; WTO accession; Timing of negotiations dependent on diplomatic maneuvers after embassy bombing,” *Financial Times*, May 20, 1999; see also Agence France Presse, May 20, 1999.

⁹⁹ Guy de Jonquie’res, “China to shun further trade talks with U.S.: Beijing takes harder line,” *Financial Times*, May 27, 1999.

¹⁰⁰ Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, May 27, 1999, available at <http://www.usembassy-china.org.cn/press/release/1999/roth.html>.

Moreover, Roth linked his warnings to suspicion about the authenticity of the anti-American protests:

I think the way it was handled and managed and orchestrated makes it clear that this was a decision [sic] to use for their own purposes....Perhaps it was an effort to divert attention from the upcoming 10th anniversary of Tiananmen and therefore an opportunity to fuel Chinese nationalism in a different direction and take the heat off this poignant anniversary....The nationalist card is being played...the hard question is, how much and how permanent is it?¹⁰¹

Roth's testimony marked a turning point. According to a Chinese scholar who has researched the 1999 crisis, China's leadership understood Roth's statement to mean that the WTO negotiations might be used as a stick if China persisted in linking the bombing to other issues:

China's leaders and the Chinese public received the message, 'If I overreact, you will hold the WTO up.' So China's response was to separate these two negotiations—a very smart tactic—to prevent the United States from using the WTO to soften the Chinese position on the embassy bombing. (Interview 99, June 2007)

Having received the signal that the United States would stand firm on the WTO issue, the Chinese government decided to suspend the WTO negotiations until the crisis was resolved. To continue the WTO talks would have set China's leaders up for a maelstrom of domestic criticism. Protestors may not still have been in the streets, ready to target the government for betraying the national interest, but the issue was still highly salient, both in the media and in private discussions. As Wu (2006: 368) notes, "The Chinese government was wise to temporarily suspend the

¹⁰¹ "U.S. Senator Craig Thomas holds hearing on U.S.-China relations," May 27, 1999, FDCH Political Transcripts.

negotiations with the United States on China's accession to the WTO [and] to impress its domestic audience by not sacrificing its principles.”¹⁰²

5.5 Alternative Explanations

The comparison of the 1999 embassy bombing and the 2001 plane collision also sheds light on the merits of alternative explanations. For the most part, the three most common alternatives in the literature—state weakness, diversionary incentives, and bureaucratic politics—have not addressed why protests occurred in 1999 and not in 2001. Indeed, the repression of protests in 2001 has not been typically identified as an outcome of interest. Below, I draw out the implications of each explanation for both 1999 and 2001, evaluating their strengths and limitations.

The first variety of explanations argues that the state is too weak to prevent anti-foreign protest. According to this view, the Chinese government's legitimacy in 1999 was too fragile to withstand the popular backlash that would occur if the government tried to prevent protests. Because nationalism is a key pillar of the Chinese Communist Party's legitimacy, the leadership feared that they would be condemned as traitors to the national interest if they tried to prevent anti-American demonstrations. As Dingxin Zhao (2003:9) writes, “Because of the seriousness of the incident in the minds of most Chinese, most PRC leaders worried that the students would turn against the government if anti-U.S. demonstrations were not permitted.” Similarly, John Wong and Zheng Yongnian argue that “if the students were not allowed by the police or the military to vent their anger,

¹⁰² When the WTO negotiations were ultimately concluded, in November, the United States ultimately agreed to “somewhat worse terms,” according to Shirk (2007), p. 231.

these students would turn hostile on them, accusing them of being unpatriotic.”¹⁰³ In short, this line of reasoning suggests that the magnitude of popular grievances against the embassy bombing and the proximity of the June 4th and May 4th anniversaries dictated that the Chinese government acquiesce to the protests, rather than risk a popular backlash.

The evidence presented above suggests that this view suffers in two ways. First, it does not address the risk that the government accepted by allowing anti-American protests in 1999. Indeed, I argue that the risk of a popular backlash increased, not decreased, after protestors were allowed to take to the streets. The risk that the embassy bombing protests would get out of control was widely perceived by Chinese observers both inside and outside the government. Moreover, the government demonstrated its willingness to stop protests and bear the costs of appearing unpatriotic. Vice Premier Hu Jintao told citizens to calm down on March 9; students were told that their actions were illegal on the evening of March 11; and the streets were cleared completely by March 12. In light of the government’s concerted efforts to curtail the 1999 protests after they had begun, it is unlikely that fear of student reprisal was the primary reason behind the government’s decision to acquiesce to the protests in the first place.

Second, this view cannot account for the government’s decision to prevent protests in 2001. It is likely that the government would have faced popular resentment if it had tried to prevent anti-American protests after the embassy bombing. But this fear was insufficient to sway the government in 2001, when anti-American protests were prevented even though public opinion was quite agitated over the death of the Chinese

¹⁰³ “Nationalism and its Dilemma: Chinese Responses to Embassy Bombing,” in *Reform, Legitimacy and Dilemmas: China’s Politics and Society*, ed. Wang Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian, 2000, p. 337.

pilot and U.S. surveillance near China. To buttress this line of reasoning, one might argue that popular anger was greater in 1999 than in 2001. But this difference was partly a function of domestic media coverage, whose tone and content was heavily guided by the Chinese government. In 1999, most Chinese learned about the embassy bombing via the official CCTV and Xinhua reports,¹⁰⁴ which called the bombing a “brazen” and “barbarian act,” as well as “a gross violation of China's sovereignty.” By contrast, the first statement released by the Foreign Ministry after the 2001 plane collision did not mention the violation of Chinese sovereignty, only that a “sudden turn” by a U.S. military reconnaissance plane had caused the Chinese plane and pilot to crash, and that the U.S. plane had entered Chinese territorial air space and landed “without permission.” If China had a freer press, one could argue that public opinion had shaped media coverage. As I have suggested in the narratives above, however, one of the earliest decisions that the Chinese government made in handling both crises was to instruct the official and commercial media to guide public opinion—not the other way around. In short, the relative levels of popular anger in 1999 and 2001 are endogenous to the government’s decision to escalate the crisis in 1999 and pursue a comparatively conciliatory strategy in 2001.

A second class of explanations suggests that the government allows anti-foreign protest in order to benefit domestically. An extreme version of this view holds that the government mobilizes or manufactures anti-foreign sentiment to divert attention from domestic grievances. This view does not find support in the narrative of the 1999

¹⁰⁴ However, the initial calls for protest were initiated by university students in Beijing who had learned of the news via other sources, prior to the noon CCTV broadcast. See Zhao, Dingxin (2003), p. 14.

embassy bombing protests. Many of the protests began spontaneously, not as “rent-a-crowd” mobs. Reacting to these organic protests, the authorities provided buses, placards, and a specific marching route in order to minimize the risk that the demonstrations would get out of hand.

A moderate version of this logic suggests that the government allows anti-foreign protests in order to avoid looking soft domestically. In this view, the Chinese government allowed protests in 1999 in order to deflect domestic criticism that it was too weak to protect the national interest. In this light, anti-foreign protests can be seen as a “gambling for resurrection” tactic, a way for leaders who fear losing power at home to stake their domestic legitimacy on the outcome of an international crisis. By taking a strong stance on foreign policy, the government can recoup some of its lost legitimacy.

This line of reasoning overlooks evidence that nationalist protests have a tendency to turn against the government, often providing a platform for critics to broadcast their grievances. In 1999, Suisheng Zhao notes that the “demonstrations quickly spiraled out of control and not only threatened permanent damage to Sino-U.S. relations but also provoked domestic criticism that the leadership was unwilling to confront the United States.”¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the risk that protests would get out of hand in 1999 prompted the government to orchestrate official demonstrations and co-opt those that arose spontaneously. However, the stage-management of protests also created anger and disillusionment among participants who felt they had been manipulated by the government, undermining the diversionary benefit of allowing protests. A foreign policy

¹⁰⁵ Zhao, Suisheng (2003), p. 70.

analyst who was a student at People's University in 1999 recalled her frustration with the government:

Everybody watched the remarks by Hu Jintao on the evening news, telling everyone to calm down and be rational, so as not to harm relations. And there was a feeling, how could he take this position? We've just been dealt a blow to the head – how can you tell us to calm down? (Interview 37, July 2006)

Moreover, diversionary explanations typically ignore the outcome of the international negotiations. The government is said to benefit from standing up to the foreign aggressor and rallying the public around the flag—regardless of what happens at the international level. According to the gambling-for-resurrection logic, however, the government must obtain international victory in order to benefit domestically (Downs & Rocke 1994). This is consistent with my hypothesis that the government's decision to allow or prevent protests depends upon the anticipated reaction of the foreign opponent. In 2001, the belief that the United States was likely to react hawkishly was influential in the Chinese government's decision to prevent protests. Given that the United States was likely to stand firm, having nationalist protestors in the streets would be quite dangerous, as demonstrators could easily turn their wrath against the government for failing to resolve the crisis on favorable terms. *Anti-foreign protests can only be domestically beneficial when they are also successful as an international tactic, i.e. when the government anticipates that it will be able to claim victory and satisfy the protestors.*

Even by this stricter definition, the gambling-for-resurrection logic is still incomplete. It does not require that protests be risky to the government, only that protests link the leadership's domestic legitimacy to the outcome of the international crisis. As I have suggested above, however, foreign observers must believe that the protests pose a

credible risk to the government. Otherwise, the protests will not generate bargaining leverage. As illustrated in the 1999 case study, protests that were perceived by the United States as benefiting the Chinese government—e.g. providing a temporary distraction from anti-regime sentiment—did not improve China’s leverage vis-à-vis the United States.

A third explanation highlights the role of bureaucratic politics. Usually, bureaucratic explanations focus on competing organizational interests or standard operating procedures. Existing accounts of the 1999 and 2001 crises have not focused on these traditional elements but have instead highlighted the role of learning. For example, Fudan University professor Wu Xinbo writes: “Drawing lessons from the embassy bombing crisis, Beijing managed to forestall public demonstrations in the wake of the mid-air collision.”¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Suisheng Zhao argues: “Pragmatic leaders learned their lesson the hard way and decided to ban unauthorized demonstrations two days after the bombing incident.”¹⁰⁷ In this view, the 1999 demonstrations taught Chinese leaders that demonstrations could get out of hand. “At certain moments, the protests almost got out of control,” said a Shanghai foreign policy scholar. “The U.S. Embassy was almost broken into, and the Consul’s residence in Chengdu was burned” (Interview 110, May 2008). The Chinese government undoubtedly drew lessons from the 1999 protests. However, it is less clear that these lessons were sufficient to explain the decision to prevent protests in 2001. First, the evidence above suggests that the government was already concerned about the risk that protests would get out of hand *before* the 1999 demonstrations were

¹⁰⁶ “Understanding Chinese and U.S. Crisis Behavior,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2008, p. 71.

¹⁰⁷ “Chinese Nationalism and Its Foreign Policy Ramifications,” in Marsh and Dreyer, eds., *U.S.-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, 2003, p. 70.

allowed. Indeed, the risk that protests would spin out of control was an important factor in the government's decision to allow but also stage-manage the protests. Second, the Chinese government had already learned that protests could get out of hand during the anti-Japanese protests in the mid-1980s. Citing social stability concerns, the government took pains to prevent anti-Japanese protests in 1990 and 1996.¹⁰⁸

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that the decision to allow or prevent anti-foreign protests depends on whether the expected international benefit outweighs the domestic risk. Comparing two “near crises” in U.S.-China relations, I have identified three variables that influenced the Chinese government's strategic calculus: the international stakes, U.S. resolve, and magnitude of domestic risk. Taking the international stakes as roughly equivalent, I have argued that the Chinese government allowed protests in 1999 in the belief that the United States was likely to back down, despite the high risk of allowing protest. Conversely, the Chinese government prevented protests in 2001 because the United States was likely to stand firm, even though protests (had they been allowed) would have been less likely to get out of hand.

While I have taken pains to justify these codings, they remain highly subjective, particularly because the variables are beliefs that decisionmakers hold about hypothetical outcomes. The approach also falls short of a comparative static analysis, in that both of the primary treatment variables—U.S. resolve and domestic risk—changed between the two episodes. Nevertheless, these episodes have been highly influential in shaping

¹⁰⁸ See, e.g., Ouyang Bin, “中国民间反日势力延烧,” *Phoenix Weekly*, September 3, 2003.

foreign views of Chinese nationalism and crisis decisionmaking, particularly among scholars and policymakers in the United States and Japan. Indeed, many analysts were so struck by the protests in 1999 that they erroneously assume that protests occurred in 2001 as well.¹⁰⁹ Here, the value-added lies in examining why protests were allowed in 1999 but prevented in 2001 and explicitly addressing the direction of change in the international and domestic contexts.

In addition, the analysis of the 1999 protests highlights two important points. First, protests must be credible. If protests are not seen by outsiders as genuine—either as a risk to the government or as increasingly costly to suppress—then they will be discounted and ineffective as bargaining instruments. Second, protests can only be effective as a domestic diversion if they also succeed in generating an international victory. If protests provoke further intransigence by the foreign target, then the government will not achieve the foreign policy victory needed to pay off its domestic “gamble for resurrection.”

¹⁰⁹ For instance, see Joshua Kurlantzick, “China’s Next-Generation Nationalists,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 2008.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This dissertation has sought to explain why Chinese and other authoritarian leaders sometimes allow nationalist, anti-foreign protests and at other times nip them in the bud. In China, anti-American protests were permitted in 1999 but repressed in 2001. Anti-Japanese protests were tolerated in 1985 and 2005 but banned in 1990 and 1996. Further examples from Iran and Syria illustrate the variation in how authoritarian leaders handle anti-foreign protest activity, ranging from encouragement to tacit approval to suppression.¹ In October 2005, tens of thousands of Syrians demonstrated against the U.N. investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister, Rafik Hariri, shouting anti-American slogans and carrying photographs of Syria's president. School children who participated in the rally "were told when they arrived at school that their classes were canceled and that they would be 'spontaneously demonstrating today in support of President Assad.'"²

A month earlier, Islamic student associations in Iran protested outside the British embassy, formed human chains around Iran's nuclear reactors, and demanded that Iran's leaders resume uranium enrichment. The demonstrations turned violent when protesters began throwing grenades and attempted to enter the embassy. Although the police used tear gas to disperse the crowd, the police chief reportedly told a circle of students that had gathered around him:

¹ As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, to suppress is "to put down by force or authority," whereas to repress is "to keep or hold back, to restrain or check (a person) from action or advance." See also Tilly (1978), p. 100 and Tarrow (1998).

² Katherine Zepf, "Syrian Government Mobilizes a Vast Rally to Support Assad," *The New York Times*, October 25, 2005.

Damn those who cause the police to confront the students. A number of people had obtained permits to demonstrate here, and we cooperated with them. We have certain feelings as you do. I'm sure that you didn't have any intention of hurting the system. And we never wanted to clash with Hezbollah students.³

The words of the Iranian police chief illustrate three critical features of anti-foreign protest in authoritarian states: the difficulty of reining in nationalist protest once unleashed; potential fissures between sympathetic and unsympathetic elites; and the risk that anti-foreign protest will cause broader unrest and even regime instability, thus “hurting the system.”

In the theory developed above, I suggest that authoritarian leaders can utilize this risk to domestic stability and the escalating costs of suppression to benefit internationally. Just as democratic leaders can generate bargaining leverage through “audience costs,” autocrats can demonstrate resolve and tie hands by allowing anti-foreign protests.

6.1 Findings

Using evidence from several Chinese case studies and a comparison of Hong Kong and mainland China, I have illustrated the dynamics of nationalist protest and sought empirical evidence for several hypotheses derived from the theory. These case studies have served to demonstrate that the theory developed in Chapter 2 has a solid empirical foundation. Viewed side by side, the case studies show that Chinese policymakers were keenly aware of the risk that protests could get out of hand and the difficulty of suppressing protests once begun. The case studies also provide evidence that

³ *Iranian Students News Agency*, FBIS IAP20050928011044, September 28, 2005.

foreign negotiators took into account the presence of nationalist street protests and their impact upon China's bargaining position.

Chapters 2 and 3 explored the domestic risks and costs associated with anti-foreign protest in the authoritarian context. At the end of Chapter 2, I compared the incidence of anti-Japanese protest in Hong Kong and mainland China over the past quarter century. Relying primarily upon foreign news reports, particularly Japanese wire services, I coded almost twice as many anti-Japanese protests in Hong Kong as in mainland China. This finding supports the hypothesis that anti-foreign protests are less likely to occur in authoritarian societies, owing to the risk to regime stability and the relative ease of suppressing demonstrators. The findings are particularly compelling in light of Hong Kong's much smaller size and population.

Chapter 3 illustrated both the risks of allowing anti-foreign protest and the costs of suppressing nationalist protest once demonstrations have gained momentum and spread to multiple locations. The case study of the 1985 anti-Japanese protests highlighted four ways in which anti-foreign protests can turn against the government and become costly to suppress. The 1985 anti-Japanese protests: 1) revealed a tolerant government attitude toward protest; 2) increased the salience of the right to protest (thus generating additional disillusionment when protests were curtailed); 3) generated public support and established linkages among campuses under the banner of nationalism/patriotism; and 4) reactivated collective action techniques that would be later used in the pro-democracy protests of 1986 and 1989.

Chapters 4 and 5 examined the international causes and consequences of allowing anti-foreign protest. In Chapter 4, the case study of the 2005 anti-Japanese protests

demonstrated support for three primary hypotheses—showing that anti-foreign protests coincided with a key period in diplomatic negotiations, led the government to take a tougher foreign policy stance, and produced a more favorable international outcome. In Chapter 5, the comparison of China’s reaction to two “exogenous” events—the 1999 Embassy bombing and the 2001 plane collision—yielded evidence to support two additional hypotheses: autocratic leaders are more likely to allow anti-foreign protests against an “easy” target, i.e. a foreign government that is perceived as likely to back down; and anti-foreign protests are more effective at generating bargaining leverage when the risk to regime stability and the costs of suppression are credible, i.e. protests are not visibly stage-managed.

6.2 The Dogs that Didn’t Bark

One advantage of having deep knowledge of a single country is the ability to identify and analyze events which do not occur because of selection effects. Here, these “non-events” are nationalist protests that the government chooses to nip in the bud. In China, anti-Japanese protests were prevented in 1990 and 1996, and anti-American protests were prevented in 2001. Protests against Taiwan and Tibetan independence—the issues of greatest concern to Chinese nationalists—have never been allowed. What explains the government’s decision to nip these protests in the bud? The theory developed above predicts that the government will give a red light to nationalist protests when the risk is not worth the return. When the domestic risk of allowing protest is too large and/or the expected international benefit is too small, Chinese and other authoritarian leaders have an incentive to nip anti-foreign protests in the bud.

Taiwan

On the issue of Taiwan, I suspect that the Chinese government has not allowed protests because a) the issue is so central to the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party and b) the government has established the credibility of its bargaining position through other means. Rather than allow anti-foreign protests, the Chinese government has used other tactics—such as military exercises—to signal its resolve and assuage public concern over Taiwan.

The belief that Taiwan is an inseparable part of China is pervasive in mainland China. Indeed, many observers believe that the Chinese leadership would be overthrown if Taiwan were allowed to become independent. For example, Swaine writes: “many think the loss of Taiwan could result in the collapse of the Chinese government.”⁴ That so many analysts make this prediction indicates the perceived depth and strength of Chinese popular feeling against Taiwan independence. Similarly, Kokubun and Liu write: “Those who favor taking a hard line on the Taiwan issue make up a majority in China...as high as 80 or 90 percent.”⁵ If Chinese leaders share this perception, then they are also likely to believe that a popular protest over Taiwan could easily get out of hand. Once begun, protests regarding Taiwan could easily unite different groups against the government and would be extremely costly for the government to suppress.

Since democratization began on the island in the late 1980s, pro-independence politicians have become increasingly influential in Taiwan politics, seeking greater international recognition as a separate political entity from mainland China. Any number

⁴ Swaine and Zhang (2006), p. 18.

⁵ Kokubun and Liu (2004).

of these efforts to gain “de facto, if not de jure, independence for Taiwan”⁶ could have sparked nationalist protest on the mainland. Examples include the purchase of 150 F-16s from the United States in 1992, attempts to win a seat in the U.N. General Assembly in 1993, and the pro-independence speech by Taiwan’s president, Lee Teng-hui, at Cornell University in May 1995. In response to Lee Teng-hui’s visit to Cornell, which broke a sixteen-year ban on senior-level visits by Taiwan officials to the United States, the Chinese government began a series of missile exercises—televised in mainland China and Taiwan—and mobilized troops along the coast facing Taiwan.⁷ Chinese students in New York City denounced Lee Teng-hui’s visit, but only small campus gatherings were allowed in mainland China.⁸ When I asked a senior policy analyst in Beijing if he was surprised that there had never been a demonstration over Taiwan, he replied: “The public knows that the government is very firm on Taiwan. When Lee Teng-hui visited the US, we sent missiles. I think the government has been tough enough that people are satisfied” (Interview 24, May 2006). The missile exercises, which took place in the months leading up to Taiwan’s first nationwide election in March 1996, led the United States to dispatch two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region. The escalation of tensions produced economic tremors on the island but did not reduce popular support for Lee in Taiwan. Swaine suggests that “Beijing’s actions actually drove Taiwan voters to back Lee in unexpectedly high numbers....[As] an embattled leader and symbol of Taiwanese nationalism,” Lee and his party won the election with 54 percent of the vote.⁹ The episode taught Chinese leaders that using military exercises to intimidate Taiwan voters

⁶ Swaine (2001), p. 321.

⁷ See Shirk (2007), p. 188.

⁸ Sheng (2001), p. 34.

⁹ Swaine (2001), p. 326.

was counterproductive, but it also underscored to foreign observers China's willingness to use force to prevent Taiwan from declaring independence.

In the years since the 1995-96 crisis, the Chinese government has continued to prevent popular demonstrations over Taiwan despite numerous provocations, such as Lee Teng-hui's public declaration that Taiwan and China had "state-to-state" relations in July 1999, the election of pro-independence party candidate Chen Shui-bian as Taiwan's president in March 2000, and Chen Shui-bian's re-election and referendum on independence in March 2004. For example, a prominent Chinese scholar told me that on the eve of the 2004 presidential election in Taiwan, he was sent to a university in central China with a history of student demonstrations in order to "inoculate" students. His lecture—broadcast on televisions across campus and posted to the university's website—was intended to prevent students from staging protests if and when pro-independence leader Chen Shui-bian was re-elected as president of Taiwan.

Similarly, police detained and "re-educated" activists in Hefei when they attempted to hold a street petition against Taiwan independence on March 7, 2004. The activists had posted their plan to the Patriots Alliance Network internet forum in late January, but on the day of the protest, the leaders were taken to the police station as soon as they showed up. According to one of the organizers, the police persuaded him that the street petition was a rash idea that might even benefit Chen Shui-bian, just as the People's Liberation Army exercises had helped Lee Teng-hui win the 1996 elections.¹⁰ Another netizen remarked in response: "The Ministry of State Security is worried that our

¹⁰ <http://bbs.1931-9-18.org/viewthread.php?tid=83597>, last accessed July 30, 2008.

patriotism will be used by bad people and cause the situation to get out of hand (*bu ke shoushi de jumian*).”¹¹

Tibet

I suspect that a similar logic accounts for the government’s response to recent events regarding Tibet. On March 14, 2008 protests demanding better treatment and greater autonomy for Tibetans escalated into violent riots, destroying dozens of local (mostly Han Chinese) businesses in Lhasa. Although it remains unclear to what extent local security forces stood aside as the protests grew violent, we know that over the following several days, the government restored order in Lhasa and other nearby areas where similar protests had taken place. Citizens across China were shocked and angered by the “beating, smashing, looting and arson” they saw on television. But domestic media coverage of the protests diverged widely from international reports, provoking many Chinese netizens to condemn what they perceived as anti-China bias. Amidst this furor, a new website, Anti-CNN.com, was launched. The website provided examples of misleading photographs and other material used by CNN and other Western media that portrayed the Chinese government and security forces as brutal repressors.

On March 25, French President Nicolas Sarkozy raised the possibility of boycotting the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics if the Chinese government continued its crackdown in Tibet. According to one Chinese intellectual in Beijing, “The government had to respond to France’s talk about boycotting the Olympics. But the government couldn’t directly oppose France because it has to host the Olympics, after all.

¹¹ Ibid.

So the government wanted the public to be angry” (Interview 112, May 2008). On March 27, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang acknowledged the anti-CNN website as “purely spontaneous condemnation and criticism by the Chinese people toward some Western media’s irresponsible reports.”¹² On March 30, the commercial internet portal Sina.com launched an internet signature campaign against CNN and the Western media’s “distorted coverage” of the Lhasa riots, followed by similar signature campaigns on other internet portals. According to a news editor at Sohu.com, another of the major commercial portals, the signature campaign “was led by the government, but they told us to make it look like the voice of the people (*minjian de shengyin*)” (Interview 111, May 2008).

After the Olympic torch was attacked by protestors during its stop in Paris the following week, anti-French street demonstrations broke out in several Chinese cities between April 17 and 20, including Changsha, Fuzhou, Beijing, Xi'an, Chongqing, Nanjing and Xiamen.¹³ The protestors called for a boycott of French products and picketed various branches of Carrefour, the French supermarket. Shortly thereafter, France backed down. President Sarkozy met with President Hu Jintao’s special envoy in Paris on April 18. The following week, beginning on April 21, three high-level French officials flew to China “in a diplomatic charm offensive aimed at limiting the political and economic fallout from the controversy...[as well as] to reassure the Chinese leadership that France has no intention to strain relations.”¹⁴

¹² Xinhua, “‘Anti-CNN’ website reflects Chinese people’s condemnation,” March 27, 2008, available at <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zmgx/zmgx/Political%20Relationship/t418923.htm>.

¹³ Xinhua (English), May 1, 2008.

¹⁴ *International Herald Tribune*, April 21, 2008.

The Chinese government began to curtail protests while placating the public. The domestic media publicized the goodwill overtures by France, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman demanded that CNN apologize for the inflammatory remarks by one of its commentators, Jack Cafferty. At the same time, the government warned against further street protests. Police in Beijing told students to cancel protests scheduled for the May 1st holiday.¹⁵ The following notice appeared on anti-CNN.com:

Posts regarding certain topics will be politely refused: domestic politics, Taiwan, religious and ethnic tensions, Han-Tibetan conflict etc. Without exception, we will delete posts that attempt to announce and stir up (*shandong*) domestic protest marches, personal attacks, group or individual announcements, or other posts that may affect social stability.¹⁶

In May, CNN President Jim Walton apologized for the remarks by Jack Cafferty in a letter to China's ambassador to the United States. In June, President Sarkozy publicly indicated that he would attend the Olympic opening ceremony, so long as talks between China and the Dalai Lama continued to make progress, stating that "we absolutely must not push a population of 1.3 billion people into wounded nationalism."¹⁷

Given the evidence that I have collected so far, I suspect that the Chinese government prevented anti-Tibetan protests but allowed anti-Western protests for the two reasons suggested above.¹⁸ Anti-Tibetan or anti-Dalai Lama protests would have been

¹⁵ <http://bbs.9jjz.com/dispbbs.asp?boardid=169&id=59104&star=1&page=1>, last accessed April 30, 2008.

¹⁶ <http://www.anti-cnn.com/forum/cn/announcement.php?id=19#19>, April 19, 2008, last accessed April 20, 2008.

¹⁷ Associated Press, June 30, 2008.

¹⁸ It is also worth noting that although protests against Taiwan independence have never been allowed, protests against Japan and the United States for taking pro-Taiwan actions have been allowed. For example, anti-Japanese activists held a demonstration outside the Japanese Embassy in Beijing on December 20th and December 30th, 2004, condemning Japan's decision to allow Lee Teng-hui to visit and "interfering in China's domestic affairs." See *The Beijing News*, December 31, 2004, available at <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2004-12-31/02555381341.shtml>.

both *more risky* to domestic stability and *less beneficial* from a bargaining standpoint than anti-French or anti-CNN protests. A policy analyst in Shanghai noted:

The students were very angry, both at the Dalai Lama and the government for not stopping the riots from destroying Han businesses. The students really wanted to take to the streets, but the university officials persuaded them not to. They were worried that the protests against the Dalai Lama might turn against the government. Protests against Carrefour were unlikely to turn against the government. (Interview 110, May 2008)

Similarly, according to a senior policy advisor in Beijing, “The government successfully persuaded students not to demonstrate over Tibet. The government is more nervous about anger against Tibetan people than about anger against France. The government is worried about ethnic tensions. There are 55 minorities in China!” (Interview 112, May 2008)

The natural target for the righteous anger of Chinese nationalists would have been the Tibetans who attacked Han Chinese in Lhasa or the Tibetan exiles who disrupted the torch relay in Paris. Instead, fearing that a counter-protest by Han Chinese would further inflame tensions between China’s domestic ethnic groups, the Chinese government sought to channel popular anger in a more productive direction. In the end, the protests against France and CNN were successful, prompting a spate of apologies and an eventual pledge by Sarkozy to attend the Opening Ceremony.

Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands

Unlike the issues of Taiwan and Tibet, protests have been allowed over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute between China and Japan. However, the size of these anti-Japanese protests has always been restricted to a handful of dedicated activists, with the exception of the 2005 protests, which were primarily aimed at Japan’s UNSC bid. At other times, such as in 1990 and 1996, the government has prevented even small-scale

anti-Japanese protests, sending anti-Japanese organizers such as Tong Zeng on extended “business trips” in more remote areas of China. At these times, I expect to find evidence that the government believed that a) the disputed issue was not that important, and/or b) protests were likely to get out of hand and become costly to suppress.

A cursory look at the “non-events” of 1990 and 1996 supports this prediction. Both episodes were precipitated by Japanese assertions of sovereignty over the disputed islands.¹⁹ On September 29, 1990, the Japanese Maritime Safety Agency announced that it would recognize a lighthouse on the main island as an official navigation mark, provoking thousands of protesters in Taiwan and Hong Kong to take to the streets. A group of activists from Taiwan even set sail for the islands. In mainland China, however, the government rejected applications for protest permits, and students decided not to hold the protests illegally.²⁰ According to a Hong Kong report cited by Downs and Saunders (1998), “the CCP issued a circular to local party committees stressing that tensions over ‘these economic and strategically insignificant islands should not affect friendly relations between China and Japan’”²¹ Moreover, the Chinese leadership was still trying to end the international isolation it found itself in after the Tiananmen massacre. When the dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands flared up, it had only been weeks since Japan announced that it would resume loans to China, which had been suspended since 1989. As Downs and Saunders (1998:132) note, “China’s leaders were afraid that demonstrations might not only jeopardize the resumption of Japanese lending but also turn into antigovernment protests.”

¹⁹ For a more thorough treatment, see Downs and Saunders (1998).

²⁰ Nicholas Kristof, “To quiet its own critics, China aims at Japan,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1990.

²¹ Lo Ping, “Bowling to Japanese Yen has Angered the Masses,” *Cheng Ming*, November 1, 1990, p. 6-7, quoted in Downs and Saunders (1998), p. 131.

In July 1996, a right-wing Japanese group built a second lighthouse on the main disputed island, the Japanese Diet declared an exclusive economic zone that included the islands, and Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto paid an official visit to Yasukuni Shrine, the first prime minister to do so since 1985. Large protests occurred again in Hong Kong and Taiwan, but once more the CCP prevented street demonstrations. According to a Hong Kong report:

The official Xinhua news agency would not cover the mass demonstration held by Hong Kong people two days ago mainly for fear the news would encourage mainland students to take to the streets and demonstrate....[The authorities] are concerned that the students' feelings will develop into "student strikes," producing a negative impact on national stability and economic growth.... The faxed circular by the State Education Commission reportedly urged various localities and schools to properly channel young students' patriotism [and] to inform the leading body at a higher level in a timely manner when students are likely to go on to the streets and demonstrate, hold campus rallies or deliver written protests to the Japanese embassy or consulates, so that the problem will be nipped in the bud.²²

The government was evidently concerned about the risk that anti-Japanese protests would threaten domestic stability. A Chinese military officer noted that "if the Party allowed the people to protest unhindered, the first day they would be protesting against Japan, the next day against the lack of response by the government, and on the third day against the government itself."²³ After anti-Japanese activist Tong Zeng sent a petition to the Central Committee calling upon the Chinese government to dispatch a naval force to destroy the lighthouse,²⁴ he was told that "for the stability of China's entire environment, at present, all protest-Diaoyu activities must unanimously aim at external targets, the Japanese

²² *Ming Pao*, September 17, 1996, translated by the BBC, September 18, 1996.

²³ Richard K. Betts and Thomas J. Christensen, "China: Getting the Questions Right," *The National Interest*, Winter 2000.

²⁴ Kyodo, September 2, 1996.

government in particular.”²⁵ As the sensitive anniversary of September 18 approached, Tong Zeng and other activists were sent out of Beijing.

The Chinese leadership was also worried that anti-Japanese protests would encourage Japan to seek a closer alignment with the United States, and a tussle over “economically and strategically insignificant islands” was not worth jeopardizing China’s relations with Japan. According to Downs and Saunders (1998:133), “Chinese officials were aware of negative international reactions [to the 1995-96 missile exercises] and sought to downplay China’s military capabilities for fear of driving Japan closer to the United States. China’s desire for a lower military profile and an opportunity to repair relations with Japan influenced its policy toward the Diaoyu Islands.”

6.3 Extensions for Future Research

I also anticipate extending this project in the following directions:

- 1) *Building a cross-national dataset of anti-foreign protest.* Since several of my hypotheses are stochastic, a large- n statistical test would strengthen the conclusions I have drawn from the Chinese case studies. For example, *H1* states that anti-foreign protests should lead, on average, to a more favorable outcome for the authoritarian regime. Similarly, *H3* states that anti-foreign protests are more likely to be allowed by authoritarian governments before or during negotiations, and *H4* predicts that anti-foreign protests should be less frequent in autocracies than democracies. Testing these hypotheses on a larger number of observations would add validity to the conclusions presented above. The comparison between “autocratic” China and “democratic” Hong

²⁵ Hong Kong Economic Journal, FBIS FTS19961001000033, October 1, 1996.

Kong represents a first step in this direction—providing support for *H4* by looking at relative levels of anti-foreign protest in Hong Kong and mainland China. In future work, I plan to extend this comparison to look at the timing and impact of anti-foreign protest vis-à-vis concurrent international negotiations. The theory predicts that anti-foreign protests in China should not only be fewer but also a) coincide with key international negotiations and b) result in a more favorable international bargain for the Chinese government. By contrast, anti-foreign protests in Hong Kong should not be restricted to key international negotiations and should have no direct impact on China's international negotiations.

- 2) *Formalizing the theory.* In Chapter 2, I developed a theory of anti-foreign protest as a bargaining tactic in a two-level game using informal reasoning. Formalizing the logic would add value to this project by providing a mathematical foundation for the hypotheses presented above and tightening the connections between my assumptions and predictions (Powell 1999). A game-theoretic model might also generate new and unexpected hypotheses, which could then be tested on other observations.
- 3) *Examining additional cases outside of China.* The theory of anti-foreign protest as a bargaining tactic is general to all authoritarian regimes. Aside from a few anecdotes about Syria and Iran, the data examined above are exclusively drawn from China. In future iterations of this project, I plan to investigate other cases. For example, it would be interesting to extend the China-Hong Kong comparison to all countries occupied by Japan during World War II, autocratic as well as democratic. Another useful comparison would examine anti-foreign protest in a country that was once autocratic but later democratized, such as South Korea and Taiwan. Moving beyond

China will demonstrate the utility of the theory as an explanation for a general class of phenomena. Doing so may also help refine the theory to account for variables such as the presence of opposition parties (which are virtually nonexistent in China) and forms of authoritarian government other than single-party rule (such as military or personalist regimes).

6.4 Broader Implications

Examining the logic and pattern of nationalistic protest in China may help us determine whether China's rise will be peaceful, or whether the "coming conflict with China" (Bernstein and Munro 1997) is in fact inevitable. As China becomes more powerful, both economically and militarily, will China's leaders mobilize popular sentiment to achieve foreign policy objectives? In future crises with the United States and Japan, will China's leaders seek to satisfy nationalist demands as their primary objective, or will they maintain a conciliatory foreign policy to attract foreign investment and sustain economic growth? Will the Chinese Communist Party be thrown out by popular revolt if Taiwan becomes an independent state, as is widely assumed by both Chinese and foreign analysts (e.g. Johnston and Stockmann 2007)? Understanding why and when the Chinese government gives a wink and a nod to nationalist protest is crucial to answering these questions and illuminating the extent to which public opinion in China affects China's foreign policy decision-making (Fewsmith and Rosen 2001; Lieberthal 1997).

The project also has implications for the study of social movements and channels of communication between state and society. How do citizens read the political environment to determine when a window of opportunity to protest has opened? My

interviews with Chinese protesters and protest organizers illustrate how activists and citizens read government signals and identify when it is safe to organize or join a protest. How effective are state controls over the spread of information, given the proliferation of cell phones and internet access in the last decade? A comparison of official and commercial internet portals during the 2005 anti-Japanese protests shows that government censors and propaganda authorities are still highly effective at silencing internet coverage of nationalist protest. However, the comparison also shows that in the absence of a blackout order, commercial portals are more likely than official portals to “fry up” (*chao zuo*) stories that appeal to nationalist sentiment.

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