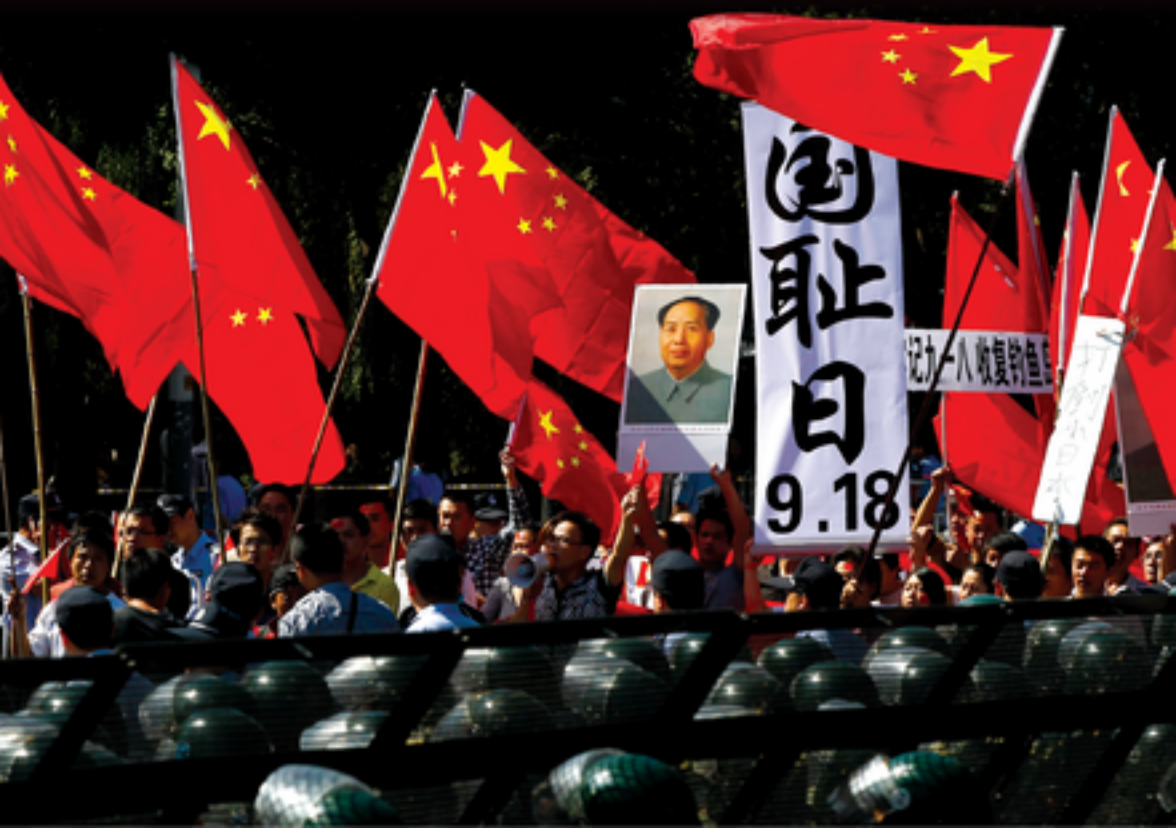


JESSICA CHEN WEISS

POWERFUL PATRIOTS

Nationalist Protest in
China's Foreign Relations



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Powerful Patriots

Introduction

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 to high-level Japanese officials, June 28, 1987¹

This book examines China's management of nationalist, antiforeign protests—both those that occurred and those that were prevented—and their diplomatic consequences between 1985 and 2012. In China, anti-American protests were allowed in 1999 after NATO planes accidentally 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 repressed throughout the 1990s and late 2000s but erupted in 1985, 2005, 2010, and 2012. When the United States 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.² Popular demonstrations have never been allowed over the issue of Taiwan, perhaps the issue of greatest concern to Chinese nationalists.

Explaining this pattern sheds light on an important debate about the role of nationalism and public opinion in China's foreign relations. Can China's unelected leaders ignore popular sentiment in handling foreign affairs? Or are China's authoritarian leaders so dependent on nationalism that they must appease domestic calls for a more assertive foreign policy, inhibiting rational diplomacy? This book takes a middle position between these two extremes, arguing that the degree of popular influence on Chinese foreign policy is affected by the government's management of nationalist, antiforeign protest. Does the government let angry citizens take to the streets and organize demonstrations outside foreign embassies and consulates? Or do the authorities shut down calls for protest as they begin to circulate online, bring activists in to "drink tea," and disperse crowds shortly after they materialize?

The central argument of this book is that the decision to allow or repress nationalist protests helps signal an authoritarian government's intentions and shapes its room for diplomatic compromise. Just as an American president can say that his hands are tied by Congress and domestic opinion, so can Chinese leaders claim that they cannot give in to foreign demands that "hurt the feelings" of over a billion Chinese people. Such rhetoric is more credible when the streets of Chinese cities are filled with antiforeign protests that may turn against the government, particularly if it appears weak in defending the national interest. Without visible evidence of popular mobilization, foreign observers are more likely to dismiss such statements as "cheap talk."

There is wide variation in how authoritarian governments handle antiforeign protest, ranging from suppression to encouragement to containment. The Jordanian government suppressed pro-Iraqi demonstrations in 1996 and all protests in 1998 after signing a peace treaty with Israel and strengthening ties with the United States. In Syria, thousands demonstrated in October 2005 against the UN investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri, shouting anti-American slogans and carrying photographs of Syria's president. Schoolchildren 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.'"³ A month earlier in Iran, Islamic student associations 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:

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.⁴

His words illustrate several critical features of antiforeign protest in authoritarian states. First is the risk that nationalist protests will escalate beyond their anticipated scope, potentially causing a diplomatic incident and bringing protesters into conflict with the regime. Once begun, protests can trigger the sudden realization that taking to the streets is acceptable, even safe, leading more and more people to join the protest. Citizens who join an antiforeign protest may discover common cause against the regime itself, particularly if the government fails to take a tough diplomatic stance. Once unleashed, protests become more difficult for the government to restrain. Even strong authoritarian governments may have difficulty reining in

protests that are widely seen as patriotic and legitimate. State security may disobey orders to curtail antforeign protests with force, as the Shah of Iran discovered during the 1979 revolution.

China's leaders are keenly aware of the threat posed by nationalist mobilization. Indeed, the last two Chinese regimes—the Kuomintang government in 1949 and the Qing dynasty in 1912—fell to popular movements that accused the government of failing to defend the nation from foreign predations. Given the risk that protests might get out of hand and turn against the regime, why have China's Communist leaders been willing to allow nationalist protests? Two common explanations focus on the Chinese Communist Party's eroded domestic legitimacy, following the disasters of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution under Mao Zedong, as well as the repression of pro-democracy demonstrations in 1989. With the move away from Communist ideology, a prominent argument holds that China's authoritarian rulers have become so dependent on patriotism for their legitimacy that they cannot risk defying nationalist pressures. Another common view argues that China's leaders benefit from nationalist protests as a distraction from domestic grievances or a relatively safe outlet for pent-up anger.

While compelling, these arguments have difficulty accounting for the variation in China's management of nationalist protests. Existing studies have focused on nationalist protests that have occurred but not those that have been repressed: paying greater attention to the "ones" than the "zeros." Selecting on the dependent variable may bias our conclusions, leading us to overlook the Chinese government's ability to mitigate the impact of popular nationalism on foreign policy. The regime is worried about grassroots nationalism, but it is not uniformly paralyzed. As in democratic states, there is a political process that sometimes amplifies and sometimes mutes the impact of public opinion. Both protesters and government authorities have agency. China's authoritarian leaders are most constrained by popular sentiments when protesters are in the streets. But the Chinese government is not feeble. When it chooses to mount the effort, it is usually capable of curtailing popular mobilization through dissuasion and censorship. Nonetheless, the costs of curtailment and the risk that repression will fail create incentives for the government to take a tough foreign policy stance, easing domestic pressures and persuading protesters to desist.

To be clear, this should not be characterized as state manipulation of popular protest, but as state management of protests that are costly to repress but also risky to allow. "Red light, green light" is a useful analogy to describe the management of nationalist protest in authoritarian regimes. Protesters are in the driver's seat, motivated by sincere grievances as well as anger that has been stoked by patriotic propaganda and inflammatory media coverage. As activists and protesters rev their engines, the government signals when to go, when to stop, and when to exercise caution. But the government does not control protesters, though it may try to enforce speed limits. Once protests gain momentum, it is difficult for

the government to stop them without evidence of progress toward their demands. It is because nationalist protests are difficult to control and can easily turn against the government that nationalist protests constrain the government's diplomatic options. If nationalist protesters were "puppets," this constraint would not be real—nor would it be credible to foreign observers.

This framework builds on existing explanations that balance the risks of allowing protest against the costs of repression. Allowing protests may be beneficial as a "safety valve" for citizens to vent their domestic grievances. Yet citizens harboring domestic grievances may seize the opportunity to mobilize under the protective cloak of patriotism. Competing elites may also utilize street protests to strengthen their hand in internal power struggles. Although nipping protests in the bud avoids the risks that accompany mobilization, repression is also costly, exacerbating resentment against the regime's high-handed suppression of patriotic sentiments. These trade-offs suggest that domestic factors are important but often indecisive as the government considers how to respond to nationalist mobilization. Given these domestic dilemmas, the government's diplomatic motivations often tip the scales toward allowing or repressing nationalist protest.

Diplomatic objectives are an important and understudied part of the government's management of nationalist protests. I argue that when the Chinese government wants to signal its resolve—using public sentiment to "teach foreigners a lesson"—it has been more willing to tolerate nationalist street demonstrations. On the other hand, when the Chinese government wants to reassure foreign audiences, defuse a potential crisis, and preserve its diplomatic options, it has been more willing to keep nationalist protests in check, despite the domestic costs of defying popular sentiment.

In diplomacy, nationalist mobilization can be an asset as well as a liability. Domestic constraints make international cooperation more difficult but can also provide negotiating leverage. Demonstrations of popular anger can be helpful when the leadership seeks to signal resolve and demonstrate its commitment to defending the national interest. Provided that foreign observers can tell the difference between sincere and manufactured protests, the government conveys greater resolve when protests are allowed to erupt and greater reassurance when protests are kept in check.

Because nationalist protests are costly to repress and can spiral out of control, triggering domestic or diplomatic instability, nationalist protests both convey and exacerbate an authoritarian government's vulnerability to domestic pressure. As protests gain momentum, they generate additional pressure on the government to stand firm in diplomatic negotiations, raising the domestic cost of backing down. Because it is easier for the government to curtail street demonstrations before they have grown in size and spread to multiple cities, the escalation of street protests ties the government's hands, making it more likely that the government will stand firm in diplomatic negotiations and risk an international standoff rather than confront

mobs in the streets. A democratic president or prime minister can point to Congress or Parliament and say, "I'm pinned." With antforeign protesters in the streets, the autocrat can retort: "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, visible protests provide unelected leaders a means of showcasing domestic pressure as leverage in diplomatic negotiations, a form of brinkmanship that conveys resolve and commitment to an unwavering stance.

But authoritarian leaders do not always seek to demonstrate resolve and tie their hands in diplomatic disputes. Often, foreign policymakers seek to preserve room for maneuver, defuse potential crises, and insulate diplomatic relations from nationalist opposition. When the government seeks to reassure foreign governments that cooperative initiatives and bilateral commitments will not be hijacked by domestic extremists, it has diplomatic incentives to keep nationalist protests in check. Nationalist protests are costly to repress, creating resentment and leaving the government vulnerable to charges of selling out the nation. Because the act of nipping protests in the bud is costly, doing so sends a credible signal of reassurance, demonstrating to outside observers that the government is willing to defy domestic demands for the sake of international cooperation. The decision to stifle antforeign protests demonstrates the government's willingness to spend domestic capital to restrain domestic voices that might reduce diplomatic flexibility and prevent cooperation.

My argument does not imply that international incentives are primary in the management of antforeign protests, only that they are a critical and often omitted factor in existing analyses. In addition, domestic factors are critical to understanding the diplomatic consequences of nationalist protest. Nationalist protests are only effective if they appear to be domestically costly for the government to repress; otherwise, they will be dismissed as "cheap talk." Whether the government allows or stifles popular mobilization, the sincerity of nationalist anger must be apparent in order to be credible.

Foreign perceptions of China's motivations and constraints are crucial. At the diplomatic level, whether nationalist sentiments are actually spontaneous or state led matters less than whether foreign negotiators expect Chinese leaders to be constrained by domestic sentiments or pay a high political price for defying popular opinion. An important task is to identify the observable characteristics that make nationalist protests more or less credible. I argue that the specter of nationalist mobilization is more convincing when protests appear costly to repress and potentially destabilizing. Government efforts to channel nationalism and thereby mitigate the danger to the regime and diplomatic relations run a different risk: that nationalist opinions will be dismissed by foreign observers as manufactured. If foreign observers believe that the government can manipulate Chinese mass opinion at will, even raucous street protests will have little diplomatic sway. If protests are seen as "safety valves" for domestic discontent, releasing popular anger and then subsiding with

no impact on foreign policy, foreigners have less inducement to offer concessions, because they expect China's leaders to be able to show flexibility soon thereafter. Outside observers often fail to recognize that diverting domestic grievances toward foreign policy issues does not strengthen the government's legitimacy if it cannot claim diplomatic victory or point to tough countermeasures that the government has taken to protect the nation's interest. Likewise, the repression of protests only signals reassurance when outside observers understand that the abortive demonstrations were genuinely antforeign rather than a cover for antiregime dissent.

One may wonder why foreign governments should make concessions if the risks of nationalist mobilization are primarily borne by the Chinese government. Nationalist mobilization enables authoritarian leaders to play the "good cop" in the "good cop, bad cop" routine. Even prickly leaders appear moderate when compared with angry demonstrators in "the street." Many external actors—from governments to multinational enterprises to international investors—have a stake in the stability of China and many other authoritarian states. Provided that foreign leaders prefer the status quo to instability, nationalist protests give foreigners an incentive to make concessions and give the authoritarian leadership more slack.⁵ By making diplomatic accommodations, foreign decision-makers ease the domestic pressure on the government to adopt tougher policies. Faced with a hawkish or unstable alternative, foreign governments may see concessions as a wise hedge against a worse fate. Often, it is the moderate autocrat whom foreign governments seek to bolster against conservative competitors who might gain influence with the eruption of nationalist protests.

As these risks make clear, antforeign 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. Nationalist protests are only credible when they appear genuine, not state directed—rooted in sincere anger against foreign acts of perceived aggression or humiliation, not manufactured by the state to distract attention from domestic grievances. Nationalist protests are also a blunt instrument, ill suited for delicate negotiations where fine-grained compromises are inevitable. When diplomatic and domestic considerations have counseled flexibility and restraint, authoritarian rulers have often sheathed the "double-edged sword" of nationalism.

Finally, the management of nationalist protests may be a tactical asset in the short run but a strategic liability in the long run. Domestically, the government may find it increasingly difficult to preserve domestic stability as the cycle of nationalist mobilization repeats. State control and legitimacy may erode as protesters gain experience with political participation and domestic observers become cynical toward the government's selective tolerance. Internationally, foreign observers may become inured to nationalist protests, discounting them as "crying wolf," while others become more convinced that China's leaders are in fact "riding the tiger" of popular nationalism. This polarization of foreign perceptions may make it more

difficult for China to facilitate a smooth rise and defuse acrimonious debates over China's long-term intentions.

Method and Approach

To my knowledge, no study has systematically evaluated the pattern of nationalist, antiforeign protest in China, examining the causes and consequences of protests that occurred as well as protests that were preemptively stifled. Indeed, the phenomenon of antiforeign protest has not been systematically studied by social scientists, with protests against foreign targets typically excluded from widely used cross-national data sets on internal unrest.⁶ China is a substantively important as well as appropriate setting in which to assess the plausibility of the theoretical framework. In different respects, China is both a tough and easy case for the general theory.

As a strong authoritarian state, China is tough case. Because the Chinese government demonstrated its willingness and ability to put down nationwide demonstrations on June 4, 1989, foreign observers may doubt that popular protests pose a real risk to state control or are costly for the government to curtail.⁷ As two international relations scholars note, "Tiananmen Square should serve as a cautionary tale for those peddling ideas about the weakness of single-party regimes."⁸ If we still observe domestic and foreign concerns about China's vulnerability to nationalist protests and the difficulty of defying popular opinion, we should increase our confidence in the theory's general applicability to other authoritarian regimes. On the other hand, as a country with a long history of nationalist protest and mass revolution, China is a relatively easy case. Foreign officials may be more willing to believe that Chinese leaders are vulnerable to popular nationalism than authoritarian leaders that do not depend so heavily on nationalism for their legitimacy.

Indeed, resistance to foreign domination has been a central tenet in Chinese political discourse since the mid-nineteenth century. A key point of reference is the so-called Century of National Humiliation (*bainian guochi*), beginning with China's defeat in the first Opium War in 1842 and ending with China's victory on the side of the Allied Powers in 1945. During this period, the Qing dynasty was forced to sign several hundred "unequal treaties" that gave foreign powers treaty port rights and territorial concessions. Particularly galling was Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, which resulted in the loss of control over Taiwan. The Boxer Rebellion was one of several forms of antiforeignism to emerge as a response to the increasingly pervasive feeling that China was being carved up by foreign powers. Other forms of resistance included the anti-American boycott of 1905, organized in response to anti-Chinese immigration laws and mistreatment of Chinese workers in the United States. Indeed, it was out of the need to defend the nation from foreign encroachments that Chinese intellectuals such as Sun Yat-sen first began to use the phrase

“Chinese nation” (*zhonghua minzu*) in the early 1900s, replacing the culturally based view of China as a civilization with the Western (Westphalian) concept of China as a territorial nation-state.⁹ By 1911, the Qing rulers were forced to step down.

The victory of Chinese nationalists in overthrowing the Qing did not spell the end of China’s subjugation to foreign powers. During World War I, Japan seized German-held territories in Shandong province and presented China with additional demands, giving Japan extensive economic and military rights in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. At the end of the war, Chinese delegates to the conference at Versailles were shocked to learn that Britain, France, and Italy had signed a secret agreement awarding Germany’s territorial holdings in China to Japan. This perceived betrayal sparked a series of antiforeign demonstrations in cities across China, beginning with Beijing on May 4, 1919. The May Fourth movement, as it came to be known, was both patriotic and self-critical: seeking to strengthen China against foreign imperialism while attacking Chinese traditionalism as inferior to Western political, intellectual, and scientific practice. Many of China’s rising political leaders were active in the May Fourth demonstrations, including Zhou Enlai and close colleagues of Mao Zedong.¹⁰

The Japanese invasion and occupation of mainland China caused further national trauma, beginning with Manchuria in 1931 and the Chinese heartland in 1937. During the war, Japan attacked or occupied much of China, with its army following a brutal and indiscriminate policy of “kill all, burn all, and destroy all” in Communist-controlled areas of northern China. In Manchuria, Unit 731 of the Japanese army set up several biological and chemical warfare research centers, whose field trials included Chinese military and civilian subjects.¹¹ According to official Chinese estimates, 300,000 were killed in the 1937 Nanjing Massacre. It was against this backdrop that Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party came to power in the civil war that followed China’s liberation at the end of World War II. With the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Chairman Mao declared: “Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up.”¹²

Under Mao, mass antiforeign rallies were commonplace, organized and sanctioned by the government. The Communist Party assumed the mantle of anti-imperialism, consistent with the international Communist effort as well as China’s nationalist struggles against foreign exploitation. The United States was the primary target—for entering the Korean War, intervening in the Taiwan Strait, and rearming Japan—but protesters also rallied against India, Britain, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Soviet Union following the Sino-Soviet rift in 1960. In 1960 alone, the *People’s Daily* reported 283 anti-American demonstrations, 99 anti-Soviet demonstrations, and 54 other antiforeign demonstrations.¹³ Antiforeign fervor reached its zenith during the Cultural Revolution, when Chinese mobs attacked foreign embassies and consulates, even burning the British embassy.

In the 1970s, the waning of the Cultural Revolution and increased fears of Soviet expansionism created the background conditions for rapprochement and normalization of relations with the United States and Japan. Prioritizing diplomatic recognition and cooperation against the Soviet Union, China agreed to relinquish claims that Japan provide war reparations.¹⁴ It was not until the 1980s that this “benevolent amnesia” began to fade, as the Soviet threat waned and China grew more concerned about Japan’s rearmament under the U.S.-Japan alliance.¹⁵ China also launched a new wave of education and propaganda efforts to buttress the Party’s legitimacy and discredit Western-style liberalization after the pro-democracy protests of 1989 and the fall of Communist regimes throughout the Soviet bloc, reviving the narrative of “national humiliation” through new textbooks, films, and commemorative museums.

China’s remembered humiliation at the hands of foreign powers—both real and reinforced through patriotic propaganda—has provided ample kindling for nationalist mobilization in the post-Mao era. Although many foreign powers played a role in China’s “Century of National Humiliation,” since the 1970s almost all antiforeign protests in China—whether realized or stillborn—have targeted Japan. Chinese citizens also sought to mobilize anti-American protests in two high-profile crises with the United States. France bore the brunt of nationalist protests after President Nicolas Sarkozy publicly contemplated a boycott of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Anti-Indonesian protests were repressed in response to violence against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia in 1998.

An important advantage of a single-country study is the ability to identify and analyze the “dogs that did not bark”—in this case, nationalist protests that the government preemptively repressed. The appendix catalogues all observed episodes in which antiforeign protests were allowed or prevented in China between 1985 and 2012. Including stillborn protests provides the “universe of cases” in which the argument is relevant: episodes where popular mobilization prompted a government response. I have undoubtedly missed some episodes, particularly small or remote events that went unnoticed or unreported by foreign and domestic sources. By definition, however, unobserved episodes do not impact foreign perceptions, so their absence is less troubling for the study of nationalist protest in China’s foreign relations. The fact that there are nearly as many observations of repression as tolerance, even when the size of aborted protests is very small, also gives confidence that this list provides a plausible universe of cases.

I define antiforeign protest as a public manifestation by a group of people, containing hostile feeling toward 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.”¹⁶ Throughout the book, I use the terms *nationalist*

protest and *antiforeign protest* interchangeably, recognizing that many different currents of nationalism flow beneath the surface of these demonstrations.¹⁷ There is no single Chinese nationalism, with distinct and competing visions articulated by state propaganda, liberal and conservative intellectuals, and grassroots activists, making it all the more difficult for the Chinese Communist Party to harness nationalism in support of its rule.

It is particularly important to distinguish the phenomenon of what I call “antiforeign protest” from official rallies or other state-organized demonstrations. Official rallies are organized under government or party auspices and attended by a select group of prescreened participants. State-organized mass demonstrations, such as those in North Korea or in China during the Mao Zedong era, are not very costly for the government to curtail, nor do they carry the same risk of turning against the regime.¹⁸ In contrast, grassroots antiforeign 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, unofficial organization.¹⁹

Nationalist, antiforeign mobilization in the post-Mao era has typically followed a recurrent cycle, beginning with efforts by students or dedicated activists to stage a peaceful demonstration or protest march, attracting the notice and participation of bystanders, and at some point precipitating government efforts to rein in and disperse protesters. What has varied is the government’s response at the outset of the protest cycle, ranging from preemptive repression to acquiescence to facilitation. Repression includes preemptive efforts to stifle grassroots mobilization (removing calls for protest and dissuading activists in advance of rumored protests or important dates) as well as rapid containment (confiscating protest banners, removing online petitions, and dispersing crowds as soon as they materialize). Tolerance includes tacit acquiescence (allowing calls for protest to circulate and providing passive security as demonstrations grow in size and geographic spread) as well as facilitation (preapproving protest routes and slogans presented by grassroots organizers as well as using party structures to organize protests and provide logistical support). The government’s willingness to repress, tolerate, or facilitate nationalist mobilization has not strictly corresponded with the anticipated or realized size of protest demonstrations. Both small- and large-scale protests have been prevented as well as allowed, ranging from a dozen activists to thousands of participants.

To explain why China has allowed or repressed nationalist protest and to evaluate the diplomatic consequences of this variation, in the remaining chapters I trace China’s management of antiforeign protests against Japan and the United States. While these relationships are not representative of China’s foreign relations, the scarcity of grassroots mobilization against China’s other counterparts to date lessens the empirical sacrifice. It is crucial to note that all of Chinese diplomacy is not under the scope; grassroots mobilization restricts the set of cases in which the repression

or tolerance of nationalist protest is informative and potentially constraining. The government has many other tools of pressure, including official demarches, suspension of high-level exchanges, economic threats, and military mobilization. Given these possibilities, this book does not seek to provide a comprehensive history or analysis of Sino-Japanese or Sino-American relations, nor does it assess all of the difficult negotiations and disputes these governments have confronted. Rather, I limit my scope to those issues over which Chinese citizens attempted to stage street demonstrations against Japan and the United States, requiring the Chinese government to respond and foreign observers to interpret Chinese actions. In the conclusion, I return to the issue of generalizing to China's other diplomatic relations and authoritarian regimes more broadly.

To trace the links between perceptions, motivations, actions, and reactions, I draw upon data gathered over 14 months of field research, including memoirs of high-ranking officials and senior leaders, party histories, yearbooks, and diplomatic records, policy analysis published by government-affiliated think tanks, nationalist bulletin boards and discussion forums online, and more than 170 interviews with nationalist activists, students, protesters, journalists, analysts, and diplomats in China, Japan, the United States, France, and Taiwan.

Plan of the Book

The remainder of the book is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 2 develops the logic of nationalist protest in authoritarian regimes, first identifying the domestic and international factors that make authoritarian leaders more or less likely to tolerate antforeign protest, and then developing the mechanisms by which protest tolerance and repression affect foreign perceptions. Chapter 3 assesses the management of anti-American protests in the context of two "near crises" in U.S.-China relations. Chinese leaders viewed the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade as a deliberate test of China's resolve. By permitting anti-American protests, the Chinese government communicated its determination to stand up to U.S. bullying as well as the domestic demands it faced to take a tougher foreign policy stance. In contrast, Chinese diplomacy was aimed at reducing the perception that China posed a threat to the United States when the 2001 EP-3 collision occurred, shortly after President George W. Bush took office. By repressing nationalist protests, the Chinese government helped defuse the crisis, sending a costly signal of its intent to maintain friendly relations despite domestic accusations that the Chinese government was being too soft on the United States. The chapter also illustrates that the domestic character of nationalist protests influences their diplomatic credibility. After the Chinese government took visible measures to stage-manage the second, third, and fourth day of anti-American demonstrations in 1999, foreign incredulity reduced their diplomatic impact beyond the initial signal of resolve.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 turn to China's management of anti-Japanese protest between 1985 and 2012. Chapter 4 examines Sino-Japanese relations in the 1980s, assessing China's lenience toward anti-Japanese protests in 1985 and their contribution to political instability and Japanese concessions. The first anti-Japanese protests in the post-Mao era broke out on September 18, 1985, condemning Japanese prime minister Yasuhiro Nakasone's official visit to Yasukuni Shrine, where 14 A-class war criminals are enshrined. The anti-Japanese protests helped convince Nakasone that his visits to Yasukuni were undermining China's policy of engagement and reform, illustrating that foreign governments often have incentives to bolster embattled moderates in light of popular unrest. It would be 11 years before another Japanese prime minister visited the shrine. Nakasone's concessions were unable to prevent the downfall of his friend and counterpart, General Secretary Hu Yaobang, however. As protests spread, demonstrators accused the government of selling out the nation's interests and demanded political reform. The anti-Japanese protests helped set the stage for the pro-democracy protests of 1986 and 1989, the most severe crisis of legitimacy that the Communist Party has faced in the reform era—underscoring the risk that nationalist protests may galvanize a broader movement for change.

Chapter 5 examines Sino-Japanese relations in the 1990s, when China restrained anti-Japanese protests amid tensions over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Anti-Japanese protests were repressed throughout the 1990s despite efforts to bolster national unity after the Tiananmen crackdown. China launched a patriotic education campaign with materials that often featured Japan as the central villain in China's history of national humiliation, but attempts to shore up the regime's legitimacy did not translate into a more permissive attitude toward nationalist protest. As China sought to break free of its post-Tiananmen economic isolation, the government courted Japanese assistance and restrained anti-Japanese mobilization between 1990 and 1994. Japan's continuing interest in stabilizing China in the early 1990s produced a new "honeymoon" in bilateral relations. Despite the emergence of grassroots activism and civilian demands that the Japanese government make amends for its wartime atrocities, the Chinese government repressed protests on several occasions: in 1990, when a dispute erupted over the islands in the East China Sea, in 1992, during the Japanese emperor's first historic visit to China, and in 1994, when Japanese prime minister Hosokawa visited China. When right-wing activists from Japan built a lighthouse on one of the disputed islands in 1996, China again prevented anti-Japanese protests, concerned about impending revisions to the U.S.-Japan alliance and trying to mitigate the diplomatic fallout of Chinese nuclear tests and military exercises in the Taiwan Strait. China's restraint helped defuse the crisis with Japan, eliciting assurances that the Japanese government would not officially recognize the lighthouse. The 1990s illustrate that China has not always been forced by public opinion and a crisis of domestic legitimacy to allow protests; the government was willing to suppress grassroots nationalist protest for the sake of reassuring foreign audiences and promoting bilateral cooperation.

Chapter 6 assesses the softening of China's attitude toward anti-Japanese protests during the 2000s, including the large-scale anti-Japanese protests that erupted in 2005. Following Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine, China began to tolerate small-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations and Internet petitions. But it was not until Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council gained momentum that the Chinese government allowed large-scale anti-Japanese protests to support its diplomatic campaign to undermine Japan's candidacy and head off a vote in the General Assembly. Petitions and protests in dozens of cities helped the Chinese government signal resolve against Japan's candidacy and mobilize third-party support for China's position. At the bilateral level, Chinese pressure also elicited symbolic Japanese concessions.

Chapters 7 and 8 address China's management of anti-Japanese protests between 2006 and 2012, including two crises over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Chapter 7 demonstrates that the Chinese government is still capable of restraining large-scale nationalist protests, even with the spread of the Internet and social media. In 2010, when Japan arrested a Chinese fishing captain after a collision near the islands, China initially restrained anti-Japanese protests, expecting Japan to follow precedent and release the captain. China did not take more severe countermeasures until the Japanese government extended the captain's detention and continued to insist that domestic law be used to handle the case. As China escalated pressure on Japan to recognize the territorial dispute, no nationwide effort was made to prevent anti-Japanese protests, which erupted in two dozen cities. Although Japanese observers credited China's efforts to cool down nationalist protests during the crisis, the uneven management and appearance of domestic grievances amid anti-Japan protests fueled foreign skepticism about their sincerity and credibility as a constraint on Chinese foreign policy. The lessons of 2010 played a role in shaping Japanese resolve and perceptions two years later, when a new crisis escalated in the East China Sea.

Chapter 8 traces China's lenience toward the most widespread anti-Japanese protests to erupt in post-Mao China over Japan's purchase of three of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. After a right-wing Japanese governor campaigned to purchase and develop infrastructure on the islands, the central Japanese government declared its intent to bring the islands under state control. China sought to prevent what it perceived to be an adverse shift in the legal status quo but also preserve plans to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of normalized relations. Seeking to display resolve without jeopardizing bilateral cooperation, China tolerated anti-Japanese street protests and showcased the landing of Hong Kong activists on the islands to assert Chinese sovereignty. China escalated after Japan announced that it would proceed with the purchase, satisfying domestic demands to take a tougher stance and banking the fires that it had helped light. Despite growing signs of China's opposition, Japan discounted Chinese resolve and believed that Chinese authorities would curtail anti-Japan protests before they could become constraining or

destabilizing. Japanese observers largely viewed the protests as a convenient distraction from domestic concerns rather than as a credible signal of the Chinese government's willingness to retaliate.

Chapter 9 considers the continuing struggle for credibility amid China's evolving management of nationalist protests. The increasingly viral mobilization of protests and local variation in the government's response has made it more difficult for outside observers to interpret the government's intentions. The chapter also reflects on the prospects for nationalist spillover to democratic dissent, highlighting the connections between anti-Japanese protest and pro-democracy movements in the 1980s and considering whether a more democratic and developed China would be more or less nationalistic. The chapter concludes by discussing the role of nationalist sentiment in other policy areas, including the South China Sea, Taiwan, and Tibet, as well as in other authoritarian regimes.

Nationalist Protest and Authoritarian Diplomacy

The authorities did not clearly express support, but the government did not unduly interfere, which implies its “consent” (*ren tong*).

—Tong Zeng, activist and founder of the China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands¹

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 nondemocratic country like China, the government can still point to the public’s feelings.

—Anti-Japanese activist and website founder²

In China, as in most authoritarian states, there are no institutional channels for popular input on foreign policy. Members of the Politburo do not answer to mass electoral constituencies; their success is judged by others within the Party elite. Yet the extent to which public opinion influences Chinese foreign policy remains a subject of great speculation, particularly when nationalist protesters take to the streets over international issues or Chinese diplomats refer to the “hurt feelings” of the Chinese people. What are the consequences of antiforeign nationalism, and why does the Chinese government sometimes allow and sometimes suppress, encourage, or tolerate nationalist street demonstrations?

This chapter develops a framework for understanding the management of anti-foreign protests in authoritarian regimes like China.³ As authoritarian leaders weigh the domestic benefits and risks of nationalist protest, they also calculate the international consequences. Nationalist mobilization, if sincere, can be a diplomatic boon. When allowed, nationalist protests give unelected leaders a way to point to public opinion and credibly claim that diplomatic concessions would be too costly at home. By allowing antiforeign protests, autocrats can signal their resolve to stand firm, demonstrate the extent of public anger, and justify an unyielding bargaining stance. When repressed, nationalist mobilization enables authoritarian leaders to

play “good cop” to the hawkish voices in society that might undermine cooperation and destabilize the status quo if given free rein. By stifling antforeign protests, autocrats can signal reassurance and their commitment to a more cooperative, flexible diplomatic stance.

The Domestic Politics of Authoritarian Diplomacy

For many years, scholars and observers of politics viewed the relatively monolithic, opaque character of autocracies as an advantage for diplomacy. Unlike democrats, autocrats could conduct state affairs with secrecy, without fear of domestic debates being “overheard” by foreign observers. Autocracies could maintain a steady course rather than being blown about by the winds of particularistic interests and faddish public opinion. Recently, the very features that once seemed to put democracies at a disadvantage, particularly transparency, have been viewed as benefits to credible commitment and communication. Only in the last few years has the pendulum begun to swing back. Certain types of autocracies—whose leaders are vulnerable to punishment by other elites if not popular elections—are now seen as performing on par with democracies in international conflict.⁴ The arguments developed here follow in this vein, viewing domestic vulnerability and the ability to communicate that vulnerability to foreign observers as a potential advantage in international bargaining.

Authoritarian leaders are no exception to the “two-level game” of strategic interaction between international and domestic politics.⁵ 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.”⁶ Just as U.S. politicians seek re-election, authoritarian leaders strive to retain power.⁷ Leaders may have other goals, including ideological or policy objectives, but holding office makes it easier to achieve those goals.⁸ The process of rising to power also tends to favor those who have an appetite for it, weeding out those who do not.⁹ 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.¹⁰ In ordinary times, authoritarian leaders may be accountable to the military, the bureaucracy, or some other constellation of powerful actors. I argue that antforeign protests also give importance to the voice of ordinary citizens normally outside the selectorate or winning coalition. The decision to allow or repress protests alters the potential costs that the authoritarian regime must pay to restore order to the streets and signals its vulnerability to popular sentiment, akin to a “revolution constraint” on foreign policy.¹¹

I develop two analytically distinct mechanisms by which the management of nationalist protests serves as a potentially credible diplomatic signal and an endogenous constraint on foreign policy. The first incorporates the risk that protests

pose to regime stability, akin to Thomas Schelling's "threat that leaves something to chance."¹² Nationalist protests can get out of hand and undermine authoritarian stability in a number of ways: providing a protective umbrella for domestic dissent, giving citizens experience with political mobilization, and generating populist fuel for intra-elite competition. Because nationalist protests can get out of hand, the decision to allow such protests signals resolve.

The second mechanism captures the escalating cost of repression, or the difficulty of putting the genie back in the bottle. As protests materialize and gather momentum, they become increasingly difficult and costly for the government to curtail, changing the government's incentives. Rather than restore order by force, which is costly, the government has an incentive to take a tough diplomatic stance in order to appease nationalist protesters and persuade them to disperse peacefully. On the other hand, the decision to nip protests in the bud can signal the government's ability and willingness to cooperate and defuse international tensions. In either case, the decision to allow or suppress nationalist protests enables foreign observers to learn about the regime's diplomatic intentions. In cases where the regime is too weak to curtail nationalist mobilization, street protests reveal information about the degree of popular opposition to compromise or conciliation.

Because governments have strategic incentives to misrepresent their resolve in international bargaining, credible communication is difficult.¹³ Although governments prefer to avoid the escalation of tension and open conflict, each wants to ensure the best possible terms of any tacit or negotiated agreement. To signal resolve, states must take actions that distinguish their statements from bluffs. One way to demonstrate resolve is to take actions that increase the risk of bargaining failure.¹⁴ An influential body of literature has argued that public posturing is one way for leaders to send a costly signal of resolve.¹⁵ 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 domestic punishment ties the government's hands.

The microfoundations of audience costs have generated significant controversy.¹⁶ In a seminal article, Fearon suggests that domestic audiences punish leaders who back down for betraying the "national honor."¹⁷ 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 argues that backing down reveals incompetence. If failure to follow through with past commitments reflects poorly upon a leader's competence, then voters may rationally punish leaders for backing down despite being

content with the outcome, that is, having avoided war or some other form of “foreign entanglement.”¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ An alternative line of argument suggests that being caught bluffing destroys a country’s reputation for honesty.²⁰ In this view, voters have incentives to remove leaders who back down in order to restore the nation’s credibility. Survey experiments by Tomz indicate that U.S. respondents indeed disapproved more strongly when the president failed to follow through with a threat than when the president stayed out of the crisis altogether.²¹ Yet others argue that citizens care less about holding leaders to their word than about choosing appropriate policies under the circumstances.²²

Despite these debates, audience costs have been marshaled to explain international cooperation, crisis behavior and outcomes, compliance with trade agreements, monetary policy credibility, and even democratic consolidation.²³ Moreover, the conventional wisdom suggests that the probability that authoritarian leaders will be punished for appearing incompetent or weak on foreign policy is small, even though the magnitude of the punishment may be large in the event of a coup or other irregular turnover.²⁴ Which effect dominates is moot if the domestic costs of backing down are invisible to outsiders. Unless authoritarian leaders can convince foreign negotiators *ex ante* that the adverse 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. One of the few dissenting voices in this literature argues that many autocrats are able to invoke audience costs because they are vulnerable to punishment by other elites within the regime, particularly in single-party and hybrid autocracies, and politics are stable enough that outsiders can detect this potential punishment.²⁵

Yet we still lack a mechanism by which authoritarian leaders can demonstrate *ex ante* their vulnerability to domestic pressure, which is likely to vary across different issues and crises. Departing from the conventional focus on institutions and regime type as determinants of political vulnerability, I turn to the strategic interaction of citizens and leaders in nondemocratic states.

The decision to allow or repress antiforeign protests enables authoritarian leaders to signal their diplomatic intentions and determine the degree to which their hands are tied by popular nationalism. First, because protests can spiral out of control, the decision to allow protests is analogous to a “threat that leaves something to chance.”²⁶ Even if the government allows protests in the first place, there remains some probability, however small, that protests get out of hand.²⁷ Antiforeign protests may turn against the government, grow too large for the state security apparatus to disperse, or generate such popular support that state insiders are tempted to defect and disobey orders to suppress the protests. Second, by raising the specter of mobs that will figuratively storm the palace gates if the government betrays the national interest, the government can more credibly refuse to make international

concessions. In bargaining terms, the decision to allow antiforeign protest represents a credible commitment to stand firm as well as a costly signal of resolve.

In determining whether to allow or repress a particular occurrence of nationalist protest, autocrats weigh the potential risk to regime stability against the cost of repressing protests before they can materialize or gather steam. Any given instance of nationalist protest varies along these two dimensions.

The Risk of Instability

Nationalist protests pose a risk to domestic as well as diplomatic instability. Antiforeign protests may trigger an international incident if mobs overrun diplomatic compounds and injure or even kill foreign nationals, jeopardizing diplomatic relations as well as foreign trade and investment. Moreover, nationalist protests pose 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.²⁸

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.²⁹

Elite splits: Protests may expose weaknesses in the government that may not have been widely apparent, revealing sympathetic allies among the elite and potential regime-threatening fissures between hardliners and moderates.³⁰ As Ithiel de Sola 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.”³¹

Nationalist protest is especially risky because it has the potential to shake the foundation of state legitimacy, particularly those that rely upon nationalist myth-making to bolster their credentials with the public.³² Nationalist protests have broad appeal and pose a greater threat than movements that advocate more particularistic interests.³³ Nationalist protests advance goals that may challenge the foundation of the government’s legitimacy, such as “the historical mission of the nation, ranging from quiet self-perfection to conquest or the restoration of some golden age,” as Haas puts it.³⁴ 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 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.”³⁵

How often have antforeign protests spun out of control to such an extent that autocratic incumbents lost their grip on power? The Archigos data set on political leaders from 1875 to 2004³⁶ documents 573 instances in which leaders lost power in an irregular manner but were not deposed by a foreign state. Of these, popular protests pushed leaders out of office in 29 cases. Using Lexis-Nexis and the sources cited by Archigos, I found evidence to suggest that four of these 29 leaders were ousted by protests that were at least partly antforeign: the 1956 revolution in Hungary, where an anti-Soviet uprising caused the government to collapse (and also precipitated a Soviet invasion); the 1979 revolution in Iran, where anti-American protesters deposed the shah; the 1972 riots in Madagascar against neocolonial agreements with France, which pushed President Tsiranana out of office; and the 1992 ouster of Azerbaijani president Mutalibov, during which protesters demanded tougher action by the government against Russia and Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh. In 2014, nationalist protests in Ukraine forced President Yanukovych to flee the country, galvanized in large part by his deference to Russia and rejection of greater ties to the European Union.

In these examples, protests were the proximate cause of irregular leadership turnover,³⁷ but there are undoubtedly many more cases where antforeign protests created instability that provided a pretext for a military coup or foreign takeover. It is also important to note that there are selection effects working against these outcomes, as governments tend not to allow high-risk protests. When they do, moreover, government officials are likely to take actions—such as adopting a more hawkish foreign policy stance—that will mollify protesters and prevent a popular backlash.

The Cost of Repression

Protests are easier to nip in the bud than to suppress after they have begun. Repression is always costly, but dispersing an amassed crowd is more costly than hauling away a few “early risers” at the scene or warning off activists on the eve of protest. The cost of curtailment also increases as protests attract domestic and international scrutiny. The larger and more prominent the protest, the more likely international and domestic observers are to condemn the government for quashing political freedoms. Even members of the public who disagree with the protesters’ demands may be spurred to defend the right to protest, varying with the extent to which other observers view the protests as legitimate.

Nationalist protests are especially costly to suppress because doing so appears unpatriotic, a betrayal of the national myth. Nationalism provides a layer of protection against government suppression, raising the cost of using force to disperse

protests. 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 not a crime!" (*aiguo wuzui*). The very attempt to repress nationalist protests may backfire if security forces side with the protesters. In Iran, the 1979 revolution succeeded in large part because of support from elements in the military who turned against the pro-American shah.³⁸

Protestors may participate for many different reasons, including thrill-seeking and blowing off steam, but many are also purposive, seeking to effect policy change. Because one individual's decision to participate can increase the likelihood that others join in, the private risk and cost of action also diminish as demonstrations grow in size, providing relative safety in numbers. 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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰

The Regime's Domestic Dilemma

In deciding to allow or repress grassroots efforts to mobilize nationalist protests, the government must weigh both the domestic and international costs and benefits. At the domestic level, the government faces a dilemma: prevent citizens from gathering in the street and pay a certain cost of repression, or allow protests and accept an increased risk of domestic and diplomatic instability. As Johnston and Stockmann note, the government has to "walk a fine line between allowing public expressions of negativity (thereby boosting its nationalist credentials but risking large-scale protests that might turn against the regime and harm its international image) and constraining popular anger (thereby maintaining public order and protecting its external image but threatening the regime's internal legitimacy)."⁴¹

All else equal, the greater the domestic risk that protests will get out of hand, the less likely the government is to allow protest. Protests over issues that are integral to the government's nationalist credentials and draw sympathy from diverse groups in society pose a greater risk to stability than those that are more peripheral and appeal to a narrow group of ultranationalists. Nationalist protests that appear insincere or primarily a cover for antiregime dissent are also relatively risky and more likely to be suppressed. Vietnam, for example, has taken pains to shut down protests against Chinese actions in the South China Sea, imprisoning several activists and bloggers on charges of working with overseas dissident groups and "conducting propaganda against the state."⁴² Conversely, the lower the risk to domestic stability, the more

likely the government is to tolerate a given protest. When the risk is low enough, such protests may have a salutary effect on domestic stability by allowing citizens to air their grievances and blow off steam, particularly if tight security measures ensure that the “venting” effect dominates the “mobilization” effect, aided by restrictions on protest participation, predetermined time limits on protest duration, and police cordons to prevent passers-by from joining hard-core activists.

The government’s willingness to tolerate antforeign protest is also likely to vary with the cost of repression, depending on the state’s coercive capacity (including police discipline, training, and surveillance resources) and the magnitude of grass-roots mobilization (including the salience and resonance of the issue with the broader public). Different regimes are likely to vary in their ability and willingness to repress protests. Relative to democrats, authoritarian leaders have greater motivation and capacity to repress nationalist protest. Nationalist protest is both riskier for regime survival and less costly to repress in autocracies than democracies, where laws and norms protecting freedoms of speech and assembly are stronger. Moreover, democratic protests are less likely to escalate to demands for regime change, often feeding into the electoral process. As Tarrow notes, “The ease of organizing opinion in representative systems and finding legitimate channels for its expression induces many movements to turn to elections.”⁴³

Figure 2.1 illustrates a stylized universe of possible protests defined by the risk of instability and the cost of repression. The dashed line represents the cutoff between protests that the government is willing to allow and protests that the government is likely to repress.

Below the dashed line, the risk to stability is low relative to the cost of repression, making it likely that the government will tolerate protests. Above the dashed line, the risk to stability is high relative to the cost of repression, making it more likely

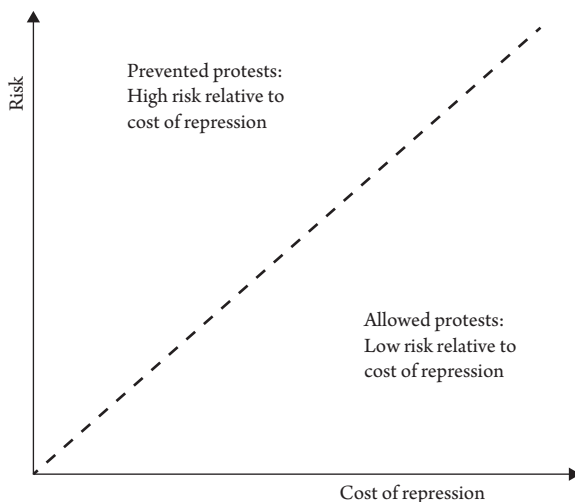


Figure 2.1 The Authoritarian Regime’s Domestic Dilemma

that the government will squelch protests. Along the line are cases in which the government is uncertain or indifferent between tolerance and repression, where the choice to allow or prevent protest is not obvious.

Empirically, most potential protests will cluster around this line, since the factors that affect the risk to stability are also likely to affect the cost of repression. For example, the level of discipline and training among riot police is likely to affect both the risk that a protest spins out of control as well as the ease with which the government can disperse protesters without bloodshed. Likewise, the public salience and resonance of the issue affect the risk that a protest will undermine regime legitimacy as well as the cost of repressing potential protesters.

Yet one can imagine cases both above and below the line. Above the line, the risk to stability exceeds the cost of repression. The anniversary of June 4, 1989, is a focal point for dissent in China. Every year, on that date, a number of individuals attempt to walk toward Tiananmen Square by themselves or in groups to commemorate the movement and its tragic end. Such actions do not pose a great risk on an individual basis, but a gathering crowd could set in motion a chain of events with unpredictable and destabilizing consequences. Thus far, the Chinese government has faced little difficulty in shutting down these small-scale acts of resistance. When one writer who participated in the 1989 demonstrations attempted to approach the square on June 4, his journey was cut short by security officials who detained him en route. Surveillance cameras and facial recognition software had flagged him as a potential troublemaker. Such anecdotes illustrate cases in which the government represses protests because the potential instability is greater than the cost of additional surveillance and police resources to prevent a demonstration from forming at Tiananmen Square.

Other instances of protest might fall below the line, where the government decides to tolerate protest because the cost of repression is high relative to the risk of instability. In November 2006, for example, Chinese police cordoned off but did not disperse a crowd of several hundred dog owners who gathered in front of the Beijing zoo to protest restrictions banning the ownership of dogs taller than 35 centimeters and limiting families to one dog per household. Although it would have been costly to repress a protest at such a visible location (on a major arterial in central Beijing), the protest took place outside the Beijing zoo, not a location with political importance. Moreover, the protest demands were specific to height restrictions on dog ownership in Beijing and relatively unlikely to escalate to appeals for systemic political reform or spread to other cities, many of which have less strict regulations on dog ownership.⁴⁴ Based on location and demands alone, Chinese security officials may have concluded that the risk of instability was insufficient to warrant the costs of repression.

My purpose here has been to create a simplified representation of the domestic calculus against which the government must weigh the international consequences. Next, I argue that the set of protests that the government is willing to allow expands

or contracts depending on the government's diplomatic objectives and the anticipated international consequences of nationalist protest. Put differently, the diplomatic repercussions of nationalist protest may lead the government to allow some protests that it would otherwise prevent, and prevent some protests that it would otherwise allow.

Protest Management as a Diplomatic Signal

The decision to allow antforeign protest is a coercive tactic, like limited war: "a risky engagement, one that could develop a momentum of its own and get out of hand."⁴⁵ Some portion of the risk to domestic and diplomatic stability is independent of the government's actions on foreign policy, that is, it is exogenous to the international negotiations, determined by the "fragility" of the authoritarian system and security apparatus. This element of risk renders antforeign protests analogous to Schelling's "threat that leaves something to chance."⁴⁶ The innovation here is that the potential for disaster is political instability and antforeign violence rather than mutually assured nuclear exchange. Whereas traditional models require actions that increase the risk of war to signal resolve,⁴⁷ I suggest that actions that increase the risk of domestic and diplomatic instability can also serve this purpose.

Because antforeign 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 concern over the disputed issue.⁴⁸ As Thomas Schelling 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."⁴⁹ Antforeign protests provide a mechanism for authoritarian leaders to communicate resolve under conditions of incomplete information and incentives to bluff.

The risk to domestic and diplomatic stability need not be deliberately embraced in order to help convince foreigners of the need to compromise or stand down. States do not send troops to the border in order to heighten the risk of an unintended skirmish, nor do they develop nuclear weapons in order to increase the likelihood of a nuclear accident. Yet the increased risk of confrontation may still weigh heavily on foreign calculations of whether to strike a compromise and prevent unwanted escalation. If the government is unable to prevent protests, their occurrence signals the government's vulnerability to domestic pressure.

The decision to allow protests that pose a risk of getting out of hand and constrain the government's diplomatic options is not as crazy or irrational as it may sound. By allowing nationalist protests, the government avoids appearing unpatriotic and conserves the political capital it would have spent to repress demonstrations. Tolerating protests may be a judicious choice, particularly when the government desires to take a tough stance against foreign demands. The government can