Communication and Commitment: The Strategic Use of the Media in China and Other Autocracies

by

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言多必失

Yanduo bishi

"It can be dangerous to speak too much."

A Chinese Proverb

For my parents, Robert E. Rooy and Sara M. Jones-Rooy, and my grandparents, William C. Jones III, Sara D. Ferris, George Rooy, and Jeanette Rooy

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for scholarly work have made a lasting impression. In addition, his endless curiosity and refusal to be limited by academic disciplinary boundaries is something for which we should all strive.

I will come back to Scott Page in a moment. My dissertation committee members are not the only people who have served as advisors, inspirational figures, mentors, and friends here at the University of Michigan. Anna Grzymala-Busse, Bill Clark, Mary Gallagher, Kenneth Lieberthal, and Carl Simon, in particular, have all at various times (and some over and over again) donated their time to help a wayward student learn about: how to *do* academic work (Anna), how to understand China (Ken and Mary), why we should care about eigenvalues (and more! from Carl), and the real difference between cats and dogs (Bill). Each has given me frank advice that has stuck with me, even though I was not formally their student. All who get to work with them are lucky.

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In addition to all these great faculty members, another reason the University of Michigan is a great place to be a graduate student is that there are so many interesting things going on. The Center for the Study of Complex Systems, in particular, became a home-away-from home for me for many years, and it was filled with students and faculty from all sorts of disciplines. My favorite hours as a student here were probably those spent doing problem sets in the CSCS conference room with students in fields as (seemingly) far apart as physics, natural resources, and engineering. Carl Simon, Mark Newman, Rick Riolo, and Scott Page all play a big role here, too.

Yet a third reason the University of Michigan is a great place to be a graduate student – or to be anyone, really – is that the other graduate students are delightful.

I am very grateful to have been a part of a department that was filled with so much camaraderie, mutual respect, and friendship. I could list everyone in the department (and a few other departments while we're at it), but instead I'll direct the reader to the online list of all graduate students and give each one here and now my full endorsement: A+! They're all fabulous.

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More people should be like Gerrit.

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Richard also provided the music soundtrack to the entire dissertation experience, as he is a gifted DJ who put together no fewer than 31 CDs for me to listen to as I write, read, drive, and everything else. He has also provided entertainment (from dancing to backgammon), outstanding meals (you really should try his vegan split pea soup), a medically ideal combination of water, bourbon, beer, and coffee as the situation called for it, and a sense of humor and perspective that makes life all-around-better. I am not only grateful for his help, but also, much more importantly, beyond glad he's been a part of all of this. I also hope I can at least remotely come close to returning the favor when it's his turn.

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(among the many, many emails that came over the years) was not one about work (though those were great, too), but one that said, "life is just so darn fun". While I'm glad that during my time at Michigan I got to finish my dissertation, I am even more glad that I got to know Scott.

Finally, in addition to my parents, this dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents. Not only did they raise two great children (that would be my parents), but they also have been on my mind since I started this endeavor. When I have felt down, or as though I couldn't finish, they were my inspiration. My grandmother, Jeanette Rooy, and grandfather, George Rooy, both moved to the United States when they were very young, and bravely started brand new lives. My grandfather, William C. Jones III, sought adventure everywhere he went, and always succeeded in finding it, all while doing service for our country.

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Because of her, I did.

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ABSTRACT

Communication and Commitment: The Strategic Use of the Media in Autocracies

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Co-Chairs: Robert Axelrod and Scott E. Page

Why do some international events make news headlines in autocratic countries, while others do not? When do they give events prominent attention, and when do they bury them? When do they present the news with bias?

This dissertation offers answers to these questions. It evaluates two contending theories for what appears in the news: a theory of audience costs, and an original theory of a tradeoff between legitimacy and credibility. The legitimacy-credibility theory makes additional predictions about when autocrats will use bias in presentation of news. The focus of the dissertation is on China's national media, but the theoretical propositions should hold for other autocratic regimes.

The dissertation statistically evaluates several hypotheses through analysis of the *People's Daily* from 1990-2008 and conducts case studies of international coverage of the Arab Spring (2010-2011) by China, the United States, France, Russia, and Venezuela. It also considers China's coverage of earthquakes and China's coverage of events in the US since 1949.

The dissertation finds support for the theory that autocratic leaders balance dual desires of building regime legitimacy and maintaining media credibility. Specifically,

the more likely events are to be politically sensitive, the less likely leaders are to cover them directly. The effect of sensitivity is mediated, however, by public interest. As public interest in an event increases, leaders are more likely to cover the event in a biased fashion. When interest is very high, leaders cover very sensitive events directly – the effect of liability disappears altogether. The logic is consistent for non-crisis and historical events.

The findings from this dissertation fill gaps in international relations understandings of audience costs in autocracies, as well as for constructivist arguments about how actors see the world. The research also contributes to literatures in comparative politics, including how autocracies use the media for domestic regime stability. Finally, the research helps further scholarship on China in three ways. It offers a formal logic for China's use of the media, it links China's behavior to that of other autocracies, ands it incorporates our understanding of China into broader research in international relations.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

On August 23, 2011, the *New York Times* reported a breakthrough in a series of military clashes between rebel forces and government soldiers in Libya. Their front page headline read, in large, bold font, "Rebels Storm Qaddafi Compound". The article appeared at the top, front, and center of both their print and electronic publications. The online article was accompanied by a fourteen-photo slideshow of the event. The slideshow included images of fighters standing on Qaddafi's favorite sculpture; Libyan rebels preparing to enter the compound; rebels entering and taking a flat screen TV; a rebel wearing a Qaddafi military-style hat; and many of rebels fighting in different locations. Thirteen of the fourteen captions for the photos boasted phrases indicating a successful outcome for the rebels. The captions described that the rebels "stormed ... into the compound"; they explained "a fighter celebrated" and "rebels celebrated the news". Another proclaimed that "the invasion and pillaging ... was an important symbolic moment". Only one caption among the fourteen indicated that it was not entirely clear whether the rebels were indeed in complete control of the compound.

On the same day, the *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*), a prominent national newspaper in China, carried its own headline about the same development. This time,

however, the headline read, "Tripoli Battle Not Over as Qaddafi Forces Strike Back". This headline did not feature as prominently as that in the *Times*. Instead, it was presented in a list along with four other headlines about national news, all of which appeared below several other larger headlines on the online front page. The headline was followed by the sub-headline, "Forces loyal to the hidden Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi struck back against the rebel fighters who had swept into Tripoli."

Only one photo was included in the *Daily* coverage of the event, and it appeared in a rotation with four other photos that were unrelated to Libya. A reader accessing the online paper would thus only have a twenty percent chance of seeing this photo unless they remained on the front page for several minutes and did not scroll down very far. The photo was of a widely internationally circulated photo of Qaddafi's son making a peace sign gesture. The caption read, "Son appears on Tripoli street." The photo and caption alone did not indicate that a conflict had taken place. Should a reader simply see this photo, she may not realize any major event had transpired. Three other short articles appeared in the lower half of the *Daily*'s online front page. To find them, the reader would have to scroll down an entire frame and look through dozens of other deadlines in order to find, "Libyan Armed Opposition Attack", "Gaddafi says he's still in capital", and "Reflection on the Negative Effects [of the crisis in Libya]".

These two national papers both describe that a surge by rebel forces against forces loyal to Moammar Gaddafi, the longstanding leader of Libya, had taken place. They agree, too, that the surge represented a spike in activity in a series of violent clashes that had been taking place in Libya since March 2011. They also agree that the major players involved included Qaddafi's forces and the rebel forces. Finally, they even agree on some of the specific military actions that took place.

The similarities stop there, however. The papers give different levels of attention to the event, and they come to very different conclusions about the event. First, regarding attention, the *Times* gives the issue greater prominence and a dozen more

photos than the *People's Daily*. The *Daily* embeds it among several other articles and offers only one rotating photo. A reader of the *New York Times* online that day would come to the conclusion that this was the major breaking news of the day, if not week or month. A reader of the *People's Daily* might notice that the event took place, but she might miss it entirely if another equally or more prominent news headline first captured his or her attention.

The most striking difference is that the two papers interpret the events very differently, and ultimately come to very different conclusions about it. The most striking difference between these stories is that they come to very different conclusions about the event. According to the *Times*, the event was generally very successful, if not completely, for the rebels. According to the *Daily*, rebel forces struggled and met their match as they attempted to enter the compound. Apart from the basic fact that some military activity took place, the coverage by each side has very little in common with the other. This different interpretation means the papers draw very different lessons from the event: in the *Times*, the coverage suggests this rebel effort was a success, and perhaps even ought to be repeated in the future. The *Daily* depicts it as a risky undertaking that may not have been worth the costs.

The differences between the two papers' coverage of the events become even starker when we consider not just the headlines and photos, but also the actual content of the articles. The first sentences alone of the major article in each paper on the attempt by the rebels to take over the compound are telling. In "Rebels Storm Qaddafi Compound", the *New York Times* writes as its opening sentence,

> Backed by NATO airstrikes and seasoned reinforcements, rebel fighters crashed through the gates of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi's fortress-like compound Tuesday, running madly across its sprawling lawns, ransacking its barracks for weapons, and carting off mementos of his 42-year dictatorship.

It is a dramatic scene. On the other hand, the *People's Daily* opens its article, "Tripoli Battle Not Over as Qaddafi Forces Strike Back" with the statement,

> Forces loyal to the hidden Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi struck back against the rebel fighters who had swept into Tripoli on Sunday night, forcing them to retreat from several strategic locations and tempering hopes that the battle for Tripoli was all but over.[1]

According to these two accounts, two very different events took place, and with very different consequences. A reader of the *New York Times* would feel triumphant and optimistic about the power of rebellions and even democratization, while a *People's Daily* reader would be skeptical about the effectiveness of challenging an established regime. A conversation between these readers would be difficult. It would likely be met with frustration and confusion about not just what actually took place, but also about whether it should have taken place. Further, there would also be disagreement over the next course of action – what is likely to transpire? What, from an ethical perspective, *should* transpire? A *New York Times* reader would prescribe a continued push for full control of the compound. A *People's Daily* reader might hope for a withdrawal to save lives over what is likely already a lost cause.

The fact that it's relatively unlikely for readers of one of these papers to talk much with readers of the other means that in the short term, few confusing conversations like the hypothetical one described here will actually take place. In addition, of course, this is just an isolated, single-day event, and we should not overstate the effect of reading just one news story and glancing at a few photographs.

Closer consideration reveals two more troubling aspects. First, while in the short run it probably saves a bit of confusion for readers of the *Times* and the *Daily* to not talk with each other, in the long run this typical lack of communication between

[1]The fact that this sentence mentions "Sunday" and the *New York Times* mentions "Tuesday" is not a problem. The rebel forces had been in Tripoli for some time before the actual clash took place on Tuesday. Both articles are covering the same event.

readers of these two papers means few opportunities for reconciliation or sharing of these different interpretations of the news. Second, while this is just one event, is it characteristic of broader trends in reporting between these two papers? If these two newspapers repeatedly present particular types of events in consistently different ways, readers may gain not just different understandings of a few events, but may form different impressions about broader causal relationships, such as the efficacy of violence, the consequences of rebellion, and the role of third party intervention in international conflict. Different interpretations of events can also affect the preferences, beliefs, or opinions that readers form: Removing an unpleasant leader might sound tempting, but is it worth the chaos that is required to achieve it? A reader of the *Daily* might say no, while a reader of the *Times* might say yes.

A great deal of research in political communication, the media, and the psychology of learning suggests that what people read in the news affects how they think about the world. In democratic systems, evidence suggests media need not affect underlying beliefs, it can simply alter what readers find important, and thus changing expressed attitudes (Zaller 1992, Iyengar and Kinder 1987). It also suggests that newspaper media, even in the age of the Internet, is still a source of information for many people (Moro and Aikat 2010, Ihlstrom and Henfridsson 2005, Chyi and Lasorsa 1999), and especially on the subject of international affairs, where the public is typically thought to be less informed or interested, except when leaders and the media specifically draw attention to issues (Wittkopf et al. 2008, Powlick and Katz 2008, Holsti 1996, Hurwitz and Peffley 1990, 1987).

Systematically different presentations of world affairs could, according to this view, over time contribute to deeply held beliefs about not just how to achieve political goals, but also what those goals should be. It might even instill impressions about what is appropriate, legitimate, and acceptable – and what is not. As March and Olsen (2009) write, rules are followed when they are "seen as natural, rightful, ex-

pected, and legitimate" (p. 163). What is considered appropriate need not be pleasant: "a logic of appropriateness may produce truth telling, fairness, honesty, trust, and generosity, but also blood feuds, vendettas, and ethnic conflicts" (March and Olsen 2006). Repeatedly describing international events in ways that invoke ideas that justify conflict may lead to precisely the normatively undesirable outcomes of "blood feuds, vendettas, and ethnic conflicts" that March and Olsen describe.

The probability that biased coverage may be repeated seems higher when we consider that many international issues are characterized by series of events that last several days to several months or years. The surge in August in Libya was just one event in a long rebel experience that began in March 2011. The US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has lasted years. Multiparty negotiations with North Korea capture attention for weeks at a time, only to disappear and resurface months or years later. It is difficult to reframe events after a particular frame has been imposed. Of the above events, US involvement in Iraq has been reframed the most, but even then has seen only approximately three successful, lasting frames: removing weapons of mass destruction, disposing of a dangerous dictator, and securing Iraqi freedom. Another frame might be increasing US national security, but this could also be interpreted as simply implicit in the previous three frames.

How individuals in any country perceive these events is a result of exposure to facts, opinions, and both implicit and explicit causal narratives about many daily events. This is especially so for international events, where the vast majority is not only not present to personally watch events unfolding, but they also very rarely even know anyone who is present. Our information about international events comes almost exclusively from major media outlets and the social media sites where people share them. For example, while the US is directly involved in Iraq, very few US citizens experience firsthand the events unfolding there. When we consider that most international events do not involve the US, it becomes apparent that we rely very

heavily on information from authorities, including the media and our political elites.

It has become popular to argue that social media will democratize international relations. Most citizens' peers on social media networks, however, are rarely physically present for most news-worthy international events. Rather, the extent to which citizens do learn about international events from their social media connections tends to be when peers share links to major media outlets or create posts about their own opinions based on their reading of major media stories. If individuals really wished to learn about international events firsthand, they might seek blogs or posts by individuals directly involved, but this is rarely done.

When we then consider other international events where the US is not directly involved, but is instead an observer, the probability that a particular citizens and/or his or her peers will have firsthand knowledge of the event decreases even further. Interesting research on the role of diaspora populations suggests that countries can have links based on family and friends who have moved, but even then the role of these connections tends to be more for sharing personal information than for sharing news about international events. Finally, many have argued that tools like Twitter allowed information about the election protests in Iran to spread when journalists were barred (Pikulsky et al. 2011, *The Daily Beast* coverage 2009). Even in this case, however, limited information was revealed, and frames were later imposed by national media that have been longer lasting (Cohen 2009).

It is common knowledge that many media sources have their own biases. For example, many newspapers and television news stations in the US are thought to be more liberal or more conservative. It is also common knowledge that different events can be sometimes described, or "framed", in different ways – for example, an event can be a "crisis" or it can be a "challenge". It is less understood how different countries interpret world events: Is there any systematic feature to the biases imposed? If so, what does that logic look like? Do autocracies and democracies

present interpretations of events according to similar logics? If not, why not?

The purpose of this dissertation is to fill a gap in the Political Science understanding of the logic behind whether and to what extent international events are presented in the national news in autocracies. I am interested both in the salience and the meaning ascribed to events presented in the international news. Leaders of all types of regimes, not just democracies have reasons to be strategic about what appears in the national media (for a good review of democracies, see Baum 2004). As will be reviewed in subsequent chapters, we know a great detail about when democratic leaders "go public" about international events, but we do not have a good understanding of what they say, and nor do we know why events are given attention outside the strict context of audience costs. The logic of audience costs dictates that leaders strategically make public statements about their stance on international issues in order to signal to foreign adversaries their commitment to that policy. If the leader does not follow through on this public statement, they are thought to incur costs in the form of punishment from their domestic audience for backing down (Fearon 1994, 1997).

Of course, the content that appears in the national media in democracies regarding foreign affairs is not all simply the result of leaders' efforts to generate audience costs. The decision to cover an event in any given news outlet is instead the result of incentives for both journalists and politicians. On the journalistic side, these incentives can include the desire to sell papers or advertising, to fulfill beliefs about transparency, and even to satisfy journalistic curiosity. On the political side, covering international events might be not just for audience cost generation, but also to raise awareness, bolster domestic approval, or even weaken public support for a political adversary. As Potter and Baum point out, democracy is often thought to be nearly synonymous with an independent media (Potter and Baum 2010), but it need not be necessarily. In fact, a mix of politicians and strategic media executives that exerts influence over what appears in the national news in most democracies. In times of

crisis, for example, research shows democratic leaders exert especially high influence over media content (Schudson 2002).

Thus, while my focus is specifically on when autocracies exert influence over the national media, the results may have implications for a leader of any regime type, so long as they have some opportunity for influence over the messages that appear in the mass media. For now, however, attempting to discover the logic behind autocracies offers an important contribution. We know very little about when and how autocratic regimes draw attention to international affairs. Yet, leaders of autocracies typically have more control over the national media than their democratic counterparts, so it is surprising we have not already investigated this matter.

To address this, I develop a theory of the strategic use of the national media by leaders of autocratic regimes, and I test it using several empirical strategies. I argue that there are systematic patterns in the information about world events that appears in the national media of autocracies, and that these patterns can be predicted and measured. Central to my argument is the consideration of whether and when leaders have incentives to manipulate what appears in the national media. There are two primary incentives that drive leaders when they make these choices: incentives to maintain legitimacy, but a sometimes contradictory desire to remain a credible news source. The news that appears in the national headlines in autocratic regimes ends up there as a result of leaders' attempt to balance the tension between wanting to increase legitimacy while maintaining credibility.

I support the argument by examining how autocracies use the national media. Most of the empirical work in this dissertation draws on China's media coverage of international events, but the major theoretical arguments and the fundamental logic driving my analysis should hold for autocracies general. As mentioned, very little in the way of systematic understanding is known about how autocrats use the media. Most of what we do know tends to come from close case studies of a single regime

over a single issue. This research is important, as it paints a picture of the myriad ways autocracies can use the media. They have so far, however, not been considered together, and nor has an attempt been made to link these stories according to a common logic. Finally, no effort exists that systematically tests any more general claims about how autocrats use the media. Instead, more general research on autocracies tends to emphasize either that autocracies can say whatever they like, or that autocracies are sensitive to changes in the media environment, such as the rapid increase in Internet and mobile communication, but they do not go much further to say when, how, or to what extent autocracies adjust their reporting patterns based on these changes.

A growing availability of data about the headlines that appear around the world means that large-n statistical analysis of the use of the media in different countries is possible. The commonplaceness of online archives, coupled with the existence of digitized historical databases of newspaper content, means that trends can also be examined over time. Finally, the tools of content analysis allow for the analysis of large quantities of text data, such as that which can be collected from these growing online and digital archives. The empirical strategy in this dissertation takes advantage of these developments, and combines them with statistical analysis and formal modeling to develop a theory of how leaders strategically use the media and test its claims over a large-n analysis of the real-time coverage of events.

Very broadly, the motivation for the project comes from a speculation that what we know about the world affects what we do in it. By "what we do", I mean everything from how we react to actions by others, to the goals we seek, to the actors we punish, and to the act we deem punishable. It has been argued widely that putting a political issue in the news invites scrutiny of leaders over their handling of that issue. I expect it may do more than that. It sends a message about the types of events that are important in the first place and the types of outcomes that are acceptable. It may

introduce ideas in the minds of the population about which actors we can trust, and which actors have motives that may undermine our own interests.

The extent to which public opinion influences international conflict has been the subject of much research already and is not the goal of this project. How the media might shape public opinion has also been examined by many scholars, and is also outside the scope of this analysis. Thus, in this dissertation I make no claims about the ultimate effects of the systematic departures in coverage of events in different countries, except to state that they exist, and that I believe they matter. The extent to which these differences in media coverage might explain systematic differences in international relations, such as the persistence of conflictual relationships and the persistence of peaceful relationships between states, is left for future work. Instead, before we are able to think about connections between patterns in event reporting in the national news and outcomes in international relations, we must first establish whether and why there might patterns, whether these patterns can be measured, and, empirically, whether they do indeed exist. This is the goal of this dissertation.

Divergent coverage of events can be more pernicious than the example described above, which was already quite striking in how different the US and China's papers covered the same event. Sometimes the media vilify other actors, regardless of whether they are central or to the issue under consideration. On August 8, 2011, the *New York Times* published an article about the stock market drop that month. The article was titled, "Chinese Fault Beijing Over Foreign Reserves" (Aug. 8, 2011), and it reported that nationalistic Internet postings in China blamed the leadership for not taking a harder stance against the United States. This argument is similar to one made by many China scholars. For example, Wu (2007) writes that the Chinese government worry considerably about very passionately nationalistic Chinese citizens spreading strong critical statements against the government after many major international events.

August 9, 2011, the *People's Daily* online page featured many headlines about PLA defense plans, a claim that Japan owes China more military transparency, and a comment about the US needing to be punished for selling weapons to Taiwan. There was no mention of the debt crisis that made news the day before in the United States. Finally, under a section of the paper titled "Ideas Meet, Contend, and Flourish" there appeared an article titled "Does the Arab Spring + 20 years = Russia?", which is interesting, but not relevant to foreign reserves or the international economy. Other headlines feature China-centric news, including Premier Wen vowing to punish those responsible for the train crash six days earlier and that many Chinese citizens continue to be upset about Japanese textbooks.

The only mention of the economic events regarding "Black Monday" is the S & P credit rating downgrade of the US in the context of how it may affect the Chinese economy. There also appear three other headlines about how it may not necessarily hurt it, and about how despite the downfall in stocks elsewhere, China has performed reasonably well. It also features a photo from the riots in England that were taking place at that time.

It is one thing to discuss several examples of divergent coverage of events, or of coverage that vilifies another actor. It is another to determine whether this happens with any regularity. By the end of the dissertation I intend to have demonstrated that these differences do take place according to regular, even predictable, patterns. I next outline the dissertation by chapter. The chapter immediately following this considers the literature that has come before on how leaders of democracies and how leaders of autocracies use the media for political gain, both domestically and abroad. These provide the starting point for the analysis and empirical evaluation that follow in the rest of the dissertation.

1.2 Organization of the Dissertation

In the next chapter I examine three cases closely. Specifically, I evaluate China's coverage of the unrest in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya from December 2010 to March 2011. I show that the three case studies support the hypotheses derived from my formal model regarding indirect versus direct coverage. For robustness, I compare my findings for China's direct and indirect coverage patterns to patterns in the US, France, Russia, and, briefly, Venezuela. I find that more autocratic countries follow China's behavior and more democratic countries in general tend toward direct (though not perfectly direct) coverage.

In Chapter 3 I review extant literatures on the politically strategic use of the national media in autocracies and democracies. I introduce both the audience costs logic as well as the logic of the credibility-legitimacy theory of media use.

In Chapter 4 I describe my theory of how autocrats strategically use the media when they cover international events. I present a formal decision-theoretic model that specifies the strategic incentives facing autocratic leaders as they choose to draw attention towards or away from international events. In the model autocrats want to cover events in the national news that reflect positively on the regime, and they want to not cover events that pose a potential political liability. By political liability I mean any event that could could incite, provoke, anger, or otherwise promote political controversy in China, such as a revolution in another country, a challenge to China by the US over a sensitive issue, or a disagreement with Taiwan or Japan. The ideal outcome would be that the national media covers only events that are not political liabilities.

However, even autocrats with very high levels of media control can rarely hold perfect control. This means that some issues are going to leak. If the public is going to find out an event after all, the leaders prefer that they find out about the event from the government directly. Thus, if an event is highly publicized elsewhere in the

world, for example, the government may cover it regardless of its political riskiness.

In countries, including China, where much of the media is a source of revenue, a big story is worth covering not just because of how much international media attention there is to it. China's leaders want to sell newspapers to consumers, so if an event is high magnitude or otherwise of public interest, the economic incentives to publish stories about the event may outweigh the political risks to doing so.[2]

To summarize the contributions of Chapter 4, first, I offer a formal analysis of how China's leadership balances the desire to keep public interest high while drawing attention away from politically sensitive events. I then derive conditions under which China's leaders publicize events. Specifically, as public interest increases, I expect China will be more likely to cover the event so that they keep public attention and maintain credibility. But, as political liability increases, I expect the government will be more hesitant to cover the event, as they may be wary of risks to regime stability or loss of control over public sentiment. These expectations form the hypotheses for the empirical evaluation of the theory in the second half of the dissertation.

In Chapter 5, I begin the empirical analysis of my theory. I develop a modified audience costs model for autocracies, and then I evaluate whether autocracies use the media for generating audience costs, as evidence suggests their democratic counterparts do. To find out, I statistically evaluate an original dataset of China's coverage of international events from 1990-2008 and find little support for an audience costs argument for China. Instead, I find that Chinese coverage of international events is negatively related with domestic conditions. The worse the economic performance of China's economy, the more foreign events are covered.

In Chapter 6, I test the legitimacy-credibility theory. I again evaluate the coverage of international events in the *People's Daily* that are exemplary of events that vary in terms of public interest and political liability. I consider the same conflict events from

[2]See Shirk (2006) and Lynch (1999) for a discussion of the commercialization of the media in China.

Chapter 2, and then add additional non-conflict events to evaluate my claims. To inform the coding used in this empirical section, I also develop and conduct an expert survey in which China scholars code a series of hypothetical and real international events according to the extent to which they pose political liabilities or might be of public interest. I find support for the legitimacy-credibility theory in my analysis. The Chinese government is more likely to cover international events when public interest is high. They are less likely to cover events the more politically liable they are, but as interest increases, the effect of liability diminishes. This explains why we sometimes observe autocratic governments publishing stories about international events, even if they are potentially risky to the autocratic government. In other words, it is the need for credibility that drives autocratic governments to choose to publicize politically sensitive news stories.

In Chapter 7, I consider non-crisis events as well as events in decades prior to 1990. I do this for two reasons. First, it could be that conflict and crisis events pose a special worry for autocratic regimes like China that prioritize domestic stability. It may be that any political liability or sensitivity associated with a non-crisis event might not be considered to be as dangerous as that associated with crisis events. Second, the logic of this dissertation rests on the observation that China's control of the flow of information is imperfect. Scholars of China have found that China's control over the national flow of information has decreased in the past two decades, which means they must be more sensitive to levels of public interest in events than in the past. If this is so, this implies that in the analysis of coverage of international events before 1990, we should see the Chinese government demonstrate less regard for potential public interest in an event, and instead behave solely according to whether the event is potentially politically liable. Furthermore, we should see this sensitivity to liability decrease over time even in this historical period, as China relaxes its control over media over time. The role of interest should, in other words, increase over this

period.

To evaluate non-crisis and historical events, I consider two new sources of data. First, I collect data on the biggest 30 earthquakes since 1990 and evaluate China's coverage of them. Second, I consider China's coverage of 30 "big" historical events in which the US was involved from 1948-1989. I find that China's overall attention to earthquakes is low, but that they give more media attention to earthquakes that take place in locations where earthquakes are uncommon, and to earthquakes that cause high numbers of casualties. This suggests that the choice over these events may be driven by the potential public interest in the event, and that the uniformly low levels of political liability allow interest to play the dominant role in this decision. The analysis of China's historical coverage of major events with US involvement offers several surprises. China at times gives some events very high levels of attention, and at other times ignores seemingly similar events. There are two possible explanations. First, China may indeed have been able to be more selective about what events to cover in the past when there was a higher degree of control over the flow of information. This would explain why similar events are covered or not covered, seemingly at the government's will. Second, this may be indicative of the role of the domestic political climate on China's coverage of events, as found in Chapter 5. China's coverage of international events appears to increase when the country is facing domestic political challenges.

Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation by summarizing the findings and contributions of the project. It then discusses avenues for future work. Several Appendices provide supplementary material.

CHAPTER II

Broader Patterns: A Case Study of The Arab Spring 2010-11

Chapter Abstract

Does the national media in different countries typically cover third party international events differently? I analyze the coverage of the first three months of unrest in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya during the Arab Spring (December 2010-March 2011) by five national newspapers in five countries. My central focus is on China, and I compare it to coverage of the same events in the United States, France, Russia, and Venezuela. The goal is to find out whether the anecdote presented in the introduction is exemplary of a broader divergence in issue presentation. I employ content analysis to evaluate differences in salience of the issue and the meanings associated with it in each country. I find that there is ample evidence of consistently divergent frames imposed on the same events. This finding provides motivation for the analysis as follows, as well as illustrates several key features of the theory of autocratic use of the media.

2.1 Introduction

In the Introduction I presented examples of differences in coverage of one event by two news sources in China and the United States. The event is an example of a third party international event to both of the countries; that is, while both countries expressed interest and even some mild involvement in the conflict, neither party was a key player in the developments. The accounts by these two countries of this event in a third country were very different. In this chapter I examine whether this difference is part of a larger patten. Do the same third party events consistently get presented differently in two different regimes? Or are the account normally the same, and this just happened to be an example of a rare divergence?

An alternative possible pattern to either consistent differences or consistent similarity would be that the early presentation of an event that is part of a larger series of developments is that the accounts begin different, but grow more similar over time. Research in international relations on the convergence of information about relative strengths as a conflict progresses would support this claim (Slantchev 2003, Powell 2002, Blainey 1988). Baum and Potter (2008) also present a related model where as an international event proceeds, the gap in knowledge between members of the leadership – who know more – and members of the public – who knows less –shrinks (Potter and Baum 2007). The mechanisms presented in both of these areas of work would support the idea that, over time, information leaks from diverse sources, the media are forced to keep up, and eventually both accounts grow similar.

On the other hand, two different countries may not follow this logic. In the above convergence of information during conflict model, the convergence of information is between two leaders who are bargaining. This means they are both communicating with each other and seeking information about the other. In the above media model, the gap in knowledge is domestic – between the media/leader and the public. Two different countries, alternatively, may not be actively seeking to match understanding,

or discover what the other is saying. They also don't typically share a leader - public relationship, where one side knows much more. In this case, two countries are covering a third party event, presumably know similar amounts about the event, and present them to audiences who also know considerably less. These differences make it hard to imagine reasons why the accounts would grow more similar over time.

The goal of this chapter is to evaluate three recent cases in terms of their international coverage. I employ corpus, or content, analysis to examine differences between the coverage of unrest in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt by five countries: the United States, China, France, Russia, and Venezuela. Analyses were conducted in the original language of popular national newspapers in each country. I analyze coverage in terms of salience and meaning. An analysis of keyword frequencies between the US and China reveals that attention was given much more heavily to Libya in the US rather than China, though China, surprisingly, did not neglect Libya as one might expect of an authoritarian regime interested in keeping protests at home at a minimum. A collocate analysis of how Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt are each discussed in China, however, reveals notable differences in coverage between the US's coverage of events. Specifically, I find that coverage in the United States tends to focus on major actions that we might imagine when thinking of a revolt. Coverage in China, however, appears to be more indirect, focusing instead on auxiliary events to the major ones unfolding in the region.

I then extend the analysis of collocates to five countries, which yields two main findings. First, coverage differs in all cases from country to country. In Europe, there appear to be regional interests influencing the coverage of side effects of events, for example. The second major finding is that differences seem to be pronounced along regime type lines. Coverage styles in France and the US are more similar to each other than to the other countries with lower democratic and media freedom scores. Coverage in China seems to more closely resemble that of Russia and Venezuela. Finally, the

extent to which coverage appears "biased" or "indirect" seems to increase as media freedom/democratic scores decrease.[1]

2.2 Methodology

Cross-national analysis of the news is common in linguistics (see Connor and Upton 2004 for a good review). No research has focused explicitly on the coverage of third party international events – i.e., international events where the host country does not play a significant or direct role in the event – nor has an attempt been made to systematically understand, from a political perspective, why the coverages in different countries differ. Most work is descriptive, or uses the evidence of different coverage as an explanatory variable for another phenomenon of interest. Rarely is the investigation aimed at understanding the roots of the divergent coverage itself.

I conduct corpus analysis on several different corpora collected from Internet resources. A corpus is a "large and principled collection of natural texts" (Biber et al. 1998, p. 12), which is to say it is a collection of texts that were produced independently of the research design, but are collected in a fashion so that the texts in the corpus are accurate representations of the real language structure and use that we might be interested in understanding.

Corpus linguistics is a branch of linguistics that is interested in understanding differences in language structure and use as well as changes in language use over time. A study such as this one of the spread of an issue in terms of both its salience and its meaning is served well by the techniques developed in this field. Two focal analytical areas of corpus linguistics, frequency and collocation, are directly helpful in understanding both issue importance and meaning in a body of text.

Frequency is simply the count of a particular word or words (or variants on that

[1]Media freedom and democracy are of course two different features of a country, but they tend to correlate strongly. See *Freedom of the Press* report 2011.

word(s)) in a body of texts, or corpus. A frequency count of the use of the word "energy" in a corpus that is representative of public discourse compared to the frequency of it in a text representative of government discourse can alone give us a good sense of how salient the issue is in one section of society compared to another. Frequency is helpful in determining the salience of a particular issue or idea in a corpus.

Collocation is useful for understanding the different senses or meanings a particular word can take on. Collocates are a subset of concordances, which are simply the words that appear near the target word. One might make a list of a window of words 5 ahead and 5 behind of the target word. Simply reviewing that list would give a useful and quick idea of the context in which words like "revolution" or "protest" is appearing. Collocates are words that frequently appear with the target word; they are less qualitatively rich than concordances, but easier to analyze for large-n data (either from large corpora or very high frequency words). For example, if one had a list of 500 instances of the word "Tunisia", rather than sift through all the concordances, one could add up the frequencies of various collocates (again, they might be collocates immediately before and after a word, or they might be words that consistently appear within a two to five-word window to either side), and from that infer the most common uses of a particular word.

The media is a natural place to look for information about what the public is reading about, but unfortunately (for these specific purposes), much of the information in the media comes from the government. At the same time, the media has incentives to sell newspapers, so it wants to select stories that will cause readers to want to purchase their papers. As Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) explain, this relationship of influence between newspapers and their readers is "bidirectional and dynamic" (p. 9). Baum and Potter (2008) add that the jury is largely out in the political science literature in terms of the direction of the causal arrow between the media and public opinion.

I use these tools to understand some major features of the use of the names of the countries Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya and related topics in different corpora. I selected the five major corpora I use in order to allow both cross-group and diachronic analysis.

2.2.1 Specifics

The analysis is designed to determine two things: How much a topic is covered (salience) and what the news is saying about it (meaning). To evaluate salience of an issue, I simply generate word lists, which sort all words in a corpus by frequency. To evaluate meaning, I apply the corpus analysis technique of collocation, which evaluates when words appear together with statistically greater frequency than chance.

The text I analyze comes from five newspapers around the world. Many were accessed directly from their news website, from which I downloaded all original content (*People's Daily, New York Times, Rossiiyskaya Gazeta*). Others I accessed through archives on Lexis Nexis (*Le Monde, El Nacional*).

In all analyses I exclude common words, including "of", "to", or "from", which would otherwise feature prominently in both frequency lists and as collocates for all cases. I also exclude all words that are grammatical fillers or connectors, such as prepositions, conjunctions, and demonstrative adjectives. I include only "meaning" words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs).

The primary corpus of interest is China's national news media coverage of the unrest in the Middle East. The analysis considers coverage of the protests in the online version of the *People's Daily* (*Renmin Ribao*). The analysis covers the period from December 17, 2010 through March 9, 2011.

Dec. 17 marks the day when the first in a string of events that led to the protests in Tunisia took place. March 9 is the end point simply because it was the day I began this particular set of analyses, but it now has the convenient feature that it concludes before any serious military action took place in Libya. This is a convenient feature

because the coverage of later military events are arguably part of a different data generating process than the coverage of events prior. Namely, the coverage of those later events appears to be an opportunity for strong Anti-American writing in China, Russia, and other countries.

2.2.2 Universe of Possible Cases: Coverage Targets

I could consider many countries involved in the unrest. The unrest in the Middle East spans many countries. For example, the NYT gives special "Topics" attention to Libya, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Tunisia, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

"Topics" attention means that the *NYT* devotes an entire page to coverage of the country, on which is collected all articles written on the country as well as special graphics and interactive features. Others countries besides the ones in the *Times* topics also have experienced unrest. Others covered, for example, by CNN in their Middle East reports include Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, and Syria.

I focus on the three most-reported-on countries in the unrest: Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

2.2.3 Universe of Possible Cases: Coverage Sources

My primary interest is in Chinese coverage of the unrest, and evaluations of other countries are primarily for comparing to China's coverage. The data on China's headlines come, as in the above empirical chapters, again from the *People's Daily*. Because the events I consider in this analysis are more recent than 2008, these headlines were accessed not from the database described in earlier chapters, but from the *People's Daily* online archives directly.

My first choice for comparison countries is the United States. I chose the United States for several reasons. First, linguistically and culturally, it represents the case

with which I am most familiar. Second, it is the comparison case in the empirical analysis in the above chapter on audience costs. Third, as one goal of the analysis is to compare China's coverage to coverage by regimes with both different and similar relationships with the media, the US presents a salient foil to China's government-media relationship. Of course, the US is not free of a relationship between the media and the government, but nor is China a case of perfect government-controlled media. Each case represents a different end of the spectrum, but not the extreme end.

I select the *New York Times*, because, like the *People's Daily*, it is also a national daily paper with high circulation. It is technically second to *USA Today* in terms of circulation, but I believe this is because *USA Today* is distributed freely to many venues around the United States. The *New York Times* is also a paper of record, a criterion I apply as much as possible to other countries. Finally, I wanted national papers that are thought to represent the general views of citizens of that country. Of course, there are certainly many Americans who do not share views with the *NYTimes*. However, as an overall pulse of the country, I argue it is at least as good, if not better, than many other major papers in circulation, such as *The Washington Post* or *The Los Angeles Times*.

I accessed all the headlines in the *Times* and the *Daily* through their online archives. I wrote a basic python script to download all headlines during the period of interest. I collected the headlines in simple text files, which I then analyzed using AntConc, which is a type of corpus analysis software. Graphical representations were generated using wordle.net, and are built directly from the word lists from my original headline files. I conducted the translation from original languages myself, with the aid of language dictionaries in some cases. I speak fluent English, proficient Chinese and Spanish, and basic French and Russian. Thus, my reliance on language dictionaries was higher for France and for Russia, but my basic knowledge was an asset in determining whether the translations were logical. In addition, in some cases

I evaluated the trustworthiness of the dictionary results by consulting colleagues who speak the languages fluently.

I will explain my selection of papers from other countries following the presentation of results from the China-US analysis.

2.3 China and the US

2.3.1 Salience

Were there differences in the level of attention given to the Arab Spring in the US and China? In this section I present pictograph representations, or word clouds, of word frequencies in a text. They are aesthetically appealing, and they also directly reflect statistical features of a text. The size of each word directly reflects the frequency a word is used relative to others in the text. I leave out all numbers and most common English words (e.g., "the", "and", "of", etc.). A table of the most common words and their frequencies would convey the exact same information, but would take many pages to list. Even longer would be the full list of all headlines, which is 59 single-spaced pages.[2]

I consider two texts: all news headlines on the online versions of the *New York Times* and the *People's Daily* during just the first nine days of March 2011. This section is the only one that considers only coverage in March. All subsequent sections consider the full range of coverage from December 2010 to March 2011. I conclude the analysis on March 9 because it is right before NATO's involvement in Libya is announced. Once that announcement is made, the event changes to quite a different focus – China accuses the West of imperialism, and Europe and the US now become more involved in the events, making it less of a third party conflict. Thus, my focus is on the early stages of the unrest before international involvement reached high levels.

[2]I do not include it in the Appendix, but make it available to anyone interested.

Figure 2.1 depicts the top words in headlines from the *NYT* during March 1-9, 2011. Libya features most prominently in this period, followed by Oil, Obama, reference to a Court, and China. To create this graphic, I consulted the *NYT* archive of all headlines during March and removed section and subsection terms, which were repeated a great deal (e.g., "Sports", "World", "National", and many more.). These are strictly headlines, not section headers. Figure 2.2 considers *People's Daily* news headlines from the same period.

Figure 2.1: *NYTimes* Headlines, March 1-9, 2011

From Figure 2.2 it is evident that China speaks a great deal about itself. This on its own is important – and note especially how different this is from the NYTimes, which does not mention its home country much. To gain a clearer understanding of what else China is discussing besides its own affairs, Figure 2.3 presents what the coverage looks like when we remove "China", "China's", and "Chinese".

Surprisingly, the People's Daily does seem to be covering Libya – almost as much as it covers fashion, and other "fluff" or "safe" topics. In the next section, we consider what exactly the coverage about Libya is saying. To do this, we can consider collocates of the word "Libya" in headlines in the *People's Daily*.

Figure 2.2: *People's Daily* Headlines, March 1-9, 2011

Figure 2.3: *People's Daily* Headlines, March 1-9, 2011, "China" removed

2.3.2 Collocates

Collocates are a good way to get a sense of how a subject is being discussed. They are especially well-suited for making empirical order out of large volumes of text that otherwise would simply need to be read through and interpreted by humans, which opens the possibility for misinterpretation, bias, or other forms of unbalanced analysis.

Collocates are words that appear with a target word with statistically important

frequency. In this analysis, the statistical measure I use is a Mutual Information (MI) score, and all words listed here represent MI scores that suggest the observed frequency of the co-occurring words is greater than random (a similar analysis of t-scores also delivers the same finding). I consider collocates of "Egypt", "Tunisia", and "Libya".

For all three countries I consider collocates that could appear anywhere from two words left of the country name to two words to the right. Increasing or decreasing this range did not substantively change the results. Table 2.1 presents the collocates. Numbers in parentheses represent the number of times the collocate appeared with the country's name. The numbers after the country name indicate the total number of times the country itself was mentioned in the text.

Rank	Egypt (261)	Tunisia (48)	Libya (306)
1	protests (16)	announces (6)	China (44)
2	Mubarak (16)	curfew (5)	evacuees (43)
3	day (16)	unrest (4)	evacuated (41)
4	transition (14)	sees (4)	nationals (40)
5	killed (13)	peaceful (4)	Chinese (26)
6	gov't (11)	Egypt (4)	citizens (18)
7	continue (10)	visit (3)	arrive (18)
8	pyramids (9)	violence (3)	home (16)
9	China (9)	turmoil (2)	planes (12)
10	accident (9)	Somali (2)	fly (12)

Table 2.1: Collocates of Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya in the *People's Daily*, 12/18/10-3/9/11

Note that the coverage of all three countries does not seem to indicate much in terms of what has been reported as taking place in media available to American readers. We know from *NYTimes* coverage that there are revolts, that leaders have left, and, most of all, that democratic transitions are taking place. We see no mention of the word democracy in any of the top collocates. Elsewhere in the collocates results the word "democracy" appears only in two instances for Egypt, and does not appear

for the other two countries.

By comparison, Table 2.2 presents a list of top collocates for "Libya" in the *NYT* from March 1-9, 2011. (I do not present other countries, as the sample size is very small for Egypt (only eight mentions) and Tunisia (six mentions) during the first week of March).

Rank	Libya (61)
1	rebels (4)
2	updates (3)
3	says (3)
4	revolt (3)
5	oil (3)
6	Qaddafi (3)
7	US (2)
8	UN (2)
9	turmoil (2)
10	trade (2)

Table 2.2: Collocates of Libya in *NYT* headlines, 3/1-3/9/11

The difference between the collocates for the *New York Times* coverage of Libya and those for Libya in the *People's Daily* is striking. The *People's Daily* coverage of Libya is mainly on evacuating Chinese nationals from the country, as well as other country's attempts to evacuate their citizens form Libya. The *New York Times* spends almost no time on evacuations, focusing instead on the "rebels", the "revolt", the "turmoil", and the involvement of the United States and the United Nations.

Another way to think of these differences is: If one were presented with a list of collocates for each of these countries, would the reader be able to guess what event was taking place? If a reader was presented with just the list of collocates on Libya in the *People's Daily*, they would think that some kind of important evacuation had taken place, but they would have no idea why – and certainly would have no reason to guess that it was due to protests or unrest of any kind. To the contrary, a reader of the collocate list for Libya in the *New York Times* would immediately guess that "rebels"

may be part of a "revolt" against "Qaddafi", and that there was "turmoil". Further, they would guess that the US and the UN probably have become involved. Lastly, they might infer that "trade" had been disrupted or somehow otherwise affected.

Turning to China's coverage of Tunisia and Egypt, suppose the reader is given each of these lists of collocates. A reader of the *People's Daily* headline collocates to Tunisia would note that there was "unrest", "violence", "turmoil", and possibly a "curfew" imposed. They might guess that Egypt and Somali became involved, but they also might see that someone had paid a "visit" and that perhaps something "peaceful" also took place. It would overall seem as though at some point something terrible and violent took place and that at another point, either before or after, or in a different location, there was peace. The reader would not know that an entire regime change took place, nor that it began out of an individual person's protest against the government.

The collocate list for Egypt in the *People's Daily* is the only one that specifically uses the word "protests". The reader of this list might actually gain a relatively accurate understanding of what is taking place: in addition to protests, there was a "transition", people were "killed", and "Mubarak" probably played some role. It also actually would appear "China" had a role in the events, too. We would not know how Egypt was resolved from this list, but we would at least know something of what was going on. Note that the words seem a bit on the negative side – "accident", "killed", but not as overwhelmingly as in Tunisia. Why would China, overall, describe the event in greater detail than the Tunisia case? The theory I present below will offer one explanation for this difference.

2.4 Chinese Coverage: Timing

It is interesting to consider not just what *People's Daily* is covering, but *when* it is covering the unrest. It may be the case that an autocratic regime might prefer to not

cover unrest in other autocracies, but then as the situation grows, they discover they need to cover the event to some extent. If this is so, then we should see coverage of all three countries, but in a delayed fashion; i.e., we should not see headlines of events on the date of the event, but should see some mention of the country in following days.

Figure 2.4 presents a graph of when Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia appear in the *People's Daily* headlines. To begin, however, for reference, I first provide an abridged timeline of major events in the region during the time period under analysis. Event dates and descriptions come from the *New York Times* Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya topics pages, as well as the *National Journal*'s online "Revolt in the Middle East" timeline.[3] Information on Libya also comes from CNN online.[4]

Because these major events come from headlines in Western media sources, they provide a good starting point for comparison to China's coverage.

- **Dec. 17** Mohamed Bouazizi sets fire to himself in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia
- **Dec. 18** First report appears in the *NYT* online
- **Jan. 4** Bouazazizi's funeral fuels further protests in Tunisia
- **Jan. 14** Ben Ali leaves Tunisia
- **Jan. 16** Protestors in Cairo demand Mubarak step down
- **Jan. 17** Protestors in Cairo emulate Bouazizi by setting themselves on fire
- **Jan. 20** A Facebook group calls for protests in Cairo on Jan. 25
- **Jan. 25** Thousands participate in protests in Cairo, and around Egypt
- **Jan. 29** Mubarak announces he has removed his Cabinet, refuses to step down
- **Jan. 31** Egyptian authorities arrest six Al-Jazeera journalists; US State Department demands their release
- **Feb. 1** Mubarak announces he will not seek another term as president, but will stay in power until the elections
- **Feb. 2** One death and 403 injuries during protests in Cairo and Alexandria
- **Feb. 11** Mubarak announces he will step down as president
- **Feb. 14** Calls go out on Facebook for peaceful demonstrations against Qaddafi in Libya
- **Feb. 16** Approx. 200 protestors take to the streets in Benghazi, Libya. Many are arrested.

[3] http://nationaljournal.com/timeline-revolt-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-20110128.
[4] http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-20/world/libya.protests.timeline.

- **Feb. 17-present** Protests spread across Libya, including to Tripoli; pro-Gaddafi forces respond with violence
- **Feb. 22** Qaddafi appears on television to blame the unrest on "foreign hands"
- **Feb. 25** The US closes its embassy in Libya and imposes unilateral sanctions
- **Feb. 26** The UN meets to discuss broader economic sanctions
- **Feb. 28** Qaddafi forces strike against rebels on three fronts
- **March 1** Rebels begin discussion about whether to ask for air strikes from Western countries
- **March 5** Qaddafi forces fire on unarmed protestors

Now consider the coverage by the *People's Daily* in Figures 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6. The frequencies represent raw numbers of mentions of a particular country in all Chinese headlines. There are approximately 2800 words in any given day's set of headlines. The data again come from all headlines in the *People's Daily* between December 18, 2010 and March 9, 2011.

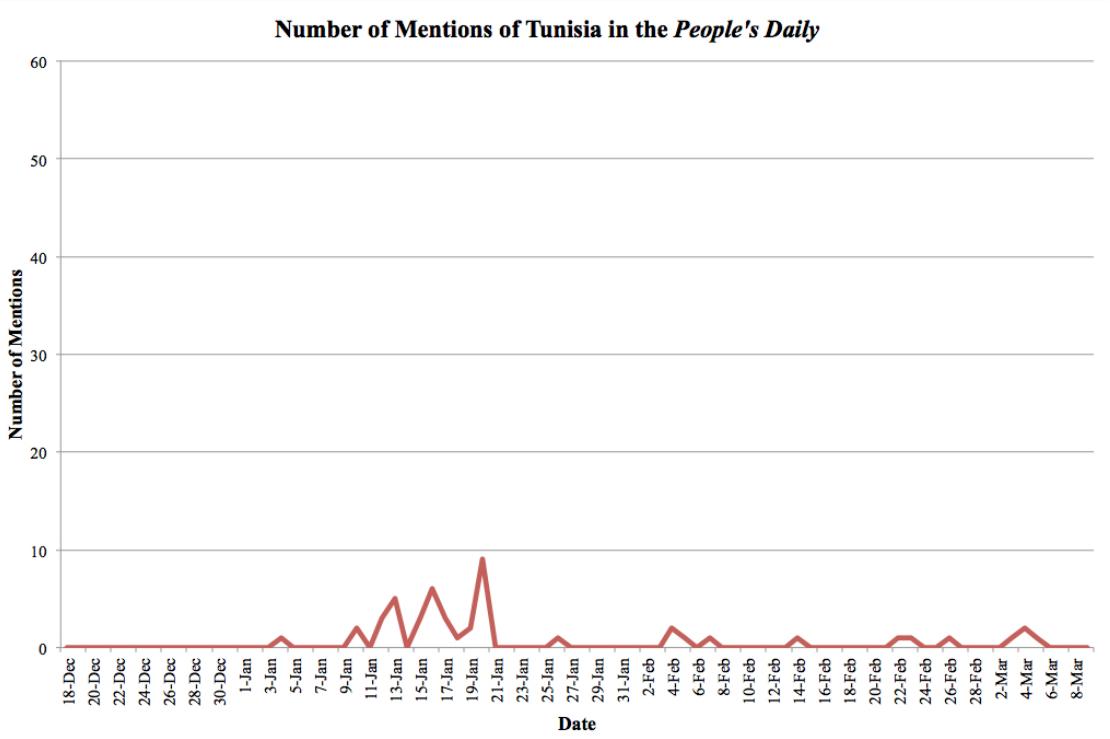

Figure 2.4: Number of Mentions of Tunisia in the *People's Daily*, Dec. 18, 2010 to March 9, 2011

We can make several observations from Figures 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6.

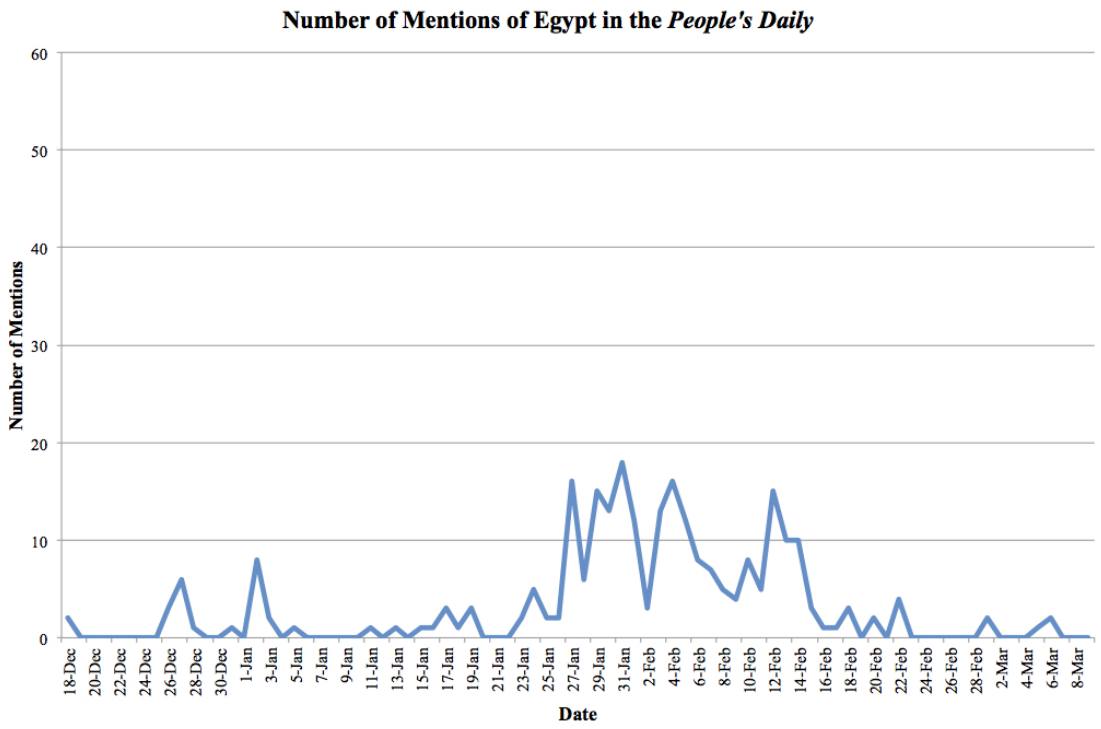

Figure 2.5: Number of Mentions of Egypt in the *People's Daily*, Dec. 18, 2010 to March 9, 2011

First, meaningful coverage of any of the events begins much later than the event coverage in Western media sources. The early mentions in December that we see of Egypt and Libya are from headlines unrelated to the unrest. A very brief mention of Tunisia appears in Dec. 21-22 headlines, but then disappears again until January 4.

The January 14 departure of Ben Ali is only covered a little. Coverage on the 14th of January is notably at zero, but this may be due to time differences between China and Tunisia. Coverage on the 15th goes up to four mentions of Tunisia. It is overall extremely low after that.

For Egypt, again the beginning of coverage is delayed compared to Western media. Jan. 25 marks a major day of protest in Egypt, and coverage on Jan. 25 and 26 is very low. It only increases on the 27th. On Feb. 1, when Mubarak announces he will not seek another term as president, coverage of Egypt in the *People's Daily* is again very low. It's somewhat low on Feb. 1, but then, notably, plummets on Feb. 2 (an

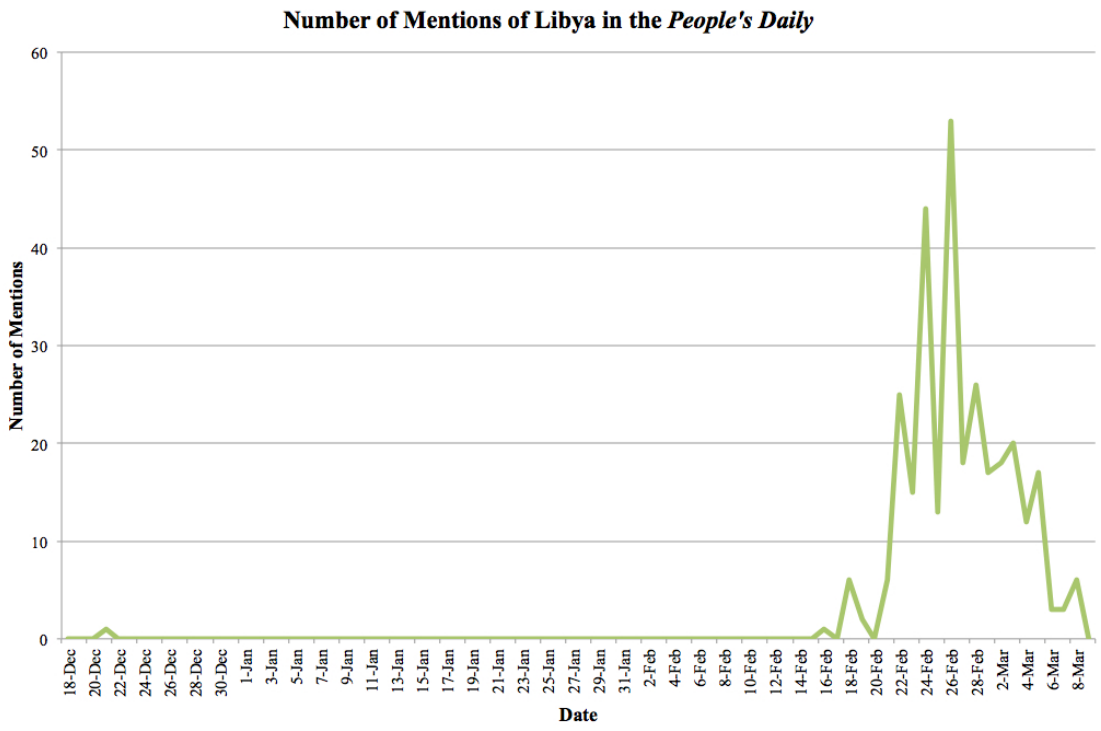

Figure 2.6: Number of Mentions of Libya in the *People's Daily*, Dec. 18, 2010 to March 9, 2011

even more likely day for coverage, given the time difference).

Coverage on Feb. 11 (and 12), when Mubarak announces he will step down, is about average for the coverage of the entire series of events, and then we see only sporadic mentions of Egypt after that.

Finally, coverage of Libya does not really take off until Feb. 22, even though protests began in Libya as early as Feb. 16. Coverage rises and falls dramatically over the following week. On Feb. 24 and 26 coverage is extremely high. The vast majority of these headlines are about China's evacuation efforts from Libya, as well as mentions of other countries' evacuation efforts, including those by Pakistan and Ukraine.

Examples of headlines of stories about these evacuations include, "China's All-Out Effort to Evacuate Nationals from Libya Continues" (Feb. 27, 2011) and "35,860 Chinese Nationals in Libya Evacuated: FM". These headlines also come with corre-

sponding photos (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7: 'Chinese Nationals Evacuated from Libya Walk in Beijing Capital International Airport" (2/27/11)

The evacuations are then effectively resolved (citizens are reported to have been evacuated successfully and then welcomed home to China), and coverage of Libya decreases.

2.5 March 9-14, 2011

In the week after the period of analysis, Chinese coverage of the events in Libya turned largely to taking a leadership role in the region. For example, headlines during this time period include mentions of the Chinese government calling for a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the region.

Finally, notably, on March 10 a lengthy "opinion" article appeared in the *People's Daily* titled, "China is Definitely Not Middle East". The article begins by describing the turmoil, chaos, and deaths that have occurred as a result of the protest. Then it writes that "some people with sinister ulterior motives" are trying to "divert troubled water" to China and cause protests there.

Then the article discusses evidence that people in China are the most satisfied in

the world with their country's leadership (based on a survey), and that the Chinese people yearn for peace in the Middle East. The article also emphasizes the strong leadership of the Communist Party, including its hosting of the Olympics in 2008, as well as how it turned a "formerly backward country" into the second largest economy in the world. It also writes that citizens in China already participate in their own governance. The closing line of the article reads, "In a nutshell, China is definitely not the Middle East, and any vain scheme to diver [sic] Middle East turmoil to China is doomed to fail."[5]

2.6 International Comparison

2.6.1 Selection of Countries

I generated a list of 40 countries randomly drawn from a set of 196 countries that had all been ranked by Freedom House and assigned "media freedom" scores. Within that list, I chose two countries that are relatively major actors in the world system (they may have more of a stake in international affairs than small countries), are home to widely circulated national newspapers, and who represent different sides of the media freedom scale. I also prioritized countries that offered ease of access to online archives, and those with which I have regional and language familiarity, as the analyses are conducted in the publications' original languages. This led me to choose France (more media freedom; closer to the US) and Russia (less media freedom; closer to China).

To take advantage of the fact that I also have language skills in Spanish, I added an additional analysis of Venezuela, even though it did not originally appear in my random list. Among all possible Spanish-speaking countries, I selected Venezuela because it is an example of a country where media freedom is lower than China,

[5]http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90780/91342/7314966.html.

and my analysis so far only includes countries where freedom is greater. Because government control of the overall information flow in Venezuela is higher than in China, Venezuela's coverage of the unrest should be even more limited than we saw in China. By virtue of its stronger control over information, Venezuela has the luxury of being much more selective about reporting on potentially political liable stories.

2.6.2 Selection of Newspapers

Selection of papers from these other countries was much more difficult than for China or the US. In those two, I have high familiarity with media in both places, so could choose my cases with confidence. For these new countries, I have less familiarity, so it was not always obvious which paper to choose.

I used several criteria to determine which papers within a particular country to analyze. The paper chosen for each country should be a national paper, it should have daily circulation, and it should be generally highly respected and trusted. If applicable – some countries have none – the paper should be a paper of record. The paper should also be generally thought to represent the views of the country. There is no obvious way to determine this, especially in countries with a more free press, where there will be many papers expressing a kaleidoscope of views. Finally, the paper needed to offer access to archive articles.

To resolve the difficulty of determining a paper that represents the views of a country, I did two things. First, I researched the top national daily papers in each country and based on my own research and judgment selected a paper that I thought best represented the views of the most people and the government in that country. It was not always an easy choice, and I am still unsure about the method as far as differences in media between autocracies and democracies.

Second, once I selected a paper, I asked colleagues and friends who are natives of or experts about those countries what paper they would say is most representative. I

did not tell them what I had chosen. In the end, it turned out we agreed in all cases. In some cases I provide names of other top contender papers and brief explanations for my rejection of them.

2.7 France: *Le Monde*

"For a national perspective on how the French are viewing national and world events, *Le Monde* is the source to use" (Lexis Nexis description). *Le Monde* is one of the top circulated French papers, has a reputation for being centre-left or moderate (depending on whom you ask), and is a newspaper of record.

The search on *Le Monde* was through Lexis Nexis, and I searched for dates between December 16 and March 10, thus yielding results for Dec. 17 through March 9. I used Lexis Nexis because *Le Monde* requires a subscription for online archived content.

Due to the nature of the search on Lexis Nexis, rather than download all headlines for that time period as I did above, I had to limit my search to just headlines about the three target countries. This changes how I present some of my analysis, but does not change the performance of collocates, which are my key comparison.

Once downloading the headlines, I stripped all author names, dates, and section headings. A feature unique to Le Monde is its use of colons. Many headlines read as follows: "Libye: Things are changing" or "Tunisie: More protests", which is not ideal for collocates. Therefore, in the future I will also present total top words used in the headlines for each country.

Other contenders for France were *Oest-France*, *Le Figaro*, and *Liberation*

Oest-France This paper has the highest circulation of all French papers, including high global circulation, but is known for its focus on local news and events. Its editorials are typically strongly pro-EU integration and influenced by the Christian democratic, or Nouveau Centre, political viewpoint.[6]

[6]information from Wikipedia and EasyPR.com's list of top international circulations of papers

Le Figaro This is a popular national daily paper in France, known to have a right-wing bent.[7]

Liberation This paper has a left-wing bent, and is thought to reflect only part of the French population's views.[8]

Of these, may *Le Monde* represent the best choice as a representative paper of France. As with the alternative papers I could have used for United States, any of these options would have been acceptable.

2.7.0.1 *Le Monde* Collocates

As above, I considered collocates at ranges greater than 2L and 2R. In Table 2.3 I present the results from the standard 2L to 2R window in the original French. Table 2.4 presents the same results in English.

Rank	Egypte (129)	Tunisie (162)	Libye (61)
1	Tunisie (19)	Egypte (21)	Bahreïn (9)
2	révolution (9)	extraits (17)	faits (7)
3	international (9)	international (12)	nouvelle (4)
4	secouée (8)	faits (11)	manifestants (4)
5	faits (8)	renaissance (10)	gagne (4)
6	Tahrir (5)	Ben-Ali (5)	vannes (3)
7	point (5)	violences (3)	Tobrouk (3)
8	ètroite (4)	révolution (3)	sociètè (3)
9	pouvoir (4)	occident (3)	rèvolt (3)
10	Moubarak (4)	voyage (2)	pays (3)

Table 2.3: Collocates of Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya in *Le Monde*, 12/17/10-3/9/11

There are several things to note. First, unlike what we have seen in the US, the word "democracy" is surprisingly not in the top group of collocates. Second, unlike China, there is no hesitation to use words like "revolt" or "demonstrators". Finally, the mention of the Italian oil company as well as "travel" (regarding travel to the

[7]personal correspondence.
[8]personal correspondence.

Rank	Egypt (129)	Tunisia (162)	Libya (61)
1	Tunisia (19)	Egypt (21)	Bahrain (9)
2	revolution (9)	extracts (17)	facts (7)
3	international (9)	international (12)	new (4)
4	shaken (8)	facts (11)	demonstrators (4)
5	facts (8)	renaissance (10)	wins (4)
6	Tahrir (5)	Ben-Ali (5)	valves (of an Italian oil company) (3)
7	point/moment (5)	violence (3)	Tobrouk (3)
8	close (4)	revolution (3)	company (3)
9	power (4)	occident/western (3)	revolt (3)
10	Moubarak (4)	travel (2)	country/nation (3)

Table 2.4: Collocates in *Le Monde*, English Translation

region) does reveal somewhat of a Euro-focused view of the effects of the unrest, but overall these references are not terribly high. Finally, there is no mention of evacuees, unlike in China, but this could be because there simply are not as many French people in these countries. That said, as France does have a colonial history in the region, one might expect at least some noteworthy French presence (and, after all, France has since been involved in the air strikes on Libya since).

Overall, however, the news is striking in that it is reasonably fact-based. By this I mean that the majority of words are nouns and verbs, not descriptors. The noteworthy modifiers that appear are "shaken" and "close", which are instances of an assessment of events. The rest of the words, such as "demonstrators, "violence", and "revolution" all name factors common to any protests – the collocates analysis suggests the headlines mostly seem to be descriptive of main events taking place. Or, another way to think of it is that the collocate words seem to have more in common with US coverage of the events in Libya than of China's coverage of the same events. France and the US did both also launch evacuation efforts in Libya, albeit at a smaller scale than China, but these efforts did not make top headlines in either country (BBC Report on evacuees 2011). In China's case, these efforts seem to take up most of the attention to Libya in headlines.

Finally, we notice also that while France does use the term "violence" when describing Egypt and the word "revolt" when describing Libya, the collocates regarding these countries is generally less violent and more pleasant than the collocates by China with regard to Egypt and Tunisia (and, again, this is not an issue with respect to Libya, as they do not spend much time on protests in the first place in Libya). Instead, France uses words like "revolution", "demonstrators", and "shaken". Clearly, something has happened to alter the status quo, but there is little suggestion that it was necessarily terribly violent. Why would China cast a much more violent light than France? I argue below that this may be because China wishes to maintain legitimacy through domestic stability at home, and thus has incentives to cast these events in a more negative light. France and the US, on the other hand, have repeatedly been directly involved in many regime changes and democratization efforts in the Middle East in the past, and might see these changes as positive developments in the region – as well as legitimizing for their own heavy presence there – and thus have incentives to cast the events in a more positive light.

2.8 Russia: *Rossiiyskaya Gazeta*

I selected *Rossiiyskaya Gazeta* after much deliberation. *Rossiiyskaya Gazeta* is a national daily newspaper in Russia, enjoys one of the highest circulations in the country (but not the highest, which goes to a tabloid paper known for sensationalism and to a paper that is only weekly), and is a paper of record. It is State-owned and was founded in 1990.

According to Wikipedia the *Gazeta*, "publishes the official decrees, statements and documents of state bodies, ... [and] newly approved laws".[9] According to the "About the Newspaper" section on the *Gazeta* itself, although its mission is to deliver the

[9]While Wikipedia has obvious shortcomings as a source, because I care about the paper's reputation, it is actually quite a good source for a general, crowd-agreed-upon view of a newspaper, its content, and its position in society and among other papers.

official state word on topics, it also "is intended for the general reader, embracing everything from daily news, special reports, and interviews with government officials to expert commentaries on documents of state." Finally, they report that polls indicate their readers tend to be "even-tempered adults inclined to a conservative view."[10]

My search on the *Rossiiyskaya Gazeta* was directly on their website and I was able to search for "Libia", "Tunis" and "Egipet" in both headlines and in full articles. For consistently with *Le Monde* and others, I again consider just headlines in my analysis, but I did read the full texts of many articles. As we will see in the section on Venezuela, I find that the less "free" a news source is, the more mentions of these countries appear in the body of articles, as opposed to in the headlines. One explanation for this trend may be that by mentioning international events in the body of the newspaper articles, the leaders are able to generate the impression they are being transparent and credible when it comes to covering international events, no matter what they are, but by leaving them out of headlines, they also are able to avoid sending a strong signal that the events are important or worthy of attention.

As before, all headlines are from the period of Dec. 17-March 9. Figure 2.8 presents the table of collocates in the original Russian. Table 2.5 presents the English translations.

It's not clear what some of these terms are implying, especially the types of planes and the reference to a coast. To help understand the coverage in this Russian newspaper, I thus also present a few sample headlines that use some of the words in the collocates list. The collocate words are in italics.

For Egypt,

- "After the *events* in Egypt, the Russians prefer to vacation at domestic resorts"
- "*More* than 150 killed in Egypt", "*More* than 100 detained in Egypt"
- "*Escape* from Egypt"

[10]http://www.rg.ru/about.html.

Rank	Египет	Тунис	Ливия
1	Генерал (5)	Президент (5)	Россиянами (5)
2	Турист (4)	Молодежь (1)	Берегам (2)
3	Беспорядков (4)	Трансаэро (1)	МЧС (2)
4	события (4)	Безопасности (1)	совещание (2)
5	Президент (3)	Разбегаются (1)	Упущенная (2)
6	более (3)	Беженцев (1)	Каддафи (2)
7	Февраль (3)	Полиция (1)	Эвакуированных (2)
8	Побег (3)	Прерванный (1)	Экстренное (2)
9	Туров (2)	неопределенное время (1)	Восток (2)
19	Секретарь (2)	Гуманитарная (1)	Як-42 (1)

Figure 2.8: Collocates of Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia in *Rossiiyskaya Gazeta*, Dec. 17, 2010 -March 9, 2011

Rank	Egypt (74)	Tunisia (16)	Libya (37)
1	general (secretary/attorney) (5)	president (5)	Russians (5)
2	tourists (4)	youth (1)	shores/coast (2)
3	riots/unrest (4)	Transaero (1)	MCS (a kind of plane) (2)
4	events (4)	security (1)	meeting (2)
5	president (3)	run (1)	loss (2)
6	more (3)	refugees (1)	Gaddafi (2)
7	February (3)	police (1)	evacuated (2)
8	escape (3)	interrupted (1)	emergency (2)
9	tour (2)	indefinitely (1)	east (3)
10	secretary (2)	humanitarian (1)	Yk-42 (1)

Table 2.5: Collocates of Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia in *Rossiiyskaya Gazeta*, Dec. 17, 2010 - March 9, 2011, English Translation

- "The Ministry of Tourism prohibits the sending of Russian *tourists* on holiday in Egypt", "European *tour* operators have stopped selling *tours* to Egypt"
- "New Egyptian Government has sworn in the incumbent *President* Hosni Mubarak"

For Libya (coverage begins Feb. 16), one example headline is, "*loss* of profits" to Russian firms. And, as with China, there are many references to evacuations of Russian citizens. For Tunisia, coverage is very limited, but some popular headlines include, "*Interrupted* Tunisia" and "*Indefinitely* extended state of emergency in Tunisia."

The collocates and example headlines presented here are overall more similar to

China's coverage style than to the coverage style of France or the US. A reader of the Russian collocates list for Libya might guess that some kind of "emergency" happened on the "coast", and that people were "evacuated". In Tunisia, the reader would learn that there was some kind of "security" event, that may have generated "refugees" and possibly involved the "police". The event may have been big enough to "indefinitely" "interrupt" matters, and may even have been a "humanitarian" crisis. But, as with China's coverage, the reader would not know that some kind of uprising had taken place.

Finally, Russia's coverage of Egypt, similar to China's, does call the events a "riot" or "unrest" (depending on one's translation). China's coverage of Egypt also is the only case where the word "protests" are specifically used. It's not clear from the other collocates in Russian headlines what took place specifically, especially as there seem to be many mentions of "tourists". As we know from looking at the headlines themselves, this represents information about the dangers of travel to the region at the time of these events. But, we again know little about the substance of the riots. Overall, however, in both Russia and China we see more attention to direct information in Egypt and less when it comes to Libya and Tunisia.

2.9 Venezuela: *El Nacional*

For Venezuela I evaluated *El Nacional*. Venezuela is an interesting autocracy in that its control over the media is much stronger than that of many other autocracies, including China. The goal of the analysis here is to evaluate how a country with very strong media control handled the events. I predict that media leaders in countries that have stronger control over the overall flow of information need to be far less concerned about credibility than leaders in countries with weaker control.

The results of the analysis of *El Nacional* were so surprising. that I first assumed the search was conducted with an error. As above, I used Lexis Nexis for this search.

Their overview states they provide full text coverage of this paper. I find that for the period Dec. 17-March 9, there were only two headlines mentioning Egypt, both from February 2011, and both mentioning the unrest only in the body of an article about a different subject. The two headlines are, "Egipto Virtual?" ("Virtual Egypt?") and "El Mercado Petrolero y Egipto" ("The Petroleum Market and Egypt").

Lexis Nexis covers articles in *El Nacional* from 2005 to the present, and there are only 9 total articles about Egypt, including the 2 during February 2011. So, we might assume attention to Egypt is very low in general, and remains low during the unrest.

Surprisingly, if I expand the search to include mentions of Egypt anywhere in the articles, the number of articles becomes quite large. It yields 265 articles since 2005 and 59 articles for the period under analysis.

The articles themselves are mostly about the Middle East and, indeed, mention Egypt in the body of the text. Some March headlines that mention Egypt in the body of the article but not in the headline include, "El Gran Golpe? Cual? Cuando?" (The Big Hit? Which? Where?); "Renovacion de la Sociedad" (Renovation of Society – believe it or not, this article is largely about astrology; it invokes Egypt when it mentions a "period of change"); "Immoralidad" ("Immorality" – discusses how Chavez will not intervene in the Middle East); and "Rabes Reelectos!". This third headline means "Arabs Reelected!" This is a hateful and dramatic review of why the leaders in the Middle East are despicable, including their affinity for American culture, and discusses how Venezuela's leaders are different. They don't rig their elections. Another article, "Chávez: No Permitiremos Violencia" (Chávez: We Will Not Permit Violence, speaks of a public ceremony in which the President spoke about many good things planned for the country, as well as to commemorate that 22 years ago there was a revolution that put the current regime in power. It concludes by saying that anyone who tries to suggest that what's going on in Egypt may happen in Venezuela is "ignorante", as that revolution took place in Venezuela 22 years ago.

This fifth headline in particular is quite similar to the Op-Ed in China in mid-March.

Coverage of Tunisia in headlines only is limited to three articles, "Siempre Quedará Con Túnez" (we will always remain with Tunisia), "La Voz de Nuevo Túnez" (The voice of new Tunisia), and "Andres Tunez" (an article about a baseball pitcher with the name Tunez minus the accented ú). These headlines are from Feb. 26, Jan. 23, and Dec. 23, respectively.

Since 2005, only four articles have headlines containing the word "Libia". Only 2 of the articles are during the period of unrest: "Arde Libia?" (Libya burns?) and "Libia y Venezuela" (Libya and Venezuela). The first article discusses how Gaddafi's moves are one of a desperate dictator, and goes on to criticize him. The second is a criticism of a Bolivian leader who supports Gaddafi.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter represents the first step in a series of analyses on how autocratic regimes use the national media. The goal was to determine whether they may indeed be broad and persistent differences in coverage of the same events by democratic and non-democratic regimes. I find both inter-country differences and inter-regime differences in coverage over a three month period of three different countries in the Arab Spring.

This result answers the question of whether coverage of international events can be systematically different, but it raises several more questions: Why is the coverage different, both between countries doing the covering, and between single-country coverage of different events. China's coverage of Libya, for example, was very different from the US or France's coverage of Libya. However, China's coverage of Libya was also quite different from its coverage of Tunisia, which was different from its coverage of Egypt. Why?

In what follows, I develop a theory of a legitimacy-credibility tradeoff that I argue

explains why autocracies cover some events and not others, as well as when coverage styles will differ from event to event. I compare it to an audience costs-based explanation for publicizing international events. Both offer predictions for when autocratic leaders might go public. I then extend this to a large-n study of China's coverage of international events. While the case studies of the Arab Spring demonstrate that the differences in coverage content and style between China and other countries do run deeper than simple anecdotes, they are still limited to only three cases. The large-n analysis will allow for the discovery of consistent, long-term divergent patterns in coverage of international events.

While case studies have limits in generalizability, there are several benefits from this close analysis. The first is that it allowed for a closer look at the *kind* of coverage. As will be seen in the large-n analysis, this benefit is lost as we move to broader generalizations. The finding in this chapter that just mentioning an actor in an event does not mean it was covered "directly" in a news article. I will later term this "direct" versus "indirect" coverage.

The closer analysis of particular cases also offers an overall improved understanding of the real content of Chinese news media. It is one thing to calculate headline frequencies; it is quite another to evaluate what is being said in them. Thus, in addition to understanding direct and indirect coverage, we also gain deeper insight on how China handles potentially sensitive events in the news. The Direct/Indirect distinction is an improvement over a stark Coverage/No-Coverage dichotomy, but it is still a vast simplification of the many ways a government may choose to present an event. This chapter thus offers an insight to this end that will be lost in large-n counts of frequencies.

A second benefit of an analysis such as this is that we can examine trends over time. The theoretical model described above and the associated large-n statistical tests consider only coverage of an event at the moment it erupts. This focus was by

design, as my theoretical interest is particularly in how governments manage events when they need to make time-sensitive decisions under uncertainty. In the real world, however, the government can change it's coverage over time – though, as discussed, there may be associated costs, lost credibility, and missed opportunity.

In general, decisions still need to be made in a timely fashion in the news industry. However, they can, and as I discover, they do, modify their messages as time passes. In addition, another tool at the leaders' disposal that my theoretical model did not consider is that leaders can observe an event, and then wait until they have a better sense of how matters are developing or until they have more information, or until they develop a suitable frame for the issue, before publishing a story about the event. As mentioned, there are costs to doing this, but there may be circumstances where waiting is the right choice. The approach in this chapter allows us to consider this possibility.

A third benefit to the closer analysis of just a few cases is that it allows for the inclusion of coverage of events by other countries. Due to the time required to collect the data on the *People's Daily* coverage of 187 international events, it was not possible to also collect data for a parallel analysis of coverage by other news sources around the world. Focusing specifically on three cases permits analysis of coverage by more countries. Thus, this chapter represents not just China's coverage of three cases, but of coverage by major media sources in the United States, France, Russia, and Venezuela during the identical time period.

The findings from this analysis reveal that China's patterns of coverage of the three events of the Arab Spring are different from the coverage of the same events by the United States. Furthermore, the coverage by the US has much in common with the coverage by France, while China's coverage has similarities with Russia. China and Russia in particular are both more prone to indirect coverage compared to coverage by the US and France. Finally, Venezuela offers the finding that in a

case where media control is very high, the freedom for indirect coverage appears even higher. Venezuela's readers are least likely to share views with readers from any of the other four countries in the analysis. Overall, the findings suggest there are regime type differences between countries in terms of whether events are covered, how much they are covered, and what specifically is said about them. In addition, the difference may be due to differences in the levels of control in each regime over the flow of information, as well as the types of events that are most likely to be interesting to the publics in each country. The following chapters will elaborate and refine these explanations, as well as subject them to further tests.

CHAPTER III

Theories of Autocratic Use of the Media

Chapter Abstract

The media serves dual purposes for leaders in both autocracies and in democracies. First, it can be a tool for gaining domestic political capital. Second, it can be helpful in international signaling. While the bulk of research on the two uses generally tends to pin international signaling on democracies and controlling domestic political opinion on autocracies, there exists research to demonstrate that both regime types use the media for both purposes. Building from this observation, I present the foundations for the logic behind an explanation of the use of the media in autocracies as a means to build credibility and legitimacy.

3.1 Introduction

Any time a leader deliberately attracts domestic attention to an international dispute, he is taking a risk. First, by publicizing a dispute and stating a position on it, the leader may lock himself into a particular policy that he later might regret (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 2005). Second, the crisis may unfold in a fashion that reflects poorly on the leader, which also means a risk of domestic punishment. Third, the notoriously fickle nature of public opinion means that, regardless of the actual outcome of a crisis, a leader may find himself dealing with an unhappy audience (Baum 2004, Zaller 1992). Ultimately, attracting attention to an international dispute always means a leader is opening himself up to scrutiny, which means there is always some risk of domestic political punishment.

On the other hand, "going public" (Kernell 1997) over international disputes carries some benefits for leaders. At the international bargaining table, it serves as a signaling device by demonstrating credibility in the form of audience costs (Fearon 1994, 1997). Domestically, attracting the public eye abroad is thought to offer rally effects or to serve as a diversion from troubles at home, such as unrest or slumped economic performance (Fravel 2010, Mitchell and Prins 2004, Smith 1996, Russett 1990).

The logic behind both the risks and benefits to going public over international disputes have long been thought to be unique to democratic leaders. They are beholden to their audience through elections, which determine their survival. The institutional feature of elections thus influences the value of going public versus not going public. The international relations literature on dispute behavior boasts a wealth of work on when democratic leaders go public and why (see, e.g., Tomz 2007, Aldrich et al. 2006, Baum 2004). Following Baum (2004), I use the terms "crisis" and "dispute" interchangeably.

Yet, autocratic leaders can also choose to publicize international disputes to their

domestic audience, and for similar ends: international credibility weighted against potential domestic backlash (Weiss 2008, Weeks 2008). Autocratic leaders face different institutional constraints and benefits compared to their democratic counterparts, however, and these constraints differently affect when autocratic leaders should go public. Until now, we have only a limited understanding of when and why autocratic leaders use the tool of going public – either for domestic or international advantage – and to what effect (Slantchev 2006).

The most relevant research on the role of the media in terms of audience costs comes from Baum's 2004 study of when democratic leaders deliberately draw public attention to international events. Baum's theory builds from the premise that the selective attraction of public attention to an issue is a strategic choice available primarily to leaders in democratic institutions. The fact that leaders are held accountable to their audiences through elections drives the trade-offs between the international benefits from going public and the domestic risks to doing so. Because democratic leaders face removal from office in an election, they have incentives to be selective when it comes to the particular disputes to which they seek to attract public attention.

It is widely agreed, however, that, even though they are not subject to regular elections, autocratic leaders, too, depend on public opinion for their political survival. And, even more so than democratic leaders, the consequences of low public opinion can be detrimental: as Shirk (2007) writes, for example, China's leaders "don't have to stand for election, but they face other political risks", including risks of challenge by rival leaders, mass protests that overthrow them, and a discontented military who could try to topple the regime. Unlike in a democracy, "the price of political defeat to China's leaders could be crushing. Political defeat could cost them and their families their livelihoods and even their lives" (Shirk, 2007, pp. 6-7). This concern appears to be growing less serious as China continues to demonstrate a capacity for peaceful transitions of leaderships, but it has not fully disappeared. There continues

to be some concern among scholars of China that a leadership transition that is not peaceful is still possible.

Finally, as will be elaborated below, the removal of a leader in an autocracy is almost always far more disruptive than the removal of a leader in a democracy, who is cycled out in the next election or in a vote of no confidence. In an autocracy like China, not just the leader's survival is brought to question, but the legitimacy and right to rule of the entire regime may come under scrutiny. Just as the case with leaders potentially losing their lives following removal from leadership, this concern is decreasing with the passage of time in China, but it is far from gone. While peaceful transitions from one leader to the next have been observed in China, it is less likely that this peacefulness would also characterize a transition from the current political system to another. The loss of perceived legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese public could mean not just lost confidence in the particular leader, but also in the regime as a whole.

Of course, this lost legitimacy can spread from leaders to the entire regime in democracies, but the consequences of disapproval are often far less severe than those of widespread voiced disapproval of autocracies. For example, public unhappiness with a particular policy, such as the perceived invasion of privacy following the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, or the perceived mishandling of Hurricane Katrina, was in part directed to the leader of the United States, but it also spread to criticisms of the government of the United States as a whole. These criticisms, however, were vented through a variety of means, including elections, petitions, letters to the editor, and a host of other anger expression mechanisms available to citizens of the United States. In addition, and more importantly, while the criticisms were levied at the United States government, they were not based on a fundamental loss of belief in the legitimacy of the government. They simply reflected a dissatisfaction with particular features of the government. In autocratic regimes, the fear is often

that slight expressions of dissatisfaction may spiral into broader movements. Another way to think about this is that autocratic leaders and other members of the autocratic regime are often more wary of widespread, public disapproval than their democratic counterparts.

In addition to domestic concerns, autocratic leaders also have incentives to attempt to signal resolve to foreign adversaries. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that both of Baum's key independent variables driving the choice to go public, the strategic stakes in a dispute and the likelihood of success, should also enter into autocratic leaders' calculations when they choose to attract public attention to a dispute or not. How these two key variables matter to autocracies, however, are different.

With respect to international advantages to going public, Weiss (2008) demonstrates that it is not just democratic leaders who can reap the benefits from generating audience costs – the idea that making public statements about policy positions can be an international bargaining tool. Because democratic leaders are held accountable to an audience through elections, they risk punishment from their constituents if they do not follow through on these statements. Thus, audience costs are a kind of commitment-making strategy for democratic leaders. Weiss argues that Chinese leaders can also generate a kind of audience costs. Chinese leaders use public protests as a means of demonstrating resolve to foreign adversaries. When they want to prove their hands are tied in a particular dispute, they can provoke their population into conducting public – often nationalistic – protests against that adversary. The signal an autocratic leader is able to send by the presence of an actively protesting domestic population on his/her hands is a bit like the signal democratic leaders send by increasing public rhetoric about an adversary during a dispute.

Despite the bargaining advantages against foreign adversaries, Chinese and other autocratic leaders still do not invoke audience costs in this way all of the time. Even though autocrats are not beholden to the public in the form of elections, attracting

public attention to a foreign adversary in an international dispute still carries risks. This observation is central to the theories developed here: Autocracies, despite the lack of direct electoral connection to the public, still behave as though they are at least somewhat sensitive to domestic public opinion. Of course, this sensitivity can vary over regime, over time, and over leaders. Hitler and Stalin, for example, are both examples of leaders who demonstrated resilience to public opinion.[1] Because of this, we see ample evidence of some international crises being mentioned in the news prominently, others mentioned only in passing, and still others ignored altogether.

In the study mentioned above, Weiss comes to her conclusions by closely examining two salient international disputes, the 1999 bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and the 2001 Hainan spy plane incident, in order to understand some of the conditions under which protests are used by Chinese authorities to demonstrate resolve. She concludes that the bargaining context explains whether the government allowed anti-foreign protests. In 1999 the Chinese leadership viewed the bombing as a deliberate act of aggression by the US that tested Chinese resolve. Thus, the Chinese government allowed protests in order to demonstrate they were, indeed, resolved. Alternatively, in 2001 China was in the midst of trying to demonstrate to the newly-elected US President Bush that China was not a threat; thus, they did not allow protests. The collision was also near the time of the decision regarding Beijing's bid for the Olympics, offering an additional incentive to the Chinese government to want to reduce the risk of crisis escalation.

Weiss also argues that the Chinese government does not allow anti-foreign nationalist protests when the risks of such a protest are high. This would explain the government's unwillingness to permit – and active prevention – of protests against Taiwan. She claims this is because Taiwanese protests might quickly spiral out of control and be difficult to suppress. Weiss argues that this explains why the Chi-

[1] I thank Robert Axelrod for this point.

nese government uses different means to demonstrate resolve against Taiwan, such as military exercises. This is consistent with the observations of many scholars, including Wu, Fravel, and Shirk, who argue that while China certainly is concerned about international affairs, they almost always put domestic stability first, and will not hesitate to prioritize the latter at the expense of the former.

Weiss's work is helpful in that it shows, indeed, authoritarian regimes can generate audience costs through anti-foreign nationalist protests. Her work also helps us begin to understand when authoritarian regimes will use this tool for international bargaining advantage. Specifically, her work points to two features that may affect whether the Chinese government attracts public attention: bargaining context and issue sensitivity. With respect to bargaining context, Weiss showed that in 1999 the Chinese wanted to demonstrate resolve should the crisis against the US escalate, so protests were permitted. In 2001, they did not want to escalate, so no protests were allowed. With respect to sensitivity, or what we might compare to Baum's "strategic stakes", when sensitivity is very high, protests may grow too quickly out of hand, so the Chinese leadership tends to not allow protests on this issue, either.

While Weiss is likely correct in identifying its importance, "bargaining context" is not a particularly helpful concept as far as the theoretical agenda here is concerned. Without further refinement, stating that context matters is effectively to just tell an "it depends" story. This is unsatisfying both as an explanation and as a prediction. In terms of issue sensitivity, Weiss argues that the government does not allow protests because Taiwan is a highly sensitive issue. China's relations with Japan, however, are also fraught with tension, and are, according to Wu (2007) one the most emotionally explosive political issues in China. Yet, we observed in 2001 the Chinese leadership making public statements about Japan, as well as allowing, and encouraging, public protests against Japan.

While the institutional features of democratic and autocratic systems may mean

leaders of each type are rewarded and punished differently, they are still rewarded and punished, which calculates into their decision to attract attention to international disputes. This means that both democratic and autocratic leaders should exhibit patterns in their going public behavior that can be explained by institutional features of reward and punishment, as well as features of the dispute itself. This research project represents a first step in towards a systematic understanding of the specific circumstances under which autocratic leaders seek to attract public attention to adversaries in an international dispute.

3.2 Introduction to the Logic of the Legitimacy-Credibility Theory

There exists empirical evidence in support of the claim that democratic leaders systematically use the media for domestic political gains and for international signaling purposes. In international relations, the logic of audience costs has driven most empirical work in leadership choices about the media in general, and about engaging the public in particular. The empirical evidence for autocracies, however, is sparse in comparison. There is indeed work that suggests autocrats, too, have reason to consider manipulating the public through the media (though the media avenue is not always made explicit) for international signaling purposes. There is also work that suggests autocrats do care about public opinion and frequently use the media as a tool for generating domestic political support. The research on both of these media uses for autocracies, however, does not consider general empirical patterns, and nor does it attempt to develop a formal theory of the conditions under which autocrats will cover an issue in the media, and, if so, the extent to which they will do so.

If public opinion does not matter in autocracies, why would they spend effort to control what appears in the media? And if they do care about what appears in

the media, then why do we see them sometimes include "unfavorable" events in the media? I argue that it is a mix of a desire for legitimacy but also credibility that drives the choice in what to cover in the national news. And, the desires for credibility and legitimacy often require different actions, and these actions may be at odds with one another. The very story that may make a national news source more credible may make the regime seem less legitimate, and vice versa.

In addition, the ability of leaders to achieve these two goals is influenced by two other features of the media and political environment. First, reporting environments are filled with uncertainty: when events take place, it is uncertain how they will develop, and it is uncertain how the public will react to them. Leaders and media officials must make choices in a context of uncertainty, and then wait to see how things turn out. Second, the nature of reporting also demands sensitivity to timeliness, which exacerbates the challenges associated with uncertainty. Once an event takes place, leaders have a limited window within which to decide whether to report on the issue, how much to say, and what kind of frame, if any, to impose on it. A leader need not necessarily report on an event instantly, but he/she also cannot wait a week before saying anything. This would undermine credibility to announce an event took place one week ago, as it would immediately remind readers that the news on the event was blocked early on. It is not the goal of this dissertation to examine specifically the size of this window (one day? several days? more than a week?). That task I leave to future work. For the purposes here, it suffices for the logic to assume that decisions must be made before all the necessary information is made available. Leaders can typically at best only have probabilistic assessments of how the event will develop and how the public will react to it.

These two points suggest that the choice to mention an event in the national media poses a kind of commitment problem for leaders. Leaders need to react to an event relatively immediately by deciding whether to not to report on it, report on it,

or report on it in a biased (or deliberately framed) fashion – a type of reporting I will call "indirect" later in the dissertation. Then they must wait to see how the event develops, as well as how the public reacts to it.

An obvious question that may have come to mind in this discussion is: What about events that are one-time occurrences? Wouldn't uncertainty surrounding something that begins and ends in a short period go away completely? While I allow that certainly some events are truly small, discrete, one-time activities, the ones that bear no further consequence are actually very rare. Even rarer are events that take place where observers know *at the time the event occurred* that there will be no follow-up events, or further repercussions. For instance, at the moment Mohamed Bouazizi set fire to himself in Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia on December 17, 2010, there was little way to know whether the event would go unnoticed by Tunisians and the rest of the world, or whether it would play a role in a series of events that would follow. It was an event with a relatively clear beginning and end, yet uncertainty was quite high. It may well have fallen on deaf ears, and been forgotten by all but a few of his friends and family.

Consider China's decision at this moment. An event that is a clear example of violent defiance of national authorities is likely to be considered politically liable in China. Due to reasons of wanting to maintain their own regime credibility, the government should prefer simply to not tell any citizens at home that this event took place. Had the event turned out that way described above – that no further events followed as a result of it – the decision not to cover it would have been wise. And, if they had chosen to cover it, yet nothing came of it, the media would regret having covered it, as they didn't really need to for credibility purposes, and they now risk provoking a stir within China.

The decision to cover a politically liable event (a "bad" event in shorthand) can be described in a table. In Table 3.1 an event can be possibly bad or it might end up being a political asset ("good"). The leader of the regime decides at the outset

whether to cover the event or not.

	Cover Event	Do Not Cover Event
Good Event	Regime benefits from covering	Regime should have covered
Bad Event	Should not have covered	Benefits from not covering

Table 3.1: Possible outcomes of event coverage

Leaders wish to maximize expected value. To do so, they have several options. They may strive to minimize the regret that would come from publishing a "bad" story or not publishing a "good story". They may also seek to maximize reward from publishing a "good" story. Or, they may pursue some mix of these strategies. As mentioned, the decision making process takes place under uncertainty, which means leaders make probabilistic expectations about how events will unfold, as well as how the public will react to it. Whether an event is "good" or "bad" depends not just on the actual event, but on how the public reacts to it. Both matter, and they need not always go together. A rebellion may be unsuccessful, which might make a regime like China feel comfortable telling the story. But it still may provoke unstable reactions among China's public.

We can modify Table 3.1 to consider a regime's choices of coverage over time. Table 3.2 might represent all the stories in a day, a month, or the types of stories that are covered in a year. S_n represents a story that could possibly appear. An "x" in a box indicates it did appear in the news. We can use a matrix like this to compare between a regime (A) that performed better than another regime (B).

	S_1	S_2	S_3	... S_n
Good Event	x	x		x
Bad Event			x	

Table 3.2: Matrix of regime A's decisions about event coverage

An example regime that did not as accurately predict the outcome of the events/the reactions of the public is in Table 3.3.

	S_1	S_2	S_3	... S_n
Good Event		x		
Bad Event	x		x	x

Table 3.3: Matrix of regime B's decisions about event coverage

In this case, assuming that the patterns between S_3 and S_n continue similarly, regime A correctly covered 75 percent of all events, and regime B only covered 25% of the events correctly. The goal of this dissertation is not to compare how well different regimes perform in terms of their correct choices for event coverage. It also is difficult to say with this kind of clarity and simplicity in the complexities of political life which events are truly "good" or "bad" for a regime. I have presented these tables instead to help demonstrate the logic of what regimes seek to do when making choices about what appears in the national media. This logic will be expanded considerably in Chapter 3. For now, we simply note that leaders should aspire to achieve perfect coverage, where no bad events are covered and no good events are missed (Table 3.4).

	S_1	S_2	S_3	... S_n
Good Event	x	x	x	x
Bad Event				

Table 3.4: Perfect coverage

So far this " perfect" coverage is where credibility does not matter. If it does, it would be preferable for a regime to occasionally cover events that do not flatter the regime, or that might prove otherwise politically liable. If this is the case, the behavior in Table 3.3 may actually be closer to ideal.

Alternatively, to get even closer to the effect of credibility, we can construct another table that allows for consideration of event size, or the level of potential public interest in the event. If a regime cares about credibility, it wants to be sure to cover events that are large enough or interesting enough that the public is likely to find out about them. If an event is bad but also not of interest, credibility is not risked by

not covering it. The matrix in Table 3.5 depicts the possibilities and the associated goals of the regime.

	Interest Low (/Size Small)	Interest High (/Size Big)
Good Event	Cover event	Cover event
Bad Event	Do not cover event	Cover event

Table 3.5: Ideal coverage with legitimacy and credibility concerns

We can refine Table 3.4 further by considering that the four different types of events (Good/Small, Good/Big; Bad/Small, Bad/Big) carry different coverage preferences. Regimes may cover bad events that are big/interesting, but it's unlikely they'd cover them as extensively as a good event that is big/interesting. I will argue in Chapter 4 that leader preference ordering, from most coverage to least, is: Good/Big > Good/Small > Bad/Big > Bad/Small. Table 3.6 presents a revised strategy for the leader in light of this preference ordering. It also includes an added option for leaders to control how much they say about an event. As I will explain in Chapter 4, leaders have discretion when it comes not only to whether to cover an event, but also over how much to say about a particular event, and what particular details to reveal.

	Interest Low (Size Small)	Interest High (Size Big)
Good Event	Cover event	Cover event as much as possible
Bad Event	Do not cover event	Cover event guardedly

Table 3.6: Ideal coverage with legitimacy and credibility concerns

I will elaborate these points further in Chapter 4. Before moving on, however, consider one final table. Table 3.7 presents some example events the Chinese government in particular may consider falling under these four categories.

If the theory presented in this dissertation is correct, we should see the behaviors described in Table 3.6 take place for events of the types described in Table 3.7.

	Interest Low (Size Small)	Interest High (Size Big)
Good Event	A small autocracy defeats a small democracy in a dispute	A prominent autocratic regime prevails over protestors
Bad Event	A small autocracy is defeated by a small democracy in a dispute	Protestors overthrow a prominent autocratic regime

Table 3.7: Ideal coverage with legitimacy and credibility concerns

Finally, some events just may be neutral. These I assume are covered according to their interest to the public, as we might see in a regime with lower interests in legitimacy.

In the next chapter I unpack this logic piece by piece. I then draw several claims from the logic to be tested in Chapters 5 and 6.

CHAPTER IV

The Legitimacy-Credibility Theory of Autocratic Use of the National Media

Chapter Abstract

I present a decision theoretic model that can be used to analyze when autocratic leaders cover events in the media, and whether, when they do so, they cover events directly or indirectly. The model assumes leaders receive negative payoffs for covering events that reflect poorly on the regime, but that they are also punished if citizens catch them not covering significant events. In the context of this model, I derive conditions of reporting behavior based on the magnitude of the event and the probability that it will be unfavorable for the regime.

4.1 Introduction

We saw above that autocracies and democracies differ in how their national medias cover events. Much of the difference stems from the fact that autocratic leaders typically have more control over the media than do their democratic counterparts. Yet, autocratic leaders of even the most closed societies do not have complete control: the Internet, mobile phone technology, diaspora populations, and other features of a globalized world conspire to mitigate the extensive (although even then incomplete) media control autocratic leaders enjoyed decades ago.

The lack of complete control over the information released in a country creates a tension for autocratic leaders. On the one hand, they still wish to cover events that reflect well, or at least neutrally, on the regime and downplay events that might cast the regime in a poor light. On the other hand, control over the media is only useful if the media is credible. Being caught not covering an important event carries the risk of lost credibility. It also can anger a public who prefer to be informed. Not covering an event also carries a risk that, should information about the event be revealed by another source, it may be too late to fully control the framing of the event.

Research in communications and political psychology indicate that once a frame is adopted, changing it later can be difficult. Schudson, for example, writes that new frames can do little to change public opinion of an individual once the public has already developed an opinion of that individual (Schudson 2002). Mermin (1997) finds that especially when it comes to foreign policy, journalists who lack firsthand knowledge of an issue tend to copy the frames of early framers, thus creating an echo chamber of one highly salient frame. Of course, once an issue is framed a particular way, it can be challenged and modified, but the original frame is typically usually extended, not forgotten (Benford and Snow 2000, Cornfield and Fletcher 1998, Benford 1993). Finally, Potter and Baum (2010) draw attention to a more nuanced version of this argument: research also shows the conditions under which

frames are influential can vary over contexts. They point out that Entman (2003) finds that a new frame can be more effective over old frames when the old frames are competing, not congruent. It is when the public largely agrees over a common frame that attempts to introduce new frames are most likely to fail. This is consistent with Schudson (2002). All of these findings underscore the importance to autocratic regimes of having the first chance to lay the framework for a frame.[1]

Susan Shirk, a prominent researcher on China and a former State Department officer in Eastern Asia, characterizes the goals of the Chinese regime as follows,

> After the close call in [Tiananmen in] 1989, China's leaders became fixated on what they call "social stability." They use that euphemism to convince the Chinese public that Communist Party rule is essential for maintaining order and prosperity, and that, without it, a country as large as China would descend into civil war and chaos (Shirk 2007, p. 7).

Shirk argues that the primary goal of China's leadership is domestic stability. Other scholars also argue that China will do whatever it can to maintain domestic stability, at almost any international cost (Wu, 2008, Lynch 1999, Fravel 2004). Further, other research on Chinese national media suggests that the government and the Communist Party considers its power over the flow of information among its most important tools of social control. Shirk (2008) quotes a Chinese journalist who states, "the CCP has two powers, the gun and the pen, and it must control both" (quoted in Shirk 2008, p. 42). The Propaganda Department is also historically one of the most powerful departments in the government, along with the the Ministries of State Security and Public Security, the CCP Organization Department, and the People's Liberation Army and the People's Armed Police (Shirk 2008). In addition, China's propaganda apparatus continuously grows to keep up with innovations in communication technology. My focus here is not on censorship technology, but the fact that

[1] I thank Philip B. K. Potter for initially making this argument to me.

much energy and effort is exerted in controlling the flow of information on the Internet is evidence of just how important China views information control. Recent reports in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and the *China Digital Times* all indicate that China's efforts to limit expression have not decreased, but have increased in recent years. For example, major websites such as Google and LinkedIn have reported many issues with disrupted service. Individual bloggers, including many on a popular Chinese website called "Weibo", which is a service similar to Twitter, are increasingly targeted by Chinese authorities (*The New York Times* March 21, 2011; *The Washington Post* October 4, 2011; and *China Digital Times* October 26, 2011).

The government also faces a tension when it comes to this media control, however. In their desire to foster growth and innovation at home, to create competitive journalism, and to be considered a generally "modern" regime, the government has incentives to increase openness. As Shirk (2006) points out, the government has gone to great lengths to privatize some of the media and encourage papers to compete for sales. In addition, while the openness of the Internet is a source of great fear among many in China's leadership, it is also a source of information. Increasingly, leaders in China turn to Internet comments for information on public sentiment (Wu 2007, Shirk 2008). Thus, further resources are spent making sure that enough comments are allowed that the leaders can get a sense of what is in the minds of the citizens, or "netizens", but at the same time preventing comments that might be dangerous to social stability from getting out of hand.

When most think of the Chinese government and its censorship efforts, the role of the Internet and mobile communication technology almost always come to mind first. China has been engaged in information control for a long time, however, and the national print media has been a dominant element in its national information strategy, including early efforts to have complete control over the flow of information in the national media, and later by developing a mix of control over sensitive political

information with a desire to sell papers and appeal to and connect with a national audience (Schudson 003, Lynch 2000). While the Internet is the focus of many efforts in China's campaign to control information flow, this attention has not coincided with the neglect of information in the national news. Indeed, the national print media and television media form the primary way the majority of China's rural population learns about the world. In addition, the print media is also available online, and the Internet sites for news increasingly play a dominant role among China's younger readers. The attention to the Internet by other scholars of China's efforts to control information is important, and helps us understand a full picture of what China's management strategy looks like – both including particular information and purposely blocking other information. Focusing on the print media gives us information about much of China's strategy. Censorship activities are another important part, but are outside the scope of this research project. That said, as should be evident in the theory that follows, much of the logic presented here may also apply readily to censorship strategies.

Overall, whether we focus on Internet chat rooms, the print/online national media, or the television news, one of the strongest conclusions to be drawn from research on China's domestic and international politics is that China's leadership considers information management to be of crucial importance to its regime stability. It is therefore crucially important for anyone interested in China's political development to understand how China's leaders go about information management. Yet, while we understand that China's leaders tread carefully when they direct the media, we do not have a systematic understanding of when China will draw national attention to events, when they will enact their power of news blackouts, or when they will give events a cursory nod and then move on.

In this chapter, I present a decision theoretic model of the choice facing China's leadership over the coverage of events. From the model, I derive hypotheses to predict

when China covers international events, and to what extent. These provide the basis for the empirical evaluation of the model that follows in subsequent chapters.

4.2 The Model

In the model, international events arise exogenously. An autocratic leader then must decide whether to report on that event, and, if so, whether to do so directly or indirectly. By directly, I mean they cover the event in detail and with focus on the major features of the event as identified in other international newspapers of record. By indirectly, I mean they cover the event with little detail and with attention on features of the event other than the major features identified in other papers. I elaborate on this further below with some specific examples.

In the model, leaders want to maintain power and they use the media as a tool of public control. Leaders seek to maximize payoffs from media control. They do this by drawing attention to events that bolster the regime's security and away from events that pose a threat to regime security. Were they not concerned with credibility, they could publicize only events that bolster support for the regime and keep events that might weaken the regime out of the public eye.

4.2.1 Definitions

I define whether an event might bolster or weaken a regime in terms of its *political liability*, a term drawn from much literature on the importance of China's domestic politics on its international and national policy decisions (Shirk 2008, Wu 2007). Here political liability specifically refers to how much the event, should the public learn about it, might incite, provoke, anger, or otherwise promote a political controversy in China.

If the government believes the probability an event could incite public controversy about the regime, it would prefer attention not be drawn to it. Other times, the

government may believe an event will have no political effect on the public. These are low liability events, and the government should prefer to attract attention toward these events.

There are two primary reasons that autocratic leaders cannot hide all potentially politically liable news and only promote low risk news about the regime. The first reason concerns the temporal nature of news reporting and its associated uncertainty. At the moment an event begins to take place, it is not obvious how it will unfold or turn out. Yet, it is necessary in any newsroom to make a decision about whether to publish a story about the event within the first day after the initial event. For example, when protestors filled Tahrir Square in Egypt on January 25, 2011, no one knew how the event would unfold. Nevertheless, newspapers around the world had to decide whether to cover it, and how much attention to give to it. Of course, papers can make the choice to delay coverage, but that delay, I argue, weakens credibility in the papers. Publishing stories in a daily news publication about events that took place a week ago is not a good way to gain the confidence of news consumers.

There is an obvious question of "how long is too long" to wait to publish a story. This is an important question, but is outside the scope of this model. For now, I am interested in decisions to publish at the moment of the event. An extension to the model that has many periods might consider the additional choice to delay coverage to learn more about the event, with a dampening cost in the form of public impatience.

This brings us to the second reason autocrats cannot publish whatever they wish: the loyalty of the public. Leaders who run papers that are not read by or believed by the public lose the benefit of controlling the media in the first place. Thus, leaders must be aware that if an event is big or interesting enough, the public may find out about it even if the government censored it in the national media. If news about an event that was not covered in the national papers spreads, then the government faces two problems – they lost credibility in the eyes of citizens who don't trust

coverage to be complete, and they lose an opportunity to be the first framers of an event. As I will elaborate in just a moment, the high-speed train crash in Wenzhou, China, on July 23, 2011, is a case where China's national media reported on the event only after local citizens broke the story on the Internet. While the public may be understanding that a news source cannot get to a site of a crisis right away, they are less understanding as the length of time passes between the citizens breaking the news and the government issuing a formal report. *The Guardian* reports that Chinese anger over slow media response in this case was indeed high (*The Guardian*, July 25, 2011). In addition, because the government did not report on the event first, they were limited in their ability to impose their own frame on the event. Coverage of the event by outside media sources suggested, for example, that the government quickly reworked their coverage to focus on technology failings that were the responsibility of a specific company, but the poor impressions left on Chinese citizens from the early lack of coverage continued to be the more salient interpretation of events (*National Public Radio* August 4, 2011, *Reuters* August 1, 2011, *Financial Times* July 31, 2011).

In the model, I measure size in terms of how many people want to know about it, or how interesting it is. The more interesting an event is, the more a leader should be inclined to publish a story about it, lest they run the above risks. In empirical work, I develop a measure of the level of public interest in an event based on a survey I conduct of China experts. I present them with a list of real and hypothetical international events and ask them to score the events according to how interesting they think the Chinese public would be in each one. This provides the basis for my measurement of the "size" or "interestingness" of an event.

This is not the only way to measure event size. Common ways to measure the size of international events is by the number of people affected or killed, the extent of the damages (if there are some), or even the extent to which an event shapes future events. But, by this count, many "large" events, such as flooding that killed hundreds in Rio

in early 2011, get much less media attention than "small" events, such as the arrest of Abdulmutallab during Christmas 2009, which killed nobody. In the United States, Abdulmutallab received far more media attention than the flooding in Rio. China also has its own different rankings of stories that might be interesting to the general public, and the goal of my survey was to discover this. Thus, this kind of measurement by number affected, while it works well for estimating event size in some cases, for the purposes of this dissertation, it is not appropriate. Instead, I am interested in the size of events in terms of how likely it is that word of the event might spread even to a country where the news was censored. Finally, by "interesting" I mean specifically how interesting it might be to the target public. In China an event about Taiwan may not get much attention in western news, but would be of great interest to the Chinese public. To emphasize, I focus throughout the project on international events only, and consider their size in terms of how interesting the Chinese public might find them.

There is an obvious confounding issue in any study of the media and public interest, which is that what makes a story interesting or "big" in the first place can be a function of previous coverage of related issues. What Americans find interesting is both a function of natural human curiosity for different types of events as it is the media to which we've been exposed in the past. Literature in psychology on attention shows that we are more likely to pay attention to new information when it is related to something about which we're already familiar or interested, especially when that new information agrees with our existing beliefs (Nickerson 1998, Klayman 1995, Pyszczynski and Greenberg 1987, Tversky and Kahneman 1982). In addition, simply covering an event in the first place can generate interest, even if we have no *a priori* reason to expect it to.

In the theoretical model presented here, this confounding issue is not a problem, as I examine the effects of different levels of public interest to a given event, and

am not concerned with the source of that interest. A way to imagine the question of magnitude that makes endogeneity of interest less of an issue is to consider the problem from the perspective of the Chinese government. If a particular type of event takes place somewhere else in the world, how big is the Chinese public's demand likely to be for information about this event? In the empirical chapter, I address the problem of identifying the extent to which the government perceives level of public interest by coding events according to findings in scholarly work on China's media leadership and by coding assistance from experts on China (more on this in the next chapter).

To summarize, leaders in an autocracy would like to cover only events in the world that they can frame to make the government look better, and they would like to keep attention away from all events that might pose a political liability. Yet, because of the uncertainty of how events will turn out and the risk of citizens finding out about an event elsewhere, leaders must sometimes publish stories about events that they would otherwise prefer not to cover. But, when should leaders publicize events that might stir controversy and when shouldn't they? How big does the event have to be to justify that risk? Or, how politically risky does an event need to be such that leaders choose to censor the event, no matter its size? The model below will help answer these questions and its answers will provide the basis for hypotheses to be empirically tested in the next chapter.

There are two final points before I continue. First, I focus here, as elsewhere, on international events only – that is, events taking place anywhere outside of the autocracy. As with democracies, the national leadership has much more influence over the public's knowledge about international events. Research in foreign policy and audience costs in international relations shows repeatedly that, in the US, the President is one of the primary windows through which the public learns about international events (Tomz 2010, Baum 2004, Fearon 1994). Research in American Politics on public opinion corroborates this view (Zaller 1992, Iyengar and Kinder 1987). The

same is true for autocracies – they have a monopoly of information over foreign affairs (Shirk 2008, Wu 2007, Lynch 1999). Autocracies also have more control over information about domestic events than their democratic counterparts do, but in both types of regimes the opportunities for the public to have firsthand knowledge about domestic events is much higher than for foreign events. For example, the news about the July 23, 2011 high-speed train collision in Wenzhou, China, was first announced by Chinese web users on the site "Weibo", who posted both comments and photos taken from cell phones directly to the Internet (*The Washington Post*, October 4, 2011). Only later did the central government formally announce this collision, which killed 40 people. Foreign events simply are less likely to be reported on or spread initially through these online and word-of-mouth mechanisms. Once the news has broken out, however, foreign and domestic news may spread in the same way.

Second, many issues can be cleverly framed to reduce their liability; however, it's hard to know a priori what frames will work, or whether a good one will be available. Thus, I consider events in terms of "prior to any framing, how much of a political liability might they cause?". An extension of the model could include the possibility of framing as a random variable – sometimes there is a plausible frame available that might cast the regime in a better light, and sometimes there simply may be no frames available to convincingly cast a liable event in a rosier color. In addition, a good frame can also be the result of creativity on the part of an individual journalist or leader. Creativity is notoriously hard to pin down or predict, but we might conceive of future work where different groups within the media are typically more likely to generate high quality frames than others.

For now, however, I address the issue of frames in terms of whether the event is covered directly or indirectly. I introduced these two terms briefly above. Direct coverage means the primary actors, actions, and consequences are addressed as a focal point in the article. This definition is similar to how many events data projects

generate their data (KEDS, King et al.). Indirect coverage means that only some primary actors, actions, and consequences are described, while the thrust of the article is on a tangential point.

We saw examples of direct and indirect coverage in the Arab Spring case studies. Direct analysis is a news story about a political protest in another country that focuses on who the protestors are, what they are doing, and what their actions are causing. An indirect story about the protests would mention that they are taking place, but then might divert attention to what a third party is saying about the protests, what the home country is doing to help the situation, or an editorial about the risks of such actions, with little information about what is actually going on. Another way to think of the difference between direct and indirect coverage is in terms of detail. Direct coverage may typically be higher detail than indirect coverage. Specifically, as will be relevant in the following empirical chapters, we might ask ourselves as part of the coding exercise: Would someone who read this article pass a basic "did you read" quiz about the basics of the event?

My intention is not to suggest there is a universal truth out there that can be captured about any specific event. To the contrary, I believe all events are interpreted subjectively and there is no single proper interpretation. The way to respect this natural feature of human event perception is to consider coverage as direct or indirect *relative* to the other major voices in the world about an event. There may be of course more than one or even several "major" voices in the world media about the event, but between them all we can generally get a decent understanding of what happened anywhere – be it World War II, the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, or even something more controversial like 9-11 or responses to Hurricane Katrina. The *causal explanations* for what happened in any of these may vary wildly from group to group, or even from person to person. But the essence of "what happened" can still be described.

4.2.2 Assumptions

I denote an international event by a real valued random variable, z. If z is positive, then the event will be a political asset to leadership. When it is negative, it creates a political liability. Initially, the government receives two pieces of information. It learns the *magnitude* of the event, $\mid z \mid$ and it receives a signal s which gives the probability that the random variable will be an asset or a liability, i.e., that z will take on a negative value. The government believes with probability p that the event will turn out to be a political asset. When $p = 0$, the government believes the probability $\mid z \mid$ will be assigned a positive value is 0. When $p = 1$ the government believes the probability that $\mid z \mid$ will be assigned a positive value is 1. In other words, as p increases, the government becomes more confident the event will be good (or "safe") to publish. At low levels of p, the government expects the event is likely to pose a political liability.

For example, Chinese leaders knew that the events of September 11, 2001 would be of enormous magnitude but they did not know whether they would turn out well for China or not. Thus, to reiterate, part of the reason for the difficult choice at the outset is precisely this: Not knowing how it will turn out. Leaders can only know, at best, probabilistically how the event will turn out, and whether the resolution will be good or bad – or, if it's bad, whether they can spin it in a way that is good.

I consider as an event every single thing that happens that could qualify for a news story, however small. I consider a "long" event as a series of small events. In this way, something that in retrospect takes one moment – "the leader was assassinated and then life proceeded as normal" – and an event that continues for a long time – "the leader was assassinated and then the country descended into years of civil war" – are treated identically in my data, because I break down the latter into multiple events: (1) The leader is assassinated, and then (2), (3), and so on are the events that indicate descent into civil war, such as different factions taking up arms, skirmishes

in strategic territories, and information revelation about death counts. Because I am interested in media coverage of events before it is obvious how the event will resolve, the key question is whether at each moment that something takes place, will the government cover it? The government's desire to balance the perceived risk of political liability of the event and perceived potential public interest drive its choice over whether to do so. Higher liability means they should want to say less about the event, but high interest means they should want to say more.

After receiving the signal s, the government chooses one of three actions: *report directly* (D), *report indirectly* (I), or *not cover* (C). Of course, the "government" is a simplification of the many regime leaders who direct the national media. A more elaborate model interested in how actors in positions of leadership influence medial coverage could pit individuals with different bargaining goals and institutional powers against one another.

The government considers two major features when choosing how to report on the event: the likely level of public interest and the likely level of political liability. The larger the government believes the probable interest in the event will be – i.e., the more likely they think it is that people will pick up papers covering the event, or might seek out information from other sources if it's not in the paper – the more likely they will be to cover the event directly. The higher they perceive the risk of political liability to be, however, the less likely they are to cover the event.

If the government reports the event, then their payoff equals z, which could be an asset or a liability. If they indirectly report on the event and the event turns out to be an asset, payoffs are mitigated by a factor $\alpha < 1$. This is because indirect coverage can offer the credibility benefits of having at least covered some of the event, but with added flexibility: because only part of the event is covered, it may be easier to switch coverage to more or less direct in the future.

If the event is covered indirectly but turns out to be a liability, the government

faces an additional cost, $C(z)$. This captures that political liability accrues over time from withholding the truth. C is the cost to the government if the public finds out about the event from somewhere else. In what follows, I assume that C is a positive, increasing convex function.[2] This simply means that the cost to the government for not covering an event is not only the size of the event (z), which is what they would have incurred had they reported on the "bad" event right away. Instead, the cost is the size z magnified by an increasing function $C(z)$.

These assumptions are designed principally to capture two ideas. First, this designation allows for the idea that "the bigger the lie, the larger the consequences". As z increases, the negative payoff for covering it goes up. Second, it captures the idea that the longer one takes to reveal a lie, the worse the punishment for lying. $C(z)$ is an increasing function that grows over time. I depict it as a convex function to capture an early level of understanding or forgiveness by the public of the national media for being a bit slow to report on a subject or inaccurate in their early reports. But, as more time passes, the citizens become less sympathetic to the argument that the media is collecting information, or doesn't know enough about the issue, and becomes more concerned that the media is covering something up by indirectly reporting an event.

This increasing pattern in punishment is evident in democracies, too, where citizens accept low attention to an issue at first, but grow more angry as it becomes more obvious that there is something to report. The public outcry in the early days of the Occupy Wall Street protests in September 2011 are an example of early tolerance for non-reporting that turned to anger several days later. Another way to depict this function would be as convex increasing, which would mean that in the early days the public gets very angry very quickly, and then after some time the increase in anger tapers off. There are arguments to be made in defense of this depiction as well, and this

[2]Formally, $C > 0$, $C' > 0$, and $C'' > 0$.

indeed may be the case for some types of events. Determining the correct functional form is beyond the scope of this project, however, and so I have chosen what I believe to be the most compelling among a number of good options. The more important point is that the level of punishment both for indirect coverage of a liability and, as we are about to discuss, the complete non-coverage of a liability, increases both with the size of the problematic event and with the passage of time that the government allows to pass before revealing the truth.

If the government chooses not to cover an event at all, and the event turns out to be an asset, I assume they earn a baseline payoff of zero. But, if the event turns out to be a liability they play a cost $G(z)$, which reflects being punished for not covering the news at all, plus the lowered ability to frame the event in a more favorable way. I use a different notation, G, because I assume that the punishment for non-coverage of an event is different from punishment for indirect coverage, which was denoted by $C(z)$. Specifically, the difference in functional form is as follows: I assume that for small events, $G(z)$ is less than $C(z)$ but that for large events the inequality switches and $G(z)$ is higher than $C(z)$. The reason for this is that covering an event indirectly and then having more complete information leak mean the government incurs a short-term cost. But indirect coverage affords them some flexibility. Having already introduced the story, the government can then release more details that allow them to dampen the loss in credibility.

If the government does not cover the event at all, general attention to it will be low in the early days following the event, even if information about it leaks. Leaked information may not spread as widely or as quickly as news in the national press. Importantly, however, it still may spread. This means the government may then need to publish a story about the event. When they do so, this is essentially an admission that they covered up the story early on. This means that while punishment may be low in the early aftermath of not covering an event at all, once the information

spreads and it is revealed the government censored the event, the punishment grows more quickly than in the case of indirect coverage. In this way, direct coverage and no coverage are both forms of commitment – the government has chosen to address the issue or not, and it's a stance that can be costly to switch. Indirect coverage, however, allows for more flexibility. Publishing stories about events that are vague, incomplete, or that focus on a tangential point rather than a primary point, means leaving open the opportunity to increase information over time or taper off without as much notice. This approach minimizes damage from being caught not covering or from covering bad events, but it also minimizes benefits from good events.

As introduced above, I assume that at the outset the costs to being caught giving only indirect coverage are greater than or equal to costs for not covering an event at all, but that as time passes, the costs to not having covered the event at all will exceed those for indirect coverage. This is because indirect coverage allows for more room for adjustment of coverage later: because the story has at least been introduced indirectly, the regime can change its tone to be more direct. Going from no coverage to coverage implies greater admission of guilt for not covering an event, and thus those costs accumulate more rapidly over time.[3] In addition, I have made the case that the level of punishment increases with the size of the event. I can also show that formally based on my assumptions.[4]

[3]Formally, I assume that $G(0) = C(0) = 0$ and that $G'(0) < C'(0)$ but that $G''(x) > C''(x)$ for all x, and $G(1) > C(1)$. $C(z)$ and $G(z)$ are single crossing functions. This captures the different costs over time to being caught presenting biased information ($C(z)$) or not presenting any information at all ($G(z)$).

[4]Specifically, given my assumptions, we can determine that $\frac{C(z)}{z}$ increases in z. This is because, using L'hopital's rule to evaluate $\frac{C(z)}{z}$ at 0, we get that it equals $\frac{C'(z)}{1}$. L'hopital's rule states that we can take derivatives in order to convert an indeterminant expression to a determinant one. Because this expression yields $\frac{0}{0}$, we need to find the derivative of $\frac{C(z)}{z}$ in order to evaluate the limit. We find that $C'(0) = 1$. We take the derivative to show that this is increasing. We obtain

$$\frac{C'(z)}{z} = \frac{zC'(z) - C(z)}{z^2} \tag{4.1}$$

To see that this is positive, consider that for all positive z the bottom is positive. For $z = 0$ the top equals 0. Taking the derivative of the top yields $zC''(z) + C'(z) - C'(z) = zC''(z)$. And by assumption $zC''(z) > 0$. Thus, we know that $\frac{C(z)}{z}$ increases in z, which is helpful as we interpret

As a reminder, the probability the event will resolve in a way that is positive for the regime is p, where $p = 0$ means there is no chance the event will resolve positively and when $p = 1$ the event will definitely end positively.

To make the logic more transparent, I will use specific functional forms that satisfy my assumptions about costs to the regime over time about being caught lying. They are $C(z) = z^2$ and $G(z) = z^3$. The findings that follow are qualitatively robust for convex functions that satisfy my assumptions. As discussed above, there are many alternative functional forms we might consider that share the same fundamental logic of increasing punishment over time. For simplicity, I choose the most basic characterization of that relationship, and leave revisions to this assumption for future work. Future empirical work might even find that punishment goes down over time, or completely ceases after a certain point. These findings would require me to revise my analysis. Until then, however, the assumed function forms of $C(z) = z^2$ and $G(z) = z^3$ should be relatively non-controversial and advantageous in their analytic simplicity.

4.2.3 Decision Tree

The below figure depicts the decision tree facing an autocratic leader at the moment an event takes place. The left side of the payoff to each of the actions represents the payoff to the leader if the event is good for the regime, and the right side of the payoff is the payoff when the event is a political liability.

4.3 Analysis

Using this model and the specific functional form assumption, I can now state several claims and support them in the following three part analysis. First, I compare direct to indirect. Then I compare direct to no coverage. Finally, I compare, indirect

the results of the analysis.

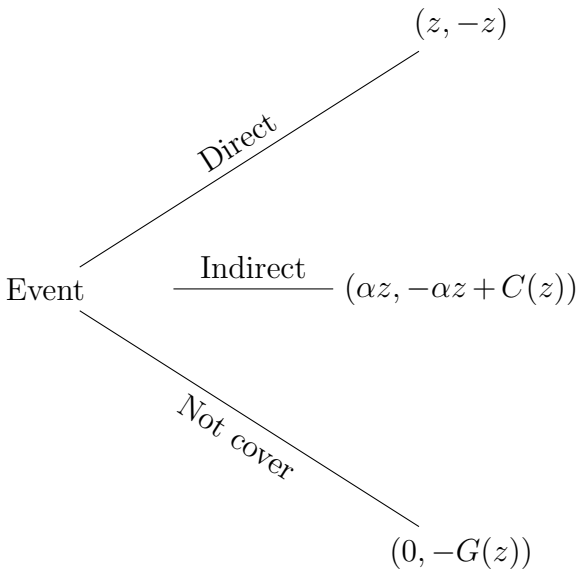

Figure 4.1: Autocratic Media Decision Tree

to no coverage.

4.3.1 Case 1: Direct vs. Indirect Coverage

First consider the choice between direct coverage versus indirect coverage. I can state the following claim. In this case and in Case 2 and Case 3 below, the assumptions I made above that $C(z) = z^2$ and $G(z) = z^3$ are only utilized when I analyze the results with numerical examples. The interpretation of the expressions I derive use these functional forms, but the general conditions hold for any increasing functional form of $C(z)$ and $G(z)$. In addition, in the numerical examples I will also assume specific values for p and for α. These, too are only for ease of interpretation and to make concrete the intuition described in these general claims. The assumptions we do need are simply that α is bound between 0 and 1, that we consider only the absolute value of z, and that $C(z)$ and $G(z)$ are increasing functions.

Claim IV.1. *If $p > 0.5$, the government always prefers direct coverage to indirect coverage.*

proof: The leader should cover an event directly when D > I. This is true iff

$$pz - (1-p)z > p\alpha z - (1-p)(\alpha z + C(z)) \tag{4.2}$$

This reduces to

$$(2p-1)z > \alpha(2p-1)z - (1-p)C(z) \tag{4.3}$$

This further reduces to

$$\frac{C(z)}{z} > \frac{(1-\alpha)(1-2p)}{(1-p)} \tag{4.4}$$

We can also solve for p to get a more general case. I will provide a numerical example below to aid intuition. Solving for p yields

$$p < \frac{C(z) - z(1-\alpha)}{C(z) - 2z(1-\alpha)} \tag{4.5}$$

Equation 4.5 indicates that p is positive and between 0 and 1. We see that the government prefers direct to indirect coverage when the right side of Equation 4.5 is greater than p.

To aid intuition, it helps to use a numerical example. Suppose $p = 0$ and $\alpha = \frac{3}{4}$. Now I invoke the assumtion that $C(z) = z^2$. This gives $\frac{1}{4} \leq z$. When the probability the event is good is zero, the event magnitude will need to be greater than or equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ in order for the leader to choose direct coverage. Of course, $\frac{1}{4}$ on its own is abstract does not tell us much about magnitude of a real event, but it is instructive in comparison, as we will see.

Now suppose $p = \frac{1}{4}$. This gives $\frac{1}{6} \leq z$. This maps to our intuition. When the probability the event is good increases from 0 to 0.25, the threshold of event size above which the leader will cover the event directly decreases from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{6}$.

Now consider when $p = \frac{1}{2}$. This simplifies to $z \geq 0$. When the probability the

event is good is one half, in this setup the leader should always cover the event directly. This holds for all $p > \frac{1}{2}$. This completes the proof.

This claim demonstrates that the expected value of direct coverage is higher than indirect when the probability the event is good is greater than one half. Of course, whether the leadership perceives the probability the event is good is greater than one half is a different matter. In addition, measuring these probabilities is empirically challenging. However, the intuition is important, and will guide our empirical evaluation of these claims.

The finding in this model that the event need only have a one half probability of being good for the regime in order for the leader to directly cover it is a bit surprising. Compared to the perspective of autocracies as full controllers of information, where they should only directly cover events if it would definitely bolster the regime, a finding of any p less than nearly one is novel. Here, leaders are wary about losing credibility. This puts leaders in a similar position with leaders of democracies – they want to draw attention especially to good events, but they may not always have the luxury of that choice. In addition, note that this is direct coverage, not indirect. When $p > 0.5$ leaders of autocracies prefer to say exactly what is going on in the world, not just present a watered down or biased view.

Two corollaries follow directly. Their proofs are simply that direct coverage increases in both α and in $C(z)$ in Equation 4.4.

Corollary IV.2. *The probability of direct coverage relative to indirect coverage increases in* α.

Corollary IV.3. *The probability of direct coverage relative to indirect coverage increases in* $C(z)$.

Corollary 1 implies that as the difference between benefits from direct coverage of a good event and indirect coverage of a good event decrease, the leader is more

likely to cover an event directly. This makes intuitive sense. Higher values for α mean the mitigation of benefit from indirect coverage is lower. Corollary 2 implies that as the punishment for being caught not covering an event increases $C(z)$, the leader is more likely to cover an event directly. It is difficult in real life to imagine how one might measure precisely a change in the expected level of punishment from the audience for not covering or incompletely coving an event, but intuitively we can imagine situations where the audience is already stirring with discontent about the leadership, or specifically about information control by the leadership. This would contribute to a higher value on $C(z)$. In addition, we could also imagine that the longer a regime fails to cover an event, or covers it only indirectly, the angrier the public will be for being misled. It's one thing to publish one misleading story and get caught for it. It's another to publish misleading stories for weeks, and then be caught.

A final corollary concerns comparative statics with respect to p. It states that the probability of direct coverage vs. indirect increases in p.

Corollary IV.4. *The probability of direct coverage increases in p.*

proof: Taking the derivative of equation (3.4) we get

$$\frac{\partial z}{\partial p} = \frac{-(1-2p)}{(1-p)} \tag{4.6}$$

Figure 4.2 depicts the graph of this function, where we see that the probability of direct coverage increases in p. The x-axis is p and the y-axis is the probability of direct coverage. Notice that when p crosses 0.5, the probability of direct coverage becomes positive, as described in Claim 1. Now we see that not only do leader prefer direct coverage when $p > 0.5$, but also that their preferences for direct coverage increase over the entire range of possible values of p. Of course, the only relevant values in Figure 4.2 are those between 0 and 1 on both the x and y-axis, as both p and the probability

of direct coverage are probabilities. The values for "probability of direct coverage" when the line is below the x-axis are to be interpreted simply as that there will be no direct coverage. After we cross past $p = 0.5$, we see real, increasing, meaningful probabilities for the probability of direct coverage. Similarly, values greater than 1 on the y-axis are to be interpreted as the probability of direct coverage = 1.

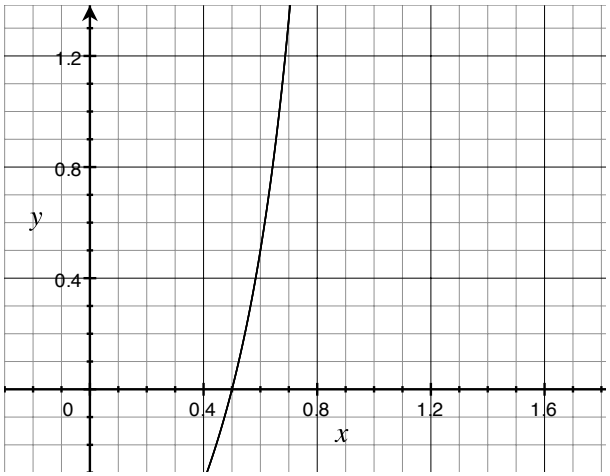

Figure 4.2: z changing in p for the choice of Direct vs. Indirect

4.3.2 Case 2: Direct Coverage vs. No Coverage

Now consider the choice between not covering the event at all versus covering it directly. The relevant assumptions are the same as those for Case 1. I can state the following claim

Claim IV.5. *If $p > 0.5$, the government always prefers direct coverage to no coverage.*

The leader will prefer no coverage to direct coverage when N > D, which is true iff

$$pz - (1-p)z > (1-p)(-G(z)) \tag{4.7}$$

This reduces to

$$\frac{G(z)}{z} > \frac{(1-2p)}{(1-p)} \tag{4.8}$$

Solving for p, as above, yields

$$p > \frac{z - G(z)}{2z - G(z)} \tag{4.9}$$

As in Case 1, p is positive and a fraction. The leader prefers direct coverage to no coverage when the expression on the right side of equation 4.9 is greater than p, the probability the event is good.

As above, we again consider a numerical example. We again invoke specific values for the variables and functional forms. Recall $G(z) = x^3$. When $p = 0$ the leader prefers N when $z < 1$; that is, he always prefers N. When $p = \frac{1}{4}$, the leaders prefers N when $z < \sqrt{\frac{2}{3}}$, or ≈ 0.82. From above we also know that leaders prefer D to I when $z > \frac{1}{6}$, so we also know know that they prefer I when $0.17 < z < 0.82$. Continuing to $p = \frac{1}{2}$, we see leaders prefer N to D when $z > 0$, or, never. We also know from above that at $p = \frac{1}{2}$ leaders never prefer I to D, either. Thus, under this setup, anytime the probability the event is good exceeds one half, leader prefer to directly cover the event. This supports Claim IV.5. It also contradicts more general, colloquial ideas about the media in autocracies that assume the government is free to cover only the events they like, or to cover any event as indirectly, or however biased, as they please.

We see that Corollary IV.4 again follows – the probability of direct coverage relative to no coverage increases in p. This does not rely on specific values for α or z, but again requires that $G(z)$ be an increasing function. The same holds for an additional corollary regarding $G(z)$, presented below.

Corollary IV.6. *The probability of direct coverage relative to no coverage increases in $G(z)$.*

The logic is the same as above where it was demonstrated that $\frac{C(z)}{z}$ increases in

z. Again, as punishment increases for non-coverage, we see the probability of direct coverage increase.

4.3.3 Case 3: Indirect Coverage vs. No Coverage

Finally, consider the choice between covering an event indirectly versus not covering it at all.

Claim IV.7. *If $p > 0.5$, the government always prefers indirect coverage to no coverage.*

The leader will prefer indirect coverage to no coverage when I > N, which is true iff

$$p\alpha z - (1-p)(\alpha z + C(z)) > (1-p)(-G(z)) \tag{4.10}$$

This reduces to

$$\frac{G(z) - C(z)}{z} > \frac{\alpha(1-2p)}{1-p} \tag{4.11}$$

Solving for p yields

$$p < \frac{G(z) - C(z) - z\alpha}{G(z) - C(z) - 2z\alpha} \tag{4.12}$$

As with Cases 1 and 2, p is positive and a fraction between 0 and 1. When the right side of Equation 4.12 is greater than p, the leader prefers indirect coverage to no coverage.

Continuing the numerical example from above, we find from this that when $p > 0.5$ the government prefers indirect coverage to no coverage, which is Claim IV.7. Two corollaries follow. They do not rely on $\alpha = 0.75$ or the specific functional forms of $C(z)$ and $G(z)$ – again, only that they are increasing. These are true for the general

case – and, of course, also for the specific numerical example presented here.

Corollary IV.8. *The probability of indirect coverage relative to no coverage increases in p.*

Corollary IV.9. *The probability of indirect coverage relative to no coverage increases in α provided $p < 0.5$.*

Corollary 5 is not surprising: As the probability an event is good increases, we should see the leader prefer indirect coverage to no coverage. And, as we recall from above, as p exceeds 0.5, we see the leader prefer direct coverage to indirect. Corollary 6 implies that when we see lower levels of p – that is, $p < 0.5$, or, in other words, levels of p where the event is more likely to be bad than good, the incentive to cover the event indirectly increases as the mitigating effect of indirect coverage also increases.

To summarize the findings of these three cases, we turn to Figure 4.3. Figure 4.3 is a graphical representation the zones where leaders prefer not to cover an event, indirectly cover it, or directly cover it. The area below the "$\diamond$ (lower) line is the zone where leaders prefer not to cover an event. These are events where generally the size of the event is very low, and especially low as p approaches one half. Leaders prefer to indirectly cover an event between the two lines, where z can go up to being very large and p again does not exceed one half. The area above the "$\times$" (upper) line is where leaders prefer to directly cover an event. They prefer to directly cover all events that have a probability greater than one half of being good, and they also directly cover events that are large and also have a p slightly lower than one half. As p increases the size of z at which leaders should shift from no coverage to indirect and from indirect to direct decreases.

Figure 4.3 assumes, as above, $\alpha = \frac{3}{4}$. When an event has 0 probability of being good, the event size must be above 0.25 in order to see a move from no coverage to direct coverage. As the probability an event is good increases, the threshold of

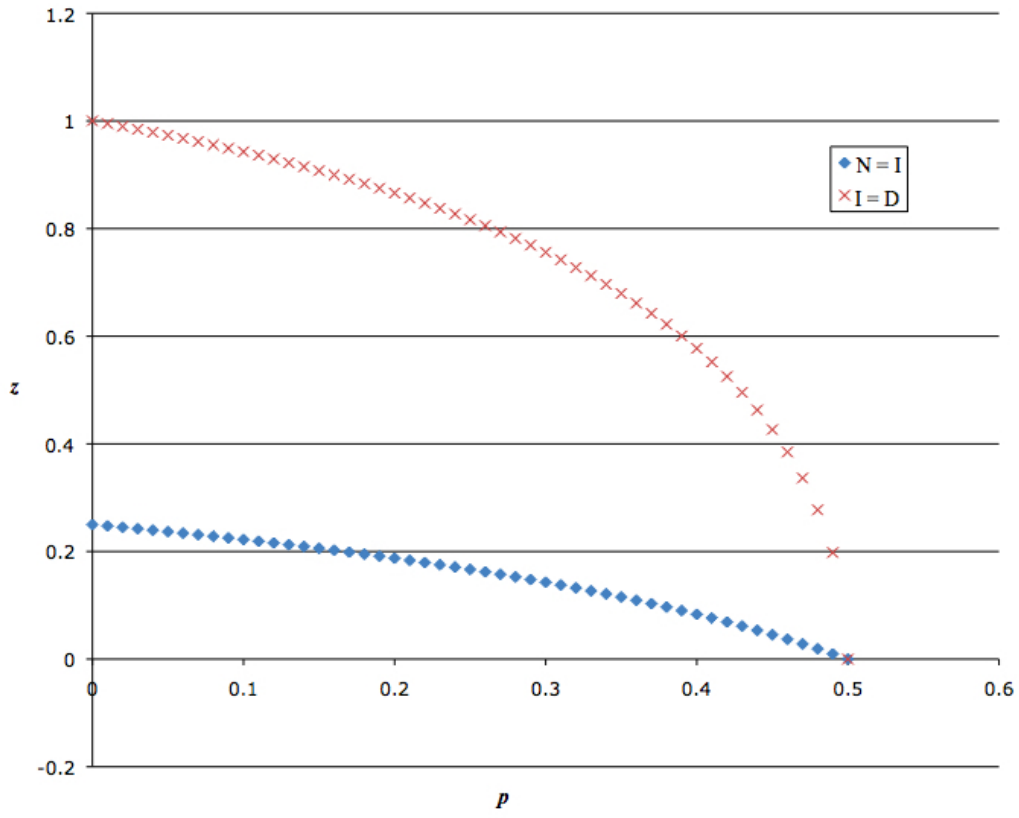

Figure 4.3: Zones where leaders prefer N, I, or D. Above the "×" line is direct coverage, between the "×" line and "◇" line is indirect, and below the "◇" line is no coverage. Recall that z and p are both bound between [0, 1].

interest decreases for the point beyond which a leader is willing to publicize the event. If the probability an event is good is 0.4, for example, the size of the event need only be just above 0.1 for it to be possibly mentioned indirectly.

In order to publish an event with direct coverage, either the size needs to be very high, or the probability it will be good needs to exceed one half. For example, if an event size is 0.8, it still may be published indirectly – as we saw in China's coverage of Libya in Chapter 2 – if the probability it is good is less than 0.3. In Chapter 6's statistical analysis of the propositions made in this theory, I will address how we might measure event size and event "good" status. I offer as a solution a survey of China experts regarding their views of the size and quality of different types of events.

4.4 Discussion

There are three main findings from this model. First, the probability an event is good (p) increases the likelihood that its leadership will prefer to cover it indirectly and directly. Second, when $p > 0.5$ the leader prefers to directly cover an event rather than indirectly, and this is due to the mitigating factor α, which dampens the potential benefits from a good event when there is only indirect coverage. Finally, the extent to which p influences this decision is mitigated by the size of the event. The bigger the event, the more a leader should cover it, regardless of how likely it is to be good or bad. These findings, especially the third finding, form the basis for the hypotheses that will follow. A simpler analysis than the one presented here could be acceptable for identifying the major relationships that coverage increases the more likely an event is to be good, but the introduction of the idea of "indirect" coverage complicates this. The decision-theoretic setup of three possible choices helps us specifically identify the type of coverage to expect when indirect coverage is an option for leaders. As we will see in the empirical analyses that follow, the role of indirect coverage is difficult to measure in practice, so this analysis is the primary way, for now, that we observe this tool at work. Of course, future research should address the problem of measuring indirect coverage in practice. Finally, this formal analysis is helpful in testing our beliefs about the world. I made similar conjectures to the findings established here in Chapter 2, but formally demonstrating them helps us have more confidence in the logic underpinning my arguments.[5]

There are a few additional comments to be made about these findings. First, much of the decision to cover an event or not comes from beliefs leaders hold about them. Once an event transpires, it is not obvious how it will turn out, or what implications it might hold for the regime. As discussed in the introduction, this makes this decision

[5]Of course, there are limits to formal models in that, indeed, as discussed, they rely on assumptions of their own. However, as long as these assumptions hold – and, as explained, I believe they are reasonable assumptions – the logic follows.

a form of commitment for future actions (cover or not cover the event) that must be made under uncertainty. Here, uncertainty is captured in p, the probability the event will be good for the regime. So far we also assume the leaders are rational.

Second, the decision to cover an event directly, indirectly, or not at all may be in part a function of leaders' preferences about risk-taking. It also may depend on whether leaders correctly interpret the event as likely to be good or bad or likely to be big or small, which might happen if there is increased noise in the system, or if the leaders are more optimistic or pessimistic. Future work should examine the effects of these additional considerations.

For example, we might expect that a risk-averse regime should prefer a higher p than 0.5 before choosing to cover an event. A risk-accepting regime might prefer to cover an event even if the p is lower than 0.5. An optimistic regime would look the same as a risk-averse regime, but for a different reason. They would choose to cover an event when p is higher than 0.5, but in a model this would be because now p would reflect the leader's inflated view about how likely the event is to be good. The model could push a number of different directions for evaluating these and other nuances of the autocratic leader's personality and environment.

This basic model has provided a logically consistent and simple rational framework for analyzing when and to what extent autocratic leaders should cover international events. It is built on the assumption that leaders control much of the news available to the public, but not all of it. This is consistent with the true situation for most autocratic leaders today, and a refinement of the model could compare differing levels of control. But that is not the goal here. The goal here is to develop a set of predictions based on this simple model to provide the foundation of an empirical test of the theory developed here. We have just done that.

4.5 Putting the Pieces Together

I made three claims and several corollaries about the use of direct, indirect, or no coverage for different types of events. The relevant event features are the size of the event $\mid z \mid$ and the probability p that the event will be a political asset or liability, where it is more likely to be an asset (positive value on $\mid z \mid$) as p approaches 1 and more likely to be a liability (negative value on $\mid z \mid$) as p approaches 0.

Two claims that follow from the model are that when the probability an event is good is greater than 0.5, the government will prefer direct coverage to indirect coverage (Claim 1 from the earlier chapter) and to no coverage (Claim 3 from above). An additional claim is that when the probability the event is good is greater than 0.5, the government prefers indirect coverage to no coverage (Claim 2 from above). This does not help distinguish between behavior when p is less than 0.5, however. Thus, we turn to the corollaries regarding the choice over each strategy.

The most relevant corollaries for the analysis in this chapter are, first, that the probability of direct coverage increases in p at any level. The other two corollaries regarding direct coverage, that the probability of direct coverage also increases as the size of potential non-punishment increases and that the probability of direct coverage also increases as the potential loss to non-coverage of a "good" event increases, are interesting, but beyond the scope of this empirical analysis. The role of z, however, is important, because as it increases, the public is more likely to hear about the event from a source other than the government.

We also saw from the corollaries that the probability of indirect coverage compared to no coverage increases in p, but we recall from Claim 2 that after p exceeds 0.5, the government prefers direct coverage to indirect coverage. When p is less than 0.5, however, the government prefers indirect coverage to no coverage as α, the potential loss to non-coverage, increases.

Putting it all together, we see a picture where, at low levels of p, the government

will choose no coverage of the event until the costs of potentially being caught not covering outweigh the costs of indirect coverage of the event. These costs increase as z grows. The bigger the event, the greater the costs of not-covering them. Since we see that direct coverage is preferred only at a $p > 0.5$, we see that: from $0 \leq p < 0.5$, the government chooses no coverage until $(-\alpha z + C(z)) > -G(z)$.

Empirically, and in the simplest terms possible, this means that when an event is likely to be good, we should see direct coverage. When it is likely to be bad, we see no coverage until the event becomes big enough that the government would do better to say something about it than ignore it. As discussed, ignoring it comes with risks: the government loses possible credibility and it loses the opportunity to place its own frame on the event, and loses the opportunity to have a meaningful (and not purely reactionary) say in the national conversation. In an ideal world, the government would prefer to not cover bad events, but given the reality that there are many ways to find out about events other than through the national media – even despite the presence of strong censorship – as the event grows in size (magnitude plus interest), so the government must address it, in at least some form.

In what follows, I will also elaborate in more detail what events that are a political liability might look like. There is an intuition that high liability events are instances like a leader being violently overthrown, while a low liability event is a peaceful leadership transition, or an international negotiation that comes out well for the regime. But there are many events not at the extremes that pose challenges to categorization: Was the US-China air collision an event that was good for China, or not? Is an election of a new leader a good event for a democracy that is also a bad event for China?

Again, because I focus on the coverage of the event at the outset, this is not an issue in my analysis. In fact, it actually helps motivate the payoffs: Because after the fact leaders can cast an event in positive or negative terms, it may be the case that,

should they discover they can cast it in a positive light, they may wish that they had covered it more in the early stages. That is, if the regime decided not to cover an event because it looked as though it would be resolved in a fashion not flattering to the regime, but then in the end there turned out to be a way to cast it positively, they would have been better off covering the event from the outset.

As discussed above, after an event has concluded, whether it was a success or failure can depend a great deal on how it is framed. The same event can be cast as a success in two opposing countries. This is due to political incentives to appear the victor, and it can hinge somewhat on the creativity or cleverness of the media. The ability to think of a clever angle that makes the regime look good is a skill akin to that which makes a good marketer, and that can be difficult to quantify.[6]

Thus, with an eye to the fact that we are considering a leader's choice about event coverage at the moment an event takes place, and with an appreciation that this is a choice with long-term repercussions that must be made in a relatively short period of uncertainty, we turn to fleshing out some of the underlying assumptions and testing the core predictions.

[6]It also cannot always save the day: Great marketing efforts after the Vietnam War were not enough to cast the event in a positive light for many US citizens.

CHAPTER V

Testing for Audience Costs in Autocracies

Chapter Abstract

Attracting the attention of the domestic audience to a foreign adversary in an international dispute carries both risks and benefits for leaders. The literature in International Relations on audience costs focuses on when democratic leaders choose to "go public" in their handling of international disputes and when they conduct foreign policy outside the scrutiny of the public eye. Other work shows that autocratic leaders are also capable of going public for strategic gain. Yet, we do not know when autocratic leaders employ this strategy. I develop a modified audience costs model for autocracies and I test it with a statistical analysis of a new dataset of Chinese national newspaper headlines. I find that autocratic leaders do not seem to follow the same logic as their democratic counterparts – in fact, in some instances they follow an opposite logic to democracies.

Importantly, however, there does seem to be a logic that autocracies follow. They do not appear to "go public" at random. I find that domestic factors play a role in China's decision to draw attention to disputes. I suggest that this may be due to the fact that China particularly draws attention to disputes that increase opportunities for regime legitimacy claims by the government. I test this claim in subsequent chapters.

5.1 Introduction

A vast literature on audience costs in democracies demonstrates that leaders publicize stories about international events strategically. In this chapter I aim to discover whether autocracies follow the same logic as democracies when it comes to going public over international events. If they do, then the rest of the dissertation is not necessary. If they do not, then we must ask: When do autocrats discuss international events?

In this chapter I present a modified theory of audience costs that makes predictions about when autocratic leaders will go public over international events. This is a standard audience costs argument with modifications that are based specifically on three important differences between autocratic and democratic institutional punishment and reward systems as well as variants in levels of information control.

The theory leads to several hypotheses that help address two questions: Do autocratic leaders go public under conditions similar to democratic leaders? If not, what are the patterns according to which they do go public? I test my theory using a statistical analysis of Chinese leadership's going public behavior since 1990. To do this, I create an original dataset of Chinese newspaper headline mentions of foreign adversaries during international disputes, and evaluate mentions of adversaries against key independent variables previously identified in the literature as relevant to democratic going public. I then use this dataset for the testing of the legitimacy-credibility model of international relations

My analysis yields three main findings. First, the patterns according to which China goes public appear to differ from that of democratic leaders. Second, unlike what audience costs would predict, Chinese leaders are more likely to go public in disputes with regimes more powerful than they are, and they do not seem to be affected by the strategic stakes of a dispute. Third, my results suggest that autocracies strategically go public over disputes more for domestic ends than for signaling

purposes abroad. With this result in mind, I will then turn to an evaluation of the specific domestic mechanisms that might explain this difference. Of course, these mechanisms are, as introduced above, credibility and legitimacy.

These results are important for several reasons. First, insofar as going public is a means of signaling intent, it is useful to know from a foreign policy and conflict behavior perspective when China will invoke audience attention in order to tie its hands to particular policies.

Second, to whom and to what the Chinese government draws its domestic attention is a sign of to what the Chinese government will, in the future, possibly hold itself accountable. Attracting public scrutiny to a dispute means the government is allowing its domestic population to judge its behavior in that dispute, and Chinese leaders are very sensitive to public opinion over the capability of the government to maintain order at home and defend China's prestige abroad. Fravel (2010), for example, shows that China is more likely to use violence when its own regime legitimacy is at stake. And, Susan Shirk writes, "whenever the public pays close attention to an issue, [Chinese] leaders feel they have to act tough to show how strong they are" (Shirk 2007, p. 11). And, in *Chinese Cyber Nationalism*, Xu Wu details how, with the rise of the Internet, opinions of China's handling of international crises can spread like wildfire – and are of major concern to the Chinese government (Wu 2007).

Third, as China is a rising power and influential player in the international system, knowing more about the types of conflicts its leadership tells its audience about helps us broadly understand the types of policy priorities and overarching foreign policy agenda arcs China is likely to follow in the future. This is different, and indeed beyond, the above gained insight on China's crisis behavior in any given crisis: The types of crisis to which the Chinese government calls attention gradually paints a worldview for its audiences about who friendly states are and who are foes. If indeed there is strategic consistency in when and how the Chinese government attracts attention to

international disputes, knowing what that is can possibly help US policymakers, and policymakers in other countries, anticipate China's policy moves in the future.

This chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section I present the existing knowledge on when democratic leaders make the choice to attract public attention to international disputes. I then present the state of knowledge on when and how autocracies attract attention to international disputes. In Section 3 I introduce my theory and draw several hypotheses on when autocrats go public. In Section 4 I describe my empirical strategy, including the sources and methods for collecting my data on Chinese national newspaper content. The results are presented in Section 5. I conclude in Section 6 with comments on future directions to push forward this work.

5.2 Democracies Going Public

How do democratic leaders weigh the costs and benefits of drawing domestic public attention to foreign disputes? As introduced above, in 2004 Baum conducted a statistical analysis of the going public behavior of all US presidents from 1946 to 1994. He finds support for his theory that leaders are more likely to go public when the strategic stakes in a dispute are high, and as the likelihood of US success in the dispute, should it become militarized, increases. His predicted and corroborated patterns are based on a logic that leaders care about domestic opinion regarding disputes. This logic works in two ways.

First, when the strategic stakes in a dispute are high, leaders are more likely to go public because the domestic risks to attracting public scrutiny – risking "public wrath" (Baum 2004, p. 605)) – will be outweighed by the international signaling benefits that come from going public. Second, as the probability of winning in a military dispute with the target foreign actor increases, so, too, increases the likelihood that the dispute will generate political capital for the leader. Baum's empirical analysis focuses primarily on the role of these two key variables, the stakes associated with

the dispute and the probability of military victory in it, his story ultimately rests in a (albeit untested directly) logic that leaders care about these two things insofar as they affect their own chances of political survival at home (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999).

Baum derives three hypotheses from his logic, two of which are relevant to the present study. They appear below.

Baum's Hypothesis 1: *Presidents are more likely to go public (private) when the strategic stakes in a dispute are relatively high (low).*

This states that when stakes are high, leaders are more likely to go public (because audience costs would be useful). When stakes are low, leaders are less likely to go public (because it's not worth it to get public scrutiny). Baum's second hypothesis is:

Baum's Hypothesis 2: *When the strategic stakes in a dispute are low, as the president's expected probability of success increases (decreases), he will be more likely to go public (private).*

Baum tests these hypotheses using a dataset of public rhetoric by US presidents in disputes since 1946. He finds, first, in line with his expectations, when stakes in a crisis are high, the volume of public mentions of that adversary is almost always significantly higher during the crisis period compared to during a prior, non-crisis period. Also in accordance with his theory, when national security interests in a crisis are low, then the probability that a president will attract attention to that dispute is positively related to the likelihood of success should the crisis become militarized.

An alternative explanation to Baum's first finding is that high stakes disputes are likely going to be salient on their own, with or without public mention of it by presidents. It's rare that a high stakes dispute would also be relatively low profile.

To make sure he is not just capturing the natural salience of a dispute, Baum also tests his propositions against an alternative specification of the dependent variable, which is the number of times the adversary in mentioned in the *New York Times*.

His theory is also supported when using this measure, and the correlation between the two versions of the dependent variable is 0.57. This suggests that while, indeed, presidents and the media do follow similar patterns, these patterns are not identical, suggesting leaders do have some freedom from just reacting to salient issues as they come and do exhibit autonomy when they choose which foreign adversaries to mention in public statements. This point will be relevant to the analysis of autocratic leaders, as we will see in just a moment.

5.3 Audience Costs in Autocracies

Baum's hypotheses from above provide the starting point for my analysis. In this section I present a modified audience costs theory for autocracies. First, I describe major institutional reasons for why I expect autocratic leaders to go public under circumstances different from those affecting democracies. These differences are institutional differences in how leaders are rewarded and punished and differences in the level of information control by leaders in autocracies compared to democracies.

5.3.1 Differences in Punishments and Rewards

Leaders in autocracies are punished differently for failures compared to their democratic counterparts. Autocratic leaders cannot be elected out of office, but if public opinion is low enough, they are not immune to coups, destabilizing protests, civil war, or other forms of disorder. They may also be removed through internal maneuvering within the government. Thus, while autocratic leaders may be less sensitive to small dips in public opinion, they may be more sensitive than democratic leaders to big decreases, as sudden drops in approval can have major negative ramifications for po-

litical survival. This is not to suggest democratic leaders are not sensitive to major drops; they are. Another way to think about this is that democratic leaders' political vulnerability is linearly negatively related to domestic disapproval, while autocrats' is exponential.

This suggests that, on average, autocratic leaders may be more likely than democratic leaders to go public in low stakes disputes, and that as stakes increase, they are less likely to go public. The reasoning is simply that autocrats have less to lose when they go public over low stakes events because the extent to which they are punished for a failure is lower than it is for democracies. Specifically, this logic comes from Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003, 1999).

Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003, 1999) suggest that democratic leaders typically are not rewarded as much for war successes as their autocratic counterparts. They argue that regimes with a small "winning coalition", the number of individuals required to keep the leader in power, require a higher probability of victory than regimes with a small winning coalitions. Thus, the benefits to publicizing relatively low stakes, high probability of success, crises may be even higher for autocracies, which are characterized by small winning coalitions, than for democracies, which have large winning coalitions. Thus, we see that leaders of the two regime types are both rewarded and punished for victories and failures, but to different degrees.

Of course, both kinds of regimes can benefit from "rally 'round the flag effects", though democracies may be less able than autocracies to reap the rewards from this for an extended period: As Schudson (2002) and others point out, opposition parties in democracies may be able to provide counter-evidence to weaken the "rallying" that the current leader wishes to invoke. Finally, of course, this is not to say that democratic leaders cannot benefit from foreign policy victories. Kennedy's management of the Cuban Missile Crisis is an example of this. The assertion is simply that, on average, institutional rewards to conflict are higher and punishment for failure are lower for

autocratic leaders than for democratic leaders.

As the discussion above highlights, the difference in reward and punishment may also mean that autocratic leaders go public for domestic political purposes more often than democratic leaders, who, by contrast, may go public more often for international bargaining reasons. The risks to autocratic leaders for going public, especially in low stakes disputes, are low compared to those for democratic leaders due to the absence of an electoral connection, as demonstrated by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003, 1999). I draw a third prediction from this pattern, which is that because autocratic leaders have less to lose when they go public over a foreign policy issue, they are then more willing to go public as a distraction from domestic problems. Another way to think of this is that the threshold for how serious domestic problems need to be before it's worth the risk to go public over a foreign crisis is lower in autocracies than in democracies.

The third major institutional difference between autocracies and democracies that may affect leaders' propensity to attract attention to international disputes is that when democratic leaders publicize foreign policy, they face punishment to themselves and the political party they represent.[1] The leader and/or his party may be thus punished by removal from office in the next election.

Autocratic leaders, however, as discussed above, may be putting the broader regime at risk when they publicize foreign policy and then fail to carry out their promise. When Wu (2007) discusses Chinese nationalists' dissatisfaction with China's leadership's lack of assertiveness against the US, Japan, and Taiwan, for example, he explains that the anger was directed toward the entire government, not just the particular leaders. Because the Chinese Communist Party is the only party in government, when the party falls under criticism, the entire regime is necessarily criticized and questioned as well.

[1] Croco (2009) identifies cases where individual leaders versus their political parties are punished.

A tangential expectation can be drawn from this third institutional difference. Because the entire regime is at risk when there is widespread public disapproval, Chinese leaders have incentives to attract public attention to disputes that make the Chinese government appear more legitimate. This means they may be more likely to attract attention to disputes involving other allies, other non-democratic regimes, and disputes where other developing or rising nations overcome adversity from the existing political order. In addition, they may be more likely to attract attention to disputes where rival powers, such as the United States, are not perceived favorably. Incidentally, democracies may not differ from autocracies in the desire to focus on conflicts that boost approval of the government or the leadership; however, again, because the entire regime is less at stake in a conflict in a democracy, the effect for democracies should be smaller. I translate these expectations into several formal hypotheses below.

5.3.2 Differences in Necessary Domestic Reactions

As discussed above, for democratic leaders, the simple act of being public is thought to be sufficient for generating audience costs. As mentioned, audience costs are a way for leaders to signal commitment to a policy stance: by making a public statement about that stance, they "tie their hands" to follow through on it, as both the leader and the adversary know the leader will be punished by his domestic audience if he backs down from or later contradicts his stance. For autocrats, however, the mere act of going public alone may be somewhat helpful, but, according to Weiss, most international bargaining benefits come from protests. Thus, autocratic leaders need not just to have passive listeners – they need to have active participants.

It takes more effort to both instigate a public protest and to keep it under control – i.e., to keep it from spreading to other issues – than it does to simply make a public statement. In other words, it is more costly for autocrats to go public in this way

than for democratic leaders who simply need to make a speech or two.

In addition, protests in general, once begun, even if they were originally desired by the authorities, can grow out of hand, which is potentially domestically destabilizing (Lohmann 1994). In addition, the bigger they grow, the harder to control they become. As they grow in size, so, too, can the sentiments that inspired the protest also grow to be more extreme. This means that leaders now must either spend resources trying to calm the protesters or must follow through on the protestors' demands. Neither of these are desirable for leaders. Again, protests can be problematic for both democratic and autocratic leaders, but because autocratic leaders use protests to generate audience costs, these concerns lead to different audience cost generating behavior for autocracies. In addition, this issue of instability is more problematic for unstable regimes than for stable ones, regardless of whether they are democratic or autocratic.

Further, protests can grow not just in terms of size or in terms of extremeness of viewpoint. Protests can also grow to encompass more issues (Wada 2004). Protests against Japan, for example, that begin just demonstrating unhappiness about something like textbooks risk evolving to encompass broader nationalist issues (He 2007). In Bolivia, protests about pipelines in Bolivia merged with other nationalist issues, including criticizing the leadership's close relations with the US over the war on drugs and the government not doing enough to improve the standard of living in the country, which caused the protests themselves to become a major destabilizing force across the country (Schweimler 2006, Webber 2005). Protests originally sparked over a contained issue may also bring to the surface deeper issues that had been dormant until the protest. McNally (2008) provides an example of this in protests about Tibet, and Daragahi (2010) and the Green Voice of Freedom's coverage (2010) suggest this in protests in Iran.

Even if protests that begin over one issue stay contained to that issue in the short

run, the mere act of having protests take place can help foster links between people and can give citizens useful experience for organizing protests effectively (Tarrow 1998). These newly formed networks and experience in the process of protesting would help facilitate the outbreak of future protests over some unrelated issue. Finally, much research demonstrates that people simply like to follow the footsteps of others, whether it be in the context of protests or otherwise (Bikhchandani et al. 1992).

Attracting attention to a foreign adversary in an international dispute is risksy in autocracies even if the attention does not result in a protest. As in democracies, public opinion is inherently unpredictable. The autocratic leadership could attract public attention to an adversary, only to have opinions either about that adversary or about the leadership's handling of that adversary, swing out of control. With the rise of the Internet in China, for example, these swings can and do take place, often in the direction of much more nationalistic views than the leadership would like (Wu 2007). These views concern China, even without necessarily having them translate into public protests. Negative public opinion, even just expressed on the Internet, can translate into unrest. Even just publication of a relatively low strategic stakes dispute that ultimately ends in failure for China can cast doubt on the regime in the eyes of the domestic audience.

5.3.3 Differences in Information Control

Leaders in autocracies have more control over the information about foreign adversaries that is communicated to domestic audiences than democratic leaders. Democracies are typically characterized by an independent media. Therefore, democratic leaders who publicize foreign policy run the risk of their messages being refuted, modified, or manipulated by actors in the media. While autocratic leaders do not have full control over information, they have a much stronger hold on the information filter. Thus, going public in autocracies is typically a less risky proposition, as

the chance of opinion veering away from the party line is lower. In addition, lower stakes situations are less likely than high stakes disputes to be publicized heavily in non-government media sources in autocracies. This further reduces the risk of going public in particular over low stakes situations.

All of this also supports the prediction that autocratic leaders may be more likely to go public under low stakes situations than democracies.

5.4 Hypotheses

The above discussion of relevant differences between autocracies and democracies that may affect the propensity of leaders of different types of regimes to go public points to two hypotheses. The primary purpose of the analysis in this chapter is to evaluate the going public behavior of autocracies compared to democracies, these core hypotheses are limited to comparisons to Baum's findings for democracies. Because, based on the above discussion and based on other research on China in particular, I expect that additional variables that Baum does not specify are driving China's leadership's going public behavior, in a separate section I consider several additional China-specific hypotheses. Accordingly, in the results section, I will divide my analysis into two parts.

First, I explicitly compare my work to the findings of Baum and endeavor to match his control variable and his methodology as closely as possible. Then, I consider further specifications of my statistical model that include variables I believe to be specifically relevant to China's leaders' calculations. For now, however, we focus exclusively on autocratic behavior compared to what we know about the behavior of democracies.

There are two different issues that relate to the idea of control over the media – first, autocracies may have more say in terms of what they publicize. Second, they can also have more say in what they dampen. Autocrats, much more than democrats,

can put a cap on what is said about a foreign adversary. This deliberate limiting of attention is more than just "going private" in democracies, and may also drive different patterns in autocrats' choices to attract attention to international issues. If I find, for example, that autocrats go public with less frequency than democratic leaders, this could be because my analysis is not capturing another tool at autocrats' disposal – pushing for privacy.

The ability to limit attention to particular events is typically stronger in autocracies, who have more power than democracies to initiate news blackouts, broadly censor whole events, and control informal news sources, such as websites, blogs, and chatrooms. Democratic leaders, however do have some ability to limit attention as well. While they cannot usually (or, legally) explicitly instruct the media not to cover an event, leaders can influence where attention is allocated by selectively speaking about issues or not. In fact, they can sometimes even have more influence than this. The Obama Administration was able to keep secret US operations in Pakistan in the search for bin Laden in 2011. The Bush Administration was able to limit the broadcasting of body bags on TV of casualties from Iraq and Afghanistan. During the Vietnam War, too, information about head counts were kept classified until it was deemed strategically acceptable to release the information.

As mentioned in the Introduction, an important and interesting avenue for future research is to consider the extent to which the logic for autocracies presented in this dissertation are also relevant to democracies. While autocratic leaders and democratic leaders face several important institutional differences in terms of how they are rewarded, punished, and how much control they have over the media, the differences are not as pronounced as one might think. Especially when it comes to control over the media, it is typically thought that democracies have a free press and autocracies have complete control. We increasingly see that neither extreme is true, and both types of regimes face tradeoffs over what to share and what to keep quiet. In future

work, I intend to continue this project to include democracies. I am especially interested in empirical evidence of cases where democracies behave like autocracies when it comes to news coverage, non-coverage, and indirect coverage. For now, however, I focus first on establishing the patterns according with which autocracies behave.

Hypothesis 1: *Autocratic leaders are more likely to go public when the strategic stakes in a dispute are relatively low compared to democratic leaders. They should be as willing to go public as democratic leaders when the stakes are high.*

The logic of Hypothesis 1 is that we should see the opposite pattern for autocrats from what Baum predicts for democratic leaders in terms of the relationship between going public and strategic stakes. The first part comes from the domestic logic of the repercussions of going public. The second part is the same audience costs logic as that for democracies.

Hypothesis 2: *Autocratic leaders are more likely to go public (private) as the probability of military success against a crisis actor increases (decreases).*

Hypothesis 2 is designed to capture the prediction that the same effect for autocracies as exists for democracies in terms of military capabilities: that is, a leader is more likely to go public as the probability of military success against that actor, should the conflict escalate to a military dispute, increases.

Hypothesis 3: *China will be more (less) likely to attract attention to a dispute when the actors involved are non-democracies (democracies).*

This refers to the expectation that China will be selective about the disputes to which it attracts public attention in order to make the Chinese government appear more legitimate. When autocratic regimes are involved in disputes that make headlines, China may wish to stress these events in order to inflate perceptions of the

prevalence of other similar regimes.

Finally, Hypothesis 4 is used to represent the role of domestic stability and public opinion of the government in China's going public calculations. Because of profound limitations in access to Chinese public opinion data, I use the economic well-being of Chinese citizens as an, admittedly crude, thermometer for Chinese satisfaction with the government. I measure economic well-being simple as the percent change in GDP per capita per year minus the percent change in consumer prices per year. The reason that autocracies should be more willing to do this is the same as described above regarding rallying around the flag – because they are punished less for publicizing events that end up not being flattering for the regime, they are more willing to go public as a way of distracting from domestic problems. Because democratic leaders are more sensitive to foreign policy failures – again, this is according to Bueno de Mesquita et al. – they will go public over foreign policy as a means of distraction after a higher level of domestic trouble than that required for democracies. As with the other hypotheses, it should be noted that again democracies and autocracies do have much in common, as the differences in behaviors are often a matter of degree or specific means, not fundamentally different incentives.

Hypothesis 4: *China will be more (less) likely to attract domestic attention to any international dispute when the economic well-being of citizens decreases (increases).*

The second half of hypothesis 4 – that the government will be less likely to go public when GDP per capita grows – is as important as the first part. When economic well-being is high at home, China should be less inclined to risk the "public wrath" by going public. This suggests that as China's growth and economic performance increases, it will be less aggressive and less worried about posturing internationally for regime legitimacy purposes. The literature on rising powers and aggression is tremendously rich, and provides mixed expectations for the circumstances under which rising

powers are aggressive militarily.

5.5 Methodology

The basic statistical model that Baum uses to test his hypotheses is that his dependent variable, the level of president' public mentions of an adversary during international crises, is set equal to two key independent variables, the level of strategic stakes and the US's likelihood of success militarily against the adversary, plus several control variables.

In this section I describe in greater detail the variables and controls Baum employs, and then, for each, I describe my operationalization of these variables and their data sources for my Chinese version.

5.5.1 Data

I construct an original dataset of when Chinese leaders seek to attract domestic attention to a foreign adversary during an international dispute. Following Baum, I am interested in the differences in level of attention to an adversary during the early stages of a crisis compared to the level of attention to that adversary during non-crisis periods. I measure Chinese leaders' intentions to attract domestic attention to an adversary during a dispute in terms to the frequency of mentions of that adversary in a major Chinese national newspaper, the *People's Daily* (*Renmin Ribao*). If the government wishes to attract public scrutiny to an event, the first and easiest way to do so is to cover the issue heavily in the national, government-run news.

Baum uses data on international crises between 1946-1994 from the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) dataset (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1998). Most of the independent and control variables described here come from the International Crisis Behavior dataset, which is a collection of 455 international crises from 1918-2007. They consider an international event a "crisis" if it poses a threat to basic values, has a high

probability of military hostilities, and is characterized by a finite time for response to the original threat.

5.5.1.1 Cases

The first step in the analysis is to determine what constitutes an international dispute over which a leader may choose to attract public attention or not. In his analysis, Baum uses all crises listed in the International Crisis Behavior dataset during his time period of interest. He does this under the logic that, because the US is a global superpower during the entire period of analysis, any crisis is one in which the US could *potentially* have become involved. In addition, choosing only crises in which the US was involved would truncate the dependent variable and thus bias results.

China, of course, was not a global superpower with the same reach or involvement as the US during most of the past century. However, China could still have mentioned these other adversaries, as most conflicts in the dataset are salient enough that it is conceivable that all middle to major players in the international system might at least take note. In recent decades, especially, China has grown more involved in international affairs, so that, even if China is not involved militarily in a dispute, they may still have reactions to the dispute. Thus, for the analysis presented here, I also include all crises.

Finally, there is a question of the unit of analysis: it may be either individual crisis actors in a dispute, or the disputes themselves. Baum's primary analysis uses individual crisis actors as the unit of analysis, but he also replicates his results using specific crises as the unit of analysis. While there are benefits and costs to both approaches, focusing on the crisis actor is generally more appropriate, as it requires fewer uncomfortable assumptions.[2] For all results presented here, I use crisis actor as my unit of analysis.

[2]These costs and benefits are discussed at length in Baum. For space, I will not replicate that discussion here.

5.5.1.2 Dependent Variable: Going Public

The dependent variable in this analysis is whether the president has sought to attract public attention to a dispute. To measure this, Baum creates an indicator based on public statements of US presidents. He uses records from the *Public Papers of the President of the United States*, which is a record of all public speeches, verbal or written statements, and press conferences, made by US presidents in a political context. Baum's variable is constructed from three different tallies that are intended to capture the volume of attention a leader publicly gives a crisis.

For any given crisis, Baum first counts the average number of times per day that the president mentions a crisis actor in a political context between the date the crisis escalation begins (according to the ICB records) until the date of the first major response by one of the actors. The ideal outcome for presidents is that making public statements in this early period will drive the adversary to back down before the crisis escalates. As mentioned previously, considering only the early crisis period also helps control for the possibility that the president is just mentioning the crisis in a reactionary capacity because it appeared in the news, as dispute may be less likely to make headlines during very early periods.

The second is the average number of mentions per day that the president makes during one month prior to the crisis. The third is the daily average for the exact same calendar month in the year prior to the crisis. Baum takes the average of the precrisis month's daily average and the daily average from the precrisis month in the previous year. He then uses as his primary measure the difference in the average number of daily mentions between the actual crisis period (between initiation and response) and the combined precrisis periods. Focusing on the difference in volume between precrisis and crisis periods, rather than total volume during crisis periods, helps account for the tendency of presidents to mention other countries more often (such as the Soviet Union), regardless of whether there is an active dispute to publicize.

Finally, of course, there is always a possibility that leaders may be pressured into mentioning crises or adversaries due to existing news coverage, rather than for strategic purposes. To account for this possibility that the observed mentions by leaders of adversaries is not just presidents reacting to news stories, Baum also tests an alternative specification of the dependent variable. Baum counts *New York Times* articles that mention the adversary in each dispute according to the exact same procedure for the presidential speech index. He finds the same patterns in his results for either specification – the *Times* or remarks by presidents. As mentioned, there is a 0.57 correlation between mention the two, which indicates that while they are related, they are not identical.

Public statements by Chinese leaders about foreign policy are not as frequent as in the US. Instead, scholars have long inferred Chinese foreign policy opinion through Chinese newspapers that are government mouthpieces. This means that I can create an index in exactly the same fashion as Baum, but using mentions of an adversary in a top Chinese newspaper. I collect mentions of foreign actors from a database of all articles in the *People's Daily* (*Renmin Ribao*). The database extends from 2008 back to 1946, and contains all full articles published, in original Chinese, in the paper.

For every country and crisis mentioned in the ICB dataset from 1990-2008, I searched the database for all mentions during the early stages of each crisis, for the month prior to the conflict, and the same time period the year before the crisis. I recorded the total number of mentions of the country for each of those time periods. My reasoning for this is explained in Table 5.1. I count all mentions of both the country name, any standard Chinese abbreviations of it, as well as the name of the country's capital city. For example, the Chinese word for the United States is *meiguo*, but it is often abbreviated in headlines simply as "*mei*". I included both terms in my search, and then dropped headlines that included "*mei*" in another context that was not the United States. This was necessary because "*mei*" on its own

means "beautiful" and is also a syllable in many other common disyllabic Chinese words. I repeated this process for all countries in the dataset who were involved in an international crisis. I also included names of capital cities, as it is common practice in international journalism to call a country by the name of its capital. For example, a headline might read "*Washington* announces a change in policy" rather than "the United States". Thus, in addition to search for *meiguo* and *mei* in the database, I also searched for *huashengdun* ("Washington, DC") in the case of the United States. Again, I repeated this process for all countries and their capital cities.

I considered including also the names of leaders in the crisis – for example, "Bush" in addition to "United States". In the end, I dropped these considerations as it appeared China did not use leader names consistently for many countries. More often than not, they simply mentioned country names. Furthermore, if a leader was mentioned, it was often for commentary about that leader, not attention to a crisis. Thus, because leader mentions were not consistent from country to country, or from event to event, I did not include them in the final analysis.

The analysis covered here includes observations as far back as 1990. I stop at 1990 for several reasons. First, before that, China had much stronger control over the news, due primarily to the lack of mobile communication technology and the widespread use of the Internet. In addition, 1990 is a convenient stopping point because it picks up upon the winding down of the Cold War as well as begins just after *Tiananmen*, which is thought to have played a role in China becoming more concerned with the spread of information in the media.

The *People's Daily* is considered to be primarily a mouthpiece of the Communist Party of China, as it is under the direct control of leaders of the Party. And, given that in the US, a non-government newspaper, the *New York Times*, and presidential rhetoric are somewhat correlated, we can be quite confident that mention of an actor in an international dispute in the *Daily*, a government-run news source, is indicative

of the government's desire to attract public attention to it.

Table 5.1 presents summary statistics of my version of the dependent variable and Baum's version. The final indicator represents the percent change in average mentions per day during the crisis initiation period compared to the average number of mentions per day in the month prior to the conflict and the same period the year before. That is, the overall average number of mentions per day in the month prior and the same month in the year before that provide the denominator, and the average number of mentions during the crisis initiation period is the numerator. The specific formula for the "Going Public" Indicator is:

$$C - [(A + B)/2] \tag{5.1}$$

A is the period of 13 months before the crisis through 12 months before the crisis. B is the period of month month to one day before the crisis. C is the period from the crisis to the moment of the first response by the second actor in the dyad. The Columns in Table 5.1 reflect A, B, C, and the Final Indicator, respectively.

	Mentions/day year before crisis (C)	Mentions/day month before crisis (B)	Mentions/day crisis initiation to first response (A)	Final Indicator
US Mean (SD)	0.08 (0.31)	0.10 (0.39)	0.43 (2.09)	0.34 (2.03)
China Mean (SD)	0.23 (0.40)	0.24 (0.44)	0.40 (0.78)	0.16 (0.67)

Table 5.1: Going Public Indicators: the US and China

The standard deviations for the means in both the US and the China case are quite high. The US results come directly from Baum's 2004 paper, and I was able to replicate them in my analysis. The Chinese results share the same pattern. I believe this comes from the fact that there is indeed very high variance in both the US and in China for the coverage of some international crises – some are mentioned extensively, while many are ignored. The discussion of outliers in Chapter 6 will

illustrate specifically the cases in China where five particular international events were given much more attention than most international events.

5.5.1.3 Independent Variable 1: Strategic Stakes

The strategic stakes in a crisis refer to the extent to which national security interests are affected by outcomes in a dispute. The traditional international relations perspective on this is that the more an issue's outcome would genuinely affect the distribution of power to a state in the international system, the higher the "strategic stakes" in a crisis. Thus a crisis whose outcome would fundamentally alter the relative military capacity of the United States compared to its major adversaries would be considered to be of much higher "strategic stakes" to the US than one whose outcome might just affect the fate of an isolated policy, program, or small nation.

As Baum points out, defining this concept, much less objectively and accurately measuring it, is difficult. It's not often obvious a priori whether a particular crisis will become something that really affects the national interest or not. It's not even obvious what would really constitute the national interest. In realist theory in international relations the "national interest" is typically treated as being whatever it takes to not lose relative power in the system (measured by relative military capabilities, both potential and active), but what this constitutes can certainly vary considerably from leader to leader.

Baum's response to these difficulties is to rely on an existing, observable empirical indicator. This is the "geostrategic salience" variable from the ICB dataset. This variable measures the "significance" of the location of an international crisis in terms of features, such as natural resources and distance from power centers. It is measured by the number of international systems that would be affected by a crisis" (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1998, 47-48). What they mean by this is that some crises affect only one region, while others spill over into several, and some may affect the entire

global order. Specifically, they measure the systems that are affected in terms of, in order from lowest salience to highest, "one subsystem" (e.g.., affecting the South American subsystem only), "more than one subsystem", "one dominant system" (e.g., the West system including Europe and the US), "one dominant system and more than one subsystem", and the "global system" (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1998, System Level Codebook Variable 49). Thus, countries that are near other major powers, or countries that have more natural resources, would be scored as having higher "geostrategic salience" than ones that are distance and/or poorly endowed.

This variable is of course imperfect, but for consistency with the model tested for democracies, I begin by including it as well. It is a dummy variable, taking on a value of 1 if it is a "high stakes" crisis, and 0 if it is not; i.e., if its consequences do not extend beyond the immediate concern of the crisis actors involved. It is important to note that this represents the overall stakes in a dispute as far as the entire international system is concerned. It does not specifically take into account whether the dispute is high stakes for China. While these two may overlap in many cases, they are decidedly distinct features of a dispute. Baum's original analysis only considers the general strategic stakes; not the stakes as they are seen by the US. In the controls section below I offer a possible way to evaluate the direct strategic stakes to China. Finally, in the next chapter I drop this variable from the analysis altogether, as it appears to have no bearing on the results for either test.

5.5.1.4 Independent Variable 2: Probability of Success

Baum relies on the Correlates of War National Military Capabilities summary statistic to measure the probability of success in a crisis. While this indicator is not perfect (see Stam 1996 for a discussion), it represents the standard operationalization of this variable in empirical IR research.

I use this indicator to determine the probability of success in a particular crisis by

following the standard practice of calculating the power of China as a proportion of the power of the crisis actor, weighted by their alliance portfolio in the crisis year. This gives a variable that takes on values between 0 and 1, representing the probability of China's success in the crisis should China become militarily engaged in it. It appears in the results below as the US relative power scale and the China relative power scale.

The US relative power scale for the entire 1946-1996 period Baum considers has a mean of 60.17 with a standard deviation of 29.48, and ranges from as low as 10.92 to as high as 99.99 in some conflicts. The China relative power scale for the 1990-2008 period has a mean of 86.06 with a standard deviation of 16.81. The range for China extends from 31.01 to 99.96. Again, the way to interpret these values is that they represent a loose approximation of the probability of US or Chinese military success against a particular crisis actor in a dispute. Not surprisingly, these probabilities are very high for both countries except when both are involved.

5.5.1.5 Control Variables

My controls fall under two sets. One set of controls are designed to match Baum's original analysis for the US as closely as possible. Another set is to better match what actually may be relevant to China, as discussed in the theory section above.

Below, I present two tables. Table 2 lists all of the controls Baum uses in his analysis of the US and explains where and how I match his work for the case of China. Table 3 lists controls that my theory suggests also matter for China but that do not exist in Baum's analysis of the US.

In both tables, the reason for the inclusion of each variable should be rather obvious. Where it may not be, I provide commentary. For all of Baum's and my control variables, I list the predicted sign on the coefficients. Finally, in some cases Baum's controls are simply not relevant for China; these are noted accordingly.

Table 5.2: Controls: US vs. China, predicted direction in parentheses

Variables	Baum's Operationalization	My Operationalization
Domestic		
Precrisis approval	(+) Percentage approval of president in Gallup presidential approval poll prior to crisis initiation	None; Not relevant
New administration	(+) Dummy coded 1 for the first 3 months of each new administration	None; Not relevant
Divided government	(−) 3-category scale, 0 = unified	None; Not relevant
Presidential election	(+) Dummy coded 1 for election years	None; Not relevant
Domestic economy	(+) Monthly percent change in US personal income minus monthly percent change in the consumer price index	(−) Annual percent change in GDP per capita in China minus annual percent change in the consumer price index
Crisis Actor		
Democracy	(−) Dummy coded 1 if crisis actor was a democracy at the time of the crisis	(+) Identical
Distance	(−) 9-category scale measuring the distance of crisis actor's region from the US	(−) Distance in miles between the crisis actor's capital and Beijing
Regime Repression	(+) 3-category scale of the extent of repression exercised by the crisis actor prior to the crisis period (3 = minimum repression	(−) Identical
Ally	(−) Dummy variable coded 1 if a crisis actor was a US ally in any formal alliance at the time of the crisis (according to Correlates of War dataset)	(+) Coded 1 if ally of China
International		
Cold War	(−) Dummy coded 0 if between years 1949-1988	None; Not applicable (my analysis is 1990-2008)
US Crises	(−) Number of crises under way in which the US is coded as a crisis actor during the same year as a crisis in which the US is involved	None; China is only coded as a crisis actor once during 1990-2008
Regional Organization	(+) Dummy coded 1 if a regional security organization is involved in the crisis	(+) Identical
Global Organization	(+) Dummy coded 1 if a global security organization is involved in the crisis	(+) Identical

Table 5.3: Controls Stage Two: Additional China-Specific Controls

Variables	Operationalization	Notes
Domestic		
Internet	(+) Percentage of the population active Internet users	The more people have access to the Internet, the more likely China is to mention a dispute officially so it can have a chance to frame it early on
Crisis Actor		
Asia	(+) Dummy coded 1 if crisis actor is an East Asian or South-Central Asian state	China is more likely to publicize other Asian countries. (It does not make substantive difference in my analysis if I consider just East or South-Central Asian actors.)
Crisis		
US Crisis Actor	(+) Dummy coded 1 if the US is the crisis actor	In the data, some of the crises with the highest increase in mentions of a foreign actor are those involving the US
US Involvement	(+) If the US is not a crisis actor but is involved as a third party intervener, it is scored on a 9-category scale, 1 = no involvement, 8 = US direct military involvement, 9 = US is crisis actor	This is another way to account for high mentions of crises with the US involved

Table 5.4: Controls Stage Two: Additional China-Specific Controls, con't

US Intervention	(−) Dummy coded 1 if the US is a third party intervener in the conflict and the intervention is viewed favorably	If the US is not perceived favorably, China will jump at the opportunity to cast its own regime in a better light by comparison
Violence	(+) 4-category scale, 1 = No violence, 4 = Full-scale war	
Military Issue	(+) Dummy coded 1 if the crisis is over a military issue	
9/11	(+) Dummy coded 0 if the crisis is 9/11	This event gets many mentions and is arguably from a different data generating process compared to the other crises included

5.5.2 Comparing Autocracies and Democracies

Before continuing to my results, I need to address an important point about the focus of my analysis. I evaluate the overall volume of political rhetoric about

adversaries in international disputes. In democracies, having the public just listen to leaders' statements is thought to be sufficient to generate audience costs. Based on Weiss's work, this may not be sufficient in autocracies. Instead, autocratic leaders may need their audience not just to passively listen to the statements, but also actively take to the streets with signs and slogans. Despite this, I argue that studying the volume of public mentions of an adversary by autocratic governments can still help us start to understand when they seek to attract attention to international issues. My reasoning is twofold.

First, if autocrats wish to incite protests, the most effective and inexpensive starting point for doing this, as mentioned, is to make public statements about the adversary in the dispute through the government-run media. If the government would rather the public not pay attention to a particular international issue, then, logically, *not* mentioning an adversary is the easiest first step toward preventing attention to the adversary.

It is often thought to be the case in China that sometimes the public becomes engrossed in an international dispute against the wishes of the leadership. If this is the case, it might be argued that counting government newspaper mentions of an adversary would mistakenly also pick up on these efforts of the government to reduce attention to the dispute. This is because a leader might attempt to defuse audience attention to an adverary by publishing many news stories that cast an adversary in a positive or neutral light.

I argue, however, that the overall volume of attention to that adversary, even in this positive form, would still be much lower than if the leadership wished to incite anti-adversary sentiments. There are only so many positive news stories one can publish about one's enemy. In addition, rather than fill the newspapers with glowing stories of an adversary in order to quell domestic attention, it is more reasonable to expect that the government would publish one or two calming stories, and then fill

the papers with unrelated news as a distraction. By comparison, then, attention to an adversary would be relatively very low in these instances, not higher.

The second reason that focusing on the leadership's volume of statements about an adversary is a sufficient first step for understanding when autocrats go public is that this happens to also be the current state of the art in research on democracies. Certainly, what happens once attention is attracted to an issue is important to understanding the ability of leaders to generate audience costs. While autocracies may require some form of domestic action in response to public statements, democratic leaders also require, at minimum, that audiences listen. Yet, despite this centrality, remarkably little work in the expansive body of work on democracies and audience costs addresses this half of the theoretical story.

For example, even in Baum's study, where he explicitly claims to involve domestic public opinion, the research actually barely addresses public reactions to leaders' statements. At a very general level, Baum is technically not even interested in domestic reactions so much as he is interested in the *anticipated* reaction of the domestic audience by the leader choosing to go public. Even this, however, this is not ultimately tested in any way in his statistical analysis.

One method Baum follows to address this issue is that he considers only leaders' statements during the initial stages of the crisis. He does not consider all statements during the entire crisis period. This helps minimize instances in the data where high public rhetoric *later* in the crisis period might be due to a leader responding to domestic outcry. The reaction of the public after that early crisis mention is not part of the analysis in Baum's study, and nor is it in mine.

Given all of this, I argue that counting the volume of attention to a foreign adversary in an international dispute is a valid first measure for understanding when autocratic leaders seek to attract the attention of domestic audiences to it. The key point of the analysis for Baum, as well as for me, is the overall volume of pub-

lic rhetoric employed by the leader about a potential adversary during early crisis periods relative to the volume concerning that adversary during non-crisis periods.

5.5.2.1 Media Censorship in Autocracies

I addressed censorship above, and wish to revisit it here, as it is an important part of any autocracy's overall efforts to control the information flow inside a country. Censoring an issue is a choice to actively detract attention from an issue. The opposite, attracting attention to an issue, puts China at a big enough risk, as discussed, that when they deliberately do this, we ought to pay attention. In addition, if the Chinese government is censoring issues, they more than likely will be doing it alongside going private. Thus, if we observe in my analysis that the government is not going public, we might suppose there is also censoring going on. It is difficult to conceive of cases where there is extensive attention to an issue at the same time there is rampant censoring of other media attention to that issue. Given that my interest is when leaders do attract attention to an issue, this effectively removes the concern of whether censoring is taking place.

When we are considering only the universe of cases where China has chosen to go private, a separate research question is when the Chinese government also censors issues, and when they do not. I leave this important task for future work, though, again as mentioned above, I believe that insights from this research can be applied to the problem of when China chooses to risk censoring events when it may later be caught censoring and punished in the form of some lost credibility in the eyes of the public.

5.6 Results

I present three models, all of which are OLS analyses. In all three models, the crisis actor is the unit of analysis and each model employs robust standard errors

clustered by individual crises. This is identical to Baum's US work.

Again, following Baum's method, the first specification of my model is just the change in crisis rhetoric evaluated against the two key independent variables, probability of success and strategic stakes, as well as an interaction term for the two IVs and a control for the average level of precrisis rhetoric.

The second model again follows Baum's method and includes all of *his* controls, excluding dummies for leader identities. I first present the results of his analysis compared to my results for a version that matches him as closely as possible (i.e., controls from Table 2). Finally, the third version of the model considers all of Baum's controls as well as controls for leader identities.

Again, for now, in all three models, I first present an exact replication of Baum's results for the US, followed by my results for China.

5.6.1 Model 1

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 contains the results from the simplest OLS estimation for the US and China, respectively.

Table 5.5: OLS Estimation results : US Model 1

Variable	**Coefficient**	**(Std. Err.)**
Precrisis presidential rhetoric	0.862	(0.717)
The New York Times coverage	0.644**	(0.264)
US relative power scale	0.006*	(0.003)
Strategic stakes	0.577*	(0.329)
Strategic stakes x US relative power scale	-0.008*	(0.005)
Constant	-0.474*	(0.267)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*; Pseudo R^2: 0.24 ($N = 525$)

For consistency with the analysis of China, for all US models presented, I also consider their results when looking just at results since 1990. In most cases the n is reduced so much that it is difficult to draw inferences from the OLS results. But, what results do exist do follow the patterns presented for the full dataset from Baum.

That is, there does not appear to be any special difference taking place in the US between the period before 1990 and after.

Table 5.6: OLS Estimation results : China Model 1

Variable	**Coefficient**	**(Std. Err.)**
Precrisis *Renmin Ribao* coverage	-0.437	(0.295)
China relative power scale	-0.017**	(0.006)
Strategic stakes	-0.151	(1.004)
Strategic stakes x China relative power scale	0.002	(0.011)
Constant	1.689***	(0.603)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*; Pseudo R^2: 0.09 ($N = 157$)

The results for the US show a positive and significant coefficient for both the independent variables. True to Baum's hypotheses, an increase in the strategic stakes in a dispute and an increase in the US's relative power (probability of success) are associated with an increase in presidential rhetoric about a foreign actor. Notice also that the level of presidential rhetoric increases with coverage by *The New York Times*.

Turning to the results for China, the key things to notice are that the coefficient on China's relative power is negative, indicating as China's military strength compared to an actor *decreases*, China is more likely to mention that adversary in national newspaper headlines. Second, notice that strategic stakes is also negatively associated with rhetoric levels, but it is not significant (at all). This is very surprising: It seems that the overall "importance" of the crisis has no bearing on whether that crisis appears in Chinese national newspaper headlines. Finally, I do not have a comparison to *The New York Times* because, as discussed above, the *Renmin Ribao* is effectively a hybrid between what might be leader rhetoric and what might appear in non-government mouthpiece news media (most of whom get their information from the government anyway).

In terms of the hypotheses, we see that Hypothesis 1, that autocratic leaders are more likely to go public as stakes decrease, surprisingly, must be rejected. In fact,

stakes in a dispute appear to have no effect on the Chinese government's calculations to go public. This is provocative and suggestive that domestic factors may be an even more powerful driver of going public behavior than previously thought. Second, hypothesis 2, that higher probability of success in a dispute will lead to more going public behavior, is also rejected. In fact, the opposite is the case. This, again, suggests something more is at play than posturing internationally.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 require additional variables. They are considered in Model 2.

5.6.2 Model 2

The second model specification in Baum's analysis includes all controls he deems relevant, excluding dummy variables for actual president identities. Table 5.7 presents the results for estimation of the US model, and Table 5.8 presents parallel results for China.

A few things to notice for this version of the US model are that all of the original variables from Model 1 keep their signs and remain significant. In addition, election years are positively associated with presidential mentions of foreign adversaries. Interestingly, a divided government is negatively associate – the more divided it is, the less a president mentions foreign actors. Finally, the role of democracy is important. The negative coefficient on this dummy variable suggests that US presidents are more likely to mention non-democratic crisis actors.

The results in Table 5.8 for China are again provocative. First, again, China's relative power scale is significant and negatively associated with increased rhetoric about foreign adversaries. In addition, the domestic economy and the presence of global security organizations also affect rhetoric levels. Consistent with Hypothesis 4, as the performance of China's economy improves, it is less likely to mention foreign adversaries. As the economy slows down, China is more likely to feature mentions of foreign actors in its newspaper headlines. Hypothesis 3, however, that the non-

Table 5.7: OLS Estimation results : US Model 2

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Precrisis presidential rhetoric	0.996	(0.740)
The New York Times coverage	0.654***	(0.251)
Precrisis approval	-1.003	(0.725)
Divided government	-0.230*	(0.126)
Presidential election year	0.591**	(0.301)
New administration	-0.422	(0.284)
Domestic economy	9.950	(8.520)
Regime Repression	0.145	(0.118)
US ally	0.205	(0.252)
Democracy	-0.430**	(0.195)
Distance to US	-0.091	(0.075)
US relative power scale	0.010**	(0.005)
Strategic stakes	0.742*	(0.424)
Strategic stakes x US relative power scale	-0.009*	(0.005)
Regional security organization	0.118	(0.169)
Global security organization	0.078	(0.106)
Cold war	-0.538	(0.769)
Number of US crises per year	-0.078	(0.122)
Constant	0.658	(0.902)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*; Pseudo R^2: 0.31 ($N = 501$)

Table 5.8: OLS Estimation results : China Model 2

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Precrisis *Renmin Ribao* coverage	-0.334	(0.386)
Domestic Economy	-3.991**	(1.585)
Regime Repression	-0.252	(0.189)
Chinese Ally	0.356	(0.275)
Democracy	0.000	(0.112)
Distance to China	0.000	(0.000)
China relative power scale	-0.019**	(0.007)
Strategic stakes	-0.634	(1.315)
Strategic stakes x China relative power scale	0.006	(0.014)
Regional security organization	-0.112	(0.136)
Global security organization	0.331**	(0.141)
Constant	2.167**	(0.823)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*; Pseudo R^2: 0.23 ($N = 140$)

democratic regimes should be more likely to be mentioned, is not supported in this analysis. This is consistent with an argument that China uses mentions of foreign adversaries for domestic diversionary purposes.

Finally, the presence of a global security organization is also positively associated with mentions of an actor in a foreign crisis in China. The interesting thing about this result is that it does not seem to affect the US, but it does China. Reasons for the power of this variable are merely speculative at this point, but perhaps it might indicate China's interests in ingratiating itself with international organizations. Many scholars of China have posited that China is keen to prove its own legitimacy both at home and abroad, and one way it may be doing this is to become involved and active in international organizations. This result is consistent with that position (though, notably, regional security organizations seem to not carry this effect). Alternatively, it may also very well be the case that some events are big enough that information is bound to get to the public regardless of China's national paper coverage and, realizing this, the Chinese authorities may publicize those events directly in order to make sure they set the tone of the coverage.

5.6.2.1 Model 2 with US Modified to match China

To give a more balanced comparison between China and the US, I also consider Model 2 for the US but with several domestic factors removed – as these comparable variables simply do not exist for China. Thus, Table 5.9 presents the results from Model 2 for the US but with the following variables removed: precrisis approval, divided government, presidential election year, and new administration.

Overall, we see generally the same patterns for the US. Strategic stakes and the interaction term still follow the expected direction, precrisis coverage by the *New York Times*, and the other country being a democracy all continue to play the strongest roles.

Table 5.9: US Model 2 minus 4 key domestic indicators, all years

Variable	**Coefficient**	**(Std. Err.)**
Precrisis presidential rhetoric	1.145	(0.787)
The *New York Times* coverage	0.652**	(0.262)
Domestic economy	6.094	(8.521)
Regime repression	0.205	(0.129)
US ally	0.000	(0.234)
Democracy	-0.450**	(0.197)
Distance to US	-0.111	(0.073)
US relative power scale	0.008*	(0.005)
Strategic stakes	0.704*	(0.404)
Stratgic stakes x US relative power scale	-0.010**	(0.005)
Regional security organization	0.159	(0.177)
Global security organization	0.144	(0.100)
Cold War	-0.251	(0.742)
Number of US crises per year	-0.066	(0.118)
Constant	-0.201	(0.728)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*

5.6.3 Model 3

Table 5.10 presents the OLS estimation results for Baum's final model. It is the same as Model 2, above, only adds dummies for the identities of presidents.

Table 5.11 presents the results for the third model for China. Everything is basically the same as it was in Model 2, with the same support for hypothesis 4, opposite findings for hypothesis 2, and no support for hypotheses 1 and 3.

Table 5.10: Estimation results : US Model 3

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Precrisis presidential rhetoric	1.081	(0.733)
The New York Times coverage	0.634***	(0.223)
Precrisis approval	-0.676	(0.636)
Divided government	-0.034	(0.058)
Presidential election year	0.566*	(0.294)
New administration	-0.406	(0.285)
Domestic economy	22.627*	(13.712)
Regime Repression	0.099	(0.103)
US ally	0.090	(0.225)
Democracy	-0.431**	(0.201)
Distance to US	-0.107	(0.076)
US relative power scale	0.011**	(0.005)
Strategic stakes	0.874**	(0.431)
Strategic stakes x US relative power scale	-0.010**	(0.005)
Regional security organization	0.165	(0.149)
Global security organization	0.095	(0.141)
Cold war	-0.316	(0.284)
Number of US crises per year	-0.047	(0.108)
Eisenhower	0.105	(0.174)
Kennedy	-0.091	(0.263)
Johnson	-0.159	(0.318)
Nixon	-0.480	(0.457)
Ford	-0.449	(0.345)
Carter	0.671	(0.573)
Reagan	0.154	(0.332)
Bush	-0.943*	(0.511)
Clinton	4.233	(3.129)
Constant	0.041	(0.658)

** $p \leq 0.10$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$*; Pseudo R^2: 0.36 ($N = 501$)

5.7 Conclusion

The analysis presented in this Chapter does not offer much support for the argument that China follows a logic of audience costs to achieve crisis commitment when it comes to choosing which international crises to mention in its news headlines. It does, however, suggest that domestic considerations may play a role, as it was consistently the case that there was a negative relationship between economic growth at

Table 5.11: OLS Estimation results : China Model 3

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Precrisis *Renmin Ribao* coverage	-0.347	(0.372)
Domestic Economy	-4.952**	(2.411)
Regime Repression	-0.169	(0.191)
Chinese Ally	0.359	(0.269)
Democracy	0.018	(0.111)
Distance to China	0.000	(0.000)
China relative power scale	-0.020***	(0.007)
Strategic stakes	-0.634	(1.273)
Strategic stakes x China relative power scale	0.007	(0.014)
Regional security organization	-0.127	(0.130)
Global security organization	0.340**	(0.136)
Hu	0.212	(0.301)
Jiang	-0.135	(0.170)
Constant	2.189***	(0.768)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*; Pseudo R^2: 0.26 ($N = 140$)

home and the mention of foreign crisis actors. But what other domestic considerations might be playing a role? As it was made clear in the Legitimacy-Credibility theory, the concerns may be focused on domestic stability.

In addition, it is noteworthy that China's relative power scale and the presence of a global security organization seem to play a consistent role. As far as the relative power scale is concerned, the results are opposite what we would expect from an audience costs logic – even though China is considerably militarily stronger than many foreign crisis actors, it is more likely to publish stories about actors that are stronger than itself – such as the United States.

In addition, the presence of a global security organization in a crisis is surprisingly strongly positively correlated with China's publicizing of an event. One explanation might be that China tends to emphasize events that are already getting global attention. This could be consistent with a credibility story outlined in the previous chapter: the more global actors are involved, the more China realizes the story will probably spread anyway, so they should mention it themselves. Another explanation

is that China wishes to be more involved in international affairs, and this is an example of China mentioning in the news major events in which it wishes to be perceived as playing a role. As we saw in the case studies of the Arab Spring, China emphasized the evacuation of its nationals from Libya at the expense of attention to any other event going on.

Overall, this analysis raises as many questions as it answers. We see hints that there are some patterns in what China covers in the national news, but they do not seem to follow the logic of audience costs – or even a modified audience costs explanation to accommodate differences between democracies and autocracies. With this in mind, we turn to the next chapter, where we employ the same dependent variable with a new set of independent variables. This time, we attempt to find out whether the patterns exhibited by China follow the logic of the credibility-legitimacy model of Chapter 4.

CHAPTER VI

Testing for the Legitimacy and Credibility Theory for Media Coverage of International Crises by Autocracies

Chapter Abstract

I derive hypotheses from the claims from the theoretical model presented in Chapter 4. I then test the hypotheses using the dependent variables from Chapter 5, but independent variables for credibility and legitimacy based on a survey of China experts. I present the results of OLS analysis of this new model, and results indicate support for the credibility-legitimacy theory.

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I evaluate the exact same crisis data from the audience costs chapter (1990-2008), this time with a new model that reflects the theory of legitimacy and credibility. To code events according to whether they are political liabilities and/or of public interest, the cornerstone elements of my theory, I conduct a survey of China experts that asks them to evaluate a series of hypothetical and real events according to these two dimensions. I present the results from this survey here. The results serve as the foundation of the coding of the events in the statistical analysis. The full survey appears in Appendix A.

In the next chapter I consider two types of non-crisis events. I consider earthquakes from the same time period (1990-2008), and I consider China's coverage of major US political, economic, and foreign policy events from 1948-1989. The purpose of these non-crisis events is not to again statistically analyze the theory, but to explore whether the logic described in the theory may hold in non-crisis domains. They are intended to dig deeper into how China handles a variety of different events, as well as to ask how China's management of events may have changed over time.

6.2 Hypotheses

In this empirical analysis I focus on the choice to cover an event or not cover it. The key hypothesis that comes out of the model of legitimacy and credibility from Chapter 4 is based on the interaction between legitimacy and credibility. Because leaders balance both when they make decisions about what to publish in the news, evaluating the effects of each independently are not as interesting as evaluating them together.

Hypothesis 1: *The probability leaders will publish stories about international events is proportional to the product of public interest multiplied by (1 - political liability).*

This indicates that events are more likely to be published the more interesting they are to the Chinese public, and they are less likely to be published the more politically liable the government believes they are. Taken as a whole, this means that high interest, low liability events should be published frequently. High liability events will be more likely to be punished as interest increases. We should rarely observe the publication of low interest and high liability events. When interest is zero or liability is 1, we should never see the story covered.

6.3 Expert Survey

I employ the same data as that used in Chapter 5, but with two added variables. I code each of the ICB crises according to the extent to which it poses a political liability for China and the extent to which the Chinese public would be interested in it. There exist no ready measures for what constitutes "liable" or "interesting", and because both are terms susceptible to biased interpretation and subjective evaluation. It also is not possible to interview China's leadership directly on what types of events they deem politically liable or of interest to their citizens.

To solve this, I developed a survey that I administered to China experts in the US and EU that asked them to code a series of hypothetical and real events according to the extent to which they believe the Chinese government would find them to be politically liable events or of interest to their citizens. I then averaged their responses to each example event, and these became the basis for my coding of these events. I explain my survey method in Appendix A and include the survey itself.

Overall, there was widespread agreement by the survey takers over what events are typically political liabilities and what are of public interest. To gain an understanding of a broad spectrum of China's views on different types of events, I asked the survey respondents to consider China's government's beliefs not just about international crises, but also about natural disasters, political protests in other countries, elections

in other countries, and international sport events. Survey respondents coded events in terms of liability on a scale of 0, 1, or 2, where 0 is low, 1 is medium, and 2 is high political liability. They coded interest according to the same 0, 1, 2 scale.

The results were surprisingly consistent. Especially for some types of events, there was widespread agreement across the six coders. For example, all respondents coded sporting events as low political liability. The same was true for natural disasters before 2008. After 2008, many respondents pointed out a potential source of political liability in comparisons of the earthquake to the Chinese government's widely criticized response to the 2008 Wenquan earthquake.

There were almost no instances where coders spanned all three possible codes, that is, where some coders called the event high liability (or high interest), and others called it low liability (or low interest). In other words, when there was disagreement, it was almost always between whether and event was a 0 or 1, or if it was a 1 or a 2. There were very few disagreements over whether an event was a 0 or a 2. This was reassuring.

To check the reliability of my coding, I calculate Krippendorff's alpha, a commonly used measure of inter-coder reliability (Krippendorff 2011, Lombard 2011). This measure is more commonly used for content analysis, where several coders read an article and then determine the core message or tone. In this case my interests are slightly different. While I hope for general agreement about overall liability or interest levels of any particular event, my goal is not to ultimately ensure all coders agree perfectly. In fact, coding for liability and interest is a subjective exercise, and I do not expect my coders will necessarily agree perfectly. Instead, I take the average of all of their views, and am interested in which events pose more difficulty in coding – i.e., which have higher variance. Each coder has a different view of what the Chinese government views as important or influential, so the combined wisdom from all of these coders is more important than coming to a uniform agreement over any

particular issue.

To get a sense of the overall level of agreement, however, I also calculate Krippendorff's alpha scores. I use ReCal software by Dean Freelon (Freelon 2011). The Krippendorff alpha ranges from 0 to 1, where 1 is perfect agreement and 0 is no agreement. An alpha score less than 0 is considered to be as good as if the coders coded completely randomly. Thus, anything better than 0 is better than random chance, although higher scores indicate more coder agreement. The Krippendorff alpha scores for my coders indicate the coders are performing better than random. The overall intercoder reliability score is 0.430 for "Liability" and 0.343 for "Interest". The higher score for liability is intuitive: it should be easier to tell what events might be politically liable compared to what events might simply be interesting, as interesting has a wide range of definitions, while liability is typically narrower.

General social science convention normally treats alpha scores of 0.6 and higher as indicating reliable coder agreement. While my scores are lower than 0.6, I still believe that these scores are acceptable, because, as mentioned, my goal is not to achieve agreement, but rather to sample a variety of China experts for their views. Liability and interest are difficult to code, and the results from the survey underscore this point. Thus, a score indicating better than random agreement suggests there is some general sense of what event types are interesting or liable, but they also demonstrate that it is simple difficult to tell exactly what events will be liable or interesting. Again, my goal is not to achieve perfect agreement, as I do not expect the scholars interviewed would necessarily eventually come to agree over several codings. The more important feature is that there is indeed some general agreement. The current score is not problematic.

Importantly, agreement is higher in some domains rather than others. Almost all coders agreed, for example, that sports events are low liability events, that foreign protests are high liability, and that natural disasters before the 2008 Wenchuan

earthquake are low liability. Most also agreed that international sports are high interest, that elections in other countries are medium interest, and that for the most part earthquakes before Wenchuan are relatively low interest. It is surprising that the agreement scores for liability are actually higher than that for Interest. I expected the opposite, but overall, as mentioned, it was rare that one coder called an event 0 liability while another called it 2. When there was disagreement it was between 0 vs. 1 or 1 vs. 2. Thus, the disagreements tend not be be over whether an event is politically liable, but to what extent it is. Not surprisingly, this is of course a difficult thing to assess, which was the motivation for the survey in the first place.

6.4 Analysis

I consider three types of models: robust estimation, OLS estimation with standard errors clustered by crisis number, and an OLS estimation with major outliers excluded. I think the robust estimation and the OLS with clustered SEs is a better choice, but several outliers do appear to play a role. I thus present all three models.

I also estimate the model three ways. First, I consider only the variables of interest. Then, I consider a small set of key controls, including independent variables I found relevant in the analysis in Chapter 2. Finally, I consider several additional controls. I estimated additional models with other controls but ultimately found them unproductive for inclusion in the model. I discuss those briefly below.

As is clear from the hypotheses, a key independent variable of interest is the interaction of political liability and public interest. In the estimation I present below, I include two interaction terms. The first is liability*interest. The second is liability*US involvement. In my survey, I asked respondents to report on the level of interest in any event, just so long as the US is involved. The respondents all reported higher interest. Thus, I include the variable "US involvement". This variable is from the ICB dataset and codes the level of US involvement in any event along a 9-point scale,

where 0 is no involvement, and 9 is the US is one of the crisis actors.

My predictions for US involvement are the same as my prediction for public interest. The dependent variable is identical to that in Chapter 2 – the percent of change in mentions of the crisis actor compared to the average number of mentions over the past month and the same month the year prior to the crisis outbreak.

6.5 Results

Model 1 presents just the core independent variables that may play a role given the theory of legitimacy and credibility. I present robust regression, clustered SEs, and the removal of a few outliers.

6.5.1 Model 1

This considers just change in rhetoric as the dependent variable with the independent variables liability, interest, level of US involvement, and two interaction terms, liabilty*interest and liability*US.

Table 6.1: Model 1a: Key IVs, Robust Regression

Variable	**Coefficient**	**(Std. Err.)**
Liability	-0.603***	(0.170)
Interest	-0.344***	(0.121)
US Involvement	-0.001	(0.014)
Liability*Interest	0.420***	(0.096)
Liability*US	0.026*	(0.015)
Constant	0.389**	(0.153)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*, ($N = 157$)

The choice to consider a model with some big outliers dropped is due to the fact that several events were the subject of very high levels of attention in China. The five farthest from zero are all positive values and are the ones dropped in Model 1c. I estimated the model without the next-farthest from zero, which is actually the negative change for the US in 1996 (Iraq). This did not change the results.

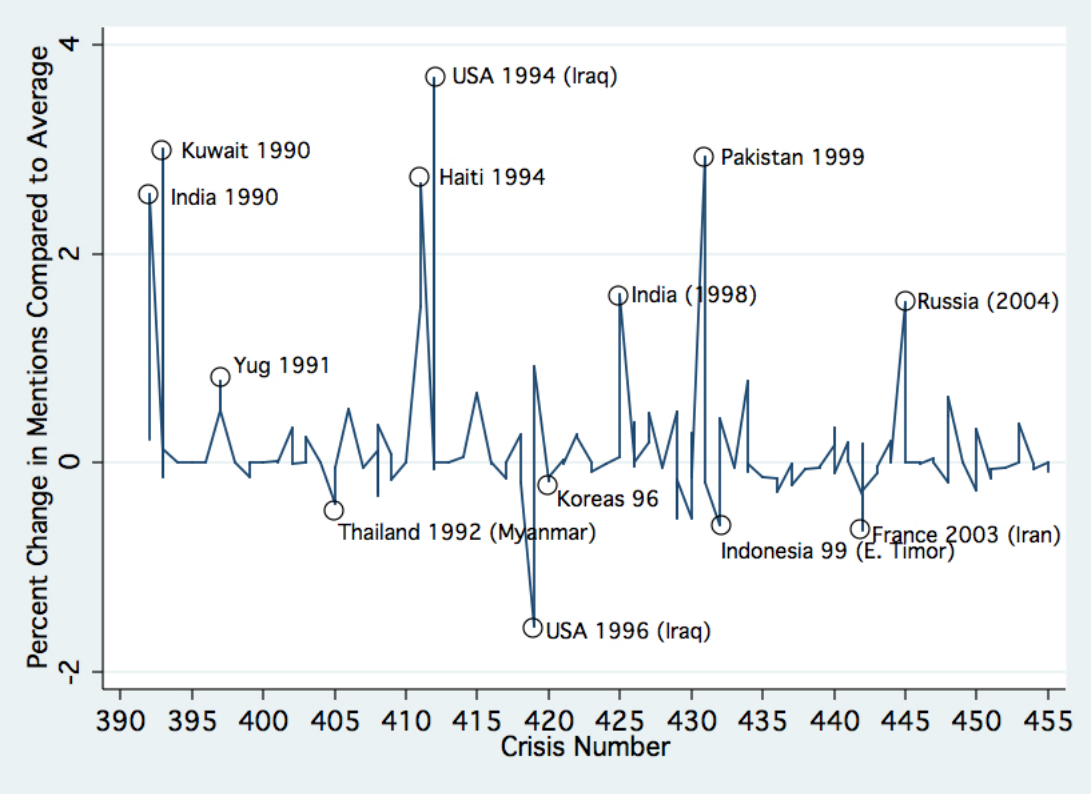

Figure 6.1: Crises and Percent Change of Mentions in the *People's Daily* of the Crisis Actor During the Initial Stage of the Crisis Compared to the Average Number of Mentions over the Previous Month and Previous Month Plus One Year. Large (Positive and Negative) Percent Changes in Mentions of Crisis Actors (and Corresponding Crisis Year) are Labeled.

Table 6.2: Model 1b: Key IVs, OLS with Clustered SEs

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Liability	-0.188	(0.370)
Interest	-0.337	(0.321)
US Involvement	0.052	(0.057)
Liability*Interest	0.329	(0.213)
Liability*US	-0.019	(0.044)
Constant	0.191	(0.350)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*, R^2: 0.04 ($N = 157$)

Table 6.3: Model 1c: Key IVs, OLS with Clustered SEs, 5 largest outliers dropped

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Liability	-0.772***	(0.278)
Interest	-0.501***	(0.170)
US Involvement	0.002	(0.031)
Liability*Interest	0.575***	(0.147)
Liability*US	0.025	(0.028)
Constant	0.572**	(0.228)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*, R^2: 0.13 ($N = 152$)

Overall, with the exception of the OLS model with clustered SEs but no other robustness measures, liability and interest both stand out as significant in the estimation. The negative coefficients on liability and interest are at first glance surprising, but when we consider the interaction term, it makes more sense. I will address this later when I present a graph of the interaction effects several sections below.

6.5.2 Model 2

In these models I add the independent variables that were relevant in the analysis in Chapter 5. I add precrisis rhetoric levels, domestic economy, and the probability of success in the crisis. The probability of success is just a measure of the relative military capabilities of the crisis actor compared to China. In Chapter 5 we observed that China was more likely to mention countries as its capabilities relative to that country increased. This is a pattern consistent with democracies when they are thought to be invoking audience costs. For autocracies, it could also be for a similar

reason – they draw attention to crises involving states that, if China later had to be involved, China could likely defeat militarily. This variable correlates with the relative sizes of national economies, so an alternative interpretation of this measure is that it captures the overall level of bargaining power China has over the crisis actor at a particular point in time. For instance, if the crisis encompasses not a military standoff but a trade disagreement, this still captures the fact that China would likely possess greater capacity to influence the outcome of the conflict than the crisis actor would. As in Chapter 5, this is true for most crisis actors except for the United States, with which relative capabilities, or overall bargaining power, are more equal.

The strategic stakes in a dispute were another major independent variable in the analysis in Chapter 5. Recall that stakes in this case refer to the number of systems and subsystems affected in a conflict. Further, it is designated as a dummy variable, where 1 means it is "high stakes" (i.e., the outcome of the conflict affects more than one subsystem) or "low stakes" (it does not affect more than one subsystem). I estimate several models with strategic stakes included, and the results were not different in any important ways, and stakes appeared to play no substantive role. This could be because stakes already correlates with interest – if the conflict is big enough that its outcome affects more than just the region containing the conflict, then public interest is already likely to be high, and thus already captures its effects.

Interestingly, dropping the outliers causes domestic economy to no longer be significant. The coefficient is still in the expected direction.

Finally, and importantly, we note that in every treatment, the interaction variable of interest*liability is highly significant. This is of course encouraging for the legitimacy-credibility theory, as these results suggest the interaction of these two factors does indeed play a role in explaining the variance in the appearance of headlines about foreign events in the Chinese news.

Table 6.4: Model 2a: Robust regression with precrisis rhetoric, domestic economy, and relative capabilities added

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Precrisis Coverage	-0.281***	(0.035)
Liability	-0.678***	(0.102)
Interest	-0.329***	(0.073)
US Involvement	-0.018**	(0.009)
Liability*Interest	0.444***	(0.058)
Liability*US	0.039***	(0.009)
Domestic Economy	-0.429***	(0.161)
Relative Power	0.002**	(0.001)
Constant	0.310**	(0.125)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*, ($N = 157$)

Table 6.5: Model 2b: OLS regression with precrisis rhetoric, domestic economy, and relative capabilities added

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Precrisis Coverage	-0.608**	(0.241)
Liability	-0.722**	(0.308)
Interest	-0.525*	(0.274)
US Involvement	0.048	(0.043)
Liability*Interest	0.532***	(0.197)
Liability*US	0.005	(0.034)
Domestic Economy	-2.130**	(0.990)
Relative Power	-0.017***	(0.006)
Constant	2.236***	(0.561)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*, R^2: 0.17 ($N = 157$)

Table 6.6: Model 2c: OLS regression with precrisis, economy, and capabilities; 5 outlier removed

Variable	Coefficient	(Std. Err.)
Precrisis Coverage	-0.467**	(0.198)
Liability	-0.961***	(0.287)
Interest	-0.513***	(0.175)
US Involvement	0.006	(0.027)
Liability*Interest	0.621***	(0.151)
Liability*US	0.039	(0.025)
Domestic Economy	-0.558	(0.392)
Relative Power	-0.009**	(0.004)
Constant	1.572	(0.488)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*, R^2: 0.26 ($N = 152$)

6.5.3 Model 3

This final set of models estimates the same above independent variables, but considers several others that may be relevant. As mentioned above, many appear to play no role, and I cannot think of a theoretically driven reason to include them either. Therefore, I do not consider many of the control variables that appear in Chapter 2.

However, there are several controls that may play a role in the theory tested here. I include two variables that are familiar from the analysis in Chapter 2 – whether a global organization was involved in the event and whether the crisis took place in Asia. Asia includes East Asia and South Asia. Evaluating just East Asia or South Asia separately made no substantive difference. Both of these variables are other factors that may contribute to the magnitude or interest in the event. If a global organization was involved (namely, the UN), the government may be more likely to believe the event is important and interesting, and thus choose to cover the event. I estimated a version with global organizations and with regional organizations as well, but they appear to play no role. If the country is an Asian country, there may also be greater regional interest. I also attempted replacing Asian with an alternate measure, the distance between Beijing and the country's capital city. It made no substantive difference.

I also include a variable for whether or not the state actor in the crisis is a democracy (0 if not, 1 if a democracy). I expect that if a crisis actor is a democracy, this should reduce the probability that a story about them appears in the news. This is because for legitimacy purposes, the government should prefer to emphasize the activities and relevance of fellow non-democracies. While sometimes there may be opportunities for coverage of democracies in a way that makes them look bad, I do not expect this will outweigh the general fact that the Chinese government may benefit from drawing attention to non-democracies, which should be easier and more frequent

than waiting for something unfortunate to transpire against a democracy.

Table 6.7: Model 3a: Robust Regression, added global organization, asia, democracy

Variable	**Coefficient**	**(Std. Err.)**
Precrisis Coverage	-0.295***	(0.039)
Liability	-0.667***	(0.113)
Interest	-0.309***	(0.078)
US Involved	-0.021**	(0.010)
Liability*Interest	0.437***	(0.062)
Liability*US	0.039***	(0.010)
Domestic Economy	-0.470***	(0.177)
Relative Power	0.001	(0.001)
Global Organization	0.016	(0.028)
Asia	-0.029	(0.031)
Democracy	-0.027	(0.021)
Constant	0.379***	(0.138)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01* ($N = 157$)

It appears in the robust regression that none of the new variables add any explanatory power. We now consider a regular regression with clustered standard errors.

When we remove the outliers, Asia begins to play some role, although in the opposite direction from my prediction. US involvement has never played a role. When I remove US involvement and Liability*US from the analysis, the other patterns hold, although Asia becomes yet more significant in the version without the 5 outliers.

Overall, the addition of other controls did little to improve the explanatory power of the model. The controls that do seem of interest are that domestic economy continues to play a negative and important role. Relative power continues also to be negative. The negative relationship between Asia and mentions is surprising, and may be a result of efforts to explain countries more of interest, of which the US is a major case, which may be driving that result. Finally, liability and interest continue to play a strong role. We now move to consider their interaction.

Table 6.8: Model 3b: OLS, clustered SEs, added global organization, asia, democracy

Variable	**Coefficient**	**(Std. Err.)**
Precrisis Coverage	-0.626***	(0.237)
Liability	-0.706**	(0.320)
Interest	-0.475*	(0.259)
US Involved	0.031	(0.044)
Liability*Interest	0.516***	(0.189)
Liability*US	0.009	(0.033)
Domestic Economy	-2.270**	(1.016)
Relative Power	-0.019***	(0.006)
Global Organization	0.113	(0.111)
Asia	-0.083	(0.123)
Democracy	-0.083	(0.085)
Constant	2.419***	(0.626)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*, R^2: 0.18 ($N = 157$)

Table 6.9: Model 3c: Same as Model 3b, minus 5 outliers

Variable	**Coefficient**	**(Std. Err.)**
Precrisis Coverage	-0.506**	(0.196)
Liability	-0.899***	(0.300)
Interest	-0.449***	(0.160)
US Involved	-0.008	(0.029)
Liability*Interest	0.595***	(0.140)
Liability*US	0.038	(0.025)
Domestic Economy	-0.629*	(0.363)
Relative Power	-0.012***	(0.005)
Global Organization	0.077	(0.063)
Asia	-0.149**	(0.064)
Democracy	-0.058	(0.051)
Constant	1.779***	(0.493)

** p≤0.10, ** p≤0.05, *** p≤0.01*, , R^2: 0.29, ($N = 152$)

6.5.4 Interaction Terms

Figures 6.2 and 6.3 present the marginal effects of Interest and Liability when they interact with each other. These results are generated from an estimation of Model 2, with simply clustered standard errors, which are the results that offered the weakest relationships. When I estimate the same graphs with robust regression, the results are even stronger. It is reassuring that even the weakest results offer interesting findings.

Figure 6.2 presents the marginal effect of liability on the change in mentions of a foreign crisis acrtor as interest changes. The way to interpret the graph is that as interest in the event moves from 0 to 1 to 2, the effect of liability changes. When interest is less than 1, liability plays a negative role. At low levels of interest, liable events are less likely to be published. This is in accordance with the legitimacy-credibility theory. When interest crosses from 1 to 2 (and beyond, although I only measure events up to interest levels of 2), liability plays a positive role. This implies that as events become more interesting, higher liability events are published.

Figure 6.3 presents the marginal effect of interest on change in mentions of a foreign crisis actor as liability changes. This is similar but not the same as Figure 6.2. I this graph, we again see a positive slope. In this case, it means that at low levels of liability (x-axis), interest does not play a a major role in what is published. As liability crossed past level 1, however, interest plays a positive role: the more interesting, the more likely an event is to be published, even when liability is high.

6.6 Conclusion

Overall, the findings from this empirical test lend support for my theory. Of course, evaluating liability and interest is an inherently difficult task subject to interpretation and speculation. I attempted to meet the challenges posed by this problem by conducting a survey of experts on China to determine when they think the Chinese

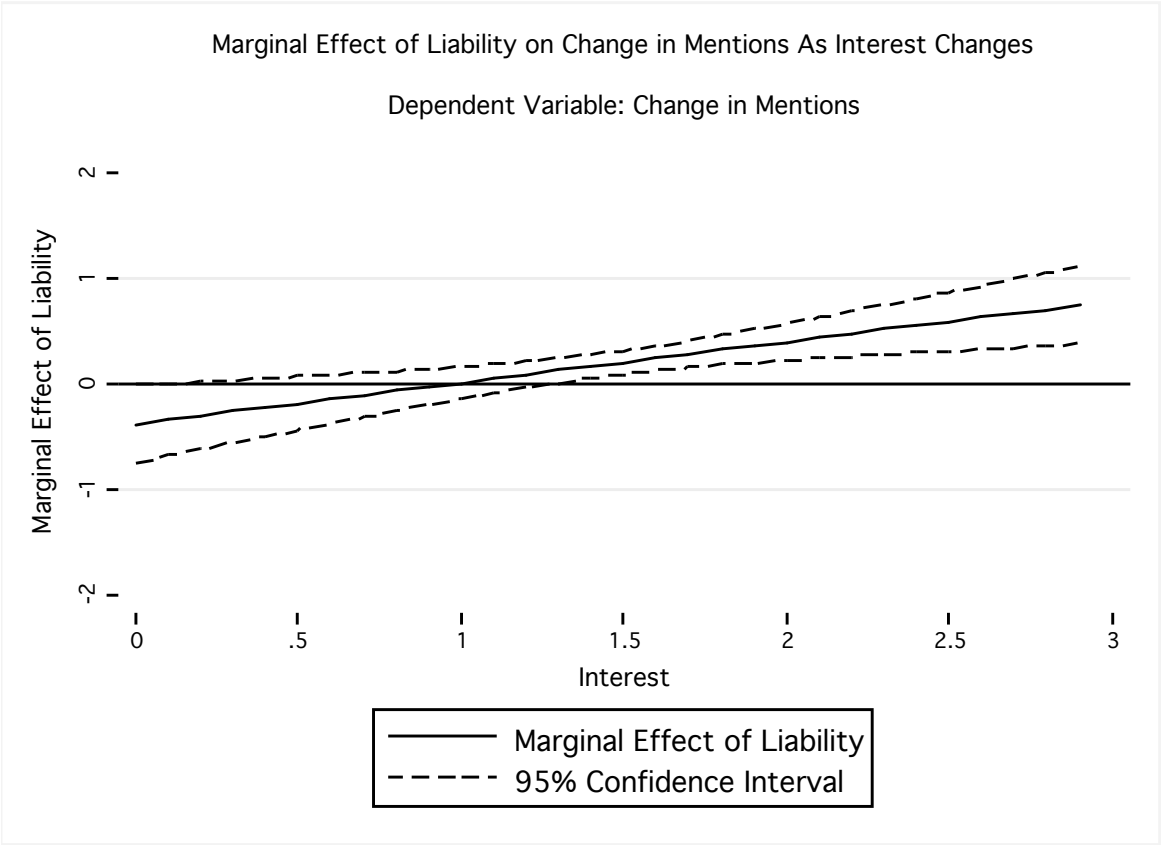

Figure 6.2: Marginal Effect of Liability on Change in Mentions

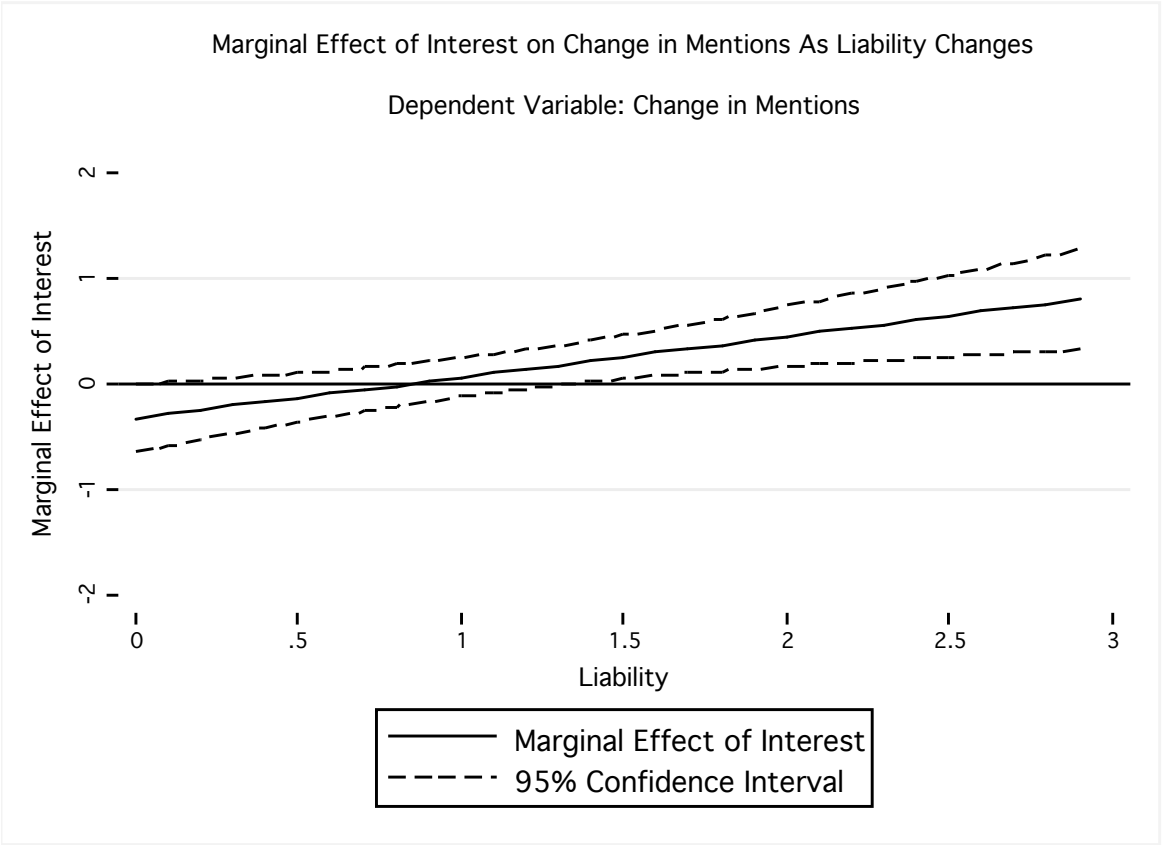

Figure 6.3: Marginal Effect of Interest on Change in Mentions

leadership would view an issue as potentially liable or potentially of interest. I find that high liability means interest matters more, and high interest means liability is ignored. Thus, we see that, from the period of 1990-2008, the Chinese government was more willing to publish high liability events when domestic interest was high, and that at low levels of interest, the government was typically unwilling to publish news about high liability events.

This finding is a bit different from the hypothesis I offer in this chapter, but it is consistent with the credibility-legitimacy logic. I am surprised to find that at high levels of interest, the role of liability appears to disappear. The finding that at high levels of liability, it is interest that determines whether the event is covered, is consistent with the original hypothesis. One explanation for the fact that interest seems to override the role of liability when interest is high is that I have underestimated the importance to China of covering high interest events. Another explanation is that some events lend themselves better to strategic framing, and it could be that it happens that high interest events tend also to be those that China can frame more easily. Further research is needed to evaluate this possibility. Overall, the fact that China can strategically reframe issues has been left out of this analysis. Future work should collect a more detailed dataset that considers not just how many mentions of the crisis actor are made in newspaper headlines, but that also captures the overall tone and interpretation of the events in the crisis. As I found in Chapter 2, just because China is mentioning an interesting event, such as Libya, this does not mean it is reporting directly on the central events that are unfolding.

CHAPTER VII

Non-Crisis Events

Chapter Abstract

The dissertation has so far focused on crisis events during recent years. In this chapter I expand the empirical analysis to consider the role of natural disasters and the coverage of events before 1990. I consider China's coverage of the 30 biggest earthquakes (in terms of number killed, from EM-DAT) (1990-2008) and the 30 biggest events related to the US (according to Cutler et al. 1989) (1948-1987). My goal is to evaluate the usefulness of the hypotheses presented in Chapter 6 on non-crisis events. I expect that earthquakes in other countries are low liability events, and thus interest should drive the coverage of earthquakes in other countries. I examine historical events in order to find out whether the increased control over information that characterized mid-20th-century China means that the roles of both legitimacy and credibility are reduced. In the case of earthquakes, I find that interest does seem to play a dominant role in China's coverage patterns. In the case of historical events, I find several surprising instances where China gives high attention at some times and low attention at other times to seemingly similar events. I expect that this may be due to a mix of China's ability to publicize events at its discretion when information control was higher, and China's focus on domestic issues, especially in the 1950s.

7.1 Introduction

International crises are only one of many types of international events that are potential candidates for inclusion in any newspaper headline. In the case of China and other regimes for whom the media is a primary tool in the maintenance of regime stability, international crises – and especially those included in the ICB database employed here – may pose a particularly acute strategic tension for leaders. Crises are associated with uncertainty, for the actors directly involved, third party interveners, and for observers. During the early moments of a conflict's escalation and outbreak, matters are typically particularly uncertain, as it is possible for things to spiral out of control quickly.

So far, I have only considered these types of high-uncertainty conflicts. Crises in the ICB database, as mentioned, are typically those that have something at stake, so even though military forces may not be actively involved or employed, tensions are high in each one. In addition, I have only considered instances where international conflict takes place. The stakes and issues associated with domestic conflict are also very high, but they are different from those that surround international conflicts. Given my claims that China cares about legitimacy and stability, it may be domestic conflict in other countries that they are especially loathe to cover – even more so than international conflicts, no matter how much in common the matters in those conflicts might have with China's own international relations challenges.

In this chapter, I expand my consideration of recent international events from crises to natural disasters and to historical big events in the United States. The purpose of these extensions is to examine more closely whether the logic described in this dissertation may hold in other domains. The primary test of the theory's predictions has been in the international crisis domain, and I do not attempt to replicate that rigor here. Instead, I have three related goals.

My goal in evaluating natural disasters is to find out whether the logic in this

dissertation plausibly holds in non-political domains. While all natural disasters may potentially pose political problems, or enter into political discourse in some way, they are still typically far less political than most other international events that medias in any country might consider newsworthy. They are also especially removed from politics in the early unfolding and immediate aftermath, as the attention is largely on disaster relief, saving lives, and minimizing damage. Later, as weeks and events unfold, the government may be held up critically or in praise, or other governments may become involved. Finally, there are many different types of natural disasters, and some more immediately and readily linked to politics than others. Natural disasters that stem from sources that might be linked to climate change, for example, may be more likely to be added to debates in political circles than others.[1]

To address these issues, I have chosen to evaluate earthquakes. Earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions are geologic events that arise largely independent of human activity. I say "largely" because seismic activity only becomes a natural disaster when humans and buildings are present. Thus, there is of course an important human component in the extent of damage caused by seismic activity. There is also a political component in the size of damage, as the extent to which the region was prepared, or the evacuations were successful, or the response teams were effective; all have potential political connections. Earthquakes of similar sizes can cause very different levels of damage – in terms not just of number killed, but also number affected, and cost of damages – in Haiti or China compared to Chile or New Zealand, as we have seen in the past several years, and when the country suffering the earthquake is thought to have incurred more damage due to poor domestic government response or preparedness, earthquakes can become quite political. Finally, an additional political component comes from whether other countries offer aid, and whether that aid is effective.

[1] I thank Robert Axelrod for pointing out this feature of several categories of natural disasters.

Nevertheless, earthquakes present the closest example to "human-free" natural events that become international events. Volcanoes are another choice, but there are very few volcanic eruptions to consider in the past several decades. Earthquakes make the best choice as an exogenous and frequent natural disaster to examine here.

One final issue with earthquakes is that they appear along fault lines, which, of course, are not randomly distributed. It happens that many of the world's biggest recent earthquakes have taken place in Asian regions (including Central, South, East, and Southeast Asia) and along the west coasts of the Americas. This may mean that the sample of earthquakes I consider may represent countries that might already typically be of higher interest to China based on some of the assumptions I made above. On the other hand, it may mean that when earthquakes take place in countries that are not in typical earthquake zones, they are more likely to make the news than an earthquake of the same size in a different zone. The map below gives an example of earthquake occurrences around the world during a one week period (Sept. 28-Oct. 5, 2011).

Figure 5.1 represents all earthquakes with magnitude of 2.5 or higher that were counted by the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre. From the period Sept. 28, 2011 - Oct. 5, 2011, they recorded 522 earthquakes with magnitude greater than or equal to 2.5. Darker gray-shaded circles represent bigger earthquakes. Clearly, earthquakes are not randomly distributed around the globe. Not only that, but also severe earthquakes seem to be concentrated in Central and East Asia. We will keep this in mind as we proceed with the analysis of China's coverage of earthquakes.

7.2 China's Coverage of Earthquakes

To examine whether China's coverage patterns of earthquakes follows the logic described in the dissertation, I employ data from The International Disaster Database (EM-DAT), assembled by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters

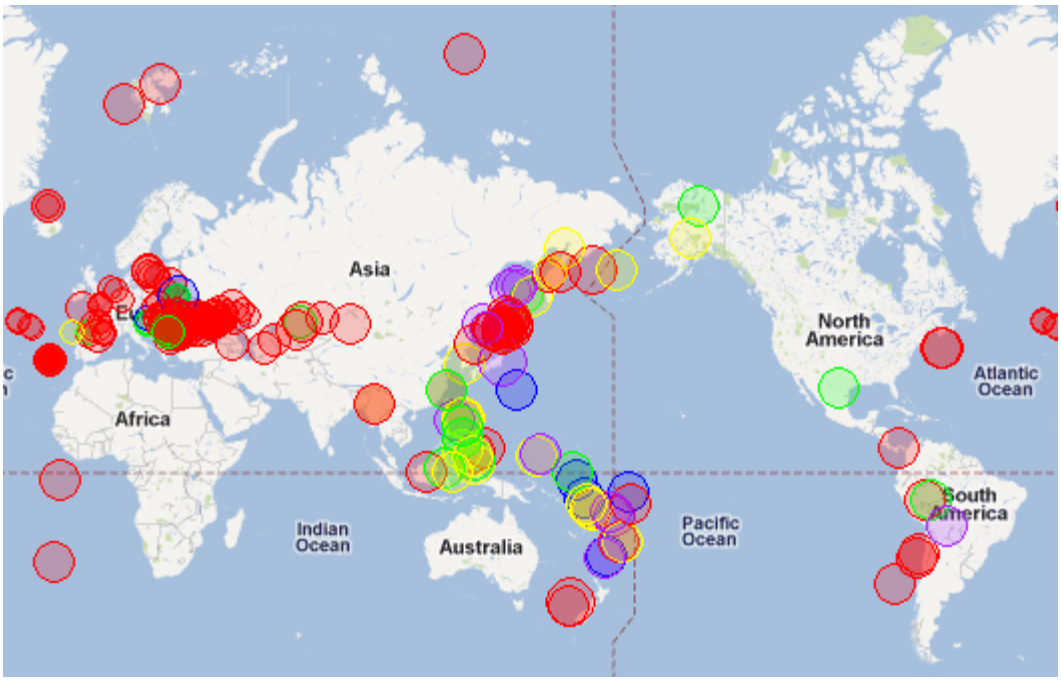

Figure 7.1: Earthquakes Recorded by the European Mediterranean Seismological Centre, September 28, 2011 - October 5, 2011

(CRED), at the Catholic University of Louvain in Brussels, Belgium. There are many databases that records seismic activity. The most prominent in the US include the National Earthquake Information Center (NEIC) by the US Geological Survey (USGS) (www.usgs.gov), and the IRIS database from the Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology (IRIS) (www.iris.edu).

The full set of data on earthquakes is presented in the table in Appendix B. Here, I summarize several major features of the earthquakes considered.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Killed	389	2088.594	15561.82	0	222570
Total Affected	547	209695.7	2032026	0	4.60e+07
Est. Damages in Millions of USD	221	$3,312.42	$22,763.22	$0.01	$309,000.00

Table 7.1: Killed, Affected and Damages, All Earthquakes 1990-2011, According to the International Disaster Database (EM-DAT)

Of the 590 earthquakes in Table 7.1, about one-third (201) caused no deaths.

I consider all earthquakes that killed more than 650 since 1990, which yields 36 earthquakes. 650 presented a natural breaking point in the data, as large earthquakes tended to be over 1000 killed, and most others were in the low-100s or below. 650 split the data in an intuitive way between "larger" and "smaller" earthquakes. I had to drop five that occurred between 2008-11, however, because the *People's Daily* dataset ends in 2008. Thus, I now consider 31 earthquakes between 1990-2008. Of these, six also involved tsunamis.

Table 7.2 presents summary data of the number killed, total effects, and estimated damages of the top 31 largest earthquakes in terms of number killed. The estimated damages seem high, but they include all costs associated with the earthquake, not just the specific costs associated with damages of buildings and infrastructure. These costs include economic costs, long-term recovery costs, the costs of supplying medical aid to victims, and more.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Killed	31	14718.97	32121.01	653	165708
Total Affected	31	827402.7	1479960	750	6321812
Est. Damages in Millions of USD	28	$6,198.07	$18,942.46	$10.00	$100,000.00

Table 7.2: Killed, Affected and Damages, Top 31, 1990-2008, Data from EM-DAT

Finally, Table 7.3 lists the countries represented in the sample.

7.2.1 Analysis of the Data

The table in Appendix B includes all the data about earthquakes. There are several things to note based on this table. The low number of observations means that statistical analysis is not especially meaningful. Instead, it is possible to directly observe several interesting trends in the table.

First, as mentioned, most of the actors affected by the biggest earthquakes since 1990 are indeed in Asia. Second, the number killed is surprisingly low for the top 30

Country	Freq.	Percent
India	5	16.13
Indonesia	5	16.13
Iran Islam Rep	4	12.90
Afghanistan	3	9.68
Turkey	3	9.68
Algeria	1	3.23
Colombia	1	3.23
El Salvador	1	3.23
Japan	1	3.23
Pakistan	1	3.23
Papua New Guinea	1	3.23
Philippines	1	3.23
Russia	1	3.23
Sri Lanka	1	3.23
Taiwan	1	3.23
Thailand	1	3.23
Total	31	100

Table 7.3: Countries Represented in Earthquake Data

earthquakes over two decades. Third, the score for political liability is almost always 0. Again, these scores are extrapolated from the results of the expert survey. Only 12 of the events are coded greater than 0 liability, and none of them is greater than 1. Liability runs from 0-2. Interest is a bit higher for most events than liability, but it is still not terribly high. There are only six earthquakes with interest scores greater than 1: Indonesia (2004), India (2004), Sri Lanka (2004), Thailand (2004), Pakistan (2005), Japan (1995), and Taiwan (1999).

The 2004 earthquakes are of course the major earthquake and tsunami (tsunamis also count as earthquakes, so they are included in this dataset) that made international news around the world and devastated the region. The total number of deaths counted in this dataset for the four countries is 225,841. The Pakistan earthquake is another massively devastating event: 73,338 deaths. Finally, the expected interest in the earthquake in Japan and in Taiwan are not surprising.

Do the expectations about interest match with changes in headline attention to

these countries? Recall the hypothesis that when liability is at 0, interest should drive what appears in the headlines. For these six headlines, we see that for the week after the earthquake, 4 saw positive percent change in number of mentions, which is a much greater proportion than the total collection of events. On the day, next day, and second day, however, the percent change is still negative. This means that these countries were mentioned less immediately following an earthquake compared to the average mentions per month of that country in the past year. This could be because these countries all typically feature largely in China's news headlines, so mentions of earthquakes, while they may be prominent and horrifying news, does not actually outdo the average numbers of mentions of that country in headlines. Another possibility is that when there is an earthquake in another country, there is little information early on about what is going on, and little to report right away besides estimated damages and death tolls. As time since the initial quake passes, however, there is more to report on as stories about government handling of the crisis, of recovery efforts, and of the aftermath in general become available. Indeed, I find that over the course of the week following the event the rhetoric changes are largely positive. To summarize, for most earthquakes the percent change of mentions of the country suffering the earthquake appears to, surprisingly, go down compared to a monthly average of numbers of mentions. Once a full week has passed since the earthquake, however, China appears to mention the countries more than it does on average.

Of course, for two of the events, Japan and Taiwan, the level of liability is greater than 0. These are in fact the events with the highest liability in the dataset. Japan is one of the countries with negative percent change in coverage of these top 6 events. This is surprising given the level of public interest in Japan, but is perhaps explained by the fact that Japan typically makes headlines, so when there is an earthquake, it doesn't stand out as evidence of much greater attention during an earthquake com-

pared to "business as usual". In addition, if Japan is in the middle of recovering from an earthquake, it is less likely to take actions that will upset the Chinese public, so there actually may be *less* news about Japan when there is an earthquake. This is not to say that there is no attention to earthquakes in Japan, but rather simply that this level of attention seems to be lower than attention to other types of events in Japan. Taiwan, on the other hand, is covered more than average during its earthquake, but it could well be that China simply has no choice but to address a disaster in Taiwan if it wishes to assert its authority over it.

Not surprisingly, events with low interest scores and with low numbers of deaths are reported on less. This is a nice confirmation of the assumption that uninteresting events won't tend to make the news, but it is also a more interesting signal that China is not picking these events to cover at their convenience, perhaps to distract from other international or domestic issues. We might imagine a story where China does cover some very small earthquakes just to have something neutral to talk about in the news. It does not seem from the data like this happens much. Instead, they tend to follow interest and event magnitude, as any profit-seeking paper typically would.

The countries that end up being covered at a rate that exceeds previous country mention averages are an interesting group. Only one is greater than 0 in the day and day after – Turkey in 1999, when 20000 people were killed. The other 4 countries that are given a positive percent change in number of headline mentions are Algeria (2003), Indonesia (2005), El Salvador (2001), and Turkey (1999, when 1000 people are killed). Excluding Turkey, which perhaps may be mentioned so much in part because of the incidence of 2 earthquakes in one year, the other three countries were coded as having no political liability and relatively low (but not zero) interest. Perhaps the low liability of these events, plus a small modicum of interest, led to their being granted greater attention than their country received on average prior.

The five smallest earthquakes, which are also the only five with death counts lower than 1000, are also interesting. The countries are Indonesia (2006 and 2005; 802 and 915 killed, respectively), El Salvador (2001; 844 killed), Turkey (1999 and 1992 ; 845 and 653 killed, respectively). These countries are all mentioned a surprisingly great deal. It appears there may be some lasting interest in Turkey, and possibly Indonesia. The attention to El Salvador is puzzling, and I can only guess that its absolute lack of political sensitivity led it to receive higher than average attention during the period of the earthquake. Either that, or this is reflecting some of China's moves into South America to invest in natural resources and make other ties. This explanation would also explain the attention to the earthquake in Algeria. Finally, with the case of El Salvador, it could simply be that China never has reason to mention El Salvador, so when it does mention the earthquake there, it appears as a positive percent change in the number of mentions of El Salvador during the earthquake crisis compared to China's average number of mentions.

Finally, I also mentioned that it is possible that when earthquakes occur outside of the common zone where we see most earthquakes, that in itself might make it newsworthy. This could also explain the attention to relatively small earthquakes in Algeria and El Salvador. Small earthquakes in the United States are too small to include in this dataset, but it appears that they show up in China's news headlines. Small earthquakes tend to make the news in the US when they are basically anywhere but California, where small earthquakes are expected. This may be true for China, which seems more likely to report on earthquakes in places where earthquakes are unusual. In this case, China's and the United States' reporting behaviors are more similar than different. This suggests that when it comes to reporting events characterized by low levels of political liability, autocratic regimes may behave the same as democratic regimes. Future work will evaluate this possibility. A simple way to do this would be to conduct the exact same analysis for newspaper coverage of these

earthquakes by newspapers in democratic countries.

Overall, this section finds that earthquake mentions follow the logic of the level of interest the public is likely to have in them. More casualties in the earthquake lead to more mentions of the country where the earthquake took place. In addition, earthquakes that take place in countries where earthquakes are rare also tend to be mentioned more. Both of these are reasons the public may have more interest in the particular earthquake. Levels of significance for this analysis are very low, however, because of the overall small number of cases considered. Future work should extend the analysis to consider more earthquakes and other natural disasters. For now, we can only notice trends and interpret possible patterns that might be found in a larger analysis. The results of a statistical attempt reveal no significance. Thus, we interpret all of these results with caution and as a call for future work.

Finally, the results are influenced by the fact that many countries where earthquakes take place also frequently make headlines in China. These include, for example, Iran, India, and Indonesia. All of these countries experienced a total of 14 earthquakes, but only three earthquakes, one in Iran and two in Indonesia were each mentioned with a positive number of mentions compared to the average number of times the country was mentioned in the year and month prior. It could be that these results reflect that earthquakes are less likely to make headlines than other activities these important countries undertake as far as China is concerned. A great deal of future research is needed to investigate this further.

7.3 China's Historical Coverage of Big Events in the United States: 1948-1989

This section represents the results of an analysis designed to accomplish two goals. First, I wished to evaluate whether China followed the same logic in past decades as

I have found for the 1990s and 2000s. Second, I have made several claims about the United States being a primary source of interest for China. I wanted to know if this has been the case for long, or if it is a result of more recent political and societal changes in China and the world. Finally, I wanted to examine the claims in light of yet another type of foreign events. The majority of the events presented in this analysis are domestic political events in the United States. Many are elections.

Given that there are 188 events in the analysis of just the world's biggest earthquakes and the ICB crises since 1990, an analysis that considers events since 1948 could conceivably include many more hundreds of events, even with the cases limited just to those related directly to the United States. To limit the vast number of possible events for inclusion, I turn to an established list of "Big Events" in the world system. The list itself was not intended specifically to focus on the United States, but most of the events do include the US as a prominent – if not the only prominent – actor.

The list of events for this analysis comes from Cutler et al.'s 1989 paper, "What Moves Stock Prices?". The paper's goal is very different from the one for which I use it here. Cutler and his coauthors seek to understand the reaction of the stock market to non-economic events. They collect a list of events based on a multi-step process. First, they collected a list from "The Chronology of Important World Events" in the *World Almanac*. They then narrow the list by dropping events they deemed unlikely to affect the stock market. Unfortunately, I do not know specifically how they came to these conclusions. Third, they further narrowed the list by choosing to drop all events except those "that the *New York Times* carried as a lead story, and that the *New York Times* Business Section reported as having affected stock market participants."

This is a considerably narrowed list, but presents an excellent and concise account of major US events during the period 1941-1987. I do not know why they began their list with 1941, though the fact that the paper was published in 1989 explains the

choice of end year. The *Renmin Ribao* database that I use in this analysis goes back to 1948, so that is where I begin my analysis. I continue the analysis through 1989.

Cutler et al.'s final list includes 49 events. I was not able to include eight that appeared in their list before the *Renmin Ribao* database begins. I collapse several "events" that they consider discrete, but really are mentions of the same event over several days. To compensate, I consider an extended period of analysis of one full week for all events in order to capture attention to the event over multiple stages. This is because there is simply no way to know which aspect of the event to which the Chinese media is referring. Thus, they are better left as one extended event. Finally, I exclude two events because they involve actors that are not the United States: the Soviet Union 1979 invasion of Afghanistan (December 26, 1979) and the Chernobyl nuclear reaction meltdown (April 29, 1986). Lastly, I exclude the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis (April 17, 1961 - October 29, 1962) because the events spanned such a long time that it proved impossible to determine attention in the Chinese news to the United States, much less to attribute that attention to this particular issue. A case study analysis such as the one conducted in the Arab Spring chapter would be an ideal method for investigating Chinese coverage of the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Appendix C includes the final list of all events I considered.

7.4 Analysis of Coverage by Event Type

In Appendix C I present the full list of events as well as the frequency counts of headlines for the day of the event, the day after, and the full week after. Later, I will comment on general trends in the total numbers. Here, I focus specifically on analyzing the content of these article headlines. I read the original Chinese headlines for these events, and in some cases turned to the full articles if the meaning was not clear. I present my findings about the content of the headlines in the below several

sections.

As for overall trends – international events seem to get much more attention than domestic, and especially events where China can vilify the United States. This is the case especially when the US interacts with Vietnam and with Iran. Second, some domestic events receive surprisingly little coverage (the assassination of Robert Kennedy), while others receive an outpouring of attention (the shooting of Reagan). This may have something to do with the political climate within China at the time these events took place, but it also may represent warmed sentiments to the US over the period between the assassination of Robert Kennedy and Reagan's taking over as President.

As for the trends in timing, in the first decades of the events in this analysis, domestic events tin China end to be mostly used as examples of how the United States is completely doomed (elections are a farce, for example). This is the case through 1980. After that, the tone toward the US softens. Criticism of the US for its international acts remains strong throughout the period of analysis. It may also be that as we get closer to the present, more information was able to flow through China, and thus the leadership was unable to make sweeping assertions about the US without running a growing risk of being caught, or of citizens finding their own information elsewhere.

7.4.1 Elections

In this section I report my findings on the content of the headlines on election events in the United States. Again, I read the original Chinese and present what I read. Copies of articles and headlines are available (in Chinese, but I can assist in translating them) upon request.

Surprisingly, the election of Eisenhower in 1952 is given no attention at all. I suspect this may be due to the fact that this event takes place only a few years

Elections
Eisenhower defeats Stevenson (Nov. 11, 1952)
Eisenhower defeats Stevenson (Nov. 7, 1956)
Kennedy defeats Nixon (Nov. 9, 1960)
Johnson defeats Goldwater (Nov. 4, 1964)
Johnson withdraws from race (April 1, 1968)
Nixon defeats Humphrey (Nov. 6, 1968)
Nixon defeats McGovern (Nov. 8, 1972)
Carter defeats Ford (Nov. 3, 1976)
Reagan defeats Carter (Nov. 5, 1980)
Reagan defeats Mondale (Nov. 7, 1984)

Table 7.4: Elections

after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. In 1952 Chinese officials were preparing to launch the Five Year Plan (1953-1957), and efforts were made to collectivize agriculture according to the Agrarian Reform Law enacted in June 1950. Also in the early years of the 1950s, China was declared an aggressor by the United Nations for its actions in the Korean War, which may have been the focus of much of China's international news coverage. Either that, or there was simply no international coverage at all, as the Communist Party exerted its efforts in the media solely on establishing dominance at home. Future research will examine the content of international news coverage in general, not just regarding the United States, during this period. Future research will also consider other words besides the United States that China may have used to mention this election, including "Eisenhower", "Stevenson", and "Election".

The *People's Daily* devotes many articles to Eisenhower's 1956 election. This is surprising because it seems unlikely that the Communist Party would wish to draw attention to elections as it still attempts to build a reputation as the legitimate and permanent leader of China. One possible explanation is that in 1954 the People's Congress formally elected Mao Zedong Chairman of the People's Republic of China. Perhaps the 1956 election in the United States was an opportunity to legitimize

China's own election. In addition 1956 was characterized in China by efforts to liberalize the political climate (Rodzinski 1988). Officials were encouraged to speak their minds. This was also the year that Mao made his famous statement, "let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend" (Shinn and Worden 2011). Perhaps in light of all of this, it now because advantageous to mention an election in the US. Future work will investigate these possibilities.

In the 1960s, attention is high to the US in general. Almost all of the attention is purely negative. When Kennedy defeated Nixon in 1960, the *People's Daily* published one article about the election directly, and only in terms of , and then released 50 articles in one week that were loathing of the US in general. Johnson's defeat of Goldwater in 1964 was covered in one article, in which only one sentence mentioned that the US keeps having elections, it cannot overcome its troubles. That week, 19 articles were published about the US, 18 of which did not mention the election. Johnson's withdrawal from the race in 1968 is never mentioned, but the US is criticized heavily for a military attack on Vietnam, which China considers as "an attack on China". The paper condemns the US imperialists for attacking Southeast Asia.

The Nixon defeat of Humphrey in 1968 is given one article, in which the US election system is again called a farce. When Nixon defeated McGovern, however, in 1972, the election is mentioned the next day. The election was described in basic terms, but was not called a farce this time.

The Carter defeat of Ford was an opportunity for the Chinese government to discuss the US electoral system with a stronger opinion than in the past. They wrote only 6 headlines about the US in the week following this election, but 3 were on the election directly. In one article, three paragraphs are devoted to explaining how the US system means people elect a bourgeois party, not individuals.

Reagan's 1980 defeat of Carter marks a major turning point in the *Renmin Ribao's* coverage of US domestic politics. There are many articles about the election, and

plenty contain messages of congratulations. It's also mentioned on the first page of the *Renmin Ribao* for the first time. China official congratulates Reagan on the first page, and it appears the next day after the election. Given the 12-hour time difference between Washington, DC, and Beijing, this is the soonest publication possible. The article and other coverage are not all sunny, however. The election process is still considered a sign of deteriorating circumstances in the US. The paper also points out voter apathy in the US and considers elections time consuming.

Reagan's 1984 defeat of Mondale is mentioned in the paper, but is not given extensive attention.

7.4.2 Other Domestic Political Events

Other Domestic Political Events
Eisenhower suffers heart attack (Sept. 26, 1955)
Kennedy assassinated (Nov. 22, 1963)
Orderly transfer of power to Johnson (Nov. 26, 1963)
Robert Kennedy assassinated (June 5, 1968)
Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Dean resign (April 30, 1973)
Dean tells Senate about Nixon cover-up (June 25, 1973)
Agnew resigns (Oct. 10, 1973)
Reagan shot (March 30, 1981)

Table 7.5: Other US Domestic Political Events

Eisenhower's 1955 heart attack is not mentioned in the *People's Daily*. The assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 is mentioned two days after the assassination in one article. This is followed by an article about Johnson, which later moves to comment on the Cuban missile crisis. There is overall surprisingly little attention to the assassination. The transfer of power to Johnson is also not specifically directly covered, but the funeral is mentioned. Then, the conversation that week in China turned to 30 articles describing the evil acts of the US in the international system.

There is also no mention of Robert Kennedy's assassination in 1968 when I

search for mentions of the US. When I expand the search to consider the last name "Kennedy" (in Chinese), there is only one article.

The entire Nixon affair is also surprisingly given little attention, especially given that it seems such an easy opportunity for China to illustrate the myriad problems with the US political system. Instead, there is no mention of the resignation of Dean, Haldeman, and Ehrlichman in 1973. Instead, there are 13 articles that week condemning various US actions abroad. Dean's 1973 comments to the US Senate about the Nixon cover-up two months later are also not directly mentioned. In fact, I found no mention of the scandal at all. The 8 articles about the US that appeared that week were largely focused on the bombing of Cambodia. Searching directly for "Nixon" gave little help. It added one more article for the week, and it was on how Nixon vetoes the bill that prohibited the bombing of Cambodia.

On October 10, 1973, Agnew resigns, and China finally mentions the issue! They directly state that Agnew is resigning. However, they then report nothing else of note on the matter. The article itself is surprisingly sparse on detail or derision of the US. Again, it would seem that this is an ideal issue for the Chinese government to use to demonstrate the US's flaws. But there is very little of this. It does mention that there were claims of bribery, and that this is the first resignation in US history. It is all surprisingly restrained.

Finally, when Reagan is shot on March 30, 1980, the *Renmin Ribao* covers it rather thoroughly, and then goes on to publish several other articles in the same week that are merely descriptive of the US political system. These articles explain how basic processes work, and who the major players and actors are in the US political system. With respect to the shooting, the coverage reports that there is still order in the US, and that authorities are seeking to find out who did it.

This time, an additional search specifically just for "Reagan" yielded further results. There were 10 articles in the week following the shooting, many of which

contained direct mentions of the events and condolences. The last article that week was an essay on the failure of the American system to ensure safety, and it pointed to an ideology of violence in the country. So we see some derision here, but it is still relatively contained compared to how it might be, or has been over other issues.

The stock exchange effects of the shooting, however, do not seem to be of interest.

7.4.3 Foreign Policy Events

Foreign Policy Events
U-2 shot down and Eisenhower admitting to spying (May 9, 1960) (event 4)
US Fires on Vietnamese ship (Aug. 4, 1964) (event 8)
Johnson halts Vietnamese raids, urges peace talks (April 1, 1968) (event 10)
Attempt to free Iranian hostages fails (April 26, 1980) (event 21)
US Marines killed in Lebanon (Oct. 24, 1983) (event 25)
US invades Grenada (October 25, 1983) (event 26)

Table 7.6: Foreign Policy Events

Participating in a major foreign military issue seems to be the most effective way for the US to get China's attention. When the U-2 plane is shot down in 1960 and the US admits to spying, this sets of a cavalcade of articles filled with anger against the US. There are mentions of the aerial spy, and lots of attention to the fact that the US is generally terrible. The discussion moves over the course of the 52 articles that week to consider how Algeria, Korea, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union all despise the United States.

China is extremely critical of the US for its firing on a Vietnamese ship in 1964. The *Renmin Ribao* writes that the attack is not just on Vietnam, but is also on China and other parts of Southeast Asia. There are 106 articles that week that mention the US in a headline. Many of these did so in the context of condemning the US's imperialist ways. The paper is very sensitive to unity between countries in Southeast Asia.

As mentioned, Johnson's 1968 withdrawal from the race was not given a great deal of attention. Johnson's halting of Vietnam raids and his urging of peace talks did not go unnoticed, however. There were several articles about the US in Vietnam. An additional headline discussed a great deal about the struggle of African-Americans in the US. The article was not about either event, but was still an article that criticized the poor US management of so many of their citizens.

The *People's Daily* wastes no time in mentioning the US failed attempt to free Iranian hostages in 1980. There are 30 articles that week. One early article must have come out before this event took place, as it is a friendly message about a US-Chinese book fair. Then, the tone turns to lots of criticism. They also address the Soviet invasion.

There is some attention the US Marines killed in Lebanon. There is some commentary on how the US seems to be planning to stay there. Most of the news about the US and Lebanon this week is washed out by the US invasion of Grenada, which receives three times as much attention. Again, there is a condemnation of US actions, and this time the paper writes that there is widespread international condemnation.

7.4.4 Economic Events

Economic Events
Nixon: price controls, Federal tax cuts, strengthens dollar (Aug. 16, 1971) (event 13)
Volcker appointed to Fed (July 25, 1979) (event 19)
Fed announces major policy changes (Oct. 6, 1979) (event 20)
NYSE closes early (due to Reagan being shot) (March 30, 1981) (event 23)
NYSE reopens (March 31, 1981) (event 24)
House votes for Tax Reform Act of 1986 (Dec. 18, 1985) (event 28)
Senate Committee votes for tax reform (May 8, 1986) (event 29)
Greenspan named to replace Volcker (June 2, 1987) (event 30)

Table 7.7: Economic Events

Economic events in the US do not make it into the *People's Daily* very much

during the period of analysis. Nixon's price controls and other efforts in 1971 are not addressed directly. There is commentary during that week about the gold reserves falling and that the US is facing a worsening trade deficit. There is no specific mention of a tax cut.

When Volcker is appointed to the Fed in 1979 there is again no specific mention of Volcker or the Fed. However, this week sees many mentions in the paper about the United States's economic crisis. It does mention some US cabinet reshuffling, but nothing specific. It then turns to address other international behaviors of the US.

When the Fed announces major policy changes later the same year, there is a bit of attention. They comment specifically on a speech by Carter and write that it failed to alleviate worries. The paper that week also publishes a document titled American League Marxist Leninist Letter. In it, there is much praising of China's great achievements. But, alas, nothing on the Fed's policy change.

The New York Stock Exchange reactions to Reagan being shot are not of interest to the *People's Daily*. However as described above, there is a great outpouring of condolences to Reagan at that time.

Turning to the later 1980s, there is no mention of the House vote on tax reform in the US. There is an article, however, that addresses the high growth in the stock market and it explains what "Dow" is. The paper writes that this might be a sign of trouble ahead. It is noteworthy that around this time when we considered elections, it seemed the paper was including more background information about the United States.

When the Senate votes on tax reform, it is hardly addressed, either. The *People's Daily* this time focuses on a number of different subjects regarding the US. They speak of meetings in China with US guests, of Bank of America, about traveling, and other pleasantries.

Finally, when Greenspan is nominated in the US in 1987 to replace Volcker, the

Chinese paper pays a little bit of attention. They offer a generally kind comment on the nomination, though they never mention Greenspan directly. Only 4 articles appear that week that involve the US. The other articles are non-political – they describe that a US museum has a China exhibit. They also describe the development of a US-China friendship association.

7.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to consider other types of events as well as coverage patterns over time. In general, I find that the patterns established in chapters 5 and 6 generally hold for non-crisis events. Earthquakes are generally low-interest, low-liability events, and we accordingly see relatively low attention to them. This helps us rule out an alternative hypothesis that China published only very safe, fluff news pieces – if this were so, we would see more attention to things like low-profile earthquakes, which are arguably both politically neutral and perfectly news-worthy.

China's coverage of events prior to 1990 is interesting in that it helps us notice that the extent of coverage of events was more at the discretion of the Chinese leadership in the past when information control was higher. China appears to have covered some events and not others with little regard for public interest or liability. I think this is due to the fact that interest and liability mattered less when China had more control over information, as it was able to cover events indirectly or not cover them without risk of punishment.

In the decades following the end of World War II, China turned its attention inward and focused primarily on domestic affairs. When it did mention international affairs – perhaps even to a surprising degree given the events at home (although this lends support for a "distraction" argument) – it was largely critical and very indirect. An election in the US was mentioned not in terms of the events of the election, but in terms of the extent to which it could be leveraged to demonstrate the many problems

with American society and US policy. We do not observe that high level of bias in China for the 1990-2008 period, which suggests that as the probability the leadership might be caught introducing bias increases, the leadership's tendency to present news with a bias decreases.

Overall, I find support for the legitimacy-credibility hypothesis in that China seems to cover earthquakes, most of which are low liability events with the exception of earthquakes in Japan or Taiwan, according to how interesting the public may find them. China does not publish much regarding an earthquake in Japan and it does publish several articles about an earthquake in China. This may be due to the fact that, since China wishes to establish authority over Taiwan, it has incentives to cover an earthquake in Taiwan in order to demonstrate engagement and commitment with Taiwan. It may not have given the earthquake in Japan much attention relative to how often Japan is covered generally, as Japan frequently makes headlines in China and this may simply have been less interesting. There is also no political liability to China in Japan's handling of an earthquake, but there is a potential for political gain to China for covering Taiwan.

China's historical coverage of events poses more questions than it answers, many of which will be the basis for interesting future work. Overall, it appears that the roles of legitimacy and credibility are lower in China in the period from 1952-1990, and one explanation is that the level of information control in China was higher during that time. When China does cover events during this period, the coverage is frequently characterized by indirect, rather than direct, coverage. This, too, is likely due to the luxury of higher information control in China at the time. Future research will include detailed analysis of the full article content of China's coverage of the United States and other international events using the tools of content analysis in order to further test the legitimacy-credibility hypothesis in the pre-1990 period.

In addition, future analysis will particularly benefit from closer consideration of

China's internal political, economic, and social affairs during the 1952-1990 period. This period encompasses the Five Year Plan (1953-1957), the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). It also includes the period following the Open Door Policy (1979) and the famous events in Tiananmen (1989). Thus, a wide range of domestic conditions may be affecting the coverage we observe here. In general, the data here indicate that Chinese attention to foreign events are highest when it affects Southeast Asia (e.g., the US firing on a Vietnamese ship in 1964). Other than this event, the highest coverage of US events takes place from 1960-1963 and from 1980-86. The period in the 1960s is the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward, and it is possible that coverage of US politics at that time proved a good distraction. On the other hand, this also is the period of Kennedy's assassination, so the high level of attention may be due to this event. Finally, the period of high attention to US events in the 1980s is after the Open Door Policy is established, so that may in general be consistent with high openness in a number of domains in China, including the media. On the other hand, the US was again politically active overseas, and the Grenada political issue was especially of interest in China, receiving 73 headline mentions during the week of October 24 through October 31, 1983.[2] Much future work is needed to begin to reconcile the influence of China's domestic situation, its overall level of openness, and the nature of the events external to China themselves in order to fully explain why China covered the events it did, how much it covered the events, and what exactly was said in this coverage.

[2]Specific numbers of mentions of the United States during all 30 big events are listed in Appendix C.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

In this dissertation we learned that autocratic leaders are strategic when it comes to what is published in the national media in their countries. Furthermore, these leaders, contrary to common generalizations about them, do not simply censor unfavorable news and spread only information that flatters the regime. Instead, they carefully use their power over the flow of information in a manner that rationally balances a desire to boost regime legitimacy along with a realization that keeping the media credible is as important as the content itself.

While the research in this project is focused exclusively on autocracies, it should have struck the reader throughout that many of the assertions made should also apply to leaders of democracies. While democratic leaders have less influence over news media content than their autocratic counterparts, they still have some, and they can leverage this for political gain. Future research will seek to further specify this link between autocratic and democratic leaders. If leaders of autocracies have been wrongly accused in the past of manipulating more media than they really do, leaders of democracies have perhaps gotten away with more manipulation of the media than we have ever accused them. In the end, this dissertation strives to point out that leaders of all kinds have incentives to manipulate the news, and that, importantly, this manipulation can be rational, predictable, and understandable. The question

now is to determine just how much freedom of manipulation might be best for a particular regime.

To review what we have learned in greater detail, the formal goal set out in this dissertation was to establish a logic by which autocratic leaders publicize foreign events in the national news, and to empirically test the claims of that logic. In Chapter 2, I presented content analysis results from an analysis of China's coverage of three countries during the Arab Spring from December 2010 to March 2011. I found that China's coverage differed from that of coverage by two democracies, the United States and France, but it shared features in common with coverage by a non-democracy, Russia. Specifically, the coverage by both regimes featured the use of a strategy I label "indirect" coverage. They do not present any incorrect information about the events, but the focus on the coverage is not on the central features of the events. For example, in the case of the events in Libya, China's coverage focused on China's own efforts to evacuate Chinese nationals from Libya, with nearly no mention of why the nationals were being evacuated

In Chapters 3 and 4 I presented a logic of legitimacy and credibility to explain when autocracies cover international events in the national news. In Chapter 3, I provided a background on related research and introduced the key components of the logic, which include the fact that leaders wish to present "good" event in the national media, but they also wish to appear credible, so they must on occasion also publish "bad" events. In Chapter 4, I presented a decision theoretic model that explicitly lays out the costs and benefits of covering events directly, indirectly, or not at all. The analysis of the model yields several claims, including that autocratic leaders prefer direct coverage over indirect coverage or no coverage when the probability the event is good is sufficiently high, and that below that probability level, the leaders prefer indirect coverage as the probability the event is good increases, and as the mitigating power of indirect coverage increases. Overall, the more likely the event is

good, the more likely a leader is to cover it directly. However, as the size of the event is sufficiently large, the leader more likely to cover it directly.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I empirically evaluated two explanations for China's patterns of publicizing international events. First, I considered the role of audience costs. I found little support for audience costs as far as their utility in international bargaining, but I find that domestic conditions within China are related to the propensity to mention international crisis actors. Specifically, I discovered a negative relationship between the percent change in GDP per capita in China and the number of times China mentions foreign crisis actors in the news. This suggests domestic factors may indeed play a role in China's media behavior. In Chapter 6 I tested the credibility-legitimacy logic directly. I first measured international events in terms of the political liability and potential public interest by conducting a survey of China experts and averaging the results into two indicators. My statistical analysis found that the interaction effects of these two variables are provocative. I find that as interest increases, the role of legitimacy disappears. I also found that at high levels of legitimacy, interest levels determine the extent to which the regime is going to publicize an event. Finally, I found that at very high levels of interest, the effect of legitimacy disappears. This is largely consistent with the legitimacy-credibility theory, but it suggests the theory underestimates the importance of public interest when China's leaders choose what to publish in the national news.

In Chapter 7 I expanded my analysis to consider non-crisis and historical events. My reasoning for studying non-crisis events is that they may pose a kind of liability for China that is not political, and thus poses less of a risk. Thus, we should see earthquakes publicized according to how interesting they are. I studied historical events, specifically China's coverage of 30 big events in the United States from 1952-1989, in order to find out whether during this period China's overall sensitivity to legitimacy and credibility is lower. I expected this to be the case because the level of

control China has over the national flow of information should be higher during the 1952-1989 period compared to the 1990-2008 period, which has been characterized by the growing use of the Internet and telecommunication devices, as well as a broader interest by the Chinese leadership in integrating into the international system. Indeed, I found China demonstrates its capacity to be selective in what they publish and how they characterize events during the 1952-1989 period.

To summarize, Chinese leaders use the national news media as a tool for establishing legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the public. Their ability to pursue this goal, however, is strongly mediated by a need to present the national media as a credible source of news. If the public does not regard the national news as genuine or informative, then no amount of strategic publication of flattering news stories will help China establish greater legitimacy. Instead, I find strong evidence that China deliberately covers politically sensitive events in the news. I also find that in many cases the behavior of China is consistent with that of other media sources in more politically liberal countries, especially when it comes to events that are of high public interest.

I have stated that the logic in this dissertation is applicable to all autocracies that are characterized by some government control over the national media. I also stated at several points that democratic leaders are also able to exert some control over what appears in the national news media. The control is typically lower than in autocracies, but in some cases even this pattern may not hold. Thus, two important directions for future work are to evaluate the legitimacy-credibility claims in other autocracies, as well as to expand the theory to include democratic states. Any time a leader of a group has an opportunity to control the flow of information in that group, that leader faces the challenge of balancing the desire to flatter oneself and remain a reliable news source.

Why study what appears in the national news, in either autocracies or democra-

cies? Previous research has examined the relationship between the media and foreign policy, though much work is left to be done in this area. The goal of this dissertation has been to take a step back and establish the foundation that leaders have reasons to be strategic when it comes to publicizing foreign events. The consequences of this strategic behavior are important, and represent a third urgent avenue for future research.

Overall, communication between leaders and citizens through the media is thought to be a potential avenue for commitment-making. The commitments scholars typically have in mind in these cases are usually shorter term. Leaders can signal intentions in order to generate audience costs in order to improve their international bargaining position. This is a form of commitment because leaders, especially democratic leaders, are thought to suffer domestic political punishment should they not follow through on their threats (Tomz 2007). This dissertation is a foundation for broader work on the longer term commitments leaders are making when they attract domestic attention to international issues. As Constructivist scholars in international relations would describe it, they are attracting attention to events in ways that systematically label some actors as friends and others as foes. If these views are persistent, then leaders may find themselves forced to adopt harsher stances against some countries than they might like, and softer stances against others. Again, I cannot formally defend these claims here. I introduce them only to suggest the possible future implications of the research conducted in this project.

At its core, this is a model of opinion control. Leaders of organizations of many kinds who possess some control over the information they share with the group face problems similar to the tension faced by autocratic leaders. When do you publicize only positive events? Many companies, for example, circulate newsletters about the achievements of the business in the previous period. Often, these only contain sunny reviews of developments. This could plausibly lead to employees and other readers

losing interest or confidence in the claims of the reports. Control over information is a valuable tool in organizations of all kinds, but it necessitates strategic choices that, I believe, are similar across many types of groups, despite differences in organization, goal, or membership. As mentioned, all leaders should have incentives to manipulate the flow of information in a group.

This dissertation is motivated at the core by a deep belief that what we know about the world affects how we behave in it. The information that flows in a society affects what people know, which, in turn, affects their behaviors. With the knowledge that leaders have incentives to manipulate information for political advantage now comes the question: what is the optimal level of information control in a society? While in democracies we are taught that an open flow of information is best, what about the spread of dangerous rumors that lead people to over-react, thus harming the group as a whole? Certainly keeping the flow of information limited to the incentives, however rational, of just one leader, can be dangerous, but a completely open flow may be similarly problematic. Future work will consider the role of the flow of information in a society on that group's overall well-being. For now, however, we now understand what that flow looks like, and why.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Expert Survey

This survey was completed by six scholars who met the following criteria: Their research primarily focuses on China's domestic politics (and especially on propaganda, the media, and social stability, wherever possible) and they are employed at a major US or European research university.

The version of the survey below was emailed to twelve such experts. It represents a substantial revision based on the results of an informal pilot survey with an additional scholar.

Of these original twelve, nine responded indicating a willingness to take the survey. Of these, six actually completed the survey and returned full responses, often with additional information based on their own experience. This information has been incorporated into the text in the dissertation in the form of discussion of what the Chinese government might believe the Chinese population finds interesting, and what the Chinese government might consider to be a potential political liability.

An agreement was made with one of the six experts that his/her identity will be kept anonymous until the number of experts surveyed reaches twenty, after which he/she has granted permission to list his/her name and affiliation. To further protect his/her wishes, I am keeping the identity of all scholars who participated in the survey,

including those I contacted but have not heard from, anonymous until that twenty is met. The exact text of the survey that was sent to all participants is presented below.

Events and Political Liability in China: A Short Survey to Help Andrea Jones-Rooy's Dissertation

Instructions

Hello, and thank you for agreeing to help with my dissertation!

I have developed a theory of when China will cover international events in the national media. The two main factors are how likely the Chinese public is to be interested in the event and how much the event might pose a political liability to China.

My theoretical section considers how Chinas leadership balances the desire to keep public interest high while drawing attention away from politically sensitive events.[1] In my empirical section I test my theory using a new dataset based on a list of international events and evaluate when they are covered in the Chinese national media.

I have coded these events according to how I think the Chinese government would perceive them in terms of potential public interest and potential political liability.

This is where you come in. As a robustness check on my coding, I would like to know how you might categorize a few of these types of events.

Definitions

[1]Specifically, as public interest increases, I expect China will be more likely to cover the event so that they keep public attention and maintain credibility. But, as political liability increases, I expect the government will be more hesitant to cover the event.

I would like you to code a sample set of events according to two features: Public Interest and Political Liability.

Public Interest

This is how interesting you think the Chinese government might think an event would be to the Chinese public. How likely would Chinese citizens be to pick up a paper that covered this event?

What I hope you can help me do is get inside the government's head and imagine what they might typically think are topics of interest for the Chinese public. It of course cannot always be straightforward, but, generally speaking it should be possible to make guesses about trends. For example, it is fairly uncontroversial to assert that news stories in the US about Al Qaeda typically sell more papers than stories about food prices in Africa. I would like to do the same for China.

Political Liability

This is how much the Chinese government might think news about the event could incite, provoke, anger, or otherwise promote political controversy in China. I would like to know how you think the government typically perceives the politically riskiness of news getting out about particular types of events.[2]

Coding Instructions

Below I present some hypothetical and actual international events and would like

[2]Many issues can be framed to reduce their liability; however, it is difficult to know *a priori* what frames will work, whether a good one will be available, or whether anyone will believe it. Thus, I would like you to consider events prior to any framing.

to know whether you think the Chinese government would consider them to be of potential interest and whether you think they would consider them a political liability.

The codes for public interest are 0, 1, or 2, where the government typically believes:

0 = Low = The probability the public will find the event interesting is low.

1 = Medium = It is possible the public will find the event interesting.

2 = High = The probability the public will find this event interesting is high.

The codes for political liability are 0, 1, or 2, where the government typically believes:

0 = Low = The probability that this event could become a political liability is low.

1 = Medium = It is possible that this event could become a liability.

2 = High = It is likely that this event could become a political liability if information about it spread widely in China.

Important Note

The events below are mostly hypothetical and many are simplistic. It may be hard to say specifically whether something might pose a political liability without knowing more details about any particular event, or possible ways of framing it.

Thus, given the very big caveat that for every scenario listed below the best answer is probably "it depends", I hope that you can still help me get a general sense of: Is this type of event *typically* of interest to the Chinese public? Do these types of events *typically* generate concern in the Chinese leadership?

Please move quickly and trust your initial reactions.

Finally, feel free to contact me with questions (ajonrooy@umich.edu, 240-284-7190 (cell)).

Events

Please code the following events according to the instructions above

1. Natural Disasters	**Public Interest? (0, 1, or 2)**	**Political Liability? (0, 1, or 2)**	**Comments**
(a) The 2004 Indian Ocean and tsunami that killed over 200,000			
(b) The 2010 Earthquake in Haiti that killed over 200,000			
(c) An earthquake in India that kills approximately 20,000			
(d) An earthquake in India that kills approximately 2,000			
(e) An earthquake in Central Asia that kills approximately 2,000			
(f) An earthquake in the Middle East that kills approximately 2,000			
(g) An earthquake in Taiwan or Japan that kills approximately 2,000			
(h) An earthquake in the US that kills approximately 2,000			

2. International Crises Assume no actors are Japan or Taiwan	**Public Interest? (0, 1, or 2)**	**Political Liability? (0, 1, or 2)**	**Comments**
(a) International tension over nuclear arms in an autocracy (e.g., Iran, N. Korea)			
(b) A crisis between two countries over territory, borders, or sovereignty			
(c) A crisis between two countries over access to natural resources			
(d) A crisis between two countries with US involvement that is largely viewed as favorable in the international community (e.g., Iran Nuclear 2006, Chad-Sudan 2007)			
(e) A crisis between two countries with US involvement that is largely viewed as unfavorable in the international community (e.g., Israel-Lebanon 2007)			

3. Political Protests	**Public Interest? (0, 1, or 2)**	**Political Liability? (0, 1, or 2)**	**Comments**
(a) Protests in an autocracy that demand democratization			
(b) Protests in an autocracy about any topic			
(c) Protests in a democracy about any topic			
(d) Protests in Tunisia in Dec. 2010-Jan. 2011			
(e) Protests in Egypt beginning Jan. 25, 2011			
(f) Protests in Libya from mid-Feb. to March 5, 2011, before direct NATO involvement			
(g) Violence in Libya from NATO involvement to rebel entry in Tripoli			

4. Elections	Public Interest? (0, 1, or 2)	Political Liability? (0, 1, or 2)	Comments
(a) An uncontroversial election in a non-Asian country			
(b) A controversial election in a non-Asian country (e.g., the election handling was subject to extra scrutiny; accusations of unfair play were made)			
(c) An uncontroversial presidential election in an Asian country (not Taiwan or Japan)			
(d) A controversial presidential election in an Asian country (not Taiwan or Japan)			
(e) US presidential elections in the 1950s-1960s			
(f) The 1963 assassination of Kennedy			
(g) US presidential elections in the 1970s			
(h) US presidential elections in the 1980s			

5. Sports	Public Interest? (0, 1, or 2)	Political Liability? (0, 1, or 2)	Comments
(a) The success of a non-Asian country in an international sport match in a popular global sport like soccer, cricket basketball, rugby, or tennis			
(b) The success of an Asian country in an international match of a popular global sport			
(c) The success of an autocracy in an international match of a popular global sport			
(d) The success of China in an international sport match that is less globally popular, such as volleyball, field hockey, ping pong, or swimming/diving			

APPENDIX B

Earthquakes

This table presents the percent changes in the number of mentions of the included earthquakes compared to a baseline of the number of mentions of these countries on average during the month prior and the same month in the previous year. In the table, "Day" is the day of the earthquake plus the next day. "+2" is the first two days following the earthquake. "Week" is the total percent change in mentions during the entire week following the earthquake. "Int" is the score for the level of potential interest in the event. "Liab" is the liability score. "Asia" is a 0 or 1 if the country is in southeast or east Asia (0 if no, 1 if yes). "Ally" is a 1 if the country is an ally of China, 0 if not. "Killed" is the total number of people killed. This data come from EM-DAY and China's mentions come from the *People's Daily* database.

	State	Year	Day	+2	Week	Int	Liab	Asia	Ally	Killed
1	Afghanistan	2002	-2.5	-1.5	1.5	0.4	0	1	1	1000
2	Afghanistan	1998	-7.5	-7.5	-6.5	0.68	0	1	0	2323
3	Afghanistan	1998	-4	-3	-3	0.8	0	1	0	4700
4	Algeria	2003	0	3	2	0.15	0	0	0	2266
5	Colombia	1999	-2.5	-1.5	-1.5	0.2	0	0	0	1186
6	India	2005	-8	-7	-5	0.13	0	1	0	1309
7	India	2004	-8	-7	-3	1.17	0	1	0	16389
8	India	2001	-13	-11	-5	0.83	0.17	1	0	20005
9	India	1993	-9.5	-8.5	-5.5	0.5	0	1	0	9748
10	India	1991	-8.5	-8.5	-5.5	0.15	0	1	0	1500
11	Indonesia	2006	-4.5	-1.5	0.5	0.7	0	1	0	802
12	Indonesia	2006	-8	-8	-1	0.7	0	1	0	5778
13	Indonesia	2005	-1	2	5	0.7	0	1	0	915
14	Indonesia	2004	-7	-5	1	1.17	0	1	0	165708
15	Indonesia	1992	-5	-3	0	0.7	0	1	0	2500
16	Iran	2003	-2	0	8	1	0.1	1	1	26796
17	Iran	1997	-11	-11	-9	0.3	0	1	1	1100
18	Iran	1997	-7	-5	-5	0.3	0	1	1	1568
19	Iran	1990	-6.5	-5.5	4.5	1	0.1	1	1	40000
20	Japan	1995	-17.5	-12.5	-1.5	1.83	0.83	1	0	5297
21	Pakistan	2005	-3	-2	4	1.23	0.18	1	1	73338
22	Philippines	1990	-3	-2	-2	0.3	0.12	1	0	2412
23	P. N. Guinea	1998	0	0	1	0.3	0.12	1	0	2182
24	Russia	1995	-15	-14	-9	0.3	0.4	0	0	1989
25	El Salvador	2001	0	1	2	0.1	0	0	0	844
26	Sri Lanka	2004	-2.5	-2.5	0.5	1.17	0	0	0	35399
27	Taiwan	1999	-4	-1	3	1.83	0.83	1	0	2264
28	Thailand	2004	-8.5	-8.5	-6.5	1.17	0	1	0	8345
29	Turkey	1999	-1.5	0.5	5.5	0.4	0.05	0	0	845
30	Turkey	1999	1	2	5	0.55	0.07	0	0	17127
31	Turkey	1992	-2.5	-0.5	1.5	0.4	0.05	0	0	653

Table B.1: 31 Largest Earthquakes (in terms of number killed) (1990-2008)

APPENDIX C

Big Events

Table 11.1 presents the full set of events considered in the analysis of China's coverage of big historical events. The first column is an event number I assigned for reference in the chapter. The event description is in column two. "Date" is the date the event took place. "Day" is the number of mentions of the United States (*mei guo* in Chinese) on the day of the event. Note that variants in how we call the US in English ("United States", "United States of America", "USA", "US", "America", etc.) are all captured by two words in Chinese ("*mei guo*" and sometimes abbreviated "*mei*". I have search for both versions, taking care to exclude other words that include the shared root "*mei*"). "+1" is the number of mentions of "*mei guo*" the day after the event. "+2" is two days after the event. "Week" is the total number of mentions in the week following the event. The counts are the total number of headlines appearing that day (or week). In some cases I have labeled with a (*) instances where the majority of the headlines mentioning "*mei guo*" did not correspond with the event. If they are not marked, this means that most of the articles were generally about the event (some tangentially, but still about the event and its associated repercussions, real or speculative).

Searching just for mentions of the US is obviously imperfect, as it is possible to

mention these events without specifically using the words United States. For instance, the President's name could just be given. In three cases where I was surprised by low attention to the event, I conducted an additional search for the President's last name. (It so happened that these three instances were all cases where a US President was the central actor or subject.) These cases were the assassination of Robert Kennedy (Event 11), the announcement of Nixon's cover-up (Event 16), and the shooting of Reagan (Event 23). In addition to *mei guo*, I searched for the names "Kennedy" ("*Kennidi*"), Nixon ("*Nikesong*"), and "Reagan" ("*Ligen*"), respectively. To my surprise, this yielded few additional results for Kennedy (1 extra headline) and Nixon (1 extra headline), and 10 additional headlines for Reagan.

For other events, it was not obvious what additional words to search for that would be comparable across cases so that each extra search would be fair compared to the others. For example, if I started searching for auxiliary terms in headlines about elections, I might turn to the candidate who was defeated. But, for events where the US engaged in a military clash with the other country, I might search for the name of the other country. It is much more likely that additional headlines exist that mention the target country (Vietnam, Iran, etc.) exist than additional headlines that mention defeated candidate (Humphrey, McGovern). Thus, I might then look further for headlines suggesting the election, such as the word "election", "defeated", "votes", or more, to be sure I got the event.

For the international events, I would also have to worry whether the results from searches for names of the target country were about US actions, or something separate. For example, China had plenty of reasons to mention Vietnam that may not have had anything to do with US behavior. For all of these reasons, the fairest search was simply to limit my inquiry to mentions of the US directly. Not surprisingly, international events that involve Vietnam and Iran did still turn out many mentions in headlines. Mentions of elections vary – some were mentioned a great deal, while

others were mostly ignored. Overall, I am confident that, while I may not have gotten absolutely all mentions of an event, my results are consistent in that we can compare between events to evaluate, generally, which events were mentioned a great deal and which were largely ignored. As for the content of the mentions of the events, that has been discussed in the chapter.

	Event	Date	Day	+1	+2	Week
1	Eisenhower defeats Stevenson	Nov. 11, 1952	0	0	0	0
2	Eisenhower suffers heart attack	Sept. 26, 1955	0	1	0	5*
3	Eisenhower defeats Stevenson	Nov. 7, 1956	4	1	5	17
4	U-2 shot down, US admits spying	May 9, 1960	3	6	6	52
5	Kennedy defeats Nixon	Nov. 9, 1960	6	5	7	53
6	Kennedy assassinated	Nov. 22, 1963	4	4	4	30
7	Orderly transfer of power to Johnson	Nov. 26, 1963	3	7	0	34
8	US fires on Vietnamese ship	Aug. 4, 1964	4	3	11	106
9	Johnson defeats Goldwater	Nov. 4, 1964	4	3	5	29
10	Johnson withdraws from race, halts Vietnamese raids, urges peace talks	April 1, 1968	0	0	1	13
11	Robert Kennedy assassinated	June 5, 1968	0	1	3	9
12	Nixon defeats Humphrey	Nov. 6, 1968	3	1	0	7
13	Nixon imposes price controls, requests Federal tax cuts, strengthens dollar	Aug. 16, 1971	0	0	1	9
14	Nixon defeats McGovern	Nov. 8, 1972	1	3	2	16
15	Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Dean resign	April 30, 1973	2	0	1	13
16	Dean tells Senate about Nixon cover-up	June 25, 1973	0	1	2	9*
17	Agnew resigns	Oct. 10, 1973	0	0	1	3
18	Carter defeats Ford	Nov. 3, 1976	0	0	1	6
19	Volcker appointed to Fed	July 25, 1979	2	3	5	19
20	Fed announces major policy changes	Oct. 6, 1979	2	1	1	9
21	Attempt to free Iranian hostages fails	April 26, 1980	3	5	3	30
22	Reagan defeats Carter	Nov. 5, 1980	3	7	4	25
23	Reagan shot, NYSE closes early	March 30, 1981	3	2	2	18
24	NYSE reopens next day	March 31, 1981	1	1	5	10
25	US Marines killed in Lebanon	Oct. 24, 1983	3	1	3	37**
26	US invades Grenada	Oct. 25, 1983	1	3	4	36
27	Reagan defeats Mondale	Nov. 7, 1984	3	4	2	28
28	House votes for Tax Reform Act of 1986	Dec. 18, 1985	3	1	1	9
29	Senate Committee votes for tax reform	May 8, 1986	4	4	7	32*
30	Greenspan named to replace Volcker	June 2, 1987	2	1	0	4*

Table C.1: 30 Events from Cutler et al.'s List of 49 Events
$*$ not directly about issue
$**$ mostly about Grenada

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