The Impacts of International Human Rights Pressure on Public Opinion in Authoritarian States

Jamie J. Gruffydd-Jones

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Abstract

Why do international attempts to improve the human rights of oppressive regimes fail? Why, in the case of China have twenty-seven years of intense efforts from the international community to advance respect for human rights resulted in conditions that appear even worse than the early 1990s? In this dissertation I examine the impacts of human rights pressure on citizens’ preferences in authoritarian states. I develop a theory for when pressure is most likely to have counterproductive effects in the public, and then test this theory through an in-depth examination of the case of China.

A central assumption of transnational human rights activism is that pressure on the offending regime from abroad and bottom-up pressure from domestic activists will work in tandem, in a mutually beneficial path to change. I show on the contrary that authoritarian regimes like the Chinese Communist Party may even use international pressure for their own propaganda purposes, strengthening their ability to carry out illiberal policies without complaint from the population. This is because under certain circumstances, international human rights pressure and diplomacy may in fact make members of the public more satisfied with their human rights conditions, and less likely to support efforts to change government behaviour.

I argue that this kind of ‘recoil effect’ is most likely when the information makes the idea of a threat to the nation’s standing in international competition particularly salient, such that people respond to pressure by defending their collective self-esteem rather than by updating their grievances about the issue itself. When regimes can ensure that this is the only information about human rights pressure that reaches their public, and are able to successfully cement a strong link between the ruling elite and the nation in the eyes of the public, the recoil effect will result.

I conclude that Western pressure on the Chinese government over its human rights may have set back the progress of human rights in the country, increasing public support for authoritarianism. Cases like China should not just be seen as ‘failures’ of models of human rights pressure, but actively modelled and investigated in their own right. The findings also direct our attention to the impact of human rights diplomacy and transnational activism on the views of members of the public. Even in authoritarian states, citizens are essential to the success or failure of the human rights system, and as this project shows, neglecting how they respond to activism may overstate how successful that activism really is.
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Introduction: International Human Rights and Public Opinion

Persuading Citizens - Failures of International Pressure - Public Opinion - Research Design - Outline

Persuading citizens

Since the 4th of June 1989, the international human rights regime has singled out China for intense scrutiny. The People’s Republic has faced regular public invocations from Western leaders, parliaments and congresses, severe criticism from media and advocacy groups, White Papers, United Nations resolutions and even Nobel Peace Prizes over its human rights conditions. While many have noted the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) tactic of strategically releasing a few prominent prisoners when the eyes of the world’s media have been on it\(^1\), evidence of underlying change is less promising\(^2\). In contrast, in recent years the CCP has become notably more intolerant of dissent, tightening laws on civil society, arresting human

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\(^{1}\) International Business Times (2015) China To Grant Amnesty To 'Thousands' Of Prisoners To Commemorate 70th Anniversary Of End Of War With Japan. International Business Times, 25 August

rights lawyers en-masse, and launching cross-border raids into Hong Kong; called by some ‘China’s new age of fear’.

Why have exhaustive international efforts to improve respect for human rights in China failed? And what can this tell us about the failures of international pressure around the world - about why, despite increasingly well-accepted human rights norms, laws, and powerful transnational movements, freedoms have declined in many countries over the last ten years? Popular accounts of the failure of human rights pressure in China have argued that China is just too powerful to need to pay any attention to the threats of outside actors, or that foreign outrage has not been tied in closely enough with the demands of China’s domestic activists. In this thesis I argue however that external efforts may not just have failed to sway China’s leaders, but that some of the pressure over the last thirty years may have actually made liberalisation in China less likely.

To understand this counterintuitive result, we need to look at an unexplored group; the Chinese citizens. In the face of crackdowns on civil, political, religious and legal rights, in recent polling over 80% of the Chinese public believed that their human rights were well respected, while over 70% believed that the country was democratically run. After all of the international efforts through the 1990s to publicly shame China, in 2001, on the eve of the Falun Gong crackdown, the Chinese had the second most positive public perceptions of human rights conditions in their own country of the thirty-one countries surveyed, as shown in table 1.

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3 Foreign Policy (2016) China’s New Age of Fear. Foreign Policy, 18 February
7 www.asianbarometer.org
8 In the World Values Survey Fourth Wave, from 2000 – 2004. This table does not take into account how different countries’ citizens interpret these questions in different ways (see King, G., and Wand, J. (2007) Comparing incomparable survey responses: Evaluating and selecting anchoring vignette. Political Analysis 15(1):46-66). However even given these differences the table is notable, not least in showing that huge international attention has failed to convince Chinese citizens that their rights are not well respected, however they interpret the question.
Table 1: Human Rights Perceptions 2000 - 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Respect for Human Rights in Country (% say positive - % say negative)</th>
<th>Total Newsweek/Economist Articles on Human Rights from 1990 - 2000</th>
<th>Polity score for the year of survey (from -10 for authoritarian to 10 to democratic)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>-7</td>
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<td>Philippines</td>
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<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>United States</td>
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<td>72</td>
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<td>Jordan</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>Bangladesh</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>-6</td>
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<td>Iran</td>
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<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td>Tanzania</td>
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<td>-1</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>Nigeria</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Macedonia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>-41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>-55</td>
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10 Those countries in the World Values Survey Fourth Wave, from 2000 - 2004. The question given was: “How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in [respondent’s country]? No respect at all, not much respect, some respect, or a lot of respect for individual human rights?”. The score above is the difference between the percentage that responded A lot of respect or some respect, and those who responded no respect at all or not much respect. (World Values Survey Association (2009) World Values Survey 1981–2008 (www.worldvaluessurvey.org)). There is almost no correlation here between belief in respect for rights and either authoritarianism or news articles (-0.06 and 0.07 respectively)

11 This measure has been shown to be a reasonable proxy for Western media attention on human rights in a country (Ramos, H., Ron, J., & Thoms, O.N.T. (2007) Shaping the Northern Media’s Human Rights Coverage, 1986–2000, Journal of Peace Research, 44, 385–406)
A central assumption of this dissertation is that citizens’ grievances about the state of human rights in their country matter. Even in China, the focus of this project and a country that scores 0 on CIRI’s empowerment rights scale\textsuperscript{12}, public opinion has had an impact on government behaviour over human rights. In late 2015 for example, following a concerted campaign over many years by China’s women’s federations, civil society groups, and feminist activists\textsuperscript{13}, the legislature passed a national law banning domestic violence. The campaign against the law gathered public exposure over the previous decade in part down to the high-profile cases of women like Kim Lee, an American woman who publicised the abuse she suffered at the hands of her Chinese husband on Weibo, China’s ‘Twitter’\textsuperscript{14}. Perhaps unexpectedly, the Chinese government has also taken steps in recent years to control its use of the death penalty, including reforms to prevent wrongful convictions, leading to a 75\% decline in convictions from 2002 to 2013\textsuperscript{15}. According to Kinzelbach domestic opposition has been the driving force behind these changes, primarily in the form of outcries at high-profile wrongful executions. She points to the famous case of Nie Shubin, who was exonerated of the rape and murder of a woman in Hebei province when another man came forward to confess his guilt - ten years after Nie was executed. The public outcry, media coverage and mobilisation of the legal community sparked a chain of events that led to reforms, which as Kinzelbach says “accommodated a domestic demand that was modest enough not to challenge fundamental state or Party interests”\textsuperscript{16}.

Public pressure has not just pushed the courts to reduce the overall number of death sentences, and the Supreme Court to overturn death penalties\textsuperscript{17}. According to He Weifang, legal scholar at Peking University, the Supreme Court has also faced calls to impose the death penalty on those

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\textsuperscript{12} Out of 14; see \url{http://www.humanrightsdata.com/}

\textsuperscript{13} For which they suffered repeated persecution, especially in recent years, as will be seen in chapter five

\textsuperscript{14} Washington Post (2015) China’s domestic violence law is a victory for feminists. But they say it doesn’t go far enough. \textit{The Washington Post}, 29 December

\textsuperscript{15} Diplomat (2014) Is China Rethinking the Death Penalty? \textit{The Diplomat}, 26 November

\textsuperscript{16} Kinzelbach, K. (2013)

\textsuperscript{17} Christian Science Monitor (2012) In China, public outcry softens sentence for Wu Ying. \textit{Christian Science Monitor}, 22 May
whose crimes have sparked public indignation\textsuperscript{18}. Indeed, Liu Renwen, legal scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences said that the public may have \textit{too much sway} over judicial decision-making: “On one hand, when the public holds the courts accountable, it prevents problems like corruption, and that’s a positive function. But on the other hand, [in this case] it seems like popular will has too much power.”\textsuperscript{19}

Kenneth Roth, director of Human Rights Watch, argues that it is often a small subset of activists that really matter in shifting government policy, rather than majority public opinion\textsuperscript{20}. While this may be true, it is hard to argue that majority opinion will not have significant effects on the success of those activists. Koo argues that in South Korea, public awareness and support for protecting the human rights of vulnerable groups has a marked effect on the ability of these groups to advocate for policy changes\textsuperscript{21}. This is perhaps particularly relevant in somewhere like China, where small interest groups by themselves are likely to have very little sway on government policy. It is true that activists in China who call for the reduction of the death penalty or for laws against domestic violence may be able to have limited success in changing government policies, even without any public interest in their actions. However, as Hassid and Brass show, those issues on which the CCP has taken liberalising reforms in recent years are often those that have also seen a large public commotion\textsuperscript{22}. At a minimum, we would expect the likelihood of the government releasing a political prisoner or changing a law on family planning to be far higher when the action is backed by a public outcry, and far lower when it is opposed by the public.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid}
\textsuperscript{20} Roth, K. (2015) For human rights, majority opinion isn’t always important. \textit{Open Democracy}
This means that a comprehensive understanding of the impact of international pressure on human rights behaviours in China and elsewhere will be severely compromised without an awareness of how human rights pressure affects the citizens. Tautologically, public diplomacy on human rights is public. Even for those citizens who are unwilling to breach the Internet firewall, information about human rights pressure has been widely available, and oddly enough, even celebrated by the Chinese authorities. As discussed in chapter four, since 1989 the Communist Party mouthpiece, the *People’s Daily*, has reported over two hundred separate incidents of international human rights pressure on China on to its population\(^2\).

These reports have often touched on extremely sensitive topics. On the 11\(^{th}\) of October 2016 Ilham Tohti, a Uighur academic, was given the Martin Ennals Prize for human rights\(^2\). The prize was notable, since at the time, Tohti was languishing in a Chinese jail, having been imprisoned by authorities two years earlier for separatism. Despite being widely celebrated by other Chinese dissidents, the prize seems unlikely to have any effect on Tohti’s conditions\(^2\), just as the Nobel Peace Prize had little obvious impact on the treatment of Liu Xiaobo in 2010\(^2\). Indeed, on Tohti’s arrest in 2014, Beijing paid scant attention to the entreaties of foreign states and organisations calling for clemency\(^2\), sentencing him to life imprisonment. The CCP did however allow domestic media to play up news of the Martin Ennals prize, Xinhua calling it a “blasphemy

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\(^2\) Author’s database. Data available upon request


\(^2\) Congressional-Executive Committee on China (2011) One Year after the Nobel Peace Prize Award to Liu Xiaobo: Conditions for Political Prisoners and Prospects for Political Reform. *Congressional-Executive Committee on China*, 6 December

and mockery of human rights”\textsuperscript{28}, while the \textit{Global Times} fulminated that the West was using the issue to “tear up” China\textsuperscript{29}.

But not all foreign comments have been given such lavish treatment by Chinese media, even when they have been far more eyebrow-raising. When Turkish Ministers called the Chinese authorities’ heavy-handed response to violence in Xinjiang in July 2009 ‘genocide’\textsuperscript{30}, the comments were ignored throughout the Chinese press. When Xi Jinping visited Britain in October 2015, he was met with high-profile protests and condemnation about his treatment of dissidents like Ilham Tohti from members of the public, NGOs, opposition leaders and British media\textsuperscript{31}. Again, none of these protests, widely featured in international news\textsuperscript{32}, were included in Chinese media.

Why does the CCP appear to want its public to hear about some of this pressure, but not others? And what is the impact of all this information about international pressure on Chinese citizens’ beliefs and grievances about their human rights, particularly the information that is most likely to reach them through state media? Accounts of the impacts of human rights pressure in China have rarely touched upon the importance of the Chinese citizens and how their responses might condition its success or failure. At the same time, scholarship that does look at citizen attitudes towards their rights and towards democracy in China - including the extensive democratisation literature - often excludes the international side, the vast amounts of condemnations, laws, sanctions, and norms that have come from outside over the last few decades.

\textsuperscript{28} Xinhua (2016) Foreign Ministry: China Strongly Opposes the Award given to Ilham Tohti by Human Rights Groups. \textit{Xinhua}, 12 October
\textsuperscript{29} Global Times (2016) Western Human Rights Prize given to one who “sits in jail”, \textit{Global Times}, 12 October
\textsuperscript{31} International Business Times (2015) Xi Jinping UK state visit: Who are the protesters targeting China’s leader and what do they want? \textit{International Business Times}, 20 October
This gap is not just something limited to scholarship and policy on China. The human rights and democracy-promotion literature has only recently begun to pay attention to the importance of the reactions of the citizens of the target country. Yet this literature is in its infancy, and to date has not moved beyond a basic premise about how people respond to information about foreign pressure - and is particularly reticent about how this premise might change in authoritarian regimes. This simple, common-sense assumption, which underlies much of the literature on international advocacy, is that citizens are rational actors. When they find out information about foreign pressure over government repression, they update their views and become more likely to believe that their government does not respect human rights. As these grievances grow, members of the public will be more likely to voice their displeasure and support organisations that look to put pressure on governments to reform their repressive behaviours. In this dissertation however I contend that in some situations this assumption may be misplaced, and that certain kinds of critical information may actually reduce public grievances about human rights, making improvements in those conditions less likely. Moreover, these are precisely the kinds of information that are most likely to reach citizens of authoritarian regimes like China.

I build on theories from motivational reasoning, which look at the psychological foundations of how people respond to new information. According to these theories, people do not merely update their perceptions in line with new information, but also according to how the information plays in to their own existing beliefs and identities. I argue that the impact of foreign pressure on public support for domestic movements will depend on the extent to which the pressure makes salient a sense of threat to citizens’ national image. Many instances of human rights pressure may have the expected effect of increasing public grievances, but not always. When members of the public hear condemnation that poses a salient threat to their positive image of their nation, it will

34 Davis, D.R., Murdie, A., & Steinmetz, C.G. (2012)
cause them to react defensively and strengthen their belief that human rights are good enough in
their country. This will be especially likely if the information comes from a hostile source, such
as a geopolitical opponent at times of high tension, and when it addresses issues closely linked to
the integrity of the nation.

We might believe that information about government abuses of human rights would still make
citizens hold grievances with their leaders. However, authoritarian regimes have strong control
over their media environment and the flow of information that reaches their citizens. Much of
the information about human rights that reaches the public comes filtered through their regime’s
censorship and media apparatus. This means that news about shooting of protestors from
authoritative or neutral sources is unlikely to get through. Instead, my argument implies that
regimes will only allow their state media to report non-specific ‘threatening’ information about
human rights pressure to their public, such as condemnation from President George W. Bush
about human rights in Tibet, or a critical European Union report on the One Child Policy. As a
result, most information that citizens of authoritarian regimes encounter about human rights
pressure will be most likely to reduce their grievances about human rights, and will therefore be
most likely to spark a ‘recoil effect’, as the build-up of pressure increases public support for the
regime’s behaviour towards its citizens.

For this recoil effect to succeed, one essential condition is that the citizens look to defend their
nation against a perceived threat, not look to improve their nation in response to negative
evaluations. For this, the populace must perceive their rulers to be the representatives of the
nation, such that pressure on government policies is construed as pressure on the nation as a
whole. When this link is broken, such as when pressure is explicitly focussed on the ruling elites,
or at times when the party does not appear to be properly defending the nation’s interests, the
public may see pressure on human rights as an attack on a small cabal who do not necessarily
represent them, and the outside information can have its intended positive effect, as a way to improve rather than defend the nation. It is precisely because the CCP has been able to cultivate in the minds of the public this tight link between their leadership and the nation as a whole that international pressure has been particularly counterproductive in the country.

This thesis is about the role of persuasion in international relations and global governance - not persuasion of other states and their leaders, but persuasion of the citizens of those states. It is the story of what happens to information about international pressure on human rights in authoritarian countries; how the leadership deals with it, how it reaches the public, and how the public respond. While transnational advocacy and ‘quiet’ diplomacy have also played important roles, I focus predominantly on the public nature of human rights diplomacy that has characterised the international community’s attention to China. I examine this using a wide range of methods, from novel experimental surveys, existing national survey data, hundreds of interviews with members of the public and rights activists, to a quantitative and qualitative analysis of Chinese newspaper reports over the last seventy years.

**Failures of international pressure to safeguard human rights**

While international law\textsuperscript{35}, economic sanctions\textsuperscript{36}, and military intervention\textsuperscript{37} have all variously been found to be uneven instruments in improving the behaviour of repressive governments,
recent quantitative studies have suggested that international shaming of human rights violations can, under certain circumstances, have its intended effect on government behaviour in the short term. For Davis and colleagues there will only be improvements if the state already has a healthy presence of domestic human rights organisations; while Hendrix and Wong show perhaps counter-intuitively that the tactic will only be successful in autocracies. Krain finds moreover that shaming will work on the most serious and extreme of crimes, such as mass killing; horrific and obvious and likely to bring large levels of opprobrium.

Hafner-Burton argues that governments will often respond to naming and shaming with short-term superficial improvements, such as releasing political prisoners or signing international agreements, just to take some of the heat off. To balance these superficial improvements, many

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Krain, M. (2012)
increase their use of more repressive tactics. Examples of this kind of behaviour abound, from Myanmar to Azerbaijan. While some have questioned Hafner-Burton’s ‘substitution’ hypothesis, her study highlights one important caveat to quantitative analyses: that any positive findings may just be quick-fix government reductions in repression to put off foreign attention, without any true long-term impacts.

The most influential models of transnational activism, such as Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink’s ‘spiral model’, argue that activism and pressure can indeed lead to long-term changes in human rights behaviour. Their argument is that domestic pressure from below and foreign pressure from above do force the superficial changes documented by Hafner-Burton, but that these superficial changes themselves will lead states to begin to internalise human rights norms. And several qualitative case studies have sustained this argument, demonstrating longer-term beneficial effects of international pressure, in countries ranging from Morocco to South Africa, and particularly in Latin America. There are notable exceptions however, and Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink’s more recent volume does discuss states like China, which have steadfastly refused to submit to the model’s logic and become socialised to respect human rights. However, these failures are generally treated as exceptions to the theory - places where the model has not yet achieved fruition due to some roadblock or other - rather than a phenomenon to examine in itself. There is very little theory that actively explains the failures as something other than ‘absence of success’ and can therefore tell us why human rights in countries such as China have

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44 International Media Support (2016) A victory for press freedom advocacy as 15 political prisoners are released in Azerbaijan, International Media Support, 19 March
47 See contributions to Risse, T., Ropp, S.C., & Sikkink, K (eds.)
appeared to get worse in the face of international pressure. To date all we know is that the spiral model does not seem to be successful in China, but not what actually is going on.

The most common story on China is precisely one of an absence of success - that conditions conducive to democratising triumphs in other countries are simply not present. In these accounts, the CCP’s growing international power means that leaders have no need to give in to economic or diplomatic threats⁴⁹, and as such are less able to be coerced. Sophie Richardson of *Human Rights Watch* bemoans the fact that coercion has not been intense enough⁵⁰, while Keck and Sikkink argue that “what is often missed in the debate over the apparent ‘failure’ of human rights policy in China is that virtually none of the classic military and economic levers exist”⁵¹. In a more positive account, Fleay says that China’s power means that it is also more able to fight back against its accusers, by coercing other states and multilateral organisations in turn to dial back the pressure⁵².

Others argue that it is not just the lack of vulnerability to external pressures that matters, but also the lack of strong links between external actors and domestic activist groups. According to Nathan, the only time that pressure was effective in the post-Tiananmen era was when “it pushed in the same direction as internal forces”⁵³. Kent agrees, and argues that failures to ensure more substantial change have come because strong criticism and coercion from foreign powers has not been accompanied by a similarly strong push from the domestic population⁵⁴. As discussed earlier, public grievances about human rights and democracy in China have not been

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⁴⁹ Kinzelbach, K. (2013)
⁵⁰ Richardson, S. (2016) How to Deal with China’s Human Rights Abuses, *Human Rights Watch*, 1 September
⁵⁴ Kent, A. (1998)
that powerful over recent years, so international pressure has had little domestic pressure to tap into.

What neither Nathan nor Kent address however is whether the problem is not just that external pressure has thrived while domestic grievances have withered, but whether external pressure has had its own independent effect on these grievances. In other words, by making Chinese citizens more or less likely to care about their human rights, external pressure may have itself had an effect on the ‘direction of internal forces’, and therefore the ability of human rights groups to effectively pressure the state from below.

If it has had a negative effect, this gives a clue as to why human rights may not just have stagnated in China, but appeared to worsen in the face of external pressure. Only two articles examine the potential counterproductive effects of foreign pressure on China’s human rights. Wachman argues that attempts to shame China’s leaders may lead to anger and defiance in the face of perceived imperialism, rather than feelings of shame\(^\text{55}\), while Li and Drury suggest that China’s painful history means that the domestic public would not allow Beijing to publicly give in to international pressure on its human rights. They show that for this reason US threats to revoke Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) status to China in the early 1990s led to a reduction of concessions over human rights\(^\text{56}\). While both accounts are plausible, neither tests whether their mechanisms do in fact hold true, nor explicitly examine the effects of international pressure on public opinion.


Public opinion

The extensive literature on democratisation in China and the resilience of the CCP pays close attention to citizen attitudes, particularly attitudes towards democracy\(^{57}\). The assumption is that the more important Chinese citizens see democracy to be, the more they will push for political change. And studies show that support for democratic values are impressively strong in China\(^{58}\), with 91% of the public in 2012 believing that ‘having a democratic system’ is good in some form\(^{59}\). In 2007 Chinese political scientist Zhengxu Wang summed up the conventional literature well, saying that “more and more people are growing up with the belief that political rights and freedom supersede economic wellbeing or other materialist goals. In 15–20 years, Chinese society will be dominated by people with such beliefs. We can be cautiously optimistic about the prospects for democratic change in China.”\(^{60}\)

Democratic values are not enough however to encourage popular mobilisation\(^{61}\). To agitate for political change citizens need to both value political rights and believe that those rights are not respected in their country. As noted, these grievances are notably absent in China at the moment. One popular view is that continued economic growth has been enough to persuade the public that their governmental system is indeed working on their behalf, and their civil liberties are respected\(^{62}\). Andrew Nathan argues on the other hand that a major source of the resilience of China’s authoritarian system comes from political reforms and public participation in decision-making, making citizens more likely to believe that their complaints and concerns are being

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60 Wang, Z.X. (2007)
addressed. Others have shown that in areas from the National People's Congress to requests for social welfare, the CCP has shown responsiveness to citizen demands, with the assumption that this responsiveness increases public satisfaction with how well the system reflects their needs and respects their rights.

The scholarship on human rights and democracy promotion in China and the scholarship on regime resilience and democratisation in China have obvious overlaps. Yet while the democracy promotion literature focuses on international actors but neglects the citizenry, the domestic literature focuses heavily on the citizens but ignores international factors. Despite the fact that intense external pressures for democratisation and liberalisation have continued almost throughout China’s reform era, their impact on citizen perceptions of their human rights and political system have seen little attention.

The lack of attention to public opinion is all the more surprising given that it forms an important part of many models of international-led human rights change. While the spiral model rarely explicitly mentions the role of public opinion, the model’s key argument is that states internalise human rights rhetoric as a result of the interaction of domestic and international pressure. Pressure from above and pressure from below work in tandem, foreign and domestic actors providing assistance to each other in challenging the government. For the authors this interaction is the only way that we can expect improvements in human rights.

In one of the most influential accounts of the impact of international human rights law, Beth Simmons argues that treaties provide opportunities for domestic groups to mobilise against the government by giving them access to new legal avenues and forcing their leaders to stand up to their commitments. Awareness of treaties also changes public values about human rights, by raising people’s consciousness about how human rights are seen as a universal value around the world. In the spiral model and Keck and Sikkink’s equally significant ‘boomerang’ model, external pressure works in a similar way. Foreign actions like shaming and sanctions influence target regimes directly, but also indirectly, by providing information about abuses and foreign condemnation to the domestic public and civil society, which “empower and legitimate the claims of domestic opposition groups against norm-violating governments.” Bottom-up pressure is actively empowered by international actions.

One crucial premise of the argument, and of theories of authoritarian stability, is that public access to critical information, including that from abroad, will make them more likely to come out and oppose their regime. Timur Kuran argues that in authoritarian countries, expressing one’s grievances about the regime in public is a treacherous business. In many countries, even those citizens who strongly oppose their rulers in private will firmly support them in public, precisely because so many others with similar grievances are also hiding their views, and coming out alone will result in certain persecution. This ‘preference falsification’ may help to explain why Chinese people say in surveys that they believe their human rights to be well-respected. There is safety in numbers however, and even a small incident may have the potential to tip the balance. If those with more entrenched private opposition become more emboldened and come out to publicly criticise the regime, the risk of publicly announcing opposition to the government

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69 Simmons, B.A. (2009)
appears to go down. More and more people respond to the growing numbers of their fellow citizens coming out and criticising the regime. A ‘revolutionary cascade’ of public opposition appears from nowhere.

The spread of information is key to beginning and maintaining this cascade. Hearing even small pieces of information about other citizens criticising their government might be enough to tip a few people over the edge. At the same time, information that increases people’s grievances with their conditions, for example that the government has committed human rights abuses, or is failing in its economic plans, may cause a small number of people to announce them in public. Anderson and colleagues argue that most models of political action have this assumption about information built in: people receive information about state repression (or other state failings), and mobilise against the state in response\(^\text{72}\).

This idea is also built explicitly into studies of naming and shaming itself; that the greater negative information about a government that reaches the public, the more likely people will be to support opposition groups and to try to do something to change government policies. In explaining why foreign shaming of politicides is effective, Krain argues that publicising information about abuses shows that the government is violating international norms and as such is illegitimate\(^\text{73}\), which then leads to greater domestic opposition. Hendrix and Wong argue that critiques from abroad ensure information about abuses reach a wider number of members of the public - who will therefore be more likely to protest those abuses\(^\text{74}\). As Davis, Murdie, and


Steinmetz argue, “if a domestic population does not believe their rights are being violated, it is
easy for a repressive government to thwart the reform process”\textsuperscript{75}.

This argument relies on an unwritten ‘informational’ assumption: that citizens are rational
Bayesian updaters using new information to develop accurate opinions about their country.
Citizens take in information from credible international sources that human rights are not well
respected in their country, and downgrade their views about the state of human rights\textsuperscript{76}. As a
result their grievances about human rights conditions in their country will rise. They will then be
more likely to support domestic activism and more likely to challenge their government over
these conditions.

Two studies have examined directly the impacts of naming and shaming on public opinion.
Davis and colleagues, and Ausderan look beyond the United States, and demonstrate that cross-
nationally, human rights organisations’ shaming of a country makes its citizens less likely to
believe their government respects human rights the following year\textsuperscript{77}. However, the fact that the
studies use observational data means that naming and shaming is not randomly assigned - and
therefore it is not clear whether the causal chain runs in the hypothesised direction. Studies
suggest that international NGOs and media outlets select on the hard cases in their reporting,
such that shaming may be more likely in those countries that are becoming more repressive\textsuperscript{78}-
and therefore we might expect perceptions of rights conditions to be worse in these cases the
next year for reasons unrelated to the amount of shaming they have received. In an
accompanying survey experiment Ausderan addresses this to some extent, finding that when

\textsuperscript{75} Davis, D. R., Murdie, A., & Steinmetz, C. G. (2012): 208
Indian and American citizens read a passage from Amnesty International criticising their country’s human rights record, they became slightly and non-significantly more likely to believe that their country did not respect human rights\textsuperscript{79}.

Recently, political science studies have also begun to show that transnational activism influences how much people value human rights, if not their perceptions of how well they are respected. McEntire and colleagues use survey experiments in the United States to examine how human rights organisations’ messaging about the use of torture affects public opinion. They show that providing specific information about the abuse, as well as emotional and motivational appeals, successfully changed attitudes against the use of torture\textsuperscript{80}. Other authors have recently begun to use experimental surveys to show that exposure to international law can do as Simmons expects, increasing public preferences for respect for human rights\textsuperscript{81}, while Gulnaz and colleagues show that endorsements of government policies on women’s rights from international organisations\textsuperscript{82} can substantially change public attitudes.

\textbf{Partisan cues}

The above studies provide useful initial evidence that on aggregate, people respond to transnational activism as we would expect: they use it to update their preferences about human rights in their country. However, they give very little explanation about whether there might be systematic differences between states, individuals, or types of information.

\textsuperscript{79} Ausderan, J. (2014)
Building on findings from the field of American political psychology, several studies of transnational persuasion have begun to examine the simple ‘informational’ assumption more deeply. In contrast to a large body of scholarship finding that American citizens generally ignore opinions from outgroup sources\textsuperscript{83}, in recent years studies have shown that people rely on their own domestic partisan political identities to cue their response to foreign comments. The argument is that holding views on complex social issues requires a lot of cognitive effort, so people resort to the views of their trusted peer group, in this case their political party\textsuperscript{84}. Dragojlovic finds that domestic political partisanship dominates how Americans respond to foreign persuasive attempts\textsuperscript{85}, something Bush and Jamal find extends beyond the US. They argue that one important identity marker in the Middle East is support or opposition to the regime - and that this identity drives people’s views on many social issues. As such, when regime supporters hear that the United States endorses government policies about women’s representation, this tells them that their peer group - government supporters - are pro-women’s representation, and they adjust their views in line with that group\textsuperscript{86}.

Other communication scholars have shown that this also applies to more ‘coercive’ strategies: how foreign attempts to put pressure on American government policy affect public opinion in the United States. Hayes and Guardino find that foreign opposition to the Iraq War and to airstrikes on nuclear facilities in Iran increased the level of American opposition to US military


action, although only amongst Democrats. Marinov extends this work to beyond the US context, showing that foreign comments about democratic freedoms in Turkey could positively affect beliefs about freedoms in the country - but only if the comments were supported by peoples’ partisan political elites.

These studies provide an encouraging start to thinking about how and when the ‘informational’ approach may or may not apply. However, it is not clear how applicable these studies are for more authoritarian states like China. This work has arisen in the American context, from American political psychology, and therefore is heavily biased by findings about the highly polarised partisan politics of a liberal democracy, the United States. As such it emphasises domestic political differences, and neglects to examine perhaps more relevant social identities in other contexts. In China, and other powerful autocracies with few political parties, partisan political identities are not the clear identity markers that they might be in some countries in the Middle East. Pan and Xu show that there does exist what they call an ‘ideological spectrum’ in China, with citizens’ ideologies broadly aligned from ‘authoritarian-traditional-non-market’ to ‘liberal-traditional-market’. However, the authors argue that there is little clear political partisan polarisation in the country due to the “absence of anything resembling organized political opposition”, and as a result the spectrum “does not delineate a cleavage between those who support regime policies and those who oppose them”.

Instead a major source of group identity in many post-colonial countries and powerful authoritarian states like China is the nation: an identity often actively promoted by the country’s

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90 ibid: 2
In China government propaganda has emphasised the link between the party and the nation, in order to inculcate the idea in citizens’ minds that that there would be no China without the CCP. This propaganda was clearly illustrated by the nationally televised 2016 Chinese New Year Gala, where performers sang the popular Maoist song “Without the Communist Party there would be no New China”. Nationalism is unquestionably a powerful political force in China today. In the World Values Survey conducted in 2012, 98% of Chinese citizens said that they saw themselves as part of the Chinese nation, while 90% said they were proud of their country, and according to Fewsmith and Rosen, expressing this national attachment and pride is one of the main ways in which citizens articulate their opinions in public in China. We would expect therefore that in cases like China, theories that rely on partisan political identities might be less useful, and that citizens' national identities will hold more sway.

Even beyond China, there has been nagging evidence of nationalist ‘backlashes’ against foreign pressure, where encountering foreign opposition to government policy has make citizens appear to rally behind a policy. Carothers argues that authoritarian leaders have won public sympathy by appearing to stand up to Western democracy promotion efforts, while anecdotal evidence has suggested that there have been backlashes to foreign interference from international campaigns in places from Japan to Kenya. In one famous case, international pressure on the Nigerian government to reverse the death sentence on Amina Lawal was met with an angry reaction from Islamists, who even tried to speed up the sentence as a result, such that members of Nigerian rulers. In China government propaganda has emphasised the link between the party and the nation, in order to inculcate the idea in citizens’ minds that that there would be no China without the CCP.

94 Excluding people who said ‘don’t know’ or refused to answer the question. [http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)
98 Some have argued that public support for female genital mutilation in Kenya has been bolstered by an international campaign to stop the practice (All Africa (1997) Kenya: Alternative Rite to Female Circumcision Spreading in Kenya, *All Africa*, 19 November)
women’s groups called for Westerners to stop what they saw as a counterproductive letter writing campaign. Marinov finds that amongst those people not affiliated with a political party in Turkey, criticism from the United States did indeed have a backlash effect, making them significantly more likely to believe that their freedoms were respected.

In the flurry of literature looking at transnational persuasion, there has been no work that examines when this backlash is most or least likely to occur, the conditions that cause the effect, or indeed the role of the national identity. The repeated indications of defensive reactions to pressure pose an unanswered puzzle for places like China. Are the examples of nationalist backlashes just outliers? When are they most likely, and when will pressure have a positive ‘informational’ effect? If we are to have a full understanding of citizens’ response to foreign pressure, the backlash effect needs to be examined directly.

There are therefore two distinguishing features about postcolonial autocracies like China that suggest they need to be looked at in their own right. Firstly, not only are partisan political identities often weak in these one-party states, but the national identity is powerful. The national identity is therefore likely to be far more relevant in determining how citizens of these countries will respond to pressure than any partisan political affiliations, especially when that pressure comes from foreign, outgroup sources. This may dramatically change how this pressure affects citizens’ preferences about human rights, as Marinov’s findings with non-partisans in Turkey demonstrate.

Another feature of authoritarian regimes is the public’s lack of access to information, where authorities have a high level of control over what information reaches its citizens, especially if it comes from abroad. This means that the type of critical information that citizens hear about is likely to be highly dependent on their regime, and the information it chooses to let through.

Even if there are prominent opposition actors, there is likely to be little opportunity for them to provide their views on the foreign criticism (as in the Marinov study) - the only filtering entity will be the regime itself. Authoritarian states’ oppressive environment means that they are also often the most prominent targets for human rights pressure, while China is perhaps the most high-profile case of the failure of human rights diplomacy\textsuperscript{100}.

Public opinion in response to the messaging of human rights diplomacy and human rights groups in authoritarian regimes cannot therefore be viewed in same way as in liberal democracies. Hendrix and Wong argue that naming and shaming will be most effective in authoritarian regimes precisely because foreign information about human rights violations will have more of an impact in such an information-scarce environment. Yet we have very little understanding of whether citizens of these countries do in fact hear about this information from human rights groups, states, or international organisations, and if they do, how it affects their preferences towards government repression, and their own political and civil rights.

**Research design**

In this study I examine the information about international pressure on human rights that gets through to the citizens of authoritarian states, and how members of the public respond to this information. To do this I use an in-depth mixed-methods analysis of China. A one-country analysis naturally has its limitations, most notably in demonstrating that the mechanisms I propose are not just a quirk of one group of people under one regime. It also means that I cannot test for country-level variables, such as how regime type, histories of colonialism and anti-Americanism, press freedom, and even past levels of government repression all affect the public. Yet an in-depth subnational analysis allows me to hold these country-level differences constant, while accounting for variables like the source of the pressure, the timing of the

pressure, the issue on which the pressure is targeted, and individual differences. Limiting myself to one country makes it possible to factor out the noise that comes from cross-national variation, and focus on these variables.

In the forthcoming pages I refer to my main explanatory variable as ‘naming and shaming’, ‘human rights diplomacy’, and ‘foreign criticism’. These commonly-used concepts capture parts of the focus of this project, which I less mellifluously describe as ‘information about public international human rights pressure’. This is likely to include information that directly criticises a country’s human rights, such as the global gay rights protests over Russia’s laws on homosexuality before the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. It also includes the policy of naming and shaming more broadly, not just the use of criticism to shame governments over their abuses but also bringing attention to those abuses in the first place, such as the Amnesty International reports on labour conditions at World Cup stadiums in Qatar. However, it also includes information about any types of pressure over human rights - from economic sanctions to military threats and calls to join international human rights organisations - anything that is designed to change government behaviour and policies over human rights in some way, and, importantly, is announced publicly. Announcements of public financial, military or verbal support for opposition groups and public meetings with dissidents are also a form of pressure on the country’s rulers.

My purpose in this study is to tell a story - a story about what happens to information about international pressure in authoritarian regimes. Focussing in on one country makes it possible to tell this story, by teasing out the mechanisms, peculiarities and histories of responses to international pressure over time. Despite its systematic nature, one of the main limitations of the

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101 BBC Online (2014) Sochi 2014: Gay rights protests target Russia’s games, BBC Online, 5 February
102 Reuters (2016) Amnesty says workers at Qatar World Cup stadium suffer abuse, Reuters, 31 March
quantitative literature on naming and shaming is that it only allows us to compare country-year scores. A one-country study allows us to look in more fine-grained detail about what happens to the information, while retaining quantitative rigour. Using a mixture of quantitative media analysis, existing survey data, survey experiments, historical process-tracing, and public interviews I test systematically how foreign information has impacts over time, between sources, topics and individuals.

A range of methodologies also makes it possible to address one of the most serious concerns about this kind of work, that of research ethics. The research environment at the best of times in China prohibits research into sensitive areas of human rights, and this is especially the case in the last few years, as Xi Jinping has cracked down further on civil society. In an ideal situation, a large-scale longitudinal study would expose people to real instances of foreign pressure on various human rights topics, and then examine their responses days and months into the future. The nature of this topic means that this kind of work has been impossible in China, and there is an obligation to respondents to ensure that they are not asked any questions where their answers may potentially put them at risk. There is a possibility, however slim, that survey respondents or interviewees on the Chinese mainland could be subject to attention from the authorities if they were to provide a foreign researcher with their views on human rights issues. There is no clear guidance at the present time for foreign researchers or for the Chinese public about red lines over which issues and actions might or might not attract unwanted attention. Given this uncertainty, it is necessary, ethically, to be overly cautious about the types of questions I ask people in surveys and interviews.

In any case, asking people about human rights has become next to impossible, even in government-approved surveys (which were possible even four years ago). I have taken advantage
of some surveys from the times before suspicion of academic research reached the fever-pitch of 2015 and 2016, and used issues that are less sensitive, but should retain the same mechanisms. Unfortunately, these research limitations mean that I am unable to address one of the main hypotheses of my theory in full; that pressure on issues of territorial integrity will be more likely to see a recoil effect. While this is included in the chapters that use media and secondary literature, issues of territorial integrity (on Tibet and Xinjiang in particular) are some of the most sensitive topics in China today, and it would be next to impossible to safely ask survey or interview questions on these topics. Conclusions on this topic therefore are somewhat tentative.

In my experimental survey and most of the interviews I use the topic of women’s rights. While women’s rights in China have become central to Western condemnations of human rights in China since the arrest of feminist activists in 2015, as detailed in chapter five, this choice was primarily for ethical purposes. The CCP has, since its inception, portrayed itself as a liberator of women\textsuperscript{103}, and as a result party propaganda can ill afford to condemn support for women’s rights. It is therefore relatively freely discussed in academic institutes, and on traditional and social media.

To counter the accusation that my findings would just be limited to the issue of women’s rights - a topic that contains its own peculiarities - I used further interviews on different topics to triangulate these findings, and demonstrate that the mechanisms carried across issue areas. In China I also conducted interviews on the topics of international pressure over air pollution and the use of ivory in traditional medicine, and followed this up with interviews in the United States with Chinese students directly on the issue of human rights. Each of these interview topics and methodologies have their own biases, but each also allowed an examination of how the

\textsuperscript{103} See for example Mao Zedong’s speech in 1950: Mao, Z. (1950) Women have gone to the labour front. The Socialist Upsurge in China’s Countryside. Vol 1
mechanisms involved in public responses to human rights pressure extend beyond women’s rights, while avoiding the ethical limitations so deeply entwined with this area.

**Outline**

The following chapter develops a theory of public responses to international pressure in authoritarian regimes. I build on social psychological theories of motivational reasoning to hypothesise about the type of pressure most likely to lead to a ‘recoil effect’, reducing grievances about human rights conditions and increasing support for the regime. The second half of the chapter develops this theory in the context of authoritarian regimes, and forms observable implications about the type of information they will be most likely to want their citizens to hear about international pressure on human rights.

Chapters three and four address these observable implications, and explore the question of how authoritarian regimes deal with the sensitive issue of international pressure on their human rights in the domestic realm. Chapter three provides a detailed historical analysis of foreign attempts to pressure China over its human rights. Focussing on a number of key case studies, from Tiananmen in 1989 to Tibet in 2008, I examine consistencies and changes in how Chinese media has chosen to pass on or censor information about international pressure to the domestic public. I show that the CCP has reported ‘sensitive’ information far more than would otherwise be expected, balancing the domestic risks and opportunities of allowing their citizens to hear it, also using the information as a way of introducing them to news about sensitive human rights issues at home.
Chapter four explores, statistically, the conditions under which the regime chooses to report this pressure. I combine two original databases, of all instances of international pressure on China’s human rights, and all reports of international pressure on human rights in China’s state-run People’s Daily newspaper, between 1979 and 2011. As predicted by the theory, Chinese state media was far more likely to report pressure that came from the United States, particularly at times of international tension and on issues of territorial integrity. Together these two chapters provide strong evidence for the argument that China’s leaders see some real propaganda benefit from certain types of critical foreign information, and choose to pass this on to their public as a result.

The remainder of the dissertation examines whether the CCP will indeed gain propaganda benefits from passing on this information. In chapter five I discuss the history of foreign pressure on women’s rights in China, and then in chapter six I use an original online survey experiment with Chinese netizens on the issue of women’s rights to test the threat-based theory directly. I show that when Chinese respondents are exposed to criticism from the United States about women’s rights conditions in their country their grievances about those conditions drop dramatically; by as much as 14 percentage points, and become less willing to sign petitions to improve women’s rights. This effect does not appear when criticism comes from a neutral actor and is particularly strong when the national identity is salient and in those respondents with higher national pride. Interestingly, I also find that the recoil effect disappears when criticism only addresses Chinese leaders rather than the nation as a whole, and indeed, when the national identity is made salient, comments about the leaders have a positive effect on grievances.

One concern with experimental data is the artificial nature of the prompts, and potential lack of applicability to real-world events. In chapter seven I address this concern with a quasi-natural
experiment. I make use of the convenient implementation of an Asianbarometer survey that was carried out in China around the time of President Obama’s meeting with the Dalai Lama in 2011. The timing of the survey allows us to explore how real-life instances of international pressure affect beliefs about political rights - in this case showing that the meeting made Chinese people significantly more likely to believe that their country was democratically ruled.

I explore the causal logics behind these reactions in chapter eight, using over two hundred semi-structured interviews with Chinese citizens. While most interviews addressed women’s rights, I also asked people about international pressure on air pollution, the use of ivory in traditional Chinese medicine, and with Chinese students in the United States on human rights itself. The interviews provided in-depth qualitative support for the proposed mechanisms behind the recoil effect, and helped to shed some light on the causal logics Chinese citizens employ when they encounter foreign pressure, and how they use it to form preferences about their own country.

Finally, in chapter nine I examine how these findings extend beyond China, and what this means for how we think about human rights pressure. I argue that regimes that have been able to successfully portray themselves as the sole, legitimate representative of the nation, as well as having a powerful censorship apparatus, are the most likely to successfully be able to cultivate a recoil effect. My findings have important implications for theories of international human rights pressure and transnational advocacy that assume foreign information has a uniformly positive impact on domestic mobilisation. Cases like China, that have up to now been considered as ‘exceptions’, may betray a fundamental contradiction of the global human rights movement in more authoritarian regimes - the need to both coerce elites and persuade their public. For China, the study demonstrates that this contradiction may have contributed to the failure of international pressure to improve human rights in the country.
It is worth noting from the start that even on the issue of women’s rights, many NGOs and feminist activist groups have called out to the United States to publicly criticise the Chinese government. On a number of occasions, the CCP has allegedly given in to foreign pressure, from foreign policy on Darfur to releasing political prisoners. I am not trying to argue that this kind of pressure is not effective, or has not had powerful and crucial impacts. Instead I argue that states and organisations need to pay close attention to how their efforts may have different effects on different aspects of China’s domestic audience, and that what may work on the elite level may have counterproductive effects on the citizenry. This has important consequences for the sources, timings, and content of messages that are most likely to be successful in improving human rights in the long term.

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A Theory of Citizens’ Responses to International Human Rights Pressure in Authoritarian States

Motivated Reasoning - Recoil Effect – Type of pressure - Counteracting

What is the impact of international pressure on human rights within authoritarian states? How do members of the public respond and how do their governments deal with the possibility that their citizens will hear this information? According to literature on human rights and authoritarian resilience, critical information about rights violations should pose a challenge to autocratic leaders. Information that human rights are being violated under the regime and about international opprobrium should increase public concerns about their rights and the benevolence of their leaders, making them more likely to put pressure on them to change their behaviour.

Instead this chapter develops the theory that under certain circumstances, information about foreign pressure may reduce citizens’ human rights grievances; and as such the information may generate opportunities as well as risks for authoritarian regimes. In these regimes, where control over foreign information is high, there will be strong selection effects, and most of the
information about international human rights pressure that reaches the public will be the kind more likely to reduce grievances about human rights. As such the pressure may evoke a ‘recoil’ effect, strengthening support for authoritarian regimes, allowing the leadership to suppress human rights and still hold on to power.

The chapter continues as follows: After discussing the rational actor assumption, the next section discusses the ways in which citizens’ attachment to their nation means that may not act as strictly rational actors in response to critical information, before deriving hypotheses about when this might happen in response to international human rights pressure. I then discuss an important addendum to the theory, identifying a way in which a more salient national identity may serve to counteract the recoil effect. The chapter closes with an examination of what this means for citizens in authoritarian regimes, which have strong control over their media environment.

*Rational actors*

The basic assumption to this theory is that authoritarian governments, with control over the information that comes in from outside, can choose to either censor foreign human rights pressure, or allow their public to hear it. This may include using state media to actively pass on the information. Information that the leaders believe will make their citizens less satisfied with them, they will choose to censor, and information that leaders believe will make their citizens more satisfied with them, they will choose to pass on.
In accordance with the literature, I argue that under most circumstances, people do respond to pressure as rational Bayesian updaters\(^1\). They hear condemnation from abroad, that human rights are not well respected in their country, and subsequently downgrade their beliefs about the state of human rights. This poses challenges for the rulers. In Kuran’s framework, as citizens question the legitimacy and benevolence of the regime towards its public, and learn of others’ discontent, the pressure may spark an information ‘cascade’\(^2\), leading some to actively challenge their rulers.

Authoritarian states have powerful media and censorship apparatuses, and should therefore look to prevent any information that discusses human rights violations from reaching their publics. In this way they can both maintain the illusion that they enjoy widespread support at home and abroad, to “make the sum total of available public expression more favorable to those in power”\(^3\) and minimise any public discontent over their behaviour. Despite evidence that the Chinese government uses censorship primarily to prevent collective action, rather than to prevent criticism of the regime itself\(^4\), the need for authoritarian regimes to limit criticism is a popular assumption. Geddes and Zaller argue that a goal of autocrats is to “stifle independent criticism and analysis”\(^5\), and Orttung and Walker similarly that dictators will look to “limit criticism of official policies and actions”\(^6\). Even Freedom House, responsible for monitoring political and press freedoms around the world, codes authoritarian regimes based on their willingness to “censor or punish criticism of the state”\(^7\). If this censorship is effective, as it has been in China in recent years, the critical information from abroad should therefore have very little impact on the general public.

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4 King, G., Pan, J., & Roberts, M. E. (2013)


7 https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/worst-worst-2012-worlds-most-repressive-societies
Motivated Reasoning and Collective Identities

However, a long-standing premise of the cognitive and social psychological literatures is that people do not always act as rational actors, reacting to the accuracy and relevance of the information. As recognised by the work on transnational persuasion and partisan cues discussed in the previous chapter, people have competing motivations, and also interpret new information based on their existing beliefs and identities. These include their national identity and attachment to their nation, which is what I focus on here (see figure 1).

Collective identity

According to social identity theory, part of a person’s self-concept comes from their membership in a social group. People wish to have a positive image of themselves, to maintain their self-esteem, and therefore also wish to hold a positive image of the group to which they identify as a member. They evaluate the image of their group in relation to other groups, such that “the better one’s group looks in comparison to other groups, the more status the group gains, and the more self-esteem it can provide for its members”. The more strongly people identify with a group, the more important the group’s image becomes to their self-esteem, with the nation an example of the kind of group to which many people identify particularly strongly.

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In order to retain self-esteem, people are motivated to defend their group against anything that might threaten that positive image\(^\text{13}\). One particularly direct way in which the group’s image (and therefore its members’ self-esteem) may be threatened is through information that frames the group in a bad light, questioning its character or ability. International pressure on one’s nation’s human rights situation may do precisely this, by suggesting that the nation does not respect human rights, and that other countries or organisations disapprove of its actions. When citizens hear that the United Nations has passed a resolution criticising their country’s treatment of its minority groups for example, this has the potential to challenge their identity of themselves as a benevolent and respected people in international society.

To defend their self-worth from this kind of threat, group members have various options. They might affirm their collective self even more strongly\(^\text{14}\), or put down other outgroups\(^\text{15}\). Recent

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\(^\text{12}\) There may be a number of plausible other motivations, such as defending other social groups not mentioned here. I focus on the most prominent.


work has shown that one powerful way for people to reduce threats to self-esteem is to engage in ‘self-affirmation’; to reflect on the (unrelated) values that are particularly important to them as a person. Cohen and colleagues show that when patriotic Americans engaged in self-affirmation, they were far more tolerant of a report that condemned American policies in the Middle East, allowing them to accept the criticism and yet retain their sense of self-worth.

Motivated reasoning

Another way in which group members can protect their self-worth is through defensive biases in how they process the threatening information. According to the theory of motivated reasoning, people do not just look to form accurate opinions, but are motivated to form opinions that fit a self-interested goal, such as maintaining a positive self-image. This motivation affects how people deal with new information. Extensive scholarship has found that people undergo ‘biased assimilation’ of new information to fit it to their partisan prior beliefs and the prevalent beliefs of their social group. This is the intuition that lies behind the partisan ‘cues’ hypothesis; that people rely on the views of their partisan political party to cue them how to respond to foreign pressure.
Others have shown however that people do not just use their social identities as cues, but are ‘emotionally’ motivated to interpret new information in ways that defend their collective image\textsuperscript{23}. On hearing information that threatens the positive image of their social group, people dampen their desire to form accurate opinions, and instead reject the information\textsuperscript{24}. And if this threatening information comes from an outgroup (as in the case of most human rights pressure), people may be even more likely to reject it. Hornsey finds that there is a “tendency for group-directed criticisms to be received in a more defensive way when they stem from outgroup members than when the same comments are made by in-group members”\textsuperscript{25}. This effect appears to be primarily limited to critical information, since people are no more likely to believe messages of praise of their group from in-groups than from outgroups\textsuperscript{26}. As Hornsey and colleagues argue, this is because criticisms from outside are a “unique subset of persuasive messages in the sense that they directly threaten the (collective) self-concept”\textsuperscript{27}. This suggests that while a cues-based approach may be sufficient for a study that examines foreign endorsements of regime policies\textsuperscript{28}, when examining how people respond to critical and threatening information, we also need to pay attention to people’s emotional need to protect their self-concept.

\textit{Counterarguments}

It is perhaps not surprising that patriots reject out of hand information that criticises their nation. However, studies have also shown that on encountering information that challenges their partisan beliefs, people spend longer processing the information, spending time to develop

\textsuperscript{27} Hornsey, M.J., Trembath, M., & Gunthorpe, S. (2004): 501
counter-arguments to fit the information with their own prior views. The same appears to be true of information that threatens people’s collective self-worth. De Hoog shows that on reading a passage that criticised their social group, people who identified with that group were more likely to disagree with the information. She finds that these people perceived the information to be more threatening and spent considerably longer reading and processing the passage.

The important point is that by developing these counterarguments, people may acquire stronger opinions in the opposite direction, in what is known as a ‘boomerang’ effect. This boomerang effect is central here, the intuition that may lie behind any counterproductive impact of international pressure on the citizens of the target state.

A number of authors have shown that on encountering information incongruent with their prior opinions, people may hold their original belief even more strongly. Nyhan and Reifler find that when conservative Americans were presented with evidence showing that President George W. Bush’s statements about Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction in 2003 were in fact false, they became even more confident in their misperceptions, and more likely to believe that Saddam Hussein was in fact stockpiling such weapons. Schaffner and Roche find similarly that

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30 De Hoog, N. (2013)
32 From the authoritative ‘Duelfer report’, showing that there were no Iraqi WMD stockpiles or production of WMD at the time of this speech
33 Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2010). It is worth noting that there have been several failed attempts to replicate this effect (see Wood, T., & Porter, E. (2017) The Elusive Backfire Effect: Mass Attitudes’ Steadfast Factual Adherence. *Manuscript* for a summary), and it appears that the effect only applies to particularly ‘hot-bottom’ partisan political issues, as discussed below
Republicans surveyed following news of the drop in the unemployment rate in October 2012 believed that the level of unemployment was higher than those surveyed before the news.\(^{34}\)

Given the similarly motivated response, it is a plausible inference therefore that a boomerang effect may also occur when people encounter information that directly threatens their self-concept; that by thinking through counterarguments to why negative information about the group is not correct, they develop more positive views about their group. Trevors and colleagues find that people feel confusion, anxiety and frustration when they encounter information that challenges a valued part of their identity, and that the boomerang effect in response to this challenging information comes as a direct result of these negative emotions.\(^{35}\) According to Peter Nauroth and colleagues, people’s negative emotions in response to information that threatens their identities do not just make them hold stronger existing attitudes, but also motivates them to take action to fight against that threatening information. The authors show that when ‘strongly identified gamers’ heard studies linking playing video games to aggression, they felt threats to their identity, and were therefore more likely to post online comments to discredit the studies.\(^{36}\)

This type of boomerang effect is a change in what social psychologists call ‘explicit’ attitudes - conscious evaluative judgements determined by propositional reasoning\(^{37}\) - where people manage their emotional reaction by actively thinking through ways in which they can reduce the sense of threat. In other words, on hearing that one’s country has been denounced over its human rights conditions, citizens develop counterarguments to defend against the potential threat to their collective self-esteem, finding logical flaws or searching their memory for evidence that their

\(^{34}\) Schaffner, B. F., & Roche, C. (2017)
\(^{36}\) Nauroth, P., Gollwitzer, M., Bender, J., & Rothmund, T. (2015)
nation does not violate human rights, and as a result become more likely to believe that human rights are indeed well respected.

**Assertive response**

Human rights pressure does not just involve criticism of a government, but also involves an attempt to change the way that government behaves. I draw here on the theory of psychological reactance, which seeks to explain how individuals respond to others’ efforts to persuade or coerce them to change their attitudes or behaviours, such as anti-smoking campaigns. According to Brehm, when people believe that regulations or attempts at persuasion are putting pressure on them to change their behaviour and threatening their freedoms, they feel ‘reactance’, an emotional response born out of anger and frustration. This feeling motivates them to act to reassert their sense of freedom. As a result they may become even more likely to hold the opinions and behaviours they were asked to change.

Murtagh and colleagues argue that reactance in the face of pressure comes in part from people’s feeling that the pressure threatens the identity they have of themselves as an independent individual. To back up this view, some authors have found that the feeling of reactance is closely linked to people’s feelings of threat to their self-esteem, and is stronger on issues rated

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as more important to that self-esteem\textsuperscript{42}. As discussed, a central tenet of social identity theory is that people’s image of their valued social group will affect their own self-worth\textsuperscript{43}. This suggests that, when people value their national identity and see pressure as impinging on or interfering with their nation’s freedom as an autonomous and independent country, they may encounter feelings of reactance, including anger and frustration. To alleviate these feelings they may seek to reassert their nation’s autonomy, and when pressured over human rights, will become more likely to assert that their nation has no need to change its behaviour over human rights.

To put this in the China case, imagine that Angela Merkel issues a statement criticising the level of religious freedom in China. The statement provokes feelings of threat for Liu, a Chinese citizen, as it challenges her proud collective identity as a member of a people who respect religion. Liu searches through her memory for ways in which her country has supported religious rights over the years, by freely allowing church attendance for Christians for example. She then comes to believe even more strongly than she did before that there is religious freedom in China.

However the call from Merkel also makes Liu feel that her country is being put under pressure, facing a direct attack on its autonomy and ability to make its own choices on religion. In turn this threatens her own feelings of self-esteem and causes her to feel anger and frustration. Liu (in her hypothetical mind) therefore seeks to reassert her nation’s independence and autonomy to deal with its own religious rights, and flatly denies that there is any problem with religion in China, and that there is no need to improve religious rights in China, becoming more forceful in her belief than she ever was before hearing Merkel’s words.


\textsuperscript{43} Tajfel, H. (1979)
While closely related, this ‘assertive’ reaction is more of an instinctive defensive, emotional reaction than a cognitive response and as such is arguably more of a short-term reaction than the first mechanism. It is more likely to lead to change in what are termed ‘implicit’ attitudes, “automatic affective reactions resulting from the particular associations that are activated automatically when a person encounters a relevant stimulus”. These attitudes are formed when people experience continuously reinforced associations between stimuli. Olson and Fazio find for example that when subjects were exposed to images of Pokémon alongside images of ice-cream, they subsequently evaluated those Pokémon more positively than when they were exposed to Pokémon alongside pictures of cockroaches. The subjects, unconsciously, associated those Pokémon with positive emotions rather than feelings of disgust. Scholars have found that these implicit attitudes may be extremely stable, and may have strong effects on behaviour.

In a similar way, if Liu repeatedly hears American critiques of religious freedom in China, she may begin to associate the idea of religious freedom with her indignant reaction to the critique, and her insistence that rights are respected in China. This implicit association may guide her opinions about religious freedom in the future, and even her decision to voice dissent or support

64 We might use the distinction between Kahneman’s ‘System 1’ and ‘System 2’ processing here. System 1 is the brain’s automatic and intuitive response, often emotional and involving minimal processing, while System 2 is the brain’s more effortful, slow and logical response (see Kahneman, D. (2011) Thinking Fast and Slow. Macmillan)
65 Gawronski, B., & Bodenhausen, G. V. (2006): 697
for her government’s future decisions to restrict religious freedom of Christian worshipers in Zhejiang for example.

The recoil effect

Together, these responses may have important implications for oppressive regimes facing human rights pressure. If foreign pressure does indeed make citizens feel more positively about how well their government respects human rights, then citizens will be less likely to express public dissatisfaction and less likely to publicly support efforts to challenge the authorities over their actions in suppressing human rights.

Scholars have found a mixed relationship between state repression and dissent. While coercive and suppressive tactics may make mobilisation more difficult, they may also increase public dissatisfaction with the state’s behaviour, making mobilisation more likely in certain scenarios.

Some authors have demonstrated that government repression does indeed deepen negative public evaluations of human rights conditions in their country. The dilemma of an authoritarian government therefore is that by utilising its methods of control, suppressing its citizens’ civil, political and physical rights, it may make those citizens more likely to desire to push back and

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regain those rights\textsuperscript{54}. One goal of international human rights pressure is to increase public mobilisation by highlighting the use of repression to the public\textsuperscript{55}. The theory here suggests however that international pressure may also break this link, allowing the government to carry out the repressive actions needed to keep the population under control and resist any liberalising reforms that may weaken that control, while minimising public dissatisfaction with its actions.

Like the recoil of a spring, the embattled leadership gathers up external pressure designed to weaken it and uses that pressure to strengthen its own position, pushing back demands to improve respect for human rights. Foreign human rights pressure may have the opposite effect from the one intended.

This means that rather than censoring all foreign pressure, authoritarian regimes like the Chinese Communist Party will be faced with a choice. It is in the regime’s interests to pass on pressure that is likely to cause a recoil effect, but it also needs to also prevent the citizens from hearing any pressure that they will respond to as rational actors. In other words, reporting pressure can have a propaganda value, but carries risks. The case of Morocco in the 1980s demonstrates this risk. In response to an Amnesty International report of human rights abuses, leaders launched a domestic advertising campaign to denounce the report. However according to Gränzer, the campaign backfired, because instead of winning supporters, it just served to spread the news through the country about the Amnesty report and the government abuses detailed within\textsuperscript{56}.

This is what distinguishes authoritarian regimes from liberal democracies. In liberal democracies with a free press, we would expect that the overall impact of human rights pressure should depend on the most common type of pressure received, whether it provokes a rational response

\textsuperscript{54} Although see García-Ponce and Pasquale for a study that finds that the Zimbabwean government’s use of repression increases positive citizen evaluations of the regime. As the authors admit, this may come down to higher fear of expressing negative evaluations: García-Ponce, O., & Pasquale, B. (2015) How Political Repression Shapes Attitudes Toward the State: Evidence from Zimbabwe. Working Paper


\textsuperscript{56} Gränzer, S. (1999) in Risse, T., Ropp, S.C., & Silkink, K. (eds.)
or not. Even if many in the population respond defensively, there may be others who pick up other sources of information, such as pressure that critiques the elites themselves, and develop stronger grievances. There may be a recoil effect, but only if the conditions of pressure are just right.

However in autocracies, if the regime can effectively control the information environment, and can safely predict which pressure is likely to provoke a recoil effect, then they will allow their public to hear only the information that increases support for the government’s behaviour over human rights. This means that there will be strong selection effects in authoritarian states. For a large proportion of the public in places like China, who do not seek out critical foreign news on human rights by accessing English-language or censored news sites, most of the information they receive will be through ‘approved’ media or social media posts. The pressure that citizens are most likely to hear is precisely the pressure that will be most likely to decrease their grievances, while pressure that will lead to a rational, Bayesian response will not reach their ears. This means that overall, international pressure on authoritarian regimes will have a recoil effect.

**When will the recoil effect be more likely?**

All of this circumvents the question central to the whole discussion: when will citizens respond as rational actors, and when will they respond as motivated reasoners to international pressure?

Nyhan and Reifler acknowledge that the boomerang effect in response to the correction of misperceptions has only been documented on certain issues, what they call the most ‘affect-laden’ issues. Only on controversial issues that have come to symbolically represent bipartisan

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57 By ‘recoil effect’ I refer to the aggregate impact of pressure on the state, the overall level of support for the country’s leaders, rather than the impact on the individual level

58 Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2016)
competition in the United States, like the war in Iraq\textsuperscript{59}, the Affordable Care Act\textsuperscript{60}, and the unemployment rate at the time of a presidential election\textsuperscript{61} do partisans strengthen their misperceptions. On issues less clearly linked to this bipartisan competition, people generally act in a Bayesian fashion\textsuperscript{62}. The essence of this argument is that people will consider information that corrects their misperceptions rationally, \textit{unless} the issue is more saliently linked to partisan competition, in which case they will disregard the accuracy of the information and whatever the issue is actually about, and consider it in terms of their partisan political identities and prior beliefs.

I argue that in the same way, citizens will consider information about foreign pressure rationally, \textit{unless} it is more saliently linked to the idea of international competition, in which case they will disregard whatever the human rights issue is actually about, and consider it in terms of their national identity. In other words, if citizens perceive negative information about their country’s human rights conditions to be closely tied to a threat to its standing and image in comparison to other countries, then the sense of threat to their own self-worth becomes activated, and therefore so does the need to defend against this threat. As a result they become more positive about their country’s human rights, and the government sees a recoil effect from the pressure. If the sense of threat to self-worth is not activated (and nor are other competing motivations), then people can judge the negative information on its own terms, and if they judge it to be accurate, will become more negative about their country’s human rights, increasing the risk of public dissent against the government.

\textsuperscript{61} Schafiner, B. F., & Roche, C. (2017)
\textsuperscript{62} Wood, T., & Porter, E. (2017)
In some cases where partisan ties are strong, their pull may even outweigh a salient threat to the nation. However, I argue that in the case of China, a threat-based argument is likely to have more explanatory value than cue-based theories. According to these theories, foreign criticism of government policy should polarise public opinion along partisan lines. When regime supporters hear any kind of criticism of their regime’s human rights record they should reject it, while opponents will be more likely to accept the information, leading to an even greater cleavage in beliefs about respect for human rights between pro and anti-regime groups. However as discussed, in China and other one-party authoritarian states there are few clear partisan political identities, even as regime supporter or opponent. The more salient identity, on the Chinese mainland at least, is that of the nation.

As discussed, a tenet of social identity theory is that the more people identify with their social group, the more important that group’s image will become to their self esteem. Those with the strongest national attachment, whose sense of self-worth is most closely linked to their nation, will be the most likely to feel a sense of threat, and should therefore become more satisfied with the state of human rights. Those who care little for their nation are unlikely to care about criticism or pressure, and can interpret the information on its own terms.

**Hypothesis 1:** International pressure on human rights will be more likely to reduce citizens’ grievances about human rights conditions in those with a greater attachment to their nation

Pressure on human rights is also more likely to evoke a sense of threat for those who care in some way about how their country treats its people (even if they believe that it does treat them...
well). People who do not particularly care how their country deals with freedom of speech and political rights are unlikely to feel too hurt by news that their country is not performing well on these measures. At the very least this means that individuals who care less about how their country is performing on human rights will be less likely to think through counterexamples to the criticism - although since they may still feel that their nation is under attack, they may still see the need to reject the information on an emotional level.

Testing for these individual differences helps to show that the observable implications of the theory hold. However, they do not give us much useful information for policy or international human rights theory, or the circumstances under which an authoritarian regime is most likely to successfully engender a recoil effect. For this we need to look at different types and timings of foreign pressure.

**Type of pressure**

As an initial scope condition, the effect should mainly apply to issues on which people have not already conclusively made up their mind. If members of the public all already firmly believe that their country is repressive and already hold strong grievances about their government’s behaviour, then they are unlikely to feel a strong sense of threat to their nation’s image if they hear news that others also think so. People are also motivated to reject information that threatens their pre-existing beliefs, so will be more comfortable accepting information that is congruent with those beliefs. As a result, issues on which the majority of the population have less strongly-held grievances - through a lack of knowledge or through less clear evidence on either side - are much more likely to be influenced by the threat to the national image. In

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conjunction with the above argument, this suggests that we are most likely to see a recoil effect on issues where many citizens care about how their country performs on a given issue, but have not formed strong previous opinions on the issue itself.

As shown in table 1 in the introductory chapter, respect for human rights is not an issue that a sizeable proportion of the Chinese public believe is a serious concern in their country (at least on the surface). While I do not test this scope condition fully in the dissertation, in chapter eight I discuss the results of interviews with members of the Chinese public on the much more widely accepted problem of air pollution.

There are three main ways in which international pressure is likely to appear especially threatening to the part of people’s self-esteem that comes from their nation, and therefore more likely to evoke a recoil effect.

Perceived hostility of source

According to Social Identity Theory, people gain a positive image of their group through its comparison to other groups. As Druckman says, it is important for people to feel that “not only are they part of a ‘good’ group, but it is ‘better’ than another group.” As such, pride in how one’s nation treats its people is not just about absolute levels of how well human rights are respected but is also outward-looking, about how well they are respected in comparison to other nations. People’s positive image of their nation is therefore closely linked to its standing in international competition. When this sense of international competition and relative performance is highly salient and closely linked to the performance of the nation on the issue in question, citizens are likely to view critical information on that issue as particularly threatening.

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69 Tajfel, H., & Turner, J.C. (1979)
One way in which this will occur is if human rights pressure comes from a source that is a major competitor to the nation, especially if tensions between the two groups are high. Even if citizens of the country targeted for human rights pressure do not care much about the human rights issue in question, when pressure comes from a major geopolitical competitor, and when that competition is fierce, then the issue becomes one closely tied to their nation’s relative standing, and therefore (if they are attached to their nation) to their own self-esteem. Rousseau shows that people’s attention to relative versus absolute gains increases significantly when they are considering states that are economic or military opponents. Criticism from a geopolitical opponent places the country’s failure on human rights in a comparative, international setting; criticism of Soviet human rights from the United States would have explicitly framed Soviet human rights as worse in comparison to the US, as part of international Cold War competition, something that would not be nearly as salient if the criticism came from Cuba for example.

Hornsey argues that a key issue in determining whether group criticism evokes acceptance or defensive rejection is whether the criticiser is seen as having the best interests of the group at heart, or is seeking to attack the group. He argues that when people “perceive that the critic has relatively sinister or destructive motives, then this provides an opportunity to dismiss the message, and heightens negativity toward the speaker and his or her comments. However, if they can see no reason to assume that the speaker has destructive motives, they are free to assess the content of the message on its merits”. Hornsey argues therefore that the perceived constructiveness of the criticism is the main mediator for the intergroup sensitivity effect. People generally believe that out-groups will have hostile intentions towards their group, and are

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72 Hornsey, M.J. (2005)
therefore more likely to reject their criticism. On the other hand, these effects are negated when people believe that the source is psychologically invested in the group; which is more likely when the criticism comes from a member of the in-group.

If people believe that the source is deliberately using pressure to denigrate their nation, then the threat to their nation’s image becomes highly salient and clear. The issue turns from one of human rights into one intimately and symbolically linked to the relative worth of their nation. Moreover, the more hostile human rights pressure appears to be, the more likely it appears to be attacking the nation, then the more likely people will feel the need to assert their country’s autonomy. US pressure on the Soviet Union needs a repost; Cuban pressure can be ignored. This increases the chances that citizens will fight back, asserting that their country does not need to improve human rights.

In the case of the Soviet Union’s human rights, pressure that comes from a geopolitical competitor, like the United States, perceived to be using human rights as an excuse to attack the country and gain a geopolitical advantage, may tie the human rights pressure closely to the Soviet national image and its autonomy. This sparks a boomerang effect and leads patriotic Soviet citizens to counter-argue and assert their country’s respect for human rights. If pressure comes from a source not perceived to be hostile, like an ally or a non-partisan international organisation like the United Nations, then citizens will be less likely to see the issue as tied to the national image or autonomy. If the source is seen as having the best interests of the country at heart, citizens may even view the pressure as constructive, and will be more likely to attend to the accuracy of the information.

**Hypothesis 2:** International pressure on a country’s human rights will be more likely to reduce public grievances about human rights conditions, and authoritarian regimes will be more likely to report the pressure, when it comes from a geopolitical opponent.

*National identity salience*

This argument implies that what matters is not just the source—whether pressure comes from the United States or Cuba—but also the current relationship of the target country with that source. If the Soviet Union is involved in a current conflict or geopolitical dispute with the United States, then pressure will be seen as particularly hostile, and international competition will be even more salient—and we should see an even greater effect.

**Hypothesis 3:** International pressure on a country’s human rights will be more likely to reduce public grievances about human rights conditions, and authoritarian regimes will be more likely to report the pressure, when there are geopolitical tensions between the source and the target.

If the threat argument is correct, then not only should ongoing disputes with the source have an effect, but also any international event that raises public nationalism, whomever it is directed at. At these times the public is not only more likely to be emotionally invested in their nation, but also more likely to encounter national symbols like flags, shown to increase national attachment. As the national identity becomes more salient, people will be more likely to link it to pressure over the issue in question, and will be more likely to be motivated to defend it.

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Hypothesis 4: International pressure on a country’s human rights will be more likely to reduce public grievances about human rights conditions, and authoritarian regimes will be more likely to report the pressure, when the national identity is salient.

Topic of pressure

The likelihood that citizens will see pressure as a threat is also determined by its content. For example, people are likely to see calls for their nation to be sanctioned or diminished in power for rights abuses to be more hostile than calls for money to be pumped into the country to improve its infrastructure\(^77\). The perception of threat may also depend on the topic of the pressure. Some topics are much more closely tied to the nation and its relative power than others, in particular issues of territorial integrity, such as separatist movements or breakaway territories. This effect is arguably likely to be particularly large in states like China, with its history of partial colonisation and a number of territories where sovereignty has been closely contested over recent years.

Attacks on these issues will be far more likely to evoke feelings of threat to the national image than on issues concerned with individual rights like prevention of torture or the rule of law, since they are directly concerned with the breakup or continuity of the nation. In China, much international pressure is focussed on these areas, on democracy in Hong Kong and treatment of minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang. While pressure on these issues also concern individual political rights, I argue that when those rights also touch on territorial integrity, they will be much more likely to evoke a feeling of threat.

\(^{77}\) The variation in the impact of the form of pressure is a question for a future project.
As mentioned in the introduction, due to the sensitive nature of these topics in China, I am unfortunately unable to investigate this hypothesis in surveys or in direct interviews. Therefore I address this only in the next two chapters, which rely on evidence only from Chinese media reports - as well as briefly in interviews with overseas Chinese students.

**Hypothesis 5:** International pressure on a country’s human rights will be more likely to reduce public grievances about human rights conditions, and authoritarian regimes will be more likely to report the pressure, when it is concerned with issues of territorial integrity.

**Counteracting the recoil effect**

There is an important caveat to the above hypotheses. A more salient national identity may work in the opposite direction: by sparking public mobilisation to improve human rights in the country rather than sparking defensiveness and satisfaction with the status quo. Weatherley for example argues that throughout recent Chinese history, “almost every time there is a debate in China about democracy and rights, it is closely tied to the national question”\(^{78}\). He cites cases from the Qing Dynasty to the present day where reformers have used ‘the nation’ as a cause to push individual rights. This suggests that a strong sense of national identity may in fact benefit those agitating for change, by encouraging the popular sense that the nation needs to improve. And indeed, major anti-government protests in China, from May Fourth to Tiananmen Square have been born out of nationalist movements and sentiment\(^{79}\).

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We need here to distinguish between two kinds of nationalism. According to Liah Greenfeld, nationalism can either be individualistic-libertarian or collectivistic-authoritarian. Individualistic-libertarian, or liberal, nationalism emphasises the freedom of individual citizens, or as Greenfeld says, where “every member of the people was… equal to any other member, as well as free, invested with the right of self-government, or, in other words, sovereignty, and the people or the nation collectively was, in turn, defined as sovereign.” Liberal nationalism is about fighting for the nation in order to ensure the rights of the people - the state is the property of the people, and the people are the sovereigns of the state.

Authoritarian, collectivist nationalism on the other hand subsumes the interests of the individuals to those of the group - the people are the property of the state. There is a “fundamental inequality between a small group of self-appointed interpreters of the will of the nation - the leaders - and the masses, who have to adapt to the elite's interpretations.” Authoritarian nationalism is about the uniqueness of the state in contrast to other states, where it is the elites who determine and interpret what constitutes that uniqueness.

The increases in salience of the national identity referenced by Weatherley can best be described as liberal nationalism. Nationalist reform movements such as those at the end of the Qing Dynasty have directed their attention inwards, looking at how the nation can be improved for the benefit of its citizens, often questioning and even overthrowing the elite leaders. Authoritarian nationalism on the other hand generally has its attention directed outwards - to the outgroup - to protect the 'self-appointed interpreters of the will of the nation' against foreign competitors.

80 Greenfeld, L. (1995) Nationalism in Western and Eastern Europe Compared. Can Europe Work, 15-23. She also delineates a difference between civic and ethnic nationalism
81 Greenfeld, L. (1995): 19
82 ibid
For Greenfeld, authoritarian nationalism has become most common in recent history, and Zhao argues that it was this form that came to dominate in China from the 1990s. The CCP’s post-Tiananmen Square ‘Patriotic Education’ campaign was designed to not only instil a sense of nationalism in its population, but also to strengthen the link between the party and the nation in the public’s imagination; to press home the message that a threat to the CCP is a threat to China. As such, recent nationalism is very different from that which arose at the end of the Qing Dynasty. It is aimed at bolstering rather than challenging the ruling elites, and instead of overcoming problems at home, focuses on resisting the threat from abroad. According to Zhao, the CCP have characterised this state-led nationalism in terms of resistance to Western aggression rather than self-improvement; international relations rather than domestic politics. They have portrayed ideals of modernity and freedom as values that belong in the West. Some Chinese scholars have suggested that, for present-day Chinese nationalists, “democracy is only of secondary value and important only if it can serve as a tool to strengthen the power of the state and government.”

My hypothesis about the impact of the national identity is likely to only hold for this particular kind of authoritarian nationalism. When authoritarian nationalism is prominent, the threat from other countries and the need to protect the nation and its leaders from outside attack becomes the most salient way to interpret new information. The response to foreign pressure is directed outwards, to defend the nation.

Liberal nationalism on the other hand, rather than increasing the salience of threat from outside, highlights how well the nation is doing in serving its citizens. Information that criticises the

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85 Weatherley, R. (2014)
86 Zhao, S.S. (2014)
nation is less likely to be interpreted as a threat, but instead included as part of this debate about successes or failures of the nation - and therefore more likely to be interpreted as a sign that the nation is not doing as well as it can. The response to foreign pressure is directed inwards, to improve the nation.

As a result we would expect that pressure might be more successful in increasing grievances if it occurs at times when liberal nationalism is more prominent, and least successful when authoritarian nationalism is prominent. These two forms of nationalism, one that privileges the elites and their defence of the nation against foreign threats, and the other that privileges the sovereignty of the people over their country, can coexist. The question is which one of the two is more salient. At some times for example, when foreign threats are particularly high, and the government elites are standing up for the nation against those threats, authoritarian nationalism will be especially prominent. However, at other times, when internal crises are high, the leaders may not be seen as adequately protecting the nation and promoting the will of the people, and liberal nationalism will be more prominent. The key difference comes from how citizens perceive their government elites to be defending and representing the nation.

Foreign pressure might itself be able to shape the relative salience of the type of nationalism felt by the citizens of the target country. The key to the existence of authoritarian nationalism is the link between the government elites and the nation - that the CCP represents the nation, and any attack on the CCP is an attack on China. This is why foreign pressure on the CCP elicits a sense of threat to the part of people’s self-esteem that comes from their allegiance to the nation. However, foreign comments themselves can attempt to separate the elites from the nation, to make the CCP appear less representative of the nation. The simplest way in which this can be done is by explicitly framing the pressure as targeting government elites over their behaviour on
human rights, and explicitly not targeting the nation as a whole. In terms of respect for human rights, this has the effect of decoupling the ruling elites from the nation. This allows members of the public to reaffirm their belief that their country cares about human rights, and allows them to shift the blame of violating human rights to their leaders. As the sense of threat to the nation dissipates, citizens can assess the critical message on its own merits.

Making the national identity salient however, as in the above hypotheses, means that people will link the issue of pressure over human rights closely to that of the performance of their nation. This may evoke the need to defend the nation against this threat, or it may evoke the need to improve the nation. The goal of international pressure should be to evoke this second kind of liberal nationalism. As mentioned, when it explicitly targets elites, human rights pressure is less likely to highlight the threat to the nation, and more likely to highlight their failure to protect the sovereign rights of the citizens. As such, instead of evoking authoritarian nationalism and the need to defend the nation, the salient national identity should evoke a sense of liberal nationalism, a nationalism that looks at how citizens can improve their nation from within. They should be more likely to accept grievances about their country’s human rights conditions, and more likely to support domestic efforts to improve the nation. Pressure that only addresses the elites therefore might not just negate the recoil effect, but might even increase citizens’ grievances about human rights conditions in their country.

In summary, if people are thinking about their country, then pressure can have two opposing effects. If pressure makes people think that their country is under attack, then they will defend it. If it makes them think that their government leaders need to work to improve the country, then they will look to improve the country. This may depend on the target of the pressure.
National identity salient

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<td>Pressure on the nation as a whole</td>
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**Hypothesis 6:** When the national identity is salient, international pressure on a country’s human rights that only addresses the elites of the country will be more likely to increase public grievances about human rights conditions.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a theory of the public response to international pressure in authoritarian regimes; asking when international pressure is most likely to decrease citizens’ grievances with their regime over their suppression of human rights. The conventional wisdom is that information about international pressure will raise grievances in the public and as a result authoritarian regimes will look to limit all information from reaching their public.

The logic of a threat-based approach argues however that when the pressure threatens the parts of people’s self-esteem linked to their valued national identity, then it may reduce grievances about human rights, and serve as a domestic propaganda tool for authoritarian regimes. The regime will choose to report on the information most likely to do this, while minimising information most likely to lead to mobilisation, leading to a ‘recoil’ effect. This does not mean that the pressure does not have hugely important mobilising effects for human rights activists.
and organised dissident groups. For the ordinary Chinese citizen however, certain types of foreign pressure may stifle their support for the aims of those groups, and make long-lasting change more difficult.
In late 2015, five Hong Kong booksellers linked to ‘Causeway Bay Books’ disappeared. The store had a habit of publishing politically sensitive volumes, including fictional stories about Xi Jinping, the Chinese leader. At the time of the disappearances Causeway Bay Books was planning on publishing a book on Xi’s love life, allegedly called *Xi Jinping and his Six Women*. One of those who disappeared was Lee Bo, a British national, who vanished from Hong Kong and reappeared in mainland China months later, prompting accusations that he had been abducted by CCP agents acting illegally in the semi-autonomous region. In February 2016 the United Kingdom’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued a report to parliament that called Lee Bo’s disappearance a “serious breach” of the bilateral treaty between the UK and China on the

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2 See [http://www.scmp.com/topics/hong-kong-bookseller-disappearances](http://www.scmp.com/topics/hong-kong-bookseller-disappearances) for summary of the events
handover of Hong Kong\textsuperscript{3}. While many criticised the report as being too easy-going on China’s crackdown on civil liberties in the city\textsuperscript{4}, China’s governmental-controlled media took a different view, devoting a surprising level of attention to such a sensitive issue. The \textit{Global Times} described both the Lee Bo case as well as the Foreign Office’s ‘serious concerns’ in full, including the accusation that Bo had been transferred to the mainland against the Hong Kong territory’s laws. It went on to discuss the other disappearances at length\textsuperscript{5}. Other newspapers called the criticism “irresponsible” and “unreasonable accusations”\textsuperscript{6}, while castigating the United Kingdom in turn for trying to retain its imperial past\textsuperscript{7}.

This case illustrates the dilemma authoritarian regimes face when dealing with foreign criticism. On the face of it, allowing state-owned media to inform Chinese citizens that the CCP has been heavily criticised for violating its bilateral commitments in the Hong Kong handover, for abusing its own laws in deploying forces in Hong Kong, and for squeezing rights and freedoms of Hong Kong citizens, would be a risky strategy. Yet the media reported widely on a British government document that otherwise would have presumably reached a very small number of people. The next two chapters examine this tension, and the circumstances under which authoritarian governments report on critical foreign information about human rights. The primary aim of this chapter is to set the scene, to show what happens to information about foreign pressure in authoritarian regimes; that the Chinese government faces competing domestic concerns when facing foreign pressure over its human rights; and that it reports this pressure to the public more than we might otherwise expect.

\textsuperscript{3} United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2016) Six Monthly Report to Parliament on Hong Kong: July-December 2015. \textit{FCO}
\textsuperscript{4} Guardian (2016) Britain accuses China of serious breach of treaty over ‘removed’ Hong Kong booksellers. \textit{The Guardian}, 12 February
\textsuperscript{5} Global Times (2016) 英报告幻想自己有涉港特权 干涉香港事务遭批. \textit{Global Times}, 14 February
\textsuperscript{6} Beijing Youth Daily (2016) 英国发表所谓香港问题报告 中方表示坚决反对. \textit{Beijing Youth Daily}, 13 February
\textsuperscript{7} Global Times (2016) 环球评英国发布香港事务报告：别把鸡毛当令箭. \textit{Global Times}, 14 February
I examine how, domestically, the Chinese regime has dealt with pressure over time; how it has reported it in state media and the language it has used, breaking it into examples of the most prominent overseas criticism, such as the Tibetan crackdown in 2008, or the United States Country Human Rights Reports. I also show that when the CCP does report sensitive news related to human rights in China, such as arrests of dissidents or crackdowns on protests, it often does so through the lens of international pressure, tying domestic human rights concerns closely to international opprobrium. I primarily use reports from the People’s Daily, which I analyse more systematically in the next chapter, but also use commercial government-controlled outlets like the Global Times that have grown over recent years.

From Qing to Deng

After the missionary-led attempts to abolish the practice of footbinding in the late Qing period (discussed in detail in chapter five), foreign attention towards human rights in China before the Tiananmen massacre was rare. Despite atrocities throughout the twentieth century, the major acts of international pressure only concerned Tibet. In March 1959 a popular uprising in Lhasa spread into a full-scale revolt. The Chinese response was shift, and Communist forces crushed the nascent rebellion within a few days, killing thousands of Tibetans and prompting the Dalai Lama to flee to India. The actions sparked condemnation around the world, and Chinese newspapers were not slow to report on the international response. The People’s Daily focussed its ire on the United States, where a number of senators had laid into the Chinese forces for “ethnic cleansing”. The paper also lavished attention on the British media, who in the absence of an extensive repost from their government, had led the criticism of the crackdown. A People’s Daily

8 People’s Daily (1959) 妄图借西藏叛乱事件煽起敌视我国的运动美国“冷战”策士恶毒叫嚣. People’s Daily, 13 April
report on the 8th of April gave a summary of the accusations from British newspapers, including “violent suppression of the freedoms of powerless people” and “attempts to wipe Tibet off the map”. In retrospect this response was surprising, since there would have been very little opportunity for the Chinese public to otherwise hear about the level of violence or any foreign disapproval. However the response did fit nicely into the Communist propaganda machine built up over the previous ten years that placed China alongside the Soviet Union in an ideological battle against the West.

In October of the same year, Ireland and Malaya sponsored a United Nations General Assembly Draft Resolution to debate Chinese activities in Tibet. Rather than addressing issues of independence, the resolution called for “respect for the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people and for their distinctive cultural and religious life”. The document passed with a vote of 42-9, with only the Soviet bloc in opposition. The Indian delegation abstained, despite pressure from MPs at home, as did the United Kingdom, France and Belgium, perhaps mindful of what support for the resolution might mean for their own colonial behaviour. Further similar resolutions were tabled and passed in 1961 and 1965.

The People’s Daily gave the discussions almost blanket coverage, with over fifty articles in the week of the 1959 meeting. The articles noted all the states who had voted for the resolutions, and heavily quoted the texts, in 1961 for example passing on news that the General Assembly was “gravely concerned at the continuation of events in Tibet, including the violation of the

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9 People’s Daily (1959) 歪曲西藏局势真相暴露帝国主义野心英国报刊恶毒诬蔑我国 People’s Daily, 8 April
10 See for example: People’s Daily (1959) 兴反华之风作反共之浪美国统治集团和印度扩张分子相呼应印度官员散发所谓达赖声明美国官员叫好印度报纸发出诽谤我国叫嚣美国报纸打气 People’s Daily, 25 April; People’s Daily (1959) 美国力图收藏狐狸尾巴想用“沉默”掩盖支持西藏叛乱阴谋 People’s Daily, 25 April; People’s Daily, 24 April; People’s Daily (1959) 李承晚集团声嘶力竭大肆叫嚣支持西藏叛乱分子 People’s Daily, 24 April; People’s Daily, 24 April; People’s Daily (1959) 美国利用西藏叛乱鼓吹侵略统治集团代表人物大肆叫嚣我国以图迷惑亚洲国家 People’s Daily, 25 April; People’s Daily (1959) 日本一帮反华的反动分子在东京聚众作反华叫嚣 People’s Daily, 15 May
12 People’s Daily (1959) 美国挟持联大通过所谓“西藏问题”的非法决议 苏联等国代表痛斥帝国主义冷战丑剧 People’s Daily, 24 October
fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people and the suppression of the distinctive cultural and religious life which they have traditionally enjoyed\textsuperscript{13}. The articles sung an almost identical refrain, attacking the United Nations as a tool for American imperialism and Cold War dominance\textsuperscript{14}, and postulating that the sponsoring countries had only done so under orders from the US\textsuperscript{15}. When it came to 1965, the story was that the United States was using the United Nations to take over another Chinese province, as it had done with Taiwan\textsuperscript{16}, and was using the process to cover up its own aggression in Vietnam\textsuperscript{17}. The resolution “proves that US imperialism is the Chinese people’s most ferocious enemy; they are determined to destroy the unity of China’s ethnic groups\textsuperscript{18}”. By 1965 border conflicts with India had turned the country into enemy number two for the CCP press machine, and reports of the resolutions portrayed them as a joint United States and Indian attack against China\textsuperscript{19}.

Through the rest of Mao’s rule, including the Great Leap Forward, which according to some estimates led to the deaths of over 45 million people,\textsuperscript{20} and the Cultural Revolution, which arguably saw 125 million citizens persecuted\textsuperscript{21}, international criticism of China’s rights conditions was almost non-existent\textsuperscript{22}. Perversely, it took the end of these campaigns and the opening up of China to increase foreign scrutiny. Amnesty International began its China research programme in

\textsuperscript{13}People’s Daily (1961) 在美国操纵下煽动反华浪潮 联大通过所谓“西藏问题”提案 社会主义国家代表抗议联大敌视中国干涉中国内政 美国代表透露美国要在西藏使奴隶制复辟的野心 1961.12.23 People’s Daily, 23 December
\textsuperscript{14}People’s Daily (1959) 反对美国加剧“冷战” (1959.10.24) People’s Daily, 24 October
\textsuperscript{15}People’s Daily (1965) 联合国的又一个可耻纪录 People’s Daily, 21 October
\textsuperscript{16}People’s Daily (1961) 谴责美国挟持联大阻挠恢复我国合法权利 People’s Daily, 25 December
\textsuperscript{17}People’s Daily (1965) 联合国的又一个可耻纪录 People’s Daily, 21 December
\textsuperscript{18}People’s Daily (1965) 陈毅副总理兼外长举行中外记者招待会发表重要谈话 中国决心为打败美帝国作出一切必要的牺牲 打败美帝之后，全世界结束帝国主义殖民主义的时代就会到来 People’s Daily, 17 October
\textsuperscript{19}People’s Daily (1965) 美国印度又在联大就“西藏问题”演出反华丑剧 大多数代表不是反对和弃权就是不参加投票 People’s Daily, 21 December
\textsuperscript{22}An examination of the United Kingdom’s Foreign and Commonwealth files for the period reveal concerns about attacks on the British embassy and uprisings in Hong Kong, but next to no mention of the bloodshed undergone by Chinese people themselves. Why there was this almost wilful lack of attention is a question for another thesis
1976, and began to file reports on human rights in the country - particularly on the treatment of those arrested in demonstrations in 1976. According to Rosemary Foot, the attention did not go unnoticed in Beijing, and propaganda officials tried to prevent details about executions of political prisoners from being released to the outside world. Attention grew into the 1980s as other NGOs began to focus on China, including Human Rights Watch, but in general, as Roberta Cohen demonstrates in her stand-out study, China was very much still the ‘human rights exception’. The combination of the wish to maintain a strong anti-Soviet alliance and the recognition that things were far better than they had been ten years before meant that while press attention grew, especially over crackdowns on intellectuals and the arrests of political dissidents like Wei Jingsheng, foreign governments tended to ignore any violations that did occur. And the Chinese government, perhaps confident of the good relationship it was enjoying with Western countries, had no discernible domestic reaction to the criticism that did take place, reporting almost nothing from abroad. It was at this time, rather than post-Tiananmen, as Dingding Chen notes, that China made efforts to join the human rights regime, signing the convention against torture and joining the UN Commission for Human Rights.

Tibet 1987

It was repression in Tibet that once again attracted the international community’s interest, what Foot calls the ‘sharpening of attention’. In September, pro-independence protests began throughout Tibetan areas, meeting arrests and violence from Chinese forces in response. The crackdown ushered in a current, if not a torrent, of international pressure on Beijing. While the US State Department remained supportive of Chinese actions, Congress was much more

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27 Foot, R. (2000)
forthcoming. In September the Dalai Lama was invited to Washington to speak\textsuperscript{29}, in October the House and the Senate passed a resolution condemning China and linking arms sales to the treatment of Tibet\textsuperscript{30}, and then in December, a clause on Tibet was entered into the Foreign Relations Authorisation Act. As riots and repression continued through 1988, condemnation grew from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch as well as from the British Parliament, while in June the European Union also invited the Dalai Lama to speak to the European Parliament about the conditions in Tibet\textsuperscript{31}.

In comparison to the response in 1959, the Chinese media was relatively subdued in passing on news of the criticism. There was a media blackout on the riots in Tibet throughout September, the \textit{People's Daily} instead choosing to focus on grape production in the province\textsuperscript{32}. It was only in October, after a number of articles about Senate votes and the Dalai Lama speech that domestic news began to come out on the unrest\textsuperscript{33}. Indeed the only mentions of any unrest in Tibet came through mentions of United States congressional activity.

Reports of foreign comments focussed almost solely on the goings-on in the US Congress, generally ignoring any criticism from other sources, with even the Dalai Lama speech to the European Union only receiving a short repost\textsuperscript{34}. The Chinese public was regularly kept up to date about the congressional resolutions on the other hand, although given very little detail about what had been discussed. Articles generally ignored the reasons for the congressional action and any human rights abuses in Tibet, merely mentioning that the resolutions attacking China for repression in Tibet had ‘passed’, and focussed instead on the $200,000 worth of congressional

\textsuperscript{29} Taken from: http://dalailama.com/messages/tibet/five-point-peace-plan
\textsuperscript{31} Taken from: http://www.dalailama.com/messages/tibet/strasbourg-proposal-1988
\textsuperscript{32} People's Daily (1987) 西藏人吃上了自产葡萄. People's Daily, 15 September
\textsuperscript{34} People's Daily (1988) 中国驻瑞士使馆官员驳斥达赖讲话 决不允许西藏问题国际化. People's Daily, 23 June
funding given to the Dalai Lama\textsuperscript{35}. In contrast to the earlier rhetoric, fulminations against the United States were more implicit, limited to criticising congress for interfering in China’s domestic affairs and calling for better bilateral relations\textsuperscript{36}.

**Tiananmen**

This goodwill did not last the crackdown on the streets of Beijing on the 4\textsuperscript{th} of June 1989. Condemnation from around the world came almost immediately, from the United States\textsuperscript{37} to the Philippines\textsuperscript{38} and even the Soviet Union\textsuperscript{39}. The United States immediately put a ban on bilateral weapons sales, and then in coordination with the G7 and the European Commission, later expanded sanctions on China. Japan and the World Bank froze loans, the United Kingdom cancelled bilateral visits, and France opened its doors and Bastille Day celebrations to democracy protestors hoping to flee China after the massacre\textsuperscript{40}.

The gamut of foreign criticism gave the Chinese regime a dilemma. As with the Tibet riots two years earlier, it sought to limit public knowledge of the massacre in Beijing as much as possible. Passing on stories of foreign accusations, sanctions on Chinese behaviour and the cancelling of economic and diplomatic deals would demonstrate that the CCP had at the very least done something worthy of foreign opprobrium and show that international actors believed the leadership was behaving in a way that violated international norms. At the most, news of this criticism would give details about what the Chinese forces had done in the night of the 4\textsuperscript{th} of June, for those in the population who was unaware. As a result in the days and weeks following

\textsuperscript{35} People’s Daily (1987) 美参院公然通过所谓“西藏问题”修正案 我驻美使馆重申我对西藏神圣主权 谴责美国会一些人粗暴干涉我内政. People’s Daily, 8 October

\textsuperscript{36} People’s Daily(1987) 我驻美使馆发表声明 谴责美国议员干涉中国内政. People’s Daily, 11 November


\textsuperscript{38} New Straits Times (1989) World leaders outraged by army action. New Straits Times, 6 June


\textsuperscript{40} This is all summarized in detail by Foot, R (2000), so I will not repeat in full here
the massacre, Chinese state media was careful about the news of foreign criticism it passed on to the public.

While foreign condemnation and sanctions came in almost immediately, it was four days later that the first information about the hostile international reaction featured in Chinese news. A brief story detailed only the news that President Bush had suspended the arms deal between the two countries, for “things happening at present”\textsuperscript{41}. While no further details were given, the \textit{People’s Daily} was more forthcoming about the news that Professor Fang Lizhi, a leader in the Tiananmen protests, had been given asylum in the United States’ embassy\textsuperscript{42}. This escape gave state media a chance to portray Fang and his colleague Li Shuxian as traitors, fleeing to join anti-Chinese and anti-Communist foreign forces\textsuperscript{43}. Whereas reporting on foreign criticism that directly attacked the CCP’s actions of the 4\textsuperscript{th} of June would have had no choice but to shine a light on those events, the dispute over Fang allowed the CCP to play the criticism and sanctions as a bilateral dispute between two international competitors, even giving the foreign ministry the opportunity to say that US actions were a “violation of international law”\textsuperscript{44}.

Many of the Chinese reports that mentioned the unrest in Beijing chose to do it through critiques of foreign actors interfering in China. In June and July these focussed primarily on the \textit{Voice of America} (VoA)\textsuperscript{45}. At this time, VoA was perhaps the most widely used outside source of news\textsuperscript{46}, and a major way by which the Chinese people picked up information about the events

\textsuperscript{41} People’s Daily (1989) 布什总统对中国局势进行指责 我外交部发言人表示极大遗憾. \textit{People’s Daily}, 8 June
\textsuperscript{42} People’s Daily (1989) 方励之到美驻华使馆“避难” 有关人士称提供这种庇护是干涉中国内政. \textit{People’s Daily}, 8 June
\textsuperscript{43} People’s Daily (1989) 外衣剥光之后——评方励之教授夫妇“寻求保护”. \textit{People’s Daily}, 13 June
\textsuperscript{44} People’s Daily (1989) 美使馆给予方励之等所谓“保护”事 我外交部提出严重抗议. \textit{People’s Daily}, 9 June
\textsuperscript{45} For example People’s Daily (1989) “美国之音”无中生有 西北五棉职工用事实反驳造谣者. \textit{People’s Daily}, 17 June;
\textsuperscript{46} He, Z., & Zhu, J. (1994) The “Voice of America” and China’s Zeroing in on Tiananmen Square. \textit{Journalism and Communication Monographs}, 143
in Beijing. Zhou and Zhu estimate that VoA may have had up to 100 million Chinese listeners, and that around 80% of its Chinese news-time in 1989 was devoted to the Tiananmen movement. Throughout the 1980s, VoA had used its Mandarin and Cantonese short-wave radio service to reach millions of Chinese homes. The station was one important route through which many students and urban intellectuals heard about the 1987 unrest in Tibet, and the Chinese government explicitly blamed it for spreading news about the 1986 democracy protests. Zhang and Dominick show that, among Chinese intellectuals working and studying in the United States in 1996, 63% had listened to VoA at least once a week when they were in China, and this was how they became aware of much domestic and international news, supplementing the more readily available Chinese media. As one respondent said, “my experience told me that VoA plus Chinese media equalled the truth.”

From the 10th of June, still almost a week later, the People’s Daily began regularly reporting on critical stories from the Voice of America, attempting to refute them and cast doubt on the station’s trustworthiness and motives. The story on the 10th for example gave explicit information on the ‘rumours’, reported already on the Voice of America, that over three thousand had been killed and that tanks had entered Tiananmen Square, before repudiating them as deliberate falsehoods. In itself, this appears a risky strategy, as even with the reach of Voice of America in China, repeating this information in national newspapers would reach a far larger proportion of the public. However as time went on and news of the events of the 4th of June more widespread, criticism and sanctions from the United States became a useful brush to

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53 ibid: 92
54 People’s Daily (1989) 就美使馆给予方励之等所谓“保护”事 我外交部提出严重抗议 People’s Daily, 10 June
tarnish Voice of America, and stories on the two were often entwined, with the station framed as a tool of a hostile opponent that was attacking China through as many means as possible. In the eyes of the *People's Daily*, VoA was “dishonourable”\(^{55}\), a “government mouthpiece”\(^{56}\), and a tool for the “economic blockade” of China\(^{57}\). We cannot know the consequences of this damage control, although Zhang and Dominick’s study suggests that even among liberal intellectuals living in the United States in the 1990s, Voice of America was not seen as very objective - respondents scoring its level of ‘bias’ as 3.88 out of 5\(^{58}\).

The CCP made strenuous efforts to limit people’s access to the station through the 1990s, aware of the damage that unfiltered information could do. By 1996 its attempts to ‘jam’ VoA and the equally conspicuous BBC and Radio Free Asia had become more successful. One such tactic was the use of a ‘fire dragon’ - Chinese music that covered up any content\(^{59}\). This meant that Voice of America had a total of 1.3 million listeners and the BBC around 2 million in 1998\(^{60}\); still a fair number, but together the two channels only reached less than 0.05% of the Chinese population. Regulations in 1996 on foreign news services (and the start of centralised control over the internet) meant that the news channels struggled to have the influence they had in the 1980s\(^{61}\).

When Voice of America shut down its China coverage in 2011 it commanded around 2 million listeners a week.\(^{62}\)

As Foot discusses in detail, international pressure continued apace throughout the decade, especially from the United States and European nations. Despite the need to engage China in the

\(^{55}\) *People’s Daily* (1989) 《美国之音》的不光采行径  *People’s Daily*, 12 June

\(^{56}\) *People’s Daily* (1989) 《美国之音》继续造谣  *People’s Daily*, 19 June

\(^{57}\) *People’s Daily* (1989) 正告美国政府和美国之音  *People’s Daily*, 18 June

\(^{58}\) Zhang, L., & Dominick, J. R. (1998): 91


\(^{60}\) [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmfaff/574/0061310.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmfaff/574/0061310.htm)


international arena, not least for the first Iraq war, NGO and congressional attention meant that the issue of human rights in the PRC remained on the top of many Western countries’ agendas. One main area of tension was over China’s Most Favoured Nation trading status, which came up for renewal every year. Members of Congress repeatedly introduced bills that sought to link the status to improvements in China’s human rights situation, until President Clinton chose to delink the two in 1994. Foot argues that the decision “represented the end of a highly public and contentious dimension to the USA’s human rights policy”\(^{63}\). She notes that while pressure continued with UNCHR resolutions (discussed below), it moved to more private venues, at least on the state level.

The Chinese domestic response became more entrenched through the decade. As shown in figure 2, despite the drop-off in attention and threats following the delinking of MFN, the proportion of foreign criticism reported in the People’s Daily did not fall. The paper chose to focus on ‘old’ criticism, pressure from the West that followed a predictable pattern - threatening economic reprisals, reintroducing sanctions, and calling for improvements in China’s behaviour - especially from the CCP’s recurring enemy, the US Congress. These kinds of pressure rarely threatened to provide any new information about China’s human rights, instead providing a familiar picture of Western countries going on about the same old human rights problems. Little attention was paid to critical reports from groups like Amnesty International, which generally discussed the treatment of political prisoners arrested post-Tiananmen. Reports about foreign pressure also took a familiar form - angrily refuting the claims, providing contradictory evidence (for example giving a counter-story about improvements made to life in Tibet)\(^{64}\), and a backlash against the criticiser. In the mid-1990s this backlash began to call out the United States and its allies for attempting to undermine China’s stability and hold back its rise\(^{65}\), but also emphasise

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\(^{63}\) Foot, R. (2000): 165

\(^{64}\) People’s Daily (1992) 西藏的主权归属与人权状况. *People’s Daily*, 23 September

\(^{65}\) People’s Daily (1997) 我大使阐述人权立场批驳对我人权状况无端指责. *People’s Daily*, 17 November
the hypocrisy of the criticism - something also done in the international arena. A lengthy repost in 2001 for example detailed the history of international law on human rights, saying that “Americans do not enjoy the basic needs of the right to live, to be free from hunger…there are still a large number of homeless and beggars in American cities.

Figure 2: Proportion of instances of foreign pressure on human rights reported in the People's Daily, 1989 - 2011

Resolutions and Reports

*United Nations Resolutions*

Immediately following the Tiananmen massacre China become subject to regular attention in the annual meetings of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) and the Sub-Commission on human rights. In almost every year from 1989 to 2001, as well as 2004, the country faced a draft resolution that criticised human rights violations in the country, and

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expended extraordinary effort and diplomatic resources to ensure the resolutions were not approved. The August 1989 Sub-Commission resolution, while merely stating members’ concerns “about the events which took place recently in China and about their consequences in the field of human rights”68, was notable for being the first time a Security Council member had been called up on its human rights in this way69. The resolution passed 15-9. In the face of enormous Chinese pressure - what Foot calls “an indication of the extent to which Beijing abhorred being the subject of a UN condemnatory resolution”70, a follow-up resolution in the UNCHR the next Spring narrowly failed. While further resolutions over the next year were put off in return for China’s cooperation in the United Nations for the first Gulf War, the Sub-Commission returned in August 1991 to discuss the ongoing violations in Tibet. This NGO-driven declaration strongly echoed the wording of those Tibet resolutions thirty years earlier, with its concern at the “violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms which threaten the distinct cultural, religious and national identity of the Tibetan people”71. This would be the last successful draft resolution on China, as unrelenting threats and inducements from Beijing gradually weakened the support for UNCHR activity through the 1990s. By 2001 many countries had replaced out-and-out condemnation with bilateral dialogues, and in 2004 only the United States (under pressure from Congress) was willing to sponsor a resolution. This was voted down 28-16 by a ‘no-action’ resolution72.

One goal of the United Nations resolutions is to focus attention on human rights violations and shame the target country into improving its behaviour73. The Chinese government’s strenuous efforts to try and evade this censure suggests that on the international level at least, they were well aware of the costs of such resolutions. Yet as in the 1950s and 60s, it appeared that they

68 UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities: Resolution 1989/ 5
69 The Republic of China on Taiwan had held the ‘China’ seat in the UNSC until 1971
70 Foot, R. (2000): 121
73 http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/WhatWeDo.aspx
were far less concerned about the impacts of the resolutions on the domestic public. In the heyday of foreign short-wave radio in 1989 and the early 1990s, as international news was focussed heavily on events in China, intellectuals in particular would have been very aware of the ongoing international machinations. But as censorship tightened through the decade, and news of the resolutions became scarce even in American coverage, the proportion of the public who would have been aware of the ongoing shaming would have dropped dramatically. Indeed in 2004, even those US newspapers that briefly mentioned the UN meeting did not have the failed China resolution in their headlines.

Figure 3: *People's Daily* reports that mention United Nations human rights resolutions on China, 1989 - 2004  
(grey lines are years without resolutions)

However, as figure 3 shows, Chinese state media almost without exception passed on news about the resolutions to the public, reaching a peak in 1999. The exception came in 1991, when the Tibet resolution succeeded in the UN Sub-Commission. The *People's Daily* ignored the news, except for one report that mentioned only that a UN ‘conference’ on Tibet was ongoing. The

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75 This story mentioned nothing about a resolution however, so I do not include it in figure 3. People's Daily (1991) 我
successful resolution in 1989 on the other hand received a strong refutation in state media, but with few rhetorical flourishes or detail on the resolution itself, in contrast to the extensive discussions of the successful UN votes in 1959. There were clearly conflicting pressures felt by the CCP when dealing with United Nations’ shaming, as news of the international system condemning China for its human rights posed a risk domestically as well as internationally.

Despite this risk, the failed resolutions were given extensive coverage. Articles in the People’s Daily were much more tightly controlled than the free-ranging rebukes under Mao. Unlike in 1959, 1961 and 1965, minimal detail was given about the wording of the resolution itself, providing little information about the domestic conditions in China that were under attack. Instead the reports followed a familiar theme, condemning each year’s resolution as driven by the United States in a predictable ‘anti-China attempt’, a pretext by Western countries to prevent China’s rise. This had the effect of obscuring the debate itself and framing the event as an annual us-versus-them competition; an attack which China would invariably ‘foil’. As time went on through the 1990s, as international coverage of the resolutions diminished, the shock value of having the country’s human rights subject to international condemnation also diminished. As the resolutions provided no new information, all that was left was news of another attack from the US-led “anti-China forces”. By 2001 the People’s Daily was positively revelling in the news of another attempt, claiming “the United States and other Western countries use of human rights and an excuse to impose a hegemonic ideology and power politics

代表在联合国一会议上指出西藏是中国领土不可分割的一部分 西藏人民充分行使当家作主的权利，积极参与公共和国家事务的管理. People’s Daily, 16 August
76 People’s Daily (1989) 就联合国人权委员会下属一小组会议通过有关中国决议. 我外交部发言人发表声明 强调中国政府认为这项决议是非法无效的. People’s Daily, 3 September
77 People’s Daily (1989) 一次反华图谋的失败——记联大三委关于人权提案的斗争. People’s Daily, 26 November
78 People’s Daily (1996) 西方借人权干涉中国内政再遭失败. People’s Daily, 24 April
79 People’s Daily (1993) 所谓“中国人权状况”决议草案胎死腹中西方少数国家图谋被挫败. People’s Daily, 12 March
80 People’s Daily (1992) 我代表在人权会议上揭露“西藏人权问题”谎言这是极少数人制造出来的政治烟幕其实质是要把西藏从中国分裂出去. People’s Daily, 27 February
has once again been proven bankrupt. These anti-Chinese UNHCR resolutions are not a new thing.\(^1\)

**United States Country Human Rights Reports**

Since 1994, Congress has independently issued a report on China (and other countries), normally published between February and June every year.\(^2\) The reports on China have invariably not held back in their criticisms, the report on 2015 for example beginning “repression and coercion markedly increased during the year against organizations and individuals involved in civil and political rights advocacy and public interest and ethnic minority issues,” and filled 141 pages with detailed discussions of abuses and illiberal policies. The reports have featured in some form in international news around their release; although press coverage is naturally far less comprehensive than the reports themselves and details about the content are often sparse. US newspaper articles about the reports in 2016 gave little coverage to China, most merely quoting that the report had been issued, and others at the most saying that it was critical of Beijing’s human rights policies.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) People’s Daily (2001) 就中国再次挫败美反华人权提案 外交部发言人发表谈话. *People’s Daily*, 19 April


\(^3\) [http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252967.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252967.pdf)

Chinese media has given the dossiers a great deal of attention however. Indeed, since Xi Jinping has come to power and stepped up his control of the media, domestic coverage has increased, even as overseas publicity has slipped. In the early 1990s, the People’s Daily articles about the reports were extremely detailed, mentioning the main ways in which the US had criticised China’s human rights and issuing extensive retorts, using the reports as a way to push the regime’s argument about how its policies had improved human rights around the country.

These responses often contained surprisingly in-depth accounts of selective critical information contained within the reports. In the repost to the report about human rights in 1994 for example, the paper took exception to information about Tibetan nuns being beaten by police, and gave a full account of the accusation and why it believed it to be false.

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86 The 1992 report for example focussed on the practice of ‘re-education through labour’, and how it was actually beneficial to human rights in China (the practice has since been abolished): People’s Daily (1992) 中国人权研究会评论美国人权报告人权和中国的劳动改造. People’s Daily, 3 February

By the late 1990s, like the UN resolutions, the reports had become an annual Spring feature. The regime settled in to a similar response; setting the reports up as a part of the geopolitical fight between the United States and China. Details of the violation contained within were reported less and less however, and instead, in 1998 China began issuing its own reports on human rights in the United States, often issued the day after the report from the US. The corresponding report was often discussed diametrically opposite articles on the report about China, making the two reports appear to be two sides of the same coin - what the *People's Daily* came to call ‘tit-for-tat’ accusations - a geopolitical game between two states fighting for power rather than human rights. Just to drive home the point, state-owned tabloid the *Global Times* in 2015 placed two discussions of the reports under a fiery intertwining of the US and Chinese flag and in the *People's Daily* a somewhat incongruous montage of American fighter jets. The US reports have therefore come to be framed to the public as duplicitous and driven by geopolitics; or as the *People's Daily* put it; the “stale smell of Cold War thinking, power and hypocrisy”.

*The 2000s*

The War on Terror, and the need for China’s assistance, dampened the second Bush administration’s fervour for pursuing human rights improvements in China. The US Congress, alongside Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, made sure that the issues were not completely forgotten, with regular reports on continued detentions of Falun Gong members, as well as advocacy to encourage debates in the United Nations. Until 2008, the Chinese state media settled into a pattern in its reports of foreign pressure, limiting its attention to stock

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89 People’s Daily (2014) 社评：美国对华“人权战”已用尽前三板斧. *People’s Daily*, 1 March
responses to the regular human rights reports, as well as other annual Congressional reports. Most other criticism was generally ignored, even high profile concerns such as those raised about civil liberties in the year before the 2008 Beijing Olympics. One exception was the dispute between the Vatican and the CCP over the October 2001 canonisation of 120 ‘Chinese martyrs’; Chinese and Western Catholics killed in China in the late 19th century. Given the Vatican had earlier in the year strongly condemned the Chinese government’s decision to ordain its own bishops without approval from Rome, the CCP saw this as a deliberate attack on its authority (especially since the day chosen for the canonisation was China’s National Day, the 1st of October). The People’s Daily launched scathing attacks on the Vatican for its interference in China’s internal affairs, and naturally for “hurting the feelings of the Chinese people”. These “so-called saints” were in fact imperialists, “evil” and “bullies”.

Despite the fall in international attention, it appears that belief in respect for human rights in China actually dropped during the decade, as shown in World Values Survey data in figure 5 (there is no data from before 2001). While the overall perception of respect for human rights remains remarkably high, this small drop could be down to the greater availability of information over social media about human rights abuses in China.

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93 For example CECC reports on religious freedom
95 People’s Daily (2009) 就梵蒂冈无视中国教会主权拟册封所谓圣人事中国天主教爱国会中国天主教主教团发表声明. People’s Daily, 27 September
97 People’s Daily (2000) 国家宗教局发言人关于梵蒂冈“封圣”问题的谈话. People’s Daily, 2 October
98 People’s Daily (2000) 梵蒂冈“封圣”是对中国人民的严重挑衅. People’s Daily, 3 October
Tibet 2008

The international outcry in response to the unrest in Tibet in 2008 is a model for the potential risks and benefits that reporting on foreign pressure can bring for an embattled regime. On the 14th of March, rumours of heavy-handed police treatment of monks commemorating the anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising turned peaceful protests to riots. Thousands of Tibetans from Lhasa to Sichuan and Gansu provinces joined increasingly violent demonstrators, who clashed with security forces, attacked and killed Han civilians, and burnt cars and businesses. After a period of initial quiescence99 the Chinese authorities responded with force, sending thousands of armed police and troops into Tibetan areas, issuing curfews and mass arrests. According to a Human Rights Watch report the troops used “disproportionate force in breaking up protests, proceeding to large-scale arbitrary arrests, brutalizing detainees, and torturing suspects in custody”100.

Western media seized on reports of state repression as they leaked out of Tibet on the 14th and 15th of March. Newspaper articles and television reports spoke of the furious protests but paid particular attention to the scale of the government response. Even more even-handed reports such as that from the *New York Times*, which widely quoted Chinese government sources and Han residents about the violence from the demonstrators, also noted the vast military presence in the region and drew parallels to the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989. Other newspapers like the *Daily Telegraph* disregarded all nuance, leading with headlines like “Tibet protest crackdown claims up to 100 lives” and “Could Tibet be another Tiananmen?” CNN was one of the biggest advocates of the story of Chinese brutality against peaceful protests, its commentator Jack Cafferty calling the Chinese leaders “goons and thugs” for their response to the riots.

Western and non-Western leaders alike were quick to condemn the crackdown. The United Nations Secretary-general Ban Ki Moon expressed his concern about the level of violence and called for restraint by the authorities, while the Australian Prime Minister in a joint meeting with President Bush said “it’s absolutely clear there are human rights abuses going on in Tibet”. Calls for restraint were echoed by leaders from Taiwan to India, twenty-one Nobel laureates, as well as a letter from forty Olympic athletes calling on China “to protect freedom of expression”. The European Union paid particular attention to the events, the Presidency

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105 UN News Centre (2008) Tibet: Ban Ki-moon urges restraint by authorities amid reported violence, deaths. *UN News Centre*, 17 March
issuing a declaration of concern on the 17th of March and then discussing the issue in the EU Foreign Ministers meeting at the end of the month. In an EU parliamentary resolution on the 10th of April, the organisation said that it “firmly condemns the brutal repression by the Chinese security forces against Tibetan demonstrators” and “criticises the often-discriminatory treatment of non-Han Chinese ethnic minorities”.

There were also, across the globe, public protests at Chinese embassies, as well as candlelit vigils, even briefly within China itself. The Olympics torch, which was due to be passed by hand through a number of major cities, provided a perfect opportunity to gain attention for demonstrators. Over a thousand pro-Tibet protestors created chaos in the London leg by attempting to grab the torch from celebrity runners like Konnie Huq, a feat that was trumped in the Paris stop on the 8th of April. On this run the protestors extinguished the torch five times and managed to injure Jin Jing, a Chinese Paralympic fencer. There were further protests on the torch route through North America, India, Australia, Japan and South Korea. The Pro-Tibet lobby were not the only ones to use the upcoming Olympic Games to attempt to increase the pressure on Beijing however. Immediately after the violence began, calls came for a boycott of the Games, while on the 27th of March the Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk became the first head of government to announce that he would not attend the Opening Ceremony, closely followed by the Czech leader Vaclav Klaus.

111 European Commission (2008) Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the situation in Tibet. European Commission, 19 March
117 Hong, F., & Zhouxiang, L. (2012)
118 NPR (2008) Calls for Olympics Boycott Follow Tibet Crackdown. NPR, 15 March
119 BBC (2008) Polish PM’s No to Olympic opening. BBC, 27 March
Merkel said that she would not attend, amid domestic pressure\textsuperscript{120}, while French leader Nicolas Sarkozy suggested that he might follow suit- or at least that he would not rule it out\textsuperscript{121}.

The Chinese government worked intensely to censor all news of the unrest itself from reaching the public, in keeping with Kuran’s theory. In the aftermath of the initial violence on the 14\textsuperscript{th} of March, YouTube, Yahoo, Google News, BBC and CNN were blocked\textsuperscript{122}, as were chat rooms that might have shared news of the incidents\textsuperscript{123}. The word ‘Tibet’ was censored on Baidu.cn, the main search engine in China\textsuperscript{124}, while internet news sites like Sina.com were banned from carrying any news beyond that provided by the state agency \textit{Xinhua}\textsuperscript{125}. \textit{Xinhua} itself carried only one story on the unrest in the first few days after the protests; a five-line note saying that the government representative answered some questions on fighting in Tibet (which had been organised by the Dalai Lama)\textsuperscript{126}, while the state China Central Television news service gave only brief clips of rioting Tibetans two days after the unrest began\textsuperscript{127}. Coverage of the unrest only began in earnest on the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} of March, and then intensely over a week after the riots had begun, on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of March. Foreign journalists were forcibly ejected from Tibet, and prevented from reaching Tibetan areas in neighbouring provinces. Some were even detained and threatened in trying to cover the protests, and forced to delete any footage they did have of the unrest\textsuperscript{128}.

Despite the heavy censorship, it appears that many citizens were well aware of the violence that had been taking place in Lhasa and beyond. Barnett argues that Tibetans would have learnt

\textsuperscript{120} Guardian (2008) Merkel says she will not attend opening of Beijing Olympics. \textit{The Guardian}, 29 March
\textsuperscript{121} BBC (2008) Sarkozy threat to Olympic opening. \textit{BBC}, 25 March
\textsuperscript{122} \url{http://www.danwei.org/net_nanny_follies/youtube_blocked_in_china_1.php}
\textsuperscript{125} Christian Science Monitor (2008) China blocks YouTube, reporters over Tibet news
\textsuperscript{127} Guardian (2008) State TV switches to non-stop footage of Chinese under attack. \textit{The Guardian}, 18 March
\textsuperscript{128} HRW (2008) China’s Forbidden Zones. \textit{Human Rights Watch}
about the protests through mobile phone networks and through foreign radio stations, just as in 1989\textsuperscript{129}. Internet users in particular were able to find ways of accessing information about what had been going on. According to the \textit{China Digital Times}, many Chinese citizens learnt about the unrest through online forums, despite government attempts to stop them. In the \textit{Tianya} forum for example, with over six million members, netizens used innocent-looking streams about the beauty of Tibet to circumvent the censors\textsuperscript{130}.

Just as with the Tiananmen response nineteen years before, the government also delayed any news of foreign pressure from reaching its public, using it precisely when state media also began to report widely on the unrest. Foreign interference became a way of introducing the Chinese public to what was going on in Tibet. To begin with, reports once again focussed on attacking possible foreign sources of information about government repression. While the target in 1989 was the Voice of America, in 2008 state media had to face the whole of the Internet, and instead began a systematic campaign against all Western media. On the 19\textsuperscript{th} of March, alongside the first reports of any note about events in Tibet, Xinhua articles lambasted Western biased coverage of the unrest\textsuperscript{131}. From the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of March, news of foreign condemnation of Chinese government behaviour began to these accompany these accusations\textsuperscript{132}. By this stage, there was very little new information about the Chinese government’s actions in Tibet that had not been widely reported. So from this time on, while the Tibet unrest remained top of the bill in newspaper coverage, the \textit{People’s Daily} and other government-owned newspapers printed regular accounts of foreign pressure over Tibet. This primarily dealt with foreign media criticism but also discussed the EU

\textsuperscript{131} Guardian (2008) Tibet: Media coverage: State TV switches to non-stop footage of Chinese under attack, \textit{The Guardian}, 18 March
\textsuperscript{132} Global Times (2008) 西方媒体炮制不实西藏报道欺骗世界民众. \textit{Global Times}, 22 March
resolution, Nancy Pelosi’s meeting with the Dalai Lama, public protests over the torch relay, and threats to boycott the Olympics.

The domestic response to foreign criticism was two-pronged. The main strategy was to attack the objectiveness of the Western media, to throw doubts into the mind of anyone who had picked up news of government repression through other sources. According to a Chinese newspaper editor, authorities began an “unprecedented, ferocious media war against the biased Western press.” Throughout March and April articles piled into any and every mistake made in Western news on the unrest in Tibet - from a cropped picture to misleading headlines. Many of these errors were self-inflicted, such as the BBC use of a picture of Tibetan protestors being beaten in Nepal to illustrate a story about Chinese government repression. Chinese authorities had of course deliberately limited the ability of foreign news organisations to report accurately on the events in Tibet by banning them from anywhere where they could source information, naturally increasing the likelihood of inaccurate reports - and thus the government ability to claim that they were “fantastical and fabricated.”

News about government repression and the killing of hundreds of Tibetans were then grouped together with these journalistic errors, classing them all as fabricated rumours and examples of Western media bias. The papers then tracked down as many sources as possible to suggest that

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133 People’s Daily (2008) 中方对欧盟外长理事会非正式会议讨论西藏局势并发表评论表示强烈不满 People’s Daily, 31 March
134 People’s Daily (2008) 中国驻外外交和领事机构遭“藏独”分子暴力冲击中国外交部予以强烈谴责 驻在国表示将加强保护措施 People’s Daily, 22 March
135 People’s Daily (2008) “藏独”分裂势力在巴黎破坏奥运圣火传递遭到强烈谴责 People’s Daily, 22 April
136 People’s Daily (2008) 就法国总统萨科齐有关奥运会言论外交部发言人答记者问 People’s Daily, 27 March
137 South China Morning Post (2008) Censor loosens strings in publicity war, South China Morning Post, 9 April
140 People’s Daily (2008) 无知还是偏见？ ——网友议某些西方媒体的报道 2008.03.27 People’s Daily
the reporting was biased - even Internet thread comments\textsuperscript{142}. According to the first \textit{Global Times} article on foreign criticism on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of March, “in the \textit{Times} website on Tibet…a man called ‘Arabian Users’ said “to say that it seems Han and Tibetans are reluctant to live together is completely wrong. In fact the Han Chinese and Tibetans are like brothers’”. Commentaries accused Western media of having ‘ulterior motives’\textsuperscript{143}, arising from “deep-rooted prejudice against China”\textsuperscript{144}. Jack Cafferty’s comments only helped to play into this portrayal, and as such were jumped upon by domestic media outlets, with ten \textit{Xinhua} headlines alone about the comments in April and May.

Cafferty’s comments also reinforced the second media message: that China was under attack, and its hosting of the Olympic Games was under attack. Despite the potential shame that could come from hearing that international leaders did not want to attend the Games, Chinese media reported heavily on calls to boycott the Opening Ceremony - in particular from France’s President Sarkozy. The main trigger point was the attempt by pro-Tibet activists to seize the Olympic torch from Jin Jing in Paris. Jin Jing became a national heroine of sorts in Chinese media, and the seizing of the torch heavily publicised\textsuperscript{145}. Foreign pressure on China became framed as an attempt to destroy China’s Olympics, and Sarkozy’s threat to boycott the Opening Ceremony and French public calls to boycott Chinese products were repeated throughout April\textsuperscript{146}.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{People’s Daily} (2008) 就法国外交部官员有关西藏问题言论 外交部发言人答记者问. \textit{People’s Daily}, 27 March
\textsuperscript{143} \textit{People’s Daily} (2008) 中国驻外外交和领事机构遭“藏独”分子暴力冲击 中国外交部予以强烈谴责 驻在国表示将加强保护措施. \textit{People’s Daily}, 22 March
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{People’s Daily} (2008) 新闻工作者和专家学者——西方某些媒体歪曲报道暴露出西方新闻观的虚伪性. \textit{People’s Daily}, 29 March
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{People’s Daily} (2008) 攻击残疾人就是“藏独”的人权吗? \textit{People’s Daily}, 12 April
This may have been a deliberate attempt to induce a kind of ‘rally-round-the-flag’ effect, a tactic often discussed as a way of distracting citizens from unrest at home by directing their anger abroad\textsuperscript{147}, or it may have been the media tapping in to existing public outrage. Either way, the threat to the Olympics from the boycott threats and attacks on the torch relay gave the Chinese public a focal point around which to organise. In the aftermath of the Paris incident, a Chinese user of a BBS thread called for a campaign of resistance against foreign bullying of China, and an online campaign to boycott French goods grew. By the 18\textsuperscript{th} of April this had built up into full-scale mass protests in front of stores of the French supermarket Carrefour\textsuperscript{148}.

In this case foreign pressure, by being closely linked to an event that served as a marker for Chinese patriotism and nationalism, gave the government an opportunity. The public desire to defend the Olympics against foreign attacks came tightly linked to a more visible support for the government’s behaviour in crushing demonstrations in Tibet. In the first small anti-Carrefour demonstration on the 12\textsuperscript{th} of April in Beijing, protestors unfurled a banner that read “against separatism, let’s protect the Olympic flame”\textsuperscript{149}. Chinese citizens also appeared to agree with (and even helped to encourage) the CCP’s accusations of Western media bias. In March a Chinese student Rao Jin set up the site ‘anti-CNN.com’, which became an emblem for Chinese reactions to perceived Western media bias against China. Authorities were quick to endorse the site\textsuperscript{150}. A government-sponsored Internet campaign on Sina.com on the 30\textsuperscript{th} of March against biased coverage had the title “oppose Splittism, Protect the Torch”, and received over five million signatures\textsuperscript{151}.

\textsuperscript{147} Baker, W. D., & Oneal, J. R. (2001) Patriotism or opinion leadership? The nature and origins of the “rally ’round the flag” effect. \textit{Journal of Conflict Resolution}, 45(5), 661-687
\textsuperscript{150} China Daily (2008) CNN: What’s wrong with you? China Daily, 2 April
Protecting the Olympics, protesting Western media bias and opposing independence movements in Tibet all became tied closely together. Some Chinese citizens even complaining that the authorities had not done enough to crack down on the rioters. Weiss argues that within China, Tibet-related protests would have been too risky for the government to allow. Abroad however, there were no such risks, and pro-China protests continued in cities from London to Sydney. These youthful protestors, often overseas Chinese students, demonstrated against biased Western media coverage, but also the Dalai Lama himself and ‘splittism’ in Tibet, burning Tibetan flags in university campuses and in pro-Tibet movements. After the attempted attacks on the Olympic torch in London, the protestors also morphed into a global ‘protect the torch movement’. In this case, foreign pressure was so clearly framed in terms of competition between the West and China, that it led to a counter-reaction even from those Chinese students who could have full access to foreign information about Chinese government repression in Tibet.

While the earthquake in Sichuan in July put a temporary end to hostilities, the Olympic Games in Beijing in August provided a perfect venue for worldwide attention on China’s human rights. International NGOs used the Games to issue a number of reports highlighting abuses, from Amnesty International adverts linking government torture to the Games to Human Rights Watch stories of individual protestors going missing. On his visit to China for the Opening Ceremony, George Bush made a highly critical speech about the violations of basic human rights in China, as well as the detention of dissidents over the previous year. However despite the fact that the speech, as well as other stories critical of China’s treatment of protestors at the

156 Kyodo (2008) Rights group says man goes missing after applying for protest in Beijing. Kyodo, 13 August
Games circulated widely on international media, Chinese media chose to ignore it, and all other foreign criticism. The Amnesty International adverts had been circulated on Chinese BBS boards and were criticised by Beijing in international statements, but were left out of the domestic press.\textsuperscript{158} Indeed, around high profile international events there has been a pattern of greater foreign criticism and media attention on China’s human rights that has not been mentioned in Chinese domestic media. Whenever Western leaders have visited China they have often been under high domestic pressure to bring up the issue of human rights, and international media has closely covered their statements about rights in the country.\textsuperscript{159} The CCP on the other hand have often chosen to censor the comments. President Bush’s comments in 2002 about political and religious controls were cut from the official media coverage of his speech to an audience of Chinese university students.\textsuperscript{160} President Clinton on his visit in 1998 visited Tiananmen Square and in a press conference with Jiang Zemin criticised the CCP for its massacre nine years before.\textsuperscript{161} None of his comments were reported. Even President Obama’s relatively mild critique of internet censorship in China on his first visit in 2009 was, ironically, censored,\textsuperscript{162} despite the fact that since this speech, US critiques of internet censorship in China have often been widely reported in state media.\textsuperscript{163}

Criticism that has come when Chinese leaders have visited other countries has seen similar treatment, with media reports of foreign excursions given a wholly positive spin. While Xi Jinping was feted by government officials on his visit to the UK in October 2015, he was also...

\textsuperscript{158} Telegraph (2008) Beijing Olympics 2008: Amnesty International torture ads dropped. The Telegraph, 6 August
\textsuperscript{159} BBC (1998) Clinton battles China syndrome. BBC, 3 July
\textsuperscript{160} LA Times (2002) China Censors Bush Speech in Print. Los Angeles Times, 23 February
\textsuperscript{162} Guardian (2009) Barack Obama criticises internet censorship at meeting in China. The Guardian, 9 November
\textsuperscript{163} For example criticism over censorship of Google in 2010 was given wide coverage: People’s Daily (2010) “谷歌事件”，陈腐偏见的恶性发作——国际视野中的美国“互联网外交”. People’s Daily, 26 January
met with protests about his treatment of dissidents by members of the public and NGOs\textsuperscript{164}, and criticism from opposition leaders and British media\textsuperscript{165}. In 2012 Hu Jintao’s visit to India was subject to extensive Tibetan protests, covered heavily in international media\textsuperscript{166}. Premier Li Peng on his visit to Europe in 1994 faced huge protests about his role in the Tiananmen massacre five years earlier\textsuperscript{167}, and cancelled meetings and visits in Germany to avoid public human rights criticism\textsuperscript{168}. In the end he chose to cut back his trip early, rather than deal with the unwanted attention\textsuperscript{169}. On these occasions, the Chinese media omitted any mention of the protests or criticism, focussing purely on the red-carpet welcome and the business deals made. The absence of any mention of foreign pressure over human rights at these times perhaps reflects the competing pressures on Chinese authorities. While sometimes the picture of international conflict and bullying from the West is a useful view to put to the public, at other times Chinese leaders wish to promote a sense of international statesmanship, to be seen as a respected member of the international community. Events like the Olympics and bilateral visits help to push this narrative - and the CCTV news channel is rarely free of stories of Chinese officials shaking hands with their foreign counterparts over some trade agreement or other.

Dissidents

\textit{Dalai Lama}

A common device in the Chinese media in the 2008 protests was to blame the ‘Dalai Clique’ for the riots in Tibet, and accuse it of sparking international pressure over the issue, in particular the attacks on the torch relay. As I discuss in full in chapter seven, one way in which the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{164} Reuters (2015) China’s Xi to be feted on British trip despite criticism. \textit{Reuters}, 19 October
\item\textsuperscript{166} Guardian (2012) India cracks down on Tibetan protests during Chinese leader’s visit. \textit{The Guardian}, 18 March
\item\textsuperscript{167} Independent (1994) Li Peng finds friendly faces in Bucharest. \textit{The Independent}, 11 July
\item\textsuperscript{168} The Age (1994) Li Peng loses his cool as Germans raise rights issue. \textit{The Age}, 9 July
\item\textsuperscript{169} The Independent (1994) Chinese PM breaks off visit to Germany. \textit{The Independent}, 9 July
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
international community have expressed their displeasure with Chinese policies in Tibet and sought to raise visibility over the issue is through meetings between national leaders and the Dalai Lama. These meetings have occurred on a regular basis since 1987, but have declined over recent years in part due to Chinese economic and diplomatic pressure. One major domestic risk for Chinese media in reporting the meetings, in addition to any embarrassment to the Chinese leadership, was that Tibetans would find out about the meeting and gain encouragement for their cause. It was arguably the award of the Congressional Gold medal to the Dalai Lama in 2007 that sparked the beginning of the unrest in 2008. Monks who had seen the award over the internet were arrested for their celebrations - and the March riots may have begun in part as protests for the release of those monks\textsuperscript{170}.

Even though international coverage of the meetings was often high, and Tibetans would have been able to find out about the meetings through the Voice of America, in the 1990s these meetings were rarely discussed in Chinese media. When they were discussed, as in 1990 following an official meeting with the German President Weizsacker, the People\textquoteright{s Daily reaction was brief and stated repeatedly that the meeting “hurt the feelings of the Chinese people”\textsuperscript{171}. All that changed in 2008, from which point the CCP chose to trumpet the meetings widely to the Chinese public, as shown in figure 6.

\textsuperscript{170} Outlook India (2008) China arrests over 300 monks for staging protests in Tibet. Outlook India, 11 March

\textsuperscript{171} People\textquoteright{s Daily (1990) 就魏茨泽克总统会见达赖一事 我外交部向德国政府提出抗议. People\textquoteright{s Daily, 10 July}
There are two plausible reasons for this change. The first is the fact that the group most at risk of mobilisation, the Tibetans, had been able to hear about the meetings in any case, and the unrest in 2008 had come in part because the CCP had not been able to control Tibetans’ access to foreign news about the Dalai Lama. The second is that the aftermath of the Tibet riots had demonstrated public sympathy with the notion that the Dalai Lama had been responsible for the unrest and was conniving with foreign nations and media to push his independence agenda. As I demonstrate in chapter seven, post-2008, far from being an embarrassment or source of information about China’s human rights problems, Western leaders meeting with the Dalai Lama could play into the Chinese government’s hands and increase public support of the regime.

When Nicolas Sarkozy met the Dalai Lama in Poland in December 2008, the Chinese government responded forcefully internationally and domestically; cancelling a joint EU-China meeting and reporting widely on the meeting in state media. The *Global Times* reiterated the...
threats Sarkozy had posed about boycotting the Olympics months before, and emphasised how it would arouse grassroots anger and potential boycotts\(^\text{172}\). And there were renewed calls for a boycott against Carrefour amongst Chinese netizens\(^\text{173}\) (although government messages about the protest were more mixed this time around\(^\text{174}\)). When Barack Obama held an open prayer meeting with the leader of Tibetan Buddhism in Washington DC in February 2015, The China Daily claimed that “Obama is acquiescing to the Dalai Lama’s attempt to split Tibet from China”\(^\text{175}\).

The papers played up the significance of Obama calling the Dalai Lama a “good friend”, linking it to CIA funding of Tibetan separatists in the 1950s\(^\text{176}\). But at the same time, and often in the same paragraphs, the articles also attempted to play down the diplomatic importance of the meeting - arguing it was low key and brief, and was just part of Obama’s meeting with other religious leaders\(^\text{177}\). The need to appeal to two audiences - Tibetan groups and the broader public - helps explain this somewhat confusing desire to both play up and play down the meeting.

**Political Prisoners**

As with reports about foreign meetings with the Dalai Lama, Chinese media reporting of international pressure over political dissidents has increased over recent years. In the 1990s, foreign protests arose over the arrest and mistreatment of political dissidents like Wei Jingsheng, arrested for pro-democracy protests in 1979, through NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Despite the international publicity, very rarely were these protests reported in Chinese media however. As with other cases of international pressure, critiques of mistreatment of Chinese dissidents bring risks to the Chinese government. They highlight vagaries of the Chinese justice system in comparison to international standards as well as giving a

\(^{172}\) Global Times (2008) 法总统萨科齐不顾中国警告悍然接见达赖. Global Times, 7 December

\(^{173}\) The Observers (2008) Chinese web users give Sarkozy a roasting. The Observers, 12 May


\(^{175}\) China Daily (2015) Dalai Lama meeting, a political gimmick? China Daily, 2 February


\(^{177}\) Global Times (2015) 外媒称达赖将与奥巴马会面白宫低调回应. Global Times, 2 February
platform for the issue that the dissident was arrested for in the first place - potentially making the prisoner a martyr for their cause within China.

The pressure over Wei Jingsheng received minimal coverage in Chinese media in comparison to the international attention afforded to his case in the 1980s and 1990s. Even up to 2007, prominent appeals on behalf of Hu Jia, an activist arrested for petitioning for land rights, were ignored in Chinese media. Hu Jia even received the European Parliament’s Sakharov prize in October 2008, but while Beijing made loud international appeals, it remained silent domestically.

However in 2010, perhaps China’s most internationally renowned dissident, Liu Xiaobo, was given the Nobel Peace Prize. This was the first time a Chinese citizen had been given a Nobel prize - albeit a citizen who was currently resident in a prison in Beijing, and unsurprisingly the news was high profile across the globe. The award brought congratulatory comments from leaders from Barack Obama to Ban Ki-Moon and was condemned by Chinese government spokesmen, who warned of damages to bilateral ties with Norway, and in a flash-back to the days of fighting UN resolutions, put strong diplomatic pressure on other leaders to not attend the ceremony. Domestically, the news of the prize immediately became a top-trending topic on several micro-blogs, and according to the China Digital Times, received a number of positive messages of support amongst Weibo users - a popular theme being that by honouring rather than

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181 BBC (2010) International reaction to Liu Xiaobo Nobel Peace Prize. BBC, 8 October
184 CNN (2010) China blanks Nobel Peace prize searches, CNN, 8 October
criticising Chinese human rights stalwarts, this was something for Chinese people to celebrate. And indeed it seemed that a number of people had tried to celebrate the award, before being shut down by police, while supporters of Liu were arrested across the country. In response to the prize twenty-three retired Communist party officials wrote an open letter calling for free speech, before that too was pulled down from internet sites.

The CCP attempted to censor all news of the prize, jamming foreign television services that carried the news. The terms ‘Liu Xiaobo’ and ‘Nobel Peace Prize’ were cut out of search engines and microblogs, while the *China Digital Times* reported instructions from the propaganda ministry that: “Websites are not to create news items or exclusive stories on the Nobel Prize. Exclusive stories that do exist must all be deleted... The Xinhua News Agency will shortly circulate copy.” The copy released to state media at the time was one short article that called the award ‘blasphemous’. A few days later the *People’s Daily* attacked the award and Liu himself, in more aggrieved tones in a series of articles. In one, entitled “Against the wishes of the Nobel Peace Prize”, the paper crawled through an extensive history of the prize and its purported use as a Cold War instrument, linking it variously to the attack on the Olympics in Beijing, the dispute over censorship with Google, and the conflict over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.

Since 2008, criticism of human rights in China has fallen, particularly from state representatives (see figure 7 below) - but that which has continued has tended to come over detentions of

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186 ibid
188 ibid
protestors and political dissidents. The coverage in the Chinese press has also increased markedly over these years. Since 2014 there have been a number of high-profile arrests of scholars and ‘human rights defenders’, which have seen extensive international criticism. In 2014 the well-known Uighur academic Ilham Tohti was arrested and then sentenced to life in prison for ‘separatism’\textsuperscript{193}. The arrest and the verdict were met with appeals and condemnation from Amnesty International, the European Union, United Nations and the United States\textsuperscript{194}. In contrast to previous arrests, these appeals were broadcast repeatedly in Chinese media, \textit{Xinhua} saying that the “serious concern” shown by the United States demonstrated the link between the US and East Turkistan separatist groups\textsuperscript{195}. State media also commented on quotes from the BBC and other sources calling Tohti a ‘Uighur Mandela’, saying that this was merely an attempt to hype up the behaviour of a separatist\textsuperscript{196}.

Since 2014 Chinese authorities have arrested a succession of human rights lawyers and activists, receiving extensive international press coverage in turn. These lawyers, including most notably Pu Zhiqiang and Gao Zhisheng, were often well-known throughout China for taking on the cases of those disadvantaged by official government policies, such as over food safety, press freedom, and minority rights, and had on occasion even been feted in government media for their past legal work. Xu Zhiyong was one of the founders of the New Citizen movement, a group that campaigned for the rule of law and against corruption in China. When the \textit{Global Times} passed on news of Xu’s arrest in January 2014, the first paragraph included a statement that the US state department was “deeply disappointed”\textsuperscript{197}. Accompanying articles also focussed on the US response, under the headline “Supporting Chinese dissidents: the Western

\textsuperscript{193} BBC (2010) China jails prominent Uighur academic Ilham Tohti for life. \textit{BBC}, 23 September
\textsuperscript{194} Guardian (2014) China condemned for charging Uighur academic Ilham Tohti with separatism. \textit{Guardian}, 26 February
\textsuperscript{195} Xinhua (2014) 美国勿以双重标准干涉别国内政. \textit{Xinhua}, 2 August
\textsuperscript{196} People’s Daily (2014) 外交部斥欧美插手伊力哈木案 BBC 称其“曼德拉”. \textit{People’s Daily}, 25 September
\textsuperscript{197} Global Times (2014) 许志永判 4 年，法律明确态度和尺度. \textit{Global Times}, 27 January
conspiracy”\textsuperscript{198}, tying in Western criticism of the arrests with the attempt by the West to stifle China’s growth. The same themes were used in the case of Pu\textsuperscript{199} and Gao\textsuperscript{200}, and all three were linked together as tools of foreign forces to attack China\textsuperscript{201}.

It seems plausible that the Chinese government have learnt from their failures in the case of the Nobel Prize and successes with the Dalai Lama in terms of public opinion. In the case of Liu Xiaobo, since the early 1990s news of his activities had been generally withheld from the Chinese public, so that when he won his award the Chinese media were behind the game in terms of framing his award as an attack from foreign forces on the Chinese public. The response in 2008 to the Dalai Lama has showed just how successful that kind of framing could be.

**Hong Kong**

The CCP also linked the Occupy Central protestors in Hong Kong in 2014 closely to foreign pressure. The Chinese government policies in Hong Kong have been common targets for international pressure, even before the handover in 1997, and this pressure has featured regularly in Chinese media. In 1994 for example when British Governor Chris Patten pushed through proposals for electoral reform, Chinese international and domestic opposition was vociferous, with articles in the *People’s Daily* repeatedly attacking the British proposals, calling them “lies and deceit”\textsuperscript{202} and attempts to “undermine China’s unity”\textsuperscript{203}. Yet as with the Olympics in 2008, with

\textsuperscript{198} Global Times (2014) 支持中国异见人士，西方的“阳谋”. *Global Times*, 28 January
\textsuperscript{199} People’s Daily (2015) 单仁平：浦志强案根本不像美方指责的那样. *People’s Daily*, 8 May
\textsuperscript{200} Global Times (2014) 西方为何热捧获释“维权律师”. *Global Times*, 8 August
\textsuperscript{201} People’s Daily (2014) 西方庇护中国分裂者无用 中国强大是世界主旋律. *People’s Daily*, 25 September
\textsuperscript{202} People’s Daily (1994) 香港各界人士和报纸发表评论指出中英会谈真相英方难辞破坏会谈之责台湾舆论认为英方所为是要延后在港政治影响力. *People’s Daily*, 2 March
\textsuperscript{203} People’s Daily (1994) 全国人大外委会发言人发表谈话严厉谴责英方对内地政府的粗暴干涉. *People’s Daily*, 23 April
the world’s attention on China around the 1997 handover, foreign criticism (especially from the UK) of the threat to human rights after Hong Kong’s return was censored in Chinese media.

In September 2014 tens of thousands of peaceful demonstrators took to the streets in Hong Kong as part of the ‘Occupy Central movement’. The movement called for universal suffrage in Hong Kong by staging a sit-in in ‘Central’ - the main financial district on Hong Kong Island - and grew into what was termed the “Umbrella Revolution” after the umbrellas protestors used to protect them from police tear gas. The Chinese government, concerned that the movement might spread to the mainland, sought to exhibit full control over information about the protest. The social media site Instagram was blocked, while any terms linked to the protests were blocked on Weibo. State television showed images of rioting protestors, holding back information about tear-gassing police, and imposed blackouts on CNN and BBC news coverage.

From the start, Beijing sought to portray the protests as the subject of ‘hostile foreign forces’. Chinese media pointed to the financial assistance given by the National Endowment for Democracy for training of democratic political parties in Hong Kong to claim that the American NGO had deliberately fomented the protests. Stories in Hong Kong and mainland press referred to American ‘black hands’ stoking the demonstrations. Hong Kong’s Chief Executive CY Leung said on state television that ‘external forces’ were behind the movement, while a

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204 Guardian (2014) China censors images of Hong Kong protests in TV broadcasts to mainland. The Guardian, 29 September
206 China Daily (2014) ‘Occupy Central’ has become a political farce. China Daily, 17 October
208 BBC (2014) Hong Kong protests: Leader says ‘external forces’ involved. BBC, 19 October
People’s Liberation Army (PLA) General suggested that Occupy Central was another Western attempt to instigate a ‘colour revolution’.209

Perhaps wary of these accusations, foreign forces themselves were loath to explicitly support the movement or criticise the Hong Kong establishment’s response. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office stayed mainly silent throughout the Autumn, only issuing a statement saying “It is important for Hong Kong to preserve [the rights to demonstrate] and for Hong Kong people to exercise them within the law.”210 US leaders also refrained from explicitly supporting the movement, although Obama was pushed to publicly deny that the US had any role in encouraging the protestors in a press conference with Xi Jinping211. Other countries were less reserved in their appeals for democracy in Hong Kong, most notably Angela Merkel, who called on Beijing to recognise freedom of speech and democracy in the territory.212

Leaders of the Occupy Central movement were equivocal about the role of the international community. Joshua Wong, a student leader of the movement, actively called on Merkel to make pro-democracy statements prior to her visit to Beijing, and made an argument consistent with that of Keck and Sikkink’s ‘boomerang model’; that domestic pressures would only work alongside a top-down push on the CCP from the international community. Fellow leader and Hong Kong University Professor Benny Tai was more reticent about how the international community could best support the protests. In an interview in the summer of 2015, he said that from the start his goal had been to ensure maximum exposure for the movement internationally - but emphasised that the movement needed to be a domestic one.213 According to Tai, while proof of foreign influence would never be forthcoming, the accusations alone helped to shift the

209 SCMP (2015) Hong Kong’s Occupy protest ‘was an attempt at colour revolution’: PLA general. SCMP, 3 March
210 Financial Times (2014) UK treads softly over Hong Kong protests. Financial Times, 29 September
211 Al Jazeera (2014) Obama denies US role in Hong Kong protests. Al Jazeera, 12 November
213 Interview, July 2015
debate in Hong Kong, forcing activists to deny that they had accepted money or assistance from abroad.

It is conceivable that this was precisely the aim of the government’s ‘hostile forces’ rhetoric; to force activists onto the defensive and by reducing the willingness of foreign governments to condemn Hong Kong authorities, sway international public opinion on the protests. When there were instances of British or American sources voicing critical opinions about the protests, Chinese media quickly seized upon them. When former Governor Chris Patten published an article in the Financial Times calling on China to respect its commitments on democracy to Hong Kong, before the protests had even started in full, the Global Times responded furiously, calling Patten “shameless” and “meddling.” State media was particularly outspoken over critical comments made in a debate in the British parliament about the protests in Hong Kong. In retaliation authorities refused to issue a visa to a member of a fact-finding mission by the Foreign Affairs Committee to Hong Kong who had spoken at the debate, and the visit was cancelled. The Global Times reported extensive details about the debate to its readers, even directing them to the Committee’s website, and called it an intervention by external forces into Hong Kong’s affairs. Other articles claimed that in the past the UK might have sent a military expedition to China to try and sort out Hong Kong, but now “with the fall of the empire that the sun never set upon, the British Parliament can no longer use gunboats, but must instead use a ‘mouth cannon’ to interfere in China's internal affairs.” The same paper gave a detailed

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215 Another plausible explanation is that this was a signaling device by the Chinese leadership; to show to the Occupy Central leaders that this was not an issue over which it would or could make concessions, since to give in would be giving in to what itself had called foreign forces trying to destroy China’s territorial unity
217 Guardian (2014) MPs' trip to China cancelled after row over Hong Kong protests debate. The Guardian, 24 November
218 Global Times (2014) 社评：香港政改，英国做个自重的观众吧. Global Times, 4 September
219 Global Times (2014) 英议会靠“嘴炮”干涉中国内政. Global Times, 5 December. Showing the balancing act required, at the same time as reporting British and American condemnations, Chinese media also made efforts to
analysis of a report on the Occupy protests from the US Congressional Executive Commission on China. The paper noted that this was an attempt to put pressure on Chinese society\textsuperscript{220}, with a government spokesman calling it a “deliberate attack on China… sending the wrong message to Occupy Central”\textsuperscript{221}.

It is hard to know the impact of these messages on public opinion, in the absence of any surveys at the time. Anecdotal reports on public responses did suggest that there was only limited mainland support for the Occupy protestors. Informal interviews with Chinese students in the \textit{Washington Post} reported little sympathy with the demands for democracy in Hong Kong, and generally agreed with the government line that the unrest was the fault of radicals and foreign governments\textsuperscript{222}.

**Conclusion**

This chapter shows that international pressure on China over its human rights situation has, despite a peak in 2008 over the unrest in Tibet, fallen since the turn of the century, especially from state leaders. This can be seen in the tepid response of the British and American governments regarding the police teargassing of protestors in Hong Kong in 2014, the fall in the number of foreign leader meetings with the Dalai Lama, and the number of official mentions of Chinese human rights by US presidents (see figure 7). When state pressure has come on China, it has increasingly come regarding political detentions, something that has long been the focus of show to its citizens that global public opinion was behind Beijing, quoting (and misquoting; see The Telegraph (2014) China uses Margaret Thatcher’s private secretary to attack Hong Kong protests. \textit{The Telegraph}, 6 October) a number of foreign politicians who criticised the protestors (see Xinhua (2014) Overseas politicians show disapproval of Hong Kong’s Occupy Central movement. \textit{Xinhua}, 6 October)

\textsuperscript{220} Global Times (2015) 美国会报告指责中国人权在恶化. \textit{Global Times}, 10 October

\textsuperscript{221} International Business Times (2014) China Condemns US For Distorting Facts About Hong Kong Protests, Asks It To Stop Interfering. \textit{International Business Times}, 10 October

groups like Amnesty International, such as over Hong Kong booksellers, human rights lawyers, and women’s rights activists (discussed in chapter five).

Figure 7: Comments on human rights in China in official US presidential speeches or press conferences, 1989 - 2014

One reason for this drop appears to be unwillingness to incur the wrath of Chinese authorities, not just internationally but also within China itself. Chinese media under Mao reacted bullishly to United Nations criticism of its actions in Tibet. When attention began to grow in the 1980s over rights violations however, Chinese media was much less aggressive in its treatment of the pressure. There are two plausible reasons for this. The first is that they did not want to risk the promising relationship with the United States\textsuperscript{223}. The second is that at this time the Chinese government was suffering a post-Mao legitimacy crisis, with growing political instability from protests over corruption, democracy, Tibetan independence, and perceived concessions to Japan\textsuperscript{224}. In the pre-Tiananmen, pre-patriotic education days, liberal nationalism was far more


prominent, with protestors actively calling for reforms to improve the country. In this environment, foreign comments were potentially far more dangerous.

Since 1989 however the Chinese response has been consistent, passing on information about human rights resolutions and reports throughout the 1990s and 2000s, especially since 2008, despite the drop in foreign pressure. At the same time, it has become more refined in its reporting, and chosen to discuss in less and less detail the human rights abuses that were the target of the criticism. One explanation for this phenomenon is that with the growth of the internet, the public’s access to foreign news has increased. Another explanation is an apparent receptiveness of parts of the Chinese public to Western attacks on China, and the success of commercial newspapers like the Global Times in appealing to those demographics.

This chapter also demonstrates the dilemma that Chinese authorities face when encountering foreign pressure. On one hand, they have made strenuous efforts to discourage foreign pressure, and on occasions have attempted to censor it as much as much possible from reaching the public. On the other hand, Chinese media have often reported condemnation from abroad in extensive detail, much more than might be expected under an ‘informational’ account. Indeed, foreign pressure has often been the way through which the CCP has introduced news about ongoing sensitive human rights issues in China to its public. On some occasions this appears to be because authorities have realised that a large proportion of the public have already heard the criticism through radio or internet sources, and they need to get ahead and frame the issue. In cases like this, for example where an instance of government repression has received overwhelming international media attention, such as Tiananmen in 1989 or Tibet in 2008, domestic media has focussed on attacking the sources by which the Chinese public might have heard information about repression - the Western media.
Even this does not seem to be the whole story however. Many of the cases of foreign criticism mentioned in this chapter would have been highly unlikely to reach a vast proportion of the Chinese public, from congressional comments about dissidents to United States country reports. Many of these comments - and even the draft UN resolutions after the mid-1990s - were barely reported on in international media (I address some least-likely cases in the next chapter). It has become clear that in recent years, the view that international pressure and domestic popular pressure are mutually reinforcing does not hold, at least in the eyes of the Chinese authorities. State-owned media have meticulously passed on news about foreign comments on human rights in China to a wide domestic audience. Coverage has sometimes been used to delegitimise domestic actors by linking them to foreign forces, but state media has also reported foreign pressure even when there have been no obvious actors to delegitimise.
Self-Criticism: Reporting International Pressure

In January 2012, the People’s Daily issued a series of articles on Human Rights Watch’s annual report on human rights in China. The CCP mouthpiece placed a surprising amount of attention on the report, and devoted a large proportion of newspaper space to the report’s criticism of the Chinese government’s human rights violations. An article on the 28th of January examined how the report had criticised the system’s use of forced confessions, the failures to respect defendants’ rights and the widespread use of torture. Another article on the 27th detailed the report’s condemnation of the rights violations that accompanied the forced relocation policy in Tibet. The article directly quoted the report’s observation that “80% of the population of Tibet - including all herdsmen and nomads - were moved elsewhere”, before issuing an extensive justification of government housing policy in the autonomous region.

\[\text{People’s Daily (2012) 驳“人权观察”对中国司法改革的片面观察. People’s Daily, 28 January}\]
\[\text{For example: People’s Daily (2012) “人权观察”，请观察一下自己. People’s Daily, 1 June}\]
\[\text{ibid}\]
None of the *People's Daily* responses to the report shied away from informing their public of HRW’s highly detailed criticisms of the Chinese government’s policies and behaviour on sensitive issues—criticisms that it is hard to imagine many of the public would have heard about through other sources. As shown in the last chapter, despite having one of the most extensive censorship systems and internet firewalls, the Chinese government have regularly appeared to actively pass these kinds of otherwise unremarkable criticism of its human rights situation on for public consumption. On the surface this behaviour seems to contradict the assumptions in the authoritarian politics and human rights literature; that information criticising their human rights behaviour is damaging for authoritarian regimes, and they will therefore seek to prevent it from reaching their public.

In this chapter I examine when authoritarian regimes will pass on information about foreign pressure on to their citizens, using two unique datasets containing instances of foreign pressure on China’s human rights between 1979 and 2011, and *People’s Daily* reports of this pressure. I show that Chinese state media reports of foreign pressure are not just related to their prominence in international media. Criticism is also more likely to be reported if it comes from China’s major geopolitical opponent, the United States, if there are ongoing geopolitical tensions, and if it concerns issues of territorial integrity. It is also more likely to be reported if it does not contain new specific allegations of rights violations but contains information on violations already in the public eye. I then demonstrate these mechanisms with four ‘least likely cases’ of international pressure reported in the *People’s Daily* in 2015.

**When will authoritarian regimes report international pressure on their human rights?**

To repeat the hypotheses from chapter two that concern government behaviour:
Hypothesis 2: Authoritarian state media is more likely to report information about international pressure on its respect for human rights when it originates from a geopolitical opponent.

Hypothesis 3: Authoritarian state media is more likely to report international pressure on its respect for human rights when relations with the source are poor.

Hypothesis 4: Authoritarian state media is more likely to report international pressure on its respect for human rights when public nationalism is high.

Hypothesis 5: Authoritarian state media is more likely to report international pressure on its respect for human rights when it is concerned with issues of territorial integrity.

Policy, general and specific pressure

I add one further hypothesis, not linked to the threat-based theory. Pressure is less likely to increase grievances or spark mobilisation from opposition groups when the public is already aware of previous pressure on the same topic, or if they are already aware of the issue being criticised. This resembles Hendrix and Wong’s distinction between overt and covert repression. They argue that some abuses, like torture, are covert - they are generally unknown by the population - and if information about these abuses does become widely known it may become dangerous for the regime. Overt abuses on the other hand, like capital punishment, are generally well-known by the population and new critical information poses no extra risk.

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I make a slightly different distinction, splitting the type of information about abuses into ‘policy’, ‘general’, and ‘specific’ information. Policy information is similar to Hendrix and Wong’s ‘overt’ abuses. It is information about pressure that addresses existing widely known existing government policies, such as the one-child policy in China. These policies may be unpopular, but are already widely known. Information about ‘overt’ abuses I split into two kinds however. ‘General’ pressure is pressure that does not mention specific instances or policies but refers generally to concerns about overall human rights conditions. Many instances of international pressure are of this kind, from sanctions to presidential statements and UN resolutions; criticism that citizens are often aware has been repeated in the past. The final kind is ‘specific’ information; information that is not widely known and refers to a specific violation of human rights, such as the killing or torture of protestors. This is normally what is involved in the ‘naming’ part of naming and shaming - such as Amnesty International reports on covert abuses.

The risk of mobilisation against the regime will be greater when the criticism concerns new information about individual human rights abuses. For example, criticism detailing specific government abuses by Chinese government forces in Tibet is less likely to be risky than criticism calling out the Chinese regime for its overall poor treatment of human rights, or its ongoing policies in suppressing the Falun Gong religious group.

Firstly, specific information about an instance of human rights abuse in Tibet gives a clear target around which grievances and regime opposition can form (the 2008 riots for example, as discussed in chapter three, were reportedly sparked by rumours of widespread arrests following celebrations of the Dalai Lama’s 2007 winning of the Congressional Gold Medal\(^5\)). Groups that already oppose the regime, and indeed many other members of the population, will likely already

\(^5\) International Campaign for Tibet (2007) Crackdown on celebrations in Tibet as Dalai Lama receives Gold Medal award in week of Party Congress. *International Campaign for Tibet, 23 January*
be aware of on-going foreign criticism of their country’s human rights situation, and of existing
government policies such as the repression of the Falun Gong. They will however be less likely
to be already aware of the information about a new specific report of human rights abuse, which
may reignite grievances and mobilisation opportunities for these groups. Information about
general kinds of pressure on the other hand, especially when it is not the first time the country
has been called up on its human rights (like China in the 1990s) will provide very little extra
information. Opposition groups may still gain moral encouragement from this general criticism
or pressure, but the returns will be diminishing, as the pressure rehashes already-heard
sentiments and concerns.

Secondly, as we might expect, social psychology studies show that information supported by
strong evidence is more likely to be persuasive in changing opinions⁶, even when the source is
not seen as being especially credible⁷. McEntire and colleagues show that this kind of messaging
from human rights organisations, containing clear factual information, is more like to increase
people’s opposition to the use of torture⁸. In this case, general ‘deep concern’ about human
rights in China (from George Bush in July 2008 for example⁹) has a lower evidentiary value than
“they were firing straight at people. They were coming from the direction of Jiangsu Lu firing at
any Tibetans they saw, and many people had been killed” (from Human Rights Watch July 2010
report on the 2008 riots in Tibet¹⁰). This kind of evidence is therefore more likely to change
attitudes, regardless of the level of perceived threat¹¹.

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and peripheral routes to persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46(1), 69
*Southern Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 271 - 282
¹¹ In this project I do not test the impact on individual attitude change of the difference between specific and general
information, only relying on the ‘shaming’ side of naming and shaming in my survey experiment. This is for cost
purposes - to add evidentiary quality into the experiment would have doubled the number of respondents needed
For ongoing government policies, such as the continuing crackdown on the Falun Gong, the costs to regimes from reporting foreign pressure are likely to be especially low, as illustrated by Zhang and Dominick’s survey of Chinese intellectuals in the 1990s. They show that regular Voice of America listeners were the most likely to oppose the government’s actions in 1989, as well as the jailing of political dissidents - presumably because they had picked up more ‘new’ information about those repressive actions than non-regular listeners. However, listening to Voice of America had no effect on the level of support for the One Child Policy. Non-listeners and listeners alike would be equally aware of the policy and the issues that surround it - so foreign media would be unlikely to provide any novel information about the issue beyond what people already know.\(^\text{12}\)

**Hypothesis 7:** Authoritarian state media is more likely to report international pressure on its human rights when it is about existing government policies, and less likely when it is about new and specific abuses

**Testing**

I test these predictions using a new database of instances of international pressure on human rights in China as well as the state-run *People’s Daily* (人民日报)’s reports of pressure since the country’s opening up in 1979. According to David Shambaugh, this means that “virtually every conceivable medium which transmits and conveys information to the people of China falls under

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the bureaucratic purview of the CCP Propaganda Department”¹³. The People’s Daily is a tightly controlled government mouthpiece - a paper that Xi Jinping has called “the Party’s battle position”¹⁴ - and as such we can be confident that any news (including foreign criticism of China) contained within it has been approved by the Central Propaganda Department for dissemination to the public¹⁵.

My universe of cases is all international pressure on human rights in China from 1979 until the end of 2011. By ‘pressure’ I refer to any attempts to get the Chinese government to improve its behaviour over human rights. This primarily involves explicit foreign criticism, but also sanctions, public meetings with rights advocates, and public calls for improvements over human rights. To create a sample database of this information I used a range of media, NGO, governmental and international organisational sources. I began with the Lexis Nexus database, and recorded all instances of foreign criticism and other pressure on human rights in China mentioned in English-language news stories since 1979¹⁶. To supplement this I took instances of more prominent criticism not reported in this dataset from a number of official sources: United Nations draft resolutions or official reports on human rights in China¹⁷; European Parliament resolutions on human rights in China¹⁸; United States congressional bills, acts and resolutions and sanctions on human rights in China, plus Congressional Executive Committee on China annual reports¹⁹; as well as reports from the two major NGOs working on human rights in China; Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International²⁰. I also examined all resolutions and official

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¹⁴ http://cmp.hku.hk/2016/03/03/39672/
¹⁶ See Appendix 1 for details of coding
¹⁸ From http://www.europarl.europa.eu/
statements from regional groupings, including: African Union resolutions and declarations; ASEAN Human Rights mechanism statements and resolutions; Organisation of American States reports and sessions; Organisation of Islamic States statements and resolutions; and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation statements. Almost all of the resolutions and statements from these groupings are purely directed at their region however, so very few address human rights in China. Finally, I include all instances of meetings between country leaders and the Dalai Lama.

This gives a total of 1337 separate instances of information about international pressure on human rights in China between 1979 and 2011. The overall list is necessarily incomplete, and only contains pressure from English language sources (I address this potential bias below).

For my dependent variable I searched for whether each of these 1337 instances of international pressure was reported in the People’s Daily between 1979 and 2011, giving each a value 1 if reported and 0 if not (I also recorded the number of times each was reported). A surprisingly large 228 instances of international pressure were reported in the People’s Daily, ranging from 0 to 12 reports for each instance. This means that, as shown in Figure 8, throughout the 1990s and 2000s even Chinese citizens who only read state newspapers would be consistently aware of foreign pressure on their country’s human rights record, from 1989 seeing an average of nine instances per year.

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22 [http://aseanhrmech.org/statements/index.html](http://aseanhrmech.org/statements/index.html)
26 From [www.dalailama.com](http://www.dalailama.com)
27 Using the 人民日报 (People’s Daily) search engine, accessed at rmrb.egreenapple.com
**Independent variables**

My first independent variable is for the source of the pressure. I split the data into three main groups: pressure originating from the United States, other non-US Western sources, and non-Western sources. My prediction is that pressure from the United States should be most likely to be reported, since the US is the main geopolitical opponent for China, perceived to have the most hostile intentions. Non-US Western sources should be reported less often, since they are not direct rivals of China in the same way as the US. However they may fall under the ‘West’, and are potentially seen or more easily portrayed as hostile through histories of imperialism and alliances with the United States, so may still be reported to a lesser extent. Pressure from non-

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28 I include comments from any media organisation, commercial, religious group or individual from that country, as well as parliamentary/congressional, legislative and executive official comments. One exception to each critical instance is the reports of the Voice of America in the Tiananmen protests and their aftermath after the 4th of June 1989. I include this period of repeated reports as one instance of pressure.

29 The European Union, plus countries from Western Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. I do not include the former Soviet bloc as these are less likely to be seen as traditional allies of the United States.

30 All other nations. Criticism that comes from multiple sources is coded as such.
Western sources should be the least likely to be reported, since these countries should be either geopolitical allies or less powerful, and therefore less easily suspected of using human rights to threaten China’s rise\(^\text{31}\). Pressure is less likely to arise from these sources in the first place, and because of the use of English-language sources, may be underrepresented in the database. However, if anything, if my hypothesis 2 is correct, only including more prominent non-English language pressure that has reached international media should bias my results in the opposite direction from the prediction; their relative prominence should make them more likely to be reported in the *People's Daily*\(^\text{32}\).

This leaves two final groups, the United Nations, and International Non-Governmental Organisations\(^\text{33}\), which I test separately. While these are nominally without borders and therefore hardly geopolitical opponents, they could be seen as agents of the United States. Most INGOs are based in Western countries, while the draft China resolutions from the United Nations were proposed by Western nations, often the United States. For this reason I also test separately for UN draft resolutions and other types of UN pressure.

My next independent variables are the topics of the pressure. For my hypothesis 4 I code all instances of pressure that are concerned with territorial integrity; specifically those that mention as their main topic human rights in potential separatist regions: Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Hong Kong or Macau\(^\text{34}\).

\(^{31}\) I include all non-Western countries in this bloc; this may include US allies in East Asia or those with whom China has territorial disputes, such as the Philippines and Japan
\(^{32}\) A content search of the *People's Daily* also suggests that there is also no evidence that any non-Western criticisms not included in my database have been reported in the paper
\(^{33}\) I also include cross-border religious groups (like the Catholic Church) and international sporting organisations (like the International Olympic Committee)
\(^{34}\) This excludes Taiwan, since while it is important issue linked to territorial integrity for many Chinese, criticism of human rights in Taiwan would be directed at the Taiwanese government rather than the CCP
For hypothesis 6 I test the type of pressure; policy (pressure that primarily addresses widely known existing government policies, for example the crackdown on Falun Gong, the one-child policy, human rights bills in Hong Kong or NGO laws); general (includes resolutions or statements that do not mention specific instances or policies but refer generally to concerns about human rights conditions in China. This also includes reports or statements that mention specific past violations within them, but refer primarily to the overall state of human rights); or specific (it refers, as its main topic, to a specific violation of human rights, such as the killing or torture of protestors). I also include as a separate category appeals for jailed dissidents (this might include appeals for their release or criticism of their treatment in prison). I include this as a separate group because while it is a specific piece of information about rights abuse, it could be seen as an existing policy decision to arrest the dissidents. I include it as ‘specific’ in robustness checks.

My remaining independent variables are concerned with the timing of the pressure. For my hypothesis 3 I code occasions when relations between China and the source are poor. Given that the majority of the pressure comes from the United States, and relations between the two states have varied since 1979, I test whether pressure is reported more in the occasions when public attitudes towards the United States appeared particularly hostile. I include the twenty-eight days following major international incidents with the United States (the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, the spy-plane crash in 2001, calls for protests against the Iraq War in 2003; allowing Chen Shui-bian to visit the US, sparking the Taiwan Straits Crisis in 1995; the ‘Impeccable’ incident in 2009; and the large weapons sale to Taiwan in 2010)\textsuperscript{35}. To test whether this effect is purely down to relations with the United States or just an increase in nationalism,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{35} Taken from Weiss, J. C. (2014) Powerful patriots: nationalist protest in China’s foreign relations. Oxford University Press. None of these incidents should be linked to foreign human rights pressure. I do not include anti-CNN protests in 2008 as these were directly linked to existing criticism
\end{flushright}
for hypothesis 4, I also test the 28 days after major anniversaries of the war with Japan. War anniversaries are widely celebrated in state media, with the public often subject to blanket coverage of Japanese wartime atrocities. For robustness I also test the 28 days after interstate tensions with Japan.

Estimation strategy

**Type of Pressure**

My first tests examine the type of international pressure, and whether it is reported in Chinese state media. For this I estimate the data using separate logistic regression models, since the outcome variable is either reported (1) or not (0). In my robustness checks I test for the number of reports, using a negative binomial model for count data. I estimate versions of the following equation:

\[
\text{Report of international pressure} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Source} + \beta_2 \text{Territorial} + \beta_3 \text{Type} + \beta_4 \text{New York Times} + \varepsilon
\]

‘Source’ tests the individual dummies for the source of pressure, and ‘type’ for whether it is specific, general, policy-related or about jailed dissidents.

**Controls**

Literature on internet and media censorship suggests that autocracies may not choose to resort to blanket censorship of all foreign pressure, since with the development of the internet many

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36 Criticism of Chinese human rights very rarely originates in Japan, however.
citizens of authoritarian countries will be able to escape their firewall and access the critical information anyway. Shirk argues that international news attracts large Chinese audiences, and many newspapers have expanded their coverage in recent years to keep up with demand. As English language abilities have improved, especially among the youth in China, potential sources of foreign news have grown. With the use of virtual private networks many are even able to access Chinese language sites from outside the firewall; the ‘banned’ New York Times Chinese language site for example receives millions of visits per month, many from within the Chinese mainland. The NYT has purposely used various tactics to try and ensure Chinese readers reach its content, in a game of cat-and-mouse with the censors. As a result a large proportion of netizens in authoritarian countries are already aware of some foreign news, including prominent foreign criticism of human rights in their own country. Several Chinese interviewees from chapter eight who could speak English well and were now studying abroad said they had used the New York Times, BBC, Voice of America and other foreign news services to learn of foreign human rights pressure when in China.

In these cases, Jones-Rooy believes that autocrats face a dilemma; if for the stability reasons discussed above they choose to censor the criticism and do not report it in the media, they may lose credibility in the eyes of the public, who will be less likely to believe that state media is genuinely reporting all foreign news that might interest them. This makes state media less effective as a trusted propaganda tool. Rather than taking the risk of its citizens seeking out the information and forming their own judgements, or even that local media will give its own account, pre-emptively addressing the issue in central state media allows the regime to put out a unified message and frame the discussion in its favour. Instead of completely cutting coverage of

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39 ibid
the sensitive but widespread anti-Japan protests in 2012 for example, the Chinese Communist Party issued instructions to newspapers to “without exception use Xinhua copy”[^41] (Xinhua being the official government news agency). On social media, Tai argues that Chinese censors use a similar approach, guiding sensitive topics rather than resorting to blanket censorship[^42].

We would therefore expect authoritarian regimes to face public costs if they choose not to publish particularly prominent foreign pressure over human rights violations. If for example they leave out a front-page *New York Times* story about a United States’ presidential speech harshly critiquing their country, then members of the public who have already heard this news first or second-hand may lose trust in state media’s ability to accurately provide them with news that interests them[^43]. The more prominent the story is in international media, the more likely members of the public will hear about the criticism through other sources, and these risks will rise. Instances of pressure that are barely reported in foreign press however will be much more difficult for even sophisticated internet users and interested members of public to access, and therefore pose much less of a risk. We would expect that as coverage of instances of foreign pressure increases internationally, coverage will increase at home. To control for this I code whether each instance appeared in the *New York Times*, a plausible measure for the level of international coverage (albeit one that overestimates US reports - as discussed below).

The types of pressure are likely to be correlated with the source - for example criticism from INGOs is much more likely to be concerned with specific criticism of covert abuses, and in the case of Amnesty International, in appeals for the release of jailed dissidents. To account for this I also conduct separate tests using fixed effects by type when testing for the impact of the source, and fixed effects by source when testing for the impact of the type.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 summarises the number of reports in Chinese media of each type of international pressure. An initial look suggests that pressure repeated in the *New York Times* and concerned with territorial integrity are reported more than the average. Pressure from the United States is reported over twice as much as that from other Western countries, while there were only two reports of criticism from non-western sources. Pressure from the United Nations appears to be reported to a high level, until we take out the draft resolutions against China in the UNHCR in the 1990s and early 2000s, when the rate of reporting falls to less than half of the average. Pressure from international non-governmental organisations is also reported at a very low rate. Instances of specific criticism are reported far less on average than other reports, and appeals for jailed dissidents are not reported at all.

Regression Results

My results provide powerful evidence for hypothesis 2. Pressure that originated from the United States was far more likely to be reported than pressure from all other sources (with exception of UN Draft Resolutions), as shown in table 3. It was 118% more likely to be reported than that from other Western sources, and 649% more likely than from non-Western sources (both highly significant). Pressure from non-Western countries was 8.9% as likely to be reported as US sources and 19.3% as likely to be reported as other Western sources (both highly significant). These results all hold when using type-of-pressure fixed effects, as well as through controls. At first look, pressure from the United Nations is likely to be reported. However, disaggregating the source of pressure in the United Nations shows that this effect is entirely driven by the draft
resolutions. These resolutions were both led by the US (often alongside other Western countries) and widely featured in international media. It is not a surprise they are so regularly reported. When the resolutions are removed, reported pressure from UN sources is similar to that from INGO sources, around 17.5% and 38.2% as much as from the US and other Western countries respectively (both highly significant). These results are demonstrated in figure 9. Pressure that focuses on territorial integrity is also 75.8% more likely to be reported than non-territorial issues, significant at p<0.001, providing strong support for my fifth hypotheses (see figure 10).44

**Table 2: Pressure on human rights in China and reports in People’s Daily, 1979 - 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of cases of pressure on human rights in China 1979 - 2011</th>
<th>Total number of reports in People’s Daily from 1979 - 2011 (more than one for each instance)</th>
<th>Average number of instances of pressure reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All criticism</td>
<td>1337</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>0.1735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>0.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other West</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-West</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN (without draft resolutions)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGOs</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Integrity</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific criticism</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General criticism</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>0.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy criticism</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jailed dissidents</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.351</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44 These results still hold when using fixed effects by type
Table 3: Log odds of report for foreign pressure in *People's Daily*, by source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>No Fixed Effects Compared to non-West pressure</th>
<th>Fixed Effects Compared to non-West pressure</th>
<th>No Fixed Effects Compared to US pressure</th>
<th>Fixed Effects Compared to US pressure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>2.682*** (0.733)</td>
<td>2.381*** (0.475)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other West</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.381*** (0.475)</td>
<td>2.381*** (0.475)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-West</td>
<td>1.773** (0.738)</td>
<td>1.394*** (0.487)</td>
<td>-2.682*** (0.733)</td>
<td>-2.605*** (0.733)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN (resolution only)</td>
<td>3.850*** (0.856)</td>
<td>3.544*** (0.647)</td>
<td>-1.939*** (0.608)</td>
<td>-1.939*** (0.608)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN (non-resolution)</td>
<td>0.743 (0.939)</td>
<td>-45</td>
<td>-2.464*** (0.293)</td>
<td>-2.464*** (0.293)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>0.218 (0.775)</td>
<td>0.401 (0.561)</td>
<td>-1.939*** (0.608)</td>
<td>-1.813*** (0.334)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYT</td>
<td>0.732*** (0.188)</td>
<td>0.640*** (0.191)</td>
<td>0.732*** (0.191)</td>
<td>0.732*** (0.191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial issue</td>
<td>0.634*** (0.168)</td>
<td>0.599*** (0.171)</td>
<td>0.634*** (0.168)</td>
<td>0.634*** (0.168)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.859*** (0.733)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.777*** (0.136)</td>
<td>-1.777*** (0.136)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>1,166</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>1,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of types</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.1768</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.1768</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

45 Dropped when using fixed effects
Figure 9: Predicted probability of pressure reported in People’s Daily, by source. UN resolutions not included.

Figure 10: Predicted probability of pressure reported in People’s Daily, by topic.
My seventh hypothesis is also strongly supported. As shown in table 4, pressure that is general in nature or on existing policies is reported significantly more than when it is of a specific nature (131% and 308% more likely respectively). Moreover, pressure that addresses existing policies is more likely to be reported than even general pressure. I discuss the implications of this below.

These tables show that as predicted, more prominent stories - those reported in the New York Times - are over twice as likely to be reported as those not featured in the NYT, significant at p<0.001. This supports the findings of Roberts & Stewart and Jones-Rooy in suggesting that domestic media output is influenced by the extent of international media coverage.

Table 4: Log odds of report for foreign pressure in People’s Daily, by type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No FE: Compared to specific</th>
<th>FE: Compared to specific</th>
<th>No FE: Compared to general</th>
<th>FE: Compared to general</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>2.183***</td>
<td>1.282***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.309)</td>
<td>(0.339)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>2.332***</td>
<td>2.022***</td>
<td>0.370*</td>
<td>0.923***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.345)</td>
<td>(0.361)</td>
<td>(0.201)</td>
<td>(0.223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.629***</td>
<td>-0.589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.337)</td>
<td>(0.366)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYT</td>
<td>1.106***</td>
<td>0.653***</td>
<td>1.232***</td>
<td>0.670***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.173)</td>
<td>(0.190)</td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td>(0.189)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial</td>
<td>0.459***</td>
<td>0.615***</td>
<td>0.610***</td>
<td>0.652***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.159)</td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td>(0.156)</td>
<td>(0.170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.881***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.939***</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.300)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.123)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>1,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sources</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

46 These results still hold when using fixed effects by country, see appendix.
Timings

One way to test the third and fourth hypotheses - about the timing of the reports of foreign pressure - is to examine whether pressure issued in the days following an incident with the US or anniversary is reported more in Chinese media. However, this kind of test misses the main point of the theory, which is concerned with when international pressure is reported - regardless of when it was actually initiated. While the United States may criticise China in the weeks leading up to an incident between the two countries, my theory predicts that this will be heavily reported in the days following the incident, and indeed potentially much more than when the criticism actually occurred. When tensions are high Chinese media may use instances of international pressure irrespective of whether they had just occurred or not. Pressure can be ignored when it initially occurred, but saved up and reported heavily when it is most useful.
I create moving sums for whether there has been an incident with the United States or war anniversary in the previous 28 days, and test whether People's Daily reports are higher in these periods. I estimate the data using a time series model. I estimate versions of the following equation:

\[ \text{Report of international pressure}_t = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{US Incident}_{t-1:t-29} + \beta_2 \text{War Anniversary}_{t-1:t-29} + \beta_3 \text{International Pressure}_{t-1:t-29} + \beta_4 \text{Controls}_{t-1:t-29} + \text{lag}(8) + f(\text{Time}) + \epsilon_t \]

**Controls**

I first control for the amount of international pressure leading up to the reports, as well as the level of foreign news about international pressure. I therefore create a moving sum of the number of instances of pressure in the previous 28 days, as well as a moving sum for the number of reports in the New York Times of pressure in the previous 28 days. Reporting foreign

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47 Tests for lag selection (Aikaike’s information criterion (AIC), Hannan-Quinn criterion (HQC), Schwarz information criterion (SIC) and final prediction error (FPE)) suggest that it is optimum to use 8 lags
pressure may be a consequence of domestic conditions in China. Social and political unrest, as well as the use of regime repression, may make the regime more or less likely to report pressure. I therefore include controls containing 28-day moving sums for each of these measures using the Global Database of Events, Language and Tone (GDELT). GDELT is built from automated content analysis of news articles, with upwards of 250 million global events\textsuperscript{48}, based on open-source data from a wide range of news sources, including online sources. For details of GDELT and the coding schemes used please see the appendix. Scrutiny might increase on the CCP internationally and domestically around its annual meetings, which may also be periods when the CCP is more sensitive to foreign criticism. I include the period of the meetings of the National People’s Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People’s Constitutive Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which typically occur together every year in the Spring, known as the ‘Lianghui’ (两会). The NPC functions as the country’s legislature, while the CPPCC is the country’s political advisory body.

Finally, the growth in internet users and connectivity in China should have increased Chinese citizens’ access to information from abroad. I therefore also include a control for the date since 1979. Figure 12 depicts when this information was reported over time, indicating that pressure was more likely to be reported when relations with the US deteriorated after Tiananmen, after 1999 and then after 2008, and less likely in the middle of the decades. I investigate this further in multinomial regressions.

\textit{Results}

Following international incidents with the US, pressure was sharply more likely to be reported (as shown in table 5). In these 28-day periods, on average 2.75 more instances of foreign

\textsuperscript{48} Schrodt, P. (2013) GDELT: Global Data on Events, Location, and Tone. \textit{Presentation for the Conflict Research Society, Essex University, 17 September 2013}
pressure are reported compared to similar 28-day periods in the rest of the year, which equates to an impressive 293% increase in criticism at these times. This was driven by US pressure, which was reported 381% more often. Pressure that did not come from the US showed no difference. Hypothesis 4 was not supported however, and there was no effect from the increases in nationalism around the anniversaries in any kind of pressure.

The results stand in the face of robustness tests, detailed in the supplementary appendix. Tests with OLS as well as with fixed effects by source and type give support to my findings. Pressure that refers to jailed dissidents I treat as a separate group, but could easily be seen as 'specific' pressure, providing one particular piece of information about unjust jailing or mistreatment. However since this information was not once reported in the People’s Daily, including them as 'specific' would strengthen my results, as shown in the appendix. I also test not only for whether the foreign pressure was reported or not, but for the number of times each instance was reported. While my theory concentrates mainly on whether the CCP chooses to pass on a particular piece of information to its public, the amount of attention it gives to that information about pressure could also be instructive. My results support the binary findings. My results also hold if we exclude pressure that comes from more than one source, and when we exclude times when the international media reports about instances of international pressure come after the Chinese reports (see appendix 1 for more details).

For the timing of the reported pressure, the results may be driven by the preponderance of international pressure following the Tiananmen massacre in 1989 and the Tibet riots in 2008. Removing these dates from the analysis does not change the results. I also show that the results hold if we exclude the pre-Tiananmen period, where pressure was notably much lower, and if we only include the period under Hu Jintao. Under the ten years of Jiang Zemin however the US effect stays positive but becomes non-significant. The results also hold if the GDELT data on repression is replaced with arrests data. To test whether war anniversaries do measure public
nationalism I also use the 28 days following an incident with Japan that sparked calls for anti-Japan protests, again taken from Weiss (2014). There is, again, no significant increase in reported pressure in these periods, supporting the anniversary data.

Table 5: Timing of all reported foreign pressure in People’s Daily

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>OLS: All pressure</th>
<th>OLS: US pressure only</th>
<th>OLS: Non-US pressure only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International incidents</td>
<td>0.0992***</td>
<td>0.0938***</td>
<td>0.0135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with the US, last 28 days</td>
<td>(0.0363)</td>
<td>(0.0319)</td>
<td>(0.0142)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anniversary last 28 days</td>
<td>-0.00290</td>
<td>-0.000442</td>
<td>-0.00209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00388)</td>
<td>(0.00287)</td>
<td>(0.00249)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All foreign pressure last</td>
<td>0.00877***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 days</td>
<td>(0.00165)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US pressure last 28 days</td>
<td>0.0125***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00187)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-US pressure last 28 days</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00480***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Times stories last 28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>days</td>
<td>-0.00707*</td>
<td>0.0522***</td>
<td>-0.00233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00451)</td>
<td>(0.0184)</td>
<td>(0.00224)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrest last 28 days</td>
<td>1.37e-05**</td>
<td>1.44e-05**</td>
<td>-3.52e-06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7.69e-06)</td>
<td>(6.89e-06)</td>
<td>(2.14e-06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repression last 28 days</td>
<td>2.61e-05***</td>
<td>1.66e-05*</td>
<td>7.87e-06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.02e-05)</td>
<td>(8.67e-06)</td>
<td>(4.47e-06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lianghui and next 28 days</td>
<td>0.0368***</td>
<td>0.0647***</td>
<td>0.00362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00916)</td>
<td>(0.0178)</td>
<td>(0.00732)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>-5.72e-07</td>
<td>8.53e-07**</td>
<td>-7.96e-07**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.51e-07)</td>
<td>(4.31e-07)</td>
<td>(3.86e-07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.0276***</td>
<td>-0.0376***</td>
<td>0.00891*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00916)</td>
<td>(0.00791)</td>
<td>(0.00484)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>12,025</td>
<td>12,025</td>
<td>12,025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

These findings show that autocrats do see some benefit from passing on to their public information about foreign pressure on their human rights conditions. There is strong support for the account put forward in other literature on authoritarian media; that coverage of even sensitive topics is to some part driven by existing public awareness of the topic- in this case
coverage in the *New York Times*. However my results suggest that this is not the full story, and that autocrats are willing to report on information that may not have reached the public otherwise. I argue this is because they may gain propaganda advantages as people react defensively to news of international pressure.

*Sources and territorial integrity*

Information that criticises issues of territorial integrity - in this case Tibetan or Xinjiang separatism or Hong Kong reunification - is far more likely to be reported than pressure on individual rights. State media is also much more likely to report pressure if it comes from the main geopolitical enemy (in this case the US), that is perceived to have hostile intentions in containing China’s rise, than if it comes from sources with no clear ulterior motive. Pressure from other Western countries, such as those in Western Europe or from the European Union, lies somewhere in between. This is presumably because while Western countries have a history of imperialism and are allied with the main enemy, the United States, they are not the central players in a struggle for power\(^49\), and so geopolitical motives are less obvious.

Pressure from other actors, the United Nations and International Non-Governmental Organisations, is rarely reported. This has changed in recent years, as Chinese media has begun to accuse INGOs like Human Rights Watch (as discussed below) of being agents of the United States, but international organisations are generally harder to connect to geopolitical interests\(^50\). At least this is the case when we take out the draft China resolutions from the United Nations. Chinese state media has almost invariably reported on these resolutions, likely to be because of their media prominence and because they have been framed as US-led attacks on China, as

\(^{49}\) A point brought up by a prominent Chinese scholar in an interview. He argued that while the Chinese people are fully aware of why the United States targets them for criticism, they cannot understand why European countries do so.

\(^{50}\) This has arguably changed over the last few years, after the database ended in 2011, especially since the Arab Spring, as authoritarian governments have cracked down on foreign NGOs, and made a more concerted effort to connect them to machinations of the United States to impose regime change.
discussed in chapter three. To relate this to recent events, the results suggest that criticism from the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights on the disappearances of Hong Kong booksellers is unlikely to be printed in Chinese media, whereas criticism from the United Kingdom would be much more likely to be passed on to the domestic public (which appears to be the case).

The CCP response in the periods after the repression in Tiananmen in 1989, the crackdown on riots in 2008 and the clashes in Urumqi in 2009 shows the importance of the source more clearly. In 1989, countries across the world issued strongly worded protests against the violence on the 4th of June. However Chinese state media focussed almost purely on the criticisms from the United States. The first reported criticisms concerned President Bush’s statements about the massacre, as well as the sanctions applied on China, and the refuge of Fang Lizhi in the US embassy. Other articles addressed reports about Tiananmen coming from the Voice of America. Over the next few weeks, several articles were published, almost universally focussing on similar themes, only discussing American actions, with the one exception being the story of the United Kingdom postponing a bilateral meeting in protest.

In 2008, critical reactions also arose across the globe, but again Chinese state media attention focussed heavily on the United States’ response, and in particular US media’s critical coverage of Chinese authorities’ use of force. Reports in the People’s Daily focussed on US House speaker

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51 People’s Daily (1992) 我代表在人权会议上揭露“西藏人权问题”谎言 这是极少数人制造出来的政治烟幕其实质是要把西藏从中国分裂出去. People’s Daily, 27 February
53 Sohu (2016) 英报告幻想自己拥有涉港特权干涉香港事务遭批驳. Sohu.com, 14 February
54 For example People’s Daily (1989) 万励之到美驻华使馆“避难” 有关人士称提供这种庇护是干涉中国内政. People’s Daily, 8 June; and People’s Daily (1989) 布什总统对中国局势进行指责 我外交部发言人表示极大遗憾. People’s Daily, 8 June
55 For example People's Daily (1989) “美国之音”造谣可耻 一个6月4日凌晨天安门广场目击者的来信. People’s Daily, 10 June
56 People’s Daily (1989) 英国单方面推迟中英会议 我外交部发言人深表遗憾. People’s Daily, 18 June
Nancy Pelosi’s stated support for the Dalai Lama as well as Tibet resolutions in the House of Representatives, as well as stories on purported media bias from CNN and the BBC. The United States was joined as a hostile protagonist in the eyes of the Chinese media by France, an easy target due to its history of aggression against China and the attacks on the Olympic torch relay. Yet Sarkozy was not the most outspoken in his comments on Tibet and the Olympics. The Polish leaders were the first to threaten a boycott, joined by Angela Merkel in Germany; yet neither pieces of criticism were reported in China. The only other reported criticism discussed the European Parliament’s resolution on Tibet.

Perhaps chastened by the Chinese public’s response, after the Urumqi violence in July 2009, Western criticism was much more equivocal. While some leaders showed concern and appealed for calm, the most explicit censure came from Islamic sources. The Turkish government, Iranian newspapers and Azerbaijani politicians all harshly criticised Beijing, with Turkish ministers calling the subsequent crackdown ‘genocide’. The Organisation of Islamic States, while not issuing an official resolution, complained vehemently about the ‘disproportionate use of force’. None of these criticisms were reported in Chinese state media however, which having realised it had a receptive audience the previous year, limited its reports to again attack French and American media for their coverage of the clashes. In each of these cases there was

57 People’s Daily (1989) 论佩洛西的“双重标准”, People’s Daily, 13 April
58 People's Daily (2008) 就美国会众议院通过涉藏反华决议案全国人大外事委员会负责人发表谈话, People’s Daily, 13 April
59 People’s Daily (2008) 敲打假相还原真相, People’s Daily, 27 March
62 People’s Daily (2008) 中方对欧盟外长理事会非正式会议讨论西藏局势并发表评论表示强烈不满, People’s Daily, 30 March
63 For example: Agence France-Presse (2009) 法国对中国新疆暴乱表示关注, Agence France-Presse, 7 July
64 BBC (2009) Turkey calls international community to show more concern for China’s Uighurs, BBC, 9 July
65 BBC (2009) Iran daily deplores government “indifference” to “killings” in Xinjiang, BBC, 13 July
66 BBC (2009) Azeri opposition parties criticize China over “atrocities against Uighurs”, BBC, 13 July
plenty of prominent and angry non-Western criticism of Chinese activities, but state media almost exclusively reported pressure from those sources perceived to be hostile to China.

This conclusion is supported further by the finding that pressure is markedly more likely to be reported when tensions with the United States are high. At these times any pressure on human rights is more likely to be seen as driven by hostility. For example, after the United States unexpectedly bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, killing two Chinese journalists, there was quite naturally a barrage of anti-American propaganda in the Chinese media. US criticism of Chinese human rights formed a key part of this propaganda. The reports included both new human rights pressure from the US; a congressional resolution to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Tiananmen Square70 (something otherwise rarely discussed in Chinese media); and referenced old and ongoing efforts to condemn China for its rights situation71. The reports were seemingly designed to link the attempts to denounce the CCP over human rights with an actual attack on Chinese property and civilians, from an opponent set on “undermining China’s stability”72. In some People's Daily reports this link was made explicit. The article on the Tiananmen Square resolution, published a few weeks after the bombing, reads:

“In the US Congress there are some people, who consider themselves ‘human rights defenders’, who, for their own political ends, or from a hegemonic bullying mentality, have called for ‘human rights above sovereignty’. They fly the flag of so-called ‘human rights’, ‘democracy’, and ‘freedom’ in order to interfere in others’ internal affairs and trample upon their sovereignty, in order to impose their social system and values

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70 H.Res.178 - https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/106/sres103/text
onto other countries and dominate the world. US actions in Yugoslavia fully illustrate this point.\textsuperscript{73}

Such reports help both to support the CCP’s narrative that the bombing was a deliberate attack to punish China for its support for Yugoslavia, but also that human rights pressure is driven by hostility towards China, exemplified by the embassy attack. Figure 13 shows that there was a marked increase in domestic attention to the reports issued in the Spring of 1995 and 2000 in comparison to the previous years, dropping again into 2005. The content of the reports in these years was not markedly different. The summary paragraph of the reports in 2004 for example, discussed widely in the \textit{People's Daily}, was almost identical in wording to the report in 2005\textsuperscript{74}, a report barely noted in Chinese media. One potential explanation for these increases is the change in the relationship with the United States. In the Spring of 1995 the Taiwan Straits crisis was beginning, while the embassy bombing in the summer of 1999 again increased the sense of threat posed by the US towards China, a sense of threat that dropped again into the next decade. My theory predicts that these incidents affected how the Chinese public perceived the US and therefore how the Chinese government responded to human rights pressure.

\textsuperscript{73} ibid
In contrast to my predictions however, a more general salient national identity, as proxied for by national anniversaries or Japanese tensions, shows no impact on reports of international pressure. If we assume that the link between symbolic nationalism and the response to international pressure shown in chapter five does hold, this could be for a number of reasons. Firstly, it may be that the anniversaries do not serve to increase public nationalism as much as expected. Secondly, it may be that attention is primarily directed inwards - or towards Japan at these days, and so even if the time is a ripe one for reporting on foreign pressure, media focus is taken up by war memorials and retrospectives. Finally, it could be, as is entirely possible, that the CCP has not realised the advantage of this time of the year in this regard. In any case, it appears that public nationalism only leads to more reports of foreign pressure when the nationalism is directed at the source of that pressure.

My results also suggest that autocrats will choose to pass on information about foreign pressure that addresses existing government policies. This kind of information will have many of the benefits and few of the costs offered by foreign pressure, since the public are likely to be aware both of previous criticism and of the policies themselves. Criticism that offers specific
information on new human rights abuses is unlikely to have reached the public, is the most likely to be censored.

The pressure reported after the repression in 1989 and the crackdown in 2008 illustrate this reaction. In 1989, foreign denunciations of the massacres around Tiananmen Square came in immediately, reaching international newspapers on the 5th of June. However since this pressure may have provided new information about what had happened on the 4th of June, none was reported in Chinese media. It was only by the 8th of June that Chinese reports of foreign condemnation began to trickle in, with the majority printed towards the end of the month, once the crackdown had become an official ‘policy’. These reports focussed only on general statements made by the United States, or were used to directly address specific information about the massacre carried by the *Voice of America*.

After the Tibet crackdown in 2008 there was a similar pattern in Chinese state media reporting. Foreign accusations again flooded in in the days immediately following the crackdown, between the 14th and 18th of March. Again Chinese media was unwilling to let new specific information about the events to reach the public. Reports in the *People’s Daily* of negative foreign (American and French) responses only came in almost two weeks after the demonstrations began, on the 27th of March, just as the existence of the riots was publicly acknowledged and ensuring stability in Tibet became an official policy. Again, by this time the benefits of refuting foreign information had outgrown the marginal costs of people hearing about it for the first time, and indeed was used as a tool to introduce information about the unrest, as discussed in the previous chapter.

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Alternative explanation

There is however a possible alternative explanation for my results, especially concerning the source of the pressure. Comments from the major geopolitical opponent, in this case the United States, are potentially just much more interesting to the Chinese public than those from a minor power of no geopolitical significance, and therefore they are more likely to find out through other routes. Susan Shirk suggests that “keeping the Chinese people ignorant of a speech by Taiwan’s President, Japan’s Prime Minister, or the US Secretary of Defense is no longer possible”\textsuperscript{76}. And as Jones-Rooy and Stockmann argue, Chinese state media may then look to frame the story before people find out in other ways\textsuperscript{77}, or keep up with the more daring commercial papers that have already reported on the events\textsuperscript{78}. Because people are more interested about the United States and its criticism of China, are more likely to have found out through other routes, and so the \textit{People’s Daily} is therefore more likely to report this criticism. The same could be said for issues about territorial integrity.

This is a powerful argument, but does not seem to be the whole explanation. Firstly, while they differ to some extent, there are many overlaps between the ‘public interest’ argument and the ‘international media prominence’ theory (and both are combined by Rooy-Jones). To address the international media prominence argument I explicitly control for stories in the \textit{New York Times}. If public interest is what is driving the reporting of American pressure more than from other sources, this should also be at least partly picked up by the \textit{New York Times} control, which will drastically overestimate pressure from the US.

\textsuperscript{77} Jones-Rooy, A. (2012)
\textsuperscript{78} Stockmann, D. (2013)
Secondly, if all is happening is that the Chinese state media is reporting cases they believe the people will find interesting, this does not explain why the majority of pieces of foreign pressure, including high profile ones from the United States, are not reported. As noted in chapter three, when leaders travel to important foreign partners, the visit is given exhaustive coverage on Chinese state television and newspapers, but discussions of human rights or the inevitable protests and criticisms that accompany the trip - such as the criticism of Hu Jintao on his visit to the United States in 2006 - are seldom reported in Chinese media. The difference with the cases Shirk alludes to on nationalist topics like Japan is the level of sensitivity that human rights condemnations bring, and the risk of sparking not just nationalist but anti-government activity. Even the *Global Times*, which is driven by commercial interests, is state-owned and could not report on sensitive topics without official endorsement. Xiao Gang, founder of the *China Digital Times*, gives the example of the Nobel Peace Prize given to Liu Xiaobo:

“When dissident writer Liu Xiaobo was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, the CPD [Central Propaganda Department] ordered all websites not to create or post stories about the prize and to delete any that already existed. The SCIO [State Council Information Office] also issued a directive forbidding all interactive online forums, including blogs and microblogs, from transmitting prohibited words relating to the prize. As a result, hardly any mention of last year’s Nobel Peace Prize can be found on the Chinese Internet, let alone Liu Xiaobo’s name or writings.”

On the other side, there are also cases reported by the *People’s Daily* and other state-run media that are either very obscure or just not that widely reported in international media, which

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ordinary Chinese citizens would be unlikely to otherwise pick up on. I discuss four of these from 2015 below. These serve as good case studies for demonstrating how the Chinese state media reports on instances of foreign pressure that would be unlikely to otherwise reach the public - but instead can be used as propaganda pieces for the regime.

**Human Rights Watch report on Tibet, February 2015**

In February 2015, Human Rights Watch issued its annual report of events in China in 2014. As with the 2012 report, the report criticised many aspects of the CCP’s human rights performance, from its actions in Tibet to its lack of progress on women’s rights. Despite these criticisms, and the fact that international coverage of the report was sparse at best, the report was featured widely in Chinese state media. The *People’s Daily* focussed only on the section that criticised Chinese policies in Tibet, issuing a detailed rebuttal describing China’s developmental successes and investment in the region. *Xinhua*, the state news agency, chose a similar rebuttal focussing only on the CCP’s approach to judicial reform and policies on the rule of law. Other articles attacked *Human Rights Watch* directly, accusing it of producing biased reports and having ulterior motives: “an excuse for Western countries to impose their hegemony on the world.”

In state media reports, the CCP chose to mention the general criticisms made by HRW of China’s human rights. It took two approaches in doing so however. Firstly to only focus on the critiques that addressed Chinese existing policies- one on the topic of Tibet, an issue of territorial integrity, but framed the criticism as an attack on its existing policies of development and investment in the region - and the other on the topic of judicial reform, again an existing policy pushed by the CCP over recent years. Secondly, it focussed on denigrating the intentions of the

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83 Xinhua (2015) 署名文章：司法改革与人权保障的正义走向. *Xinhua*, 2 February

source of the criticism, *Human Rights Watch*, as a stooge of the West and as such, holding hostile intentions against China.

This approach to international NGOs is a new one in recent years in China. As shown in the quantitative analysis, in the years up to 2011, criticism from INGOs was barely reported in the Chinese media. However as Carothers argues, following the Arab Spring in 2011 there has been a notable increase in hostility towards INGOs in authoritarian states, with many regimes issuing anti-NGO laws. China has been no exception, and foreign NGOs have been treated more and more as tools of American-led regime change, both on the Chinese mainland and in Hong Kong. The Chinese media had generally ignored the Human Rights Watch reports until after the Arab Spring, when it began to publicly associate the group more and more with the United States attempts to constrain China. So while HRW publications are otherwise unlikely to reach the Chinese public, by 2015, they had become reported in full, and portrayed as a hostile attack on China. My theory shines light on this puzzling scenario, whereby the more dangerous the CCP perceives INGOs to be in sparking domestic unrest, the more it chooses to pass on their words to the domestic public.

*French journalist criticism of Xinjiang, November 2015*

In November 2015, Ursula Gauthier wrote a piece for the French magazine ‘L’Obs’ following the Paris terrorist attacks, criticising the CCP’s policies towards the Uighurs in Xinjiang. Gauthier, who was based in Beijing, argued that the Chinese government had to take its own share of responsibility for the violence in the region. The Chinese government responded by revoking her visa to China and attacking Gauthier through various state media channels. These

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attacks extensively quoted Gauthier’s criticism of Beijing’s policies in Xinjiang\textsuperscript{87}, and provided justifications for her expulsion, calling her article ‘extreme’ and ‘prejudiced’\textsuperscript{88}.

The original piece by Gauthier barely caused a stir in international media circles, and it was only after her visa was not renewed and the attacks in Chinese media began that international media attention turned to the issue (leading to foreign criticisms of press freedom in China\textsuperscript{89} and Chinese rebuttals\textsuperscript{90} in turn). In this case foreign media attention to the criticism and its consequences came after the Chinese media reports, suggesting either an attempt by the CCP to pre-empt foreign reports or a deliberate strategy to use Gauthier for propaganda purposes. Like the HRW piece, this was a critique of Chinese policies in its restive regions, and also arose from France, a source portrayed as hostile to China since the 2008 Tibet riots and the Carrefour boycott. Gauthier was therefore a reasonably risk-free target.

\textit{Hillary Clinton tweet, September 2015}

In September 2015, China co-hosted a UN meeting on women’s rights to celebrate the 20\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of a conference in Beijing in 1995. In reference to the five feminists who had been arrested earlier in the year in China, Hillary Clinton posted a tweet saying:

“Xi hosting a meeting on women’s rights at the UN while persecuting feminists? Shameless. #Freethe20”.

While the tweet became popular amongst Twitter users in both China and the US\textsuperscript{91}, it remained relatively low-key, especially in China where Twitter is blocked. Despite this, by the next day the \textit{Global Times} chose to respond to Clinton’s accusation with a harshly written editorial. While not

\textsuperscript{87} Global Times (2015) 马尧：对法国记者郭玉，中国为何“忍不了”. \textit{Global Times}, 26 December
\textsuperscript{88} For example People's Daily (2015) 别了郭玉，中国“取关”不送. \textit{People's Daily}, 27 December
\textsuperscript{90} Global Times (2015) 锐评：郭玉赤裸裸地为恐怖主义张目 却试图倒打一耙. \textit{Global Times}, 28 December
quoting the tweet as an attack on Xi Jinping, the article compared Clinton’s language to that of Donald Trump, calling her “alarmed and jealous”, saying that she was attacking the country to gain domestic attention for her presidential campaign92. On the surface, for China’s embattled feminists, support from a US presidential candidate might be a boost for their ambitions and effort to mobilise support for women’s rights in China. However like the French and Human Rights Watch, Hillary Clinton, or ‘希拉里’ as she is known in Chinese, has become a target for Chinese media ire over recent years. Clinton has been particularly outspoken about human rights in China, back even to her forthright speech at the 1995 World Conference on Women. She has publicly accused China of violating human rights, and then as Secretary of State was vocal in her doubts over China’s position in the South China Sea disputes93. Chinese state media appeared to be prepared to take the risk of exposing more feminist activists and the public to a critical message, with the hope that Clinton’s perceived hostility to China might play into their hands.

Tiananmen letter, June 2015

An open letter from eleven overseas Chinese university students, calling for the CCP to put on trial those responsible for the massacres in 1989, brought home the balancing act Chinese leaders have to face when choosing whether to report on instances of foreign criticism. This obscure letter was seized upon by the Global Times, a commercial tabloid under the control of the CCP, which published an editorial in its Chinese and English language editions attacking the letter94. The article reported the letter’s content in detail, including the fact that “the post-1980s and post-1990s generations in the mainland have been fooled and they couldn't get to know the "truth" of the 1989 Tiananmen incident until they moved abroad to study, where they can get

92 Global Times (2015) 希拉里学“大嘴”秀生猛让自己很 LOW. Global Times, 9 September
93 Diplomat (2016) Why China Dreads a Hillary Clinton Presidency, The Diplomat, 10 February
94 While the Global Times is a commercial paper, and is therefore pushed more by commercial interests, it is also state-owned, and therefore would almost certainly need approval from the Propaganda department to print something as sensitive as this letter
unlimited access to the Internet”\textsuperscript{95}. The article claimed that the writers of the letter had become “new targets of overseas hostile forces”\textsuperscript{96}. However, as reported in the watchdog website \textit{China Digital Times}, the editorial itself was removed by Chinese censors just days later\textsuperscript{97}. One of the signatories of the petition, Gu Yi, said that the \textit{Global Times} had unwittingly played into the students’ hands by bringing publicity to the letter within China, saying “the \textit{Global Times} attacking our letter was [the letter’s] best advertisement”\textsuperscript{98}.

This incident, while originating from Chinese nationals residing abroad rather than foreign countries themselves, illustrates the dilemma faced by Chinese media outlets. On one side, there is the temptation to foster a defensive reaction in readers, hoping they will agree that the students had been taken hostage by foreign forces, and to agree that the Tiananmen incident was not worthy of criticism. In this case however, the letter was written by Chinese rather than foreign students, removing many of the advantages of the defensive reaction to outgroup criticism. Moreover, the letter was not just a repetition of previous foreign criticism of Chinese human rights or of an existing government policy, but provided potentially new information to the Chinese public about how their compatriots overseas viewed the events of 1989, making it far more dangerous.

\textbf{Conclusion and Implications}

In this chapter I asked why authoritarian regimes would choose to report on (or allow their state-owned media to report on) instances of potentially sensitive international pressure on their

\textsuperscript{95} In the \textit{Global Times} (2015) Hostile Forces Target Younger Generation. \textit{Global Times}, 25 May
\textsuperscript{96} ibid
\textsuperscript{97} China Digital Times (2015) “All websites must urgently delete the Global Times commentary, "Overseas Forces Attempt to Incite Post-80s, 90s Generation.”【真理部】境外势力试图煽动八零后九零后
\textsuperscript{98} Guardian (2015) Chinese students in the west call for transparency over Tiananmen Square. \textit{The Guardian}, 26 May
human rights conditions. A quantitative analysis of the Chinese state newspaper the *People’s Daily* from 1979 to 2011 shows that autocrats make strategic decisions in choosing when or not to allow their citizens to read information from abroad on their human rights situation. My argument is that autocrats are not only concerned about the credibility of their media apparatus, but also consider the impact the information is likely to have on their public’s beliefs about human rights conditions. Different types of critical information will affect the public in different ways – some will increase grievances, and some will decrease them. Propaganda officials strategically consider the public’s response when choosing which information to pass on and when.

How are authoritarian leaders aware of these sophisticated responses? My theory assumes that the regime is reasonably well-aware of how this information might have positive and negative effects. One possibility is that they too are aware of the psychological literature, or have guessed something to the same extent. Perhaps more likely is through a process of learning and trial and error, sometimes hiding information that would be harmless, and sometimes mistakenly allowing their public to read information that has had pernicious effects. Reporting more pressure from French sources, or meetings with the Dalai Lama for example appears to have come from the realisation that the Chinese public respond more defensively to these sources. Reporting the Tiananmen letter in 2015 from overseas Chinese students on the other hand however appeared to be a lesson quickly learned, and is unlikely to be repeated.

These findings have impacts for the literature on the role of the media on authoritarian stability. My results provide further support for the findings of Jones-Rooy and Roberts & Stewart in showing that autocrats cannot just shut out all sensitive events from their public, but need to retain some media credibility and the ability to frame those events. However, the results also
show that expanding the range of information that reaches the public may bring benefits for regime stability, even if this information is critical of regime actions. While I focus on the media, this builds upon the findings in the censorship literature of King et al, who show that the CCP is less concerned about social media criticism of their actions than comments that might spur social mobilisation. I show that for a ‘highly sensitive’ subsection of critical comments and information - those on human rights that come from abroad - the CCP may pass on the comments directly to their public. This suggests that under certain circumstances governments welcome international pressure, which they then use as a propaganda tool. Human rights pressure may play into the hands of authoritarian leaders.

The findings presented so far do not prove however that pressure actually provides benefits to authoritarian regimes – just that the CCP appears to believe allowing the public to hear certain information about pressure is less disadvantageous than others. To test whether there is a genuine advantage from allowing the public to hear some kinds of pressure we need to test their responses directly. I do this in the remainder of the dissertation.
On the 6th of March 2015, a group of young Chinese feminists were planning the final details of their ‘March 7 stick-in’ project to mark the upcoming International Women’s Day. Their plan was to go onto buses and subways in various cities around China the next day and hand out leaflets and stickers to raise awareness about sexual harassment. At around 11pm that night however, police stormed houses of ten of the organisers and volunteers of the project. Police soon released five activists, but held the remaining five, Li Tingting, Wei Tingting, Wang Man, Zheng Churan, and Wu Rongrong without charge. Li Tingting was held in Beijing’s Haidian detention centre for thirty-seven days, interrogated daily by security agents determined to find out the groups organising her ‘subversive’ activities. Li recounts how the agents called her lesbian and a whore, woke her in the middle of the night to scrub floors, accused her of being a spy for unnamed foreign forces, intimidated her with ten years in jail, and even threatened her parents¹.

The arrests sparked a storm of international criticism and media attention. Samantha Power questioned China’s commitment to women’s rights, while Hillary Clinton called the arrests ‘inexcusable’. Condemnations poured forth from the United Kingdom, Canada, the European Union, as well as feminist NGOs from Japan to India. Following extensive public and private attempts to secure the release of the women, the activists were finally charged with ‘gathering crowds to disturb order’, and allowed to leave on bail on April 13th. The charges remained one year later.

These events focussed international attention on women’s rights in China for the first time since it hosted the United Nations Conference on Women in 1995. The arrests culminated in Hillary Clinton calling Xi Jinping ‘shameless’ on Twitter, which brought a mixed response from Chinese Weibo users. Some women’s rights activists welcomed the comments, saying that they reflected the frustration many felt with the lack of progress since 1995. Other Weibo users criticised Clinton, viewing her comments as deliberate attacks on China rather than arising from any female solidarity. A typical response went along the lines of:

@燕呢 xwb: Hillary is a fanatic for opposing China, regardless of what the matter is she can turn it against you.

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6 BBC Online (2015) China angered by Hillary Clinton tweet on women’s rights. *BBC Online*, 28 September
7 Taken from Lowy Interpreter (2015) The backlash to Clinton’s gender criticism explained. *Lowy Interpreter*, 8 October
Pen Xiaohui, a professor in sexology at East China Normal University, suggested that Clinton’s remarks might not have been particularly helpful for the feminist movement. She responded to the tweet on Weibo:

“There are signs that certain feminists in China won the praise and support of Hillary Clinton. Last year after President Xi speaking at the UN Women’s Summit, Hillary immediately attacked China’s policies on women. The political motives behind this make one pause to consider. A society in which men and women are equal is of course the direction to which mankind needs to strive, but China cannot allow a foreign politician who views China with hostility to meddle in this undertaking.”

In this chapter I trace through the history of gender equality, women’s rights and feminism in China, showing the influences of foreign interventions on the growing women’s rights movement, and how pressure from abroad has tended to coalesce around the periodic repression of domestic women’s rights activists. In the next chapter I examine the impacts of this pressure.

**Women’s rights in China**

At the beginning of the 20th century, as the Qing dynasty was reaching its close, women’s liberation rose in prominence in China. The movement was primarily led by male reformists, such as Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, as part of the self-strengthening movement to ‘civilise’ and modernise China. These reformists saw women’s rights and gender equality in a nationalist
context, as essential parts of what would make China strong again. For them, the backwardness of Chinese women was symbolic of the backwardness of China.

Women at the time were expected to behave according to the traditional moral code of the ‘three obediences and four virtues’, that locked them into a subservient relationship to men. According to the three obediences, women should be obedient to their father before marriage; their husband during marriage, and their son after their husband’s death. The four virtues consisted of “Moral discipline, proper speech manner, modest appearance and diligence”, and were seen as the highest ideal for women’s behaviour. Women’s education was perhaps best summed up by this lesson from the *Analects of Women*, a ‘textbook’ for women in the Tang dynasty:

“Keep your daughter indoors as a rule and only rarely should you allow her out: she ought to be under your total command. You should scold her roundly if she is not quick to obey, remind her often of self-discipline and household duties”.

Since the Song Dynasty (960AD - 1279AD), footbinding also became a way to exert control over women. Girls as young as six had their toes tied under their foot and then bound tightly to prevent them from growing. Having three-inch ‘golden lotuses’ became a sign of status for women; to show they did not need to engage in manual labour; but also became a fetishized symbol of beauty. Footbinding also ensured that women stayed tied to domestic labour.

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11 Zhou Li (1959) *Tianguan Jiuben (The Rites of the Zhou Dynasty)*. Qiming Press: 687
restricted their movement, even to the point of crippling them. According to Mackie, “the historical record contains several explicit statements over the centuries that the purpose of footbinding was to hobble women and thereby promote their seclusion and fidelity.” Despite various attempts to ban the practice by the Manchu Qing Empire from the 1660s, the practice continued unabated, afflicting up to 80% of women by the mid-19th century.

In the last few years of the 19th century, reformers began campaigns to break from these traditions, both to end footbinding and to promote the establishment of women’s schools. By the time the Xinhai revolution came around in 1911, many women were also beginning to join in revolutionary activities and the army, and form their own groups, to demand greater rights in other areas, including the Women’s Suffrage Society and the Militant Women’s Society. Wang Zheng argues that it was the May Fourth Movement that truly created women’s activism, where women became a new category in society. As part of the anti-imperialist movement, Chinese women began to push back further against Confucian ethics, in areas from women’s suffrage to forced marriages.

Born from the May Fourth Movement, the Chinese Communist Party also recognised the importance of women to their own revolution, and ‘women’s liberation’ became one of their core pledges - a crucial means to reorganise social relations. Mao Zedong stated in 1950:

“In order to build a great socialist society it is of the upmost importance to arouse the broad masses of women to join in productive activity. Men and women must receive equal pay for

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15 ibid
equal work in production. Genuine equality of the sexes can only be realised in the process of the socialist transformation of society as a whole”

The People’s Republic of China Constitution, signed in 1949, explicitly gave women the same rights as men, such that, according to Zheng, “the CCP presumption that ‘Chinese women were liberated’ was a fact beyond questioning”

The Marriage Law in 1950 gave women the freedom to marry and divorce; the Election Law of 1953 gave women the right to vote; while laws were also instituted to give women the right to possess property- including that given to them in the land reform movement.

According to Bauer and colleagues, the CCP’s Marxist philosophy led them to see bringing women from the home into the workforce as one primary way in which women could be liberated. As if to demonstrate the changes from one hundred years earlier when 80% of women were hobbled and housebound, 90% of women participated in agricultural production at the start of the Great Leap Forward in 1957.

China has continued to have a comparatively high proportion of women in its labour force.

Acting as a champion of women’s rights has therefore remained a central pillar of the CCP’s legitimacy up to the present day. The advent of capitalism and decline of communist ideology since 1979 however has brought new challenges for women’s rights, and thrown a light onto existing inequalities. The entry of women into the capitalist system has created patterns of discrimination reflected in other industrialised societies, including lower pay and fewer career-advancement opportunities. Married women and women with children have been most affected,

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20 Mao, Z. (1950)
22 Zhou, J. (2013)
24 ibid
25 CNBC (2014) Gender wage gap in Asia set to get worse. CNBC, 30 July
as managers realise the need to provide pay maternity leave\textsuperscript{27} and provide more flexible working hours\textsuperscript{28}. The percentage of women in the labour force, while still high, has dropped by 9\% over the last twenty years\textsuperscript{29}. Women’s representation in politics also falls below the CCP’s stated gender equality principles, with female cadres only making up 6.5\% of new cadres in 2008\textsuperscript{30}, and no women currently on the highest decision-making body, the seven-man Politburo Standing Committee.

Gender inequality also persists in education, where according to Zhou, despite the supposed equal opportunities for men and women, “thirty-six percent more males than females have a primary school education; 60-70 percent more males than females have a secondary school education; and nearly three times as many males as females have some college education”\textsuperscript{31}. Not only do boys tend to receive more family support for their studies, but there are widespread reports that Chinese universities have unequal acceptance demands from the Chinese Gaokao, the university entrance exam, with girls needing to score up to 65 points more than boys (out of 750) to be accepted, something also protested in recent years by China’s feminist activists\textsuperscript{32}. These trends have been exacerbated because of the growing public acceptance of a traditional division of labour, where women are responsible primarily for child-care and housework, and the men gain an education and go out to work\textsuperscript{33}. Views of marriage have become more traditional in China in recent years, with 21\% in 2010 (up from 12\% in 2002) believing that the husband should provide in a marriage, rather than both partners having jobs\textsuperscript{34}.

\begin{thebibliography}{44}
\bibitem{Worldbank} \url{http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS}
\bibitem{Beijing15} “Chinese Women’s NGOs Report on “Beijing+15””. October 2009, \textit{All-China Women’s Federation Chinese Women’s Research Society}
\bibitem{Zhou2013} Survey quoted in Zhou, J. (2013): 73
\bibitem{LosAngeles2013} Los Angeles Times (2013) China college admissions bias is testing girls’ patience. \textit{Los Angeles Times}, 20 February
\bibitem{PewGlobal2010} \url{http://www.pewglobal.org/2010/07/01/gender-equality/}
\end{thebibliography}
The one child policy, instituted in 1981, also brought back relics of male domination supposedly relegated to the country’s distant past. Lee, Campbell and Feng argue that the killing of female babies was common in the Qing period as a method of fertility control, supposedly as a means of controlling the gender mix of families. However, the burdens of the one-child policy and the purported need for male workers in the Chinese countryside saw a sudden reoccurrence in reported cases of female infanticide. According to Wang Zheng, the shocking nature of these cases and their dramatic reintroduction into Chinese society sparked renewed interest in women’s rights in the 1980s, including a campaign from the Women’s Federation to “protect the legal rights of women and children”.

The most prominent activism from Chinese women’s rights and feminist groups in recent years has perhaps come in the area of domestic violence. According to Milwertz and Bu, activists in China only began to see wife-beating as a women’s rights issue from the 1990s, especially after the UN Women’s Conference in 1995, discussed further below. Hong Fincher discusses the famous case of American Kim Lee, the wife of Chinese tycoon Li Yang. Lee was severely and repeatedly beaten by her husband, but saw no recourse from police. She eventually resorted to appealing to public sympathy, using her fame to gain attention for her case by posting pictures of her bruises and husband’s threatening texts online.

According to a survey by the Party-led All-China Women’s Federation in 2010, up to one quarter of women have experienced domestic abuse from their partner - a figure that many feminist

38 Fincher, L.H. (2014)
activists say may be understated\textsuperscript{39}. Domestic violence has become a central target of the young Chinese feminists, including the ‘feminist five’. These activists launched a ‘bloodied bride’ protest in 2012, where they went onto the Qianmen Dajie in the centre of Beijing in bride gowns and red paint, in order mobilise attention and protest the lack of a law against domestic violence\textsuperscript{40}. Twelve years after the Anti-Domestic Violence Network of China first proposed it, in December 2015, a nationwide domestic violence law was finally passed. The law bans any form of domestic violence, including psychological abuses, and allows courts to issue protection orders to victims\textsuperscript{41}.

As a result of the revolutionary movements of the reformers in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century and the CCP, gender equality in China has overcome a number of obstacles over the last 130 years. Many of the issues currently faced are ones commonly encountered in many industrialised countries. Arguably where Chinese women face exceptional problems is the overlap of gender equality with civil and political rights more broadly. Because of the authoritarian restrictions on judicial independence, freedom of expression, or public protests, the ability of Chinese women to speak out for their rights is severely limited. Kim Lee took her case, with evidence of beatings and threats against her life, to the Chinese legal system. Police told her the evidence was inadmissible, and repeatedly told her to deal with it within her own family\textsuperscript{42}. Finally, after a public outcry in response to her social media campaign, and an eighteen-month battle, the court ruled in favour of Lee. It granted her a divorce, as well as her compensation (which she has yet to receive), and for the first time in Beijing - a restraining order against her husband\textsuperscript{43}.

\textsuperscript{39} Zhen Yan, deputy chairman for the All-China Women’s Federation at the time of the report. See: China News (2011)


\textsuperscript{42} Fincher, L. H. (2014)

\textsuperscript{43} NPR (2013) American Woman Gives Domestic Abuse a Face, And Voice, In China. NPR, 7 February
According to Fry, “women are encouraged to express grievances in mediatory rather than legal processes” in China, and the lack of due legal process and judicial independence means that even with a law against domestic violence, women’s legal options are limited. While a domestic violence law should help to overcome some of the problems faced by Kim Lee and others like her, Fincher argues that there is a gap in China between what the law is supposed to do and how police and courts work - especially for those without an American passport and celebrity husband.

The Chinese police did not arrest the ‘feminist five’ because they were concerned about their views on gender equality, or because they were in some way trying to ensure that sexual harassment on public transport could continue. Even when launching their ‘bloodied bride’ protest to promote a domestic violence law - a law that the CCP supported and chose to pass - the activists were harassed by police. In early 2016 this intolerance of domestic activism and civil society extended even to activists who had taken a less public approach to improving women’s rights. The Beijing Zhongze Women’s Legal Counselling and Service Centre, run by Guo Jianmei, closed under ‘pressure’ from the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau. The high profile legal aid NGO had symbolised the growth in women’s rights in China since the 1990s, and just a few years before, state media had even praised Guo as a ‘patron of the weak’. The case symbolises that even on an issue with official government sanction, the space for those hoping to change government policy is small. Indeed, it is the periodic crackdowns of civil society activity over women’s rights that have attracted the most international attention on this issue, at least over recent years.

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44 Fry, L.
45 Global Times (2012) Bloody brides in abuse protest. Global Times, 14 February
Foreign pressure on women’s rights in China

Footbinding

The issue of footbinding drew foreign attention to human rights in China for the first time. In the late Qing Dynasty, as footbinding had reached its height, the semi-colonisation of China brought Western missionaries and their families into China. While opposition from Qing intellectuals had grown through the 19th century, most accounts agree that it took the input of missionaries and their wives to help launch a powerful campaign that eventually ended the practice in China49. From the 1860s, opposition within the missionary community grew to the practice, and the missionaries began to attract Chinese Christian women from their congregations to their message. Some women, like those in the Anti-Footbinding Society, pledged to not bind the feet of their daughters50. The reforming atmosphere of the 1890s gave a perfect opportunity for the missionaries to step up their opposition to the practice and persuade Christian and non-Christian women alike to join their cause51. In 1895, an English woman Mrs Archibald Little helped to set up the ‘Natural Foot Society’ (天足会), a society that drew both foreign and Chinese campaigners. Through its link with the Christian Literature Society for China and their Chinese language publications, they caught the attention of leading Qing officials in the Bureau of Foreign Affairs, who replied asserting the distinctiveness of Chinese culture:

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“The usages and customs prevailing in China are different from those of Western countries. ...Custom has made the practice. Those in high authority cannot but allow the people to do as they are inclined in the matter ... they cannot be restrained by law.”

The missionaries found a fertile bed of support in the intellectual Chinese reformers of the time. The reformists Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao both joined the campaign in the 1880s and 1890s. Kang set up the Unbound Foot Association in 1894, while Liang wrote a critical article in 1897 called the ‘Report of Footbinding’ (戒缠足会叙). They saw the ending of footbinding as a cornerstone of their ideas about women’s liberation and the strengthening of the nation. Indigenous anti-footbinding societies sprung up around the country, and gradually the tide of public opinion shifted. In 1902 the Empress Dowager Cixi, five years after her officials had stated that footbinders could ‘not be restrained by law’, issued an edict to abolish footbinding. After the fall of the Qing, the new Republican government issued a nationwide ban, the practice fell out of fashion, and eventually died out - almost 1000 years of tradition and convention ended in under 50 years. Appiah argues that the success of the campaign was not just its rhetoric, but the fact that “it created organizations whose members publicly pledged two things: not to bind their daughters’ feet and not to allow their sons to marry women whose feet were bound. The genius of this strategy was that it created both unbound women and men who would marry them. To reform tradition, you had to change the shared commitments of a community.”

It is hard to fully know whether footbinding would have been have fallen out of fashion in such a dramatic way without the influence of Western missionaries. Certainly, writers from Drucker to

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54 Whitefield, B. (2008)
Keck and Sikkink emphasise the vital role that the transnational movement had to play. Drucker argues that “missionary-led opposition to footbinding had more direct impact than earlier Han or Manchu opposition”, which according to Keck and Sikkink, was because the foreign campaigners embedded the campaign within the domestic national reform movement, as a means to strengthen the nation. Despite its long traditions, banning footbinding became a way of asserting the Chinese national identity rather than denigrating it, and as a result the foreign and domestic campaign saw no real organised opposition.

This was despite the wave of anti-foreign sentiment that had been whirling around China since the beginning of the Opium Wars in the 1840s. Missionaries had been killed for proselytising throughout the late 19th century, and the Christian-led anti-footbinding movement arose just before the Boxer Rebellion - a peasant rebellion that gained popular support in Northern China for killing foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians. Foreign missionaries were playing a dangerous game by launching campaigns against age-old local traditions at this time.

On the face of it, this seems to stand against the theory that when international tensions are high, and the source of transnational pressure appears hostile, domestic citizens will act defensively to foreign pressure. In other ways however, the missionaries’ campaign fell in extraordinarily favourable circumstances. Greenhalgh argues that the modernising social and economic climate (that also heralded the end of the Qing Dynasty) provided opportunities for women in education, in employment and through improved transportation. These developments drew

women away from the need to rely on traditional familial ties, and therefore the need to subject themselves to footbinding.

Moreover, while hatred and suspicion of invading foreigners was high, so was the disapproval of the Qing government - itself a ‘foreign’ power - and its inability to deal with the challenges from abroad. As Zhao says, Chinese nationalism emerged at this time not as a way of defending the state, “but rather as an ethnic state-seeking movement led by the Han majority to overthrow the Qing Dynasty.” The Boxer rebellion was not merely an anti-foreign movement, but a protest at the favourable treatment given to foreigners and foreign missionaries as part of China’s concessions, and the Xinhai rebellion in 1911 and May Fourth movement in 1919 grew out of the government’s failure to stand up to foreign threats. The end of the Qing was a time where the public no longer viewed their country’s leaders to be adequately doing their job in defending their nation.

In the face of foreign challenges, domestic reform movements directed their attention inwards towards how their country could improve, to stay strong in repelling foreign invaders, rather than defending their ‘self-appointed interpreters of the will of the nation’ against outside competitors. As such, domestic movements at the time were building on a paradigmatic case of liberal nationalism. As we have seen, reformers like Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei saw liberation of women as an essential part of their desire to modernise and strengthen the nation. It is worth noting that they did not only focus their attention on transnational movements like footbinding, but also the need to improve women’s access to education. This movement grew

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64 Zhao, S.S. (2005)
from the publication of women’s literature in the 19th century, and was also taken up prominently by Kang and Liang. While foreign Christian organisations undoubtedly sought to assist in the promotion of women’s education, setting up the first women’s schools in China in 1842, foreign and missionary campaigning was nowhere near the same level as over footbinding; and the improvements in women’s education in the late Qing and early Republican era were primarily driven from within65.

So while Keck and Sikkink credit foreign missionaries with helping to ‘roll the stone’66, it is far from clear that the dramatic abolition of the practice would not have occurred without transnational efforts. Foreigners played a role in the course of its abolition - but perhaps only because of the peculiarities of the time. The post-Opium war invasion into China of foreign states not only generated anti-foreign sentiment, but also a recognition that China needed to fight back against these challenges from abroad - and that the Qing government was failing to do so. I would argue that the main impact of the ‘foreign’ aspect of the anti-footbinding campaign lay here. Its transnational nature may have generated some hostility, playing into anti-foreign sentiment, but the fact that foreigners were involved in the movement highlighted to Chinese reformers that this was an issue in which China lay behind its occupiers. Pressure played into the need for improvement, not the need to defend. At this time Chinese intellectuals were actively on the outlook for instances of criticism from abroad. According to Appiah, in 1898 Kang wrote a note to the young emperor, saying:

“All countries have international relations, and they compare their political institutions with one another; so that if one commits the slightest error, the others ridicule and look

down upon it… There is nothing which makes us objects of ridicule so much as foot-binding.”

This is precisely the sort of threat to the collective self-esteem that we might expect to lead to a defensive, nationalist reaction. However, I argue that the fact that the government was not seen as adequately representing the nation was essential. If the Chinese public had viewed the Qing as representatives of the nation, standing up to foreign powers, then the authoritarian nationalism generated by the foreign pressure on footbinding would have led to a recoil effect. The fact that they were not viewed as such however meant that the anger and shame could be directed towards the government leaders, and their inability to do anything about it.

1990s onwards

Women’s rights in China (as with human rights in general) generally stayed on the outskirts of the vision of the international human rights community until the 1990s. Various writers have credited the period around 1995 UN Conference on Women, held in Beijing, for transforming the face of women’s rights in China. On one side, this period saw an influx of foreign funding, from groups like the Ford Foundation on scholarly exchanges and on research projects on women’s health. On the other side, these exchanges and the conference itself helped to bring Western ideas about feminism into China. Wang Zheng argues that the new feminist theories and practice have formed a vital tool by which women’s rights researchers and activists have developed their knowledge about women’s rights. In particular, they have formed a greater understanding of how women’s rights and gender equality are themselves human rights issues, reflecting Hillary Clinton’s famous comments at the 1995 conference: that “it is time for us to

68 Wang, Z. (1997)
69 Howell, J. (1997)
say here in Beijing, and the world to hear, that it is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights”\textsuperscript{70}.

Milwertz and Bu discuss the example of domestic violence. In the 1980s gender equality activists in China did not see domestic violence as a women’s rights issue. It was only after interaction with women’s health activists at a meeting in Manila, that they began to see domestic violence as concerned with health and human rights. Women’s rights groups such as the Domestic Violence Network then began to spread the idea of domestic violence as a matter of human rights throughout the country\textsuperscript{71}. In this way the global epistemic community of women’s rights activists helped provide the Chinese movement with the inspiration and the tools to challenge these issues in their society. As Zheng says, referencing the fight against footbinding:

“It has become a pattern in this century that Chinese intellectuals always turn to the West to look for intellectual inspiration in order to form their own resistance to the dominant discourse in China. It has proved an effective strategy.”\textsuperscript{72}

While Hillary Clinton indirectly attacked China’s population planning policies in her speech at the 1995 conference\textsuperscript{73}, most criticism of China’s approach to women’s rights at the time focussed not on the substantive issues of gender equality, but on the women’s rights activists themselves, and the repression of civil society around the conference. Before the conference even started members of the US Congress had called for a boycott over China’s human rights record\textsuperscript{74}. Concerned about women’s rights protests taking international attention away from the conference itself, authorities built a huge security net around the main event, banishing NGO

\textsuperscript{71} Milwertz, C., & Bu, W. (2007)
\textsuperscript{72} Wang, Z. (1997): 148
\textsuperscript{73} New York Times (1995)
delegates to a separate conference in a town outside of Beijing. They also arrested journalists for filming a demonstration, and reportedly banned delegates from the site. Conveners of the NGO forum threatened to boycott the event if surveillance of their activities continued. Amnesty International, in a news conference before the main event, bitterly protested the recent execution of sixteen people, while in her speech, Clinton directly criticised the security measures, saying:

"It is indefensible that many women in non-governmental organisations who wished to participate in this conference have not been able to attend - or have been prohibited from fully taking part...Let me be clear. Freedom means the right of people to assemble, organise and debate openly."

Since 1995 there have been periodic reports from human rights groups complaining about rising gender inequality in China, particularly on the one-child policy. However the international community’s focus on suppression of women’s civil society rather than the issues of gender equality themselves has continued to the present day, leaving Chinese women to get on with their own emancipation, until they have been prevented from doing so by the authorities. The most vociferous of these attacks came in 2015, in response to the arrests of the ‘feminist five’. Most criticisms did not address activist concerns about sexual harassment on public transport - but instead the fact that the CCP had closed down civil society space for women. It is, again, hard to know the exact effect the international campaign had on securing the eventual release on

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78 For example: BBC Online (1999) China hits back at women’s rights criticism. BBC Online, 4 February
79 Apart from transnational women’s rights groups, who, as in the 1980s and 1990s, have generally worked behind the scenes in providing support to Chinese NGOs rather than explicitly condemning Beijing’s failures to improve issues of gender equality and women’s rights
bail of the women, a month after their arrest. Activists themselves credited the enormous private efforts of those such as the Deputy Secretary of the United Nations, Jan Eliasson, in persuading Beijing to release the women, while Amnesty International called the release “an encouraging breakthrough”. Others argued however that in detaining the women without charge for a month, in the face of widespread international pressure, Beijing had shown that maintaining its international image fell a long way behind ensuring that China’s feminists stayed in line. After their release on bail, the five feminists wrote to the United Nations’ Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, calling for pressure from the organisation to make their release unconditional. Their situation had not changed however by the time Xi hosted the Women’s Conference in New York to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Beijing conference a few months later, and became the subject of new attention from Clinton.

This chapter demonstrates that over the last century in China, public opinion has played an important role in changing government policies over women’s rights, from footbinding to domestic violence. International pressure and transnational activism have accompanied these developments throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. The flurry of attention in 2015 reflects how international pressure on China over women’s rights, at least in recent years, has mainly focussed on women’s rights defenders, rather than on gender equality itself. According to comments from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs over Clinton’s tweet about Xi Jinping, reported in the Global Times, the women “were not arrested for advancing women’s rights but

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80 Reuters (2015)
84 Radio Free Asia (2015); CNBC (2015) Do women hold up half of China’s sky? Clinton disagrees. CNBC, 28 September
because their actions violated China's laws and regulations\textsuperscript{85}. In the same way, attention from the international community has not been directed at the substance of what the activists were advancing, but instead the fact that they were subject to repression for something so minor. The crucial next step is to test directly the impacts of international pressure on public views about women’s rights in their country.

\textsuperscript{85} China Daily (2015) Official: 'Chinese women are best judges of their rights'. China Daily, 29 September
Pressure on Women’s Rights: A Survey Experiment

Experimental Survey - Results - Discussion - Conclusion and Limitations

Women’s rights activists themselves have welcomed foreign attention and statements by the likes of Hillary Clinton. While we cannot be sure the extent to which foreign pressure had any concrete impact on the authorities’ decision to release the activists, the widespread condemnation would undoubtedly have caused the Chinese leadership some embarrassment on the international stage. In a top-down sense then, there are certainly potential benefits from worldwide attention on Chinese women’s rights in 2015. What I question here however is not whether international pressure factors into elite considerations - but how it affects the public, and their grievances about women’s rights.

In this chapter I examine how the Chinese public respond to international pressure over women’s rights in China. Due to the sensitivities I cannot ask about civil rights violations and reflect the recent pressure on this issue directly, but instead I expose people to more general pressure on women’s rights in the country. I use a novel survey experiment carried out just after

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1 Parts of this chapter have been presented in the Midwest Political Science Association conference, Chicago, April 2016; and the International Studies Association Asia-Pacific conference, Hong Kong, June 2016
the closure of the Zhongze women’s rights centre in early 2016. The results are striking. I show that pressure from the United States has a counterproductive effect on beliefs about respect for women’s rights in China and willingness to support domestic activism, a negative result that did not arise when pressure came from the African Union. Negative responses to pressure are also influenced by the salience of the national identity and existing national pride, suggesting that at times of geopolitical tension, pressure will be even more counterproductive. I also show that when the national identity is salient, pressure has the opposite effect when it is directed against the leaders rather than against the nation as a whole, increasing citizens’ grievances about respect for women’s rights.

**Experimental Survey**

I test these hypotheses using an online experimental survey of international pressure on women’s rights in China, conducted during the month of February 2016. As discussed in the previous chapter, women’s rights are supported by the CCP and more freely discussed than other human rights topics. Social desirability is therefore less of a concern in the survey, and in previous surveys Chinese citizens have generally not been afraid to show dissatisfaction over gender equality - a 2011 Pew survey showed that 46% of Chinese people believed that the country still had improvements to make\(^2\), while in a recent Gender in China survey 73% of women were dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with the status of women in the country\(^3\). Social desirability should also not affect how participants respond to the experimental manipulations - the source of pressure or the presence of the Chinese flag.

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\(^2\)[http://www.pewglobal.org/2010/07/01/gender-equality/]

\(^3\)[http://www.genderwatch.cn:801/detail.jsp?id=305288&cnID=90050]
The survey was carried out just after the closure of the Beijing Zhongze Women’s Legal Counselling and Service Centre, discussed in chapter five. The closure again saw international condemnation; Hillary Clinton tweeting: “Women’s rights are human rights. This center should remain - I stand with Guo”\(^4\). The closure of the centre, and Clinton’s response were both reported in the *Global Times*, which suggested that: “it is possible that Clinton was using this women’s rights-related affair to promote her campaign for the upcoming Democratic primary”\(^5\). As such, domestic awareness of women’s rights issues was comparatively high.

The survey was conducted with an online sample of 1200 Chinese people, using the Qualtrics survey provider and Qualtrics’ panel providers in China. For age and gender, respondent numbers were weighted to match the distribution in the overall population\(^6\). With the exception of these demographics, the sample more closely resembles the online population - richer, more well-educated and urban - than the overall Chinese population\(^7\), but was drawn from almost all provinces and walks of life. The online population (50% of the population in mid-2015)\(^8\) are arguably the most likely to pick up on foreign comments about China, and some have argued that amongst the middle class in China, political and civil society participation is now more likely to be online\(^9\). Beijing’s censorship apparatus is specifically designed to prevent mobilisation within this social group\(^10\).

The experimental design allows me to isolate instances of foreign naming and shaming of China’s human rights conditions and examine directly how small variations in these criticisms

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\(^6\) These were the only weightings that could be reasonably made through the survey panel.

\(^7\) Discussed in Appendix 1


\(^10\) King, G., Pan, J., & Roberts, M. E. (2013)
affect the public. To do this I randomly manipulated the perceived ‘hostility’ of the source of criticism; the salience of the national identity; as well as whether the criticism addresses the nation as a whole or the leadership only\textsuperscript{11}.

\textit{Source of criticism}

Respondents were assigned to one of three groups: a control group, who were given no prompt, and two treatment groups who were asked to read a short paragraph taken from a recent news item, as follows:

\textbf{Treatment 1:} Yesterday a United States spokeswoman criticised China’s women’s rights conditions. She said: “The Chinese government must improve the rights of women in China”

\textbf{Treatment 2:} Yesterday an African Union spokeswoman criticised China’s women’s rights conditions. She said: “The Chinese government must improve the rights of women in China”

This kind of brief condemnatory statement is often how human rights pressure is presented in international and Chinese media. In its criticism of human rights in China in December 2016 for example, the European Union was reported as being "'extremely troubled' by the human rights situation in China" in the headline of the \textit{Reuters} report\textsuperscript{12} and merely as having "accused China over its human rights" in the \textit{Global Times} report\textsuperscript{13}. And as chapter four shows, ‘general’ information about human rights pressure is much more likely to reach the Chinese public than ‘informational’ framings about specific incidents of abuse.

\textsuperscript{11} The randomisation procedure was successful, as discussed in appendix 2, Table 8. There are no statistically significant differences in demographic variables or in the pre-treatment attitudinal questions, with the exception of education, which is minimally significant at the 10% level.


I choose two sources that maximise variation in perceived hostility towards China. The CCP portrays the United States as a major geopolitical opponent of China\textsuperscript{14}, and has done so in varying degrees since the Communist Revolution in 1949. The African Union is at worst a neutral actor for the Chinese people, and at best a long-lasting geopolitical ally. Since the Maoist period, Beijing has portrayed itself as the leader of the developing world, aiding anti-imperial independence causes. China received broad support from African countries in its fight against United Nations resolutions on its human rights in the 1990s, and in recent months the \textit{People’s Daily} described the relationship as “friendly” and “a community of mutual support”\textsuperscript{15}. The Chinese government has been a major aid supplier and investor in many African Union countries\textsuperscript{16}.

\textit{Alternative causal mechanisms}

There are other significant differences between the United States and the African Union, other than competition and perceived hostility to China. A plausible reason for respondents to reject pressure from the US but not the AU might be a general anti-Americanism or anti-imperialism, and as such not necessarily linked to the US’s perceived hostility towards China and position as the main geopolitical competitor. A number of studies have shown that people’s feelings about the source of a particular message affect their response to that message\textsuperscript{17}, while Dragojlovic finds that when people dislike a foreign leader, the leader’s attempts at persuasion may even have boomerang effects among the target population.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{14} Alongside Japan - although human rights criticism rarely comes from Tokyo
\end{flushleft}
In a similar way, a common accusation from China is that the United States is acting hypocritically in criticising China over human rights, and that it should first clean its own house before targeting others. As shown in chapter three, this is a common repost from the Chinese government to the United States, with reports in Chinese media of US Country Reports on human rights accompanied by a ‘tit-for-tat’ report on human rights in the United States. Arguably either of these two mechanisms could be the cause of the recoil effect.

Unfortunately, the nature of international relations makes isolating perceived hostility very difficult, since there are always differences between any pair of countries, from history to regime type, which all might plausibly influence how citizens of the target country perceive pressure on human rights. In the case of China, any major geopolitical opponent will bring baggage - the most obvious alternative candidate being Japan, which arouses even stronger general negative historical feelings in China than the United States.

However, there are persuasive theoretical reasons to believe that if the main causal mechanism is perceived hostility from the US towards China, we would see respondents respond differently than if the mechanism is another difference between the US and the AU, such as interviewees’ general dislike of the United States. As discussed in the theory, if respondents believe that the United States is hostile towards China, hearing US pressure may make respondents more satisfied with women’s rights conditions than before. If on the other hand respondents believe that the US is being hypocritical, or they generally dislike the country and its policies, then it seems highly likely that they will reject its criticism over women’s rights. They may feel that the criticism is not valid, and ignore it. There is however no compelling theoretical reason why this
belief - that US criticism is invalid - would also make respondents more likely to believe women’s rights in China are better than before they heard the criticism\textsuperscript{19}. I discuss this further below.

**National identity**

In the second treatment I examine whether this effect is stronger when the national identity is salient. On reading the news story, the treatment group received a small Chinese flag (measuring 1”x 0.5”) placed in the top left-hand corner of the screen when answering outcome questions. Scholars in political psychology have used national flags as a way of increasing the salience of the ‘nation’ in respondents. Schatz and Lavine argue that national symbols “uniquely accentuate citizens’ identification as national members”\textsuperscript{20}, and scholars have shown that even subliminal exposure to national flags can manipulate political attitudes and decisions\textsuperscript{21}. The Chinese flag is also frequently associated with times when China is engaged in international disputes - it was, for example almost ubiquitous in the mass-anti-Japan protests held in 2012.

**Table 6: 3 x 2 experimental design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Pressure</th>
<th>United States Pressure</th>
<th>African Union Pressure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Flag</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>No nationalism</td>
<td>No nationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hostile source</td>
<td>Non-hostile source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flag</td>
<td>Nationalism only</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hostile source</td>
<td>Non-hostile source</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After receiving the treatments, respondents were then questioned on their beliefs about women’s rights in China. Respondents were asked for their level of agreement with the statement “At present women’s rights in China are not good enough” (on a four-point scale from ‘strongly

\textsuperscript{19} Dragojlovic, N. (2013) shows that comments from disliked foreign leaders might evoke a boomerang effect, but gives no persuasive reasons for why this should happen, over and above just rejecting the information

\textsuperscript{20} Schatz, R. T., & Lavine, H. (2007): 332

agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’), while a second block measured respondents’ attitudes towards women’s rights (on employment, education, and gender stereotypes), which were combined into one ‘attitude’ variable. Finally, in a survey like this it is difficult to see how grievances about women’s rights might translate into attempts to do something about them. I therefore included a question asking whether respondents would be willing to sign a petition calling for improvements in women’s rights (of course willingness to sign does not mean people would sign). I normalise these outcome variables, to measure change from the control group.

I also make an initial test of my hypothesis 6. For those four groups who heard pressure earlier in the survey, at the end I include a further sentence that continues the news story, directing pressure explicitly at government elites. It reads: “The spokeswoman continued: “Rather than the Chinese people, it is the Chinese government that has not ensured women’s rights are good enough in recent years””. Respondents were then asked again about their grievances on women’s rights in China.

How do the hypotheses map onto these experimental tests? From hypothesis 2 I expect that a defensive ‘boomerang’ will be mainly limited to those who received pressure from the United States - and that those who received criticism from the African Union will show little negative effect - and markedly less than the United States condition. Hypothesis 1 suggests that this effect will be largest in those with higher national pride, while hypothesis 4 suggests that it will be larger in the conditions when respondents are also given a Chinese flag. Finally, from my hypothesis 6, I would expect that the groups who received pressure, once they receive the second passage that emphasises that the pressure is only directed at the leadership, will have stronger grievances about women’s rights than before this second passage.

These responses were highly correlated, so show internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.7815). All the questions for the main dependent variables, as well as summary statistics for the dependent variable in the control groups are included in the appendix.
Results

I find little support for the rational informational hypotheses, that overall, pressure increases grievances about respect for women’s rights\textsuperscript{23}. However, when we split up the pressure by source there is a notable impact. When it comes from the United States (in the absence of any flag treatment), the average treatment effect (ATE) is \(-0.244\) (p=0.02); meaning that people hearing pressure from this source have significantly lower grievances about women’s rights. Grievances following pressure from the African Union on the other hand are statistically indistinguishable from no pressure\textsuperscript{24}. These results also translate into behaviours - the willingness to sign a petition for women’s rights. US pressure makes respondents less willing to sign the petition in comparison to the control (ATE=\(-0.268\), p=0.015), while AU pressure has no effect\textsuperscript{25}. Figure 14 shows the change in beliefs that women’s rights are not good in China in the pressure cases, in comparison to the control.

\textsuperscript{23} When excluding the flag, average treatment effect (ATE) = \(-0.12\), p=0.19
\textsuperscript{24} ATE\(=\)-0.003, p\(=\)0.98. I find similar results for three other measures for how well respondents perceive women’s rights to be respected in China, see appendix 3
\textsuperscript{25} ATE=0.069, p=0.50. Exposure to the Chinese flag has a minimal and non-significant effect in all petition cases
Figure 14: Change in grievances over women’s rights against the control group (higher score means higher grievances; dotted line is the control), 95% confidence intervals

National attachment also appears to have an impact on grievances. I find that in the absence of pressure, those respondents who saw a Chinese flag had significantly lower grievances (ATE = -0.239, p=0.021). In the pressure conditions, while still having a positive effect, the results were non-significant\textsuperscript{26}. This suggests that the interactive effect I describe in hypothesis 4 does not hold. Instead, it has an additive effect to the negative impact of pressure from the United States; a total ATE of -0.354 (p<0.001). Figure 15 shows that the US pressure effect is far stronger for those with higher national pride, as predicted in hypothesis 1\textsuperscript{27}.

I find strong support for my hypothesis 6. A secondary prompt saying that the initial pressure was targeted at the Chinese government not the people significantly increased grievances with

\begin{itemize}
  \item US ATE= -0.109, p=0.296; AU ATE= -0.082, p=0.444
  \item But only in the non-flag condition (for the interaction with pride F=4.69, p=0.031)
\end{itemize}
women’s rights in comparison to full pressure from the US (ATE of 0.446 (p<0.0001). And when the national identity was salient, the prompt significantly increased grievances about women’s rights even against the control group (ATE=0.172, p=0.029, see figure 16).  

Figure 15: Interaction effect: ‘high’ national pride refers to national pride greater than the mean (≥8 on a 1-10 scale)

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28 This analysis is somewhat complicated by the fact that the wording of the question following the second prompt was slightly different from the first. In the control group, the mean reversed score for the first question: “At present China’s women’s rights’ situation is not good enough” is 2.57, while the mean score for the second question: “At present China’s women’s rights’ situation is good enough” is 2.65, a difference of 0.075. I standardised the second question for all groups by adding the difference to each answer.
Figure 16: Change in grievances about women’s rights against the control, when criticism addresses elites only or the whole country, 95% confidence intervals

Robustness checks

It is possible that the fall in grievances displayed above may come not from changes in respondents’ beliefs about how well China respects women’s rights, as suggested in my theory - but instead from reducing how much respondents care about women’s rights. However, analysis of the impact of pressure on composite attitudes towards women’s rights - attitudes towards education equality, job equality, and for traditional gender roles - suggests that this is not the case. If anything, pressure from the United States increases support for women’s rights in China, albeit only weakly. Pressure from the African Union significantly strengthens support ((for non-flag, ATE=0.194 (p=0.048); for flag, ATE=0.231 (p=0.019)).

29 For non-flag, ATE=0.155 (p=0.11); for flag, ATE=0.129 (p=0.19)
I also find similar, if less strong, effects on grievances when using three other measures of ‘respect’ for women’s rights in China. The findings about reduced willingness to sign petitions could potentially be explained not just by reduced grievances about women’s rights, but by a lower willingness to sign petitions in general (for example if hearing foreign pressure reduced trust in the government’s ability to respond to the public). To control for this I created a measure for the difference between willingness to sign a petition for women’s rights, and the willingness to sign a petition against women’s rights. The results are similar, albeit with smaller effect sizes.

**Discussion**

The effects are substantial. As shown in figure 17, splitting the outcome variable into ‘good enough’ and ‘not good enough’ shows that US pressure makes Chinese citizens 14 percentage points more likely to say that they believe women’s rights are good enough in their country, not far short of the 18 percentage points difference in grievances between men and women (in the control). If the national identity is primed, US pressure makes people 18.5 percentage points more likely, while for those with above average levels of patriotism, US pressure makes people 20.5 percentage points more likely to say that women’s rights are good enough. Pressure from the US also decreases the likelihood of signing a petition by 10 percentage points, a difference that equates to over half the difference between men and women in their willingness to sign a petition (in the control). Seen in this light, the results are particularly worrying - as US pressure

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30 Responses on whether China respects women’s rights were very similar to the main dependent variable. On whether the Chinese government has done enough for women’s rights, the US pressure had a significant effect, but only without the flag. On whether girls’ education opportunities were lower than boys’ in China, the effect sizes were much smaller, with only the combination of US pressure and the flag leading to significant increases in perceptions of equal education opportunities (see appendix 3 for full results). The mixed results could be explained by the fact that these issues (past government performance and education opportunities) were not directly addressed by the criticism, and responses to them bring in external factors about the education system and previous government behaviour rather than current grievances about women’s rights.

31 ATE for US pressure without the flag is -0.145 (p=0.166) against the control, while for US pressure with the flag was -0.221 (p=0.03). See appendix 3 for full results.
does not just strengthen the resolve of people who would not necessarily believe women’s rights are a problem in any case- but persuades people not to support improvements in policies towards women’s rights that they may have otherwise been in favour of.

Indeed, those most affected are also generally well-educated\textsuperscript{32} and internationally-oriented\textsuperscript{33}. These are groups more commonly associated with a more liberal demographic. And in the control, these groups are the ones who are significantly more likely to believe that women’s rights are \textit{not} good enough in China. In other words, those who are most affected by the US pressure are those who are satisfied with their regime\textsuperscript{34}, and proud of their country - but are also more liberal\textsuperscript{35}. These results are surprising on the face of it, since more liberal respondents should hold stronger existing grievances about women’s rights, which they should be interested in preserving. However they do fit the threat-based argument laid out in chapter two, where people should have to value women’s rights in some form in order to feel threatened by pressure on those rights. If they did not care at all about women’s rights, then they are less likely to feel a threat to their nation when those rights are criticised.

\textsuperscript{32} Interaction between US pressure and university education: F=5.19, p=0.023
\textsuperscript{33} Interaction between US pressure and positive attitude towards the United States: F=6.33, p=0.012
\textsuperscript{34} Interaction between US pressure and regime satisfaction: F=4.15, p=0.04
\textsuperscript{35} There are no interactive effects by awareness of international news - this suggests that those who have been more aware of the recent criticism of China by Hillary Clinton were not biased in either way by this knowledge. There were no other significant interactions with any other pre-treatment questions, including by age or gender.
Figure 17: Influence of US pressure on percentage of Chinese citizens who believe women’s rights are good enough in China or not. Blue dots are pressure directed at whole nation. Orange dots are pressure explicitly directed at the leaders only

Pressure from a non-hostile, neutral source, the African Union, on the other hand has no impact on either grievances or willingness to sign. AU pressure in fact has positive impacts on attitudes towards women’s rights - in that it makes people more likely to believe in rights for women. Again this impact is sizeable - pressure on women’s rights in China by the African Union liberalises attitudes by 0.231 - almost identical to the difference in beliefs between men and women. Support for women’s rights overall (on an adjusted scale) is around 15 percentage points higher in this condition36. This is a somewhat unexpected finding, given the well-established difficulties in changing attitudes and values in the psychological literature, especially from outgroups, although does fit with the burgeoning literature on transnational persuasion37.

36 Greater than the difference in support for women’s rights between men and women in the control (12 percentage points)
As mentioned, the difference in responses between the US and AU may come down to either a more general anti-Americanism or to perceived hypocrisy of the US. The African Union is also an international organisation, rather than a fellow state. I address these challenges fully in the next chapter, but a closer look at the results does suggest that anti-Americanism is not the main cause. Indeed the ‘boomerang’ appears to be more driven by pro-Americanism, with those who have a more positive attitude towards the United States as a whole being significantly more likely to be affected. The negative reaction appears to come not from attitudes to the US, but distrust of the US government’s policies towards China. I find that those who distrust the US government’s China policy have significantly fewer grievances about women’s rights having heard pressure from the US (ATE=0.55: see figure 18).

Figure 18: Interaction of attitudes towards United States as a whole/trust in US government’s China policy with US pressure on grievances about women’s rights (compared to control), when national identity not salient

It is worth noting that almost all of these interactive effects disappear once people are exposed to a Chinese flag. In this condition, people more or less uniformly reject US criticism and lower their grievances about women’s rights. This suggests that one main impact of increasing

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38 F=6.33, p=0.012
39 F=7.89, p=0.005
symbolic nationalism is to bring everybody together around one position of rejecting hostile foreign criticism. In times of conflict or around anniversaries, criticism is likely to have a particularly strong effect on those who are less satisfied with the regime or who are less patriotic. This supports the psychological literature on symbolic nationalism, which argues that exposure to national symbols converges people’s attitudes towards that of a ‘typical citizen’\textsuperscript{40}, in this case one who rejects foreign criticism of the nation.

\textit{Breaking authoritarian nationalism}

Perhaps the most striking results are on the impact of pressure that explicitly targets the Chinese government elites over women’s rights, as opposed to the whole country. This criticism aims to break down the link between the governing CCP and the nation itself, to reduce the perceived threat to the national image. I find that when United States pressure on women’s rights in China is supplemented to say that it targets only the CCP leaders, and not the people, the counterproductive effects vanish. And in conditions where the national identity is salient, US pressure increases grievances in the Chinese public.

My results support the theory that when the United States criticises China as a whole nation, the criticism and the presence of the Chinese flag together evoke a defensive, authoritarian nationalism, which leads members of the public to reject negative comments about women’s rights. However, when the criticism explicitly splits up the regime and the public, my findings suggest that the national flag evokes liberal nationalism, a sentiment directed inwards at self-improvement of the nation, to ensure that the elites protect and uphold the rights of all the citizens in the nation as best they can, rather than a sentiment designed to defend the elite representatives from outside interference. As such, when liberal nationalism is primed, citizens

\textsuperscript{40} Hassin, R. R., Ferguson, M. J., Kardosh, R., Porter, S. C., Carter, T. J., & Dudareva, V. (2009)
are more likely to consider the improvements needed to their country’s women’s rights situation, rather than focussing on defending their country and its human rights conditions against threats from outside, as shown in figure 19.

**Figure 19: Impact of target of pressure on grievances against the control, when national identity salient**

This finding demonstrates that the nation is a key variable in the response to international pressure, as well as the merits of a threat-based rather than a cue-based approach. The cue-based approach argues that people’s level of support for their regime will determine how they react to foreign comments. An important implication of a cue-based approach therefore is that pressure that only targets the government elites should polarise opinion between regime supporters and opponents even more. Pressure that directly targets the government rather than the nation as a whole should be an even stronger cue for how government supporters view the state of women’s rights in their country, and should therefore make them become even more likely to be

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satisfied with how they are treated. But as shown, when pressure is directed at the government alone, the effect does not grow, but instead disappears. The difference in responses between those satisfied with the regime and those less satisfied with the regime also disappears. This suggests strongly that it is people’s national identity, rather than any political identity or regime support, that is behind the counterproductive effect.

As predicted by a cue-based theory, those with high regime satisfaction are more likely to show a defensive response to American pressure\(^\text{42}\). However, the theory also predicts that regime opponents should show a positive response to foreign pressure - yet my results show that those who are not fully satisfied with the regime instead have little positive response. The negative impact on regime supporters also only comes in the case of a hostile foreign source, but not when the source is a neutral actor. Under a cue-based theory, pressure from the African Union should also push regime supporters to become more satisfied with women’s rights. This effect only appears however when the source is the United States\(^\text{43}\). That cues only appear to work in regime supporters and only in reaction to certain groups suggests that they are not the whole story in this case.

**Conclusion**

My findings provide strong support for a ‘threat’ theory of how members of the public in authoritarian regimes respond to foreign pressure on their human rights. Pressure that comes from a geopolitical opponent, particularly when national attachment is high, has a counterproductive effect, leading up to 20% of people to say that they no longer hold their previous grievances about human rights in their country. This suggests that recent international

\(^{42}\) F=4.15, p=0.04

\(^{43}\) If anything the interaction works in the opposite direction - those more satisfied with the regime are less likely to reduce their grievances after pressure from the AU
attempts to put pressure on Xi Jinping over his government’s respect for women’s rights may have had a ‘recoil’ effect, and made it more difficult for domestic activists to seek to change government policy.

The prognosis is not completely negative however. Pressure from a neutral source not only has no negative effects on grievances but also may increase how much members of the public value human rights. Pressure that comes from a geopolitical opponent in times of heightened nationalism does have the potential for positive changes; increasing grievances about human rights when it explicitly targets elites and not the nation as a whole. The question of course is whether the kind of message used in the survey is likely to reach the public when censorship is high. In authoritarian countries, while state media may often report on US pressure, it will generally seek to frame the message in as favourable a way as possible. The theory suggests however that it is not just the phrasing of the criticism that matters, but the fact that this type of pressure reflects a split between the government elites and the nation. In other words, if the leaders are not seen to be properly representative of the nation as a whole or not protecting the country adequately, then foreign pressure may have a positive effect. This provides support for the view that transnational activism over footbinding at the end of the Qing dynasty was only successful in engendering public support because of the nature of the regime at the time, the fact that it was viewed as failing to defend the nation and represent its interests against foreign powers. Future work could test this directly by examining the impacts of foreign pressure at times when the government appears to be acting aggressively to defend the nation - and times where it appears to be giving in or making concessions to foreign powers.

There are a few caveats to these conclusions. In the first place, people’s reaction may come from their fearful reaction to what they see as a genuine territorial threat. The Chinese government
often portrays human rights pressure as an attempt to break up China, and an extensive psychology literature has found that individuals become more willing to accept restrictions on their civil liberties in the face of foreign threats to their territory\textsuperscript{44}. Territorial threats from human rights pressure may reduce support for human rights by making people care less about holding those rights. The problem for the account is that in this case pressure appears to make citizens value women’s rights more, with support for the concept of women’s rights slightly higher following pressure from the US\textsuperscript{45}, and significantly higher following pressure from the AU\textsuperscript{46}. This suggests that people are not merely responding to a perceived existential threat to their homeland and developing a preference for a more authoritarian and conservative system.

This experiment does not however eliminate the possibility that the findings are driven by other factors, such as anti-Americanism or the perceived hypocrisy of the source. I will address these alternate explanations further in the interviews in chapter eight.

The study is also limited by its nature as a stylised experimental survey conducted on one specific topic. In the first case, people may not really hold opinions about women’s rights, but just form those opinions in response to being asked about the issue\textsuperscript{47}. Their response in the survey may just be a reaction to hearing about American criticism of China, rather than anything to do with the issue of women’s rights per se. This may be the case for some, but the argument’s explanatory value is put in doubt by the fact that the defensive reaction does not just appear to be amongst those who had not thought much about women’s rights beforehand. The effect was equally large amongst young women (the demographic in the control group who felt most strongly about equal rights).

\textsuperscript{45} Without flag, ATE=0.155 (p=0.11); with flag, ATE=0.129 (p=0.19)
\textsuperscript{46} Without flag, ATE=0.194 (p=0.048); with flag, ATE=0.231 (p=0.019)
\textsuperscript{47} Zaller, J. (1992) The nature and origins of mass opinion. Cambridge
While the study provided citizens with a short example of information about international pressure, similar to the information presented in domestic and international news sources, it cannot be seen as recreating how Chinese citizens hear about pressure in real life. Often pressure on human rights and China’s system of government is more general and oblique, covers a range of topics, and is encountered by the public over a longer period of time. Whether they hear it through Chinese government media, other internet news, or social media, how the news is framed could have powerful impacts on their response. People will not form opinions immediately after hearing about pressure, but gradually, over time, having encountered a number of stories as well as the views of their friends and social media.

In addition, we cannot be sure whether pressure on women’s rights would evoke the same reaction as pressure on abuses of physical rights, such as the use of torture. It may be that when people hear about pressure over their government’s use of torture, their reaction to this more ‘visceral’ issue may overwhelm any defensive, motivational response. The ethical limitations of testing highly sensitive human rights issues in an authoritarian state such as China means that at present, I cannot ask questions on these kinds of issues. This means that it may not be possible to conclusively extend any findings from this test to physical rights violations. Pressure on women’s rights may share more in common with pressure on other civil and political rights in China.

To address some of these concerns, in the next chapter I look how Chinese citizens respond to a real-life example of international pressure, the meeting between President Obama and the Dalai Lama in 2011. I look beyond just women’s rights, and examine how the meeting affected, in real-time, people’s preferences about democracy and political rights in China.

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Meeting the Dalai Lama and Perceptions of Political Rights¹

International Pressure in Real Time

Do Chinese citizens pick up upon instances of international pressure on their domestic affairs? And as it is filtered through their censorship and propaganda system, how do they update their preferences about human rights and democracy in their country?

The Chinese public’s reaction to the meetings between the Dalai Lama and foreign leaders serves as an excellent example of how citizens respond to real instances of international pressure on human rights. To date no study has examined how public opinions shift following international pressure, given the paucity of literature on public opinion itself, as well as the difficulty of isolating individual international incidents from the cacophony of domestic events. Experimental studies like the previous chapter do not capture how citizens of target states respond in real life to foreign pressure. In authoritarian regimes in particular, information will reach members of the

¹ Parts of this chapter have been presented at the International Studies Association annual conference, Baltimore, February 2017
public through censorship and state media, through a mass of propaganda and other news. Can we extend people’s immediate responses to a manipulated prompt to their real-time responses to news of foreign actions?

In this chapter I take advantage of a unique opportunity that arises from a meeting between President Obama and the Dalai Lama in the White House precisely at the time of a nationwide Asianbarometer survey on public political attitudes in China in July 2011.

When foreign leaders meet with the Dalai Lama, they often provoke an indignant reaction from the Chinese government, both internationally and domestically. These meetings do not always serve as explicit criticisms of Chinese policies on Tibet or on human rights, yet they are a statement of support for the Dalai Lama and his attempt to achieve recognition for the struggles of the Tibetan people, drawing attention to their cause. They are also a form of public pressure on the Chinese government over the rights of the Tibetan people, which are often discussed in the meetings and quoted widely in the foreign press. The White House statement following the 2014 meeting for example stated Obama’s “strong support for the preservation of Tibet’s unique religious, cultural, and linguistic traditions and the protection of human rights for Tibetans in the People’s Republic of China.”

While the White House has also been at pains to say that official meetings with the Dalai Lama have been purely in his capacity as a religious leader, foreign leader assemblies with dissidents and activists are a common part of democracy promotion. In 2007 President Bush called official meetings with dissidents a central pillar of the American “commitment to promote democracy.

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2 White House Press Office (2014) Readout of the President’s meeting with his Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama. White House Press Office, 21 February
3 Global Times (2011) China opposes Obama’s meeting with the Dalai Lama. Global Times, 16 July
worldwide”⁴, and throughout the 1980s US Presidential gatherings with Soviet dissidents were heavily publicised as part of American efforts to engender political liberalisation⁵. As former Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky said, these meetings “had a tremendous influence on our movement, on people around us and on the authorities”⁶.

While there are no questions directly about human rights conditions in the Asianbarometer, the survey does ask questions about the public’s beliefs about their political system and rights - and in particular the level of democracy in their country. I show that the meeting between the Dalai Lama and President Obama in 2011 - heavily featured in the Chinese press- significantly increases the Chinese public’s belief that their country is democratic. This effect is driven by the respondent’s level of national pride - with those of above average patriotism over ten percentage points more likely to believe China is democratic in the five days following the Dalai Lama meeting than before.

These findings provide important ecological validity to the argument that human rights pressure leads to a recoil effect, as Chinese citizens respond by strengthening their belief that their country protects the rights of its people. In this case the results demonstrate that the public’s defensive reaction is not just limited to the subject of the pressure, but that respondents are motivated to defend their country as a whole. The meeting leads to more positive evaluations of the country’s economic situation and confidence in the central government. Dalai Lama meetings with the US President are a useful source of authoritarian resilience for the Chinese government.

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⁴ White House Press Secretary (2008) Statement of US support for democratic dissidents. White House Press Secretary, 1 May
Meeting the Dalai Lama

The only detailed academic examination of the impact of meeting the Dalai Lama has come in the area of international trade. Fuchs and Klann show that countries that receive the Tibetan Buddhist leader in an official capacity see a drop in some of their exports to China in the two years following the meeting. Why then do foreign leaders choose to hold these meetings? Some leaders have undoubtedly reacted to the economic and diplomatic threats (figure 20 shows the declining official meetings). President Obama for example chose not to hold a meeting soon after coming to office in 2009, delaying the event until after he taken his first official visit to China. Fuchs and Klann point out the case of Mongolia, whose Prime Minister met the Dalai Lama for the last time in 2002, when China responded by blocking the railway link between the countries. Refusing to meet the Dalai Lama has often resulted in vociferous domestic censure in the leader’s own country, suggesting that meetings are at least in part down to domestic interests. In 2009 Republican congressmen and human rights advocates criticised Obama as ‘currying favour’ with the Chinese in delaying the meeting, while Swiss leaders’ refusal in 2010 drew condemnation in parliament.

Choosing to brave these costs may in fact be an effective way of signalling a state’s resolve over human rights issues. It sends a costly signal to the Chinese leadership that the country is serious over its commitment to human rights, and will not ignore any violations. As Isabel Hilton notes that “meeting him signals that the host country supports the proposition that human rights

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9 *ibid*
12 For a discussion of costly signals in international relations, see Fearon, J. (1997) Signaling foreign policy interests tying hands versus sinking costs. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 41*(1), 68-90
The target of the meetings may also be the Chinese public, using high profile events as a way to directly promote human rights in the country. Meetings with the Dalai Lama can pass on international condemnation of the Chinese government’s policy and international support for civil society in Tibet to Chinese citizens.

Instances of international pressure like this may aim to provide encouragement for Tibetans seeking greater political and cultural rights. As Matteo Meccaci says, “little will buoy a Tibetan heart more than seeing their spiritual and national leader meeting with the leader of the free world. It tells them their plight is not forgotten, and that a better future may yet come.”

Robert Barnett argues that these kinds of gestures of support may lead to increased repression, as Tibetans gain false hope about the type of support the United States is prepared to

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15 ChinaFile (2014)
16 ibid
offer them. And as mentioned, the award of the Congressional Gold medal to the Dalai Lama in 2007 led to a number of arrests following widespread celebrations.

We might expect therefore that Tibetans would respond positively to the meetings. It is worth noting here that the survey I use in this case was not implemented in Tibet, for logistic reasons (although I do examine the effects on Buddhists and Tibetan minority provinces in the rest of the country). As such I cannot address the question of how Tibetans themselves respond. The question in this dissertation however is the impact of these meetings within the whole of China, especially since they are often so heavily advertised in the Chinese media. Of the thirty-one overseas Chinese students and university workers interviewed in the United States for chapter eight, twenty-three said that while they were in China they had heard about the meetings between the Dalai Lama and American Presidents, many learning about the meetings through Chinese state media.

This meeting serves as an example of pressure over an issue of territorial integrity from a geopolitical opponent. Even though the meetings do not explicitly denounce China’s policies, the Chinese and international media clearly portray the meetings as an attack on the conduct of authorities in Tibet, as discussed in chapter three. This kind of gesture is often how foreign leaders bring attention to human rights issues in authoritarian countries. While on occasion they may issue direct condemnations of political arrests or mass killings, on other occasions the disapproval will be more oblique - such as expressing ‘serious concern’ for government suppression of protests, giving international prizes to prominent dissidents, or calling for improvements in the treatment of certain minority groups.

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One extension for this particular chapter is that I do not look at people’s responses on the pressurised issue itself: the issue of political rights in Tibet. Instead I examine how this kind of pressure affects beliefs over political rights and the political system in China more generally. An important implication of my theory is that defensiveness in response to pressure on a certain human rights issue will not just lead to citizens forming counterarguments over that issue - how China is respecting Tibetans’ political rights - but to protect the nation’s image as a whole.

This study allows me to test these hypotheses against the ‘informational’ and ‘cues’ theories. The informational theory predicts that when the Chinese people hear information about international pressure or concerns about the situation in Tibet, through the meeting of the Dalai Lama and foreign leaders, they will update their beliefs about political rights in Tibet. This new negative information, as well as the shame from disapproval of the international community will move them to increase their grievances about political rights conditions in Tibet. This new information may in turn affect beliefs about political rights in China more generally, as well as overall attitudes towards the government. On the surface, this theory might help explain why the Chinese government is so loath to allow meetings between the Dalai Lama and foreign heads of state - although it explains less well why they would advertise the meetings so widely in domestic state media.

One explanation for why the Chinese government reacts so strongly against meetings with the Dalai Lama is that these meetings are an endorsement of the Dalai Lama and his desire to gain more rights for Tibetans. As discussed in chapter one, Bush and Jamal use a political cues theory

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Olympics Approach. *Freedom House*, 18 March


to explain public reactions to foreign endorsements of government policies. In this case, their argument implies that citizens will interpret foreign endorsements of an anti-government policy (like meeting an opposition leader) through the lens of their government affiliation. Government supporters will oppose what the meeting endorses - political rights for Tibetans - while opponents will support the endorsement. We should therefore see polarisation over the extent of respect for Tibetan political rights depending on regime support. We would however not expect the polarisation to extend much beyond the specific issue of Tibet however. On the issue of political rights in China more generally, while some may interpret the meeting as a criticism that extends beyond Tibet, the effect should be much weaker.

Research design

The unexpected meeting between President Obama and the Dalai Lama on the 17th of July 2011 serves as a quasi-natural experiment. Completely unrelated to this meeting, over the month of July 2011 Asianbarometer was in the middle of administering its nationwide survey on attitudes and perceptions about democratisation. 3197 of the 3473 total interviews took place in the month of July. As the meeting fell right in the middle of the survey, and had no influence on how it was carried out, this provides a perfect opportunity to examine how the meeting between the American President and the Dalai Lama affected perceptions of political rights in China. To ensure that respondents are as similar as possible, and not influenced by any other external events that could affect their opinions, I look at the responses in the five days before the meeting, and the five days after the meeting (a total of 1525 respondents). Since the survey is randomly assigned, these respondents should only differ in their exposure to the news that passed through on the 17th of July, in a quasi-experimental design. The control group are those

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22 I also look at different time frames in my robustness checks, namely 10 and 15 days.
who are not yet aware of the meeting, while the treatment group are those who have been able to hear about the meeting.

2011 meeting between President Obama and Dalai Lama

After initially postponing a meeting in 2009, Barack Obama eventually agreed to meet the Dalai Lama in February 2010, drawing predictable reactions from China. He chose to meet the leader again in July the following year, when the Dalai Lama was taking part in an 11-day Buddhist ritual in Washington, D.C. The President had stayed cool over whether the meeting would occur, supposedly to keep space for ongoing congressional shenanigans around the debt ceiling. However, on the night of Friday the 15th (Saturday morning in China), the White House announced they would meet the following day. The two met for a private 45-minute discussion in the Map Room, which occurred around 11.30pm Chinese time - enough to reach the Chinese papers the next morning.

A White House statement issued following the meeting said that, while Obama emphasised that he did not support independence for Tibet: “The President reiterated his strong support for the preservation of the unique religious, cultural, and linguistic traditions of Tibet and the Tibetan people throughout the world. He underscored the importance of the protection of human rights of Tibetans in China”23. Media reports quoted the Dalai Lama as saying that Obama expressed his concern about human rights and religious freedoms, as well as his “genuine concern about suffering in Tibet and other places”24. These comments hit the international press from Pakistan25 to Ireland26 by the following day.

23 White House (2011) The President’s meeting with his Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama. White House Press Office, 17 July
25 In Pakistan for example: Express Tribune (2011) Obama meets with Dalai Lama despite Chinese opposition. Express Tribune, 17 July
The Chinese government appeared to be somewhat caught off guard by the meeting, only having time to issue one diplomatic warning on the 16th, calling on Obama to cancel the plans. This warning was repeated in one brief story in the Global Times, which decried the planned gathering.

The meeting was however heavily discussed in Chinese state media on the Sunday. The People's Daily issued a strongly worded editorial denouncing the meeting, accusing Obama of attacking China and attempting to split the country. The paper focussed its attacks on the United States’ ongoing criticism of political and religious freedoms in Tibet, saying that: “these American officials ignore the social progress in Tibet but instead call the human rights situation in Tibet ‘evil’, and accuse the Chinese government of restricting Tibetan language education, and strictly controlling Tibetan Buddhism”. The government then used this and an accompanying feature-length article - the top front-page story on the 17th of July - to elaborate on the policies that they had put in place in Tibet for economic and political development.

More detailed examination of the meeting was reported in the Global Times in a series of articles over the 17th and 18th of July. The headline on the 17th noted that Obama had met the Dalai Lama over his “concern for human rights in Tibet”. The story reported the White House press release in detail, including both Obama’s opposition to Tibetan independence as well as his call for “attention to the human rights situation in Tibet”. The paper reiterated multiple times that “Western anti-China forces” were using the Dalai Lama as a political tool, in order to “embarrass” China, and that the meeting was about China’s “sovereignty and territorial integrity” with the “support of anti-China separatist forces”. The rhetoric evoked a clear

28 Global Times (2011) China opposes Obama’s meeting with the Dalai Lama. Global Times, 16 July
29 People’s Daily (2011) Trying to cover up interference. People’s Daily, 17 July
30 People’s Daily (2011) Deep care: a great leap forward. People’s Daily, 17 July. The front cover is shown in Appendix 3
32 Global Times (2011) As long as Tibet is stable, Dalai is just a pawn. Global Times, 18 July
33 ibid
message, that the meeting between the Dalai Lama and President Obama was a threat to China. The reports even played up the discussions of political and religious rights, and explicitly linked them with the designs of the US and the Dalai Lama to split up China for their own political ends. The *Global Times* commissioned an online (non-representative) survey on the morning of the 17th of July, asking for its readers’ opinions about the meeting. Of the 16710 respondents, around 77% apparently expressed ‘anger’ at the meeting, with some calling the Americans “imperialists” and “shameful”.

*Asianbarometer*

The *Asianbarometer* survey describes itself as the “first cross-national survey focused on democratisation in East Asia”. Run by Taiwanese political scientists, it has conducted fifty-three large-scale surveys (primarily) in East and South-East Asian countries since 2002. The survey questions focus on attitudes towards democratisation, as well as perceptions about governance and political systems. The 2011 survey was administered in Mandarin and local languages, in cooperation with the Institute of Sociology at the Chinese Social Science Academy to 3473 respondents in 2011 and 2012 on mainland China, with the vast majority administered in the month of July (3197 respondents). The surveys were carried out face-to-face on a randomised selection of adults to reflect national probability samples, weighted to ensure full coverage of minority and rural populations in all provinces of mainland China except Tibet, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang. The survey was conducted either side of the meeting between Obama and the Dalai Lama, angering Chinese netizens. *ChinaHush*, 17 July

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35 *Global Times* (2011) Obama meets the Dalai, Foreign Ministry says that Tibet is purely China’s internal affair. *Global Times*, 18 July
36 *Global Times* (2011) Obama meets the Dalai, reiterates his opposition to Tibetan independence. *Global Times*, 17 July
37 In a selection of online comments gathered by the website China Hush (2011) Meeting between Obama and Dalai Lama angers Chinese netizens. *ChinaHush*, 17 July
38 [http://www.asianbarometer.org/intro/program-overview](http://www.asianbarometer.org/intro/program-overview)
39 With a stratified multistage area sampling procedure, using probabilities proportional to size (PPS) measures. Units were sampled at the country (xian), city (shi) and district (qu) levels. The full sampling methodology as reported by the *Asianbarometer* is discussed in Appendix 2
40 Due to transportation reasons - much of these provinces are highly remote
and the Dalai Lama; with 980 respondents interviewed in the five days before the meeting was reported, and 794 in the next five days.

Given that the survey was not timed or designed with testing my hypotheses in mind, there are some potential problems to address. Firstly, while the Dalai Lama meeting was the main story in state-led and commercial media on the 17th of July, other news did not stop in the meantime. It seems plausible therefore that other domestic events may have also affected people’s opinions about their political rights. It is for this reason that I focus my analysis on a small window of time - just five days - either side of the meeting, to minimise the possibility that other news would interfere. While news continued as normal, the main news headlines in the week around the meeting do not seem to indicate many prominent stories that we would expect to have an effect on people’s attitudes. Only two events stand out - the first is the Wenzhou train crash on the 23rd of July, which is outside my five-day window, but may plausibly have affected perceptions over the longer time-frames. The second is the Hotan attacks on the 18th of July. These bomb-and-knife attacks killed eight people in the city of Hotan, Xinjiang, and were allegedly committed by Uighur youths upset with the local government’s religious policies. While these were not as heavily featured in state media, it is possible that these attacks may have also served as a threat to some people’s image of their nation, which urges caution on my findings. The attacks did not reach the newspapers until the 19th of July however\(^1\). Official discussions in national papers and websites did not come out until the 20th and 21st of July\(^2\). I address this in my robustness checks.

Second is the issue of social or political desirability bias, where respondents may be less willing to reveal their belief that China is undemocratic, for fear of appearing unpatriotic in face-face

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\(^1\) People’s Daily (2011) Police station is attacked in Hotan, Xinjiang. *People’s Daily*, 19 July
\(^2\) China Daily (2011) 14 rioters shot down in Xinjiang attack. *China Daily*, 20 July
interviews, or for fear of potential reprisals. This is a more general problem with the Asianbarometer’s attempt to measure political beliefs in authoritarian countries, and we should be careful of overstating respondent’s beliefs that China is democratic. However it is unlikely that this social desirability should be affected by the treatment - in that the meeting between the Dalai Lama and Obama should not make people any more or less concerned about giving their true beliefs. I also test in my robustness checks for whether the incidence of ‘don’t know’ or refusal to answer the question changes after the meeting - and show that there is no significant difference.

The goal is to understand people’s grievances with their political rights. To measure this, my main dependent variable is the response to a scale from 1 (completely undemocratic) - 10 (completely democratic), that asks “where would you place China today on this scale”\(^3\). There are similar questions in the survey that ask more specific views about the current system of government\(^4\), as well as questions about other important national issues, including confidence in the government, economic conditions and levels of corruption. I address these in my robustness checks. The question about level of democracy, while not specifically on human rights, addresses in the simplest form the extent to which Chinese people believe that their country is democratic; a measure that I argue tracks their satisfaction with the political rights offered by their government.

As expected by the literature, support for democracy was strong, with 83.16% of respondents in this survey agreeing: “Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government”.

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\(^3\) There is a similar question, “where would you place our country under the current government”, which I test as a robustness check. While the two responses are internally consistent (Cronbach’s alpha=0.7617), the second question specifically mentions the government, rather than the country as a whole

\(^4\) Including: “Over the long run, our system of government is capable of solving the problems our country faces”; “Thinking in general, I am proud of our system of government”; “A system like ours, even if it runs into problems, deserves the people’s support”; “I would rather live under our system of government than any other that I can think of”; and “Compared with other systems in the world, would you say our system of government works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced?”
Dickson argues that according to public opinion surveys, the majority of Chinese people either view democracy as the popular ability to hold government accountable, or as how well government policies reflect public opinion, rather than how we might think of it in the West, as the way by which leaders are chosen. Both views hold the presumption that democracy includes some level of responsiveness or congruence between government policies and the views of its citizens. We can interpret respondents’ belief that China is undemocratic as signalling dissatisfaction that the current system provides either rule by the people, or rule on behalf of the people. I also test separately the third of people in the sample who do understand democracy in the Western sense, in terms of checks and balances on government power.

If the informational view is correct, then respondents should believe that China is less democratic after the meeting. If the cues view is correct, there should be no clear overall effect, but the meeting should increase beliefs that China is democratic in those who support the regime more and decrease beliefs that China is democratic in regime opponents (as measured in this survey by confidence in the regime). If the threat view is correct, respondents should believe China is more democratic after the meeting, especially those higher in national pride.

My primary hypotheses are:

**H1:** Respondents will be more likely to believe China is democratic following the meeting between the Dalai Lama and Barack Obama

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45 Dickson, B. (2016)
47 In the popular view of the ‘People's democratic dictatorship’ (Mao, Z. (1950) *People's Democratic Dictatorship.* Lawrence and Wishart)
**H2:** The ‘democratic’ effect of the meeting will be greater for those who show higher levels of national pride

I use the following estimation strategy, using an ordered logistic model, as well as an OLS model for ease of interpretation:

\[
\text{Belief China is Democratic} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Meeting} + \beta_2 \text{National Pride} + \beta_3 \text{Pride} \times \text{Meeting} + \beta_4 \text{Individual level controls} + \beta_4 \text{Provincial Fixed Effects}/\beta_4 \text{Provincial level controls} + \epsilon_t
\]

The treatment variable ‘Meeting’ indicates whether the respondent was interviewed after the meeting between the Dalai Lama, on or after the 17\textsuperscript{th} of July. I choose this date rather than the 16\textsuperscript{th}, when the forthcoming meeting was announced, due to the level of media attention. While the announcement received a small article in the Global Times, the meeting itself took place half an hour before the 17\textsuperscript{th} and received a large amount of press coverage, taking up most of the first three pages in the *People’s Daily*. Many of those interviewed of the 16\textsuperscript{th} would not have had time to read the news before their interviews (which suggests that it may have taken until the interviews on the 18\textsuperscript{th} for the effect to be truly felt). If some respondents had heard the news on the 16\textsuperscript{th} however, this should underreport rather than overreport my findings.

A positive coefficient on the ‘Meeting’ variable would indicate that on average respondents believed China to be more democratic after the meeting between the Dalai Lama and Obama. A negative coefficient would indicate that they believed China to be less democratic after the meeting.

There are some systematic differences between the demographic variables in the control and the treatment group, which may influence perceptions of democracy - notably gender, education, income, province, and belief in Buddhism (as reported in full in the appendix). To account for
this I use a number of individual and group level controls that may influence democratic perceptions, including gender, age, education, a dummy for Buddhism, and for whether the respondent’s location is urban or rural\textsuperscript{48}. Finally, since these differences may be explained by the possibility that the survey was carried out at different times in different settings, with substantial differences between richer coastal and poorer inland provinces, I control for the level of provincial Purchasing Power Parity in mid-2011. I also control for whether the province contains a Tibetan minority of over 1\% (Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan), and also report provincial fixed effects. With these variables accounted for, those in the treatment group should be as similar as possible to those in the control. We might wonder whether the days of the week might affect responses - but the fact the meeting was reported on the Sunday means that both groups contain one weekend day and four weekdays.

**Results**

The meeting between President Obama and the Dalai Lama made the Chinese public significantly more likely to believe that their country was democratic. As shown in table 1, in the five days following the meeting, the belief that China was a democracy increased by 0.569 on a 1-10 scale, significant at \(p<0.01\). As predicted by my second hypothesis, this effect is markedly larger in those more patriotic citizens, with every increase in national pride on the 1-4 scale increasing the belief that China is a democracy by 0.429 (significant at \(p<0.05\)).

Table 8 and figure 21 show these effects in more easily interpretable forms. After the Dalai Lama meeting, citizens who are of above average patriotism believe that China is on average a 7.67 out of 10 on a democratic scale, as opposed to 6.77 before the meeting, a significant increase that is greater than the difference in perceptions of democracy between those who have completed high

\textsuperscript{48} I do not include household income, as the number who refused to answer the question is relatively high, and significantly reduces the potential observations. I show in the robustness checks that including this variable makes very little difference to the results (see appendix)
school and those who have completed university (average of 6.59 and 5.78 respectively). And the meeting does not just strengthen existing beliefs in China’s democracy, but actively moves people from believing China is more autocratic to more democratic, at least in those with higher pride. This translates into a 10.6% increase in those who believe China is democratic in some form.

The informational hypothesis was not supported. There was also no strong support for the cues hypothesis. Confidence in the central government shows only a minimal, non-significant interactive effect with the meeting treatment ($\beta = 0.205$, $p=0.427$), suggesting again that attitudes towards the nation are more important than attitudes towards the regime. Even if we take national pride as a proxy for regime support, while high pride reduced grievances, there was little opposite impact in those with lower pride.

Finally, it is worth noting that while the Dalai Lama meeting makes members of the public less likely to have grievances with their country’s democratic situation, it also appears to make them value democracy more. In the five days following the meeting, survey respondents were significantly more likely to believe democracy is preferable to other forms of government\(^{49}\), and also to want democracy in the future\(^{50}\). These effects were mainly limited again to those who showed higher levels of national pride, with significant interactive effects in both cases\(^{51}\).

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\(^{49}\) With fixed effects, an increase of $\beta =0.068$, $p<0.05$ on a 1-3 scale

\(^{50}\) $\beta =0.233$, $p<0.05$ on a 1-10 scale

\(^{51}\) With fixed effects, $\beta =0.064$ ($p<0.1$) and $0.237$ ($p<0.1$) respectively. I also show that my results hold only in the cases where respondents are pro-democracy - in other words their grievances go down (with fixed effects, 0.497 ($p<0.05$). There are however weaker interactive effects with national pride in this group- perhaps due to the distribution of national pride across those who favour or oppose democracy
Table 7: Impact of Dalai Lama meeting and national pride on perceptions of China’s level of democracy

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ordered Logit Province Controls</th>
<th>OLS Province Fixed Effects</th>
<th>Ordered Logit Province Controls</th>
<th>OLS Province Fixed Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dalai Lama meeting</strong></td>
<td>0.359*** (0.105)</td>
<td>0.569*** (0.140)</td>
<td>-1.295** (0.580)</td>
<td>-0.977 (0.663)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Pride</strong></td>
<td>0.279*** (0.100)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.312*** (0.114)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DL*Pride</strong></td>
<td>0.461*** (0.161)</td>
<td>0.429** (0.182)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>0.275** (0.110)</td>
<td>0.508*** (0.143)</td>
<td>0.251** (0.111)</td>
<td>0.440*** (0.141)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth year</td>
<td>-0.0170*** (0.00364)</td>
<td>-0.0244*** (0.00437)</td>
<td>-0.0170*** (0.00365)</td>
<td>-0.0233*** (0.00433)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>-0.0852*** (0.0290)</td>
<td>-0.0722*** (0.0349)</td>
<td>-0.0981*** (0.0292)</td>
<td>-0.0912*** (0.0347)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.00264 (0.106)</td>
<td>0.183 (0.129)</td>
<td>-0.00242 (0.106)</td>
<td>0.174 (0.128)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>0.201 (0.183)</td>
<td>-0.0494 (0.218)</td>
<td>0.283 (0.182)</td>
<td>0.0365 (0.217)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan minority province</td>
<td>0.186 (0.169)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.155 (0.169)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>-5.34e-05*** (1.81e-05)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-6.12e-05*** (1.82e-05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut1</td>
<td>-37.69*** (7.061)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-36.93*** (7.111)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut2</td>
<td>-36.97*** (7.059)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-36.21*** (7.109)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut3</td>
<td>-36.30*** (7.058)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-35.51*** (7.107)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut4</td>
<td>-35.90*** (7.057)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-35.11*** (7.106)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut5</td>
<td>-34.84*** (7.054)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-34.01*** (7.104)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut6</td>
<td>-34.17*** (7.052)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-33.32*** (7.102)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut7</td>
<td>-33.46*** (7.050)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-32.58*** (7.099)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut8</td>
<td>-32.45*** (7.046)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-31.54*** (7.095)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut9</td>
<td>-31.91*** (7.044)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-31.00*** (7.094)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td>53.91*** (8.471)</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.86*** (8.432)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td>1,213</td>
<td>1,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of provinces</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1
Table 8: Predicted Probabilities of Perceived level of democracy on China on 1-10 scale (1 = completely undemocratic, 10 = completely democratic), using OLS with fixed effects. High national pride is ‘very proud’ on a 1-4 scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>High pride</th>
<th>Lower pride</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived level of democracy: 5 days before meeting</td>
<td>6.64 (0.079)</td>
<td>6.77 (0.096)</td>
<td>6.38 (0.133)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived level of democracy: 5 days after meeting</td>
<td>7.20 (0.106)</td>
<td>7.67 (0.132)</td>
<td>6.49 (0.177)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1221</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21: Probability that respondents believe China is democratic (score China above 5 on a 1-10 scale from completely undemocratic to completely democratic), in the five days before and after the Dalai Lama meeting, by level of national pride (where high national pride is above the mean; a score of ‘very proud’ on a 1-4 scale). 95% confidence intervals.
Robustness checks

These results hold over longer periods of time. In ten and fifteen days either side of the Dalai Lama meeting, the ordered logit coefficient on perceptions of democracy remains significant (albeit smaller), at 0.251 and 0.226 respectively (both $p<0.05$)$^{52}$. The interaction effect of national pride becomes less strong however, and only stays significant without fixed effects$^{53}$.

The results also stay significant but weaker when using the alternative measure of level of democracy - ‘under the current government’, at 0.349 ($p<0.01$)$^{54}$, with a positive but non-significant interactive effect. For there to be a popular will to reform the system of government, citizens need to both want democracy, and believe that their country is not democratic. And when we analyse the subgroup of people who do prefer a democratic system, we find that the percentage of people who believe China is undemocratic (below 5 on the scale) drops by almost half, from 9.83% to 4.95%$^{55}$. The meeting also makes people more satisfied with the level of democracy in their country$^{56}$, more likely to believe that the system is capable of solving the country’s problems$^{57}$, and more likely to believe that the system deserves their support$^{58}$. It also strengthens their positive outlook about the country as a whole, including the belief that people have basic necessities$^{59}$, that they have freedom of speech$^{60}$, that corruption is not widespread$^{61}$, and that the economy is doing well$^{62}$. Confidence in the government increases significantly only in the non-fixed effects model$^{63}$. All have positive but non-significant interactive effects with national pride.

$^{52}$ Using OLS with fixed effects  
$^{53}$ $\beta = 0.301$ in ten days and 0.348 in fifteen days, ($p<0.05$ and $p<0.01$)  
$^{54}$ At $\beta = 0.283$ without fixed effects at $p<0.05$, also on 1-10 scale  
$^{55}$ $p=0.028$  
$^{56}$ $\beta=0.075$ (Fixed Effects), $p<0.1$, 1-4 scale  
$^{57}$ $\beta=0.069$ (FE), $p<0.1$, 1-4  
$^{58}$ $\beta=0.244$ (FE), $p<0.05$, 1-4  
$^{59}$ $\beta=0.127$ (FE), $p<0.05$, 1-4  
$^{60}$ $\beta=0.165$ (FE), $p<0.1$, 1-4  
$^{61}$ $\beta=0.139$ (FE), $p<0.05$, 1-4  
$^{62}$ $\beta=0.328$ (FE), $p<0.01$, 1-4  
$^{63}$ $\beta=0.284$ (FE), $p<0.05$, 1-4
Is the effect only limited to those who see democracy as the ability of the state to provide for its citizens and nothing to do with political checks and balances? Luckily, the *Asianbarometer* directly asks people what they feel is the most essential feature of democracy. And while the Dalai Lama meeting does increase perceptions of democracy amongst the third of people who see it primarily as a tool for narrowing income inequality\(^6^4\), it has stronger positive effects amongst the third who believe it is more about whether the people can choose their leaders\(^6^5\). The meeting also has strongly significant positive effects on those (richer, more urban, populations) who see democracy as concerned with the legislature controlling the government\(^6^6\), and about courts protecting people against government abuses\(^6^7\).

While the Dalai Lama meeting was the main story in Chinese media on the 17\(^{th}\) of July, other news did not stop in the meantime. As mentioned, two events stand out, a major train crash in Wenzhou on the 23\(^{rd}\) of July and a series of bomb-and-knife attacks in the city of Hotan, Xinjiang on the 18\(^{th}\) of July. To show that the critical incident was the Dalai Lama meeting I conduct 31 separate regressions where the treatment cut-off is a different date in July (of 15 days either side). If the Dalai Lama meeting is the critical event there should be a noticeable peak around the 17\(^{th}\) of July (as shown in figure 22). As expected, the 17\(^{th}\) of July appears to be a critical point for positive perceptions of democracy in China, with the only highly significant difference (p<0.01) from zero coming when the treatment is on that day.

The graph suggests that the crash and the Hotan attacks were less important than the Dalai Lama meeting, and positive perceptions of democracy peaked before the incident. Indeed even when limiting to five days either side, news of the Hotan attacks had a minimal effect on perceptions, only slightly significant in all respondents (0.255, p<0.1 using fixed effects), with no

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\(^{6^4}\) \(\beta=0.338\) (FE), p<0.1, 1-4

\(^{6^5}\) \(\beta=0.503\) (FE) p<0.05, 1-4

\(^{6^6}\) \(\beta=1.042\) (FE), p<0.01, 1-4

\(^{6^7}\) \(\beta=0.433\) (FE), p<0.1, 1-4
interactions with national pride. Controlling for the treatment on the 17th and the 19th, the Dalai Lama meeting remains significant, while the Hotan attacks have a non-significant negative effect.\(^{68}\)

**Figure 22:** Coefficients for OLS regression with FE over 15 days either side of date in July: for a binary measure of whether China is democratic or not. Red dots are statistically significant increases (p<0.1 for small and p<0.01 for large). Dalai Lama meeting reported on the 17th of July

A final robustness check is on the rate of non-response. Given that questions on the level of democracy in China are potentially sensitive, respondents can choose not to give a definitive answer, replying ‘can’t choose’, ‘decline to answer’, or ‘don’t understand’. If for some reason the meeting makes answering the question more sensitive, then there may be problems with inference. However, there are no systematic differences between the groups before and after the treatment\(^{69}\), suggesting non-response is not a major concern for this treatment.

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\(^{68}\) Using fixed effects, the Dalai Lama meeting \(\beta=0.284\) (p<0.1), while the Hotan attacks have a \(-0.046\) effect size. Controlling for both interactions with national pride, the Dalai Lama meeting and pride interaction remains positive and significant (0.398, p<0.1), while the Hotan attacks and national pride interaction is negative (-0.191) and non-significant

\(^{69}\) Using a two-tailed t-test, p=0.544
Discussion

The results show conclusively that when American leaders meet the Dalai Lama, reports of the meeting make the Chinese public significantly more likely to believe their country is democratically run. As such they provide vital real-world evidence for the theory that international pressure from sources perceived to have hostile intentions will reduce grievances about human rights in the target population, and that these effects depend on national attachment.

My results suggest that the defensiveness extends even more broadly than the issue of political rights. In the days following the meeting, Chinese citizens not only judged their political system to be superior in general, but also judged the economy, levels of corruption, access to food and their freedom of speech in China to be better than the days after the meeting. Although the improvements in these perceptions were less than in the case of democracy, it does appear that threats to the nation bring out a more general defensiveness that bolsters all aspects of the national image.

This conclusion is complicated somewhat by the fact that different groups of the Chinese public have different conceptions of what democracy is, which are not always the Western conception. For some citizens, the meeting made them care more about whether their government was able to respond to and look after its people, but also believe that it was doing a better job in performing this ‘guardianship’ role. For others, the meeting makes them more likely to value a more Western conception of checks and balances on their government, but still made them more likely to believe that the CCP fulfilled these criteria. Overall, however they view democracy,
we can say hearing about the international human rights community’s pressure on their country appears to reduce the grievances that Chinese citizens hold with their political system, therefore making it easier for the CCP to resist demands for change.

The sensitivity of the subject matter precludes asking Chinese citizens within China about the Dalai Lama and his official meetings with foreign leaders. However, alongside my research assistants, I asked thirty-one overseas Chinese students and university workers (as detailed in chapter eight) about their views of meetings between the Tibetan leader and the American President. The majority (twenty-two) said that they disapproved of the meeting, with only six saying they the meetings should go ahead. The overwhelming reason for their disapproval was that any meeting would signal support for Tibetan independence. Those who disapproved were particularly scathing of American motives, viewing the decision as strongly driven by political reasons rather than human rights concerns.

Bao, 53, summed up the disapproval: “they should not meet. America admits that there is one China, and Tibet is a part of China, so they should not meet with a person who wants to engage in political separatism”. Liu Fei, a graduate student, agreed: “American Presidents often meet with foreign countries’ leaders, but the Dalai Lama is not a foreign country’s leader. If the United States meets with him then it is showing support for Tibetan independence”. Ping Wei, 33, reiterated a popular opinion that any meeting was subverting the CCP’s ability to represent its country: “It is done as a political tactic, Obama wants to use Tibet and its religion to try to split China apart. I was very angry [when I heard they had met] – because the US did not meet him with China’s consent; it just met with the Dalai Lama. You need to get permission from China’s

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70 14 of the 31 mentioned in some form their belief that the meeting was about international politics, not human rights
leaders to meet with a figure like him. This person does not represent China’s interests, but represents Tibet’s interests.”

*Alternative explanations*

The two alternative theories do not fare so well. According to the ‘informational’ view, the meeting should provide new information about international concerns over political rights in Tibet. This disapproval should increase Chinese citizens’ grievances about their country’s political rights. As we see, the meeting had the opposite effect. The ‘cues’ account was also not supported. Foreign endorsement of the Tibetan struggle did not lead to polarisation between regime supporters and opponents. In the cues account respondents see foreign endorsements as cues for how they should view a certain policy - but should say little about issues not addressed in that endorsement. Dalai Lama meetings might cue how people think they should feel about Tibet and political rights, but it is hard to see how the cues might matter for opinions about the economy or corruption.

A final alternative not discussed above, but may apply in this specific case, is that foreign pressure over political rights in Tibet makes the non-Tibetan Chinese population (those sampled in this study) view Tibetan rights to be worse - and therefore their own rights to be better in comparison. If true, this would mean that the Chinese respondents see a clear separation between democracy in ‘Tibet’ and democracy in ‘China’, and any decrease in the first makes them believe their own situation to be better. This explanation would require Chinese citizens seeing Tibet and residents of Tibet as part of the non-Chinese outgroup. From my interviews with Chinese citizens, as well as informal discussions and readings of Chinese articles and online Weibo posts about Tibet, this appears quite strongly to not be the case. The vast majority of Chinese people view Tibet as an essential element of Chinese territorial integrity, while national
media reports on the Dalai Lama meeting drew repeated connections between what it regularly refers to as ‘China’s Tibet’ and China’s national identity.

In this study I take advantage of a coincidental timing in the implementation of the *Asianbarometer* survey. This survey was not planned for the purpose of the study, which brings up a number of potential problems. Firstly, both the main independent variable - the Dalai Lama meeting, and the main dependent variable - perceptions of the level of democracy, do not match exactly to those in my theory - naming and shaming and grievances about human rights. However, as I have discussed above, I believe that they are similar enough that the mechanisms from my theory are still applicable in both. The Dalai Lama meeting is portrayed both in Western and Chinese media as an attack on Chinese human rights policies in Tibet, while examining perceptions of democracy rather than rights in Tibet itself helps to show the impact of international pressure over and above the specific issue it addresses.

Looking at figure 22, and the fact that the treatment effect over five days is much larger than that over fifteen days, we might be concerned that the ‘Dalai Lama effect’ only holds over the short-term, and as such does not have any lasting effects on public attitudes, and therefore government behaviour. This is a legitimate concern, and a hard one to conclusively dismiss without a long-term longitudinal study, unfortunately something beyond the limits of this dissertation. It is the aggregate effect of these instances of pressure that matters however, not something we can isolate in a study such as this. We would expect there to be a number of other domestic and international events that will have similar impacts as the meeting on the Chinese public’s view of their political rights, and so there will undoubtedly be peaks and troughs over time as other events exert a greater pull. In this case it appears from figure 22 that the Wenzhou train crash on
the 25th of July began to shift people’s views of the level of democracy in China in the negative direction, lessening the boost given by the Dalai Lama meeting.

As with the survey experiment, another plausible objection is that it is not people’s reaction to threatening pressure on human rights that is driving the results, but their reaction to what they see as a direct territorial threat. The Chinese government portrays the Dalai Lama as seeking the breakup of China, so a foreign meeting may heighten the salience of this threat. Territorial threats from Dalai Lama meetings should reduce preferences for democratisation, by making Chinese people care less about having democratic rights.

The problem is that, just like the survey experiment on women’s rights, the meeting appears to make citizens value democracy more. In the five days following the meeting, survey respondents were significantly more likely to believe democracy is the most preferable form of government (an increase from 81.5% to 88.6% of the population), and to want it in the future. This suggests that people are not merely responding to a perceived existential threat to their homeland, and becoming more favourable towards having an authoritarian system.

These results should not be read as advocating that foreign leaders should not meet with the Dalai Lama, if they are concerned about promoting political rights in China. The meetings help to focus international and domestic attention on Tibet, potentially pressurising the CCP to put in place steps to improve political and religious freedoms in the country, while providing much needed moral support to Tibetan groups. An examination of whether these positive effects do in fact result is beyond the scope of this study. All this chapter does examine is the impact the meetings have on the wider Chinese public’s grievances about political rights in their country. Irrespective of the positive impacts of the meetings, any decisions over whether to meet the
religious leader should at the least bear in mind the potential propaganda role that the meetings may serve for the Chinese government.

The Chinese situation with the Dalai Lama does not necessarily apply to other dissidents. The Dalai Lama has been the subject of an intense propaganda campaign designed to vilify him in the eyes of the Chinese public, from school textbooks to television documentaries, especially since 2008. This campaign has been unmatched for other Chinese dissidents, although as shown in chapter three, since Liu Xiaobo’s Nobel Peace Prize in 2010, state media has begun to report more on instances of foreign support for political prisoners and dissidents in China. International condemnation of crackdowns on activists in recent years has been featured heavily in Chinese media, and tied closely to a narrative of Western attempts to bring down China, summed up in a 2014 *Global Times* article, entitled “Supporting Chinese dissidents: the Western conspiracy.” Beyond China, the picture is even less clear, especially in places where less intensive propaganda has been spent on vilifying individual dissidents, or tying them as closely to attempts to split up the nation as China has done with the Dalai Lama.

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71 AP (2008) Tibet ordered to ramp up propaganda education against Dalai Lama. *Associated Press*, 3 April
72 For example Western criticism of the arrests of activist Xu Zhiyong was featured in media accounts of his arrest: *Global Times* (2014) Xu Zhiyong sentenced to 4 years, clear legal attitudes and standards. *Global Times*, 27 January
Not as Bad as America Says: Chinese Attitudes towards International Pressure

Causal mechanisms

Foreign pressure on China does not just arise on human rights, democracy, or Tibetan autonomy, but on issues from trade policy to environmental damage. This chapter will provide an in-depth story of how Chinese citizens respond to information about international pressure on their country. It will discuss how they hear about different kinds of pressure, and the logics that they employ in developing a response. The previous two chapters found that some kinds of international pressure lead Chinese citizens to perceive their country’s political and civil rights to be well respected, but do not tell us much about what is going on behind the scenes, especially whether it is indeed the threatening nature of that information that drives this effect.
This section develops these chapters’ findings, examining in detail the logics that ordinary Chinese citizens use to think through and process news about international pressure, through in-depth conversations with the Chinese citizens themselves. The chapter will illustrate how negative and defensive responses to external pressure arise when the issue becomes closely associated with citizens’ sense of threat to their national image, and that this is particularly prominent when the source of the pressure is perceived as being hostile towards China. Finally, it will explore the ways in which the international community can frame its pressure so that the recoil effect will be minimised.

In the Spring of 2016 my Chinese research assistants and I interviewed one hundred and seventy members of the public in a second-tier city in eastern China about their reactions to international pressure on their country. Interviewees were approached at random in public places, including parks, coffee shops, restaurants, university campuses, housing complexes and on the street. Interviews lasted between fifteen and forty-five minutes, and were all conducted in Mandarin. Importantly, while the researchers and I made every attempt to approach people as randomly as possible, this sample is far from representative of the Chinese population. For one it overestimates those people who would visit public places like coffee shops and parks (potentially those with more leisure time or money), and while the respondents originated from various parts of China, they were all living in one, more affluent large city. I do however expect that even with these limitations the data should tell us something about common psychological mechanisms behind responses to pressure.

As far as possible the sample was balanced according to gender and age, to match the survey and the population at large, and while primarily from an urban background, interviewees held a broad range of occupations. The vast majority of those interviewed said categorically that they
were proud of their country, although only around one third said that they thought China was the best country in the world. When asked about the ways in which it could be improved, overwhelmingly the most popular response was by reducing pollution, with improving health services a distant second. Notably, almost a tenth of the sample said that they thought the most pressing improvement was the need for democracy and individual freedoms, the third most popular response.

For 100 of those people, we followed the survey experiment and asked people about their attitudes to international pressure on women's rights. However, to see whether the results were peculiar to this issue, and to triangulate as much as possible, we also asked 40 people about pressure on air pollution, and 30 people about pressure on the use of ivory in Chinese medicine. China has been exposed to pressure from the international community on both issues, but the issues vary strongly in the salience of the problem for Chinese citizens.

The use of ivory in Chinese medicine dates back over 2000 years1. In recent years a number of transnational campaigns have targeted the ivory trade in China, including prominent billboards from the international NGO *Wildaid* in underground stations featuring David Beckham, Prince William and Yao Ming2. The campaign has arguably been a successful one, with the Chinese government announcing a ban on trade in ivory in early 20173. The ivory trade is however a fairly low salience issue, on which most people may not have particular strong prior opinions. While there are clear conservationist concerns, the use of ivory in Chinese medicine has the potential to bring up accusations of interfering in traditional national practices. A similar conflict between

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3 Foreign Policy (2017) Don’t get too excited about China’s ivory ban. *Foreign Policy*, 10 January
tradition and conservation has arisen over calls for Japan to ban whaling, with nationalist groups mobilising over the issue in response to perceived foreign interference in Japanese culture.\(^4\)

China has also been subject to intense international attention over its level of urban air pollution from international organisations\(^5\) and NGOs\(^6\), and from 2008 the United States Embassy began hourly tweets giving a reading of the air quality in Beijing.\(^7\) As mentioned, interviewees viewed air pollution as the primary way in which China could improve, while according to a Pew survey in 2015, 76% of Chinese people viewed air pollution as a ‘big problem’ in the country.\(^8\) A scope condition of the theory is that on issues where citizens have already formed strong opinions that there is a problem that needs to be addressed, international pressure should not evoke the same kind of recoil effect. Chinese citizens strongly held existing beliefs about poor environmental conditions\(^9\) (as well as the clear daily evidence of air pollution in China’s cities) mitigate against people taking defensive reactions against threats to their national image. Looking at air pollution allows us to examine whether this scope condition does indeed hold.

One important reason for choosing these issues for discussion in interviews is that they are all topics on which members of the public could reasonably freely express their opinions. It would not have been ethical to expose interviewees to questions on sensitive issues like religious rights or cyber security. This does mean however that questions remain on whether defensive responses on women’s rights and the ivory trade do indeed extend to all civil and political rights.

To ethically provide some initial answers to these questions, my research assistants and I

\(^8\) [http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/10/as-smog-hangs-over-beijing-chinese-cite-air-pollution-as-major-concern/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/10/as-smog-hangs-over-beijing-chinese-cite-air-pollution-as-major-concern/)
interviewed 31 native Chinese students and university staff recently arrived in the United States on the issue of international pressure on human rights, just after the start of the Autumn term in 2016. Naturally this was far from a random sample, involving a narrow range of university students and staff, many who had already experienced some exposure to life in the United States. Despite the biases, again their responses should tell us something about common psychological mechanisms, and whether these responses are the same for human rights as a whole as they are for women’s rights.

As with the survey, interviewees were randomly exposed to different sources of pressure: for women’s rights a brief paragraph summarising recent international pressure over employment and education discrimination and domestic violence in China; on the use of ivory in traditional medicine; on the levels of air pollution in China’s cities; and on civil liberties in China, replicating recent examples of criticism in the news on these issues. The source varied between the United States and the African Union; as well as the United Nations Human Rights Council for women’s rights, and the United Nations Environment Programme for the air pollution issues. Including an international organisation like the UN allows us to see whether Chinese respondents did indeed view the United Nations as a tool of the United States, and whether including a multilateral organisation with a ‘stake’ in the resolution of the issue might make citizens look upon the issue more positively. In the overseas sample, I was particularly interested in how they viewed the pressure they had heard from the United States, and so due to the small size of the sample of overseas students and staff we only asked about pressure from the US.
Awareness of foreign pressure

The majority of interviewees were reasonably well aware of news of the outside world, with around three quarters of all those interviewed in China and almost all overseas students saying that they had heard some news concerning Western comments about China. When asked about what comments they had heard, there was a broad mix of responses, from the South China Sea to the behaviour of Chinese tourists. Around half said that the comments they had heard were from foreign actors criticising China over the issue of human rights or democracy in their country. This should not be taken as evidence that everyone in the country is aware of foreign human rights pressure on China, but does suggest that a sizeable proportion of the urban population has heard about this pressure in some form.

A small number of people in China (around 5%) admitted that they had heard about foreign comments by escaping the great firewall of China (through VPNs or foreign travel), although this was far higher for those living overseas. Notably for the analysis here, over half of the interviewees said that they had heard news about foreign comments through newspapers and television, with the remainder listing a range of sources, most commonly Chinese news websites. This suggests that for a good number of urban Chinese citizens, their information about foreign pressure on China’s human rights and democracy has come through state-sanctioned outlets, with a sizeable proportion filtered through state-controlled media, as discussed in chapters three and four.

Interviewees were generally well informed of the issues surrounding women’s rights and gender equality in China, and many talked at length about the historical and current problems, and the improvements that had been made over recent years. The main concerns spoken of were
structural problems, like job opportunities and expectations from marriage, with a number emphasising that the main problems with gender equality were in rural areas. Unsurprisingly, the most passionate on the topic were young women, those who may expect to be most affected by these structural problems in the future. Interviewees’ knowledge about recent foreign comments on women’s rights in China however were mixed, with around a third saying that they were aware of any news about international discussions of women’s rights in China. Of these interviewees, the majority brought up either Hillary Clinton’s criticisms of China in the couple of years, or talked about long-standing international concerns with the one-child policy and its impacts on gender equality in China.

Overseas students and university workers had heard extensive foreign pressure on human rights in their time in China, pointing to condemnation of the lack of freedom of religion and speech. Most of the more international, English language-educated students said that they had heard about this through English-language websites not banned within the PRC, most commonly the BBC. Some did note however that Chinese television often broadcast foreign criticism of China, and while some comments on social media were censored, some comments were left alone. Shi Qin, 19, said that she believed this was done strategically: “Chinese propaganda tells us America says this, but it’s just meant to let the government give a counter-argument.”

Urban Chinese citizens were far less aware of the debate around the use of ivory in Chinese traditional medicine, with many expressing little knowledge of the problem or its link to the dwindling elephant population. However, once interviewees were told about the issue, many quickly formed strong views on either side, reflecting how preferences can be created almost instantaneously in reaction to small pieces of information\footnote{Zaller, J. (1992)}. Despite the Wildaid billboards
plastered throughout the city, the majority said that they were not aware of international views towards the use of ivory in China. However, of the third who said they had heard about foreign views, most mentioned the link to elephant poaching in Africa, with some explicitly referring to the *Wildaid* campaign.

On the issue of air pollution, most interviewees had already formed the strong preference that it was an extremely serious problem. Even those who believed that the environment had improved in recent years still rated it as a major challenge for the country. While some stated categorically that reducing air pollution should be the number one priority for the country, others believed that there should still be a balance between environmental protections and economic protections\(^\text{11}\). Again, around a third said that they had heard foreign condemnation of environmental conditions in China, with some referring to the attention given to the Beijing APEC summit in 2014 and the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

**Responses to sources of pressure**

As with the survey results, the source of the criticism appeared to have an impact on respondents’ views about women’s rights. While the numbers are too small for a statistical test, interviewees who read a passage from the United States were less likely to agree with pressure on women’s rights in China than those who read a passage from the United Nations or the African Union. For the interviewees who heard the US pressure, over a third believed that the criticism was justified\(^\text{12}\), compared to around two thirds for the African Union\(^\text{13}\) and the United Nations\(^\text{14}\). Results were even more noticeable for pressure on the use of ivory (despite the small sample),

\(^{11}\) We should note that the interviews took place in a relatively affluent Chinese city

\(^{12}\) 13 out of 35 interviewees

\(^{13}\) 22 out of 35 interviewees

\(^{14}\) 20 out of 30 interviewees
with those reading about pressure from the African Union over three times as likely to say it was justified as those reading about pressure from the United States\textsuperscript{15}. On air pollution however, for both those who heard pressure from both the UN and the US, the majority said that it was justified\textsuperscript{16}.

Table 9: Percentage of interviewees who say that foreign pressure on a given randomly allocated issue is justified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Women’s rights</th>
<th>Ivory use</th>
<th>Air pollution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN agency</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This source of pressure also appeared to affect how the interviewees spoke about these issues. On women’s rights, many of those who had heard criticism from the United States were especially positive about the situation of women in China, with a large proportion of interviewees instinctively refuting the idea that women were treated badly. Many of these were older, like shopkeeper Liu\textsuperscript{17}, 52, who responded to the question with irritation in his voice: “Women’s position in society is very high at the moment in China, it is ridiculous to say that they are badly treated. The women I know are very fairly treated, in China the environment for them is really good”. Bo, a taxi driver from the countryside, dismissed American criticism with a wave of his hand: “These comments are so one-sided. It makes me annoyed, because in China we do have gender equality, the criticism is just not true. In all [the areas mentioned in the criticism] China is so much better than all our neighbouring countries; the law protects them here”.

This did not just apply to women’s rights. Dong, a retired schoolteacher, said that he could not accept efforts by the United States to stop Chinese people from using ivory in traditional

\textsuperscript{15} 10 out of 14 versus 3 out of 16
\textsuperscript{16} 12 out of 20 for the US, and 16 out of 20 for the UN Environment Programme. Overseas students and staff were only exposed to criticism from the United States, so no comparison is possible
\textsuperscript{17} Names are pseudonymous to preserve interviewees’ anonymity
medicine. “Foreign countries should look after their own problems, they don’t understand what Chinese culture is like, and they shouldn’t try and interfere with Chinese culture. Chinese medicine works, and they should use the medicines that work, not listen to other countries that don’t understand”.

Overseas students and staff recently arrived in the United States were overall less assertive in response to American criticism on China’s human rights, especially the younger, more liberal students. Some older interviewees on the other hand, like Yu, in her seventies, were adamant: “These comments are not justified, because human rights in America are even more serious than in China! Chinese people have human rights, there is no need to talk nonsense. People live well - how do you know there are no human rights?” Others said they were merely tired of these kinds of comments. According to Huang, 23, “I believe that America has no reason to do this. Every time it seems to be the same kind of criticism, it completely loses its meaning”. Zi Wei, 22, had the same problem with foreign attention on Tibet: “I’ve seen a lot of this, I’ve started to become numb. Because of these separatists in Tibet, the US will get involved, and China will talk about Tibet creating problems. I think we need security in China, to make sure Tibet does not separate.”

In all three areas a sizeable proportion of respondents rejected American interference, some visibly annoyed by hearing the comments, and in response actively asserted that their country was doing nothing wrong or did not need to improve its behaviour. Others hearing comments from the United States were more circumspect, often noting the existence of problems brought up in the criticism, but qualified their concerns, arguing that things were much better than they used to be, or in comparison to other countries. For these, generally younger respondents, hearing international pressure from the United States did not evoke an immediate defensive
reaction, but often led to a sustained conversation about the positive and negative circumstances surrounding the issue.

On women’s rights, these kinds of responses generally arose in younger female interviewees, like Xiao Bei, a recent graduate looking for work: “There are some places where women are treated a bit worse, but these are smaller towns in the countryside, where there are many old traditions, for example that women need to be married at sixteen and the like. But in bigger cities this isn’t really a problem; women have a lot more freedom than maybe they used to”. Xiao Bei’s tone showed a measure of pride: “I think men look at women with respect in China”. Yi Nan, an aspiring entrepreneur, believed that maybe it was easier for young women to get by in China today. “I know things used to be worse, but I don’t think the Americans really understand China now, because women have so many educational and work opportunities. The pressure on them to find work is lower, and they can work in many areas that we cannot, like in the service industry, or administration, or other nine-to-five jobs”. Tao, a first-year student in the local university, was upbeat about the prevalence of domestic violence in China: “Women are treated reasonably well in China today, but of course there can be improvements. In coastal cities, in developed regions, there isn’t really a problem with domestic violence. Perhaps in more inland areas domestic violence is more of a problem - but overall this has been getting better all the time.”

Overseas students and university workers asked about human rights pressure, perhaps due to their more international outlook, were more likely to respond in this more nuanced manner. Having heard news about US pressure on human rights in Tibet, Mike, 18, argued that the criticism was an overreaction: “native people in Tibet enjoy more freedom than people in mainland China. The Chinese government is serious about racial problems, so locals enjoy higher
privileges in Tibet. There are times when police cannot do anything about the locals, so it can get messy sometimes, and there might be some human rights issues, but it is not that serious”. Min, 26, said that Western support for Tibetans was misplaced: “We have given minorities a lot of help, we have not been bad to them. Tibet was a feudal society without freedom, and China freed them, supported their education, medical care, health. We have absolutely not been bad to them.” Many talked about the subject of human rights in China through the prism of foreign comments, talking about this issue in reaction to American pressure as much as in reaction to the ongoing events themselves.

Min said that she had become more patriotic since coming to the United States. “Before I used to believe that America was better than China. While some people write on the Internet that China is perfect and democratic, I know we all have our own problems… But China is a younger, newer country than the United States, and has just started to become part of the new international society”. This sentiment, a rising pride since moving abroad, was mentioned by several overseas students. Zhao, 21, said that he had become more proud of his country after hearing far-fetched criticisms of China in America. While there were some claims about China from Western newspapers that he strongly disagreed with, Zhao, overall, accepted the claims of violations of human rights in China, a position shared by many of the overseas students interviewed. But while he did argue that some of the criticism was overblown and misplaced, repeated evidence of human rights violations in China from his academic studies had convinced him that this was indeed a problem that needed to be addressed.

Detailed counterarguing was less in evidence in response to American criticism of the use of ivory in traditional Chinese medicine. This could be because for many of the interviewees, the use of ivory was not something that they had valued much before hearing the criticism. Having
not thought about the issue before, counterarguments were perhaps less obvious. Upon hearing pressure from the United States, the most salient issue therefore was not their country’s failure to protect an important value of theirs, but merely the fact that a geopolitical competitor was putting their country under pressure.

While some were also annoyed on hearing comments from the African Union and United Nations about women’s rights, when the source was not the US on the whole interviewees were notably less defensive. A number stated their dismay over problems with women’s rights in China, but often tempered these concerns with hope for the future. Ting Gong, 59, said that domestic violence was a structural issue in Chinese society: “Of course this is a problem. We need to give women more legal power. Actually many women who have suffered domestic violence don’t want to get divorced, because maybe they are economically reliant on their husband. So it is very hard for them to be completely equal because of their economic situation. There do need to be improvements, especially in legal protections, because to ensure we have equal treatment we need to have the law on our side”. Jin, 31, a university graduate who had moved to the city five years earlier, said that she had confidence conditions would improve: “[women’s rights] need to get better; especially when applying for jobs. I think there is certainly some prejudice against women. In some jobs there is even prejudice against men. But society is always taking forward steps, and I believe women and men will soon both be able to have the same chances in finding work.” The reaction for some was more resigned, as Sun Li, a 26-year old IT worker reflected: “Things do need to improve, especially with domestic violence, there are real problems and it’s not acceptable for women to suffer from these old views, that a man can hit his wife and it’s fine. But this is something that women around the world face, and probably everywhere needs to improve, not just China - so I think it’s a normal criticism, if a bit one-sided.”
On the use of ivory in traditional medicine, Chinese citizens were far more likely to use the comments from the African Union to inform their preferences, on an issue that they had less well-developed existing opinions. Xiao Wu, a university student studying English, summed this up well, saying “I don’t really know too much about how much ivory is used, but if this kind of material hurts the environment then we should really not use it, and replace it with things that don’t hurt wild animals as much.”

Interviewees were also strikingly more likely to accept comments from both the United Nations Environment Programme and the United States when they put pressure on China over air pollution. Not only did they agree that the comments were justified and that China did need to improve air pollution in many ways, a number commented favourably on the tone of the criticism, even though it differed little from the criticism on human rights. Dou Dou, a 28 year-old visiting her hometown from Shanghai, nodded in response to the comments. “This problem does need to be solved. The smog in the cities was not always this bad, but recently it has appeared on a few days. There are just too many factories at the moment and people using too much coal - we need to find alternatives to this kind of energy”. When asked whether this should happen even if it affected the economy, she replied “yes. After all, people also need to continue to live here, and it is worth a short-term economic decline to help save the environment in the long run. We should look at economic development from the long term”.

Very few of the interviewees said that they believed China should only privilege its economic development. Some, like Hao Wang, 41, accepted the criticisms, but were more philosophical about the state of China’s air: “Sacrificing the environment is a necessary process: which developed country has not done so? We missed the industrial revolution, and have arrived late,
but happily this means we can draw on others’ experiences, and find a way to achieve a balance between development and the environment.” It is hard to say whether hearing criticism contributed towards people’s strong belief that more needed to be done to reduce air pollution in China, but at the very least these existing grievances meant that Chinese citizens appeared to overlook and even happily accept the fact that the United States was putting pressure on their nation.

**Perceived hostility**

What explains the variety in reactions to international pressure? Why does pressure that comes from the United States on human rights and the use of ivory appear to spark defensiveness and more positive views of their country’s behaviour than when it comes from the African Union or the United Nations? In this dissertation I argue that the recoil effect comes when an authoritarian regimes’ citizens overwhelmingly see international pressure on human rights or ivory as affecting that part of their own self-esteem that comes from a positive view of their nation. If this is correct, we should see that when people respond negatively to pressure from the United States, they tie this closely to their sense of national identity. They should be more likely see the pressure in relation to global competition, in terms of efforts by the US to use the issue to bring down China.

Interviewees were in general highly critical of comments about China originating from the United States. Some responded with irritation, and many said that they believed the US would only make these comments to try and ‘attack’ China. One such interviewee, Wang, a forty-year old businessman, was bullish: “Women are treated better in China than anywhere around - these words are completely false. The United States just wants to target China for anything it can, to
try and bring China down. Chinese women have nothing to do with them - they should look after their own women. It makes me angry”. Even those who agreed that women’s rights needed to be improved said that they found the criticism one-sided and driven by other political goals. The comments were overwhelmingly viewed through the prism of international relations, rather than as legitimate concerns about a pressing issue. As Xiao Dong, a postgraduate researcher in his mid-twenties said: “these politicians don’t care about women in China, they’re always using human rights as an excuse to attack China, to try and poison international public opinion. It’s just politicians being politicians, they always behave like this. I’m bored of it to be honest”. Xiao Bei agreed. “China and America have always not got on well, so this kind of statement is normal. America is just used to putting down China, deliberately attacking us.” Taxi driver Bo also linked his refusal to accept criticism on women’s rights to the fact that it came from the United States: “if America says it then it is just not fair. I would never accept anything that America says about China”.

Overseas interviewees agreed. Huang’s assertive response to American pressure was accompanied by her belief that the US was using human rights to target China: “I always hear that America is criticising China, but treating other countries with tolerance. At the moment with Trump, he is always condemning China, it seems unfair. Because of Sino-US relations, the US needs to compete with China, and so to increase its competitiveness it feels it has to criticise China.” Mike agreed, at least in part: “I think the US does care to some extent, but I do think there is a deeper interest-driven motivation. There might some issues in Tibet, but I think the US is criticising China because it wants to exert some influence.”

Others explicitly linked US motives with their beliefs about human rights in China. According to Wei Tai, 53, “this criticism of China is driven by prejudice. I believe that China does have areas it
needs to improve, but that we are definitely not as bad as America says”. Feng Shuo, 33, said that as far as he was concerned, “I don’t think the US actually cares about human rights, but rather is using this issue as political fuel in the international stage to attack China”. He went on to insist that “China doesn’t have human rights issues with free speech, because we can speak freely. So other countries cannot criticise China on such matters”.

These comments were not just limited to human rights. Upon hearing that the US had called on China to ban the ivory trade, Liu Jin, a factory worker, said that the United States was doing so “to attack the Communist Party”, while Li, a software engineer, said that the US “did not care about animals. As China’s economy is developing and China is getting stronger, they’re using it to cause trouble, so that every country focuses on China”. Student Zhao was more equivocal. “Criticism is fine, every country needs it. I don’t like the attitude in these comments though, they seem to hold some prejudice against China”.

On women’s rights and human rights more broadly, interviewees were also quick to point out US hypocrisy in criticising China while it faced its own problems at home. On women’s rights, some argued that the US should at the least deal with its own discrimination before pointing fingers at China, with many emphasising the racial divisions in American society. Race in America also arose as a point of contention in overseas students’ response. Shi Qin argued that American hypocrisy made it a poor arbiter: “When politics and human rights are mixed, it’s complicated, so you have to look at the ultimate purpose of the news source. Is this propaganda, or is it looking to reveal the truth? If we are talking about the criticism itself – this is justified, because China does oppress its people. But, when this criticism comes from America, this is not reasonable, because America has its own issues. America has race issues, as well as a hypocritical
government – Hillary [Clinton] supports the Iraq war and then says that China shouldn’t do XYZ”.

The African Union, despite not receiving the same kind of vitriol as the US, was not seen as a particularly acceptable source of pressure on women’s rights. While many interviewees viewed the organisation’s concerns about women in China to be genuine, they were dismissive of the authority of the Union to make such comments. Some responded with confusion, and seemed unable to discern what the AU’s motivations might be. A number of people dismissed the comments or claimed that the organisation did not know what it was talking about. While few saw the criticism presented by the AU as prejudiced, a number of interviewees dismissed the comments as hypocritical and hard-to-understand from a continent with its own problems in gender equality. Wei, a 19-year old student at the local university summed up the sentiment: “I don’t think they really understand China. Aren’t women badly treated in Africa? I’m not too sure why they would criticise women’s rights in China - I think maybe they don’t realise how women are treated here. I mean there are problems for some women in our country, but I’m sure it is much worse in Africa”.

Chinese citizens’ responses to hearing criticism from the African Union over women’s rights illustrate that hypocrisy was not the main driver of the recoil effect, given that many viewed the African Union to be as hypocritical as the US in its comments on women’s rights. There was also little obvious difference in people’s overall sentiments towards the United States and the African Union, very few expressing any warmth or dislike towards either actor, and an equal level of irritation with their attempts to criticise China. What was different was the content of people’s irritation. The majority of those who said they thought that criticism from the United States was unjustified also brought up Washington’s attempts to use the issue to attack China. On the other
hand, only one interviewee said that they believed the African Union was using women’s rights to try and attack China, and not one brought up the idea of international competition when talking about their response to the pressure. While interviewees were hardly positive towards the African Union, there was a notable lack of defensiveness towards China in people’s responses, certainly in comparison to the language used in response to the United States.

On the issue of ivory, interviewees were far more well-disposed towards comments from the African Union, most saying that they believed that the AU cared about the use of ivory in China. There were few concerns about hypocrisy here, and most were happy to say as a result that the criticism was justified, with one respondent, Ya Fang, a 52 year-old housewife, saying explicitly that her views about the use of ivory were linked to the relationship between African countries and China: “It is hard to say whether these comments about China are justified or not. If I were to make a concrete judgement, I would need to go onto the internet and check, because I don’t really know much about the relationship between Africa and China. If it really is a friendly country [sic] towards China, then I can accept the criticism, and say that yes [ivory use] is a problem. But if the relationship with China is not very friendly, then I would be much more suspicious of their motives”.

Interviewees were similarly positive towards the United Nations. On women’s rights, Chinese citizens generally shared the view that the role of the organisation was to improve conditions for women around the world. According to housewife Jing “they have to care about women and whether they are being discriminated against. They do this in every country so I don’t think China is any exception”. The positive reaction to the UN cast a doubt on my belief that it would

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18 This is similar to the cues argument that people use foreign comments about their country as a cue for whether they should support the issue or not, especially on an issue they know little about. In this case, people use a friendly bilateral relationship to cue agreement with the criticism, and a hostile one to cue disagreement. See Bush, S.S., & Jamal, A.A. (2015)
be seen as a proxy of the United States. Only three interviewees took this position, with many more believing that the UN had a duty and responsibility to improve women’s rights around the world.

Overall, when interviewees did not see comments as driven by hostility or as threatening towards China, they were less likely to expound positive opinions about their own country. In the case of African Union pressure on women’s rights, Chinese citizens had other complaints about the source, but as indicated by the results of the survey experiment, instead appeared to take these complaints as a reason to ignore the pressure, rather than look to counterargue or assert their country’s autonomy. And when Chinese citizens viewed the source as driven by a genuine desire to protect human rights (or elephants), then they were far more willing to take the comments on board.

Another interpretation of these findings is that interviewees are using their existing opinions about the issue to inform their views about the motives of the source, rather than the other way around. People may believe that the United States cares about human rights only when they themselves already believe that human rights is a problem. This is borne out by interviewees’ responses to pressure on air pollution in China. On this topic, while some were suspicious of the United States, people were more disposed to view the its comments as driven by benign motives, rather than attempts to bring down China. Xue Feng, a geology student, said that the comments “showed the responsibility of developed countries’ governments to protect the world’s environment”, while estate agent Wen Hao pointed to the possibility that “China’s environment might affect the United States, so of course they want to help”.
It is likely that Chinese citizens are both basing their views about the source’s motives on their pre-existing opinions about the issue, as well as basing their opinions about the issue on their views about the source’s motives, and it is hard to disentangle this causal chain. What we can draw from this small, semi-random sample of interviews is the following: Interviewees were more likely to believe that the US was driven by hostile intentions. Those who believed the US was driven by hostile intentions were less likely to hold grievances about their own country. And as with the survey experiment, those who heard about pressure from the US were less likely to hold grievances about their own country. This effect was only likely to occur in the cases when Chinese citizens did not have strong pre-existing grievances about the topic of the pressure.

Acceptable foreign pressure

So what kind of foreign pressure would be acceptable? Many interviewees parroted the government line on human rights pressure - that other countries should mind their own business. Some were particularly insistent on this point after having been exposed to the pressure from the US. Li Ling, a coffee shop barista, typified this belligerence: “Foreigners have no right to interfere in China’s internal affairs, we don’t need it, this is a social issue of China, and we can only rely on ourselves to deal with it”. Mo, 19, agreed: “they should sort out their own problems first, and not dip their fingers into other countries.”

Some were more pragmatic on the role of foreign criticism. Shao Qing, visiting family in the city, said that he thought that China should accept interference from outside, but that on women’s rights, any efforts by foreigners would just not be effective: “International comments on these kinds of issues are not very helpful, because in those more backward areas, where there are real problems with women’s rights, nobody is going to hear the sound of foreign comments”.
Other more open respondents gave some common themes: international busybodies should have a deep understanding of China’s situation, its history and social context. One typical argument was that China was still a developing country (another line often put forward by the government in the face of human rights diplomacy19). Han, 30, said that at the least foreign countries should recognise that China was still emerging as an industrialised power. “If criticism is one-sided and does not understand China’s situation, then I cannot accept it. They can make comments about China and point out problems, but it is not acceptable to put pressure on us when they don’t understand our country. We are going through the same development period they went through and they had the same problems”.

Andy, 22, studying in the United States, argued that judgements about China needed to be placed into context. “China’s human rights situation has some bad aspects, but right now, it fits China, because more freedom in politics requires a more central role for the middle class, so that political decisions are more stable. But if China liberalises too quickly, this will be bad for China. America’s criticism is good for itself, but not necessarily good for China’s domestic problems. We need experts who examine foreign countries’ human rights situations; long-term residents in China, or people who have conducted a lot of research—these people—who holistically understand Chinese peoples’ lives and consider both their own and Chinese ethical and moral values. Because I think, human rights issues cannot be measured from one unified standard. For example, on the issue of freedom, a lot of Chinese people do not care as much about freedom; they care about the stability of their daily life. The fact that their rights aren’t as upheld as they are in the US doesn’t worry them too much.”

There was a general sense that if criticism did not just target China alone and instead actors looked to work together with China to solve the problem (especially on the use of ivory) then citizens would be more open to foreign comments. According to Jian Min, an academic, “only if what they say is objective and is not just attacking China can I accept it. If every country also faced up to the fact that their people own ivory, and did not just put the blame on China, then every country should be able to accept this criticism together, and work together to find an answer”. Yan Yan, 22, believed that women’s rights was a global issue, and should be treated as such: “The United Nations should help to improve women’s rights all over the world, not just in China. There are problems with old traditions here, but I think that the Chinese people have worked hard to improve gender equality in recent years, and can help other countries in the world.”

Interestingly, people’s opinions about the usefulness of foreign pressure on all social and political issues in China varied dramatically, according to the passage they had been given. After reading passages putting pressure on China on the issues of human and women’s rights, and especially when the source was the US, Chinese citizens often said that they were strongly opposed to any kind of foreign pressure, on any issues, and that no foreign actor had any right to intervene. However, when given examples of pressure on air pollution in China, respondents became far more positive (and eloquent) about the role that international efforts could play in China, on all social issues. Zhou, the owner of a noodle restaurant, saw quiet diplomacy as the way forward: “they should use a friendly attitude to put forward suggestions, not demand that China takes certain steps to make changes, or use sanctions, or push China to change its whole political system to be like America. Encouraging advice for step-by-step changes would be the most useful.” Xiang Feng, a recent geology graduate, agreed: “if they truly understand China’s national situation, and put forward intelligent opinions from this detailed knowledge, then I can accept
their comments, even if they criticise China. If they do this they can cooperate with our officials to give them ideas about how to improve. What annoys me are these exaggerated claims about how bad China is.”

**Citizens’ responses to international pressure**

Interviews with Chinese citizens provide broad support for this thesis’s hypothesis that a crucial factor in whether citizens respond positively or negatively to international pressure is how they connect the pressure to their identity as part of the Chinese nation. Those respondents who spoke about their nation, about defending their nation, and its position in international competition, invariably responded negatively to being told about foreign pressure on their country. When the issue being discussed became not about improving women’s rights or how to save elephants, but about how China was performing in the face of foreign attacks, interviewees’ views about the issue became far more defensive.

In many cases, when people considered that pressure on China had come from the United States, this was enough to make the spectre of international competition more salient than the dilemmas of how to resolve the issue itself. This was reflected by how interviewees viewed the motives of the United States in putting pressure on China; driven by hostility towards the country, to slow China’s growth and prevent it from challenging the US. As with the previous two chapters’ surveys, Chinese citizens exposed to pressure from the United States were markedly more positive in their opinions about the state of women’s rights, human rights, and the use of ivory in China. For some members of the public, hearing pressure evoked an emotional reaction, where people clearly felt anger and the need to defend their country. This fits with the theory that upon hearing pressure on their nation, citizens seek to assert their nation’s
autonomy and ability to protect these rights itself, without interference from abroad. However, an emotional assertion of the capabilities of China was not the only reaction. Other interviewees reacted to the criticism by recognising that there were problems, but sought to justify why things were not as bad as the criticism implied, pointing to past improvements or regional disparities. This reaction fits the theory that citizens look to counter-argue threatening criticisms of their country. Those studying and working in the United States were less assertive and more willing to counterargue in response to threats. They still viewed the US as aggressive and hostile in its motives in criticising China, but their greater exposure to other forms of pressure and a wider array of evidence meant that they were more accepting of critical comments. While we should not forget that the overall topic of the interviews was explicitly about international pressure, many interviewees clearly saw pressure from the United States as a reference point through which they could discuss and evaluate their own country’s domestic situation.

On the other hand, pressure from an organisation that Chinese citizens believed actively cared about the issue of women’s rights or the use of ivory appeared to make people focus on the issue itself, rather than international competition. Interviewees were far more receptive to comments by the United Nations on human and women’s rights, and the African Union on ivory, something which was far more likely to be associated with a willingness to discuss ways in which China could do better on these issues. While this should be tested further in future, the findings fit a bulk of social psychological literature, showing that the more ‘credible’ a source is perceived to be, the more open people will be to persuasion.

Interviewees’ lack of defensiveness did not just arise from their belief that the source of pressure was qualified to make critical comments however. Many respondents viewed the African Union as an illegitimate source of pressure on women’s rights, ill-informed and hypocritical. Importantly however, this appeared to merely give interviewees a chance to dismiss the criticism, and did not, as in the case of the United States, cause them to feel the need to defend their nation. The interviewees’ response supports the findings of the survey experiment in chapter five, where pressure from the AU on women’s rights exhibited neither a positive nor a negative reaction from Chinese citizens. In both cases, people just felt they could ignore the comments, neither updating their grievances in light of the criticism, nor counterarguing to alleviate the feeling of threat to their self-esteem.

Importantly, a sizeable proportion of those interviewed said that they had heard about some foreign pressure on China, and that they had mainly heard about this on the issue of human rights. This suggests that, at least in urban areas and for those who intend to study or work abroad, Chinese citizens are aware of the international efforts to put pressure on China on human rights and democracy over the last thirty years. Moreover, the majority had heard about these comments through sources over which the CCP had some measure of control, from state-owned television to internet news. For these people, as chapter four shows, the majority of the foreign pressure on human rights in China that they hear about would be the pressure most likely to reduce grievances about CCP respect for human rights.

What does this tell us about how international actors can best ensure that their comments do not spark a recoil effect in China over human rights or any other issues? The initial findings from this small sample of interviews suggest that Chinese citizens generally regard comments from the United Nations in a positive light. Whether this means comments from the UN about human
rights do indeed increase public grievances has yet to be tested. According to interviewees, if these comments also recognised China’s efforts to improve human rights, and approached the problem as one of cooperation between nations rather than targeting and pressurising China alone, they would be easier to accept. These are conjectures to be tested more rigorously in future studies.

One notable finding from these interviews is that when Chinese citizens discussed a topic they already believed to be a problem in their country, air pollution, they were far more receptive to international pressure, even when it came from a ‘hostile’ source. Already holding grievances over an issue meant that interviewees were far less likely to see pressure as threatening. This suggests that, as we might expect, pressure from foreign sources may indeed be successful and avoid a defensive backlash on issues that are already widely recognised to be a problem in the target country. However, when interviewees heard pressure on a topic which they had no strong previous opinions, the use of ivory, they were far more likely to be influenced by the source. If the source was neutral, they were more likely to accept the views, while if it brought up geopolitical competition, were more likely to be swayed in the opposite direction by the salient sense of threat, reflecting findings from political psychology that people’s previous beliefs also exert a strong pull on the interpretation of new information, to compete with the pull from their collective social identity.

21 Taking alongside the discussion in chapter six, this suggests that the people who react most defensively to pressure will be those who care about the issue the most, but also have not formed strong previous opinions. While these two conditions may seem to conflict with each other, in this case it suggests that on the ivory trade, those who show the strongest defensive reaction will be those who know little about the ivory trade beforehand, but a strong animal lovers, or are strongly in favour of traditional Chinese medicine (for example).

Conclusion

Findings - Limitations - External Validity - Implications

Respect for human rights has deteriorated in many authoritarian states in recent years\(^1\), despite the best efforts of the international community. Perhaps the most notable example of the failure of international influence is China, where a concerted campaign over the last twenty-seven years involving all the tools of the human rights playbook has appeared to barely scratch the CCP’s behaviour towards its public. On the contrary, in recent years authorities have stepped up arrests of dissidents\(^2\), suppression of media outlets\(^3\), and repression of religious\(^4\) and legal\(^5\) activism.

Most literature places the failures of human rights pressure at the door of China’s lack of vulnerability to coercive techniques - the international community just does not have enough

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\(^1\) See for example the most recent Freedom House report [https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016)

\(^2\) According to data from CECC analysed by the author (see Appendix 1)


\(^4\) The Diplomat (2016) China’s not so Secret War on Religion, *The Diplomat*, 14 June

leverage to force Beijing to change its behaviour⁶. In contrast, the thesis presented here is that we need to look at how external pressure affects the preferences of Chinese citizens towards their human rights.

The theory put forward in this dissertation is that certain types of external pressure may bolster popular support for how well a regime respects human rights - and that authoritarian regimes can ensure that their public will mainly hear the pressure most likely to do this. Using ideas taken from social psychological theories of motivational reasoning I argue that when citizens perceive pressure to be most threatening to that part of their self-esteem that comes from their allegiance to their nation - then they will take defensive steps that make them more likely to believe that human rights conditions are satisfactory in their country. As a result, they will be less likely to support efforts to improve policies on legal reform, or protest arrests of dissidents. International human rights diplomacy has a recoil effect for authoritarian regimes, which can use the pressure from outside to generate domestic support. External pressure may be making it easier for the CCP to enact repressive policies without protest from the Chinese public.

Findings

I use a range of qualitative and quantitative techniques to triangulate my evidence as much as possible - to show that my findings in experiments also apply in real-time surveys and in interviews, and that what works on the individual level also matches the behaviour of state media. This increases my confidence in the internal validity of my findings.

In chapter three I use case studies of external pressure on China from the 1950s to the current day to tell the story of how pressure on human rights matters in the domestic realm of authoritarian regimes - when it is reported, and when it is censored - and then if it is reported, the kind of language that Chinese state media uses to describe the pressure to its citizens. This chapter not only reveals the kinds of stories about pressure that the CCP is looking to tell to its public, but also how the media apparatus has evolved in its treatment of this information. It shows how state media passes on sensitive details about criticism of the regime’s human rights behaviour far more than would otherwise be expected, and that this pressure is heavily linked with a purported desire by foreign powers to attack China and restrain its growth. When it does announce details of human rights issues to the public, such as arrests of dissidents, it often chooses to do so by also announcing foreign pressure over the issue. In chapter four I quantitatively test my hypotheses about when the CCP is most likely to pass on human rights pressure to its public using two unique databases: instances of international pressure on human rights in China; and reports of international pressure in the People’s Daily, between 1979 and 2011. The results show that as predicted by my theory, the People’s Daily is significantly more likely to report on pressure when it comes from a hostile source (the United States), especially at times of high bilateral tensions, and when it concerns issues of territorial integrity (concerning Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Macau). The results also demonstrate that when pressure focuses on existing policies (such as the One Child Policy), that the public is already aware of, state media is particularly willing to allow the public to hear it. Pressure that provides new information on specific human rights abuses on the other hand is far more likely to be censored.

However, these results may just tell us that certain information is less disadvantageous to the Chinese government than other kinds - not that the regime actively gains benefits from allowing its public to hear it. After a discussion of the history of pressure on women’s rights in China in
Chapter five, chapter six tests this hypothesis directly, using a survey experiment of responses to foreign pressure on women’s rights in China. When Chinese citizens are exposed to pressure from a hostile source, the United States, they become significantly more satisfied with the state of women’s rights in China, especially when national attachment is high. This effect does not arise when pressure comes from a non-hostile source, the African Union. Notably, when the pressure only targets elites, this effect is eliminated, and even reversed when the national identity is salient. This suggests that the national identity may spark a defensive reaction to criticism, but also the desire to improve the nation, and this effect depends strongly on the relationship between government leaders and the state.

Chapter seven extends this to real-life examples of human rights diplomacy. It uses a quasi-natural experiment to examine how prominent meetings between foreign leaders and the Dalai Lama affect Chinese citizens’ views about their political rights. Using the Asianbarometer survey I show that following President Obama’s highly publicised meeting with the Dalai Lama in July 2011, Chinese people became significantly more likely to say that their country was ruled democratically, particularly if they were highly patriotic. The results demonstrate that the recoil effect is not just limited to immediate responses to hypothetical examples, but that instances of external human rights pressure have a real-time impact on public views about their country.

Chapter eight investigates the causal mechanisms behind these survey findings to examine in detail how Chinese citizens respond to foreign pressure on their country’s human rights. Using semi-structured interviews with 170 randomly approached Chinese citizens, I find that a sizeable proportion of the public are aware of reports of international comments about China, often through state media sources. On the issues of women’s and animal rights citizens’ negative response to hearing pressure from the United States comes from their belief that the US had
ulterior motives in criticising China - that it did not care about people in China but wanted to gain a geopolitical advantage and prevent the country’s rise. These findings are supported by interviews with thirty-one overseas Chinese students and university staff directly on the issue of human rights. On the issue of air pollution, interviewees were far more accepting of foreign condemnation, suggesting that the recoil effect is less likely to apply on issues around which people have already formed strong grievances.

**Limitations and steps forward**

The story is just a beginning however. The findings do not prove that international pressure does reduce human rights respect over the long term in all authoritarian regimes, but merely that in China, public grievances about human rights conditions fall in the initial period after exposure to some types of international pressure, and that the CCP chooses to pass on the information most likely to achieve this effect.

In the first place, this brings up the question of whether we can really argue that the tests in chapters six and seven truly represent exposure to foreign pressure over time, and that a snap judgment about the state of women’s rights or democracy in China represents a long-term grievance about human rights conditions. Respondents to these surveys may just be giving an initial angry, defensive reaction to pressure, but may not truly believe that their conditions are better. This would mean that the study is not measuring longer-term changing views, but brief annoyance. Bullock and colleagues find moreover that people may also engage in ‘partisan cheerleading’ in their responses to factual information; in other words, rather than actually believing that information about human rights abuse is false, in order to protect their national image, people just say in surveys that they believe human rights and democracy are well
respected as a way of expressing their desire to praise their country. It may be that this desire is stronger having recently heard about foreign pressure, such as the prompt about women’s rights or meetings with the Dalai Lama. This response is similar to the ‘assertive’ mechanism identified in this thesis, with the caveat that people may not actually come to truly believe these assertions.

Short-term emotional reactions may have a longer-term effect however, as they become implicitly associated with the issue of human rights. The findings from the media analysis and the public interviews demonstrate that in China, the public will have encountered a long history of western pressure on their human rights behaviour, which presumably would multiply the effects from one prompt. Every new piece of external pressure that a Chinese citizen encounters through state media may reignite this association, reducing grievances in turn. A common response in the interviews to hearing US pressure was that this was typical behaviour from the United States, that they were bored of these attempts to put China down over its human rights.

If people were just giving superficial ‘reactions’ to criticism then in the two survey experiment chapters we might expect them to also show a defensive reaction over their values towards women’s rights and democracy, rejecting them as western tools. Yet instead of superficially dismissing the issue, hearing about US pressure made people appear to care more about women’s rights and about democracy, to value them more, suggesting that at least some were thinking more deeply about the issue having heard about foreign criticism. This finding fits recent work showing that NGO naming and shaming, human rights norms, and international law all increase citizens’ support for human rights in their country. In China, this provides support for Foot’s argument that the human rights regime has pushed the country to gradually

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8 Gawronski, B., & Bodenhausen, G.V. (2006); Olson, M. A., & Fazio, R. H. (2001)
accept human rights norms\textsuperscript{12}. The presumed explanation is that international pressure, such as calls for more political rights in Tibet, exposes citizens to international sentiment on the importance of those norms, and makes them in turn value them more.

In interviews, there was certainly some evidence of interviewees dismissing China’s problems out of hand having heard pressure from the United States. However there was also evidence that others did take in the criticism and consider what it meant for women’s rights (and human rights more generally for those overseas interviewees). A number sought to justify why, even given this criticism, human rights were still well respected in China, pointing to other achievements, progress, or comparisons with other nations, providing support for the idea that they were developing counter-arguments in response to threatening information.

It is difficult to definitively refute these concerns about short or long-term responses with the current study however. At the least the findings direct our attention to the mechanisms involved in public reactions to pressure, and provide building blocks to studies that can test longer-term responses. Future work should look at the impacts over time of repeated exposure to foreign pressure, for example through field experiments, and whether hearing about pressure does in fact lead to any behavioural changes, such as a lower likelihood of posting dissent on social media\textsuperscript{13}. This will also help to clarify whether members of the public become genuinely more likely to believe that human rights are better after foreign pressure, or whether they are merely more determined to express how great their country is.

A second task is to show that changes in public grievances matter for policy, especially in authoritarian regimes. I agree here with Crowther, that “action to build public support—or at

\textsuperscript{12} Foot, R. (2000)

\textsuperscript{13} Admittedly this is difficult in the current climate in China, but may be possible in other environments
very least public respect—for human rights is critical” for activists. If the public is content with the state of their civil liberties, or women’s rights, or the treatment of minority groups, then it is much more difficult for activist groups to pressure the government into change. As Scheindlin argues, public opinion shapes the environment in which activists operate— and while a supportive atmosphere may advance the cause of human rights, hostile public opinion may hurt their ability to achieve change. This seems especially likely on issues that directly affect only a minority of the population, such as religious rights for Tibetans, who may require a broader coalition to make the government listen to their voices. A broad coalition may be particularly important in authoritarian regimes, where small groups of activists may hold little political influence, but where the government will be more likely to respond to a populist movement for change. Touhtou, Ron, and Golden argue that in Morocco, domestic activists were only likely to prosper with the backing of a broad-based social movement, while in China wider public pressure has had an apparent (if slow) impact on developing legislation on issues from domestic violence to the death penalty. Scholars have increasingly noted the CCP’s responsiveness to citizen preferences in some cases, albeit on less sensitive issues.

However, the impact of public opinion on the effectiveness of domestic activism needs to be tested, and especially whether the counterproductive influences of external pressure on public opinion are passed on to these groups. On one side, in many cases majority opinion may just not be that important for the success of human rights activism, and for some issues, only a subset of

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19 See for example Chen, J.D., Pan, J., & Xu, Y.Q. (2015); Truex, R. (2016)
the population will know and care about the issue and foreign comments. Whatever the majority thinks, it is these groups who will take to the streets and put pressure on policymakers. And many groups and dissidents in China actively seek out foreign pressure on the CCP. My interviews with activists in China and Hong Kong suggested that they saw the double-edged nature of external pressure, and worked to shape their message so that it was clearly distinct from the influence of perceived outside forces. However, they still welcomed the foreign support, and were consistent in calling for outside attention on human rights in China. The responses of activists demonstrated that whatever the negative effects on public opinion, for activist groups there are also very real advantages from external pressure.

Future work should examine how public opinion on human rights, and perceptions of the state of human rights conditions affect the behaviour of activist groups and government policy. One approach may be to explore how dissident activism in China changes as a result of external condemnation and coercion, while it may also be constructive to look crossnationally at how public perceptions of their human rights affect human rights violations the following year.

This brings forward a third concern. How far can we extend these results beyond the case of China? China is a most-likely case for the recoil effect. It is a powerful authoritarian state with extensive information control, where the leadership has heavily promoted a state-led nationalism, as well as the rhetoric that Western states have been using human rights as an excuse to constrain the country’s rise. In chapter one I discussed the findings from American political psychology: that in some countries partisan political identities may determine how people respond to transnational persuasion. In China the national identity is far more prominent

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20 Roth, K. (2015) For human rights, majority opinion isn’t always important. *Open Democracy*

21 See Zhao, S.S. (2014)
in public affairs than any partisan political identities. The question then is in which states will international pressure on human rights be most likely to evoke a recoil effect in the public?

**External validity**

I propose two main scope conditions for when we are most likely to see these kinds of recoil effects. These are:

*When the regime has an extensive propaganda apparatus and press freedom is low*

This study shows that in regimes like China, with extensive control over the informational environment the pressure most likely to reach citizens is the pressure most likely to cause a recoil effect. However, in cases where there are other sources of information, and news of human rights pressure reaches citizens through more than just state media, citizens are likely to hear more than just the most threatening information. They may also hear about specific violations, pressure that targets elites only, or pressure from non-hostile sources, all which may have the intended effect of increasing public grievances.

*When the regime has successfully portrayed itself as the sole legitimate representative of the nation*

In chapter six I show that when threatening pressure appears to target government leaders rather than the nation as a whole, it may increase grievances about human rights abuses. I argue that the reason for this is that this pressure splits the tie between the elites and the nation; the sense that the rulers are the legitimate representatives of the nation when it comes to human rights.
The CCP has deliberately and successfully strengthened this link between nation and leadership, to instil the sense that without the Communist Party China would not exist as a nation. Citizens will be unlikely therefore to view human rights pressure on China as merely an attack on the leadership, and not the nation, unless this is made explicit.

The recoil effect is likely to be greatest in those countries where this link is particularly strong, most likely in two conditions: firstly, when there is a strong historical link between the leadership and the nation (for example if the ruling elites secured independence or won a revolutionary war). Secondly, when there are no other powerful political parties or alternative political identities for people to hold that may be more salient than the national identity, such as large opposition groups or ethnic political divides. If there are partisan divides, for example in democracies or so-called ‘competitive autocracies’ then those who do not support the ruling party may be able to deflect the pressure as an attack on the partisan leadership rather than the nation as a whole. In this case we will be more likely to see results found in other studies of transnational persuasion, whereby regime supporters react negatively to foreign interference, but opponents respond positively.

“Oceania was at war with Eurasia: therefore Oceania had always been at war with Eurasia”

Another plausible factor is the geopolitical relationship between the target nation and the United States. As noted, a source is far more likely to be perceived as hostile if it is a geopolitical opponent - and since the United States is the source of much human rights pressure, US allies may be less likely to be able to portray pressure as driven by hostility. This is also something put forward by Jetschke, who, using the example of the Philippines, argues that when countries are

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23 Orwell, G. (1948) 1984. Signet. 1.3.16
allies of the US, it is far more difficult for them to use post-colonial nationalism to try and deflect attention on their human rights abuses, since such actions will have less resonance, and may even cause offence in the US, putting a valued alliance at risk. However an alliance might just restrain a regime from using external pressure from its allies as a propaganda tool, not prevent it from happening at all. If a regime is under pressure from the United States over a particularly important issue then it may still be in its interests to make the US appear like a hostile imperialistic enemy. In the Philippines for example, despite ties with the US, American criticism of Duterte’s anti-drug campaign brought accusations of imperialism (and other abusive language) from the President in domestic and international fora. Such tactics may be less successful, slower, and require more fervent propaganda than in countries that are geopolitical opponents of the US, but may still resonate with certain parts of the population. As noted in chapter three, after its 2008 protests France was far more likely to be portrayed in Beijing media as hostile towards China, and its pressure on China more likely to be reported, despite rarely being portrayed in those terms before 2008. We might expect these countries to use external pressure for their advantage less often than opponents of the United States, and only when the domestic stakes of resisting the pressure are particularly high.

The cases where the recoil effect will be most likely are countries where press freedom is low, there is no clear political opposition or where the regime is an independence or revolutionary party. When there is freedom of the press, the recoil effect is likely to be diluted, while in states where the line between rulers and nation is wider, the effect may only find resonance amongst regime supporters. A good geopolitical relationship with the US may dampen the effect. I give examples of each case below.

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Both conditions hold: Russia under Putin

In this category, regimes have no clear opposition groups, minimal press freedom, and some history of winning a revolutionary or independence war. Examples might include North Korea, Iran, the Soviet Union, or to a lesser extent (since there is nominally some political opposition) Belarus, and Russia under Putin.

Russia ranks near the bottom in *Freedom House*’s press freedom index (scoring 83 out of a low of 100 in 2015, against 87 in China), and a ‘not free’ score of 62 on internet freedom (88 in China). Despite being nominally a ‘competitive authoritarian’ state, there are no clear partisan political identities in Russia25, with anti-regime groups falling away in recent years. Putin’s United Russia party won 76% of the seats in the Duma in 201626, and over recent years has played heavily on nationalism and anti-Westernism to increase Putin’s popular support27, in what some have called a personality cult28. As a result we might expect pressure from Western sources to be reported in Russia and to spark a defensive public reaction, lowering grievances with the regime. This is difficult to test without the in-depth analysis used in this project, but there are some indications that this may be true.

Perhaps the most notable public reaction has been linked to instances of international-related pressure, to Western sanctions on Russia over its actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in 2014.

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These have primarily targeted Russian firms and elites linked to Putin himself. Russian state media organisations have reported heavily on the sanctions, Putin calling them ‘hostile’ and blaming them for economic woes in the country. The sanctions have served as a scapegoat for domestic problems, and leaders have appeared to actively use them for domestic popularity, drawing public attention to them around the 2016 elections. As Putin said after his victory, the results were “citizens’ reaction to external attempts to pressure Russia, to threats, to sanctions, and to foreign attempts to stir up the situation in our country.” Moscow has also sought to manipulate external pressure on domestic respect for human rights, particularly concerning existing government policies. Foreign criticism on Russia’s NGO laws has been reported widely in domestic Russian media in recent years, while reports of foreign criticism of authorities’ human rights abuses in Chechnya have been sparser.

It is hard to demonstrate whether external pressure did in fact help to bolster Putin’s popularity (although we can assume from his statement that he certainly believed it would). And support for the horse-riding leader has spiked dramatically. According to a 2015 Pew report, while opinions of the West had dropped since the sanctions began, the majority of Russians approved of Putin’s performance in international politics, the economy and human rights. Despite a 3.7% drop in GDP in 2015, 70% of those surveyed said that they approved of their leader’s management of the economy, while in the face of increasing repression at home and crackdowns

29 BBC (2014) How far do EU-US sanctions on Russia go? BBC, 15 September
30 Russia Today (2016) ‘Senseless carnival’: Lawmaker blasts PACE over latest anti-Russian resolution, Russia Today, 13 October
31 For example Russia Today (2016) Russia to respond to any new US sanctions with ‘painful’ measures – deputy FM. Russia Today, 16 October
33 Huffington Post (2016) Putin Sanctioned His Own People. But It Helped Him Win. Huffington Post, 23 September
34 TASS (2016) Russia against politicizing human rights discussions — Lavrov. TASS, 1 June; Russia Today (2016) Putin signs NGO bill exempting charities from Russia’s ‘foreign agents law’. Russia Today, 3 June
35 That I have uncovered in English-language searches - future work will examine this in full using Russian-speaking assistants
36 http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG
on civil society, 63% of the population believed that their civil liberties were well-respected (a 15% increase since 2008). Of course we cannot say for sure whether Western pressure is responsible; an equally plausible explanation may be the boost in national pride from the invasion of Crimea. Nevertheless, even since the invasion has ended, belief in respect for civil liberties has increased by 6%, suggesting that the events in Crimea could not be wholly responsible.

Partisanship and government-controlled press: Zimbabwe

In this category, we might expect a limited recoil effect. Free speech is restricted, with the press controlled by the regime, but there is some political partisanship, what Levitsky and Way call ‘competitive authoritarianism’, including established opposition groups. This means that pressure may evoke a defensive reaction in some, but supporters of opposition groups may view the pressure as an attack on the ruling regime rather than the nation.

Zimbabwe is an example of this kind of state. Robert Mugabe has led the ZANU-PF party in charge of the country since independence, and has played heavily on his reputation as the revolutionary leader bringing his country out of colonialism, what Ranger calls ‘patriotic history’, to justify his continued rule. Mugabe has used his control over state-owned press to remind the nation of this revolutionary mandate. In 2015 Freedom House gave the country a score of 74 for press freedom (and 56 for internet freedom), accusing authorities of punishing journalists that criticise the regime, which has led to self-censorship on sensitive issues. State-owned media controls the discourse and jams foreign media from reaching the population, while only around

38 http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/10/2-russian-public-opinion-putin-praised-west-panned/
20% of the population having any internet access\textsuperscript{41}. On the other hand, since the late 1990s the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has emerged as a credible and powerful opposition party. In the 2002 elections the MDC caused a major surprise, winning almost half the seats on offer, while in 2008 the party won the popular vote and the majority of the seats, sharing power with ZANU-PF under Mugabe’s leadership.

Mugabe has regularly attempted to use foreign influence, in particular from the former colonial power Britain, as a way of gaining support for his rule and reducing support for the MDC. As Raftopoulos argues, for ZANU-PF, the MDC was a “manifestation of foreign British and white influence in Zimbabwean politics”\textsuperscript{42}. As a result, any attempts from the former coloniser to try and condemn Mugabe and his policies have been seized upon as a propaganda tool. Referencing British criticism of the 2002 elections, a (state-run) Herald article said that “the British started showing their true colours by advocating sanctions against Zimbabwe for human rights…its hidden agenda to topple the present Zimbabwean government…the victory by Zanu-PF in the just-ended presidential election was indeed a victory over imperialism”\textsuperscript{43}.

Mugabe proclaimed British condemnation of land reform in 2001 to be an attempt to recolonise the country\textsuperscript{44}, saying to British Prime Minister Tony Blair in an often-quoted 2002 speech, “Blair, keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe”\textsuperscript{45}. As with Putin, sanctions imposed on individual leaders and companies by the United States and European Union since 2002 have been a particularly useful tool for rallying support. The sanctions are featured regularly in state-owned media, and Mugabe has railed against their use in both domestic and international

\textsuperscript{41} https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/Zimbabwe
\textsuperscript{43} The Herald (2002), 9 April
speeches\textsuperscript{46}, blaming them for the country’s economic decline\textsuperscript{47}. Even in anti-government demonstrations in late 2016, state media accused protestors of being supported by the United States, Britain and France\textsuperscript{48}. To back this up, it reported on the American ambassador’s criticism of the government’s use of force to crush the protests, accusing him of hypocrisy, racism, and regime change\textsuperscript{49}.

Phimster and Raftopoulos argue that Mugabe’s attempts to play up Western interference have, at the very least, brought him support from fellow African leaders, in particular Thabo Mbeki\textsuperscript{50}. The domestic impact is harder to unlock, but just as in Russia, deteriorating economic circumstances and growing human rights abuses have been accompanied by increasing support for Mugabe and his protection of political rights, as figure 23 shows.

\textsuperscript{46} The Chronicle (2016) Mr Obama, tear down these sanctions! The Chronicle, 7 October
\textsuperscript{47} International Business Times (2016) President Mugabe’s regime blames Zimbabwe’s economic woes on ‘international sanctions’. International Business Times, 18 July
\textsuperscript{48} The Chronicle (2016) Western countries’ role in violent demos exposed. The Chronicle, 27 September
\textsuperscript{49} The Chronicle (2016) Govt exposes US envoy hypocrisy. The Chronicle, 23 September
Indeed, as Bratton, Chikwana, and Sithole note, the sudden spike in public support for Mugabe between 1999 and 2004 (public trust more than doubles in the Afrobarometer surveys) is extremely puzzling. In these years Zimbabwe’s economy fell apart, life expectancy dropped dramatically, and political repression increased. Bratton and colleagues argue that the most likely cause of increased public support was not misperceptions of economic growth or increased fear to express true opinions, but Mugabe’s propaganda network. They show that trust in media was one of the biggest predictors of Mugabe’s positive ratings in this time. This suggests that Mugabe’s ability to control the narrative, including his manipulation of foreign pressure, may have accentuated his public support. We might expect that this effect would be less powerful than in Russia however, due to the partisan political identities in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, since the MDC was only founded in 1999 there is little opportunity to compare

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53 *ibid*
partisan changes from 1999 to 2004. In 2004 however\textsuperscript{54} it does appear that trust in Mugabe is primarily driven by those who are more attached to their nation (see figure 24), as opposed to any other ethnic or political identities, suggesting that appeals to national integrity have had some resonance with this group.

\textbf{Figure 24: Percentage trust in Mugabe, for those more attached to national identity and those more attached to other group identity (Afrobarometer 2004)}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure24.png}
\end{figure}

\textbf{One party and more press freedom (and US ally): Uganda}

In this category we would expect pressure to evoke a more extensive recoil effect, given the lack of alternative partisan political identities. However, the freer press means that not just the more ‘threatening’ information is likely to get through, and other more damaging information may also reach the public. The ruling party may need to be more careful about the pressure it chooses to pass on to its citizens, and more invested in the effort, aware that they are less able to control the

\textsuperscript{54} The only year where this question was asked
public discourse. If the country is also an American ally, this wariness may grow, since anti-Americanism may have less resonance and the leaders will also need to weigh up a potential negative response from the US.

Uganda is an example of this kind of state. It has a press freedom index of 57 (36 in internet freedom), with Freedom House noting that there were government attempts to control coverage ahead of the 2016 elections, but that there also exist more critical independent television stations and newspapers, and no restrictions on access to foreign news. Despite regular elections, President Museveni has led the country since fighting a guerrilla campaign against Milton Obote in 1986, and has sought to portray his party as the epitome of patriotism and liberation. Museveni has overseen impressive economic growth at the helm, and has become a key partner to Western countries, especially with the US in counter-terrorism activities. The United States has provided extensive development and military assistance to the country under Museveni’s supervision, and the Ugandan public hold some of the most pro-American attitudes in the world.

I focus here on one particular example of Western pressure on Uganda over human rights, the fight over gay rights, particularly in 2014 around the enactment of an ‘anti-homosexuality act’, which threatened to punish homosexuality with up to life in prison. This example is slightly different as the issue is not an instance of government oppression, but one pushed by local religious groups and co-opted by Museveni as part of his populist push for electoral votes. In 2013, gay rights were opposed by 96% of the population in Uganda. Since 2009, when the bill

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56 Daily Monitor (2014) NRM was built on nationalism, says Museveni. Daily Monitor, 1 December
57 Foreign Policy (2016) Is the U.S. Military Propping Up Uganda’s ‘Elected’ Autocrat? Foreign Policy, 18 February
58 ibid
59 http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/23/1-americas-global-image/
61 http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/06/04/the-global-divide-on-homosexuality/
was first mooted, Western activists followed the spiral model’s formula, badgering their own
governments to put pressure on Kampala to drop the bill. Leaders from the United States to the
European Union publicly criticised the bill and threatened aid sanctions if it was passed\textsuperscript{62}. The
widespread Western condemnation appeared to have little effect on public attitudes however,
with some arguing that in fact “international action surrounding the bill seemed to have spawned
an equal and opposite reaction: turning the legislation and its attendant homophobia into
symbols of national self-determination”\textsuperscript{63}.

It does appear to be the case that Museveni seized upon the issue as a chance to boost his public
support prior to the 2016 presidential elections, and used the Western pressure to play into that
narrative. According to a Chatham House report from 2014, Museveni saw a chance to
reinvigorate his role as a warrior against external colonial interference\textsuperscript{64}. Just before the signing
of the act in 2014, Obama threatened that its passage would “complicate our valued relationship
with Uganda”\textsuperscript{65}. Palchik Allen argues that the very reasons Museveni signed the bill may have
been these threats - that given his rhetoric he could not afford to be seen as giving in to Western
pressure\textsuperscript{66}. At the time Museveni’s spokesman said plainly that the President was signing the bill
to “demonstrate Uganda's independence in the face of Western pressure and provocation”\textsuperscript{67}.

The high profile calls for cuts in aid by Western donor countries had been featured heavily in the
Ugandan press\textsuperscript{68}, and brought angry retorts from even those who opposed the bill\textsuperscript{69}.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[62] Al Jazeera (2014) Europe backs sanctions over anti-gay laws. Al Jazeera, 13 March
\item[63] Allen, E.P. (2014) Unintended Consequences. Foreign Policy
\item[64] Shepherd, N. (2014)
\item[66] Something that reflects the argument made for China by Drury, A. C., & Li, Y. (2006)
\item[67] Al Jazeera (2014) Ugandan president signs anti-gay law. Al Jazeera, 25 February
\item[69] Allen, E.P. (2014)
\end{footnotes}
Public support for the bill, already at a high level, remained strong through 2015\(^{70}\), with Museveni receiving a round of applause from officials at its signing\(^{71}\). Museveni’s public popularity also grew noticeably during the furore, while the popularity of the United States dropped, as shown in figure 25\(^{72}\). Ugandan citizens’ beliefs that their country supported equal rights also grew, from 41.7% in 2012 to 44.7% in 2015 (with the percentage believing that people are treated equally more than doubling from 9.1% to 20.9%\(^{73}\)).

The passing of the bill and increase in public support for Museveni demonstrates his ability to manipulate external pressure for his own domestic purposes. This strategy may even succeed when it comes against a powerful foreign ally and aid donor with high domestic popularity. However, this case does also show the limitations of the strategy. External pressure was only played up and advertised when it came on an issue that had been already framed as an issue of national integrity, a fight against imperialism, and was an existing policy topic on which the public was already firmly on the President’s side. As such, new information about foreign pressure was particularly likely to work in the President’s favour, even if it came through

\(^{70}\) In 2015 90% agreed very strongly with the statement “Homosexuality is inconsistent with Ugandan culture and religious norms and should therefore continue to be illegal in this country” (Afrobarometer 2015)

\(^{71}\) Washington Post (2014)

\(^{72}\) Before rising again to 76% positive in 2015 ([http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/23/1-americas-global-image/](http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/23/1-americas-global-image/))

\(^{73}\) Afrobarometer 2012 and 2015
independent media sources. This is a tactic that is unlikely to work on less clearly defined issues. For example, when Obama again threatened sanctions on Ugandan officials over political repression in 2016\textsuperscript{74}, the news was not passed on in state-owned newspapers.

There are also international consequences to the elites from this kind of campaign - most notably from loss of aid revenue from foreign allies. And later the same year, just before he was to meet with President Obama, Museveni played down the act’s importance, and a Ugandan court quietly annulled the act\textsuperscript{75}. This behaviour mirrors the actions of Philippine’s President Duterte in 2016, where having railed against American imperialism at home over his anti-drug campaign\textsuperscript{76}, he later quietly expressed regret and sought to play down tensions on the international stage\textsuperscript{77}. Museveni and Duterte’s reactions demonstrate how leaders can both feel the costs of Western pressure, but at the same time manipulate it to gain support at home.

**Free press and partisan politics: Hong Kong**

Finally, when the press is free and there are strong partisan political divides (or a fragile national identity), the recoil effect is likely to be far weaker. This is because members of the public are likely to hear about all kinds of pressure, and opposition groups will be likely to shift the blame onto the ruling elites rather than the nation. Partisan politics may take over. An example of this situation is the autonomous territory of Hong Kong, and foreign pressure on Hong Kong authorities over the 2014 Umbrella protests, discussed in chapter three in relations to the mainland.

\textsuperscript{74} Daily Monitor (2014) Stop political arrests or lose US trade - Obama. *Daily Monitor*, 14 July
\textsuperscript{75} Huffington Post (2014) Uganda President Yoweri Museveni Wants To Have Anti-Gay Law Re-Issued. *Huffington Post*, 12 August
\textsuperscript{76} Manila Times (2016)
\textsuperscript{77} CNN (2016) After cursing Obama, Duterte expresses regret. *CNN*, 6 September
The territory enjoys far more press freedom than the mainland (a score of 39 from Freedom House in 2015), where despite increasing pressure from Beijing, some media outlets are often highly critical of the establishment. While Hong Kongers should arguably hold more historical grievances with the West than those on the Chinese mainland do, having been colonised by Britain for 99 years, in recent years anti-British resentment has been overcome by partisan political splits, between those who are generally supportive of Chinese influence in the territory and those who push for more political freedoms and autonomy from Beijing. The political scene is divided into two main comparable blocs that reflect these positions, the pro-Beijing camp and the pan-democrats. In the 2016 Legislative Council elections, pro-Beijing parties gained around 40% of the popular vote, against 36% from pan-democratic parties (other localist parties gained 16%)\textsuperscript{79}. Despite accusations that Hong Kongers are politically apathetic\textsuperscript{80}, this divide also spilled over into the Occupy Central protests in late 2014. As discussed in chapter three, in September, democracy activists launched a protest in Hong Kong’s financial centre, a protest that turned into a widespread movement after police sprayed the activists with tear gas, known as the “Umbrella revolution”\textsuperscript{81}. While support waxed and waned in Hong Kong, at its height in October 37.8% backed the movement, against 35.5% who opposed it, seemingly broadly along political partisan divides\textsuperscript{82}.

Pro-Beijing voices on the mainland and in Hong Kong sought to portray the protestors as manipulated and supported by ‘hostile’ outside forces\textsuperscript{83}, to frame the West as a ‘black hand’

\textsuperscript{78} https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/hong-kong
\textsuperscript{79} SCMP (2016) Strategic voting fails pan-democrat candidates in Hong Kong Legislative Council elections. SCMP, 7 September
\textsuperscript{81} After the instrument protesters used to protect themselves against the tear gas
\textsuperscript{82} Huffington Post (2014) Democracy Protests Divide Hong Kong, Huffington Post, 29 October
controlling activists to subvert Chinese authority. As discussed in more detail in chapter three, these accusations served to dampen Western criticism of the behaviour of Hong Kong’s authorities. Pro-Beijing newspapers heavily discussed any pressure that did come through, accusing Western countries of attempting to re-colonise the territory. However, given the partisan political identities and public exposure to wide array of uncensored foreign news in Hong Kong, we might expect that only those of a pro-Beijing disposition would view the criticism as a threat to their identity.

Indeed as Civic Party Vice Chairman Stephen Chan Ching-Kiu said, for those in the pan-democrat camp, the biggest ‘threat’ to their identity as Hong Kongers does not come from the UK but from China itself, and so they would be unlikely to respond that defensively to pressure from the West. And the leaders of the Occupy movement seemed less concerned about Western condemnation than as seen for example in Uganda, with some calling for more Western pressure on CY Leung, the Chief Executive, although others emphasised that the movement needed to be viewed as an indigenous one. On the other side, Stanley Ng Chau-Pei, a leader of the anti-Occupy movement Alliance for Peace and Democracy, argued that many in Hong Kong wanted to express their independence from Western imperial powers. Ng Chau-Pei argued that there had been clear evidence of foreign support for the Occupy protests, and that opposing Western interference was a strong motivating factor for many of those who had joined the Alliance.

Overall this suggests that more aggressive criticism from the United States over the protests may not have been as counterproductive as some had implied, at least in the Hong Kong territory. It may have hardened the views of pro-Beijing loyalists, but for the half of the population less

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84 Los Angeles Times (2014) In turbulent Hong Kong, conspiracy theories point West. Los Angeles Times, 9 October
85 See chapter three
86 The Civic Party is a pro-democracy party, and currently the fourth largest party in Hong Kong’s Legislative Council
87 Interview with Professor Benny Tai
88 Diplomat (2014) America and Britain’s Hong Kong Catch-22. The Diplomat, 6 October
89 The Chinese mainland is a different story
enamoured with interference from the mainland, and those more likely to take to the streets to call for democratic reforms, this criticism would be less likely to turn them against the movement.

**Implications**

**Pressure from above and below**

The findings provide an initial step towards helping us understand the puzzle of the human rights system - why pressure fails. Alongside Hafner-Burton’s theory of substitution of repressive tactics\(^90\), this project gives one of the first accounts of why external efforts to improve human rights may not just impose costs on regimes, but end up strengthening their ability to continue to commit these violations. This has important implications for more optimistic models of human rights socialisation, challenging the view about the relationship between international pressure ‘from above’ and domestic pressure ‘from below’\(^91\). According to these views, foreign shaming, threats, and sanctions impose costs on governments directly, but also indirectly by working in tandem with and providing support to domestic movements. Some scholars have advocated for a ‘comprehensive approach’, which calls for a combination of these direct and indirect efforts, attacking the elites from above as well as encouraging the inculcation of public support for domestic movements\(^92\).

The results here however suggest that in authoritarian regimes at least, these two tactics may not work together smoothly. Under some conditions, foreign pressure may make members of the

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\(^{90}\) Hafner-Burton, E.M. (2008)


public more satisfied with how the government is respecting their human rights. This means that
some pressure will reduce the likelihood that members of their public will call out the
government on its behaviour, or support the cause of domestic groups looking to fight human
rights violations or illiberal policies. This does not necessarily call into question models that extol
the virtues of external human rights pressure. What it does is demonstrate that external pressure
has more than one audience - from elites to international actors, and from members of the
public to domestic activist groups, and that the impacts on each of these audiences may conflict
with each other.

Indeed, to make the comprehensive approach even more troubling, what might be most
successful from above may even be the most counterproductive from below. The typical view is
that top-down pressure relies on leverage; that state compliance will be more likely when the
source is powerful and the target weak. Even on the issue of women's rights in China, many
NGOs and feminist activist groups have called out to the United States to use its influence to
publicly criticise the Chinese government. In many cases top-down pressure from powerful
sources is likely to be effective for encouraging short-term concessions. This study points to a
potential contradiction between leverage and public persuasion however. In the case of China or
Russia, human rights pressure that is most successful in pressing elites to make short-term
concessions should come from high-leverage sources like the United States – a geopolitical
opponent to China or Russia and precisely the kind of source that appears most hostile and is
most likely to reduce public support for human rights activists in these states.

This does not call into question the spiral model or any other accounts of how human rights
pressure works in socialising states to respect human rights. What it brings out is that to date
these models have failed to address fully how pressure can have different effects on different

and International Relations. OUP
94 Radio Free Asia (2015) China’s Five Feminists Call for UN Pressure on Beijing. Radio Free Asia, 6 July
aspects of a state’s domestic politics - that what may work on the elite level may have counterproductive effects on the public level - and that to fully understand the influence of international pressure we cannot ignore how citizens of the target state respond.

This builds on the work of Katerina Linos, who argues that a state’s leaders should explicitly target the citizens of a target country if they are looking to gain transnational influence. This idea applies beyond human rights, to any form of influence in international relations. While some authors have discussed the role of ‘strategic communication’ in diplomacy and military operations, it is clear that if we believe leaders respond to their domestic audience, then there needs to be far more attention on how coercive or persuasive attempts to change state behaviour affect that audience. If we assume that Putin cares about what his people think about his rule and foreign policy decisions, then any attempt to coerce him over Ukraine or Syria needs to at least understand how the coercion affects their views. If sanctions help to bolster his standing amongst the public, then their effectiveness in changing behaviour must surely be brought into question.

**Human rights policy**

The recommendation for more attention to public reactions also applies to human rights policymakers. Policymakers need to be clear about who is the target of their influence attempts; whether it is the government elites, the international community, or whether it is domestic actors, like opposition groups or members of the public. If it is domestic actors, then some types of pressure appear to be far more effective than others. And even if the target is elite behaviour - to push Xi Jinping to drop a particular NGO law for example - policymakers should be aware of

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whether their attempts are likely to be heard by these domestic audiences. If they are public threats, sanctions or admonishments, citizens are likely to find out about the pressure, and it is likely to affect their political preferences.

If this is the case, then my results imply that there are certain steps that the international community can take to make sure that public pressure and diplomacy is more likely to increase public support for human rights activists, or at least less likely to hinder their work. The concern of course is that identifying issues, sources, and phrases that are most likely to evoke a positive response from Chinese citizens is all very well, but the whole point of the recoil effect is that the Chinese government will not allow its citizens to hear information about these kinds of pressure. It may be too much to expect an authoritarian regime to allow its public to pick up information that has the potential to increase their grievances with the regime. Even if it does censor this kind of pressure however, international actors can at least avoid the possibility that their comments provoke a recoil effect and play into autocratic hands.

Firstly, pressure should be carried out, wherever possible, by allies of the target state, or at least parties perceived to be neutral. If geopolitical opponents are involved, as they often are for more authoritarian parties, then pressure should be employed when bilateral relations are at their most positive. The content of the pressure is also important. Pressure will be less likely to be effective on issues closely tied to the nation, such as on violations in separatist regions like Kashmir and Tibet. When pressure does address these issues, it may receive more popular support when it focuses on the violations as instances of individual rights rather than issues of self-determination.

Pressure that targets the government elites only may not spark defensive, authoritarian nationalism, but liberal nationalism, which seeks to take steps to improve the nation, rather than
defending it against outsiders. Of course, the nature of government propaganda is that leaders are unlikely to allow their public to hear this kind of pressure. The link between the elites and the nation might be broken through other routes however, for example if the leaders are not seen as properly defending the nation’s interests in an international dispute. At these times, we might expect any kind of pressure to be more effective, something to be tested in future. In a similar way, pressure employed on one-party states where the ruling party has cultivated a close link to the nation is more likely to recoil than pressure on states with strong partisan divides.

Pressure that references individual, specific violations is also far less likely to be used as government propaganda than more general critical statements, or condemnations of existing policies like the death penalty. If this information does reach the population through other routes, we might expect it to have much more potential to increase grievances (although this is not yet tested). The importance of the type of information can only go so far however, since an under-pressure regime with strong media control might be able to manipulate how threatening the information appears to its public. It might, for example, take the Uganda route and undergo a heavy propaganda push to make the issue particularly heavily linked to the welfare of the nation. Alternatively, leaders may use a subtler version of the ‘rally-round-the-flag’ tactic. According to this theory, leaders under domestic pressure can spark disputes abroad to rally their population around a common fight, raising support for the leaders and distracting the public from their problems at home. The theory here suggests that the tactic may be successful in the particular situation when leaders are facing criticism at home and abroad for their human rights abuses. If they spark a geopolitical dispute with the foreign sources of the pressure, the source will appear more hostile and grievances about the abuses will go down.

As far as China is concerned, my findings suggest that in contrast to the optimistic accounts of Foot and others at the turn of the century\(^9\), external efforts to improve human rights may have contributed to the deterioration in respect for human rights in China. At the very least they appear to have contributed to the public’s apparent indifference to those declining conditions.

The question then is how the international community should approach human rights violations in China, and deal with issues like meeting the Dalai Lama or providing awards to political prisoners. Taking the findings at face value, pressure will be more effective in the public realm when it comes from one of China’s allies, or at the least a source that does not appear to have ulterior motives. The interviews in chapter six show that perhaps the most effective source of pressure would be the United Nations (although not from US-sponsored resolutions), especially when it focuses narrowly on individual cases of specific rights violations from government elites. Least effective on the public would be high profile sanctions from the United States on government policies in Tibet.

The vital question for determining the effectiveness of pressure is: what is the goal of the pressure? A good case to examine is meetings between state leaders and the Dalai Lama. What is the aim of the meeting? If it is to raise awareness among members of the public in China about lack of political rights in their country, the efforts are clearly failing, as shown in chapter seven. If the goal is to provide moral resources and encouragement to activists in Tibet, there may be some level of success, at least in bringing people out on to the streets, even while it may reduce

the overall effectiveness of those protests by cutting public support. On the other hand, meeting the Dalai Lama may not be about domestic populations at all. Instead, a plausible reason why Presidents choose to take this step is to send a costly signal to China, to credibly demonstrate its commitment to continuing to stand up to human rights violations in the country. In this case, external pressure has a very different goal, which is not concerned with the response of Chinese citizens, but instead designed to affect the decision calculus of CCP elites.

What is essential to understand however is that even though it may not be the goal, pressure may still have very real effects on how citizens view human rights in their country. Human rights pressure has many diverse impacts, and these impacts may come into conflict with each other. Pressure that is designed to send a signal of commitment or impose costs on dictators and their inner circle may have an entirely unexpected effect when heard by members of the public. It may make them care less about their government’s violations or obstructions of human rights, and ultimately prolong authoritarian rule.
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Appendices

Chapter 4

Appendix 1: Coding Procedures

Instances of international pressure

Even if a particular instance of pressure was mentioned more than once in foreign media, I recorded it as one instance - and the first date on which this was reported. If more than one source joined in on the same instance of pressure I separated these out by source. For example after the Tibet unrest in March 2008, a number of states came out on the same day in condemnation of Chinese police actions, and were reported in the same news story. I split this instance of pressure into each of the sources mentioned in the story. If condemnation came from more than one actor within a state at one time, I recorded this as one instance of pressure.

For example:
NEWS STORY: 14th March 2008: The United States Congress and Senate, the European parliament, British Prime Minister and Indian, French and Australian leaders have criticised the Chinese government’s crackdown on protests in Tibet yesterday and called for calm.

Coded:
The *Lexus Nexus* database includes English-language media from both Western and non-western sources and news wires (including for example from South Korea, Japan and independent newspapers from Hong Kong). I excluded *Xinhua* news stories from this database, since this is a Chinese government news-wire, and is likely to be highly correlated with the dependent variable. In this database I searched for stories that included the terms ‘China’ and ‘rights’; and then ‘China’ and ‘criticism’ (and variations of these terms); and then picked out stories that actually referred to instances of international pressure on China’s human rights. This is a sample, so may have missed out some instances of foreign pressure reported in foreign media, but should not have done so systematically.

One potential problem is that on occasion, English-language media has missed instances of obscure international pressure, like that from Human Rights Watch - which have then been picked up by Chinese media, and then only because of these Chinese reports, subsequently feature in international media. While these instances are rare, this means there may be some reverse causation. However this should not influence the hypotheses, as there is no evidence that foreign media picks up on international pressure reported in Chinese media more when it is from a particular source or on particular issues. To test this I also exclude in my robustness

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checks those cases where the international media reports of the pressure occur after the Chinese media reports.

*People’s Daily reports of international pressure*

I coded whether each of the instances of international pressure was reported in the *People’s Daily* or not, and the number of reports for each instance. I did this systematically, searching whether each instance of international pressure appeared in the *People’s Daily* archive, at rmrb.egreenapple.com. I searched by the topic of the pressure, by the source of the pressure, and by date. I went through in detail the *People’s Daily* archive in the days following the pressure, and then performed a search of the title, limiting this to one year following the pressure itself. For example if Barack Obama had made a speech in Beijing criticising China on its religious freedom, I searched separately for ‘Obama’, ‘United States’, ‘criticism’, ‘religious freedom’, and then ‘speech’ and ‘Beijing’ in the days following the speech, and then for the combination of ‘Obama’ and ‘criticism’ and ‘religious freedom’ in the year following the speech. Once I had coded all of the reports I then went back and followed the same process again to double-check that my coding was accurate.

I only included a report of the pressure however if it specifically mentioned the act of pressure itself. For example a report six months later saying that ‘Obama criticised China on its religious freedom six months ago in Beijing’ would be recorded. A report saying ‘Obama has regularly criticised China on its religious freedom’ would not. Alternatively a report that said ‘China has been subject to extensive sanctions by the United States over the last few years’ would not be recorded, whereas ‘the United States chose yesterday to enact new sanctions over China’s human rights’ would be recorded.
I coded each report as ‘policy’, ‘general’, ‘specific’ or ‘jailed’. As mentioned above, ‘policy’ pressure is pressure that primarily addresses widely known existing government policies, for example the crackdown on Falun Gong, the one-child policy, human rights bills in Hong Kong or NGO laws. ‘General’ pressure includes resolutions or statements that do not mention specific instances or policies but refer generally to concerns about human rights conditions in China. ‘Specific’ pressure refers, as its main topic, to a specific violation of human rights, such as the killing or torture of protestors, giving new information about human rights abuses. And ‘jailed’ pressure is pressure that has as its main topic criticisms of the arrest or treatment of jailed dissidents, or appeals for their release, mainly from Amnesty International.

I coded each type based on the most prominent information in the pressure. For the majority of cases this was very easy, since the pressure was short and focussed; an Amnesty International appeal for a jailed dissident or a presidential speech criticising a crackdown. However in some cases, such as annual reports, a number of different topics were included. In these cases I used the main headline information. If the pressure discussed China’s policy in Tibet more widely, but the headline information in the pressure and the foreign media reports of that pressure was witness statements about killings in the 2008 protests, then this was coded as an instance of ‘specific’ pressure. A good example of this is the United States annual country report on human rights. This contains specific violations and policy issues over the last year, but the main headlines, and the introduction in the report itself, were a broad condemnation of human rights conditions in China, with little space given to specific or policy issues. Therefore these are coded as instances of ‘general’ pressure. If however the pressure equally mentioned both specific information and other information I coded it as a specific report. This is because my theory suggests that specific information should be reported less, so this coding gives a conservative standard for my hypotheses and makes me less likely to find a positive result.
I took a similar approach to distinguish pressure as territorial or non-territorial. I first looked at the main headline information, which generally either focussed on China as a whole or one constituent part. On the few occasions when pressure both mentioned territorial and non-territorial issues equally, or both were in the headlines, I recorded the pressure as non-territorial - again to give a conservative standard for my tests. These coding procedures should, if anything, underestimate the strength of my results.

GDELT

GDELT has come under some criticism over the transparency of its coding methods\(^\text{100}\), and the accuracy of these methods in comparison to hand-coded data\(^\text{101}\). However while transparency issues should not be overlooked, most of the concerns about reliability have arisen in regard to errors in geolocation\(^\text{102}\), and the fact that by using a range of news sources it may duplicate events\(^\text{103}\). In my study I do not seek to analyse geographical differences, and scholars have shown that while GDELT has only average correlations with hand-coded data when examining spatial distributions (it overreports from major population centres), it is an accurate predictor of events when only examining time series data\(^\text{104}\).

Repression includes coercive actions from a government actor, such as censorship and restrictions on personal freedoms, martial law, political executions, armed attacks by the state, torture and political arrests. Unrest includes all anti-government activity as well as protests,


\(^{101}\) ibid

\(^{102}\) http://mdwardlab.com/sites/default/files/GDELTICEWS_0.pdf


attacks, riots etc... where the target is not government actors and not carried out by opposition actors.\textsuperscript{105} However, events data alone do not account for the seriousness of an event (a protest could be coded the same as a mass riot). To account for this I weight events according to the Goldstein scale. This scale, based on expert surveys, gives each ‘conflictual’ event a score from -10 (most conflictual) to 0 (least conflictual); thus violent attacks are weighted more heavily than simple protests\textsuperscript{106}. GDELT has also been criticised for the fact that by using a range of news sources it may duplicate events\textsuperscript{107}. However unrest or repressive events by themselves, even weighted for the type of activity, do not distinguish between 1-person and 1000-person protests. As a result I follow Yonamine and argue that duplication can be an important indicator of the size, or at least visibility and importance of an event, and so keep the duplicate events\textsuperscript{108}.

Finally, a practical problem with GDELT is that it grows over time, as the quantity and reach of news sources have increased, and that as such ‘events’ may just reflect the total amount of media attention on a country in a given year. As such, events in 1979 are vastly underreported in relation to those in 2011, while media attention on China was markedly higher in 1990 than 1988, even though protest events may not have increased. To ameliorate this issue I weight events by the total number of GDELT reports on China for each year\textsuperscript{109}. Steinart-Threckeld uses this method to show that the GDELT reliably reflects protest events in the Arab Spring\textsuperscript{110}. Together, these refinements should provide a broadly reliable estimate of the scale of unrest and repression on each day in China between 1979 and 2011. The weighting does mean however that

\textsuperscript{107} http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2014/02/20/raining-on-the-parade-some-cautions-regarding-the-global-database-of-events-language-and-tone-dataset
\textsuperscript{109} I have used other means of weighting data, including country-day and total number of global GDELT reports per year, in reliability checks not given here
\textsuperscript{110} http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2014/03/19/machine-coded-events-data-and-hand-coded-data/
it is much more difficult to give an indication of the actual level of repression or unrest on any individual day, and therefore to give an easily understood estimate of the size of the impact of my controls.

For robustness, and for those suspicious of automated events data, to measure levels of repression I instead use the Congressional-Executive Commission on China’s Political Prisoner Database (CECC). This draws on a number of datasets concerning arrests of prominent Chinese political prisoners, including their date of arrest and release. As such it forms a reasonable approximation of the number of political arrests at any given time - and therefore arguably a plausible measure of the level of government repression. While this is clearly not a perfect measure, and only runs from 1998, it should help to provide some robustness to the GDELT measure. In the 1998 - 2011 period, the GDELT repression measure and the CECC arrests measure are weakly correlated (0.2057). In the supplementary appendix I show that the results still hold using this alternative measure of repression.
Chapter 6

Appendix 1: Survey description

The survey used the Qualtrics survey provider and Qualtrics’ panel providers in China. Qualtrics providers hold online panels of netizens throughout China, who participate in surveys for points - and the chance to gain rewards if enough points are gained. For each new survey, Qualtrics sends an email to a random selection of those in the panel, saying “You are invited to participate in a general opinion survey!” The email recipients can then choose whether to participate in the survey or not. The survey was carried out between the 5th of February and the 26th of February 2016, with the majority of the data collected between the 13th and the 17th of February. This was due to the need for two ‘soft launches’ to test the survey at the start and the longer time it took to elicit responses from harder-to-reach demographics towards the end. Princeton University’s Institutional Review Board approved the survey, with protocol #0000007369.

Data quality

The survey and panel provider Qualtrics uses various techniques to improve respondent quality. These include minimising the number of surveys each panel member can take per month, to reduce fatigue and overuse; and regular verification of the panel pool demographics. The survey itself also used tools to ensure the quality of the data. ‘Attention check’ questions filtered respondents out who may have been randomly clicking boxes; while those who completed the survey in an unreasonably short time (one third of the median response time) were also excluded. In total, out of 1723, 523 people were removed from the results by these measures. 11 did not give consent, 228 failed the attention check, and 12 completed the survey below the minimum
cut-off time. 269 failed to complete the survey at all. This left a total of 1200 different respondents who completed the survey satisfactorily.

Data description

The tables and figures below describe the summary statistics for the respondent demographics. As shown, the gender and age proportions broadly coincide with the broader Chinese population, as taken from the official 2013 census (reported in 2014)\textsuperscript{111}. While I did not measure income levels, the income levels in the panels from which the respondents were selected are generally higher. Table 3 shows that the survey draws its members primarily from urban areas. This suggests that the overall demographics from this sample are far more urban, educated and wealthy than the population at large - and more likely to be CCP members - perhaps reflecting the higher education levels. I use the 2015 China Internet Watch report to compare to the online population, which is also more urban and highly educated. However since this also includes a large proportion of under-18s, excluded from my study, comparisons are difficult.

Table 1: Demographic Proportions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>2013 Census</th>
<th>2015 CNNIC survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>97.1%</td>
<td>91.51%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current CCP members</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>6.46%\textsuperscript{112}</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>CNNIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>&lt;19</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>0.203</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>0.312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td>0.217</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>0.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>0.193</td>
<td>0.194</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>0.191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>0.274</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{111} \url{http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2014/indexeh.htm}. Note that this census includes respondents from 6 and above rather than the 18 and above in my survey.

\textsuperscript{112} \url{http://www.china.org.cn/china/2015-06/29/content_35939304.htm}
Table 3: Urban: I did not include a variable for whether a respondent came from an urban or rural locale - but did include a measure of those who came from city-provinces (Shanghai, Beijing, Chongqing, Tianjin)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage from city-provinces</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>CNNIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.3197</td>
<td>0.0662</td>
<td>0.1717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Education: The survey only includes respondents over the age of 18 - so is much more likely to include people who have finished education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>CNNIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never educated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.264</td>
<td>0.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.408</td>
<td>0.365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High or professional</td>
<td>0.372</td>
<td>0.165</td>
<td>0.305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate and above</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While I did not measure income, the panel from Qualtrics resembles the income bracket from the 2013 census. Those in the panel are richer than the population as a whole. Again the survey only includes respondents over the age of 18 - so is much more likely to include people with higher income

Table 5: Monthly Income (RMB)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Panel</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>CNNIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 2,500</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500-4,000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,000-6,000</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,000-8,000</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,000+</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Pre-treatment attitude variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with China Central Government (1-10)</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Pride (1-10)</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in US Government’s China Policy (1-10)</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to United States (1-4)</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures 2-5: Pre-treatment attitude variables (percentages)
**Appendix 3: Randomisation check**

Table 1: Randomisation check. Pre-treatment variables, by group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>49.75%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>50.25%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-99</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>Han</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minority group</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP member</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once was</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>72.3%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels: ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1
Appendix 4: Distributions in the control group

Figure 1 graphs my main outcome variable in the controls. This shows there are unlikely to be ceiling or floor effects.

Figure 1: Grievances over women’s rights in China

Table 1: Distribution of main outcome variables, by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s rights good enough</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for women’s rights</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough done for women’s rights</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>88.7%</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education opportunities equal</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men more right to education</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For traditional roles</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men more right to jobs</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign petition for women’s rights</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign petition against women’s rights</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Impact of treatment on alternate measures of main dependent variable

Table 9: ATEs for belief China respects women’s rights (normalised)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>US &amp; flag</th>
<th>AU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>0.225**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US &amp; flag</td>
<td>0.307***</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.231**</td>
<td>-0.313***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU &amp; flag</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>-0.124</td>
<td>-0.256**</td>
<td>0.108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels: ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Table 10: ATEs for belief that the government has done enough for women’s rights (normalised)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>US &amp; flag</th>
<th>AU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>0.242**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US &amp; flag</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>-0.225**</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU &amp; flag</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>-0.111</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>0.114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels: ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Table 11: ATEs for belief that education opportunities are equal for men and women (normalised)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>US &amp; flag</th>
<th>AU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US &amp; flag</td>
<td>0.207**</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>-0.085</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>-0.292</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU &amp; flag</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>-0.037</td>
<td>0.254**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels: ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1
Appendix 6: Survey Questions in English (Chinese in supplementary appendix)

China Social Attitudes Survey

INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT

This survey is about your social attitudes. It has been developed by academic researchers, and will only be seen by the survey researchers. The survey results will allow us to get a sense of the attitudes on important social issues of people like yourself.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you will answer some questions about yourself and your attitudes towards different policies. The questions should take about 10 minutes to answer. If you complete the survey, you will receive a small reward.

If you agree to participate, you may refuse to answer any of the questions. Your participation in this study will be confidential. Any identifying information will be accessible only to the researchers and will never appear in any sort of report that might be published or shared. Your personal identity will never be linked to your survey responses, so please answer as honestly as you can.

By clicking on the arrow below, you are agreeing to participate in the survey.

(Thank-you)

Thank-you for your participation. If you have any questions or concerns, please email:
If you have concerns about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the Institutional Research Board (irb@princeton.edu).

Section 1: Basic individual attributes

D1. What is your gender?

- <01> Male
- <02> Female
- <99> No answer

D2. In what province do you live?

- <01> Anhui
- <02> Beijing
- <03> Chongqing
- <04> Fujian
- <05> Gansu
- <06> Guangdong
- <07> Guangxi
- <08> Hainan
- <09> Hebei
- <10> Heilongjiang
- <11> Henan
- <12> Hong Kong
- <13> Hubei
- <14> Hunan
- <15> Inner Mongolia
- <16> Jiangsu
- <17> Jiangxi
- <18> Jilin
- <19> Liaoning
- <20> Ningxia
- <21> Qinghai
- <22> Shaanxi
- <23> Shandong
- <24> Shanghai
- <25> Shanxi
- <26> Sichuan
- <27> Taiwan
- <28> Tianjin
- <29> Tibet
- <30> Xinjiang
- <31> Yunnan
- <32> Zhejiang
- <99> No answer

D3. How old are you?
D4. What is your ethnicity?

- <01> Han
- <02> Minority
- <99> No answer

D5. What is your highest education level?

- <01> None
- <02> Primary School
- <03> Middle School
- <04> High School or Equivalent
- <05> Professional Certificate
- <06> Undergraduate
- <07> Masters
- <08> Doctorate or above
- <9999> No answer
D6. Do you now belong or have you belonged to the Communist Party?

- <1> Belong now
- <2> Not now, but have belonged in the past
- <3> Have never belonged
- <99> No answer

D7: How much attention do you pay to foreign news?

- <1> A lot of attention
- <2> Some attention
- <3> Not much attention
- <4> No attention at all
- <99> No answer

D8: How proud are you of to be Chinese?

Proud

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- <99> No answer

D9: For each of the below, please tell me how much trust you have in them.

i. NGOs
D10: In general, how do you feel towards the United States?

- <1> Very favourable
- <2> Favourable
- <3> Unfavourable
- <4> Very unfavourable
- <99> No answer
D11: How much do you agree with the following? People should always support the decisions of their government even if they disagree with these decisions

- <1> Strongly agree
- <2> Agree
- <3> Disagree
- <4> Strongly Disagree
- <99> No answer

D12: On a scale of 1 - 10, where 10 is extremely satisfied and 1 not at all satisfied, how satisfied are you with the performance of the Chinese central government?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all satisfied</th>
<th>Extremely satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- <99> No answer

Part 2: Social Attitudes

Control

Please answer the following questions:

Treatment 1a: US SOURCE
Please read the following text from a recent newspaper article and then answer the subsequent questions:

“According to a media report, yesterday a United States spokeswoman criticised China’s women’s rights conditions. She said: “The Chinese government must improve the rights of women in China”

Treatment 2a: AU SOURCE

Please read the following text from a recent newspaper article and then answer the subsequent questions:

“According to a media report, yesterday an African Union spokeswoman criticised China’s women’s rights conditions. She said: “The Chinese government must improve the rights of women in China”

Treatment 1b: US SOURCE x FLAG

Please read the following text from a recent newspaper article and then answer the subsequent questions:

“According to a media report, yesterday a United States spokeswoman criticised China’s women’s rights conditions. She said: “The Chinese government must improve the rights of women in China”

Treatment 2b: AU SOURCE x FLAG
Please read the following text from a recent newspaper article and then answer the subsequent questions:

“According to a media report, yesterday an African Union spokeswoman criticised China’s women’s rights conditions. She said: “The Chinese government must improve the rights of women in China”

For the following questions, do you strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree?

15. At present China’s women’s rights situation is not good enough
   - <1> Strongly agree
   - <2> Agree
   - <3> Disagree
   - <4> Strongly Disagree
   - <99> No answer

16. University education is more important for boys than girls
   - <1> Strongly agree
   - <2> Agree
17. When jobs are scarce, men have more right to work than women
- <1> Strongly agree
- <2> Agree
- <3> Disagree
- <4> Strongly Disagree
- <99> No answer

18. Men belong at work, women belong at home
- <1> Strongly agree
- <2> Agree
- <3> Disagree
- <4> Strongly Disagree
- <99> No answer

19. In most aspects, China has already done enough to improve women’s rights
- <1> Strongly agree
- <2> Agree
- <3> Disagree
- <4> Strongly Disagree
- <99> No answer

20. Please choose “Strongly disagree” from the following choices:
21. In China, men and women’s education opportunities are not equal
   - <1> Strongly agree
   - <2> Agree
   - <3> Disagree
   - <4> Strongly Disagree
   - <99> No answer

22. Are women’s rights respected in China?
   - <1> Very well respected
   - <2> Respected
   - <3> Not respected very well
   - <4> Not respected at all
   - <99> No answer

23. Are you willing to sign a petition calling on the government to put in place policies that improve women’s rights?
   - <1> Yes
   - <2> No
   - <99> No answer
24. Are you willing to sign a petition calling on the government to not put in place policies that improve women’s rights?
   - <1> Yes
   - <2> No
   - <99> No answer

Supplementary Treatment 1: “The United States spokeswoman continued: “Rather than the Chinese people, it is the Chinese government that has not ensured women’s rights are good enough in recent years”

Supplementary Treatment 2: “The African Union spokeswoman continued: “Rather than the Chinese people, it is the Chinese government that has not ensured women’s rights are good enough in recent years”

25. At present China’s women’s rights situation is good enough
   - <1> Strongly agree
   - <2> Agree
   - <3> Disagree
   - <4> Strongly Disagree
   - <99> No answer

26. When jobs are scarce, women have less right to work than men
   - <1> Strongly agree
- <2> Agree
- <3> Disagree
- <4> Strongly Disagree
- <99> No answer
CONCLUSION

Thank-you for agreeing to participate in this survey. The findings will be used for an academic research project on social attitudes in China.

The statements in section two were created solely for the purpose of this project. Any comments attributed to individual actors or groups were invented purely for this study.

All of your answers will be kept strictly confidential. Again, if you have any questions or concerns, please email:

zdiaocha@gmail.com

Click on the arrow to complete the survey
Appendix 1: Survey distribution

Figure 1: Distribution of Surveys, in month of July 2011

Table 1: Demographic variables, before and after Dalai Lama meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5 days before meeting</th>
<th>5 days after meeting</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.52*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth year</td>
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<td>Urban</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income (1-5 scale)</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.59***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.16***</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Provincial</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Province PPP</td>
<td>9700</td>
<td>9272***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan Minority</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.16**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1
Conclusion

Appendix 1

Figure 1: Detentions of dissidents in China 1987 - 2014, according to Congressional Executive Commission on China database