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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

My research lies at the intersection of comparative politics and international relations. In both literatures, authoritarian regimes are often treated as a residual category. Opening the black box of the authoritarian state, I seek to answer the following question: 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. Anti-foreign protests thus provide microfoundations for audience costs, which to date have generally been assumed, rather than empirically or theoretically substantiated.

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. Four case studies, a comparison of anti-Japanese protest in Hong Kong and mainland China, and computerized content analysis of official and commercial Chinese media demonstrate rich support for the theory.

The organization of my dissertation is as follows. In the first chapter, I develop 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. Three primary hypotheses follow: H1) If a settlement is reached, anti-foreign protests should lead to a more favorable outcome for the government; H2) Absent a settlement, anti-foreign protests should lead the government to adopt a more hawkish stance; and H3) Anti-foreign protests should occur before or during negotiations, not afterwards. The claim that protests present a risk to authoritarian regimes yields three secondary hypotheses: H4) Anti-foreign protests should be rarer in autocracies than democracies; H5) Dovish protests

should never be allowed; and H6) The larger the risk a protest poses to the regime, the more likely the government is to try to prevent it.

After presenting the theory, I then utilize a comparison of Hong Kong and mainland China to test the fourth hypothesis, namely, that anti-foreign protests should be rarer in autocracies. 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.

In the second chapter, I show that the incentives and mechanisms specified by my theory actually 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 show how the media served as a signal to the public that protest was acceptable, utilizing computer-based content analysis of official and commercial newspapers. I focus on *People’s Daily*, the government’s mouthpiece, and *Global Times*, a widely-read commercial paper with a nationalist bent.

In the third chapter, I demonstrate 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 spiral into anti-regime protests. A careful tracing reveals several 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 among democratic activists developed during the anti-Japanese protests and gained 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.

The fourth chapter shows that the decision to allow or prevent anti-foreign protests depends on not only the government’s assessment of domestic costs, but also the international bargaining context. The chapter begins with an empirical puzzle: why were anti-American protests allowed after the 1999 bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, but prevented after the 2001 collision of a U.S. spy plane and a Chinese fighter jet? 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. The 2001 collision also occurred on the eve of the final vote on which city would host the 2008 Olympics, for which Beijing was a front-runner. The combination of these factors led the Chinese government to view anti-American protests as beneficial in 1999, but harmful in 2001.

The fifth chapter addresses "the dog that did not bark," namely, the striking absence of popular protest in China regarding the issue of Taiwan. Given that reunification with Taiwan is of paramount concern to Chinese nationalists, what explains this dearth of protest? Evidence from several cases in which the Chinese government repressed protests over Taiwan demonstrates support for the sixth hypothesis, namely, that highly risky protests are unlikely to be allowed. In recent years, Taiwanese leaders have repeatedly taken pro-independence actions that have been declared "provocative" by the official Chinese media. Yet the Chinese government has taken pains to prevent popular protests against Taiwanese independence. In an interview, 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 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. I suggest that the Chinese government has not allowed protests regarding Taiwan precisely because the issue is so central to the legitimacy of the regime. Once begun, protests regarding Taiwan could easily unite different groups against the government and would be extremely costly for the government to suppress. Given the potential for protests against Taiwanese independence to spiral out of control, I suggest that the Chinese government has taken alternative measures, such as missile exercises, to establish the credibility of its position on the Taiwan issue.

My dissertation is the first systematic examination of the causes and consequences of anti-foreign protest. It sheds light on key questions about the future of China's international relations: Will China's rise be peaceful? Would a democratic China be more or less aggressive in world affairs? More broadly, my explication of the strategic logic of nationalist protest has implications for anti-Americanism and U.S. relations with other authoritarian regimes. From Egypt to Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, many authoritarian leaders are buttressed by aid from the West. Yet many of them evince a distinct reluctance to curtail the activities of extremist elements. When do autocratic leaders rein in anti-foreign activities, and when do they allow or encourage mass protest? My dissertation identifies the incentives that authoritarian leaders have to nurture anti-foreign sentiment and tolerate protest, while challenging the view that nationalism and anti-foreign attitudes are beyond the reach of government management and international diplomacy.

After completing the thesis in May 2008, I plan to revise my dissertation for publication as a book and related articles. In particular, I intend to add several cases based on secondary research to evaluate the generalizability of my argument across space and time. To evaluate the impact of regime type, I will investigate the cases of Taiwan and South Korea, contrasting the pattern of anti-American and anti-Japanese protest before and after democratization. I will also look at historical parallels in pre-reform China, particularly during the Cultural Revolution and the early 20th Century.