The State as the Mobilizer and De-mobilizer in China's Nationalist Protests

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During 1999-2012, China witnessed several waves of large scale popular nationalist protests, targeting primarily at the perceived anti-China forces in the US and Japan. The first nationalist protest was against the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia in 1999. It was followed by an anti-American protest after the mid-air collision between a Chinese fighter jet and the US Surveillance airplane in 2001. Then the Anti-Japanese protest took place in 2005 and was followed by the anti-Western protests prior to the Beijing Olympic Game in 2008. Chinese people took to the street again to protest the purchase of the disputed Tiaoyu/Sankaku islands by the Japanese government in 2012. The communist state was normally quick to stop even very small protests, but tolerated and even encouraged these nationalist protests until protestors not only became violent but also turned to blame the Chinese government for its seemingly soft stances toward the US and Japan. This article conducts case studies of the two anti-American protests in 1999 and 2001, the anti-West protests prior to the Beijing Olympic in 2008, and the two anti-Japanese protests in 2005 and 2012. It reveals how the communist state, facing a nationalist dilemma, took a two pronged strategy to mobilize popular expression of nationalism in response to the rising popular nationalist sentiments against the perceived anti-China forces after the end of the Cold War while acting in a calculated manner to rein and eventually de-mobilize the protests to make sure that they would not go out of control and create chaos to threaten the political and social stability and that Chinese foreign policy was not dictated by the emotional voices of popular nationalism on the streets.

This double role of mobilizer and de-mobilizer was a result of peculiar political developments during the 1990s and the 2000s. The Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao administrations made use of the popular nationalist sentiments to compensate the decline of communist ideology for political legitimacy but were not willing to confront the US and Japan at the expenses of China's modernization programs. Coming to office in 2012, President Xi Jinping has launched the largest campaign in post-Mao China to champion an official ideology with the mixture of communism, nationalism, and Leninism to strengthen his China dream of great national rejuvenation. Confident in China's increasing power and capacities, President Xi, however, become increasingly concerned about domestic and

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external security and, therefore, has simply banned all popular protests, including nationalist protests. The state has stopped to play the role of neither mobilizer or de-mobilizer of nationalist protests.

The Communist State versus Nationalist Dilemma

The rise of Chinese nationalism in post-Mao years was driven mostly by two forces from opposite directions: the state from top-down and the populist societal forces from bottom-up. The top-down driven nationalism is known as state nationalism, which was more pragmatic than emotional popular nationalism driven from bottom-up. The communist state played the role of mobilizer and de-mobilizer in the nationalist protests because it faced a nationalist dilemma. State nationalism was instrumental for regime legitimacy and certain foreign objectives but popular nationalism could threaten political stability and damaging to China foreign relations without constraints. Because of the nationalist dilemma, "the Chinese leadership was constrained to deploy nationalism as a means of legitimizing the regime or to mobilize the population in support of their policies."[1]

The state became a primary driver to the reemergence of nationalism in post-Mao because nationalism was instrumental to compensate to the widespread demise of communist ideology after Deng Xiaoping began to "reassess" (criticize) Maoism to pave the way for market-oriented economic reform in the 1980s. The near-total collapse of public faith in communism led to the "three confidence crises" (三信危机): i.e., the crises of confidence in socialism (信心危机), Marxism (信仰危机), and the party (信任危机). The demise of communist ideology, therefore, threatened an eroding basis of state legitimacy and gave opportunity for the advancement of alternative visions when some intellectuals turned to Western liberal ideas and called for Western-style democracy. Starting from the Democracy Wall Movement in 1979, the authoritarian rule of the CCP was challenged in several waves of popular protests and demonstrations, including the large-scale anti-government demonstrations on Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989. Although the demonstrations were suppressed, how to restore legitimacy of the communist regime and build a broadly based national support became the most serious challenge to the post-Tiananmen leadership. Coming to the realization that the political indoctrination of the younger generation had become an urgent need as the "Tiananmen

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[1] Ian Seckington, "Nationalism, Ideology and China's 'Fourth Generation' Leadership," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14(42), (2005), p. 28.

Incident" showed the fatal consequence of losing "spiritual pillars" (*jingshen Zhizhu*), the party leadership rediscovered the instrumentality of nationalism.

The communist state exploited nationalism because of its utility as the most reliable claim to the Chinese people's loyalty and the only important value shared by both the regime and its critics to compensate for the declining communist ideology. Even pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square equated promoting democracy with patriotism. Indeed, a historical sense of injustice at the hands of foreign powers is deeply rooted in the national psyche and 强国梦 (the dream of a strong China) is shared among all Chinese people. As a result of a volatile mix of rising pride and lingering insecurity in response to profound transformations in the post-Cold War era, Chinese nationalism represents an aggregation of various political forces to override China's weakness and find its rightful place in the world. A shared objective of holding the nation together during the turbulent transition reinvigorated the loyalty of the Chinese people to the state. Reinforcing Chinese national confidence and turning past humiliation and current weakness into a driving force for China's modernization, nationalism became an effective instrument to enhance the legitimacy of the communist state.

The top-down driven nationalism is known as state nationalism, which identifies the Chinese nation closely with the Communist state. Nationalist sentiment is officially expressed as 爱国 (loving the state) or 爱国主义 (patriotism), which is love and support of China indistinguishable from the state.[2] The state claims it represents the whole nation and advances the nation's interests rather than just the interests of the state and, therefore, speaks in the name of the nation and demands citizens to subordinate their individual interests to those of the state. The state, as the center of nationalist aspirations and the embodiment of the nation's will, seeks the loyalty and support of the people that are granted the nation itself. "This conceptual manipulation is coupled with political control of nationalist sentiments and expressions, thus making Chinese nationalism subordinate to party-state interests."[3]

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[2] Michael Hunt, "Chinese National Identity and the Strong State: The Late Qing-Republican Crisis," in Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, *China's Quest for National Identity*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 63.

[3] Jonathan Walton, "An Interview with Yingjie guo: Chinese Nationalism and its Future Prospect, Policy Q & A, The National Bureau of Asian Research, June 27, 2012, http://www.nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=258

For this purpose, the communist state launched an extensive patriotic education campaign in the 1990s to ensure loyalty in a population that was otherwise subject to many domestic discontents. The core of the patriotic education campaign was 国情教育 (education in national conditions), which unambiguously held that China's national conditions was unique and not ready for adopting Western-style democracy. Instead, the current one-party rule should continue because it would help maintain political stability, a pre-condition for rapid economic development. The campaign, therefore, redefined the legitimacy of the communist regime on the basis of providing political stability and economic prosperity in a protracted process of building power sufficient to protect China's national interests. When communist leaders called upon the Chinese people to work hard to build a prosperous and strong China and said that China was bullied and humiliated by foreign powers, they indicated that China's economic under-development should share some of the blame.[4]

The nationalist card was particularly effective when China was faced with pressures from foreign forces. As a Chinese official said, if Chinese people felt threatened by external forces, the solidarity among them would be strengthened and nationalism would be a useful tool for the regime to justify its leadership role.[5] It was revealing to see that although corruption and some other social and economic problems undermined the legitimacy of the Communist regime, many Chinese people sided with the communist government under sanctions by Western countries, which were said to be hostile to China rather than the Communist Party. No matter how corrupt the government was, foreigners had no right to make unwarranted remarks about China. Many Chinese people were upset by US pressure on issues of human rights, intellectual property rights, trade deficits, weapons proliferation, and Taiwan because they believed that the US used these issues to demonize China in an effort to prevent it from rising as a great power. Positioning itself as the defender of China's national pride and interests in the fighting against Western sanctions after the Tiananmen Square crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations and for China's entry into the WTO, stopping Taiwan independence, and hosting the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, the communist state certainly bolstered its nationalist credentials.

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[4] Suisheng Zhao, "A State-led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-communist Studies*, 31(3), (1998).

[5] Liu Ji, "Making the Right Choices in Twenty-first Century Sino-American Relations," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 7(17), (1998), p. 92.

State nationalism, for quite a while, however, was more reactive than proactive in response to perceived foreign pressure that was said to erode, corrode, or endanger the national interest of China. Setting peace and development as China's major foreign policy objectives, the state emphasized political stability at home as the necessary condition for the attainment of economic prosperity, the pathway for the communist party to stay in power and the foundation for China's rising nationalist aspirations. Making use of nationalism to rally support, Chinese leaders had to make sure that popular expression of nationalist sentiments would not jeopardize the overarching objectives of political stability and economic modernization upon which their legitimacy was ultimately based. Seeking to defend China’s national interests by making efforts to develop cooperative relations with the United States and other Western powers that held the key for China’s modernization, state nationalism was flexible in tactics, subtle in strategy, and avoided appearing confrontational, although it remained uncompromising on issues that involved China's vital interests or triggered historical sensitivities. State-led and largely reactive, state nationalism does not have a fixed, objectified, and eternally defined content, nor is it driven by any ideology, religious beliefs, or other abstract ideas. It was an instrument of the communist state to bolster the faith of the Chinese people in a political system in trouble and hold the country together during the period of rapid and turbulent transformation.

Chinese nationalism, however, was not the sole province of the state propaganda. Populist sentiments at the societal level were also part of the nationalist orchestra. Bottom-up driven nationalism, known as popular nationalism, defines the Chinese nation as composed of citizens who have the duty of supporting their own state in defending national rights in the world of nation-states while also pursuing individual rights of participation in the government, popular nationalists have a split personality. Identifying with the Chinese state against foreign powers, they push for political participation against the authoritarian state. Sharing with the government the dream of making China a strong and powerful country that could stand up against the bullies of the Western powers, popular nationalism is particularly suspicious about a Western conspiracy and hidden agenda to slow down or even stop China’s rise and, therefore, more vocal and emotional than the state in criticism of Western evil intentions. Although many in the US claim that the main point of friction with China is due to China’s authoritarianism and therefore press China on issues of human rights and democracy, Chinese nationalists have wondered whether or not the conflict will remain and perhaps grow starker even if China becomes

democratic because they don't believe that the US wants to see China, even a democratic China, become richer and stronger than America. "After a century slowly fomenting among Chinese intellectuals, national sentiment has captured and redefined the consciousness of the Chinese people during the last two decades of China's economic boom. This mass national consciousness launched the Chinese colossus into global competition to achieve an international status commensurate with the country's vast capacities and the Chinese people's conception of their country's rightful place in the world."[6]

Popular nationalism began to emerge in the 1990s, expressing powerfully in the instant best sellers of a series of "say no" books, such as *The China That Can Say No,* T*he China that Still Can Say No,* and *How China Can Say No.* With a quick and automatic conviction that the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 was deliberate, popular nationalists were the leading force in the anti-American demonstrations. Because most popular nationalists are young, they are also known as "*feng qing*" (angry youths). Connected mostly by new information technology, particularly the internet, the youth popular nationalist movement gained momentum in the 2000s. They led the dramatic signature campaign that gathered more than 20 million people on the internet in 2005 to oppose Japan's bid to join the United Nations Security Council, the massive anti-Japanese demonstrations in major Chinese cities, protesting Japan's approval of history textbooks which they said whitewashed Japanese wartime atrocities, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's contentious visits to the war-tainted Yasukuni Shrine, and Japan's pledge to help the US defend Taiwan in the event of an attack by Beijing. Showing their strong sense of wounded national pride, popular nationalists gathered in many Chinese cities and all over the world in an act of solidarity against what they believed to be an "anti-China" bias of the Western media during the Olympic torch relay and to show their support to the Chinese government for hosting the Olympic Games in 2008. It was the massive worldwide protests in 2008 that gave rise to the world's concern for Chinese youths' nationalistic sentiment.[7]

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[6] Liah Greenfeld, "Roots of Japan-China rivalry," *Japan Times*, September 27, 2012, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/print/eo20120927a1.html

[7] Lijun Yang and Yongnian Zheng," Fen Qings (Angry Youth) in Contemporary China," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 21(76), (2012), p. 638.

Popular nationalism was powered by a narrative of China's century of shame and humiliation in the hands of imperialist powers and the conviction that “China has been treated unjustly and its territory and related sovereign rights have been exploited by other powers.” The nationalistic discourse thus not only led to a sense of "victimization" but also “involves a unique and strong sense of morality and righteousness in foreign affairs.” As a result, Chinese people saw any problems China faces with Western powers and neighbors over sensitive issues of sovereignty and security as caused by them and certainly not by China and had little patience with the complaints and calls for China to compromise on these issues.[8] Holding high expectations for the government to fulfill its promise of safeguarding China’s national interests, the boiling popular nationalist rhetoric was suffused with a sense of China-as-victim and a yearning for redress while calling for the opening of the foreign policy-making, an arena that was long a monopolized domain of the state. Seeking status, acceptance, and respect on the world stage, popular nationalists routinely charged the communist state as neither confident enough nor competent enough in safeguarding China’s vital national interests and too chummy with Japan and soft in dealing with the United States.

The emotional nature of popular nationalism posed a daunting challenge to the state that tried not only to maintain its monopoly over foreign policy making but also follow 韬光养晦 policy-- hiding its capabilities, focusing on national strength-building, and biding its time--set by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1990s.[9] Although popular nationalists called on the government to take a hard line against what they perceived provocations from the United States and Japan, Chinese leaders, from the position of relative vulnerability, knew that China’s circumscribed national strength did not allow it to exert enough clout to confront Western powers and that its economic success depended heavily upon opening to the outside world and, particularly, upon the cooperative relations with advanced Western countries.

In this case, it is not difficult for Chinese leaders to realize that nationalism is a double-edged sword: both a means to legitimate the CCP rule and a means for the Chinese people to judge the performance of the state. “All this makes nationalism a particularly interesting force in

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[8] Robert Sutter, “China's Self-Absorbed Nationalism,” *The Diplomat*, August 31, 2012, http://thediplomat.com/2012/08/31/chinas-self-absorbed-nationalism/

[9] Deng Qirong, *Gaige kaifang yilai de zhongguo waijiao* (Chinese Diplomacy since the Reform and Opening Up), (Beijing, China: Shijie Zhishi Chuban She, 2009), p. 18.

China, given its potential not just for conferring legitimacy on the government but also for taking it away."[10] Without constraints, nationalism could become a dangerous Pandora's Box and release tremendous forces with unexpected consequences. If Chinese leaders could not deliver on their nationalist promise, they would become vulnerable to nationalistic criticism. It is very possible that if the Chinese people should repudiate the communist government, it could be for nationalist reasons after a conspicuous failure in the government's foreign policy or program of economic development.

The State and the Anti-American Protests in 1999 and 2001

To balance the positive and the negative aspects, Chinese leaders adopted a two-pronged strategy to deal with popular expression of nationalism. On the one hand, they tolerated and even encouraged the expression of popular sentiments in defending China's vital national interest, such as the preservation of national sovereignty and the reunification of China. On the other hand, the Chinese government has tried to "channel" popular nationalist expression and took repeated action to restrain or even ban anti-foreign demonstrations. The two pronged strategy required the communist state to play the role of mobilizer as well as de-mobilizer of nationalist protests. The state learned in hard way how to play the dual role during the first large scale nationalist protest in 1999 and was determined to maintain control of the popular expression of nationalism after the mid-air collision in 2001.

On May 7, 1999, during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, five US guided bombs hit the Chinese embassy in the Belgrade, killing three Chinese journalists. NATO said at first that they didn't target the Chinese embassy building but another building next to the Chinese Embassy. Later, NATO changed its explanation and said that the Chinese Embassy was in fact targeted mistakenly as a Yugoslavian arms agency due to an outdated map. Both the Chinese government officials and average Chinese people simply could not take any "accident" explanations because they found it impossible to comprehend how the high-tech NATO forces led by the United States could have bombed the Chinese embassy by mistake. After the incident, the Chinese official media carried blanket coverage of the bombing and highly emotive stories on the Chinese victims in virulent anti-US language, giving rise to a highly emotional nationalism burst out. As soon as the bombing was reported, university students, spontaneously

[10] Nicolas D. Kristofor, "Guess Who's a Chinese Nationalist Now?" *New York Times*, April, 22,

as well as organized by the university authorities, poured into the front of the US embassy in Beijing and consulates in other cities, throwing eggs and stones to express their anger at US-led NATO actions. Sympathetic to the students, the police units guarding the embassy did not make any move to stop the demonstrations.

Encouraged by the Chinese government, the protests quickly spiraled out of control, not only threatening damage to China's crucially important relationship with the US but also provoking domestic criticism that the leadership was unwilling to confront the United States. The Chinese leadership apparently did not anticipate the vehemence of the student protests. The physical damage to the US embassy and consulates spoke of the dangers of playing with nationalist fire. Encouraging or even simply tolerating popular expression of virulent nationalism could be dangerous in China because, whether or not brainwashed by the Communist state, the Chinese people had a strong sense of being victimized by Western powers. Such an emotion could boil over easily. If the explosion of nationalist sentiment among the public went out of control, Chinese leaders could be forced to take a confrontational position against the US, the unwieldy superpower holding the key to China's future of economic modernization at the time. The price would be China's reform and economic growth. This situation was obviously not in China's interest when the leadership sought to maintain stability at home and retain a cooperative relationship with the US as the foreign policy priority.

As a result, Chinese leaders had to assume the difficult task of cooling down nationalist fury by calling for a reasoned response. Two days after the bombing incident, China's then Vice-President Hu Jintao made a televised speech in which, while extending government support to students patriotism, he appealed for calm and warned against extreme and destabilizing behavior. Frenzied demonstrations quickly ran out of steam. A tight police cordon was put up around the embassy where US Ambassador James Sasser and his staff had been under virtual siege for almost four days. Only small groups of protestors allowed enter under escort, "the police made them leave their stones behind and wouldn't allow them to throw them, and they were only allowed to stop at the gates of the embassy for one or two minutes."[11]

When an increased police presence outside the U.S. Embassy showed that the Chinese government was determined to prevent protest from agitating the US, the Chinese media stopped

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2001.

showing pictures of demonstrations on the streets and instead featured organized protests in schools and workplaces. In the meantime, the *People's Daily* reported that various Western countries had issued advisories against traveling to China, hurting tourism and foreign investment. In this case, although the government continued to demand that the US engage a thorough investigation, promptly publish the results and punish those responsible, official *Xinhua* Agency promptly listed apologies by US President Bill Clinton and other NATO leaders, and state television carried Clinton's public apology. The state media also mentioned a trip made by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to the Chinese embassy in Washington to apologize. Finally, meeting with the visiting Russian envoy on the Kosovo crisis, Viktor Chernomyrdin, on May 11, President Jiang Zemin stated that life in China should now return to normal and it was time to turn a new page in the name of economic necessity.[12] Premier Zhu Rongji, who was criticized for making excessive concessions to the US over Chinese accession to the WTO in his trip to Washington about one week earlier, also came out to echo Jiang's statement that China would adhere to its reform and opening-up policy and "continue to develop its friendly and cooperative ties with all nations around the world."[13]

It was against this background that less than one month after the bombing, Beijing restrained from vetoing the G8 proposal, which had to gain approval from the UN Security Council, to end the Kosovo crisis when Yugoslav leaders announced their decision to accept its conditions.[14] This was striking to some observers because, after the bombing, Beijing threatened all kinds of restrictions on UN Security Council activity but now did nothing. To express goodwill to US leaders, President Jiang sent his congratulations to the US women's soccer team after its July 10 victory over the Chinese team in the Women's World Cup final. This congratulation was reported prominently in the Chinese media and was said to be a signal that Beijing was ready to move past the incident.[15] Beijing's pragmatic policy paid off. Six months

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11 "PRC Moves to Cool Nationalist Fury on Bombing," AFP, May 11, 1999.

12 Xinhua, May 11, 1999.

13 Xinhua, May 11, 1999.

14 Liu Weijun, Yin De An, "China did not threaten to veto the G-8 proposal," *China News Digest*, June 3, 1999.

15 In a conversation with prominent Chinese scholar in late July 1999, he called for my attention to this subtle message sent by the pragmatic Chinese leadership.

after the incident, China and the US reached a historical agreement on the terms of China's accession to the WTO.

The crisis caused by the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy by the US was a wake-up call for the danger of falling victim to uncontrolled popular expression of nationalism. When the mid-air collision between a US Navy EP-3 plane and a Chinese jetfighter in the South China Sea took place on April 1, 2001, Chinese leaders were determined to avoid a repeat of the anti-American demonstrations one year earlier while orchestrating an official show of strong protest. While the collision took place in international airspace about 50 miles outside China's territorial waters, China claimed an exclusive economic zone that extends 230 miles out to sea, and asserted that the plane had no right to conduct surveillance there. China held the 24 US crewmembers at PLA military facilities on Hainan Island for 11 days and accused the pilot of breaking the law by making an emergency landing at a Chinese air base without permission. Beijing sought an apology from Washington but the White House declined to apologize, saying the collision was an accident.

The surveillance plane incident reinforced many Chinese people's suspicion of the United States as a careless bully that threw around its weight without considering the views or feelings of people from other nations. Many Chinese people became angry over American spying, saddened by the death of a pilot, and frustrated by President Bush's unwillingness to apologize. At the root of their complaints was a sense of wounded national pride. China had suffered at the hands of foreigners before and was not prepared to suffer again. Many university students threatened that there would be larger demonstrations if the government released the crewmembers before the United States made an apology.[16]

In response to rising nationalist sentiments, while all Chinese leaders had to talk tough in their standoff with Washington, they followed a two-pronged policy, as they did not want to see a repeat of the anti-American demonstrations one year earlier. It was reported that President Jiang Zemin very quickly laid down several tough principles on how to handle the standoff at a Politburo emergency meeting moments after the collision, including demanding a formal apology, stopping military spying and provocative activities along China's coast from the US side. In the meantime, the meeting also emphasized that "the leadership must protect itself from

criticism by ordinary Chinese by not appearing weak before the 'hawkish' new Bush administration. Yet, at the same time, there should be no repeat of the anti-U.S. demonstrations after the 1999 NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade." [17]

Subsequent events proved that this emphasis was crucial in guiding the actions of Beijing's leaders during the crisis. On the one hand, Beijing's public stand was particularly uncompromising on the demand that the spy plane crew would only be released after a formal apology by the US government to the Chinese people and that the US promise to stop its provocative activities along China's coast. Commentaries in major media attacked U.S. "neo-hegemonism" and extolled the patriotism of the Chinese people. On the other hand, Chinese leadership ensured that the government rather than the public set the tone in determining how to deal with the United States. Refraining from high-profile actions that might provoke a military confrontation with the U.S., the leadership moved to censor vocal anti-American sentiment that had been pouring in on the Internet and, to some extent, in the state-run media. In Beijing and other major cities, while people's anti-American emotions ran high, the government allowed no demonstrations outside U.S. missions and no intimidation of foreign communities. To show his confidence in resolving this incident, President Jiang Zemin did not cancel an earlier scheduled foreign trip and left for a state visit to Latin America on April 4, four days after the collision. Vice President Hu Jintao was put in charge of an emergency team to handle the crisis.

Following this two-pronged policy, Chinese leaders were eager to find a face-saving solution to get out of the crisis. For this purpose, they took a flexible position under the veneer of toughness and eventually hammered out a so-called "diplomacy of apology." Frustrated by Bush's lack of flexibility in his initial responses, Chinese officials sent signals to the US side for an alternative expression to circumvent a full-fledged apology. In an interview with CNN,

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16 Graig, S. Smith, "Students' Unease over Weakness Could Threaten Beijing's leaders," *New York Times*, April 6, 2001.

17 There were different reports about this Politburo meeting. Most Chinese reports said the meeting set five principles but a CNN report said three principles. For the Chinese reports, see, for example, Wen Ren: "Hu Jintao Shicha Jiefangjun Sizongbu he guofangbu tingqu yijian" (Hu Jintao Visits Four General Headquarters of PLA and Defense Ministry to Solicit Opinions), Taiyangbao (The Sun Daily), April 6, 2001. "Beijing Shiyao Meiguo Daoqian (Beijing is determined to ask the US for an Apology), Duowei Xinwen She, April 6. For the CNN report, see Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "Analysis: Behind the scenes in Beijing's corridors of power," cnn.com, May 9, 2001.

Chinese ambassador to the US Yang Jiechi hinted that the U.S. should at least say “sorry” after doing harm to China. When US Secretary of State Colin Powell expressed "regrets" over the loss of the Chinese pilot for the first time on April 4, the Chinese Foreign Ministry promptly responded by saying this was a "step in the right direction." The next, at a press conference in Chile, President Jiang provided a further hint by saying that it was normal for two people who had bumped into each other to say "excuse me." Switching to a pragmatic position, President Bush expressed his regrets on the same day and Powell on Aril 9 used the word "sorry" for the missing Chinese pilot and aircraft. Beijing squeezed again for something stronger than "sorry" in the next two days. When Washington said "very sorry" and indicated that it could not go any further, certainly not to the level of a full apology, Beijing accepted the “very sorry” as a close equivalent to an apology and released the crew on April 11.

Chinese leaders trumpeted the success largely for a domestic audience as they did not want to let nationalism get out of hand and hurt both the communist state and the Sino-US relationship. They declared that “China had won a victory at the stage (*jieduan xing chengguo*)” in a *People’s Daily* Editorial on the day when Beijing released the US crew. The editorial told the Chinese people that “Our persistent struggle forced the US government to change its tough and unreasonable attitudes at the beginning of the incident and finally apologized to the Chinese people.”[18] It was a testimony to pragmatic leaders’ tactical flexibility that the Chinese official media was instructed to translate Powell's expression of “very sorry” as “抱歉,” which is one word different from but has almost identical meaning as “道歉,” the Chinese expression of “apology” that Beijing demanded initially. Although the US did not make a full apology to China, Chinese leaders interpreted the expression of being “very sorry” as a full apology and the American expressions of "regrets" and "sorry" that meant in most instances only for the loss of the pilot and aircraft as meant for the whole incident.[19] As a Western journalist suggested, “China stressed that it had forced the United States to admit its faults, as it was implicit in the usage of the character ‘*qian*’, which is both in *daoqian*, the apology demanded by Chinese leaders, and in *baoqian*, or deep excuses, the word used in the American statement to the

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[18] Editorial, “Ba Aiguo Reqing huawei qiangguo liliang” (Transform the warm emotion of patriotism into the power of strengthening the nation), *Renmin Ribao*, April 11, p. 1.

[19] Peter Hay Gries and Kaiping Feng, “Culture Clash? Apologies East and West,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, 11 (30), 2002, pp. 173-178.

Chinese." This was a face-saving solution not only for China but also for the US. As the journalist indicated, President Bush "underscored that it did not give China the precise apology Beijing had demanded, had brought its people home, and thus was no longer subject to either possible Chinese blackmail or internal pressures over its difficulties in handling a difficult situation."[20] As a face-saving solution, while Chinese leaders did not alter their tough rhetoric for domestic reasons, they did almost everything they could from their perspective to avoid confrontation and maintain the framework of long-term cooperation with the United States.

The State and the Anti-West Protests prior to the Beijing Olympics in 2008

Although learning in the hard way, the Chinese state had to play almost the identical role in the nationalist protest before the Summer Olympics of 2008 as it did earlier. The Chinese government as well as Chinese people expected the game as the symbol of their national reemergence from a dark cocoon of decline and isolation into the light of international recognition, marking the country's debut as a global power, with a booming economy and rapidly modernizing society. Elevating the Olympics to an official source of national pride and making extreme demands on its citizens and on the world, China spent billions of dollars to stage a grand Olympics since winning the bid,. Athletes would compete in world-class stadiums. New highways and train lines crisscrossed Beijing. China built the world's largest airport terminal to welcome foreign visitors. Thousands of newly planted trees and dozens of colorful "One World, One Dream" billboards line the main roads of a spruced-up capital.

Investing so much in the successful execution of the Games, the Chinese government and Chinese people looked forward to the Olympics as a demonstration of their newfound modernity and as a chance to reinforce their engagement with the wider world. In this case, when the Western media portrayed China in their Olympic reports as a showcase for violent repression, censorship and political persecution by a regime that failed to rise above the level of police state, the Chinese people became frustrated as much as the government at what they believed the apparent failure of foreigners to understand them, and of a fear of being robbed of the hoped-for harmonious tone of the Games. Portraying the Western attempt to spoil the Beijing Olympics with political and human rights issues, the Chinese media made the full coverage of the nine Nobel Peace Prize laureates signing a letter to President Hu, urging China to uphold Olympic

[20] Francesco Sisci, "Reading the tea leaves," *Asia Times Online,* April, 18, 2001.

ideals by pressing Sudan to stop atrocities in Darfur, and the announcement of Hollywood director Steven Spielberg to quit as an artistic consultant to the Games because of Beijing's Sudan policy as well as the international protests during the Olympic torch relay in Paris, London, San Francisco and other major cities worldwide against China's crackdown on Tibetan unrest in Lhasa.

In response, an anti-foreign nationalist heat was generated first in cyberspace and then quickly spilled over into many Chinese city streets during March-April 2008. Huge crowds gathered outside some of the more than 100 stores of the French supermarket chain, Carrefour, to protest the rough treatments of a handicapped young Chinese female athlete who grimly clung to the Olympic torch on her wheelchair as a pro-Tibetan protester tried to snatch it from her in Paris. The French company was singled out as a target because the Chinese government media televised the scene and an internet rumor accused it of supporting the Dalai Lama and seeking to undermine Chinese rule in Tibet. Overseas Chinese students also demonstrated in many European and US cities against what they believed as the "anti-China" bias of the Western media. CNN was singled out in these protests because of its "unfair" coverage of the unrest in Tibet and particularly CNN anchor Jack Cafferty's criticism of China as full of "goons and thugs."

As the Olympic torch relay's "Journey of Harmony" became a tortuous road of angst pointing to a chasm between China and the Western world, many Chinese people took a defensive position toward the Western criticism of the Chinese government for suppressing Tibetan protests, limiting press freedom, harassing and jailing dissidents and insufficient efforts to curb air pollution. The outpouring of patriotic emotions was a propaganda bonanza that helped reinforce the Communist Party's nationalist credentials. But the increasing the violence of nationalist protests also posed a daunting challenge to the state that tried to maintain its monopoly of power and political stability for economic development.

When the chauvinistic outpourings on the internet became visible to the whole world and the emotional and often violent crowd gathered outside of Carrefour stores, China's leaders confronted a familiar dilemma. While the government enjoyed the moment of unstinting support from the nationalists, it was concerned about the impact of such protests on foreign attendance at the Olympics and the long-term consequences on China's economic relations. The government hoped to show the world how China had changed in the three decades since Deng Xiaoping launched economic reforms. But it would be difficult to present a friendly, progressive face to the world if Chinese people were indulging in anti-foreign antics.

Fearing of losing control over the outpouring of patriotic emotion, Chinese leaders moved to dampen the anti-French zealotry when the call for boycott of Carrefour began circulating widely on the web. Signaling that the outburst by Chinese bloggers outraged over anti-Chinese protests that dogged the path of the Olympic torch must be wound down, the official media walked a fine line in praising the patriotism of the Chinese people but cautioning them not to place obstacles in the way of China's opening up. The Chinese people were called to express their patriotic enthusiasm calmly and rationally and in an orderly and legal manner. The front pages of state-run newspapers carried stories urging Chinese people to heartily embrace foreign friends who will be arriving in Beijing for the Olympics and saying the best way for citizens to defend their country's honor is to build the economy and warning that, in today's world of globalization, boycotts usually backfire.

In response specifically to the anti-French sentiment, an official from the Ministry of Commerce went on the state television reminding people that fully 99 percent of Carrefour's 40,000 employees in China were Chinese and 95 percent of the products it sold were made in China. The official Xinhua News Agency released a timely exclusive interview with the embattled French supermarket group Carrefour Chairman Jose Luis Duran who denied reports that his company supported Tibetan separatists. The Carrefour Chairman also said that "calls for boycott of Beijing Olympics were acts with ulterior motives, and Carrefour would make its utmost efforts to support the Olympics." In this context, the Chinese government commended the way Carrefour runs its Chinese business and thanking it for supporting the Beijing Olympics.[21] In the meantime, posts calling for consumer action against Carrefour and videos of protests were blocked on the internet, where nationalist sentiment were once free flowing and nearly millions of Chinese and their brethren abroad were connect to take collective actions. For a while, typing Carrefour into Chinese-language search engines returned blank pages explaining that such results "do not conform to relevant law and policy."

The Anti-Japanese Protests in 2005 and 2012

While the state played the role of mobilizer and de-mobilizer successfully during the anti-American protests, it found itself in an awkward position to play the similar role during the anti-Japanese protests in 2005 and 2012.

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21 No author, "Carrefour chairman: Carrefour supports Beijing Olympics," Xinhua, April 22, 2008.

For historical and geopolitical reasons, Japan has always occupied a central place in China's nationalist sentiments. Historically, Japan was China's most cruel and destructive enemy for a half century (1895-1945). China's humiliating defeat in the War of 1894-95 by Japan, a tiny country that the Chinese dismissively called 倭人 (dwafts) or 小日本 (little Japan), was fundamental to the rise of the first generation of Chinese nationalists that lay behind the 1911 revolution. Japanese expansion in China after the Versailles Peace Treaty triggered the May Fourth Movement of 1919. This anti-Japanese sentiment was reinforced by Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s-40s. The Chinese people today are still resentful about Japan for both its whitewashing of the aggression history and its lack of sincere efforts of restitution. Geopolitically, China and Japan belonged to two hostile camps in the Cold War divide. China regarded Japan as a security threat because of geographic proximity and its position in the US-led anti-China containment strategy in East Asia. Beijing's leaders were extremely alert for any signs of Japan's remilitarization. After the end of the Cold War, maritime territorial disputes in the East China Sea have been recurring and become the focal point of geopolitical rivalry in the early 21st century.

Although the two governments essentially agreed to put off the issue of territorial claims during their negotiations of diplomatic recognition in 1972 and signed the Sino-Japan peace treaty in 1978, this formally friendly relationship was largely superficial. The superficial friendship continued in the 1980s when Deng Xiaoping devised a good neighboring policy (睦邻政策) to create a favorable peripheral environment for China's economic modernization. After the end of the Cold War, the relationship with Japan remained beneficial to Chinese economic growth in the 1990s. As a result, Beijing was very calculated in response to the incident in July 1996 when ethnic Chinese people in Taiwan and Hong Kong protested angrily against the right-wing Japanese group going to the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands to renovate the lighthouse they constructed earlier. The year of 1996 was the 65th anniversary of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, known as the September 18 Incident, an anniversary very sensitive in Sino-Japanese relations. Leaders in Beijing feared that the Islands dispute would fan popular anti-Japanese sentiment that in turn would force the government to take proactive action to jeopardize the Sino-Japanese economic relations and the overall economic development strategy that relied heavily on foreign trade and foreign investment when China was still badly in need of Japanese

economic assistance, technology, and investments.[22] As a result, the incident was not reported at all in the Chinese media until tensions subsided overseas.

But the state-sponsored patriotic education campaign to reclaim the nationalist legitimacy after the collapse of communist ideology in the 1990s changed the dynamic. During the campaign, state-run museums were full of Japanese atrocities. The vast number of museums, such as the "Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders" and the museum memorializing the victims of Japan's infamous Unit 731 that conducted germ warfare and chemical experiments on live humans, forcefully reminded the Chinese public about the country's "Century of Humiliation" in the hands of Japan and other imperialist powers. In addition, anti-Japanese content is prevalent in Chinese media, which portrayed a stereotype of the Japanese “devils” as cruel and stupid warriors. Japanese soldiers run amok on Chinese screens. The violence and anti-Japanese tone in many Chinese television dramas sent a clear message that killing “Japanese devils” was easy and glorious. The anti-Japan virulence was also in full display online. Websites popular among young Chinese nationalists were riddled with slogans such as “Destroy Japanese dogs” or “Annihilate the Japanese people.”

The decade-long patriotic education campaign created a fertile soul for anti-Japanese nationalism. With the rise of China as a great power in the 21st century, the Chinese people began to push the Chinese government to take a hardline position in territorial disputes with Japan. The state began to tolerate and even encourage its popular expression. The turning point came when the Chinese government did nothing to stop seven Chinese activists setting sail from a Chinese port to land on one of the disputed islands in March 2004. After they were taken into custody by Japanese police and coast guards, the Chinese foreign ministry made official protests. When they finally returned to Shanghai from Okinawa, they were hailed as national heroes. Then, more than 20 million Chinese signatures gathered on the Internet in early 2005 to oppose Japan’s bid to join the United Nations Security Council. It was followed by thousands of Chinese protesters marched through major Chinese cities, shouting slogans and throwing rocks, bottles and eggs at the Japanese consulates, protesting Japan's approval of history textbooks, which they say whitewashed Japanese wartime atrocities, and Japan's pledge to help the U.S. defend Taiwan in the event of an attack by Beijing.

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[22] Suisheng Zhao, *In Search of a Right Place: Chinese Nationalism in the Post-Cold War World*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 1997, 17-18.

While the protests became violent, the popular nationalists turned the passions against the government and criticized it too chummy with Japan that allegedly failed to provide more compensation for wartime injuries, laid claim to Tiaoyutai islands, and waged economic imperialism by flooding China with Japanese products. Calling the government to take a hard line against what they perceived provocations from Japan, the popular nationalist discourse that gained momentum in the mid-1990s contained a strong element of criticism over the government policy toward Japan. The authors of a nationalistic best seller, *The China That Can Say No,* criticized the Chinese leaders for giving up the war reparation for Sino-Japanese normalization of relations in the 1970s. They argued that this was proved a mistake because "Japan has always turned its back on China. In recent years, some senior officials in Japan have always tried to distort historical facts in its history books. They have interpreted invasion as 'entering' and 'helping' China. Did they enter China by commercial airlines? They have repeated nonsense, exported third grade products to China… and strengthened the US-Japan security system, which is aimed at China. Japan has not made any effort to narrow the historical gap within Asian countries."[23]

The CCP rose to power to a large extent because of the nationalistic credentials based popular perceptions that its forces had taken a strong lead in fighting Japan during the war while other groups had colluded with or retreated from the Japanese advance. Now being widely, the party suffered from losing some of its dwindling legitimacy. Being criticized by popular nationalists as incompetent toward Japan, the party suffered from losing some of its dwindling legitimacy. A *New York Time* reporter observed that "China's leaders are no doubt mindful of how popular dissatisfaction with weak governments developed into rebellious movements in the past. In 1919, student protests against the government's frailty in negotiations at the Versailles peace conference after World War I led to the May 4 Movement, from which the Communist Party eventually emerged."[24] The Chinese leadership also had to worry about the massive nationalist sentiment against Japan that might evolve into a protest movement against the Chinese government itself by those people who were jobless or angry about the corruption in the government.

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[23] Song Qiang, Zhang Zangzang, Qiangbian, *Zhongguo Keyi Shuobu* (China Can Say No), Beijing" Zhonghua Gongshang Lianhe Chuban She, 1996, pp. 112-113.

Cautious to prevent the nationalist sentiment of Chinese people from turning into a criticism of Chinese foreign policy, Chinese leaders returned to the two pronged policy and ordered a stop to the demonstration in late-April when leaders discovered an internet call for even larger scale demonstrations on May 4th, an anniversary of The May Fourth Movement triggered by anger over the Versailles Treaty giving Japan control of parts of China's Shandong Province in 1919 and a symbol of social reform, individual emancipation and resistance to foreign aggression in China—almost a Chinese equivalent of the Boston Tea Party. To stop the demonstrations, the government sent a blizzard of text messages to mobile phone users in major cities warning against "spreading rumors, believing rumors or joining illegal demonstrations." Several organizers of online petition drives and popular protests were detained. In Shanghai, one major state-run newspaper published a viciously worded editorial warning that anti-Japan protests were cover for an "evil conspiracy" to undermine the government. Police in main cities throughout the nation went on full alert to prevent a recurrence of anti-Japan protests on the sensitive May Fourth anniversary. Busloads of riot police were stationed outside the Japanese embassy in Beijing, while scores of police patrolled nearby streets. Tiananmen Square was closed to the public for a government-organized coming-of-age ceremony for 18-year-olds, in another apparent attempt to thwart any protests. Shanghai authorities closed the area around the Japanese consulate to traffic, using metal shipping containers to create a barrier. Hundreds of police stood guard around the building.

Walking on a tightrope, the Chinese state stopped the popular anti-Japanese protests it initiated but went out of control but tolerated and encouraged again the biggest flare-up in anti-Japan protests in 2012, targeting Japanese businesses and shops and leading to violence and destruction against Japanese property and interests. Popular nationalist sentiment ran particularly high after the global financial crisis began in 2009. Claiming that the crisis could result in an envious West doing whatever it can to keep China down, a popular nationalist book, *China is Not Happy*, tapped into what the authors believed to be a widespread public feeling of

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24 Graig, S. Smith, "Students' Unease over Weakness Could Threaten Beijing's leaders," *New York Times*, April 6, 2001.

disgruntlement with the West and urged China to assert itself militarily, diplomatically and in every other way to grasp its great power place in history.[25]

Partially due to the popular nationalist pressure, Beijing's foreign policy, including its Japan policy, took a strident turn. For many years, Chinese foreign policy was designed to serve domestic economic modernization (外交服务于国内经济建设) by creating and maintaining a peaceful international environment. China now began to reverse the order and use its rising economic power to serve its expanded foreign policy objectives. Facing rumblings of discontent from the popular nationalists who saw the global downturn as a chance for China to reclaim its great power status, Chinese leaders become more willing to play to the nationalist gallery in defending China's core national interests, defined as "the bottom-line of national survival," which "are essentially nonnegotiable in nature."[26] Obviously chosen with intent to signal the resolve in China's rising power aspirations, Chinese leaders steadily included more controversial issues in the expanding list of China's core interests of state sovereignty and territorial integrity and reoriented foreign policy in a more assertive direction, reacting stridently to all perceived slights to its national pride and interests.[27]

The territorial dispute over the Tiaoyu/Senkaku islands was firmly included in the list of core national interests. Stepping up naval activities around the dispute islands to challenge the status quo, i.e., China accepted Japan's de facto control of the islands but rejecting its sovereignty claim and keeping its own claim alive, the Chinese government actively looked for a pretext to exercise its effective control of disputed islands. The pretext came in April 2012 when vocal nationalistic governor of metropolitan the Japanese Government began announced the purchase ("nationalization") of three of the five Islands from a private Japanese owner on September 10, 2012. China interpreted the nationalization as a direct violation of the already fragile status quo. From the Chinese perspective, it was a game-changer and an imaginative act to strengthen Japan's claim through direct government control, for Japan could now claim that it

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[25] Song Xiaojun, Wang Xiaodong, Huang Jisu, Song Qiang, etc, *Zhongguo Bugaoxing* (China is Not Happy), (Nanjing: Jiangsu Renmin Chuban She, 2009).

[26] Michael Swain, "China's Assertive Behavior—Part One: On "Core Interests," *China Leadership Monster*, 2011, No. 34, February 22, 2011, http://www.hoover.org/publications/china-leadership-monitor/7216

[27] Suisheng Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited: The Strident Turn," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 22:82, July 2013, p. 535.

had applied domestic law to the transaction of the Islands. Therefore, Beijing had to demonstrate its strength and resolve. A *People's Daily* commentary stated that "on the issue of Diaoyu islands, the will of the Chinese government and people to defend territorial sovereignty is firm. Long gone are the days when the Chinese nation was subject to bullying and humiliation from others. China has the complete ability and will continue to take whatever it takes to firmly defend territorial sovereignty" (中华民族任人欺凌的时代早已一去不复返).[28] Demonstrating its resolve, the Chinese government displayed a seemed well-coordinated response by lodging angry protests, ratcheting up state media coverage of the nationalization, featuring bellicose commentary, threatening economic sanctions, and dispatching patrol ships to the disputed waters.

Encouraged by the state, the largest anti-Japanese protests took place, unprecedented since 1972 when the two nations normalized diplomatic relationships. Starting on September 15, a large number of Chinese demonstrators took to the streets in over 100 Chinese cities to condemn the Japanese government's planned purchase of the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. In Beijing, protesters gathered and swarmed the road in front of Japanese embassy. Rows of paramilitary police lined the perimeter of the embassy and allowed protesters in groups of up to 100 to take turns standing in front of the embassy. Carrying portraits of revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, waving anti-Japanese banners and the Chinese national flag, singing the national anthem and shouting slogans, "Down with Japanese imperialism! Get the hell out of the Diaoyu Islands! Boycott Japanese goods! Declare war on Japan!" some of demonstrators tossed water bottles, rocks, bananas, tomatoes, and eggs over the gates and into the compound. In Shanghai, hundreds of protesters across from the main gate of the Japanese Consulate chanted and waved banners. Paramilitary police officers wearing helmets and carrying shields stood outside and cordoned off the street, allowing people to protest in groups of 50 for about 5-10 minutes before escorting them away. While Protests in Beijing and Shanghai turned violent at times**,** the protests in other cities were marked by violent acts, such as looting Japanese shops and restaurants, smashing Japanese-made cars, burning buildings of some Japanese companies and ransacking some Japanese supermarkets. Protestors broke into a dozen Japanese-run factories in Qingdao, setting a Panasonic factory and a Toyota dealership on fire. While the security

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[28] 钟声 (zhongsheng), "日本，不要自讨没趣," 人民日报, July 18, 2013, http://world.people.com.cn/n/2013/0718/c14549-22232913.html

presence is reportedly very heavy around the protests, observers noted that security officers were not preventing the protests.[29]

While the Chinese government initiated the protests and allowed the protests to go further than it would normally do, it became unnerved by the extent of the violence as the anti-Japanese protests threatened to spin out of control, coming right before the sensitive anniversary of the Japanese invasion of China 82 years ago on September 18 and in the midst of an already chaotic political transition. Attacking private as well as government cars made in Japan, many protesters were angry at the police for defending Japanese companies and accused police and government representatives for not being patriotic enough, preferring to defend Japanese economic interests rather than Chinese national sovereignty. Many protesters carried portraits of Mao Tse-tung and some chanted in support of Bo Xilai, the purged Communist Party chairman of Chongqing and a rival of President Xi Jinping. One banner in Chengdu read that "Diaoyu island belongs to China; Bo Xilai belongs to the people." In Beijing, a small scuffle broke out between protesters when Han, the left-wing professor, slapped an older man who witnesses said had disparaged the Mao slogans. There were a lot of political risks to the government in allowing these kinds of anti-Japan protests. Not only were there pro-democracy demands, you had extreme leftists out demonstrating and those people are even more dangerous to the current government.[30] According to one account, the original organisers of the first protests came mainly from the so-called "New Left" or neo-Maoists and other radical left groups in China critical of the restoration of capitalism and the liberalisation policy of Deng Xiaoping and his followers. Not only did new left groups take over the organisation of many of the protests from a very early point, but many other regime critical groups began to join the protests. Left-wing supporters of Bo Xilai became a common sight at many protests, as did banners against corruption, inequality and in favour of food security.[31]

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26 "Anti-Japan Protests Escalate, Turn Violent," *South China Moring Post*, September 17, 2012, www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1038664/anti-japan-prot,

30 Barbara Demick and Julie Makinen, "China government's hand seen in anti-Japan protests," Los Angles Times, September 20, 2012, http://articles.latimes.com/2012/sep/20/world/la-fg-china-japan-protests-20120921

31 Niklas Zenius Jespersen, "China: Protests against Japan reveal much deeper social malaise," In Defense of Marxism, November 13, 2012, http://www.marxist.com/anti-japan-protest-reveal-social-malaise-in-china.htm

After signs that some of the demonstrators' anger was being directed towards their own government over the weekend, the Chinese government sent signals on Monday September 17 that they were looking to taper the demonstrations and took steps to dampen the fervor of the protests. Editorials by most major state-run media in China called for restraint, “sensible patriotism” and “levelheadedness.” Authorities also significantly bulked up the police presence in Beijing and threatened the arrest of “unlawful” protesters in certain regions.[32] The police in Xi’an banned large protests and forbidden the use of phone and online messages to organise protests. In Shanghai paramilitary troops provided round-the-clock protection to the Japanese consulate for the duration of the week, stripping demonstrators of projectiles, warning them through megaphones against violence and limiting protests in front of the consulate to a few minutes. In Guangdong local governments warned citizens against assembling in large crowds. On the 19th September the limit had been overstepped. National authorities sent in riot police to suppress existing protests and prevent the recurrence of new ones and arrested many organisers of the protests. In Beijing the local authorities closed down all train stations close to protest sites; roads were reopened to traffic in order to make marches impossible and Beijing-wide text messages warned citizens against further demonstrations. Police stations across the country vowed retribution against rioters and China's Commerce Ministry urged foreign companies to report damage to the authorities. This showed clearly that the regime didn't want the protests to continue, and with good reason.[33]

In the meantime, Chinese media stopped coverage of the protests while calling to express patriotism in a rational manner. Except for a few left-wing media in Beijing, most of the traditional media in China were prohibited from reporting on the protests. Searches for "anti-Japan protests" on the website of Nandu Daily, the most influential daily newspaper in southern China known for independent-minded reporting, up to September 22 yielded only two news stories. One had been published on November 7, 2007, covering soldiers in the Second World War against Japan, while the other was published on May 12, 2008, and reported on a lecture

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[32] William Wan, “Beijing both encourages and reins in anti-Japan protests, analysts say,” *Washington Post*, September 17, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/chinese-government-both-encourages-and-reins-in-anti-japan-protests-analysts-say/2012/09/17/53144ff0-00d8-11e2-b260-32f4a8db9b7e_story.html

[33] Niklas Zenius Jespersen, “China: Protests against Japan reveal much deeper social malaise,” In Defense of Marxism, November 13, 2012, http://www.marxist.com/anti-japan-protest-reveal-social-malaise-in-china.htm

about patriotism. The same search on the website of the Dongfang Daily, a major Shanghai-based major newspaper, yielded eight stories, none of which covered the protests directly. Five of them covered the reactions of Japanese people, Japanese embassy and Japanese car companies to the protests**.** One article from Xinhua News, China's government-controlled wire service, called for "rational patriotism" in the face of tensions.[34]

Conclusion: Explaining the role of the State as mobilizer and de-mobilizer

The following three momentous developments explain the role of the Chinese state as both mobilizer and de-mobilizer in the popular nationalist protests during the late 1990s and the early 2010s.

One was the increasing influence of the so-called "public opinion" in the making of China's foreign policy. Although China's authoritarian system gave the state immense power to drive foreign policy, Presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao were not charismatic leaders such as Mao Zedong or Deng Xiaoping who had the authority to arbitrate disputes in the leadership or personally set the country's course. They must cater to a range of constituencies. The power of the Jiang and Hu administrations became conditional on their ability to defend China's national interests as Communist ideology sputtered and social controls loosened by market-oriented economic reform and nationalist appeals of prosperity and power became the new base of the regime legitimacy. As the strong-man politics gave way to a collective leadership that was more sensitive to popular views on issues involving China's vital interests, political leaders understood that mishandling these sensitive issues could not only lead to social instability but also provide political competitors an avenue by which to undermine their political standing. This created a vague sense of "boundary of permissible,"[35] which led to the match of who was tougher on the issues that defined the game for political gains or at least not to lose any ground. As a result, they became more responsive to popular nationalist sentiments on sensitive foreign policy issues.

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[34] Sandra Huang, "How China's Mainstream Media Ignored the Anti-Japanese Riots," The Atlantic, September 26, 2012, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/09/how-chinas-mainstream-media-ignored-the-anti-japanese-riots/262879/

[35] David M. Lampton, "China's Foreign and National Security Policy-Making Process: Is It Changing and does It Matter?" in David M. Lampton, *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 14.

Second, thanks to the commercialization of a large portion of Chinese media as the government limited or withdrew funding and pushed newspapers to make money from subscriptions and advertising during the Jiang and Hu eras, some of China's leading national newspapers found nationalistic expression as one powerful approach to attract readers' attention and help raise profile and revenues. As popular nationalism was expressed vocally in a growing number of media outlets, Chinese foreign policy makers had to occasionally, but increasingly, refer to the constraints that the surging popular nationalism placed upon them to resist foreign entreaties and make their own policy positions more credible.[36] "Apparently gone are the days when Chinese elites could ignore these voices. Therefore, nationalist pundits and bloggers in China find allies in high places, as top government officials are nervous about countering this trend directly. The result has been the creation of a dangerously stunted version of a free press, in which a Chinese commentator may more safely criticize government policy from a hawkish, nationalist direction than from a moderate, internationalist one."[37] Under the pressure of vocal popular nationalism, the Jiang and particularly the Hu leaderships found themselves with less room to operate on sensitive issues such as Taiwan, Tibet, and the South China Sea, as levels of foreign policy debate increased through society, magnified by a more commercially driven press and a vibrant internet.

Third, with a deeply rooted suspicion of the Western powers, however, "Chinese leaders are in essence realists. Their making of Chinese foreign policy often starts from a careful assessment of China's relative power in the world."[38] Making a point of tolerating and encouraging popular nationalist expression of nationalism to a degree, the Chinese leadership had to play the role of de-mobilizer because, facing chronic economic problems and acute political crisis at home and from a relatively weak geo-political position abroad after the end of

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[36] Joseph Fewsmith and Stanley Rosen, "The Domestic Context of Chinese Foreign Policy: Does Public Opinion Matter?" in David M. Lampton, *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 151-190.

[37] Thomas J. Christensen, "The Advantages of an Assertive China: Responding to Beijing's Abrasive Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, 90(2), (2011), http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67477/thomas-j-christensen/the-advantages-of-an-assertive-china

[38] Suisheng Zhao, "Shaping the Regional Context of China's Rise: How the Obama Administration brought back Hedge in its Engagement with China," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 21(75), (2012), p. 377.

the Cold War, China could not afford to directly confront the US and Japan. The Chinese government, therefore, made every effort to prevent popular nationalist protests from getting out of control. As one Chinese scholar indicated, for the Jiang and Hu administrations, the best way to reclaim the political legitimacy at home and regain the pre-eminent position in the world was not to fan an excessive and hostile nationalism towards foreign powers. it had to monopolize the official nationalism discourse "so that popular nationalism could not have undue influence in the actual foreign policy making process."[39]

These momentous developments have come disappearing or been revised since President Xi jinping took the helm of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership in 2012. Rising as the most powerful leader after Mao Zedong, President Xi has centralized state power to the center and to himself and tightened ideological control over the society and media to intensify the stability preservation system (维稳体制) based on the principle that "stability overrides everything" to "nib every element of instability in the bud (将一切不稳定因素消灭在萌芽状态). The Xi administration has banned popular nationalist protests because political stability has become the top concern of the state due to the deeply-seated discontent and resentment against the party and government on staggering pollution, massive corruption, growing income inequality, ethnic tensions and invidious social discriminations. The state is a victim of its successes as well as failures. No country can modernize as rapidly as China without suffering the enormous social consequences. Those who are left behind by China's rapidly economic growth in the past decades have carried placards bearing quotes from Mao in mass protests, becoming the biggest threat to the regime legitimacy. As Mao admonished, a single spark can start a prairie fire in China. Coming into office when the predatory of state toward ordinary citizens caused deep discontents and resentments over their worsening environment and massive corruption and the growing inequality, Xi is determined to ensure that, there is no single spark there, including nationalist protest, to start a prairie fire.

Banning popular protests, including nationalist protests, from taking place, the Xi leadership has developed a big security concept by linking domestic security with external security. Tightening political security at home, the Xi administration has become more willing to proactively shape the external environment rather than passively react to it and forcefully

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[39] Chen Zimin, "Nationalism, Internationalism and Chinese Foreign Policy," *Journal of*

safeguard China's national interests rather than compromise them. With China's growing economic, diplomatic, and military muscle, the Xi leadership has adopted tougher approaches than his predecessors to forcefully pursuing core interests and to deal with the US and settle territorial disputes on its own terms with Japan. With a convergence of state nationalism and popular nationalism catalyzed as increasing number of people in the powerful places of the state found them sharing the views of popular nationalism that the global balance of power was tilting in its favor and China had gained ground to say no to the US and Japan, the Chinese state has come to the forefront without the need to mobilized or demobilize popular nationalists in protesting the battered West and Japan.

Contemporary China, 14(42), (2005), pp. 51-52.