

MIXED SIGNALS

The Chinese Government and the 2017 Anti-South Korean Movement

By Jack Ramsey ◦ Thanks to Dr. Laura Field ◦ Mentor: Dr. Yang Zhang

Research Question

Why did the Chinese government allow protests against South Korea in 2017?



Literature Review

Why do authoritarian states allow protest?

Domestic Concerns School:
Because of domestic benefits

Unhelpful Constraints School:
Because it can't suppress them

Audience Costs School:
In order to signal resolve

Results: Predicted vs. Actual Government Stance on Protests

Case / Variable	H ₁ : Perceived Resolve of Foreign Country	H ₂ : Signal Credibility of Protests	H ₃ : Risk to Stability of Protests	Predicted Government Stance	DV: Actual Government Stance on Protests
Anti-American (1999)	Medium-high	Very high, then medium	High	Allowance, then restriction	Ambivalence, then restriction
Anti-Japanese (2005)	High	High	Medium, then high	Allowance, then restriction	Subtle encouragement, then restriction
Anti-South Korean (2017)	High	Medium (mixed)	Low	Allowance	Support and some direct coercion

Explanation: Economic Retaliation and Signal Credibility

Case / Variable	Degree of Economic Pressure	Degree of Government Support for Economic Pressure	H ₂ : Signal Credibility of Protests
Anti-American (1999)	Low	(Mostly absent)	Very high, then medium
Anti-Japanese (2005)	Medium	Ambivalence	High
Anti-South Korean (2017)	Very high	Direct support and some top-down leadership	Medium (mixed)

Implications

-Economic coercion can still produce concessions, but not voluntary ones (as in the 1999 and 2005 cases)

-Could lead to more antagonistic foreign relations and threaten the global trade regime

Methodology

Small-n Case Study

-Comparing the 2017 protests to anti-Japanese protests in 2005 and anti-American protests in 1999

-Utilizing official government releases and coverage by both Chinese government-owned and foreign media

Findings

-The existing model can still predict the allowance of protests

-Signal credibility seems to decrease with economic coercion