

Authoritarian Audiences in International Crises: A Real-History Survey-Experiment of Diversionary Incentives and Audience Costs in China

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Abstract

An influential argument holds that leaders have incentives to escalate international crises in order to divert domestic attention from economic problems and grievances. Despite a large body of literature on the “rally round the flag” effect and diversionary incentives to wage war, little work has been done to explore these phenomena experimentally, particularly in autocracies where such strategies may be particularly beneficial to ruling elites that lack democratic legitimacy. We employ a new kind of survey experiment—a real-history survey experiment—in which we manipulate the portrayal of recent history. We examine whether a selective portrayal of history in China can induce rally effects or diversionary effects. We also evaluate whether Chinese respondents exhibit thin audience costs, thick audience costs, sensitivity to the economic costs of conflict, or a willingness to delay a challenge until the balance of capabilities is more favorable.

This document summarizes the state of our project. With experiments, it is most helpful to receive feedback (on theory, design, analysis) before fielding the experiments. Section 1 introduces the themes of the project. Section 2 discusses the theories that we seek to evaluate, and specifically what hypotheses we draw from them. Section 3 introduces our research design. Section 3.1 discusses the methodological strengths and weaknesses of the real-history design. Section 4 outlines how we intend to test the different theories, including additional details about how we intend to analyze our data (section 4.7). Section 5 summarizes our results from a pilot study. Appendix A provides the English translation of our proposed survey design.

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1 Introduction

Government leaders are often said to escalate international crises in order to rally popular support and divert attention from domestic grievances.¹ The political benefits of acting tough on the international stage may also make it difficult for leaders to back down, particularly after they commit publicly to a tough stance.² Although these arguments have been examined in the democratic context, far less attention has been paid to their authoritarian counterparts. As most military conflicts involve at least one authoritarian regime,³ this imbalance is problematic for understanding the drivers of war and peace. An important set of recent experiments has shown that democratic publics are more willing to support the use of force against autocracies. However, these findings can only partially explain the democratic peace and the high level of conflict between autocracies and democracies. Given the democratic appetite for war against autocracies, we also need to explain why and under what conditions authoritarian leaders stand firm rather than back down when faced with such resolved democratic opponents.

Authoritarian incentives to escalate a crisis depend on whether authoritarian leaders can compromise or back down without suffering domestically. Although it may be harder for citizens to remove an authoritarian leader than a democratic leader, the consequences of losing office may weigh more heavily on authoritarian leaders who fear exile, imprisonment, or death. Another possibility is that authoritarian leaders who benefit from a popular “rally around the flag”⁴ or the diversion of attention away from societal grievances may fear losing these domestic benefits if they are exposed as a “paper tiger” in an international crisis.

On the other hand, an important characteristic of authoritarian regimes is their ability to control and shape the information that the public receives about the outcome of an international crisis. Although the extent of media freedom and access varies widely across democracies,⁵ autocratic regimes typically exert far greater control and censorship over the information and narrative that mediate public knowledge of international affairs. Autocratic

¹For a review of this very large literature, see Jack Levy. “The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique”. In: *Handbook of War Studies*. Ed. by M. Midlarsky. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

²James D. Fearon. “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes”. In: *The American Political Science Review* 88.3 (1994), pp. 577–592.

³On the high frequency of conflict between mixed and authoritarian dyads, see, e.g., Bruce Russett and John Oneal. *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001.

⁴J E Mueller. *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*. University Press of America, 1973. ISBN: 9780819146496. URL: <http://books.google.fr/books?id=RENVPgAACAAJ>.

⁵Philip BK Potter and Matthew A Baum. “Looking for Audience Costs in all the Wrong Places: Electoral Institutions, Media Access, and Democratic Constraint”. In: *The Journal of Politics* 76.01 (2014), pp. 167–181.

leaders may thus be better equipped to preserve the illusion of victory and control the “audience costs” of backing down, just as partisan elites in democratic settings may attenuate criticism of the president by providing more information about the decision to back down.⁶

State dominance over the information environment may have countervailing effects in shaping public responses to a negative international outcome, such as the government’s failure to fulfill a prior threat. Although authoritarian elites and state propaganda may describe the decision to compromise or back down as a strategic victory, citizens may discount official narratives because they are used to hearing only “good news” from state leaders and media outlets subject to government censorship. But citizens living in illiberal societies may also be more reluctant to challenge the “party line,” even when they discount official rhetoric or have access to unbiased information about international events. The balance between incredulity and deference among citizens will affect whether authoritarian leaders can compromise in international crises without paying audience costs or sacrificing the diversionary or rally benefits of standing tough against an external enemy.

Despite decades of research into diversionary incentives and the manipulation of public opinion in authoritarian regimes, we know surprisingly little about how authoritarian audiences evaluate their government’s behavior in international crises. We focus here on the attitudes and reactions of the public in an important authoritarian regime, China. Existing observational studies of authoritarian behavior in international disputes have largely focused on elite audiences, such as the military or politburo.⁷ But public disapproval and the threat of popular revolution may often be as pressing a concern for authoritarian leaders as the threat of an elite coup d’etat. In recent years, authoritarian leaders have been removed by public protests more frequently than by elite coups, which have been on the decline since the end of the Cold War.⁸ Mass and elite forces may also combine to jeopardize the survival of authoritarian leaders in office. Indeed, public disapproval can provide an important window of opportunity for elites inside the regime to turn against the incumbent and reclaim the mantle of popular legitimacy. As such, illuminating how mass audiences evaluate decisions to escalate or to compromise is important to understanding the full range of authoritarian motivations in international crises.

To understand how domestic reactions constrain or incentivize risky behavior by authoritarian leaders, this paper systematically examines whether and how authoritarian audiences reward international escalation and punish inaction or backing down. On the positive side of the ledger, we examine whether authoritarian audiences reward escalation by rallying

⁶Matthew S Levendusky and Michael C Horowitz. “When Backing Down is the Right Decision: Partisanship, New Information, and Audience Costs”. In: *The Journal of Politics* 74.02 (2012), pp. 323–338.

⁷Brian Lai and Dan Slater. “Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950–1992”. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 50.1 (2006), pp. 113–126; Jessica Lea Weeks. “Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve”. In: *International Organization* 62.1 (2008), pp. 35–64; Jessica L Weeks. “Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict”. In: *American Political Science Review* 106.02 (2012), pp. 326–347.

⁸Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Erica Frantz, “Autocrats now more vulnerable to being ousted by revolt,” Washington Post (Monkey Cage), April 9, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/04/09/autocrats-now-more-vulnerable-to-being-ousted-by-revolt>

round the flag or expressing less criticism on domestic issues. On the negative side of the ledger, we examine whether and under what conditions authoritarian audiences disapprove of empty threats. In addition, we investigate whether authoritarian leaders can preserve the domestic benefits of standing tough or mitigate domestic criticism for backing down through two types of elite cues:⁹ those that emphasize the costs of war or the strategic benefits of delayed action.

2 Literature and Hypotheses

Does public opinion affect whether authoritarian leaders go to war or make peace? In a seminal study of modern dictatorships, Ithiel de Sola Pool notes that many regimes are “highly conscious of public opinion and make major efforts to affect it.”¹⁰ We address these elements in turn: how authoritarian publics react to foreign policy choices and outcomes, and whether authoritarian regimes can successfully control these popular reactions in the face of adverse international outcomes. For each literature, we summarize key testable hypotheses.

2.1 Rally Effects

A number of theories posit that authoritarian leaders benefit from involvement in international conflict. A classic argument holds that external conflicts tend to trigger reflexive support or a public opinion “rally” around the government.¹¹ Given the importance of nationalist mythmaking as a substitute for democratic legitimacy,¹² authoritarian leaders may be especially prone to challenging foreign targets to discourage domestic criticism and garner popular support. A heightened sense of external threat may also sharpen identification with the nation and promote domestic solidarity with the government as defender of the national interest.¹³ As Bodin notes, “the best way of preserving a state, and guaranteeing it against sedition, rebellion, and civil war is to keep the subjects in amity with one another, and to this end, to find an enemy against whom they can make common cause.”¹⁴ For example, Russian president Vladimir Putin’s popularity surged after his annexation of Crimea in 2014,¹⁵ leading one observer to comment that “Putin would hardly be the first world leader to shore up

⁹R.F. Trager and L. Vavreck. “The Political Costs of Crisis Bargaining: Presidential Rhetoric and the Role of Party”. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 55.3 (2011), pp. 526–545.

¹⁰Pool, Ithiel de Sola, “Communication in Totalitarian Societies,” *Handbook of Communication* (Chicago: Rand McNally College Pub. Co., 1973), p. 463.

¹¹Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*; Patrick James and Jean Sebastien Rioux. “International Crises and Linkage Politics: The Experiences of the United States, 1953-1994”. In: *Political Research Quarterly* 51.3 (1998), pp. 781–812.

¹²Jack Snyder. *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.

¹³Coser, Lewis A., *The functions of social conflict* (Glencoe: Ill., Free Press, 1956).

¹⁴Bodin, Jean. 1955. *Six Books of the Commonwealth*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, p. 168.

¹⁵Sam Greene and Graeme Robertson, “Explaining’s Putin’s popularity: Rallying around the Russian flag,” *Washington Post* (Monkey Cage), September 9, 2014.

his public standing with a lovely little war abroad.”¹⁶ We summarize our hypothesis about rally effects as follows:

H_R (Rally): *Events that increase the perception of external threat will trigger reflexive support for the leader and government.*

2.2 Diversionary Effects

A related argument holds that leaders are particularly likely to use force to divert attention from domestic economic or political problems. Many studies have looked at macroeconomic and political indicators of domestic vulnerability to infer diversionary incentives in democratic states, although empirical support for the actual diversionary use of force remains mixed.¹⁷ Studies of the relative propensity of authoritarian and democratic states to engage in diversion have also produced conflicting results. While some find that autocracies are more likely to use force in an ongoing dispute when economic growth rates decline,¹⁸ others find greater evidence of democratic diversion, arguing that autocracies are more likely to use repression as an alternative to quelling unrest.¹⁹

Further research has sought to provide greater clarity and theoretical insight into the conflict propensity of nondemocratic regimes. Although many scholars find that single party regimes are less conflict-prone than personalist and military dictatorships in general, others argue that single party regimes may be particularly susceptible to diversionary incentives, since their larger winning coalitions are more difficult to buy off or repress in difficult times.²⁰ Despite an enormous amount of research into domestic-external linkages and the diversionary use of force, we still lack evidence of the microfoundations of diversion in authoritarian regimes. Do citizens indeed refocus their attention away from domestic problems during international crises, and to what extent is the diversion of popular attention contingent on the international context and outcome of an external crisis? We articulate two hypotheses,

¹⁶Kevin Drum, “Was Crimea Mainly a Diversion From Putin’s Burgeoning Olympic Scandal?” Mother Jones, March 27, 2014.

¹⁷See, e.g., DeRouen, Karl R., Jr. “The Indirect Link: Politics, the Economy, and the Use of Force.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39, no. 4 (Dec. 1995): 671-95; Meernik, James. “Domestic Politics and the Political Use of Military Force by the United States.” *Political Research Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (Dec. 2001): 889-904; Miller, Ross A. 1995. “Domestic structures and the diversionary use of force.” *American Journal of Political Science* 39:760-85; Morgan, T. Clifton, and Kenneth N. Bickers. “Domestic Discontent and the External Use of Force.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 1 (Mar. 1992): 25-52; Chiozza, G., and H. E. Goemans. “Peace through Insecurity - Tenure and International Conflict.” *Journal Of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 4 (Aug 2003): 443-67.

¹⁸Miller, Ross A. “Regime Type, Strategic Interaction, and the Diversionary Use of Force.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, no. 3 (Jun. 1999): 388-402.

¹⁹Gelpi, Christopher. “Democratic Diversions: Governmental Structure and the Externalization of Domestic Conflict.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 2 (Apr. 1997): 255-82.

²⁰Pickering, Jeffrey, and Emizet F. Kisangani. “Diversionary Despots? Comparing Autocracies’ Propensities to Use and to Benefit from Military Force.” *American Journal of Political Science* 54, no. 2 (2010): 477-93.

one which predicts that the diversionary effect operates irrespective of the outcome of the conflict, the other which predicts that the effect will only last so long as the government has not conceded.

H_{ID} (Outcome-Independent Diversion): *Events that increase the perception of external threat, including escalatory actions or statements by one's government, will lead respondents to focus more on national security and less on domestic economic issues.*

H_{DD} (Outcome-Dependent Diversion): *Diversionary effects are not present if the government appears to concede defeat.*

2.3 Thin and Thick Audience Costs

The above arguments highlight the potential domestic benefits of rallying the public around the flag and diverting attention away from domestic economic problems. Along with losing these benefits, authoritarian leaders may also fear the domestic costs of compromise. An influential argument holds that leaders who escalate an international crisis face domestic audience costs for backing down.²¹ Because selection effects make it difficult for scholars to document such costs in practice,²² a seminal set of experiments by Tomz found that voters disapproved more of a president who threatened to intervene in a conflict and then failed to follow through than a president who stayed on the sidelines.²³ The importance of these findings has been challenged, however, on grounds that the cost of an empty threat is “a penny, not a pound.”²⁴ For audience cost skeptics, popular concerns about the costs and appropriateness of using force trump concerns about the consistency of the government's words and deeds.

In our view, this debate rests on whether citizens disapprove of empty threats—a relatively “thin” definition of audience costs—or backing down when the national honor is at stake—a “thicker” version of audience costs that is closer to Fearon's original formulation. Because a heightened concern for national honor can arise in many different ways, including foreign provocations, casualties, or a general mobilization for war, explicit threats are not necessary to generate audience costs. Given the rarity of explicit threats in international relations, compared to situations in which national honor is perceived to be at stake, threats may not even be the modal event that engages honor. In general, fears of betraying the national honor—“thick” audience costs—can make it difficult for leaders to de-escalate an international standoff.

²¹Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes”.

²²KA Schultz. “Looking for Audience Costs”. In: *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45.1 (2001), pp. 32–60.

²³Michael Tomz. “Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach”. In: *International Organization* 61.4 (2007), pp. 821–40.

²⁴Jack Snyder and Erica D. Borghard. “The Cost of Empty Threats: A Penny, Not a Pound”. In: *American Political Science Review* 105.03 (2011), pp. 437–456.

H_{TA} (Thin Audience Costs): *Statements of commitment to stand firm (a) increase public resolve and (b) increase disapproval of backing down.*

H_{TH} (Thick Audience Costs): *Actions that engage national honor—such as the use of force, being the target of force, public insults, and statements of commitment—will (a) increase public resolve and (b) increase disapproval of backing down.*

2.4 Elite Cues, Economic Costs, and Biding-Time

In an authoritarian setting, a critical question is whether the government can mitigate popular disapproval in the event of an unfavorable international outcome. On the one hand, citizens may lack access to independent sources of news or fear the consequences of expressing critical views. On the other hand, authoritarian governments often face a credibility deficit in persuading the public. Despite major investments in controlling public discourse through propaganda and state media, particularly among single-party regimes, Pool notes, “the public learns to read between the lines. It becomes accustomed to interpreting clues to the truth that are buried in the unreliable information available to them... Whenever the structure of controls breaks down, the apparent unanimity collapses quickly.”²⁵

We examine whether authoritarian governments can utilize their influence over the flow and framing of news media to shape public reactions to an adverse international outcome (where the government does not retaliate after a foreign adversary openly defies the government’s threat). If authoritarian governments can control the costs of reneging on prior threats or betraying the national honor, then they have more flexibility to compromise or back down. They may also be able to sustain the rally or diversionary benefits of escalation without requiring an international victory or diplomatic satisfaction.

H_{C} (Elite Cues): *Statements by members of the elite, and especially members of the government, that backing down is a good policy will (a) decrease public resolve and (b) increase support for de-escalation or backing down.*

Specifically, what sorts of messages might attenuate audience costs or preserve the domestic benefits of an international confrontation in the event that the government backs down? One common justification for de-escalation is the economic costs of war. If publics primarily care about their economic situation, then an increase in the perceived economic costs of conflict will reduce resolve. At the same time, shifting public attention back to the importance of domestic development might eliminate the benefits of diversion from economic grievances.

H_{E} (Economic Costs): *An increase in the perceived economic costs of conflict will reduce resolve and increase support for backing down, but may also attenuate diversion of public attention from economic grievances.*

²⁵Pool, p. 463.

Another common justification is to portray a tactical retreat as beneficial to a long term strategy: biding time until the balance of power shifts in the country’s favor.

H_B (Biding Time): *An increase in the perceived benefits of delaying conflict to the future will reduce resolve and increase support for backing down in the present.*

3 Research Design

3.1 *Scenario-Based and Real-History Survey Experiments*

We use scenario-based survey experiments in China to evaluate our hypotheses. A scenario-based survey experiment involves describing a scenario to a respondent and then asking the respondent for their opinion or beliefs about the scenario. These are then *experiments* because we randomly manipulate important features of the scenario. Our analysis focuses on the effects of these manipulations, which are difficult to tease apart in an observational context.

Scenario-based survey experiments are powerful tools. When the survey design works, it generates relatively valid data on how citizens respond to various possible scenarios. Since the scenarios are under the control of the researcher, this method can generate opinion data about scenarios that have yet to occur, or are unlikely to occur. Further, the scenarios can be precisely constructed so that the comparison in opinion across them yields the strongest scientific inference.²⁶

In order to draw valid causal inferences from scenario-based survey experiments, the respondent’s reported opinion and beliefs about the described scenario need to be similar to what they would be in the analogous real world scenario. This condition is most likely to be true for scenarios that are close to the respondent’s previous experiences. If the scenario is very close to the respondent’s previous experiences, then the respondent simply has to consult their memory of their beliefs and opinions about these experiences. Invalid responses can still emerge, but they are less likely to do so.

By contrast, if the scenario is not like anything the respondent has experienced, then they must extrapolate what their beliefs and opinions would be, a process that is less likely to yield valid responses. The respondent might not be aware of how they come to form their beliefs or opinions. This is especially likely to be the case when beliefs and opinions are informed by signals from other actors, such as elite cues. A respondent whose opinion is typically informed by an elite cue will not have that cue available when reading the scenario. If the researchers try to provide those cues they must provide the right cue for the particular respondent. And even if they do, in order to estimate the effects of the features of the scenario, the researchers must now correctly model how this elite group will behave under the hypothetical scenario.

²⁶Scientific inference is strongest when data is expected to yield a likelihood ratio far from 1, when the data will be strongly consistent with one theory and strongly inconsistent with another theory (E. T. Jaynes. *Probability Theory: The Logic of Science*. Ed. by G. Larry Bretthorst. Cambridge University Press, 2003).

We employ a *real-history design* that should reduce these threats to validity. Instead of offering a hypothetical scenario, our real-history design provides details about actual recent events. Instead of manipulating the scenario, we selectively emphasize certain features of recent history in order to make them more salient to the respondent. By being closer to the respondent’s experiences, this design will depend less on respondents correctly extrapolating their beliefs and opinions to situations far from their experiences.

The real-history design involves a manipulation that is closer to an actual policy intervention: the selective representation of recent history. Accordingly, it should allow us to more accurately estimate the effect of this policy intervention. Selective portrayal of events is thought to be especially important in media environments like China’s, where the regime has substantial influence over the dissemination of information about crisis events. If our selective portrayal of history can change respondents’ beliefs and opinions, then an authoritarian government’s control of the media is also likely to be able to influence beliefs and opinions.

One issue with the real-history design is that the respondent’s knowledge about the actual historical events could crowd out our selective representation of them, thus attenuating all effects to zero. This is both a downside and a strength of the method. If respondents have a clear understanding of historical events, then our selective portrayal is unlikely to change their opinions, but nor would a similar²⁷ intervention in the real world. On the other hand, if our manipulation does affect opinion, then so would a similar or stronger manipulation in the real world. Thus, it will be harder for our design to observe effects, but those that we do observe are also likely to be producible by political agents with influence over the media. At the cost of a higher rate of Type II errors (failure to reject a false null hypothesis), our design in part estimates a more policy relevant causal estimand: the effects of the selective portrayal of international events.

Attenuation due to knowledge about actual events should be greatest for those who are most informed about actual events. Accordingly, we expect attenuation bias to be greatest for those who are most educated and informed. Other studies²⁸ have found, however, stronger effects for educated, informed respondents, possibly reflecting their greater understanding of and concern about international relations. Accordingly, we will investigate whether effects are weaker (or stronger) for educated and informed respondents.

To summarize, real-history survey experiments have disadvantages and advantages. Their disadvantages are that they are constrained to recent events and effects will be attenuated by knowledge of events. Their advantages are that they are more likely to yield externally valid inferences because they invoke situations closer to the respondents’ experiences, and they are especially appropriate for studying the effects of selective portrayal of events, since that is precisely what our design does. Accordingly, this design is appealing for studying public opinion in authoritarian regimes, where elite cues and selective portrayal of events could be important policy instruments.

²⁷A similar intervention would be a single selective presentation of recent history, months or years after the events. Our design can not estimate the effects of a systematic media campaign.

²⁸The October 2005 draft of Tomz, “[Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach](#)” reports that educated respondents exhibited much stronger audience costs.

3.2 Treatment Conditions

After asking for informed consent, our survey presents respondents with a selective portrayal of recent events surrounding Chinese and US activities in the East China Sea, in particular regarding China's declaration of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ).

We have six different versions of the vignette, each of which is used to evaluate some of the above hypotheses. These are denoted as **C**, **P**, **PA**, **PAB**, **PABE**, **PABBi**. We summarize them below.

- **C**: Control Baseline: no historical vignette. The respondent reads:

As you may know, China and the U.S. do not agree about the appropriate rules for air transit in the East China Sea. We will ask you some questions about this topic, and your views of foreign affairs and domestic issues. We are grateful for you sharing your opinion.

- **P**: Provocation. This condition describes how the U.S. and Japan have been infringing on Chinese sovereignty. This condition is meant to offend national honor, but not generate thin audience costs.

C +

For decades, the United States has conducted military surveillance patrols along China's coastline. In 2001, a US military reconnaissance plane even collided with a Chinese fighter jet, killing Chinese pilot Wang Wei. In recent months, Japan has threatened to shoot down unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) entering its airspace, including China's Diaoyu Islands.

- **PA**: Provocation and ADIZ. This condition adds to the previous vignette mention of China's announcement of the ADIZ. This condition is meant to depict a statement of commitment, and thus generate thin audience costs.

P +

To safeguard Chinese sovereignty and airspace, on November 23, 2013, China established an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea, announcing that any foreign aircraft that fails to identify itself to Chinese authorities will be subject to defensive emergency measures.

- **PAB**: Provocation, ADIZ, back-down. This condition adds information about how China has failed to defend its ADIZ, and that observers perceive this as backing down.

PA +

The US has refused to comply with China's ADIZ, even sending two B-52 bombers through the ADIZ without informing Beijing. A Pentagon spokesman said: 'We have conducted operations in the area of the Senkakus. We have continued to follow our normal procedures, which include

not filing flight plans, not radioing ahead and not registering our frequencies.’

Many commentators have noted China’s failure to enforce the new ADIZ. *China Newsweek (Zhongguo Xinwen Zhoukan)* reported that ‘China took no countermeasures and made no contact’ [raising] doubts over China’s capability to enforce its first ever ADIZ.’ ‘If the Chinese military doesn’t do anything about aircraft that don’t obey’ it will face international ridicule,’ wrote historian Ni Fangliu, who has more than two million followers on QQ. The People’s Liberation Army Daily warned that without strong enforcement the ADIZ is just an “armchair strategy”.

- **PABE:** Provocation, ADIZ, back-down, economic costs emphasized. This condition adds an elite cue endorsing China’s back-down, as well as an explanation about the substantial economic costs that would follow from conflict.

PAB +

The Chinese government has explained that using force in the East China Sea would be too costly. According to General Liu Yuan, Political Commissar of the PLA’s General Logistics Department: ‘War is a terrible thing. No matter who is the enemy, any war will bring great shock to Chinese society, risking severe damage to national economy’. Since we have enjoyed peace for quite a long time, many young people do not know what a war is like, it is actually very cruel and costly. If there is any alternative way to solve the problem, there is no need to resort to the means of extreme violence for a solution.

- **PABBi:** Provocation, ADIZ, back-down, biding time logic. This condition adds an elite cue endorsing China’s back-down, as well as an explanation about the long-term strategic benefits to avoiding conflict in the present.

PAB +

The Chinese government has explained that China should not risk war in the East China Sea until China is more powerful. According to General Liu Yuan, Political Commissar of the PLA’s General Logistics Department: ‘China must avoid being drawn into an ‘inadvertent’ war’. The United States and Japan are afraid of us catching up and will use all means to check China’s development, but we absolutely must not take their bait.’

3.3 Questions

We then ask the respondents a series of questions about their opinions. We summarize the questions here. The full text can be found in Appendix A. The letters in parentheses are used to denote each question.

3.3.1 Approval

Our first question is meant to measure whether the respondent approves of the government, in the policy domain closest to our real-history vignette: the East China Sea.

(as) **Regarding the security situation in the East China Sea, how do you feel about the government's performance?**²⁹

We also ask two other similar approval questions (later in the survey):

(ao) **When reflecting in general about China's current situation, how do you feel about the government's performance?**

(ag) **Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in our country today?**

3.3.2 Absolute Resolve

Our next question(s) are meant to measure their absolute resolve, which is defined as how willing they are for China to use force to win the issue in dispute. We consider several possible versions of this question.

(ra1) **We will now ask you some questions about what you think China should do regarding the East China Sea. Please answer carefully.**

Which policy do you prefer? [Respondents are given all pair-wise comparisons of the following four options, in random order. They always have an option to say they prefer the options equally.]

- 01 China **should not** publicly insist on its sovereign rights in the East China Sea.
- 02 China **should** publicly insist on its sovereign rights in the East China Sea, but not use force.
- 03 China should use force to maintain its sovereign rights in the East China Sea, but not if it risks leading to war with Japan or the US.

²⁹Answer options are usually based on a five point likert scale, such as:

- 01 Strongly disapprove
- 02 Disapprove
- 03 Neither approve nor disapprove
- 04 Approve
- 05 Strongly approve

- 04 China should use force to maintain its sovereign rights in the East China Sea, even if it risks leading to war with Japan or the US.

(ra2) **We will now ask you some questions about what you think China should do regarding the East China Sea. Please answer carefully.**

Which policy do you prefer? [Respondents are given all pair-wise comparisons of the following four options, in random order. They always have an option to say they prefer the options equally.]

- 01 China should reduce military patrols in the East China Sea.
- 02 China should increase military patrols in the East China Sea.
- 03 China should increase military patrols and use force to repel foreign patrols/activities in the East China Sea, but not if it risks leading to war with Japan or the US.
- 04 China should increase military patrols and use force to repel foreign patrols/activities in the East China Sea, even if it risks leading to war with Japan or the US.

(ra3) If China uses force it risks getting into a war with the US. **What is the maximum probability of war with the US that you think China should risk in order to defend its claims in the East China Sea?** [Options range from 0% to 100%.]

3.3.3 Economic Priority and Assessment

We ask two questions about the priority of economic issues, and their assessment of the state of the economy.

(ep) **Regarding government spending, which do you think should be given higher priority, the military and national defense or domestic economic and social development?**

(ae) **How would you rate the overall economic condition of our country today?**

3.3.4 Placebos

We also asked several *placebo* questions which are meant to see whether our manipulations are changing respondent beliefs and opinions in unintended ways. Specifically we measure respondents' beliefs about military capabilities, and the legal strength and international legitimacy of China's claims. These questions are also interesting in themselves.

(pc) In your assessment, for a conflict arising in the East China Sea, how militarily powerful is China compared with the U.S.?

(plv) If the East China Sea dispute were arbitrated by a UN legal body, do you think that the outcome would be a victory, compromise, or loss for China?

(pla) To resolve the East China Sea dispute, would you support China raising the issue for UN legal arbitration?

Finally, we ask several other questions. See Section A.

4 Tests of our Hypotheses

Recall from Section 2 that we have several hypotheses we wish to evaluate. This section will return to these hypotheses, and state the precise way that we intend to evaluate them using our design. Recall that our treatment conditions are:

- **C**: baseline.
- **P**: provocation.
- **PA**: provocation and ADIZ statement of commitment
- **PAB**: provocation, ADIZ, and back down.
- **PABE**: provocation, ADIZ, back down, and explanation of economic costs of conflict.
- **PABBi**: provocation, ADIZ, back down, and explanation of strategic benefits of delaying a challenge to the US.

4.1 Testing Rally Effects

Our first hypothesis concerns whether there is a reflexive rally of support for the government, induced by conflict with or perception of threat from another country.

$H_{\mathbf{R}}$ (Rally): *Events that increase the perception of external threat will trigger reflexive support for the leader and government.*

We will test $H_{\mathbf{R}}$ by looking to see if approval of the government's policies increases after respondents read about the foreign provocations compared to the control baseline, since the description of the provocations should increase perception of external threat. We also expect that approval will increase after the provocation and ADIZ announcement, compared to just a provocation, because the ADIZ announcement puts China escalates the dispute with the

US and should escalate the perception of external threat. $as(X)$ denotes the mean approval to the question about security policy in the East China Sea, for treatment condition X ; $ao(X)$ similarly denotes the mean level of approval of the government “when reflecting in general about China’s current situation”.

$$T_{R1} : as(P) > as(C); \quad ao(P) > ao(C)$$

$$T_{R2} : as(PA) > as(P); \quad ao(PA) > ao(P)^{30,31}$$

4.2 Testing Diversionary Effects

Our second set of hypotheses concerns whether governments can use military actions to distract the public from domestic economic issues, and if so whether it persists even after the government has backed down in the dispute. We first consider the outcome-independent version of diversionary effects.

H_{ID} (Outcome-Independent Diversion): *Events that increase the perception of external threat, including escalatory actions or statements by one’s government, will lead respondents to focus more on national security and less on domestic economic issues.*

$ep(X)$ denotes the mean response to the priority of the economy (over the military). Diversionary theory is especially persuasive if tough government actions lead to increased approval of the economy (ae) and the state of things more generally (ag).

$$T_{ID1} : ep(PA) < ep(P); \quad ae(PA) > ae(P); \quad ag(PA) > ag(P)$$

We also test for diversionary effects induced by foreign provocations. While new foreign provocations may not always be available, governments may draw public attention to prior and ongoing foreign actions and insults to divert attention from current domestic problems.

$$T_{ID2} : ep(P) < ep(C); \quad ae(P) > ae(C); \quad ag(P) > ag(C)$$

It may be the case that diversionary effects persist even after the government backs down, as the outcome-independent hypothesis states. Or it may be that after backing down, diversionary effects evaporate.

H_{DD} (Outcome-Dependent Diversion): *Diversionary effects are not present if the government appears to concede defeat.*

³⁰ T_{R2} is also consistent with hawkish preferences, see 4.6.

³¹More generally, if the rally effect is dominant then approval should increase in all conditions above P :

$$H_{TR3}. \quad as(PAB), as(PABE), as(PABBi) > as(PA) > as(C)$$

We propose the following test to discriminate between H_{ID} and H_{DD} .

$$\begin{aligned} T_{\text{ID3}} : & \quad ep(PAB) < ep(P); \quad ae(PAB) > ae(P); \quad ag(PAB) > ag(P) \\ T_{\text{DD}} : & \quad ep(PAB) \geq ep(P); \quad ae(PAB) \leq ae(P); \quad ag(PAB) \leq ag(P) \end{aligned}$$

4.3 Testing Thin Audience Costs

H_{TA} (Thin Audience Costs): *Statements of commitment to stand firm (a) increase public resolve and (b) increase disapproval of a leader who backs down.*

We interpret our ADIZ vignettes as involving a statement of commitment. We interpret P as the “stay out” condition, since the government faces a certain foreign policy situation and it does not do anything about it. Resolve should thus increase with the ADIZ declaration.

$$T_{\text{TA1}} : \quad ra(PA) > ra(P); \quad ra(PAB) > ra(P)$$

We interpret PAB as involving a statement of commitment, followed by backing down. We can then evaluate thin audience costs using a comparison that is common in the literature of looking at the approval of threatening and backing down, versus just backing down.

$$T_{\text{TA2}} : \quad as(PAB) < as(P); \quad ao(PAB) < as(P)$$

4.4 Testing Thick Audience Costs

H_{TH} (Thick Audience Costs): *Actions that engage national honor—such as uses of force, being the target of force, public insults, and statements of commitments—will (a) increase public resolve and (b) increase disapproval of a leader who backs down.*

The theory of thick audience costs agrees with the theory of thin audience costs that statements of commitment will increase resolve and decrease approval from backing down. However, thick audience costs also anticipate an increase in resolve and a decrease in approval from backing down after other honor-engaging events, such as foreign provocations. Therefore:

$$T_{\text{TH1}} : \quad ra(P) > ra(C); \quad ra(PA) > ra(C); \quad ra(PAB) > ra(C)$$

Since we interpret P and PAB as involving backing down, both of which occur after an event that engages honor, approval should go down in both of those, relative to C

$$T_{\text{TH2}} : \quad as(P) < as(C); \quad ao(P) < ao(C);^{32} \quad as(PAB) < as(C); \quad ao(PAB) < ao(C)^{33}$$

As the previous two footnotes make clear, the predictions for thick audience costs about approval are also consistent with hawkish preferences. Hawkish preferences either need to be ruled out separately, or the evaluation of thick audience costs should emphasize H_{TH1} .

³²The two previous predictions are also consistent with hawkish preferences.

³³These last two predictions could also be consistent with hawkish preferences, if PAB is perceived as more dovish behavior than C .

4.5 Testing Elite Cues, Economic Costs, and Biding-Time

Lastly, we evaluate our hypotheses about Elite Cues, and specifically the effects of economic arguments and a biding-time argument.

H_C (Elite Cues): *Statements by members of the elite, and especially members of the government, that backing down is a good policy will (a) decrease public resolve and (b) increase support for a leader who backs down.*

H_E (Economic Costs): *An increase in the perceived economic costs of conflict will reduce resolve, and increase support for a leader who backs down.*

H_B (Biding Time): *An increase in the perceived military advantageousness of delaying a major conflict to the future will increase support for a leader who backs down in the present.*

We test the specific arguments by looking to see if resolve decreases, and approval for backing down increases:

$$T_E : \quad ra(PABE) < ra(PAB); \quad as(PABE) > as(PAB)$$

$$T_B : \quad ra(PABBi) < ra(PAB); \quad as(PABBi) > as(PAB)$$

If both sets of predictions are confirmed, then we find evidence consistent with Elite Cues being important: $T_C : T_E$ and T_B

4.6 Alternative Explanations: Hawkish Preferences

For each of the above tests it is important to consider alternative explanations that make similar predictions. The finding of evidence consistent with any of the above predictions is more informative of the specific theory to the extent that it is the only plausible theory that makes those predictions.

The most important alternative explanation that we can think of is that Chinese respondents have generally hawkish preferences. This is an important alternative explanation because it makes similar predictions to some of the above predictions. We interpret hawkish preferences as leading respondents to disapprove more of the government in vignettes that depict them as behaving without resolve, such as P and PAB , as compared with their adjacent vignettes.

$$T_{HP} : \quad as(PAB) < as(PA); \quad ao(PAB) < ao(PA);$$

$$as(P) < as(PA); \quad ao(P) < as(PA); \quad as(P) < as(C); \quad ao(P) < as(C)$$

We can also evaluate this by looking at the absolute level of resolve across all conditions. The higher the score on ra , the more hawkish are Chinese respondents. We interpret an average or median response above 3 (above “China should use force to maintain its sovereign rights in the East China Sea, but not if it risks leading to war with Japan or the US.”) as hawkish.

4.7 Pre-Analysis Plan

This document also serves as a pre-analysis plan for our project. The purpose of a pre-analysis plan is to document our analysis plan *ex ante* to collecting the data so that readers can interpret our results transparently, and specifically without concern that we may only be reporting a subset of the analyses that we ran. This document focused on our intended comparisons, being specific about specification when possible. If we find interesting results not anticipated by this document, we will use appropriate language to clarify that these are *exploratory* findings, and not confirmatory tests of *ex ante* hypotheses. It is not practical to be fully explicit about every test and inference that we would draw;³⁴ accordingly we specify to the extent that is practical our main outcome measures, which ones are primary and secondary, the composition of our main comparisons, the direction of our predictions, and the subgroups we will analyze for heterogeneous effects.³⁵

4.7.1 Number of Respondents

We plan to collect between 1500 and 3000 respondents, spread equally across all conditions. We would like to have 0.8 power for detecting reasonable effect sizes for each of our predictions. Appendix 5.10 reports our power analysis, using our pilot data to estimate the standard deviation of the outcomes. For example, for 1500 respondents we would have $n = 500$ (since $1500/6 * 2 = 500$) for any comparison; we could then detect, with 0.8 power, effects of size 0.25 for *as* and *ao* (on a five point likert scale), 0.2 for *rr* (four point likert scale), and 0.13 for *ep* (a dichotomous outcome). We believe it is reasonable to expect that the predictions we are testing should involve effects of at least those sizes.

We will consider expanding our sample if some of our comparisons are almost significant. An example decision rule is as follows. If some *p*-values on important comparisons are below 0.3, but above 0.05, then we may³⁶ expand the sample so as to have power of 0.8 on these comparisons (using the observed difference as the hypothesized effect size). The power analysis and final *p*-values will be adjusted to account for this flexible *n*.

4.7.2 Data Cleaning

We will drop respondents who we suspect of not paying attention. We plan to diagnose inattention through several strategies.

Transitive Preferences. First, we exploit a feature of our measure of absolute resolve. Our measure of absolute resolve (*ra*) will involve asking respondents six pairwise comparison about their policy preferences over four policy options. One of the most primitive axioms of reasonable preference relations is that agents should have transitive preference relations, since if they don't they will be inconsistent and can be exploited through a series of cyclical offers. However, if a respondent is not paying close attention they will be more likely to

³⁴Rachel Glennerster and Kudzai Takavarasha. *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide*. Princeton University Press, 2013, §8.3.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 381.

³⁶If it is not prohibitively expensive.

answer incorrectly or randomly. This can be detected by looking for intransitive preference relations.

Duration. We will consider dropping respondents who complete the survey too quickly, for example in less than 3 minutes. A short duration is a sign that respondents were not reading carefully. We will evaluate whether short duration is a problem by looking to see if it is associated with an increase in intransitive preferences and an increase in order effects.³⁷

Other Questions. We will also ask questions about age, gender, and location, which we can double check with COMR provided data. Respondents that don't match will be investigated and probably dropped.

4.7.3 Test Statistics

Our final analysis will use randomization inference for calculating p -values. We will typically use difference in means, though we will use rank-based tests for outcome variables with skewed distributions. All estimates and tests will be reported unconditionally, and conditional on pre-treatment covariates for efficiency gains. For the purposes of any given test, the null is that the effect is zero or opposite signed.

4.7.4 Interpretation of Ambiguous and Null Results

We make multiple predictions for each theory. It is likely that some of these predictions will be supported by the data, and others not. In interpreting our results we will offer our assessment of the weight of evidence for each theory. In particular, certain predictions may end up being underpowered or otherwise not usable. This could arise if the question is poorly phrased, if the question comes too late in the survey (at which point the respondents are not paying careful attention), or if there are other explanations that we haven't considered that render them uninformative. A failure to reject a particular null tells us that either our design did not have adequate power to test this prediction, or that the prediction is false. To separate these two implications, when possible we will examine whether the confidence interval excludes values that we think are reasonable for the theory in question.

4.7.5 Heterogeneous Effects

- To the extent that we find evidence for them, we expect that the predictions of Reflexive Rally, Diversionary Effects, Thin and Thick Audience Costs, and Hawkish Preferences will be stronger for young (less than 25) males.
- We will investigate whether the above effects vary with education, foreign policy knowledge, and income (in a monotonic way).

³⁷Order effects are the effect of the order in which the answer options are presented to the respondent. Order effects are expected to be more severe to the extent that respondents are answering superficially or quickly.

- We will investigate whether Hawkish Preferences are stronger for those who don't have exposure to foreign countries (haven't lived or studied overseas; have no relatives studying or living overseas).

4.7.6 Placebo Tests

Experimental manipulation of scenarios often change more than just the intended beliefs. We measure whether this is taking place through three placebo tests: *pc* (capabilities), *plv* (legal victory), and *pla* (support for legal arbitration). We will see if there is any association between our manipulations and these placebos. If there is, we will then theorize about how such associations could confound our inferences.

5 Analysis of 140704 Wave

5.1 Survey Design

The 140704 wave (so named because it was administered on July 4th, 2014) was similar to our proposed study, detailed in Appendix A. We began with $n = 517$ respondents. After dropping respondents who finished in less than 3 minutes we had $n = 503$.

We had the following treatment groups: *C*, *P*, *PA*, *PAB1*, *PAB*, *PABEx*. These are similar to the treatment conditions we outlined above, with the following differences: *PAB1* is a weaker version of *PAB*. *PABEx* is *PAB* plus an empty explanation from the Chinese government.³⁸ With *PABEx* we wanted to test whether a mere cue from the government, with little informational content, was sufficient to shift public opinion.

In this wave we did not ask a question about absolute resolve. We did ask about relative resolve (see Figure 3).³⁹ However, we later realized that this measure is not ideal since it is a function of the respondent's absolute resolve (their underlying support for using force in this context) and the level of force used in the scenario.

5.2 Results

We plot below the responses for our main questions:

³⁸**The Chinese government has explained its decision not to intercept or use force against the US B-52 planes.** Chinese Ministry of Defense Spokesman Geng Yansheng stated: "The East China Sea ADIZ is a zone of safety, not risks, a zone of cooperation, not competition. China unswervingly adheres to the road of peaceful development and a defensive national defense policy."

³⁹**Regarding foreign military activities in the East China Sea, do you think that China should be**

- 01 Much more forceful
- 02 More forceful
- 03 Neither more nor less forceful
- 04 Less forceful
- 05 Much less forceful

- “Regarding the East China Sea ADIZ, do you approve of the Chinese government’s performance?”
- “Regarding foreign military activities in the East China Sea, do you think that China should be [more or less forceful]?”
- “How do you feel about China’s policy toward the United States?”
- “How do you feel about China’s policy toward Japan?”
- “In general, do you approve of China’s handling of foreign affairs?”
- “Regarding government spending, which do you think should be given higher priority, the military and national defense or domestic economic and social development?”

In these plots, the red rectangles are the 95% two-sided confidence intervals, with the middle line the mean value. The density is also plotted, as well as the (jittered) individual observations. The main thing to look for is whether the 95% CIs are close or far from each other, for any particular comparison.

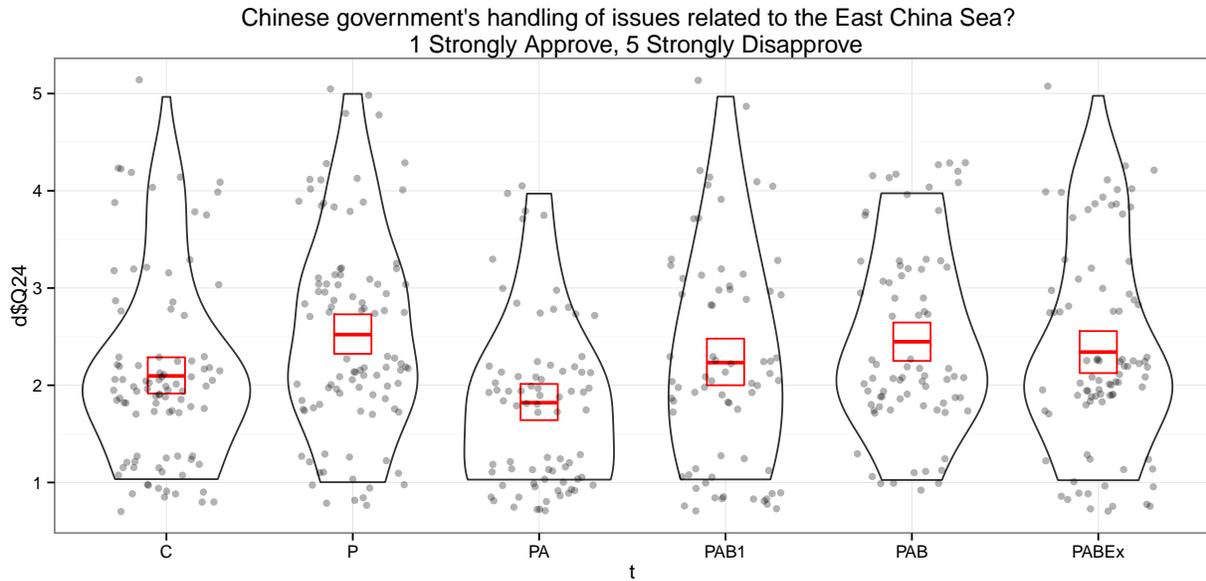


Figure 1

For the purposes of our analysis here, we interpret the relative resolve question in the same way that we intend to interpret the absolute resolve (*as*) questions.

In general, do you approve of China's handling of foreign affairs?

1 Strongly approve, 5 Strongly disapprove

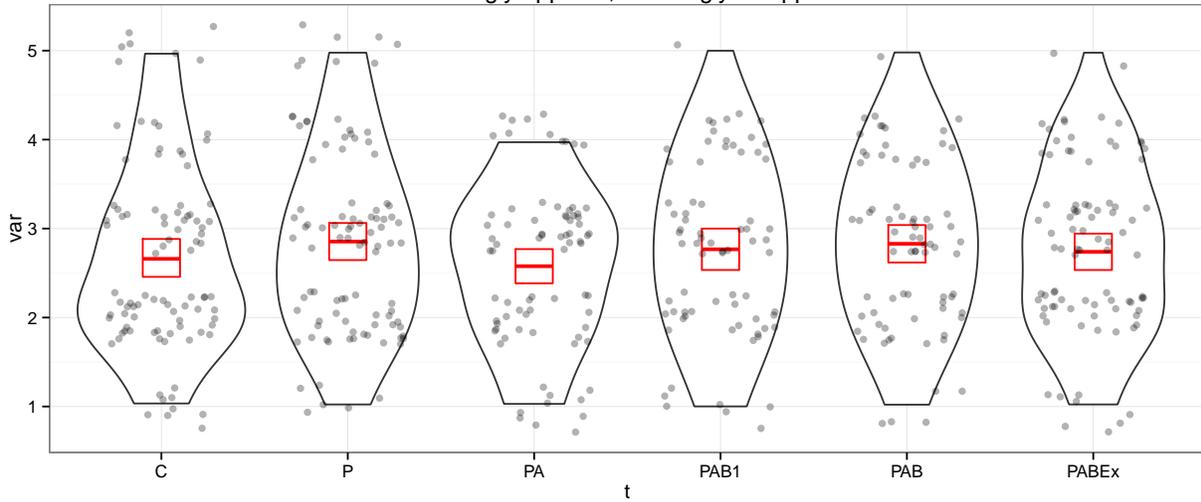


Figure 2

Going forward, do you think that Chinese policy in the East China Sea should be
1 More Forceful, 5 Less Forceful

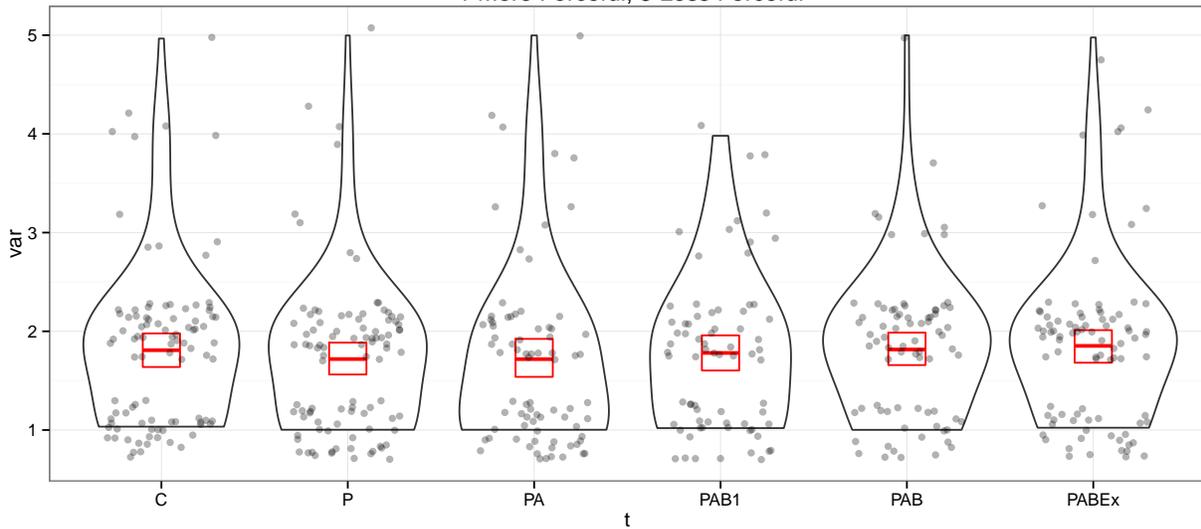


Figure 3

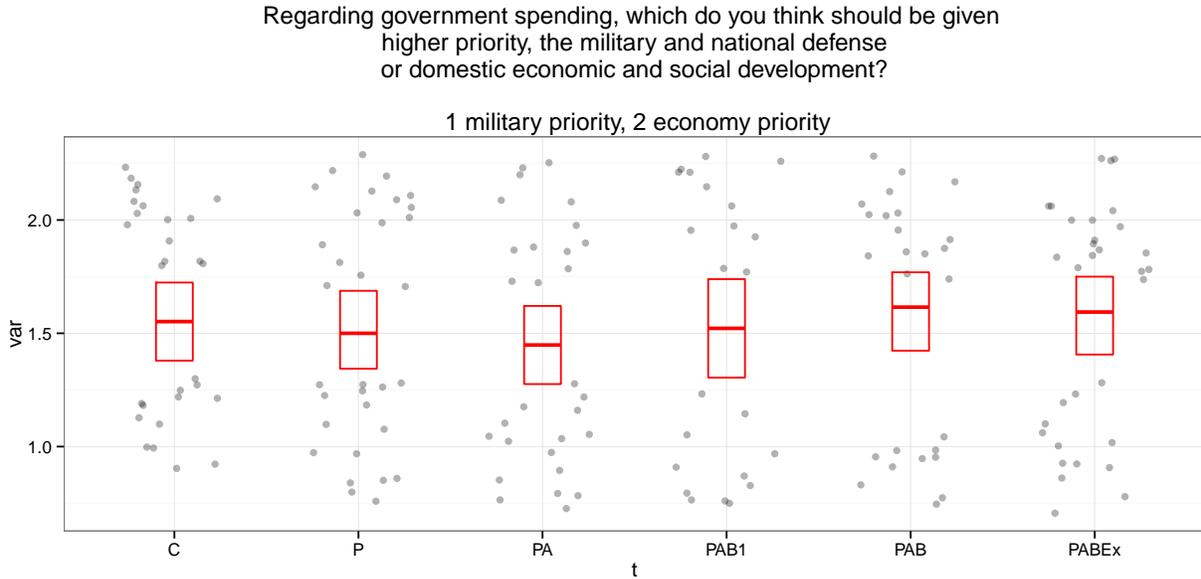


Figure 4

5.3 Underpowered Study

While we did see some significant results for our first question about approval of issues related to the East China Sea, for most of the other questions the different treatment groups had similar distributions. We believe this reflects the low power of this design. First, we think the COMR respondents are not especially attentive, at least compared with MTURK respondents who have over 95% HIT rate and are given incentives for careful reading. To address this, in the next wave we will try to build incentives into our survey with COMR. If COMR permits it, we will double the pay for the half of the respondents who are most attentive.

Second, the n was relatively small for six treatment conditions. In the next wave we are dropping *PAB1* and *PABEx*, though we are adding *PABE* and *PABBi*. We also intend to have a much larger n .

Third, we have changed our vignettes so that our summary of each paragraph stands out more. The first sentence will now be in bold, and set apart from the remainder of the paragraph.

Fourth, we will probably break up our main question about absolute resolve into six separate questions. This should make it easier for the respondents to answer all aspects of this question, and will increase the attention they devote to it. We will also use this question format to build in checks of whether their answers are transitive. Failures of transitivity can be used to screen away inattentive respondents and as the basis for rewarding attentive respondents.

Fifth, we will randomize the order the answers, so that part of the time the least common

answers are first. This can help to get more variation in the answers. It will also allow us to test for order effects.

5.4 Reflexive Rally

Our interpretation of reflexive rally led to the following predictions.

$$T_{\mathbf{R1}} : as(P) > as(C); \quad ao(P) > ao(C)$$

$$T_{\mathbf{R2}} : as(PA) > as(P); \quad ao(PA) > ao(P)^{40}$$

Our results contradict $T_{\mathbf{R1}}$ and are consistent with $T_{\mathbf{R2}}$. Since $T_{\mathbf{R2}}$ are also consistent with hawkish preferences, we interpret the total evidence here as against the presence of a powerful Reflexive Rally effect.

5.5 Diversionary

Diversionary theory predicts that the military should become more of a priority, relative to the economy, and general approval increase, following tough government action (PA vs C)

$$T_{\mathbf{D1}} : ep(PA) < ep(P); \quad ae(PA) > ae(P); \quad ag(PA) > ag(P)$$

and following foreign provocations

$$T_{\mathbf{D2}} : ep(P) < ep(C); \quad ae(P) > ae(C); \quad ag(P) > ag(C)$$

Looking at figure 4 we don't see much of an effect on the priority of the economy vs military. This is likely due to low power. To the extent that we observe an effect it is in the predicted direction (a decrease). Similarly, the answers to ae and ag were largely the same across conditions, again probably due to low power.

5.6 Thin Audience Costs

Thin audience costs predict that the public will approve less of leaders who make statements of commitment and then back down, compared to if they just backed down to begin with.

$$T_{\mathbf{TA2}} : as(PAB) < as(P); \quad ao(PAB) < ao(P)$$

Looking at figure 1, we see evidence contrary this. Approval is about the same or higher in $PAB1$ and PAB than in P , before the statement of commitment was made. Thus, in this case, the Chinese government would not have paid costs in public approval for making the ADIZ commitment and failing to follow through. This result is consistent with hawkish preferences and thick audience costs.

⁴⁰ $T_{\mathbf{R2}}$ is also consistent with hawkish preferences, see 4.6.

We are not able to infer much from our test $T_{\text{TA1}} : ra(PA) > ra(P); ra(PAB) > ra(P)$ because our measure of relative resolve did not change across conditions.

$$T_{\text{TH2}} : as(P) < as(C); ao(P) < ao(C);^{41} as(PAB) < as(C); ao(PAB) < ao(C)^{42}$$

Figure 1 reveals relatively strong support for these predictions, and figure 2 reveals weak support. To the extent that this pilot data yields any informative results, it is in support of this prediction: the P condition significantly reduced public approval compared to C . However, note that these predictions are also consistent with hawkish preferences.

5.7 Thick Audience Costs

Thick audience costs predict that the public will approve less of leaders who engage the national honor and then back down, compared to if the leader just stayed out to begin with. To assess this we look to see if approval is lower after a provocation and implied backing down (P), than staying out (C). To the extent that our data yields any significant results, it is this: the P condition significantly reduced public approval compared to C .

5.8 Elite Cues

Do Chinese respondents follow elite cues, even when the elite message provides little information? If so, we expect the Chinese public to approve more of backing down after being given the elite cue $PABEx$, compared to PAB . Looking at figure 1 we see a slight (not significant) increase in approval, weakly consistent with this prediction.

5.9 Summary

In summary, the 140704 Wave was sufficiently underpowered that we cannot infer much. We did find relatively significant support for the predictions about public approval made by the explanations of Thick Audience Costs and Hawkish Preferences. Our measure of absolute resolve in the next wave will be used to evaluate Thick Audience Costs independently of Hawkish Preferences. We found evidence against Reflexive Rally. We found weak insignificant evidence of Elite Cues. Our evidence was uninformative about Diversionary Effects. The greater power of our next wave (from larger n , and the revised design) should provide more evidence about Elite Cues and Diversionary Effects.

5.10 Power Analysis for Next Wave

We use the results from our pilot to perform a power analysis for the next wave. To simplify, we assume that the unconditional standard deviation of the outcome is approximately equal

⁴¹The two previous predictions are also consistent with hawkish preferences.

⁴²These last two predictions could also be consistent with hawkish preferences, if PAB is perceived as more dovish behavior than C .

to the conditional standard deviation of the outcome in our next wave. This estimate is conservative because the conditional standard deviation should be smaller. We do this for our measures of *ao*, *as*, *ep* and *rr*. The results are plotted below. Note that the x-axis, *n*, refers to the total number of respondents in the two conditions that are being compared (assuming there is the same number in each). So for a total number of respondents of $N = 1500$, with 6 treatment conditions, there will be 250 respondents per condition, so $n = 500$.

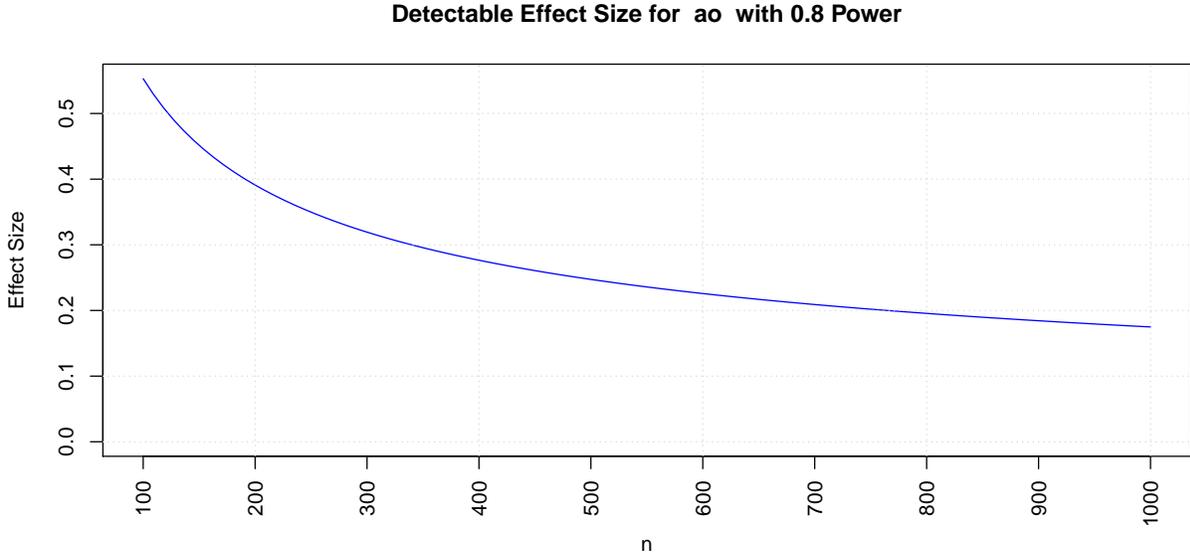


Figure 5

Detectable Effect Size for σ_s with 0.8 Power

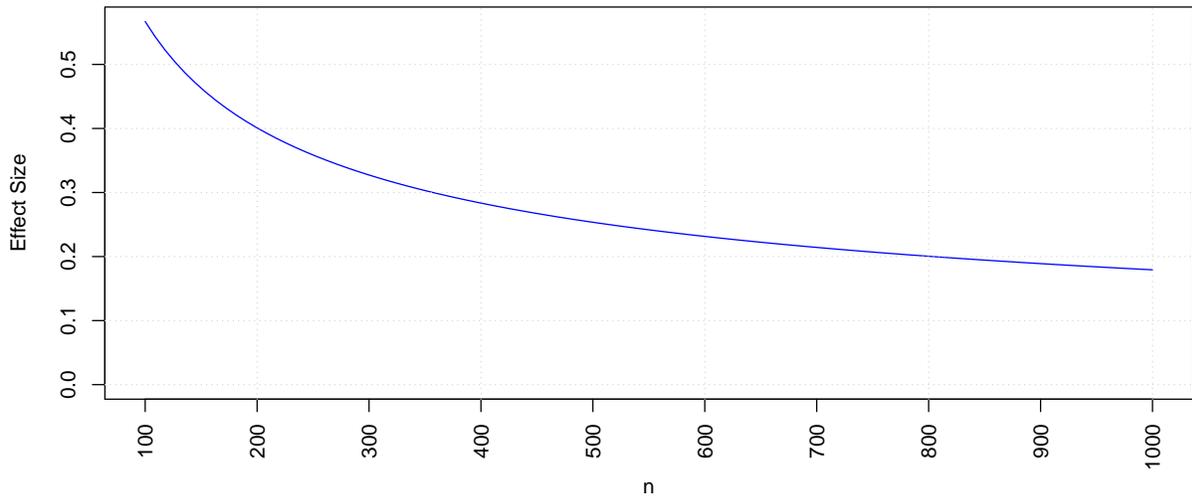


Figure 6

Detectable Effect Size for ϵ_p with 0.8 Power

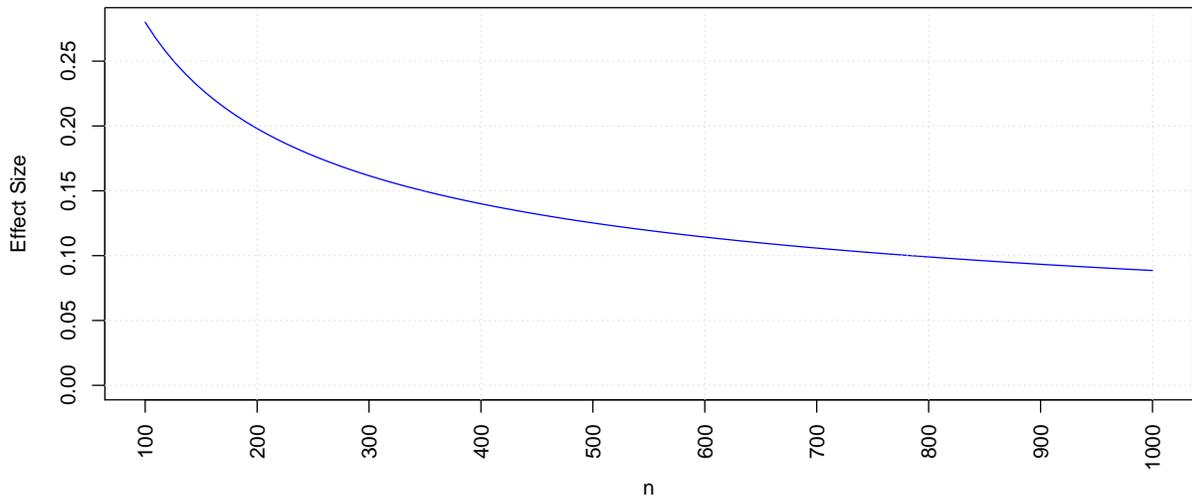


Figure 7

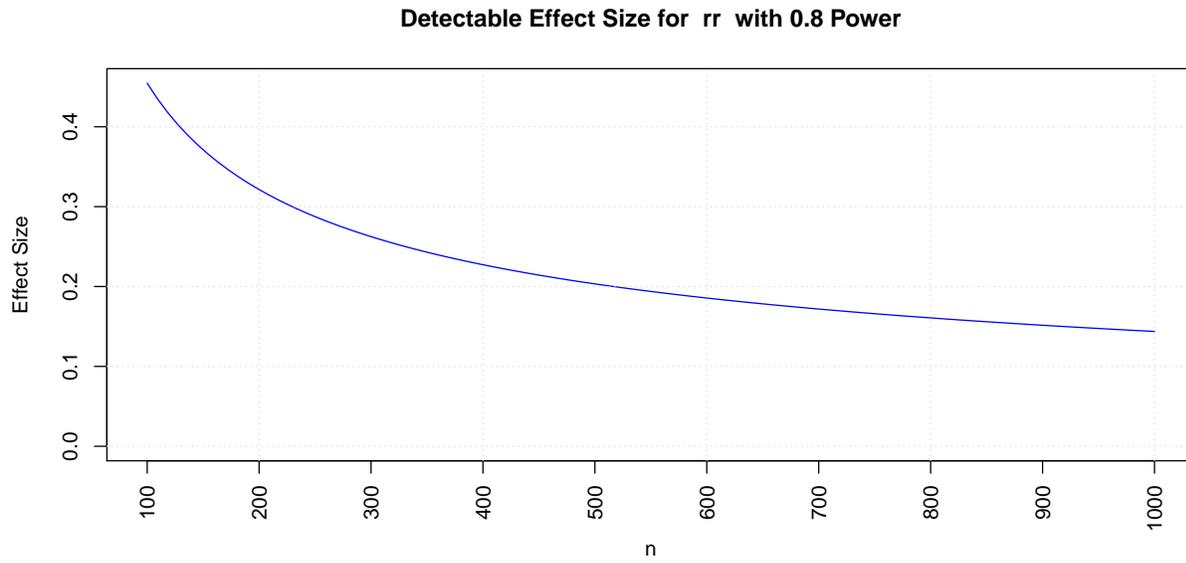


Figure 8

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A English Translation of the Survey

This survey is about your views of foreign affairs and domestic issues. We will ask you some questions about these topics. This survey is part of an academic research project administered by China Online Marketing Research company. The results of this survey will be used for academic purposes only.

If you agree to participate, you will read a short description of a historical event, and then answer several questions about your opinion. This survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes. If you complete the survey, you will receive a payment of 6 yuan. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate or to end participation at any time for any reason.

Your individual responses will be kept confidential and will not be seen by anyone outside of our research team. Your personal identity will never be linked to your survey responses, so please answer as honestly as you can. There are no known risks associated with this study. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the investigators at: adk423@gmail.com

- I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study.
- I do not agree to participate.

(C) Control Baseline:

As you may know, China and the U.S. do not agree about the appropriate rules for air transit in the East China Sea. We will ask you some questions about this topic, and your views of foreign affairs and domestic issues. We are grateful for you sharing your opinion.

(P) Treatment Group 0 (provocation):

C +

For decades, the United States has conducted military surveillance patrols along China's coastline. In 2001, a US military reconnaissance plane even collided with a Chinese fighter jet, killing Chinese pilot Wang Wei. In recent months, Japan has threatened to shoot down unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) entering its airspace, including China's Diaoyu Islands.

(PA) Treatment Group 1 (provocation, ADIZ announcement):

P +

To safeguard Chinese sovereignty and airspace, on November 23, 2013 China established an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea, announcing that any foreign aircraft that fails to identify itself to Chinese authorities will be subject to defensive emergency measures.

(PAB) Treatment Group 2 (provocation, ADIZ announcement, US defiance):

PA+

The US has refused to comply with China's ADIZ, even sending two B-52 bombers through the ADIZ without informing Beijing. A Pentagon spokesman said: "We have conducted operations in the area of the Senkakus. We have continued to follow our normal procedures, which include not filing flight plans, not radioing ahead and not registering our frequencies."

Many commentators have noted China's failure to enforce the new ADIZ. China *Newsweek* (*Zhongguo Xinwen Zhoukan*) reported that "China took no countermeasures and made no contact... [raising] doubts over China's capability to enforce its first ever ADIZ."¹ "If the Chinese military doesn't do anything about aircraft that don't obey ... it will face international ridicule," wrote historian Ni Fangliu, who has more than two million followers on QQ.² The *People's Liberation Army Daily* warned that without strong enforcement the ADIZ is just an "armchair strategy" (*zhi shang tan bing* 纸上谈兵).³

(PABE) Treatment Group 3 (provocation, ADIZ announcement, US defiance, PRC economic justification):

PAB+

¹ Li Jia, "Up in the air," *NewsChina*, February 2014, <http://www.newschinamag.com/magazine/up-in-the-air>.

² Austin Ramzy, "U.S. B-52 flight prompts indignant reaction in China," *New York Times*, November 26, 2013, http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/26/u-s-b-52-flight-prompts-indignant-reaction-in-china/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=1.

³ 钧保言, "究竟谁在制造危险?" *Jiefangjun Bao*, November 27, 2013, http://www.chinamil.com.cn/jfjbmap/content/2013-11/27/content_59160.htm.

The Chinese government has explained that using force in the East China Sea would be too costly. According to General Liu Yuan, Political Commissar of the PLA's General Logistics Department: "War is a terrible thing. No matter who is the enemy, any war will bring great shock to Chinese society, risking severe damage to national economy... Since we have enjoyed peace for quite a long time, many young people do not know what a war is like, it is actually very cruel and costly. If there is any alternative way to solve the problem, there is no need to resort to the means of extreme violence for a solution."⁴

(PABBi) Treatment Group 4: (provocation, ADIZ announcement, US defiance, PRC biding time justification):

PAB +

The Chinese government has explained that China should not risk war in the East China Sea until China is more powerful. According to General Liu Yuan, Political Commissar of the PLA's General Logistics Department: "China must avoid being drawn into an 'inadvertent' war... The United States and Japan are afraid of us catching up and will use all means to check China's development, but we absolutely must not take their bait."⁵

Questions to follow vignettes [for all treatment groups and control]

(as) Regarding the security situation in the East China Sea, how do you feel about the government's performance?

- 01 Strongly disapprove
- 02 Disapprove
- 03 Neither approve nor disapprove
- 04 Approve
- 05 Strongly approve

(ra) We will now ask you some questions about what you think China should do regarding the East China Sea. Please answer carefully.

Which policy do you prefer? [Respondents are given all pair-wise comparisons of the following four options, in random order. They always have an option to say they prefer the options equally.]

- 01 China **should not** publicly insist on its sovereign rights in the East China Sea.
- 02 China **should** publicly insist on its sovereign rights in the East China Sea, but not use force.
- 03 China should use force to maintain its sovereign rights in the East China Sea, but not if it risks

⁴ Global Times, January 16, 2013, <http://opinion.huanqiu.com/editorial/2013-01/3494346.html>; English version: <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/756065.shtml>; <https://southseaconversations.wordpress.com/2013/02/18/radar-incident-observes-beijings-conciliatory-tu-rn-toward-japan/>

⁵ *Global Times*, February 4, 2013 (Chinese), http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion_world/2013-02/3614115.html

leading to war with Japan or the US.

04 China should use force to maintain its sovereign rights in the East China Sea, even if it risks leading to war with Japan or the US.

(rr) Regarding foreign military activities in the East China Sea, do you think that China should be

01 Much less forceful

02 Less forceful

03 Neither more nor less forceful

04 More forceful

05 Much more forceful

(pc) In your assessment, for a conflict arising in the East China Sea, how militarily powerful is China compared with the U.S.?

01 Much weaker than the U.S.

02 Somewhat weaker than the U.S.

03 About equally powerful as the U.S.

04 Somewhat more powerful than the U.S.

05 Much more powerful than the U.S.

(ao) When reflecting in general about China's current situation, how do you feel about the government's performance?

01 Strongly disapprove

02 Disapprove

03 Neither approve nor disapprove

04 Approve

05 Strongly approve

(ag) Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in our country today?⁶

01 Very dissatisfied

02 Dissatisfied

03 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

04 Satisfied

05 Very satisfied

(ep) Regarding government spending, which do you think should be given higher priority, the military and national defense or domestic economic and social development?

01 The military and national defense should be given higher priority

02 The economy and social development should be given higher priority

(ae) How would you rate the overall economic condition of our country today? Is it:⁷

⁶ This question taken from Pew Global Attitudes Project,
<http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/3/country/45/>

⁷ This question taken from the Asian Barometer:
<http://www.asianbarometer.org/newenglish/surveys/ABS3CoreQuestionnaire.pdf>

- 01 Very bad
- 02 Bad
- 03 So so (not good or bad)
- 04 Good
- 05 Very good

(plv) If the East China Sea dispute were arbitrated by a UN legal body, do you think that the outcome would be a victory, compromise, or loss for China?

- 01 total victory
- 02 partial victory
- 03 even compromise
- 04 partial loss
- 05 total loss

(pla) To resolve the East China Sea dispute, would you support China raising the issue for UN legal arbitration?

- 01 strongly support
- 02 support
- 03 neither support nor oppose
- 04 oppose
- 05 strongly oppose

How likely are you to comment on or share news online about China's handling of the East China Sea dispute?

- 01 Very likely
- 02 Likely
- 03 Unlikely
- 04 Very unlikely

If very likely or likely, how would you comment on or share news online? Choose all that apply:

- 01 Post on Weibo
- 02 Retweet someone else's post on Weibo
- 03 Post on Weixin
- 04 Share someone else's post on Weixin
- 05 Post on your blog
- 06 Post on a BBS forum

Please use your mouse to click on the location of the Diaoyu islands.

Please use your mouse to click on the location of the Parcel (Xisha) islands.

Please use your mouse to click on the location of the Scarborough Shoal (Huangyan Dao).

Some people think of themselves first as Chinese. Others may think of themselves first as

(region). Which, if any, of the follow best describes how you see yourself?⁸

- 01 Only (regional identity)
- 02 More (regional identity) than Chinese
- 03 As (regional identity) as Chinese
- 04 More Chinese than (regional identity)
- 05 Only Chinese
- 06 Other
- 07 None

On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the most negative and 10 being the most positive, how do you feel toward non-locals (*waidi ren*)?

On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the most negative and 10 being the most positive, how do you feel toward migrant workers (*nongmin gong*)?

On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the most negative and 10 being the most positive, how do you feel about reforming the hukou system to allow more individuals to live in your city ?

We would like you to consider a few problems that many countries face. On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 indicating this is not a problem at all in China and 10 indicating this is an extremely serious problem, how serious do you think these problems are in China today?⁹

- a. Ethnic minority issues [*xiaoshu minzu wenti*]¹⁰
- b. Economic development
- c. Environmental protection
- d. Unemployment and job security
- e. Social inequality
- f. National security and defense
- g. Public order [*shehui zhian*]
- h. Housing
- i. Taiwan issue
- j. Civil liberties and political democracy
- k. Rising prices
- l. Government corruption [*fu bai* or *tan wu*]¹¹
- m. Island disputes with neighboring countries¹²

Demographic Questions

d1. What is your gender?

⁸ This question taken from the China Survey at TAMU:
<http://thechinasurvey.tamu.edu/documents/questionnaire.pdf>

⁹ This question taken from the China Survey at TAMU:
<http://thechinasurvey.tamu.edu/documents/questionnaire.pdf>

¹⁰ This item not included in the China Survey; added by authors.

¹¹ This item not included in the China Survey; added by authors.

¹² This item not included in the China Survey; added by authors.

- <01> Male
- <02> Female

d2. In what province do you live?

- <01> Anhui
- <02> Beijing
- <03> Chongqing
- <04> Fujian
- <05> Gansu
- <06> Guangdong
- <07> Guangxi
- <08> Hainan
- <09> Hebei
- <10> Heilongjiang
- <11> Henan
- <12> Hong Kong
- <13> Hubei
- <14> Hunan
- <15> Inner Mongolia
- <16> Jiangsu
- <17> Jiangxi
- <18> Jilin
- <19> Liaoning
- <20> Ningxia
- <21> Qinghai
- <22> Shaanxi
- <23> Shandong
- <24> Shanghai
- <25> Shanxi
- <26> Sichuan
- <27> Taiwan
- <28> Tianjin
- <29> Tibet
- <30> Xinjiang
- <31> Yunnan
- <32> Zhejiang
- <99> No answer

d3. When were you born?

- _____ (continuous variable)
- <9999> No answer

d4. What is your ethnicity?

- <01> Han
- <02> Minority
- <99> No answer

d5. What type of household registration do you hold?

- <01> Agricultural
- <02> Non-agricultural
- <99> Other

d6. What is the highest level of education you have received?

- <01> No formal education
- <02> Elementary school
- <03> Middle school
- <04> High school
- <05> College
- <06> Masters
- <07> Doctoral

d7. Have you ever studied or lived overseas?

- <01> No
- <02> Yes, country: _____

d8. Do you have any relatives studying or living overseas?

- <01> No
- <02> Yes, country: _____

d9. What is your marital status now?

- <01> Married
- <02> Divorced
- <03> Separated
- <04> Widowed
- <05> Never married

d10. How many children do you have?

Girls ____
Boys ____

d11. What is your main occupation?

- <1> Farmer, animal husbandry, or fishery
- <2> Commerce, service trade worker
- <3> Self-owned business
- <4> Owner of a private-owned business
- <5> Laborer/Worker
- <6> Employee of government agency, party agency, or social organization
- <7> Manager
- <8> Serviceman or police officer
- <9> Professional/technical
- <10> Clerk
- <11> Student
- <77> Other
- <99> No answer

d12. What was the range of your household income last year?

- <1> Less than 10,000 RMB
- <2> 10,000-100,000 RMB
- <3> 100,000-200,000 RMB
- <4> 200,000-300,000 RMB
- <5> 300,000-500,000 RMB
- <6> 500,000-1,000,000 RMB
- <7> Greater than 1,000,000 RMB
- <99> No answer

d13. Do you now belong or have you belonged to the Communist Party?

- <1> Belong now
- <2> Not now, but have belonged in the past
- <3> Have never belonged
- <99> No answer

d14. In a typical week, how many hours do you personally watch television?

- <98> Refused
- <99> Do not know

d15. In a typical day, how many hours do you use the internet?

- <98> Refused
- <99> Do not know

d16. On a scale from 0 (not interested at all) to 10 (very interested), how interested are you in the

following kinds of news?

- a. local _____
- b. provincial _____
- c. national/China _____
- d. international _____

d17. Over the past seven days, how many days did you receive political information from each of the following sources?

- a. Domestic internet _____
- b. International internet _____
- c. Local TV news _____
- d. National TV news _____
- e. Local radio news broadcasts _____
- f. National radio news broadcasts _____
- g. City newspapers _____
- h. Provincial newspapers _____
- i. National newspapers _____
- j. Little papers (xiaobao) _____
- k. Printed magazines _____

d18. Over the past seven days, how many days did you participate in an online discussion by any of the following methods?

- a Blogs _____
- b Bulletin board services (BBS) _____
- c QQ (instant messaging) _____
- d Weibo _____
- e Weixin _____
- f Renren _____
- g Other: _____

CONCLUSION

Thank you for participating in our study. All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Please contact adk423@gmail.com with any questions or comments.

References used to develop the vignettes and questions:

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