

## **The 2005 Anti-Japanese Protests in China and the Negotiations over U.N. Security Council Expansion**

Jessica C. Weiss  
University of California, San Diego  
Department of Political Science  
La Jolla, CA 92093  
jweiss@ucsd.edu

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Why does the Chinese government sometimes allow and sometimes suppress nationalist, anti-foreign demonstrations? What are the consequences of this choice for China’s international relations? In the previous chapter, I argue that authoritarian leaders face incentives to allow anti-foreign protests in order to gain bargaining leverage in diplomatic negotiations. This finding 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. Here, I illustrate the logic by presenting a case study of the 2005 anti-Japanese protests in China and the negotiations over U.N. Security Council reform. I draw upon qualitative and quantitative data gathered during 12 months of field research and more than 100 interviews with nationalist activists, protest participants, and government officials in China, Japan and Hong Kong. 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 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 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 senior Japanese officials, June 28, 1987<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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)

## 1. Introduction

Why does the Chinese government sometimes allow and sometimes suppress nationalist anti-foreign demonstrations, and what are the consequences of this choice for China's international relations? 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 1995 and 2001. Given the government's consistent emphasis on social stability and peaceful development in the post-Mao era, what explains this variation? When and why does the government give the public a green, yellow, or red light to protest foreign targets?

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

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<sup>1</sup> Whiting (1989):164, in translation from *Cankao Xiaoxi*, June 30, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> In Chinese: *Mei pizhun, juehui mei pizhun, zhe shi zhengfu moren.*

for three primary reasons: government incapacity in the face of spontaneous popular demonstrations (Perry 2002; Tanner 2004; Gries 2004, 2005a)<sup>3</sup>; 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); and factional or bureaucratic competition (Allison 1969; Nathan 1973). Although these explanations contain important insights, they have difficulty accounting for the variation described above, which I discuss later in the paper.

I present a new theory of anti-foreign protest, suggesting that Chinese and other authoritarian leaders have incentives to allow anti-foreign protests in order to gain bargaining leverage in international negotiations. Recent research in international relations 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 2001). 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-

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<sup>3</sup> Here, “incapacity” includes descriptions such as “too hazardous for the government to try to disallow student protests altogether,” (Perry (2002): xiv) and “unable to suppress the protestors, authorities were forced to plead with them for calm” (Gries (2004):131).

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. The theory presented here identifies 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.

Based on twelve months of field research in China, Hong Kong, and Japan, I use qualitative and quantitative data to examine the anti-Japanese protests that swept China in March and April of 2005, which were timed to coincide with multilateral negotiations over Japan’s bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. I conducted more than 100 personal interviews with government officials, activists, protest participants, diplomatic personnel, journalists, and foreign policy experts, enabling me to evaluate the perceptions and motivations of key players.

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 relatively 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.

In this paper, 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.

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.<sup>4</sup>

The paper proceeds as follows. I begin by outlining the logic of anti-foreign protests as a bargaining tactic in international negotiations, identifying key implications of the theory. Next, I illustrate the logic of the argument via a case study of the 2005 anti-Japanese protests in China, first presenting a detailed narrative, and then analyzing the case through the lens of the theory. Finally, I discuss several alternative explanations and their limitations, and conclude.

## **2. Theory**

In this section, I outline the core assumptions of the theory and then present the three hypotheses addressed in this paper.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Core Assumptions***

The theory rests upon two key assumptions: 1) nationalist anti-foreign protests are risky in the authoritarian context; and 2) protests are easier to nip in the bud, i.e. the costs of suppression escalate as protests grow larger and more widespread.

Protests present a risk to authoritarian stability for at least three reasons:

- *Demonstration effects, tipping points, and information cascades*: Protests, once begun, can trigger the sudden realization that protest is acceptable, even safe. 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).

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<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> See the previous chapter for a more comprehensive treatment of my assumptions and hypotheses.

- *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 (Tarrow 1998; Goldman 1987).
- *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 fissures between hardliners and moderates (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986).

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 that the protesters will change direction, for example, and picket government offices rather than the foreign embassy. As Chairman Mao famously stated, “A single spark can start a prairie fire.” Nevertheless, the magnitude of this risk—as perceived by the government and foreign observers—is an important variable that affects the expected utility of allowing anti-foreign protest as a bargaining tactic.<sup>6</sup>

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 (Snyder 1991; van Evera 1994; Zhao 2004). Nationalist protests are particularly regime-threatening because they have broad appeal and can unite different disaffected groups under a single banner (see Perry 2002:xiv; Shirk 2007:256). Because nationalism promotes love of the nation, not 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, as evidenced by the fall of the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China.

The second 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 cause greater popular

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<sup>6</sup> I return to this issue below with evidence from the 2005 case study.

dissatisfaction 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. Psychologically, the crowd’s willingness to resist suppression is also likely to increase with the experience of protest. By the logic of prospect theory, participants will fight harder for the right to protest after they have joined the demonstration than when it is hypothetical. Nationalist protests are especially costly to suppress in this regard because suppression often appears anti-patriotic—a betrayal of the national myth. The larger and more prominent the protest, the more likely international and domestic observers are to condemn the government for violating human rights. Suppressing a protest after it has begun is thus more likely to sully the government’s international reputation.

### ***Logical Implications and Hypotheses***

Based upon these core assumptions, I argue that potentially destabilizing nationalist protests create bargaining leverage for authoritarian leaders in two ways: first, by making it costly to pursue a soft or conciliatory foreign policy, and second, by demonstrating resolve in international negotiations.

Anti-foreign protests make it difficult for authoritarian leaders to take an accommodating or conciliatory foreign policy by generating a credible threat of domestic punishment. With protesters in the streets, the government would have to suppress the anti-foreign protests or suffer an anti-government backlash in order to adopt or maintain a conciliatory foreign policy. 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 reduce 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.

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 protests that are likely to get out of control, such as those 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 the government apart from governments that would not run this risk, signaling a relatively high value for the international dispute, i.e. “resolve.” Moreover, if nationalist protests are perceived to be more hawkish than the government’s position and/or the status quo, then foreign governments face incentives to make concessions that will appease protesters and/or strengthen the regime.

Several implications follow from the argument. Here, I focus on three main hypotheses:

- ***Hypothesis 1: Given the occurrence of anti-foreign protests, the outcome of international negotiations should be more favorable to the government if a settlement is reached.*** On average, anti-foreign protests should lead to a more advantageous bargain 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 stand firm in international negotiations.*** 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.

- ***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.

### **3. Case Study of the 2005 Anti-Japanese Protests and U.N. Negotiations**

I find strong support for these three hypotheses 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 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.<sup>7</sup> 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?*

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<sup>7</sup> For other academic discussions of the 2005 anti-Japanese protests, see Gries (2005b); Zhao (2005); He (2007a); and Xu (2007).

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.<sup>8</sup>

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 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

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<sup>8</sup> *Chengming*, May 2005, p. 7, citing the State Council General Office bulletin.

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.

### ***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.<sup>9</sup> 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

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<sup>9</sup> 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.

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 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."<sup>10</sup>

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."<sup>11</sup> 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

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<sup>10</sup> Satoh (2001), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

Kong Quan told reporters at a regular press conference: “Regarding Japan, I can make clear this principled stance, that we understand Japan's aspiration to play a greater role in international affairs.”<sup>12</sup> 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.”<sup>13</sup> 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.’”<sup>14</sup> 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. Both models

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<sup>12</sup> FBIS, CPP20040909000157, September 9, 2004. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China WWW-Text* in Chinese.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. <http://news.tom.com/1002/20040909-1299026.html> and [http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2004-09/10/content\\_1964696.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2004-09/10/content_1964696.htm), last accessed August 14, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> In Chinese, “*Zhongguo Waijiaobu ze mohu de duice biaoshi lijie.*” <http://www.thechinapress.com/yaowen/ywimg/200409190066.htm>, last accessed August 14, 2007.

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.<sup>15</sup>

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 permanent seats with veto power, along the lines of Model A.<sup>16</sup> By

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<sup>15</sup> Jiji Press, December 8, 2004; Agence France-Presse, March 7, 2005; see also Shinichi (2005).

<sup>16</sup> Agence France-Presse, March 7, 2005.

announcing their preference for expanding the permanent membership of the Council, the African Union strengthened the G4's position.<sup>17</sup>

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.”<sup>18</sup> 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.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Annan sided with the G4 in stressing that he wanted a decision—by vote if necessary—in time for the 60<sup>th</sup> 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 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

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<sup>17</sup> “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](http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/EJN_no1.htm).

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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/>.

by Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup>

Although the reaction from the Chinese Foreign Ministry was mild, stressing the importance of "broad consensus" on the basis of "unanimity through consultation,"<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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 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

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<sup>20</sup> 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>.

<sup>21</sup> "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](http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/EJN_no1.htm).

<sup>22</sup> FBIS, CPP20050322000209, March 22, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> <http://news.sina.com.cn/w/2005-03-22/06285425255s.shtml>.

managing China's international image and monitoring the content of all internet news sites.<sup>24</sup>

“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.”<sup>25</sup> 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.”<sup>26</sup>

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 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.<sup>27</sup> 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

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<sup>24</sup> 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](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2007hearings/written_testimonies/07_07_31wrts/07_07_31_qiang_statement.php).

<sup>25</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2005-03/25/content\\_2741791.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2005-03/25/content_2741791.htm).

<sup>26</sup> “Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman Liu Jianchao Answers Journalists' Questions at Routine News Conference on 24 March 2005,” FBIS, CPP20050324000145.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.china-embassy.org/chn/zmgx/t189682.htm>.

side should adopt a responsible attitude toward historical issues, so as to win the trust of the people of Asian countries, including China.”<sup>28</sup> 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.”<sup>29</sup>

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.”<sup>30</sup> 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).

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.<sup>31</sup> 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).

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<sup>28</sup> FBIS, CPP20050329000169, March 29, 2005.

<sup>29</sup> FBIS, CPP20050331000178, March 31, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> <http://bbs.hzu.edu.cn/mainframe.php?tid=357245>

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

The first street petition to turn violent occurred on Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.”<sup>32</sup> Another netizen asserted that the vandalism was done by people with “ulterior motives” and should not be used to smear the members of the Patriots Alliance Network. With the Chengdu protest, it became clear that even relatively 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.<sup>33</sup>

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

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<sup>32</sup> Post to the Patriots Alliance Network website, April 3, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Transcript of PRC FM Spokesman News Conference on 7 Apr 05, FBIS CPP20050407000218

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*).<sup>34</sup> 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*)<sup>35</sup> 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 avoided.<sup>36</sup> “We reported on the internet petitions against Japan’s UNSC bid,” said a senior reporter at the *Global Times*, a commercial subsidiary<sup>37</sup> 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,<sup>38</sup> Chinese netizens expressed their anger over the government’s failure to take a harder stance against Japan’s bid for a

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<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 4, 2005 and April 6, 2005; Hong Kong *Sing Pao*, April 4, 2005.

<sup>36</sup> E.g. <http://tech.sina.com.cn/i/2005-04-02/1334569566.shtml>,

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of the commercialization of the Chinese media, see Shirk (2007); Shambaugh (2007); and Stockmann (2007).

<sup>38</sup> *People’s Daily*, April 6, 2005.

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.”<sup>39</sup> 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, losing face for the Chinese people! What ability can it have to reunify with Taiwan?<sup>40</sup>

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.”<sup>41</sup> 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.”<sup>42</sup> 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

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<sup>39</sup> BBS post by Li Weixing, April 5, 2005.

<sup>40</sup> Posted to the Patriots Alliance Network website on April 5, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Shinichi (2005).

<sup>42</sup> Tokyo Jiji Press, FBIS JPP20050405000020, April 5, 2005.

Japan.”<sup>43</sup> 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.”<sup>44</sup>

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.”<sup>45</sup> Her statements prompted dismay in Japan and delighted speculation in the Chinese media. “Is the United States dumping (*paoqi*) Japan?” wrote *China Newsweek*.<sup>46</sup> 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.”<sup>47</sup> 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.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> <http://japan.people.com.cn/GB/35469/35478/3302180.html>, author translation.

<sup>44</sup> <http://japan.people.com.cn/GB/35464/35488/3305600.html>, <http://news.sohu.com/20050407/n225070485.shtml>, author translation.

<sup>45</sup> 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.usunewyork.usmission.gov/05\\_063.htm](http://www.usunewyork.usmission.gov/05_063.htm) or [http://www.un.int/usa/05\\_063.htm](http://www.un.int/usa/05_063.htm)

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/HIAW/842131.htm>.

<sup>47</sup> <http://news.sina.com.cn/w/2005-04-08/11346327744.shtml>.

<sup>48</sup> Shinichi (2005).

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 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."<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup> 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

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<sup>49</sup> Joseph Kahn, "China is pushing and scripting anti-Japanese protests," *New York Times*, April 15, 2005.

<sup>50</sup> 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 Weiji Guanli: Jiyu 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.

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 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."<sup>51</sup> 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."<sup>52</sup>

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."<sup>53</sup> 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 smoothly, [but]

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<sup>51</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 11, 2005.

<sup>52</sup> *Associated Press*, April 12, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> Yoshikazu Shirakawa, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 13, 2005.

the momentum for reforming the United Nations has never risen this high. It is a chance in that sense.”<sup>54</sup>

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).<sup>55</sup>

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 Japan<sup>56</sup> and faulting Koizumi’s “complete failure in Japan’s foreign policy.”<sup>57</sup> As Chinese netizens saluted their Premier for taking a stronger stance,<sup>58</sup> 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 worsening relations with China and South Korea. In one month, popular support for the LDP dropped eight points to twenty-five percent.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Kyodo News Agency, April 12, 2005.

<sup>55</sup> FBIS, CPP20050412000218, April 12, 2005.

<sup>56</sup> Jiji Press, April 12, 2005; *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 14, 2005.

<sup>57</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, Apr 12, 2005, FBIS, JPP20050413000119.

<sup>58</sup> 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.

<sup>59</sup> *Mainichi Shimbun*, April 18, 2005, FBIS, JPP20050418000013.

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.”<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup>

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.<sup>62</sup> 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 they are not going to use their membership to settle scores within the region.”<sup>63</sup> 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

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<sup>60</sup> James Brooke, *New York Times*, April 14, 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Agence France-Presse, April 12, 2005.

<sup>62</sup> *Nihon Keizai*, April 14, 2005, FBIS, JPP20050414000020.

<sup>63</sup> Ray Marcelo and Hugh Williamson, *Financial Times*, April 13, 2005.

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.”<sup>64</sup>

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.<sup>65</sup> One widely circulated flyer called for demonstrations in at least 12 cities, including one in Tiananmen Square.<sup>66</sup> 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, 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.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, April 13, 2005, FBIS, JPP20050413000004.

<sup>65</sup> Agence France-Presse, April 14, 2005; Xinhua Financial News, April 15, 2005.

<sup>66</sup> <http://media.people.com.cn/GB/4777497.html#>, last accessed August 16, 2007.

<sup>67</sup> 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.

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,<sup>68</sup> 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.”<sup>69</sup>

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 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.”<sup>70</sup> 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

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<sup>68</sup> Josephine Ma and Leu Siew Ying, *South China Morning Post*, April 17, 2005.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> “China allows more protests against Japan,” April 17, 2005.

there.”<sup>71</sup> 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.”<sup>72</sup> 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 released by the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated that Machimura had “expressed deep reflection and apologies.”<sup>73</sup> 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,”<sup>74</sup> street protests continued throughout the day. Thousands of protestors attended demonstrations in Shenzhen, Shenyang, Chengdu, Nanning, Guangzhou, Dongguan, and Zhuhai.<sup>75</sup> 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

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<sup>71</sup> April 17, 2005. Reported by FBIS on April 19, 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Xinhua, April 16, 2005;

<sup>73</sup> Kyodo News Agency, April 18, 2005.

<sup>74</sup> *Mainichi Shimbun*, April 20, 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Hong Kong *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, April 17, 2005.

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 accusations....it is fine if the summit meeting is different from the foreign ministers’ meeting.”<sup>76</sup>

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.<sup>77</sup> 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.”<sup>78</sup> 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

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<sup>76</sup> Agence France Presse, April 18, 2005.

<sup>77</sup> Xinhua, April 19, 2005, FBIS translation.

<sup>78</sup> Josephine Ma and Shi Ting, *South China Morning Post*, April 22, 2005.

warning against the undesirable and illegal actions that took place during the protests.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup> In fact, cell phone users were unable to send text messages with phrases such as “Japan,” “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 4<sup>th</sup>, 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.<sup>81</sup>

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.<sup>82</sup> 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.

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<sup>79</sup> Zhang and Zhao (2005).

<sup>80</sup> Kyodo News Service, April 28, 2005.

<sup>81</sup> Kyodo News Service, May 16, 2005.

<sup>82</sup> Naoko Aoki, Kyodo News Service, April 23, 2005.

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 end to the debate.<sup>83</sup> 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.”<sup>84</sup> 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.

### ***Analysis: 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.<sup>85</sup> 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

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<sup>83</sup> Associated Press, August 4, 2005.

<sup>84</sup> <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=July&x=20050712184505advnnd0.5566522>, July 12, 2005.

<sup>85</sup> China has scrupulously avoided using its veto power in the UNSC, typically preferring to abstain.

international reputation 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 the 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.”<sup>86</sup> 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.”<sup>87</sup>

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 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.<sup>88</sup>

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

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<sup>86</sup> Josephine Ma and Shi Ting, *South China Morning Post*, April 22, 2005.

<sup>87</sup> Satoshi Saeki and Masahiko Takekoshi, April 12, 2005.

<sup>88</sup> Tan (2006), p. 467. Author translation.

1986, which in turn laid the foundation for the 1989 movement (see Whiting 1989; Wasserstrom 1991).<sup>89</sup> 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.”<sup>90</sup>

*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 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

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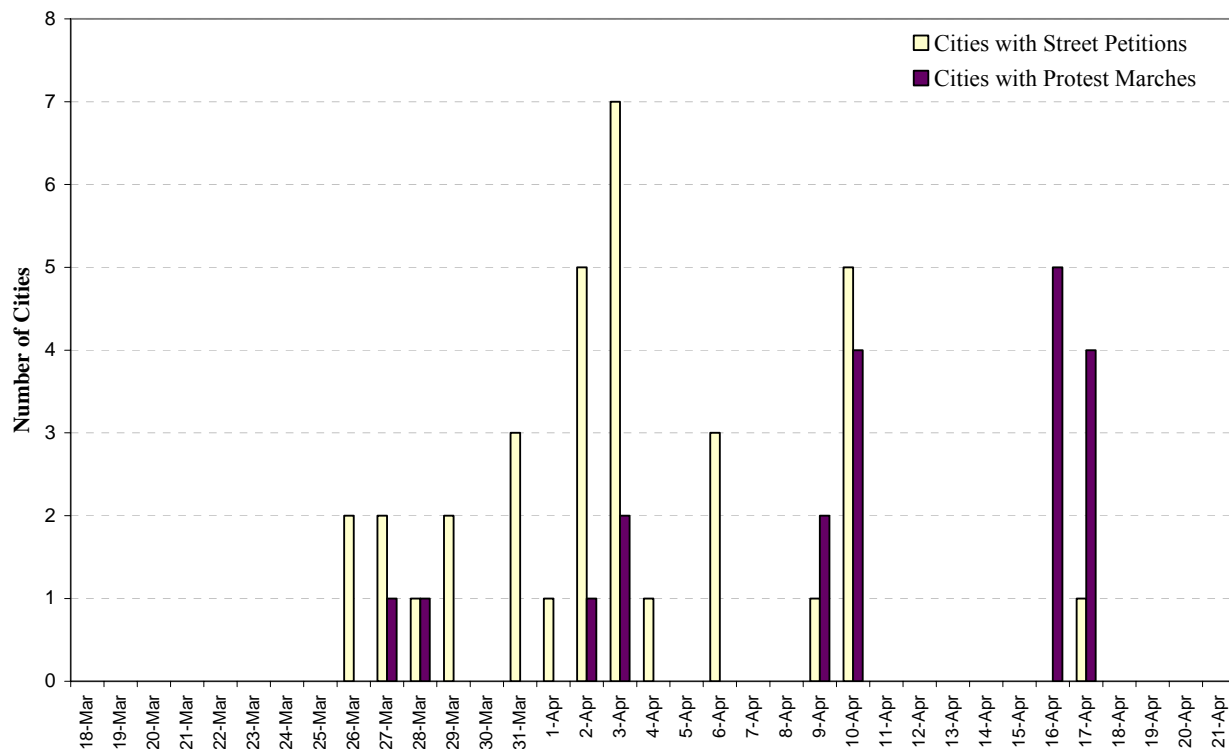
<sup>89</sup> This link is the focus of the third chapter of my dissertation.

<sup>90</sup> Agence France Presse, March 13, 1998.

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.

**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 4<sup>th</sup> 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."<sup>91</sup>

***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.

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<sup>91</sup> Leu Siew Ying, *South China Morning Post*, April 27, 2005.

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 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 placement. 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.<sup>92</sup>

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 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

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<sup>92</sup> *Ta Kung Pao*, FBIS, CPP20050603000054, June 3, 2005.

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*.<sup>93</sup>

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. Remarkd 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-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

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<sup>93</sup> FBIS, JPP20050424000002, April 24, 2005.

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.”<sup>94</sup>

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 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

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<sup>94</sup> Kyodo News Agency, August 31, 2004.

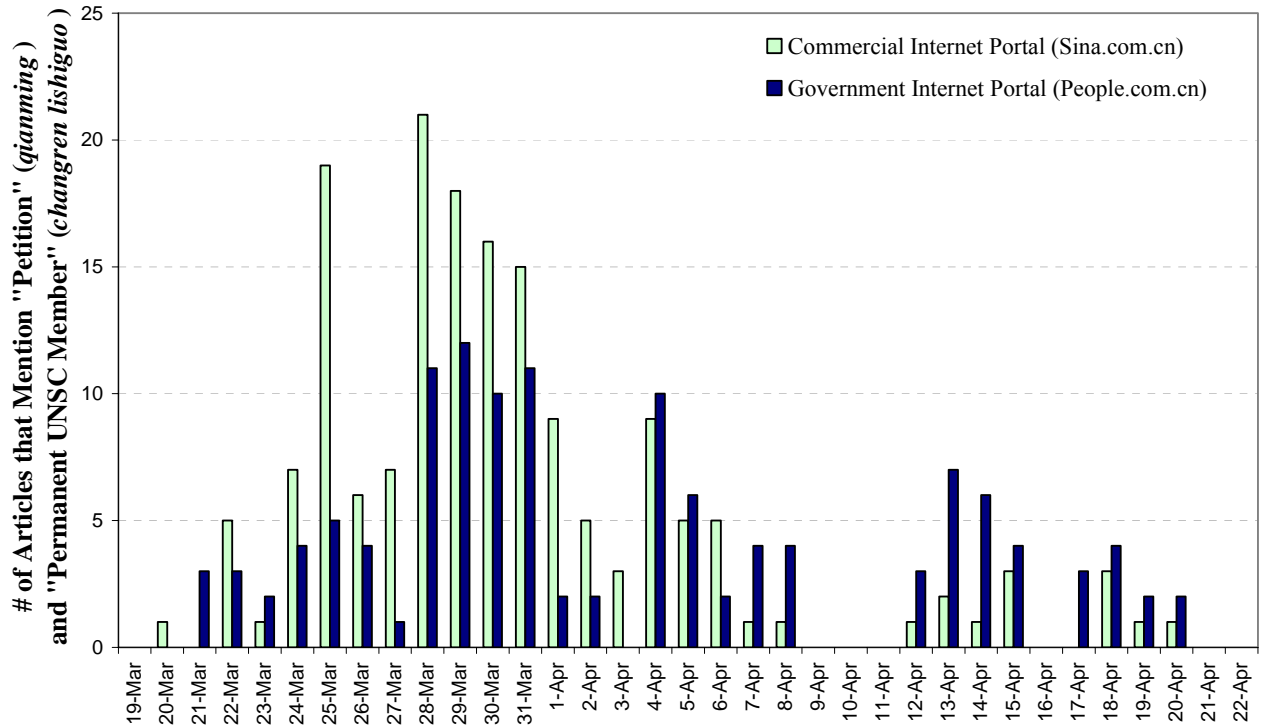
the government is quite capable of guiding news coverage and imposing a media blackout when a topic is deemed too sensitive. The figure below traces the fluctuation in online coverage of the anti-Japanese petitions on People.com.cn, the portal site of the official *People's Daily*, and Sina.com.cn, one of the three major commercial portals that hosted the internet petition.<sup>95</sup> 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, 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.

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<sup>95</sup>The data shown here were collected using the Chinese news search engine at [http://news.baidu.com/advanced\\_news.html](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.

**Online News Coverage of Anti-Japanese Petitions in Mainland China,  
March-April 2005**



***Limitations of 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 1.

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.”<sup>96</sup> 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

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<sup>96</sup> Okamoto and Tanaka (2005).

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.<sup>97</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 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.<sup>98</sup> 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.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> For an illustration of this phenomenon during the 1999 anti-U.S. protests, see Zhao (2003).

<sup>98</sup> See Shimizu (2006).

<sup>99</sup> 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.

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.

## **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 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.

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