WORKING WITH WHAT THEY HAVE:

THE INSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF DIVERSIONARY

ACTION

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation broadens the diversionary theory of war to account for both lower-levels of foreign conflict and the breadth of possible diversionary actions for authoritarian regimes. First, I present a theory of diversionary choice that argues a particular regime-types available institutions and necessary centers of political power are going to be the main determinant in choosing a potential diversionary action. I posit that the more institutionalized a regime is, the severity of a chosen diversion will be inversely correlated with said institutional strength and complexity. As authoritarian regimes are not automatically prone to pursue the archetypical "rally-round-the-flag" effect due to the lessened influence of the broader population on governing stability and continuity, chosen diversions will make most use of extant institutions in order to enhance or preserve the critical segments of political power. Greater institutionalization allows for the exploitation and manipulation of smaller diversions to derive political benefits, while weaker institutions require a direct-effects approach or more grand and engaging spectacles.

I then produce a framework of commonly accepted nondemocratic regime-types classified along institutional lines. Single-party regimes with their compartmentalized and bureaucratic nature are considered the most institutionally complex. Military Juntas represent a moderately institutionalized regime with robust institutions supporting the armed forces, but weak

institutions in the civilian sector. Personalist regimes represent the least-institutionalized regimes, with the centralization of power around a single individual causing the decay and weakening of autonomous institutions.

I then test my theory qualitatively with three rigorous case studies, two of which are historical, one of which is ongoing at the time of this dissertation. I analyze the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis and the tenure of Mao Zedong for personalist regimes, whereupon repeated failures of social engineering and widespread discreditation of Stalinism served to weaken Mao personal prestige, necessitating a violent diversion to compensate for the institutional malaise resulting from Mao's weakness. I then look at the invasion of the Falklands by Leopoldo Galtieri as an attempt to reaffirm the status and continued relevance of the military even in light of worsening economic conditions and a potential return to civilian rule. My final case study focuses on the ongoing ownership dispute between China and Japan over the Senkaku islands. The current institutional complexity and strength of China allows for the aggrandizement of even small-scale diplomatic disputes and the extraction of political benefits.

Acknowledgement and Dedication

Rutgers was good to me. Being from New York, it will always pain me that I spent so much time living in New Jersey, but my friends, colleagues and professors made the experience much more tolerable. I will always be indebted to my teachers and their valuable classes, and my various office-mates, whom served as a necessary source of both comic relief and advice. I am particularly indebted to my committee members, Jack Levy, Andrey Tomashevskiy, Eric Davis and Avery Goldstein. Generally, I thank them all for tolerating my various idiosyncrasies and work patterns, alternating between complete silence for many months, to constant email barrages. Avery served as an extremely valuable (and much-needed) source of China-centric knowledge and an insightful check on what I thought I knew. Andrey always made sure I was on the cutting-edge of research methods, data collection and stylistic prose. It also helped that his office was right next to mine. I have to thank Eric for sticking with this dissertation, even after I cut out the case for which I specifically asked him to be on it, but his presence firmly established the value of a pair of outside eyes. I have to thank Jack most of all, and for several reasons. First off, for accepting that I was never fully domesticated in, or comfortable with the various political machinations of academia as a distinct "world." I'm rough around the edges, and he took it in stride. Secondly, for consistently pushing me towards building a better theory, exploring alternate literatures and serving as a constant (and timely!) source of constructivism criticism. Given my academic focus, I couldn't have asked for a better dissertation advisor.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

My study focuses on the diversionary behavior of authoritarian regimes due to the lack of attention that has traditionally been paid to nondemocratic regimes. Authoritarian regimes exhibit high variance in their governance, priorities and audience size. Similarly, variations in external strife are also myriad. Democratic regimes have dominated the diversionary field due to the ease of access in terms of polling data (facilitating and encouraging the growth of statistical analysis), transparency of their regimes and the outdated idea that diversions (most often understood as war) are the property of rich and powerful states – frequently democracies. The black box of authoritarian regimes is opening slowly, but not at a rate that would help us decipher puzzling international moves due to the misunderstood nature of their governance in a manner similar to democracies.

The question of why different authoritarian regimes may pursue differing international strategies to potentially increase political security and utility draws attention to a simple global trend; interstate war is becoming increasingly rare in this day and age, and hallowed datasets count only several dozen instances of such within their ranks. In order to provide for an adequate sample size, actions short of war (ASW) are included within statistical analysis to ensure tested models work properly. This misspecification

of the dependent variable, and the continued focus on a narrow definition of "diversion"

contributes to a gap between theory and empirical support as diversionary theory remains

largely a theory of war, and not a theory of conflict or foreign policy. War and violent

conflict may be best suited for certain regimes, but not all authoritarian states can be

expected to pursue violent conflict and expect to walk away from it better off, or at the

very least, relatively intact.

For the purposes of this study, I consider actions short of war as lower-level

actions which include saber-rattling, diplomatic protest, bellicose remarks and political

engagement. The military can be used in such capacity as a signaling or legitimizing tool

for threats, but so long as military forces are not used to directly secure some political or

strategic goal, a diversionary action should be considered to have occurred at a "lower

level." In a hypothetical sense, military forces could be used to close a border or seize a

shipping lane in a bloodless manner, but the military has thus superseded assuring

legitimacy to threats or intimidation and served as an integral part of said goals.

However, using military equipment or personnel explicitly in a violent capacity to

achieve a goal ala-Clausewitz should be considered the use of force. A classificatory

schema of diversions is necessary due to the nigh-dogmatic split between warfare and

non-warfare as often utilized in the Correlates of War database (Jones, Bremer, Singer

1996). Any violence involving conventional armed forces, that results in 1,000 combat

related fatalities (over a period of twelve months) is considered true warfare.[1] Significant

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[1] Meredith Reid Sarkees, "The COW Typology of War: Defining and Categorizing Wars (Version 4 of the Data)," *The Correlates of War Project*, Available at: https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/COW-war/the-cow-typology-of-war-defining-and-categorizing-wars/@@download/file/COW%20Website%20-%20Typology%20of%20war.pdf

casualties can occur and not be classified as war, which is potentially problematic for quantitative studies reliant on theory.

Due to the discipline-wide shift from qualitative testing to statistical analysis, our understanding of when states are more likely to divert has perhaps grown, but why certain states act the way they do remains a mystery – especially in nondemocratic regimes. Diversions are thus measured in propensity to engage in foreign conflicts as measured in the aggregate number of initiated disputes. What is lost is here is why a particular action was appropriate for a given state or a true analysis of whether the action is diversionary, or merely coincided with negative domestic conditions. Why were certain actions chosen and how do states hope to benefit from them? Without a mechanistic explanation for the vast majority of proposed diversionary cases, we are deprived of the ability to explain based on regime composition why a certain irrational action may have been pursued, or why violence may have been the most appropriate action at a given point in time. Due to this I intend to rely on the process tracing method using historical case studies once commonly found in diversionary theory in order to flesh out proposed causal linkages between the operational capacity, political emphases and composition of different authoritarian regimes, and the chosen type of diversionary action.[2] The end result will hopefully be a convincing bridge between proposed diversionary actions and regime perpetuation strategies.

While the diversionary theory of war has a storied history, tracing its origins to early sociological work over sixty years earlier, ideas surrounding the actual mechanism

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[2] David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44, 4 (2011): 823-824.

through which diversionary theory is said to operate appears in various works from centuries prior. Initial work on the "in-group, out-group hypothesis" did not focus on nation-states or large-scale warfare per se, the logical consistency and theoretical appeal prompted an early cooption by the international relations community with mixed to conflicting results. Regardless, the internal mechanisms across both fields remained the same – war with an opposing, alien group relative to the chosen in-group appeared to have the effect of fostering cohesion, and on the international scale, increasing support for the domestic regime.

I break from the traditional (and somewhat outdated definition) of diversion and propose my own. I consider a diversion as utilizing an instance of violence or political tension by using or threatening force or diplomatic retribution in an attempt to bolster or maintain governing utility or political security. A definition such as this moves us away from the static conception of distracting the populace, while also ensuring that states who may not be able to engage in violent or diplomatic conflict on a whim can still derive political utility from actions commensurate with their regime. The hallmark of a diversion is then attempting to extract some benefit from a dispute, not the dispute itself. Distraction may still be attempted, but unless political power is bolstered or enhanced, the attempt may still be in vain. Previous attempts at defining diversions still seem slanted towards electoral democracies, with the implicit assumption that the audience can automatically punish the leader due to worsening conditions, and a show of force can adequately distract or rally them to the leader's side. However, as I will argue, the audiences and means of diverting are as variable as the regimes that pursue them, and so an expanded definition is necessary to keep pace with the current level of scholarship.

To this end, my theory advances a didactic framework of sorts regarding authoritarian diversions. The first of course is that the prime goal of any regime continues to persist within my work: leaders and regimes wish to maintain or enhance their political position and power. Second, threats to these regimes can, and do occur, with each regime type fearing most a different, yet damaging threat. Third, is that preferred international strategies for dealing with threats to political power exist for certain types of regimes, and this strategy is influenced by the political processes of a given type of authoritarianism and their modicum of maintaining control. Fourth, is that alternate modes of diversion do exist, but considerations about potential political fallout, necessary resources and operational capability (which varies cross regime-type) further reinforces authoritarian preferences towards a given type of diversion – i.e., other diversions may yield lesser results, but those with the greatest benefits are most worth pursuing. This does not discount the two classic mechanisms through which diverting states derive support (plunder or the rally effect) but rather introduces new aspects of regime perpetuation, while specifying the preferred way to institutionally achieve diversionary benefits.

I choose to study a case of each widely accepted authoritarian regime-type. For personalist regimes I choose the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1958. Mao Zedong, with this cult of personality and perceived omniscience during his tenure as paramount leader of the Chinese Communist party serve as a model for personalist rule and the effect of unfettered executive power on the state apparatus. For military Juntas I analyze the seizure of the Falkland Islands by Leopoldo Galtieri, then leader of Argentina. I choose Argentina due to its multi-generation experience with coups, thus providing concretized

parameters for military rule and also to deflate the widely-held belief that war was the endgame for Galtieri. Finally, I choose the Senkaku Islands dispute between the period of 2010-2012 for single-party regimes. This represents one of the most recent escalations of the ongoing dispute, it also represents a period of time wherein China can confidently be described as a purely single-party based regime. I elaborate on this claim later. Additionally, the CCP of today represents a maximal case for the institutional precepts I briefly describe above.

The dissertation will advance as follows. First, I broadly survey both the diversionary theory and comparative authoritarian literatures. This is necessary in that although a lack of consistency is a hallmark of the former, my ambition to create a bridge between the two literatures requires a sufficiently defined space between them. I then outline my theoretical framework surrounding the three most commonly accepted authoritarian regime types, outlining either institutional strength or weakness, and explaining the diversion most conducive to each regime-type. After a brief discussion on both case selection and my proposed research method, I utilize three case studies, one for each regime type in an attempt to illustrate empirically not only the institutional makeup of each authoritarian regime in action, but how the given diversionary type is best suited to benefit each regime.

My end goal is twofold: to empirically flesh-out what alternate types of diversions "look like," and bring into focus the role institutional composition plays in both selecting the appropriate course of action, and the manipulation of external tensions for maximum benefit and political security. To do so opens up the black box of authoritarian regimes a bit more in a literature dominated by democracies, and forges analytic bridges between

the diversionary, comparative authoritarian and institutional constraints literatures. We often draw upon work in each field in regards to diversionary theory, but without mechanistic explanations that used to be the hallmark of the subfield, we are left devoid of full and satisfying answers.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature:

Borrowing Instead of Bridging

Historical Foundations

The idea that politicians or influential elites battling internal socioeconomic unrest or domestic political weakness may be motivated to use the resources at their disposal to engage in hostile foreign actions to divert attention away from internal ills predates International Relations as a contemporary field of study. William Shakespeare, in writing *King Henry IV* famously proclaimed, "Be it thy course to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels; that action, hence borne out, may waste the memory of former days."[3] Alternately termed the "scapegoat hypothesis" or the "conflict-cohesion hypothesis," the diversionary theory of war traces its modern roots out of works of early the sociologists Georg Simmel and Lewis Coser.[4]

Although originally applied to the societal-level groups and conflict between such, theoretical and logical consistency ensured a timely cooption by the International Relations Community. At its base level, the in-group/out-group hypothesis posits that

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[3] William Shakespeare, "King Henry IV, Act 4," in *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, (London: Chiswick, 1823).

[4] Georg Simmel, *Conflict* (Glencoe: Free 1955). Lewis A. Coser, *The Function of Social Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1956).

group A (originally conceptualized as a tribal-level or near-societal group) will react with increased solidarity and the closing-of-ranks while engaged in an external conflict with group B. Though an empirical picture of the rally effect from early sociological studies is somewhat unclear, such an effect has been termed the "rally-round-flag effect," wherein an incumbent political leader enjoys an increase in public support while engaged in an external conflict with an opposing nation. [5]

The initial hypothesis enjoyed a large degree of scholarly support with Simmel famously claiming: "war with the outside is sometimes the last chance for a state ridden with inner antagonisms to overcome these antagonisms or else break up definitely."[6] This was even likened to a general law by some scholars, with one contending "it appears to be a general law that human groups react to external pressure by increased coherence" and thus, "statesmen may be driven to a policy of foreign conflict—if not open war—in order to defend themselves against the onslaught of domestic enemies."[7]

However, theoretical consistency is not tantamount to theoretical validity, and early studies of the scapegoat hypothesis based on the international system were inconclusive. Further dampening progress on the development of the diversionary theory of war was the scholarly preoccupation with neorealism and the systemic determinants of foreign policy actions during the duration of the Cold War.[8]

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[5] John E. Mueller, "Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson." *American Political Science Review* 64 (1970): 18-34. See also John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).

[6] Simmel, *Conflict.*

[7] Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1959): 17.

[8] Kanat B. Kilic, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Authoritarian States: The Use of Multiple Diversionary Strategies by Saddam Hussein During the Gulf War." *Journal of Strategic Security* 7.1 (2014): 17.

The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union rekindled academic interest in possible domestic-level drivers of external foreign policy, with some scholars affording domestic drivers of conflict the traditional level of respect long-given to the structural catalysts of international relations. One of the most formative punches thrown at the long-dominant neorealist explanation of foreign conflict came from Ostrom and Job's path-breaking work. According to their research, domestic factors played a powerful causal role in assessing the willingness of the American president to use force relative to international factors. Among the first to link the creation of external crisis to specific state-level variables, the authors hypothesized that when that when their "Misery Index" increased (the summation of both unemployment and inflation, multiplied by the number of citizens who express economic problems as foremost), the propensity to use force will be greater. This implied attention to domestic perceptions of "misery" and that the approval of the citizenry stood in direct opposition to the systemic determinants of foreign conflict which garnered the largest amount of scholarly attention.[9] Inadvertently, Ostrom and Job spearheaded not only the revitalization of the diversionary theory of war, but a fixation on the use of force by American presidents.[10] A focus on the American executive was not without its merits. As a superpower, the United States has had ample resources as well as global opportunities to engage in foreign actions all across the world.

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[9] Charles W. Ostrom and Brian L. Job, "The President and the Political use of Force." *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 02 (1986): 541-566.

[10] For additional studies analyzing the proposed link between domestic factors and the presidential use of force, see Karl DeRouen, "The Indirect Link: Politics, The Economy and the Use of Force." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39 (1995): 671-695. Karl DeRouen Jr. and Jeffrey Peake, "The Dynamics of Diversion: The Domestic Implications of Presidential Use of Force," *International Interactions* 28, 2 (2002): 191-211.

Continued work on diversionary theory was heavily biased towards democratic

regimes due to both regime transparency and ease-of-access in regards to data collection.

The eventual study of authoritarian diversions was helped in part by Levy and Vakili and

their study of the Falklands/Malvinas war.[11] Taking a qualitative approach, they argued

that Galtieri was motivated by internal strife within his ruling party to attempt to seize the

Falklands/Malvinas islands by force from the United Kingdom. In a test of the classic

scapegoat hypothesis, it was argued that Galtieri believed war with the powerful

European power would solidify his influence over key players in his regime, potentially

increasing his political utility and security, but more importantly, possibly unifying the

increasingly discordant Junta around a common cause and purpose.

The early popularity of works in the diversionary vein coupled with a great deal

of attention within the discipline allowed for an explosion of similar projects. However,

while work on the diversionary theory of war was plentiful, consistent findings and a

significant accumulation of knowledge was not and many contradictory or isolated

findings were the result. Mitchell and Prins for instance found rising inflation to be a

powerful catalyst, in a divergence from the early focus on domestic political weakness.

According to their research, the propensity to divert during times of inflationary crisis is

contingent on the presence of an enduring rival, while the relationship is weakened when

a rival is absent.[12] The importance of inflation remains as in Ostrom and Jobs' work, but

its significance is contingent on a politically accepted target. Jaroslav Tir has argued that

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[11] Jack S. Levy and Lily I. Vakili. "Diversionary Action by Authoritarian Regimes: Argentina in the Falklands/Malvinas Case." In *The Internationalization of Communal Strife* ed. Manus Midlarsky (London, Routledge, 1992): 118-146.
[12] Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and Brandon C. Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 48, no. 6 (2004): 937-961.

the lack of consistent evidence within the literature is a result of lacking a concrete

mechanism through which the public's attention is drawn to a diversionary action. Using

territorial disputes as his dependent variable, Tir argues that adverse economic conditions

have a lesser effect on the propensity to engage externally, while government

unpopularity serves as a significant catalyst.[13]

Further complicating consistency, Jessica Weeks has argued that governmental

unpopularity and economic uncertainty may not have the powerful causal effect on

diversionary behavior that has long been supposed. Certain types of autocratic regimes

do not face powerful domestic audiences, and so the classic diversionary impetus is less

compelling in the analysis of personalistic dictatorships.[14] Such disjointed results echoes

the laments of one scholar nearly three decades ag when he stated "seldom has so much

common sense in theory found so little support in practice."[15] The inability to link

diversionary theory to other relevant literatures from which scholars so often draw

information has contributed to a self-perpetuating loop of quantitative retesting or

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[13] Jaroslav Tir, "Territorial Diversion: Diversionary Theory of War and Territorial Conflict," *The Journal of Politics* 72, no. 02 (2010): 413-425.

[14] Jessica LP Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace.* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2014).

[15] Patrick James, "Conflict and Cohesion: A Review of the Literature and Recommendations for Future Research." *Cooperation and Conflict* 22, no. 1 (1987): 21-33. Additionally, for the duration of its status as a research program, many excellent literature reviews have been conducted on the subject, though most have focused on either a particular aspect of diversionary theory or the literature in isolation, wherein I intend to relate diversionary theory more broadly to the field of IR as a whole via forging bridges *between* relevant sister-literatures. For recent overviews of the literature as a whole, see: John Oneal and Jaroslav Tir, "Does the Diversionary Use of Force Threaten the Democratic Peace?" *International Studies Quarterly* 50, 4 (2006), Kilic Bugra Kanat, "Leadership Style and Diversionary Theory of Foreign Policy: The Use of Diversionary Strategies by Middle Eastern Leaders During and in the Immediate Aftermath of the Gulf War," *Diss,* Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University (2011): 16-38, available at: https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1103&context=psc_etd, Additionally one may want to reference a bibliography of general overviews compiled by Sung Chul Jung for Oxford Bibliographies available at: https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0265.xml#obo-9780199743292-0265-div1-0002

engaging the same tired empirical claims rather than a commitment towards the

advancement of theory.[16]

The "In-Group," Past and Present

Diversionary theory posits that the one that benefits in the face of a conflict with

an external enemy is the domestic leadership of said state. However, these benefits

typically need to be understood as derived or "granted" by the in-group which responds

to an external enemy by exhibiting increased solidarity and overall cohesion, which then

theoretically results in increased support for the state. What early sociologists failed to

specify however is what the composition of the in-group looks like at the state-level or

how the group itself is constructed. In the classic sociological understanding of the

conflict-cohesion hypothesis, conflict is both considered the catalyst towards generating

group identity, and the metaphorical glue which maintains the boundary between "us"

and "them."[17]

Several challenges exist to this thesis however, the first of which is whether or not

conflict always has a galvanizing effect on internal cohesion. Simmel notes that conflict

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[16] Andrew J. Enterline, "Introduction to CMPS Special Issue: Diversionary Theory," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 27, 5 (2010): 411-412. This has long been derided as a roadblock towards the advancement of understanding linkages between internal conditions and external conflict. Stohl notes that due to our fixation on testing rather than theory formulation, the foundation by which we have built the literature has given us little more than disjointed bits and pieces of information which neither allow for knowledge accumulation or stepping stones for following scholars. See Michael Stohl, "The Nexus of Civil and International Conflict," in Ted Gurr ed., *Handbook of Political Conflict* (New York: The Free Press): 325.

[17] Coser, *The Function of Social Conflict:* 35-39.

may in fact exacerbate disparate tensions within the group, leading to disunity and ruin.[18]

This runs counter to the idea that conflict is what forms and consolidates the group

identity, at least as far as Coser's original conception is concerned. This is potentially

problematic - if the in-group, out-group hypothesis is to hold true, Coser contends that

there must be some existing level of cohesion within the group before conflict can be

considered socially functional, lest external conflict exacerbate various fault lines within

the group.[19]

The question then becomes, does the sociological conception of identity and its

mechanistic formation hold true within the context of the international system?

Continuous conflict meant to maintain the boundaries of the in-group and the out-group

could have far-reaching consequences, especially if the state in question is unable to

sustain prolonged conflict. Additionally, any increased political security or utility is

often contingent on the success of a diversionary action. Loss in the face of domestic

instability can be disastrous. War may allow for a large amount of publicity and a strong

rally effect if the diverting state emerges victorious, but a loss may galvanize the

pervading sentiment of negativity, thus enflaming a problem the state has already

identified as an area of concern.[20] A leader may be disinclined to engage in a potentially

disastrous war if they foresee severe punishment in the event of a loss. In democratic

regimes, the institutionalized ouster of deposed leaders may allow for a safe exit from

office (and relatively harmless punishment), but in autocracies and military juntas, a war-

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[18] Georg Simmel, "The Persistence of Social Groups," *American Journal of Sociology* no. 4, (1898): 662-698, 829-836.
[19] Coser, *The Function of Social Conflict: 93-95.*
[20] Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace:* 24.

mongering leader may face imprisonment, exile or even death.[21] However, all is not lost

in the face of defeat. Even in the face of loss, tough-talking can be used to mitigate

incurred damages.[22] Additionally, merely the act of standing up to a powerful enemy can

garner significant benefits, even in the event of a defeat in war, as was the case of Nasser

during the Suez Campaign of 1956, or Sadat after the Yom Kippur war of 1973.[23]

Because the sovereign nation-state is the typical unit of analysis in international

affairs, and the constituent populations within states can rarely be considered

homogenized or entirely unitary, how then do we ascribe identity to the varied groups

across all states? Such a question has been tackled by social identity theorists, as well as

those within the field of International Relations. The early preoccupation with

democratic regimes, beginning after Ostrom and Job's work may have served as an

impediment towards understanding rallying mechanisms across other regime types, as the

in-group within democratic regimes is often conceptualized as the constituency at large.[24]

In more varied or stratified societies, particularly authoritarian ones, identity and the

targeted audience can be a segment of the population. As such, diversions may need to

strike chords that preclude overt loyalty to the government by virtue. By this logic,

diversions must be tailor made for a given group along ethnic, economic or even religious

lines. Benito Mussolini is famous for harkening back to the days of the Roman Empire,

attempting to evoke feelings of pride in pre-WWII Italy, while Adolf Hitler's

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[21] Giacomo Chiozza and Hein Erich Goemans, *Leaders in International Conflict*, (Cambridge University Press, 2011): 5-14.
[22] Marc Trachtenberg, "Audience Costs: An Historical Analysis." *Security Studies* 21, no. 1 (2012): 39.
[23] Jerrold M. Post., "The Defining Moment of Saddam's Life," in Stanley A. Renshon ed., *The Political Psychology of the Gulf War*, (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press): 56-57.
[24] This too comes with its own inherent convenience. As the approval ratings of democratic leaders are typically polled from the general populace, it is often easier to associate the in-group within the general, data-generating constituency.

scapegoating of the Jewish population in Germany may be the most famous example of such a phenomenon. Complete support from the entirety of the population is unnecessary even in democratic regimes, and crafting effective diversions is an exercise in utility maximization.

Reliable approval ratings from transparent regimes precludes the study of the rally effect within authoritarian, opaque nations where information of regime behavior and support is lacking. Historically, most nations of the world have been considered less than democratic, and it would be unwise to simply consider diversions to be the property of democracies, and the domestically important groups found in authoritarian regimes must be analyzed as well.[25] Complicating matters however is the inherent diversity found within different authoritarian regimes, and the first task is often placing a regime into its most appropriate category.[26] Since each respective type of non-democracy has their own internal composition and unique governing mechanisms, clearly defining regime type allows use to generalize about both the integral groups within society, and who is to benefit from the external use of force. Given that different types of regime rely on different groups for support, demarcating authoritarian regimes along common themes would similarly allow us to generalize about their constituent groups.

Few would argue that no autocrat, no matter how capable, is able to effectively govern an entire country alone. Depending on regime type, the "winning-coalition," understood as the domestic group whose support is necessary for the autocrats continued

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[25] Jeffrey Pickering 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.
[26] This issue is revisited later.

political survival, varies in size.[27] Traditionally, such a group may be extremely large as is found in a single-party state, or a select group of influential sycophants or generals as to be found in a personalist regime or military junta. Whether or not the insiders or constituents believe in the core message of a regime is irrelevant, as their political fortunes are tied in with the state itself. Implicit in this variation are relational differences between autocrat and coalition. As such, the diversionary dynamic and "audience" is going to similarly vary – a point I visit later.

An archetypical diversion within the literature is any attempt by the leader or regime to distract the domestic populace long enough from its fixation on domestic woes to shore up political support, generate a rallying effect behind the leader, or replace the target of public dissatisfaction with an alternate target. In short, a diversion needs to be visible and vital enough to the national interest to warrant public attention.[28] The other line of argument within the diversionary literature states that a leader may attempt to engage an external target with the express intent of acquiring plunder through which to placate the population, though this argument is unclear as to whether or not this influx of resources is meant to merely bury the public's problems, or be used to fund a solution for their initial dissatisfaction.[29] However, once the variation in nondemocratic "in-groups" is taken into account, it becomes clear that there is no one-size-fits all diversion type for all regimes.

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[27] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson and Alastair Smith, *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).
[28] Tir, "Territorial Diversion:" 417.
[29] Levy and Vakili, "Diversionary Action:" 119.

Unfortunately, variation in diversion, is a largely unexplored realm within the literature. As far as regime type is concerned, the study of variation has been centered on a number of themes. Scholars commonly cite the overall propensity to engage externally under times of domestic duress,[30] the effect regime maturity has on the propensity to engage externally[31] or the preferences of the leaders of different regimes and substitutable actions in lieu of diversionary war.[32] However, there exists no theoretical or empirical explanation as to why certain regimes choose a specific types of diversion, why some externalizations of domestic strife are more violent or peaceful nor an explanation analyzing variations in the duration of diversionary actions. The picture is clearer as to *when* different regimes will choose to act, but fog continues to surround *why* different states divert the ways they do.

Diversionary Action: Classic Conceptions, Contemporary Cases

The diversionary theory of war has endured as just that for decades: a theory of war. The fixation on true warfare coincides with the logical consistency of the theory, in

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[30] Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950-1992," *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2006): 113-126. Pickering and Kisangani, "Diversionary Despots?"

[31] Jeffrey Pickering and Emizet F. Kisangani, "Democracy and Diversionary Military Intervention: Reassessing Regime Type and the Diversionary Hypothesis," *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2005): 23-43.

[32] Amy Oakes, *Diversionary War: The Link Between Domestic Unrest and International Conflict,* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

that wars are highly visible and potentially spark feelings of insecurity and solidarity.

Contrast this with the world of cases, and the current rate of theoretical advancement of

the subfield seems to lag behind the number of actual cases to a large degree. Simply

put, warfare is on the decline, with the largest among them, great power wars, having

been rendered extinct.[33] Though this cannot be said of all wars. Civil wars for instance

have occurred four times more frequently than traditional interstate wars between the

years of 1945-1997.[34] However, the study of civil wars within the diversionary literature

is rare at best, and there has not been much work done on the idea of either choosing

targets located within a nation, or the possibility or formulating other kinds of "domestic

diversions."

The fixation on true warfare as the prime diversionary method has its roots in the

focus of early studies. While data collection has advanced to a large degree since the

birth of diversionary theory, the ease-of-access regarding data and the theoretical

stagnation spurred scholars to focus their analyses on large, powerful countries.

Additionally, given the fact that wars are generally more consequential, the body of

academic work left in their wake it produced is also often correspondingly larger. For

this reason, the United States became, and remains to a lesser degree the most widely

analyzed state when attempting to analyze diversionary foreign policy. The logic is

sound: possessing the world's largest economy, the most powerful military and a network

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[33] Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1983). For more recent assessments regarding the decline in warfare, see John Mueller, "War Has Almost Ceased to Exist: An Assessment," *Political Science Quarterly* 124, 2 (2009): 297-321, Page Fortna, John Mearsheimer and Jack S. Levy, "Has Violence Declined in World Politics?" *Perspectives on Politics* 11, 2, (2013): 566-577 (Review Symposium).

[34] David T. Mason, "The Evolution of Theory on Civil War and Revolution," in *Handbook of War Studies III: The Intrastate Dimension* ed. Manus Midlarsky (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009): 63-99.

of overseas bases that cover the globe, the United States not only possesses the resource base which provides ample ability to fund any initiated conflicts, but its massive global presences and unparalleled ability to project power which may help to preempt diversionary behavior.[35]

A focus on materially advantaged states has had the dubious honor of creating a decades-long presumption that diversions are the express domain of rich and powerful states.[36] Wars are large, captivating and potentially engage huge segments of the wider population in one way or another. In short, they demand attention. If a state has the ability to finance large wars, then it can reasonably be assumed that they have more flexibility in choosing targets as well. Smaller states are often misrepresented as being unable to divert for a number of reasons; the most notable being lack of sufficient resources, geographic position and inability to project power. Additionally, weak states often need weaker targets. When war is accepted as *a* diversion but not the *only* diversion, various states can be considered capable of diversionary behavior as well, even if engaging in war is prohibitively expensive or unthinkable.

True wars are rarely completed in short order, and the ability to sustain a prolonged campaign is a very real consideration for any leader contemplating such a conflict.[37] Israel for instance, a "small" country based on both the size of its economy, population and territory possesses massive troop reserves. Such a large military allows for an initial offensive or defensive rush, but pulling so many citizens out of the civilian

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[35] Reliable polling numbers, offering a proxy measurement of successful "diverting" also helps.

[36] Benjamin O. Fordham, "Another Look at 'Parties, Voters and the Use of Force Abroad,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 46 (2002): 572-596.

[37] True war as defined by the Correlates of War database – I revisit this point in depth later.

economy for large periods of time risks grinding the overall economy to a halt, potentially exacerbating internal problems.[38] Such a restriction on resource extraction prevents long-term or long-range projections of power, curtailing potential warmongering. Projecting power is inextricably linked to geographic location as well. Smaller states which are unable to project power may find themselves surrounded by more powerful enemies which deter belligerent behavior, friendly states which do not present attractive targets or in the case of island nations, insurmountable isolation. Conducting war may thus be hampered on multiple fronts.

Material and spatial constraints on the ability to wage war speak little to diversionary catalysts however. There is no work in the literature that claims a domestic crisis of sufficient intensity and the resultant diversionary calculus (whether to fix the problem or divert) fails to operate in accordance with theory in smaller states – they are just unable to engage in the archetypical diversion of war. Smaller states are just as capable of engaging in external conflict when threatened on some level domestically, but these diversions are going to be similarly small. We have thus seen in recent years a rising chorus of scholars who argue that smaller states are afforded the same opportunity to engage externally as larger states. [39] While minor powers may not have the resource endowments to allow for protracted major wars, they are still able to engage in lower-level disputes with potential benefits.

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[38] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence: With a New Preface and Afterword*, (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2008): 68.

[39] See Pickering and Kisangani, "Democracy and Diversionary Military Intervention," 2005. In one of the first empirical tests of non-major powers and their proclivities to divert, the authors note that the leaders of major powers may have a greater capacity to divert, but leaders in minor powers may be more willing to gamble with their armed forces if the prospects for continued political survival are high.

The inclusion of lower level disputes, or other bellicose actions short of war is not a new phenomenon within the literature.[40] Since the universe of cases in terms of true warfare is quite small, in order to facilitate adequate testing, datasets utilized in the study of diversionary conflict are composed largely of alternative actions to war. However, this empirical application represents theoretical disconnect as theory remains fixated on true warfare despite multiple scholars advocating for concerted study of actions short of war.[41] Advocates for the inclusion of lower-level actions typically converge upon several advantages that are not afforded to wars, which, despite greater visibility, said advantages can make lower-level actions preferable over the former.

The Same old Rally Effect?

The traditional goal of a diversion is the rally effect mentioned earlier. There is no sense in engaging in a potentially disastrous war by choice if a leader cannot expect some increase in the domestic level of support from which they can tangibly derive some utility. While we are currently unable to measure the level of diversionary effect (or more colloquially the level of distraction, which has contributed to the outdated nature of

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[40] Actions short of War were not unknown to proto-diversionary theorists. Rummel notes for instance 13 different dimensions regarding international conflict (and 9 of domestic conflict) in his 1963 piece, wherein he found that an incongruence exists between variation in international strife and external conflict. See Rudolph Rummel, "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior Within and Between Nations," *General Systems* 8 (1963): 1-50.

[41] Jack S. Levy, "The Diversionary theory of War: A Critique," in *Handbook of War Studies* ed. Manus Midlarsky (London: Unwin-Hyman, 1989): 259-288, Clifton Morgan and Kenneth Bickers, "Domestic Discontent and the External Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, (1992): 25-52, Tir, "Territorial Diversion:" 417.

the term "diversion"), the rally effect has been used as an effective proxy in many

quantitative studies. Further cementing the primacy of democratic regimes and the

United States in general, pre and post-diversionary approval or polling numbers are an

easily accessible and reliable measure of the rally effect within democratic regimes.

While Mueller (1973) was the first scholar to systematically examine what would

later be called the rally effect, the breadth of testing regarding what may actually increase

or decrease the overall effect was commensurate with the lack of theoretical grounding to

work on. It is understandable that a researcher "fishing in uncharted waters" would cast a

wide net, and he identifies five potential rally-inducing events focusing on the American

Presidency; diplomatic strategies, radical technological developments, U.S. – Soviet

summits, major military developments and military interventions.[42] This list of potential

rally-causing events has not been able to stand up to significant testing, with many of the

proposed strategies producing little measurable results or being just as likely to cause the

executives approval rating to suffer losses.[43]

The abovementioned list of potential diversionary events, while exhaustive and

timely given the climate of the Cold War's various levels of strategic competition is

given little to no attention today. Internal events, as mentioned earlier, such as the

development of new technology and major military developments may potentially bolster

the standing of a leader, but these can hardly be said to be diversionary in nature insofar

as the term is understood within International Relations. This in turn has contributed to a

lack of attention towards alternate and less-violent strategies and caused the field to fixate

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[42] Mueller, *War, Presidents.*
[43] Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, "Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism, *PS: Political Science and Politics,* 36, 1, (January 2003): 37-42.

on war. However, as Mueller and scholars following in his footsteps have traditionally been unable to account for is the consistent variation in action across different regime types in a diversionary situation.

Regimes are different "across the board." Personalist dictatorships differ from monarchies, monarchies from military juntas, juntas from democracies and so on. In dealing with authoritarian regimes alone, the comparative authoritarian literature is a direct result of characteristic differences between regimes. Leaders are afforded different powers, states exhibit various operational configurations and capacity to generally operate and the goals of different regime-types (barring the retention of power) differ as well. How can we then expect various diversionary strategies to have the same effect, or even be preferable in equal measure to all regimes? The literature-wide idea of the scapegoat hypothesis that war with the out-group will foster internal cohesion amongst the in-group, rests on multiple assumptions: the audience is going to be the same across borders and regimes, war is easily accessible and given enough import by said audience, war is the preferable choice of action and the regime itself will be able to derive some sort of tangible benefit from the audience's reaction. Though this generalizability was originally a source of strength for the initial incarnations of the scapegoat hypothesis and its cooption by the International Relations community, unfortunately these broad assumptions have proven incapable of pushing the literature in new and interesting directions in recent years.

Divergent assumptions had already been alluded to in a number of studies. Levy and Vakili (noted earlier) stated their argument that the pursuit of Galtieri seizing the Falkland Islands during a short war was catalyzed by the desire of the Argentinian

President to create greater cohesion among his fellow Junta members - the target
audience was not the public at large. Jessica Weeks argues that most nondemocratic
leaders (without typologizing them) generally rely on the support of domestic elites, and
the various layers of insulation for the leaders of autocratic regimes increase the level of
separation between the general public and the leadership.[44] Additionally, if a divide
exists between the accessibility of the leadership and the public, information gaps are
liable to persist as well and evidence exists that more freely accessible information or
actions from a more credible leader will lead to a greater rally effect as opposed to the
reflexive and emotional responses found in pure scapegoat theory.[45]

Identifying the Gaps

While the popularity and overall attention to the diversionary theory of war has
waxed and waned, we appear to be in a current "upswing" of scholarly interest. The time
seems right to take stock of the current theory in an effort to draw not only new scholars
into the fold, but allow established academics to pursue dormant strands of inquiry with
renewed vigor. However, as the qualitative and quantitative divide within the
International Relations field continues to widen (despite efforts to bridge the gap), it
makes the most sense to reorient our focus on the theoretical approach to the domestic

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[44] Jessica L. Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve," *International Organization*, 62 (Winter 2008): 35-64.

[45] Matthew A. Baum, "The Constituent Foundations of the Rally-Round-the-Flag Phenomenon," *International Studies Quarterly*, 46, 2 (2002): 263-98. Matthew A. Baum and Tom Groeling, "Crossing the Waters Edge: Elite Rhetoric, Media Coverage and the Rally-Round-the-Flag Phenomenon, *Journal of Politics,* 70, 4, (October 2008): 1065-1085.

drivers of conflict, and not rehash old hypotheses under the newest and most innovative quantitative techniques.

The most stubborn theoretical assumption within the literature is that we have yet to adequately move away from the empirical use of true warfare as the prime diversion. While it is true that wars may be the most engaging of international spectacles, it is not true that all wars are diversionary, nor is it true that wars can even be given the status as most common diversion given the relatively small number recorded (at least since the end of WWII). This may be a problem of mechanics rather than theory. The mechanisms inherent in the rally effect resulting from war are oft-repeated, and the classical conceptions are understood. However, the aforementioned bias towards democracies hamstrings our ability to fully engage in the potential testing of other, smaller-scale events as diversionary if not to democracies then certainly towards autocracies. The vast majority of contentious interstate politics do not involve war, or even violence for that matter, and yet while acknowledged long ago, lack of attention has been paid to the subject.[46]

This variation necessitates proper identification of diversionary action which is liable to change based on the engaging regime. Consolidated democracies can often withstand the brunt of war[47], but impoverished dictatorships may buckle under the weight. Similarly, bellicose remarks may fall upon deaf ears in transparent democracies due the alternate sources of information, but within censored autocracies minor disputes can be magnified significantly to engage the necessary audience. This effectiveness of

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[46] Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War," (1989): 281-282.
[47] Given, generally speaking, larger economies and stabilized channels of governance. Notable exceptions exist of course, for instance France during WWII.

diversions has thus far been relegated to either stagnant empirical explanations, or by heeding the decades-long call that scholars utilize reciprocal analysis in their quest to link political or economic weakness (or any domestic weakness for that matter) with diversionary actions.[48] However, this warning has been sparsely acknowledged, with a very small number of quantitative studies using reciprocal analysis, with the vast majority focusing on the US.[49] In the realm of autocracies, similar efforts have been made, but with the exclusive focus on uses of force.[50]

The unwillingness of the literature to properly acknowledge political provocations, small-scale violent actions or saber-rattling as comparable diversions not only narrows our list of potential cases, but further excludes smaller or peripheral countries from our analyses. It may be in the best interest of various states to *never* pursue a course of action which may be uncontrollable or unsustainable, thus necessitating the need to explore other options. This warrants the exploration of alternate mechanisms to bolster or retain political power. Additionally, attention is also drawn to the question of operational capacity and internal perpetuation mechanisms of various regimes. Simply put: different diversionary strategies afford different benefits –how various regime types hope to capture these gains is what sets them apart. This harkens back to a much earlier piece by Zinnes who was among the first the propose a linkage between regime type and diversionary behavior, although she notes that the literature is

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[48] Ibid.

[49] For the reciprocal tests of the United States see Karl DeRouen Jr., "Presidents and the Diversionary Use of Force: A Research Note," *International Studies Quarterly*, 44 (2000): 317-28, Karl DeRouen Jr. and Jeffrey Peake "The Dynamics of Diversion" and Dan B. Wood, "Presidential Saber Rattling and the Economy," *American Journal of Political Science*, 53: 695-709.

[50] Pickering and Kisangani, "Diversionary Despots."

both too immature and lacking extended research on the subject, which unfortunately has not advanced much in over four decades.[51]

Accepting the possibility this relationship erodes the superimposition of a standardized "rally effect" and highlights the need to discuss regime-specific motivations and goals. Political utility may mean votes to retain office or pass legislation through parliamentary bodies in democratic societies. However, autocratic motivations and goals are myriad. Single-party regimes may place greater import on ensuring stability or diverting frustrations rather than internal cohesion due to the personalized nature of the government. Accordingly, many potential diversionary cases may be lost by the wayside if the underlying mechanisms of pursuit and potential benefits are not fully discovered. Without a proper theoretical lens, important instances may go undiscovered. Diversions should then be considered such based, not only on the merits of the antecedent conditions leading up to such action, but by the unique internal composition of various regimes. Post-hoc analysis spurred by a discernible increase in political utility (at least in theory) should be the sole subjects of study. Diversions which are unsuccessful, must also be considered diversions.[52]

Unavailable Bridges

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[51] Dina Zinnes, *Contemporary Research in International Relations: A Perspective and a Critical Appraisal,* (New York: Free Press, 1976): 170-175.
[52] Kyle Haynes, "Diversionary Conflict: Demonizing Enemies or Demonstrating Competence," *Conflict Management and Peace Studies* 34, 4 (2017): 340.

If our lack of comprehension regarding the eventual choice and potential benefits of different diversionary strategies is as prevalent as I claim, the missing pieces may reside within the various regime types themselves. While diversity in regime type is widespread, this only begins to scratch the surface. Although we have an adequate understanding of the belligerence of some regimes, but do different regime types benefit more easily from certain types of diversions? By bridging the gap between the comparative authoritarian literature and the broader literature on diversionary conflict, we may begin to identify and close these gaps.

The comparative authoritarian literature has a long history, going back to the time of Plato, who ascribed unique qualities to the various regime types prevalent in ancient Greece during his lifetime, wherein he distinguishes between five different types of regimes based on their innate characteristics.[53] Scholarship has remained steady over the years but witnessed a marked uptick after the fall of the Soviet Union due to the proliferation of quasi-democratic and alternatively autocratic states due to the decline of Soviet influence.[54] Since then, various surveys of the competitive authoritarian literature have arisen and so there is no need to directly cover the entire field here.[55] Instead I focus on the potentially relevant links between the literatures I attempt to synthesize.

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[53] Allan Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 2nd Edition, Translated with notes and an interpretive essay by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1991): 221-249. Translations of ancient texts are prone to vary linguistically. Any edition of *The Republic* will do, as the overall information of Book VIII is largely consistent regardless of the edition or translation.

[54] Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[55] Of particular note, and probably the most comprehensive attempt to survey and categorize the field and its main considerations is Natasha Ezrow and Erica Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships: Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011).

Juan Linz's categorization of authoritarian regimes as "political system with limited, not responsible political pluralism, without intensive nor extensive political mobilization, and in which a leader or a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones," served as one progenitor to the broader program of typologizing authoritarian regimes.[56] Since then we have seen an explosion of classificatory schema to situate nondemocratic regimes in one camp or another. Perhaps the schema most often cited is Geddes' typology of dictatorships, wherein she evaluates their placement within one of four camps (personalist, single-party, military or hybrid regimes) based on their institutional structures.[57] Though useful, her typology fails to consider transient personalism across regimes, as all dictators may exhibit some level of "personal" power nor does it include monarchies (among other states) in her analysis, the broad generalizability and emphasis on elites has contributed to its utility. Hadenius and Teorell responded to Geddes' work as well as updating and expanding upon her typology. With increased nuance, the two authors divide autocratic states into the camps of monarchic, no-party, military, one-party and multi-party.[58]

Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. developed a model based on broader participation within a dictatorship. Analyzing two distinct camps of individuals, the "selectorate" and the winning coalition, they find distinct patterns in autocratic governance and regime composition that affects outcomes ranging from the propensity to engage in conflict and

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[56] Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000).

[57] Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sandcastles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003). Also of note is a revised version of this typology also championed by Geddes. See Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz, "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set," *Perspectives on Politics,* 12,2 (2014): 313-331.

[58] Axel Hadenius and Jan Teorell "Pathways from Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 18, 1 (2007): 143-156.

economic growth.[59] From a utility standpoint, Lai and Slater push back against both the

tendency to classify regimes based on the leadership structure and the personal power of

dictatorships and instead classify regimes based on institutions necessary to ensure

continued governance. Their analysis finds that military regimes are more likely to

engage in conflict due to their inability to create effective institutions amenable to

governance as opposed to other types of authoritarian regimes.[60]

While we may have an adequate, if varied understanding of what autocratic

regimes look like, how they behave is an interesting research program in its own right.

The citations above underscore the finding that some types of regime may be *more likely*

to engage in conflict behavior, or when such action is likely, less work has been done as

to why given regimes would prefer different actions. How different states operationalize

potential diversions is a critical and overlooked question in the International Relations

literature which would account for diversionary preference as well as the potential value

of different actions. However, we have no typology of authoritarian regimes based on the

overall level of institutionalization, despite the idea that operational capacity can dictate

the preferences of the state.[61] In this vein, by ascribing a level of institutionalization to

authoritarian regimes, we can investigate the mechanisms through which different

regimes can potentially benefit from multiple types of action.

To illustrate based on empirical regularities: personalist dictators have a single

indispensable individual with complete, or near-complete power over the state and

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[59] Bueno de Mesquita et al., *Logic of Political Survival*.
[60] Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive:" 113-126.
[61] Operational capacity is commonly found to mean the resources and bureaucratic structures capable of being brought to bear against a goal, domestic or otherwise.

military apparatus[62]. As such, the overall level of institutionalization is low, and these

environments actually foster the creation and retention of personalist dictators.[63] These

leaders often have ill-defined limits on their governing capacity, and frequently hand-pick

the heads of various governmental and military posts. The personnel selected are

frequently bound to the dictator by blood relations to ensure loyalty, and as insurance that

no "branch" of government can exercise autonomous power. Military juntas are more

institutionalized, with the various branches of the armed forces and their respective heads

serving as the ruling "council" of the state. Juntas are frequently formed during times of

unrest or through the failures of civilian institutions (necessitating a military balm), and

so the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of the military is frequently a valuable

stabilizing agent despite multiple centers of power. Single-party regimes are the most

institutionalized autocratic regimes, with all true political power residing with the

dominant party.[64] Large, bureaucratic and penetrative in nature, single-party regimes

control all aspects of the state from the economy to the military. Resembling

democracies in some form, there are many individuals of varying ranks exercising power,

with the party similarly capable of assimilating any potential challengers to their rule.[65]

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[62] Jessica Weeks distinguishes between two types of unfettered leaders. "Bosses," who are civilian leaders unconstrained in their political power, and military-based "strongmen" who enjoy similar freedom. However, Hadenius and Teorell are correct in asserting that personalism is a peripheral characteristic of autocratic regimes, and that some level may be present in virtually all. As such, I do not distinguish between bosses and strongmen, preferring to focus on the low-level of institutionalization and lack of restraint on the leadership as opposed to who the leader itself is. See Hadenius and Teorell, "Pathways" 2007.

[63] In Sub-Saharan Africa for example, the weakness of political institutions and the ineptitude of the military has been cited as a reason for commonplace personalistic dictatorships. See Arthur A. Goldsmith, "Donors, Dictators and Democrats in Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39, 3 (2001): 411-436.

[64] Alternate political parties can still legally exist in many single-party states, but their level of overall influence or the number of held-seats in parliamentary bodies is often negligible.

[65] Joseph Wright and Abel Escribe-Folch, "Authoritarian Institutions and Regime Survival: Transitions to Democracy and Subsequent Autocracy," *British Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2 (2012): 285.

Centralization of authority and responsibility thus inversely correlated with institutionalization. Various factors have accounted for the propensity to divert per regime type, but an explanation of choice remains elusive. The different institutional arrangements of autocratic regimes entail variation in internal cohesion, governing dynamics and threat assessment. As such, different types of regimes would logically have a preferred type of diversion should the need to divert arise. Retaining the method of governing (military, party-based or personalist rule) is of paramount importance, lest leaders face regime change. Diversions thus need to be chosen to play to the strengths of the regime, engage the relevant institutions and ensure there is no fundamental change to a given power structure. To choose incompatible diversions could alter the foundations of the regime and entail undue risks of failure.

Is there evidence that governmental institutions influence diversionary choice? Lai and Slater point us in the right direction in that domestic institutional weakness may incentivize military action to shore up regime support in a junta, but this explanation speaks to a "no other alternative" approach. Military regimes have few effective institutions to rely on, and so they do what they can – engage in war-making. This is not a preference, but more of a matter of last resort. Though fighting itself is a risk, performing familiar tasks which are comfortable to the military offsets some risky misgivings as opposed to drastically altering other facets of the state to head-off domestic ills, implying a calculated risk-acceptance. Hanne Fjeld, in applying institutional utility to civil conflict, finds that in regimes where institutions do not exist to forcibly oppress or coopt political challengers, violent repression is more likely. To this end, we can expect to see more forcible repression or organized challenges from multiparty autocracies and

Juntas.[66] While promising, the most-likely approach deprives us of an explanation as to why such actions may be valuable based on their own merits.

The coup-proofing subfield authoritarianism similarly teases us with half-answers towards diversionary choice. Caitlin Talmadge notes for instance that states in which coup-proofing is necessary to stave off domestic challenges will be unlikely to effectively arm or operationalize the military – to do so would raise the prospects of a successful coup.[67] This would ostensibly speak to a desire to avoid large-scale conflict, but this fails to explain why a regime (to use Saddam's Iraq again) would pursue warfare despite a highly fragmented and dependent military, as well as dismal prospects for success. Unfortunately, the metaphorical trail bridging institutional stability and conflict soon goes cold. Though institutions and the effect they have on authoritarian stability is a mature research program in its own right, the interplay between institutions and international conflict, culminating in an effect on regime stability is a sorely missed line of discussion.[68]

A related set of questions presents itself: is conflict type affected by institutional arrangements, and if so can optimum conflict galvanize the state against threats or

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[66] Hanne Fjeld, "Generals, Dictators and Kings: Authoritarian Regimes and Civil Conflict, 1973-2004," *Conflict Management and Peace Science,* 27, 3 (2010): 195-218.

[67] Caitlin Talmadge, "Different Threats, Different Militaries: Explaining Organizational Practices in Authoritarian Armies," *Security Studies*, 25, 1 (2016): 111-141.

[68] For a discussion on international sponsors and authoritarian stability, see Oisin Tansey, *International Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). For power-sharing dynamics facilitated or hindered by institutions see Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski, "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats," *Comparative Political Studies,* 40, 11 (2007): 1279-1301. Also see Joseph Wright and Abel Escribe-Folch, "Authoritarian Institutions and Regime Survival: Transitions to Democracy and Subsequent Autocracy," *British Journal of Political Science,* 42, 2 (2012): 283-309. Finally of note is Milan Svolik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

upheaval?[69] Under what institutional compositions can authoritarian leaders pursue

various strategies? Are certain types of conflict more effective in strengthening extant

institutional arrangements, and by extension the position of the regime? Extending our

understanding to the choice of conflict pursued by different regimes would allow us

explanations outside of merely the belligerence of one state over another. By unpacking

the internal mechanisms driving not only the choice of conflict, but the resultant effect on

a state would allow us insight not only into the endurance of authoritarian regimes, but

non-traditional forms of state maintenance as well. Conflict could be understood not just

as a destructive force, but as one of preservation and construction as well.

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[69] Though the direction I mentioned here, i.e., conflict type being the function of institutional arrangements is closely related to an inverse variation of my question, i.e., war and its effect on state building, much work on the subject has been done largely parallel to diversionary theory. This is perhaps not due to the lack of cross-discipline dialog, but due to either similar findings, or empirically inconsistent results. For instance, Eric Davis, in his discussion on the Iraqi invasion of Iran notes that the goals of Saddam Hussein were many: crush the spirit of hopeful Shia revolutionaries within Iraq, enhance the grandeur of Saddam Hussein in the vein of Nebuchadnezzar, galvanize the state against "an other," and rally the Iraqi population around a particular cause. These goals and proposed outcomes are not unlike many of the assumptions noted in diversionary theory as discussed above. In a similar fashion, Sambanis et al., find that when waging war is likely to drastically increase the status of state, internal cohesion will be achieved. Not through a similar in-group/out-group mechanism as found in diversionary theory, but due to the belief that belief in the strength of the state will cause individuals to relate more with, and actively invest in the state's overall advancement. This implies a level of sustained cohesion unknown in the diversionary literature. As noted above, the rally effect, if it does occur is almost unanimously considered to be fleeting. See Eric Davis, "State Building in Iraq During the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf Crisis," in Manus Midlarsky ed., *The Internationalization of Communal Strife,* (Routledge: London and New York, 1992): 84-85 and Nicholas Sambanis, Stergios Skaperdas and William C. Wohlforth, "Nation-Building Through War," *American Political Science Review* 109, 2 (2015).

Chapter 3: Proposed Theory and Framework

Overview of Theoretical Construction

Although we have a thorough understanding of the hallmarks of various types of regimes as well as their propensity to engage in conflict[70], less has been said of *types* of conflict various regimes engage in. More specifically, how regimes of the same type can hope to benefit from pursuing certain types of actions. If we accept war is the prime diversionary action, why don't all states engage in external warfare to deter problems at home? Why don't all states immediately jump to violent action to forestall or remedy looming disaster? The answer I argue lies below the usual logistic considerations. Yes, war is expensive and can lead to disastrous losses, but how does this explain the decision of Saddam Hussein, besieged by crippling debt and a depleted treasury to invade Kuwait in the second Gulf War? Why would Stalin, humiliated by his lopsided defeat in the "Winter War" against Finland almost immediately move the Red Army to begin the seizure of the Baltic States in 1940?[71]

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[70] As measured by the aggregate number of initiated disputes.

[71] Robert Service, *Stalin: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 2004).

Wars are big, visible and engage huge segments of society. Furthermore, the propensity for war to cut across bureaucratic malaise and streamline certain types of political action is well known. Indeed, it has been argued that in matters crucial to the security of the state, manufactured or legitimate, state-security is of paramount importance relative to any other government procedure, as nothing else can effectively function without security for the state.[72] However, as noted above, the size and expense of war works against its utility in many instances. Despite the huge troop reserves in Israel however, conscription would take mass amount of labor temporarily out of circulation. The lost economic gains would be a double negative should conflict go awry. While this example is not indicative of all states, war is costly regardless of the initiator. Still however, some states opt for violent conflict – in some cases even under the direst economic or domestic conditions. Gambling for resurrection provides one explanation, but some argue that the regime is better served using the proposed resources to address domestic issues.[73]

In contrast to the classical understanding of what a diversion is, and to further distinguish from the aforementioned gambling hypothesis, my definition differs along

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[72] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Massachusetts &Menlo Park California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979): 126. Manus Midlarsky, "Realism and the Democratic Peace: The Primacy of State Security in New Democracies," in Michael Brecher and Frank P. Harvey eds., *Realism and Institutionalism in International Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002): 88-117, pp. 90.

[73] Gambling for resurrection refers to the idea that if a leader is at risk of being removed from office, they may initiate or extend a conflict to generate confidence in their ability to lead, and this prolong their political tenure. Certain stipulations are often cited including targeting a sufficiently powerful enemy to truly demonstrate worth. Most lay people are probably more familiar with the term "Wag the Dog" after the 1997 film of the same name and the media's liberal use of the term covering the Monica Lewinsky scandal during the Clinton Presidency. His engagements in the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe in light of a sex scandal mirrored quite closely the premise of the film. For a discussion on gambling for resurrection, see George W. Downs and David M. Rocke, "Conflict, Agency and Gambling for Resurrection: The Principal-Agent Problem Goes to War," *American Journal of Political Science,* 38, 2 (1994). Oakes, *Diversionary War*: 9

functional and operational lines. Unfortunately, insofar as the literature is concerned, we seem to be perpetually stuck with the term "diversion" despite the overall impossibility of measuring such a concept. Though the term itself portends to explain or describe an overall distraction, the hallmark of any given externalization of internal strife is assessing the political machinations occurring under the surface. For the purposes of this dissertation, I define a diversion as the utilization of external political action to preserve or increase political utility. This is to say that the incumbent regime or leader should see an increase in political power, lessened chance of ouster, increased internal stability etc.

This is an important and overlooked distinction within my work that sets it apart from static conceptions of diversion as well as the resurrection hypothesis. Autocratic leaders are not blessed with institutionalized channels to be removed from office. Failure can result in exile, imprisonment or even death. Additionally, nondemocratic leaders do not have the benefit of set terms. In democratic states, despite poor performance, one can expect to stay in office for the entirety of their term no matter how ineffectual or disliked.[74] The reason here is simple: the chance for another leader to be elected is inevitable. Therefore, in such regimes, "gambling" or "diverting" need only be ephemeral to get the executive past the current election. Outside of democracies however, needs differ across regimes. With no set terms, safety nets or guarantees, diversion in nondemocratic states should seek to achieve substantive preservation or increases in power, as only that assures continued power. This definition does not discriminate between what constitutes a successful diversion, but rather that some sort of

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[74] Unless of course the leader in question violates the terms of their office or commits something highly illegal.

benefit was pursued. Furthermore, this definition does not rely on the outdated notion

that a diversion need arise in the face of an existential crisis. Such a point can be

illustrated with the argument that the Vietnam War was escalated by President Johnson in

order to gain the support of hawkish senators and pass much-needed civil rights

legislation.[75]

This breaks away not only from the obsolete conception of distracting a

potentially dangerous audience, but broadens the study of internal catalysts to external

action towards more of a broader scope of foreign policy.[76] Additionally my definition

removes the audience as the guarantor of a given diversionary benefit. While is true that

a diversion, properly timed and appropriately executed can be used to distract the

electorate in a democratic system, and increase the approval ratings of an elected official

(and all the benefits that entails), this logic is only widely applicable to democracies.[77]

Democratic leaders are by definition meant to be (at least somewhat) fleeting. Autocratic

leaders on the other hand run the gamut between indefinitely enthroned, to momentary

while the regime endures past their tenure.

As I had earlier mentioned, an increase in popularity within a democratic state

merely offers the chance of either reelection or a balm to soothe domestic ills, as opposed

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[75] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984). Additionally, the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 revealed a similar story.

[76] I refer to the concept of distracting an audience as obsolete due to the fact that it is simply impossible to quantify the concept of distraction within any society. The etymology of the word is a holdover from the sociological roots I refer to in the literature review, and the term has stuck ever since. This has biased the study of diversionary theory towards quick jumps in approval ratings on the eve of scandal, rather than deliberate attempts to increase or preserve the political power of the leadership. Unfortunately, it seems that the term "diversionary" is here to stay.

[77] This does not discount the importance of mass audiences for autocracies, only that it is less important for them. Insofar as their ability to punish authoritarian leaders, it has been found that the risk of removal is quite low here. See Svolik "The Politics:" 4.

to institutional strengthening.[78] Authoritarian regimes, govern more directly in a relative

sense and so whatever kind of diversion is pursued, strengthening the essential governing

institutions is a more prudent concern as opposed to simply making the leader more

popular. Authoritarian regimes differ, and so in some the institutions themselves are the

power behind authoritarian governance, as opposed to widespread legitimacy in others.

Further care must be taken to choose the appropriate action to best utilize extant strength

and extract potential benefits.[79] This variance affects the logic of their diversionary

choice and execution between regime-types.

The Audience: Not Just Everyone Anymore

Though it may seem as though I am discounting the importance of the population-

at-large in my discussion of diversions, this is not the case. I am merely breaking away

from the enduring assumption that capturing their attention is the modus operandi in a

diversionary engagement. As noted earlier, the risk of a mass uprising removing an

autocrat from office is quite low relative to internal politics, with the latter prevailing at a

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[78] This point illustrates the differing goals of various autocratic regimes. Institutional strengthening is a goal for party-based and (obviously) highly institutionalized regimes, while the strengthening of rival institutions intra-regime can be dangerous in personalist dictatorships.

[79] Some personalist dictators are institutions in and of themselves. I visit this point later on. Additionally, just because a leader is held in some reverence, as one would find in North Korea, the widespread love, adoration, respect (if we can call it that), or simply the view that the leader is an unassailable figure has proven itself ineffective as a means of either effectively ruling the country, executing political programs or even ensuring the continued survival of the state. North Korea's ruling dynasty may be the closest we have to nigh-worship of a living leader, but the military is the integral lynchpin of the regimes continued existence.

ratio of approximately 6.6:1.[80] Still, by virtue of size and presence alone, even a

disenfranchised population can exacerbate the already tedious job of governing,

frustrating the autocrat's efforts even further. Unlike in a democracy however,

distracting the population does not hold the same utility as would a diversion in a

democracy. Should things go south in a democratic state, a proper diversion could boost

approval ratings enough to squeak through another election. Substantive change is not

necessary, as power is assured for X number of years post-election (barring

impeachment, assassination, stepping down etc.).

Nondemocratic regimes structure their diversions differently, as the goal of the

diversion is more complicated than in their democratic cousins. While it is true that a

properly structured diversion does have the tendency to rally the population behind the

autocrat, as we saw during the invasion of Kuwait for instance and the celebratory seizing

of the Falkland Islands, the need to divert in an autocracy speaks to the desire for

substantive change, not temporary distractions.[81] Autocrats are typically not beholden to

the same type of elections or ritualized power transfers we find in the West, and

remaining in office ceteris paribus after a diversion does not substantively increase the

regimes security or political utility. There are no guarantees that the population won't

become a frustration once again if nothing changes.

For this reason, autocratic regimes have a dual audience, with each operating

along a different path. The general population behaves much like their counterparts the

world over. While their support may not be explicitly necessary to continue governing,

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[80] Svolik, *The Politics:* 4.
[81] Post, "The Defining Moment:" 54-55.

this does not negate the latent threat of their unrest. Diversions thus distract, enthrall and inspire insecurity – all to reduce strain on the state and draw the population closer around the flag. However due to the unknown quantity the population represents, this is not enough. Nondemocratic regimes face a second audience in their diversions are tailored for their particular institutional composition. To be truly successful, diversions need to leave some type of progress in their wake. These external engagements thus use the brief time period afforded by the diversion, wherein the population is supported (or at least quiet) to shore of weakness intra-regime and potentially expand, if not preserve political power.

This is precisely why choice is crucial. States will want to create the most powerful and useful diversion possible, while also minimizing risk. Choosing a safer diversion with less risk may be incompatible with the institutional composition of a given regime. Results would be lackluster – the population wouldn't be sufficiently engaged or even care, the diversion may not afford enough utility to prove valuable etc. Choice is crucial, and autocrats have to weigh the power of both internal and external observers. As I will show, the strength and level of institutions is a powerful causal force in the severity of a chosen diversionary action. As a regime matures and its level of institutional development increases, ancillary forces such as societal penetration and dispersal of authority grow as well. When this occurs, states have varied, in addition to overt (or repressive) control over society, which allows for greater manipulation and the forging of a manageable narrative. Relying on the strength of institutions to enhance the spectacle rather than simply allowing society and state to digest it means that risk can be minimized. In highly institutionalized states, small actions can be overblown and adeptly

manipulated in a way the centralized nature of personalist regimes could not handle. Personalist regimes may rely on violent diversions to engage the nation due to their institutional simplicity in a way that would make such a move untenable and dangerous in a consensus-based regime.

Balancing the need to minimize risk, is the desire to maximize engagement of the integral sections of the state. This looks different across nations. To my knowledge there has never been a diversion with the intent to foster regime change, so I will assume that continuity of the regime is a given. For this reason, a diversion is meant to expand the political utility or security of the regime, or at the very least preserve it. For a personalist regime, this may be to recentralize power in the hands of the autocrat and away from wayward generals or bureaucrats. In a military junta a diversion may be use to increase solidarity, or engage the various branches in mobilizing their forces to give them a distinct job to complete. Single-party regimes may use their diversions to gauge their societal penetration, further disperse power away from a centralized model or divert sentiment from one particular problem to the next. This is the core facet of diversionary choice. Different regime-types rely upon their own unique mode of governance, and the upkeep therein must similarly be unique. Repression does not work along all states and times and informed citizens may not care about an unjust war.

This is a critical point because all external actions are not created equal. As I will demonstrate, the institutional arrangements of different states are more amenable to some types of diversions over others. Because of this, autocratic states will attempt to utilize the most manageable type of diversion to rally the population, while choosing the diversion necessary to engage the integral segments of the regime. This could be to

strengthen the center, weaken control of outer bureaucrats, simply give "jobs" to wayward offices etc. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Remaining in power may be the common goal, but what this looks like and how it is achieved differs dramatically cross-borders.

A Range of Options

Though we have variation in regards to democracies the world over, democratic regimes, or at least democratic diversions tend to look more or less the same, and as I hated noted, the diversionary literature treats them as such.[82] This has reinforced the idea that diversions need to be big and public, as well as the misconception that the benefit of a diversion is to "distract" a group of people. This biases analysis towards wealthy nations capable of support a large-scale conflict, while relying largely on polling numbers and election results to assess the success of a proposed diversion. Based on the prevailing literature, the research gap regarding alternate types of diversions and authoritarian regimes is well known, but scholars have been slow to catch up.

Classifying types of conflict, both armed and unarmed is nothing new. All students of international relations can undoubtedly cite multiple data sets on aggregate occurrences of violence, and there is no need to list them here. Though they all exist to support our existing research, differences abound in how such data is coded. The

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[82] To my knowledge, there has been no effort to distinguish diversionary behavior along types of democratic states.

Correlates of War database is arguably to most influential conflict database in use today, and their definitions of conflict and war are similarly influential. According to the COW, an interstate war is coded as such when an armed conflict occurs between two uniformed armed forces resulting in 1000 battle deaths over a 12 month period.[83] This benchmark is echoed by another prominent dataset, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, wherein war is known to have occurred after 1000 battle-related deaths per calendar year.[84] Under the same database, armed conflict occurs when there exists 25 battle-related deaths in a given conflict, of which one actor is state-based.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Correlates of War project similarly keeps a tally of all militarized interstate disputes, whereupon one occurs when a state explicitly threatens, utilizes or displays force against another party. This definition is complicated by the fact that an MID can occur with or without the occurrence of death.[85] There is no parallel to MID's within the Uppsala dataset, as the lower term "conflict" broadly covers many of the comparatively smaller instances of force.

Though these different, yet similar schemes of classifying interstate interactions are comprehensive and have a great many uses, the situation is complicated in that it does not differentiate between types of threats, uses or displays of force, nor does 1000 battle-related deaths control for relative damage between parties.[86] I do not focus on wars as stated multiple times, but my theory is acceptant of violent actions. For this reason, and

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[83] Sarkees, "The COW Typology."
[84] Uppsala Conflict Data Program, UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia. Available at: https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/
[85] Sarkees, "The COW Typology."
[86] 1000 casualties in a given war can be a lot, or a little depending on the parties involved, not to mention to overall cost of fighting, producing or replacing destroyed war material.

due to the focus of intent along with perceived benefit, violent actions occur when states engage externally with the explicit intent to inflict casualties and destroy positions or material held by their adversary. States typically do not actively court war, and should a given result be achieved before escalating into true interstate conflict as per coding definitions, then all the better. Less resources expended for achieving the same end-goal is a net positive.

For lower-level disputes, I differentiate between diplomatic and military actions. The reason for this dichotomy is based not only on the constituent makeup of the most common authoritarian regime types, but diversions are fundamentally a question about a desire to extract benefits – and different beneficiaries are a possibility in nondemocratic regimes. If the argument is true that states wish to win the most, without losing the rest by utilizing their extant institutions, then reducing undue risk is very important. Military provocations may be more likely to provoke a violent response, and so civilian regimes may wish to avoid them.[87] Military regimes may not wish to court war, but weakened civilian institutions may make diplomatic actions a moot point, as it is often them, and not the military that conducts diplomatic actions. I differentiate between the two along primary actor lines. Which kind of institutions serve as the vanguard of this dichotomy serves as the dividing classificatory line between the two.

Diplomatic disputes occur when nations engage via political institutions rather than the military. These can include such actions as denouncements, ambassadorial recalls, expulsion or engaging in international organizations to name a few. These

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[87] This is due to the (usual) unpopularity of war.

disputes are primarily concerned with achieving some sort of goal outside of the military sphere, and so armed forces are rarely used, if at all. Should military personnel or material be used, it is not with the explicit goal to change some sort of status quo.

Military disputes are on the other end of this spectrum. These occur when military personnel and material are utilized in an integral way to achieve some sort of goal or cement a claim that is divorced from political institutions. Blockades, border closures, explicit threats or seizures are included under this umbrella in that such forces have been directed to explicitly achieve some sort of goal, resulting in a change to the status quo in concrete measures. This type of dispute differs from conflict in that there need not be any deaths within military disputes. There are in fact many reasons as to why needless death be avoided from a diversionary standpoint which include retention of resources, sustained legitimacy and controllability of a given issue.

I break away from the overarching umbrella of militarized interstate disputes simply because many disputes do not become militarized, but militarization is not tantamount to damage. Political denouncement or economic sanctions can leave states hurt and vulnerable both functionally and diplomatically and never involve the armed forces of either side. Similarly, the status quo of a given issue can be changed through intervention of the military without a war, or intentional death occurring. Capturing the nuance of a chosen foreign policy strategy allows us to involvement of authoritarian regimes and ignored strategies within the broader diversionary literature and denote the significance (and conversely, insignificance) a chosen strategy holds for different regime types.

Nuts and Bolts – Institutions

The choice to use violent force, out of a range of diversionary actions to increase or preserve political utility, I argue, is a function of the level of institutionalization within a given regime-type. While it is possible loss in war can exacerbate domestic ills, certain regimes have proven remarkably resistant after significant losses. Saddam Hussein managed to cling to power for two decades after his ouster from Kuwait with his domestic position no less reduced. If we consider the brutal Kurdish repression following the immediate ending of the Gulf War and the casualties incurred by Iraq (which reduced the unemployed workforce substantially, easing demands on his administration), one could even argue that Saddam was strengthened domestically. The lesson is clear: different institutional arrangements distribute and extract benefits from external actions differently. Each state will wish to accrue what they can, while preserving what they must. Discretion is thus key. If this is the case, the proposed typology of regime-type I use can be conceptualized along an institutional spectrum.

Table 3.1: Institutionalization by Regime-Type

Regime Type	Level of Institutionalization	Resultant Power Structure	Example
Personalist	Low	Personalized control, weak institutional complexity.	Mao's China, Saddam's Iraq, Stalin's Russia
Military Junta	Moderate	Shared Control, compartmentalized power, weak civilian institutions.	Argentina 1976-1983 Greece 1967-1974 Chile 1973-1990
Single-Party	High	Dispersed, layered control, many players, high societal penetration, strong civilian institutions.	Cuba 1959-Present Vietnam 1975-Present Eritrea 1994-Present

Institutionalization is a concept typically unseen in International Relations due to its role as the formative cornerstone of state-building. As such, the Comparative Politics literature has long dominated the study therein. This does not preclude our ability to study institutions in IR, only that progress has long lagged our interest. Samuel Huntington, a pioneer in regards to institutionalization defined the term as "the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability." In further refining his definition, he ascribed qualities of both a political process and political gauge when he noted that the overall 'level' of institutionalization is "measured by the scope and strength of institutions, manifest in 'the size, number and effectiveness of its organizations and procedures." Of particular relevance to my theory are the qualitative hallmarks inherent in the level of institutionalization, namely; "adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence."[88] On a continuum basis, institutionalization not only accounts for the overall shape and composition of various regime-types, it also dictates its actions intrastate as well as highlights the various sustaining forces necessary to govern.

Well known is overall function of institutions: to facilitate governance and rule within the state, or at the very least serve as a mechanism to assure state-society relations. As these functions acquire normative momentum, they are subject to increasing marginal returns as the action of governing becomes embedded within society.[89] This then increases the prospect for stability. Less institutionalized regimes are not without their own tools however, as totalitarian states such as Jordan or Singapore are able to rely on

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[88] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, foreword by Francis Fukuyama (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006): 12.
[89] A common illustrative example given is the dismal voter turnout of democratic elections in mature western democracies. Because the act of voting has become a natural occurrence, it is often taken for granted, rather than cherished or fought for as in many nondemocratic regimes.

wealth to assure stability. Similarly states such as Belarus or Turkmenistan can repress

as a short-term solution. Ceteris paribus however, institutionalization is often associated

with stability, with single-party regimes (commensurate with level of institutionalization)

leading the way in terms of longevity, and peaceful tendencies.[90] Additionally, rolling

out new forms of institutional rule, or simply increasing the scope of institutionalization

are afforded a whole host of governing benefits – including longevity.[91]

Single-party regimes represent the most institutionalized autocracies. Along with

having the largest membership among my chosen regime types, single-party regimes

resemble large bureaucracies meant to penetrate and monitor many aspects of given

civilian life. Furthermore, the level of institutionalization within such regimes serve as a

way to coopt potential challengers to state stability, and tie their fates in with the fate of

the party.[92] Considering the membership of the government is quite large and each

member who has advanced enough to be both relevant in the policy-making sphere and

accrue benefits from party membership have a vested interest in maintaining their

position, the decision to opt for conflict is going to run into problems surrounding

consensus-building. Additionally, as leaders are aware they loss in war may erode the

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[90] Carl Henrik Knutsen and Havard Mokleiv Nygard, "Institutional Characteristics and Regime Survival: Why are Semi-Democracies Less Durable than Autocracies and Democracies?" *American Journal of Political Science,* 59, 3 (July 2015): 664. It's worth noting here that personalist regimes are shown to have a greater lifespan than military juntas. This may not be a function of institutionalization (and thus run contrary to my theory), due to the longstanding findings with the comparative authoritarian literature that juntas are "uncomfortable" with ruling for too long, and often seek to return to the barracks. I discuss this later. On proclivity to engage in disputes see Mark Peceny and Christopher Kenneth Butler, "The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes," *International Politics,* (December 2004): 565-581, Olga Chyzh, Brian Lai and Sara Mclaughlin-Mitchell, "Autocratic Regimes and Diversionary Uses of Force," Working Paper, Presented at the International Studies Association Annual Meeting, 2011, Available at: http://www.saramitchell.org/clm.pdf and Krista E. Wiegand, "Peaceful Dispute Resolution by Authoritarian Regimes," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 15, 3 (July 2019): 303-321.
[91] Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an age of Democratization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Additionally, much of this is covered in my literature review.
[92] Wright and Escribe-Folch, "Authoritarian Institutions:" 285.

cohesion of the party, a further deterrent is embossed over the desire to externalize conflict.

Single-party regimes are able to coopt the best and brightest among their populations, and indeed tying the economic and political fortunes of even regime opponents to the survival of the regime is a noted tactic to quell unrest. Due to the penetrative patronage network and sheer institutional capacity, single-party regimes are able to mobilize the necessary segments of society during times of domestic unrest, contributing to their overall durability.[93] This targeted solicitation, as well as the propensity to build overall mass support over time[94], can allow single-party regimes to pursue lower-level diversionary actions, whilst relying on their institutional structure and dispersed membership to disseminate benefits and guide domestic sentiment. Furthermore, control over more intimate aspects of society can allow the government to publicly take a backseat in manipulation, creating the illusion of "organic" support.

Institutionalization is formative – both in a structural utilitarian sense. Inherent in the concept is the question of control, of which there are several main facets. The first and most obvious function is that of the development and sustainment of the regime. By this measure, institutionalization facilitates inter-strata communication and coexistence. This can serve to either help or hinder relations between the state and society. Strong institutional development begets continued evolution as state processes mature and enjoy economies of scale. Conversely, in a less-institutionalized state, the act of governing falls upon a smaller number of agents, up to and including a singular leader. Communication

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[93] Benjamin Smith, "Life of the Party: Origins of Regime Breakdown and Persistence Under Single-Party Rule," *World Politics,* 57, 3 (2005): 421-51.

[94] Wright, Escribe-Folch, "Authoritarian Institutions:" 291.

and collaboration may be compartmentalized or inefficient at best. Information may have to flow through a single person before being digested and reformed as policy. Though this seems counterproductive for sustaining the state, given the circumstance, a singular leader would rather be surrounded by weak institutions, rather than autonomous rivals capable of checking their power. Thus, institutionalization sustains the state, when such a regime is deliberately chosen.

The second facet is that of state penetration and societal linkages. Nations are complex political entities, difficult to govern at the best of times. Additionally, general society is the largest facet of virtually every state on the planet. Even when disenfranchised, the greater population can exert a great deal of pressure on the state regardless of regime type. Though many nondemocratic leaders may not necessarily be beholden to an electorate or are directly threatened by civilian society, this does not preclude the ability for ordinary people to make the prospect of governing frustrating. The current executive of China may not be threatened by failing approval ratings or an upcoming election, but the burden of such a large population means that adequate attention needs to be given to ensure the complacency of the general public. Relevant to China, and to all highly-institutionalized societies, a complex network of bureaucratic linkages between the state and society facilitates monitoring and governing. Devoid of this capacity, leaders may become aware of grievances once discontent has grown exponentially, which would then dictate a more forceful response. If aware of problems sooner and holding sufficient institutional capacity, the state can tailor an appropriate response quickly, and more efficiently than their less-institutionalized neighbors.

Lacking effective channels of state penetration can potentially mean a muddled narrative, fragmented communication between the state and society as well as miscalculation when responding to societal unrest. When such an institutional composition reigns in the context of diversionary theory, information is more privileged and less-understood amongst the general populace. Even those helming governmental positions are often faced with conflicting information until official statements flow from the center. Governing, broadly defined becomes more complex for the leader, as the burdens typically shared by institutions are shouldered alone. This is both a blessing and a curse. A curse due to the sheer complexity of singular governance, and a blessing as it does not empower agents or institutions to act outside of the dictator's design. By granting institutions or officials autonomy, even within reason can lead to diluting the leader's strength, perhaps even aggrandizing power of their own to supplant the leader, if not impede them.[95]

With less institutionalization to effectively penetrate, monitor or coopt society, and with restrictive information flows, such rulers are often known for their flair and direct approach to politics. Despite unpopularity, the classic rally effect can still have a powerful impetus towards solidarity across states. Without adequate bureaucratic support, diplomatic actions are often lengthy and muddied as the dictator overreaches, and military engagements often lack complexity and drag on for long periods of time.[96]

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[95] This is discussed below.

[96] See for instance the performance of Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq war. Saddam's military strategy was erratic and spoke of military inexperience. Unwilling to adequately promote officers (for fear of creating effective rivals) and unable to get sound advice due to subpar subordinates and lack of coordination between extant institutions, initial performance was dismal. Only when Saddam broke his tenets of singular control did he change the aforementioned problems and improve his circumstance. This did not prevent him from once again purging potential threats and resituating himself as the overwhelming power-broker at the wars conclusion however. See Caitlin Talmadge, "The Puzzle of Personalist

To attract attention, spectacles and grand campaigns better pierce society and compartmentalized segments of the state. Additionally, large-scale mobilizations effectively engage vast amounts of human capital, giving them a task to focus on at the behest of the leader.

Finally, as mentioned before, institutionalization represents a structural process as well as a set of qualitative features in a regime. This process has a direct effect on the normative functions between all strata of the state, as well as between the constituent branches of the government. Once codified relations reach a normative status within the state, alternative political structures or systems become less attractive and less likely to become threatening rivals. Each institution becomes engrained within the state, playing an integral role with its own political fortune wrapped up in the continued survival and performance of the regime. Relations are less strained, political infighting and threats are minimized and diverse institutions can fully manifest within their political role to effectively operate.

This allows for the efficient division of labor, as bureaucratic processes can adhere to a singular purpose, and focus on tasks relevant therein. This reduces wasteful arbitration and resource expenditures, providing for the most poignant response to a given issue. Given that the bonds of communication are strengthened within an institutionalized state, and political infighting is reduced to a minimum, deliberation rather than impulse can reign, with surgical solutions better serving the regime. When such bonds do not exist, political infighting or the risk of being supplanted remains,

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Performance: Iraqi Battlefield Effectiveness in the Iran-Iraq War," *Security Studies*, 22, 2 (2013): 180-221. Similar battlefield performance was to be found during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, with diplomatic efforts to head-off war similarly suffering due to Saddam's singular heavy-handedness and indecisive behavior.

autonomy is reduced and potential responses to domestic issues may encompass more than is necessary. This is in turn exacerbated by lacking channels of communication intrastate, with coordination and mistrust making coalescence difficult. As each institution is reliant on the leader's favor, rather than the good fortune of the state, rivalry and jockeying for position can similarly increase discordant actions, necessitating an overcompensation necessary to draw disparate strands to a singular goal via forceful production of a rally effect.

Institutional Illustrations

As the method of ruling in a single-party state represents a dispersed-corporate model in many respects, the concentration of too much power in one institution or individual is particularly threatening to single-party regimes. If done correctly, many cooks can improve the broth. The rapid rise to power of Adolf Hitler between 1933-1934 witnessed the creation of a single-party state and subsequent degeneration into personalist rule. Similar situations in Cuba, China and the USSR illustrate the danger of intra-regime consolidation around a single individual. Though single-party rule can be overturned via drastic measures such as a suspension of the constitution or a declaration of martial law resulting in emergency powers, personalism also emerges through a "creeping coup,"

wherein the leader of the party incrementally accrues powers typically reserved for institutions or subordinates.[97]

Personalism is achieved in part when the standard channels of oversight, deliberation and institutional control either become reliant upon, or are siphoned through the dictator. Organizational power must be commandeered on a personal level. A party may still exist, but its true political power is effectively neutered. Additionally, new organizations, autonomous of the party yet beholden to the dictator may arise, with a secret police force being one of the most potent tools for securing control. [98]

Personalism however is not the only threat. An independent and influential military has historically been a prime usurper of party-states, with most states of this type being removed via coup prior to the 1980's.[99] As such, a largely independent military (or at the very least, ambitious officers) without fealty to the party is a particularly destabilizing threat. Bringing the armed forces into the fold and subverting them within the larger state apparatus is of paramount importance, and subservience-reward incentives are frequently offered to top brass.

This near-total control of all aspects of the state and civil society afford party dictatorships an unparalleled capacity to domestically monitor and marginalize potential opponents to the stability of the state.[100] Additionally, the ability to mobilize the broader population, even those far-removed from political participation and funnel their energy

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[97] Paul Brooker Non-Democratic Regimes 3rd ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 61-67.
[98] Ibid: 132-139.
[99] Paul Brooker, Non-Democratic Regimes 2nd ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 221.
[100] Fjeld, "Generals, Dictators and Kings:" 199.

into activities supportive or neutral to the regime significant chances at fostering legitimacy and stability.[101]

While the literature is largely in agreement that single-party regimes are less likely to initiate military disputes overall, the political utility of disputes and its domestic consequences is an overlooked, yet significant question.[102] Lack of military disputes is not tantamount to lack of disputes defined generally. If stability of the state relies upon subordination to the party and political unity, situations in which unity may be splintered or power accumulated so as to alter the governmental balance of power can be damaging to a single-party regime. Ba'athist Iraq, while having its genesis as a single-party regime with influential factions serving to prevent the concentration of power caved under the personal power of Saddam Hussein when he exploited institutional weaknesses displaced Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr as sole leader of Iraq, transforming it into a personalist dictatorship, with the Ba'ath party as his personal political vehicle. A similar situation occurred in the wake of institutional breakdown during the presidency of Hamani Diori of Niger, wherein a sect of the military led by Colonel Senyi Kountche seized power in an effort to shore up Niger's languished government.

Similarly, when institutions fail by way of the party's leader, the army itself may integrate within politics, up to and including a coup. This impetus can be both internal and external. The tenure of President Philibert Tsriana of Madagascar between 1959-1972 was initially characterized as a party-based regime, with strong stability rare in other African states. Subsequent years led to the erosion of basic governmental

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[101] Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian.*
[102] Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive:" 113-126. Pickering and Kisangani, "Diversionary Despots:" 477-493.

institutions and widespread, developmental stagnation which culminated in the entrance of the military under General Ramanantsoa to restore order in the streets.

Additionally, the role war plays in institutional construction and revolution is well known historically[103], but there is a small, but significant literature in International Relations arguing interstate warfare as a catalyst to regime change.[104] Harvey Starr argues that war can tip the institutional scales towards some domestic interest groups, privileging one (or several) sides at the expense of the others.[105] These newfound advantages can lead to political upheaval and regime change. [106] Though it has been found that single-party regimes remain the most resistant to coup attempts, as noted earlier, the same type of regimes are less likely to engage militarily overall. Despite the lessened prevalence of military involvement in politics, the threat does remain.[107]

For the abovementioned reasons, single-party regimes may be the only regime capable of taking maximum advantage of purely diplomatic disputes which never escalate past the threat-stage. Given the sheer institutional complexity and breadth of membership, as well as the previously mentioned tendency to not only assimilate the best bureaucrats of the nation, but also create effective and autonomous institutions. This in

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[103] State-building is also an area of study regarding war. Most students of history or political science will be familiar with the bellicist's hypothesis. I direct the interested reader to Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European Stated: AD 990-1992* (Cambridge Center, Cambridge Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1990), or Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2011).

[104] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Randolph M. Siverson and Gary Woller, "War and the Fate of Regimes: A Comparative Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 86, 3, (1992): 638-646.

[105] This is particularly significant as single-party regimes are often home to autonomous actors and influential institutions which serve some vital function within the state. In more centralized autocracies, such rivals do not have the chance to exist, which reduces the risk discussed here.

[106] Harvey Starr, "Revolution and War: Rethinking the Linkage between External and Internal Conflict," *Political Research Quarterly* 47, 2 (1994): 481-507.

[107] For a discussion of the external threat environment's effect on internal governance in relation to the military, see Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

turn allows for a vast amount of both societal penetration as well as the ability to

effectively micromanage both internal and external strife. This "management" can come

in the form of predictable repression, but also in the form of a guiding narrative. While

repression is often quick and easy, those heavily reliant on their use are subject to

diminishing marginal returns, as continued suppression of unrest in a forceful way can

breed resentment and represent a threat to the regime. Creating a guiding narrative is

difficult to do, but potentially more valuable.

Given the penetrative and professionalized nature of a single-party regimes

bureaucracy, as well as the compartmentalized nature of governance, all levels of the

government have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Allowed to grow to

excellence in their own bureaucratic sphere, the state's institutions are capable of widely

monitoring domestic sentiment and responding with tailored solutions. China is perhaps

the most vivid example of such, boasting the world's bureaucracy which constantly

monitors and responds to domestic unrest while resisting potentially dangerous

reforms.[108] With such potential in terms of control, a single party regime may be

motivated to pursue the cheapest possible diversion in an effort to maximize institutional

effectiveness while mitigating risk. Diplomatic disputes in such a regime can be tailor

made to actively engage the population along two fronts. The mature diplomatic

bureaucracy can maintain a political dispute at manageable levels, and the lack of

involvement of military forces further stifles potential escalation, while the penetrative

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[108] This process has been termed "consultative authoritarianism," which helps to account of authoritarian longevity. Though Teets uses China as the illustrative example, her mechanisms logically hold in similar regimes as well. See Jessica C. Teets, *Civil Society Under Authoritarianism: The China Model* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

nature of the party allows for the dispute to be painted in a laudatory light towards the central government.

Such abilities are particularly useful under duress, as a government such as this can create or escalate political strife in an effort to draw attention away from domestic ills as per classic diversionary theory. Should the government remain a target of ire, the compartmentalized-corporatist model of single-party states allow for the lower-levels of the political pyramid to remain the target of the nation's anger, while preserving the integrity of the center. Large institutions represent large obstacles to challenge state power.

Military Juntas have a moderate level of institutionalization. True to their name the armed forces in such regimes often represent the most professionalized, well-funded and effective means of control in states where they rule. The rigid and didactic nature of the military contributes to their use as a stabilizing force – all the more important considering the acknowledgement that many military regimes have intervened in order to stabilize embattled states and facilitate the creation of a new government.[109] The Egyptian military most recently acted in this capacity after the popular protests that resulted in the ouster of Hosni Mubarak. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which assumed power on February 11th, 2011 noted its express intent to rule in the absence of a legitimate government until popular elections could be held.[110] Though they did soon return power to a civilian government in light of the election of Mohamed

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[109] Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hill, 1977).

[110] "Statement from the Supreme Council of the Egyptian Armed Forces," *The New York Times* (February 11th, 2011). Available online at: https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/11/world/middleeast/11egypt-military-statement.html

Morsi, the attempts at the new executive to increase the power of his office and pass an Islamist constitution caused new riots in June of 2013, which saw the military act to remove Morsi and restore order once more.

This desire to leave office is well-known. As Juntas frequently come to power as the result of the weakness or outright failure of civilian institutions, there is little incentive to rebuild them under the guise of the military. In fact, there is even evidence to show that a military government will leave failed civilian institutions in place in order to deflect blame resulting from poor governance rather than rebuild them.[111] Military regimes are similarly fragile however. Despite the presence of a well-ordered coercive mechanism, this does not necessarily translate into regime longevity.[112] The lack of overt civilian institutionalization and the nuance required to govern all facets of society contribute to the overall inadequacy of effective military rule. Additionally, governing increases the stresses on the military leadership. Junta's operate with more constancy when separated from society. The act of governing all aspects of the state can increase factionalism and splinter the regime, increasing the desire to remain united along a particular cause.[113]

As such, a Junta has to be understood as a council of sorts. Though a member of the armed forces may be chosen as Generalissimo, President or Prime Minister, the degrees of freedom in which they have to act are constrained by other powerful and influential veto players. Oftentimes heads of the Army, Navy, Air Force and sometimes

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[111] Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes:* 33.
[112] Barbara Geddes, Erica Frantz and Joseph G. Wright, "Military Rule," *Annual Review of Political Science,* 17 (2014): 148.
[113] Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships:* 59.

paramilitary organization sit on a ruling panel and deliberate amongst themselves during their ruling period. The Egyptian Supreme Council of the Armed Forces mentioned above is a prominent example, with the various heads of each branch holding sway. Perhaps united by their interest in continued stability, the "top brass" frequently disagrees in division of resources, risks and resultant prominence of their particular branch. Furthermore, each leader has to consider the sub-bureaucracy underneath them consisting of junior officers, soldiers etc. – all of which may not necessarily have broad loyalty to the Junta, merely their commander as was apparent in Argentina under Galtieri.[114] Such leaders not only have to worry about broader stability, but their personal prestige and power as well as the lives of those under their command.

This presents us with an interesting dynamic when considering diversionary behavior. Acknowledging the weakness of civilian institutions as the reason to rely on the military, diplomatic channels of engagement frequently suffer when seized by the military, and many military leader fail to consider than that which can be achieved through force of arms, can feasibly be achieved at the bargaining table. In short, less-developed institutions and a rigid institutional structure makes diplomacy costly.[115] The lack of effective channels to adequately engage politically with diversionary targets necessitates the use of the military once more. However, military rule is frequently fleeting. Due to their desire to continue to hold prominence in a newly formed government, their desire to maintain budgetary or material resources as well as maintain

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[114] Paul Eddy, Magnus Linklater with Peter Gillman, *War in the Falklands: The Full Story* (New York: Harper Collins, 1982): 63.

[115] Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1984): 28. Additionally, Michael Brecher finds that's the use of force is often seen as quite legitimate by such leaders, and the overall scorn for negotiation and diplomacy will reduce the list of fruitful diversions to exclude "words-only" options. See Brecher, "Crisis Escalation."

their branch strength, such leaders are faced with the prospect of relying on the military

for diversions – tempered with a desire to reduce and operational capacity.

Military mobilizations up to low-scale violence present the best chance of

accruing diversionary benefits, while preserving extant centers of power. It utilizes the

relevant institutions necessary for rule, creates an air of hostility to potentially spur a

"rally effect," they do not needlessly risk the lives of their soldiers and it asserts the

importance of the military as a necessary component of the current and incoming

administration should a transition occur. In short, it preserves the current centers of

power. By being careful with the lives of their soldiers, the Junta's leaders are able to

retain both the bulk of the power (and by extension the bases of their support), while

minimizing the risk of a disastrous loss. Sophie Panel echoes this when she states "the

military's prestige and autonomy not only depend on participation in conflicts but also on

the outcomes of those conflicts, self-preservation should play a role in officers' cost-

benefit calculations,"[116] offering support to Geddes when she states that overall efficacy

and longevity of the military as a whole remain the prime objectives in a Junta[117],

speaking to a cost-minimizing impetus in military regimes.[118]

Personalized regimes are the least institutionalized of my chosen regime-types.

The weakness or lack of effective institutions have been cited as a formative condition for

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[116] Sophie Panel, "Regime Instability, Leader's Affiliation, and Organizational Culture: Why are Military Dictatorships More Likely to Initiate Militarized Interstate Disputes? An Empirical Analysis 1975-2006," *Security Studies* 26, 2 (2017): 346.

[117] Geddes, *Paradigms and Sandcastles:* 126.

[118] Additionally, sometimes even grand prizes such as territory can be taken via militarized action short of large-scale violence, as seen in Iran seizing islands in the Persian Gulf, Turkey taking part of Cyprus and Indonesia in the case of East Timor. Though protest arose, the end results persisted. See Gerald W. Hopple, "Intelligence and Warning: Implications and Lessons of the Falkland Islands War," *World Politics* 36, 3 (1984): 352-353.

personalist dictatorships.[119] Personalist dictatorships are defined by a singular individual wielding absolute or near-absolute power over all facets of the state. These leaders typically have no formal constraints on their action, nor are their roles stringently defined. Extant institutions are deliberately kept weak or dismantled in order to remove and hindrance on the dictator, and even institutions necessary for international (and domestic) security such as the military are often underfunded, poorly operationalized and ultimately beholden to the singular leader. Saddam Hussein for instance ensured all institutional information eventually flowed through him, ensuring that the military remained compartmentalized, disoriented and ultimately unable to mount an effective challenge to his rule.[120]

As opposed to the pyramidal-bureaucratic nature of a single-party regime and the regimental chain of a Junta, the overall lack of effective institutions in a personalist regime necessitate a more "powerful" diversion in order to shore of the dictator as opposed to other regime types. Less direct effects stemming from a diversion necessitate a commensurate institutional complexity(?) to both disseminate the diversion, as well as to bolster the integral parts of each regime. Personalist dictators do not have the benefit of a well-ordered and effective military,[121] nor do they have the ability to rely on a host of civilian agencies (outside of regime protection groups perhaps) to secure themselves. Repression, while a frequently cited technique to maintain regime stability cannot exist

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[119] Goldsmith, "Donors, Dictators and Democrats:" 411-436.

[120] Talmadge, "Different Threats:" 114-120.

[121] I am not equating efficiency with strength here. At the time of the Second Gulf War for example, Iraq had fielded the fourth largest military in the world. However, battlefield inefficiency and an unclear chain of command on the ground allowed such a large force to be systematically picked apart in a matter of days. To see a pre and post-assessment of Saddam's military effectiveness, see Talmadge, "The Puzzle:" 180-221.

indefinitely due to the taxing economic and societal costs.[122] Localized dissent can be combatted with surgical repression, but once dissent becomes widespread, repression becomes infeasible.[123]

Institutionalization is a double-edged sword. While it may ease the personal burdens of the autocrat and facilitate more effective and efficient governance within the state, creating alternate centers of power and influence runs counter to the prime concern of the dictator: preservation through consolidation. Scholars agree that institutions increase the level of effective government, but how they do so, and why some leaders spur institutionalization yield less academic cohesion. Things like political parties, parliamentary bodies and councils reduce the strain on the leadership, increase the efficacy of monitoring and allows for organizational specialization to aid in governing, all while reducing the centralized power of the dictator. As such, secrecy and centralization remove intra-state monitoring which may hinder the autocrat's freedom, while removing potential challengers from the leadership process.[124]

Due to an institutional void and centralized power, a direct-effects approach through classic diversionary war (or simply put, violence) is best suited for personalist regimes as it is most compatible with the overall lack of institutionalization. Large-scale violence and war engage all segments of the population, forging a link between the greater populace, extant governing apparatus, the military and leadership. Where civilian institutions can maintain links across the stratum in the peacetime of more

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[122] Minxin Pei, *China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 2008): 82-83.

[124] Carles Boix and Milan W. Svolik, "The Foundations of Limited Authoritarian Government: Institutions, Commitment and Power-Sharing in Dictatorships," *The Journal of Politics* 75, 2 (2013): 301-302.

institutionalized regimes, the urgency of danger forces these links in personalist regimes. Where there is less-effective societal penetration and overall information, war and violence can circumvent these limitations by being too big to conceal. Additionally, conflict allows for the marginalization of peripheral authority, thus rendering competing centers of power weakened.

War and large-scale violence centralizes the authority of the autocrat in order to meet the manufactured (though possibly still legitimate) threat. Due to a lack of formalized power-structures in personalist regime and inefficient monitoring mechanisms, war and violence not only allows the dictator to assume the role of wartime commander, marginalizing uniformed officers, but also provides a yardstick to measure the competency of aspirant officers, allowing them to be removed before becoming a threat.[125] For instance, it has been alleged that Mao entered the Korean War in part to dispose of or at the very least occupy and monitor former Nationalist turncoats within his ranks, removing an organized and armed source of potential headaches.[126] Reducing the effectiveness of the office corps and the size of the military is an effective coup proofing measure. The loss of strength, and even loss in war is not inherently threatening to personalist dictators, as they have a rather strong track record of maintaining their position despite defeat.[127]

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[125] For a more nuanced discussion of this technique see Lisa Blaydes, *State of Repression: Iraq Under Saddam Hussein,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018): 268-270.

[126] Roy E. Appleman, *Disaster in Korea: The Chinese Confront MacArthur* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press: 1989).

[127] Despite centralization of authority, dictators such as this are well insulated from punishment should a military campaign go south. For instance, Stalin was able to largely avoid ramifications from the disastrous losses in the Winter War of 1940. See Weeks, *Dictators at War*: 95-105.

The intended point of this categorization is that the overall level of institutionalization can have a magnifying or stifling effect on certain types of diversions. Large external actions such as war have huge direct-effects and need not rely on extensive bureaucratic institutionalization or government penetration of disseminate the diversion throughout the state. Similarly, diplomatic saber-rattling has few, if any direct-effects and must rely on extensive institutionalization aggrandize disputes to an operational level by which the regime can squeeze some utility out of it. However little institutionalization negates the utility of small-scale actions due to the centralization of power and information, while high levels of institutionalization would serve as an inhibiting force towards large-scale warfare due to the institutional checks and balances as well as a desire to negate any "side" benefitting in a way to disrupt government harmony.

Table 3.2: Institutionalized Diversionary Inputs

Impact	Diversionary Type	Institutionalization
Personalist Regime	Warfare and large-scale violence	Least institutional complexity.
Military Junta	Mobilization and small-scale action, explicit threats,	More complex, but moderate institutionalization.
Single-Party Regime	Diplomacy, Sanctions	High levels of institutionalization.

Chapter 4: Case Selection and Method

Academic Impediments

The diversionary literature exhibits huge variance in not only data, but methodology as well. Unfortunately, this diversity has not yet resulted in extensive knowledge accumulation, with Patrick James poignantly lamenting this state of affairs.[128] Where there is some measure of agreement, there is a greater amount of contention regarding the canon of diversionary theory. Virtually all work done on the US (the most frequently analyzed state) displays this most vividly. The age-old hypothesis that domestic issues catalyze external conflict has its support,[129] while others find that negative indicators of dissatisfaction and economic indexes have no correlation with the decision to use military force.[130] Broadening the discussion to different countries finds that even if negative domestic conditions do have a causal effect on the propensity to divert, certain intervening variables must be present in order to have causal weight.[131]

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[128] James, "Conflict and Cohesion:" 21-33. This is to say, there are few dogmatic concepts or assumptions from which to guide further research. Outside of the initial scapegoat hypothesis and the rally mechanism, findings do not often transcend the generating work. This applies to theoretical assumptions even more, as less work has been devoted to refining theory over simplistic hypotheses.

[129] Ostrom and Job, "The President:" 25-52.

[130] James Meernik, "Presidential Decision-Making and the Political Use of Force," *International Studies Quarterly* 38 (1994): 121-138 and James Meernik and Peter Waterman, "The Myth of the Diversionary Use of Force by American Presidents," *Political Research Quarterly* 49 (1996): 573-590.

[131] McLaughlin Mitchell and Prins find inflation as significantly affecting the propensity to divert when in the presence of a rival, while Tir finds that economic factors are negligible, while government unpopularity

The decision to engage in diversionary behavior is a huge and complex endeavor with no concretized mold to follow. Quantitative testing exacerbates this issue with huge variation in research design, classification of the dependent variable or variables, as well as the underlining hypotheses often being narrowly construed in a theoretical sense.[132] Because of this lack of consistency in method, consistent results have been rare. Though the value of historical case studies as a tool to assess diversionary behavior was argued long ago by Levy as potentially more convincing than statistical methods, this call has gone unheeded, and case studies remain scarce. The collective work following this critique has done little to alter the literature. Despite promises of "a more focused analysis of war," few have heeded Levy's prescription.[133]

There are certain methodological reasons for this academic slant. Apart from the presence of true "smoking gun" evidence regarding the initiation of a dispute out of the need to divert, autocrats and presidents are highly unlikely to go on record and state that the war they are pursuing is diversionary in nature. Furthermore, in order to typically be considered diversionary, some type of domestic discontent must be present to catalyze the decision to go to war, which evoke the criticism of choosing on the dependent variable, or conveniently narrowing the field of cases. All wars and conflict are not diversionary in nature, and the literature has reached an impasse with this particular issue

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is a powerful indicator. This relationship is only tested within territorial disputes however. See McLaughlin Mitchell and Prins. "Rivalry and Diversionary:" 937-961 and Jaroslav Tir, "Territorial Diversion:" 413-425.

[132] If the theory remains one of war and not of foreign policy, the number of true wars is still far too small a sample size for large N studies. Because of this, various external actions are often included into the analysis, while the theoretical underpinning and resultant explanation failing to account for the variation in the dependent variable.

[133] Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War:" 264, 284.

regarding justification on qualitative case selection and diversionary motives. However, as noted, scholars choose such cases as they fit within the diversionary mold.

Additionally, the tidbits of knowledge found through quantitative tests tend to be static and disconnected from the larger theoretical propositions, with this challenge compounded by the pattern of any "new" finding subsequently disputed in further tests. While this is an excellent catalyst to generate continued scholarship, endurance of results is low and so much work necessarily starts from scratch, rather than from a previous foundation. This creates an interesting tension within the quantitative/qualitative divide. If case studies and process tracing have traditionally been used in diversionary theory to provide mechanistic explanations regarding the decision to use external force, then equally valuable is the ability to ascertain the relevance of variables.[134] In doing so, we are provided with the conditions under which a certain mechanism operates. Simultaneously, this helps clarify the causal story for our chosen phenomena in a way that identifies relevant variables and interactions.[135] Unfortunately the two traditions often speak past each other, rather than engaging in a dialogue. The result is that the proliferation of quantitative studies can hinder case study research as we are often misled by various assumptions found in quantitative models without commensurate theoretical advancement.[136]

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[134] Scholars often attribute the propensity to divert due to rising inflation, dissatisfaction, presence of a rival etc., to name a few. We still do not have an adequate understanding of the circumstances that may bring about external engagement. My work is not a question of propensity, but utility, so this point is merely for illustrative purposes.

[135] Alexander L. George, and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Science,* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005): 19-21.

[136] Ibid: 6.

Although individual diversionary scholars who engage in qualitative research are undoubtedly able to update their own understanding of their theory based on Bayesian principles after exposure to quantitative research, this has been insufficient to coalesce around the coveted knowledge-accumulation we strive for[137]. Diversionary theory has produced some very interesting and path-breaking studies, but beyond the formative sociological pieces, there are few archetypical pieces from which all scholars draw stable insight. Theoretical advancement is often found on a *singular* rather than a *literature-wide* basis. As such, findings may be significant, but lack accessibility to advance the literature as a whole, due in part to the nonexistent bridges between other literatures and even research programs. Understanding of a particular scholar's theory often remains within that particular theory or amendment, and does not necessarily advance ones understanding of diversionary theory more broadly due to lack of attention towards literature-wide refinement. More attention towards generalizable concepts, rather than generalizable cases may seem counterintuitive to some, but where large portions of a theory remain (despite being decades old) in their infancy, common ground provides room for growth.[138]

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[137] As evidenced by my literature review, there is little agreement throughout - broadly defined. Scholars debate what kind of states can divert, whether diversions even occur, what they are used for, what they look like, when they happen and whether or no they even have value. To requote Patrick James; "seldom has so much common sense in theory found so little support in practice." See James, "Conflict and Cohesion:" 21-33.

[138] This type of disconnected research and the subsequent findings also tends to affect quantitative studies as well, not simply the other way around. Differences in understanding regarding concepts as type of diversion, regime type or catalyzing condition can contribute to heteroscedasticity in quantitative studies. Theoretical concepts can be challenging enough to quantify, but much more so when there is little to no consensus on definition. An important note should also be made in regards to overall generalizability of case studies, whereupon some argue critical case studies involving most/least likely cases can help to mitigate this problem. As I note later, though I focus on maximal cases of regime types, I ensure that my overall explanation runs counter to prevailing literature. See Jack Levy (2008) to be referenced later in this chapter.

If the strength of IR is that the field is "theory-led, theory-literate and theory-concerned," then moving us away from this assessment will erode the utility of any subsequent work.[139] In the disjointed state in which we find the diversionary literature in, it makes a great deal of sense to provide a firm foundation for an agreeable concert between traditions, as opposed to each one remaining compartmentalized. In doing so we need to concretize our important concepts including an accepted continuum of diversions, differences between engaging states and the interactions between the two. It is my hope that this will not only begin a new dialogue regarding diversionary choice in the literature, but will once more afford theory the respect it once commanded, and foster a new chance at qualitative, as opposed to strict statistical generalizability.

This work focuses on institutionalization as the primary cause for international conflict, broadly defined. The overall level of institutionalization within a regime dictates the preferred method, and as a result, most beneficial type of diversion. It is a valid concern, however, that this relationship may flow in the opposite direction. For example, different regime types and their inherent level of institutionalization may be the result of a particular kind of conflict environment.[140] We may run into the problem of endogeneity if it is the case that the international landscape has an effect on the overall level of institutionalization within regimes, though process tracing and case studies allows us to discern any possible effects. Regardless of this potential issue, the

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[139] Tim Dunne, Lene Hansen and Colin Wight, "The end of International Relations Theory?" *European Journal of International Relations* 19, 3 (2013): 405-425.

[140] Though I omit them from my analysis, the same can be said of democratic regimes as well. For instance, Gibler and Owsiak, looking at dyadic border settlements finds that settlement of territorial disputes leads to peace, and then democracy, implying a connection between absence of conflict, and democratic development. See Douglas M. Gibler and Andrew P. Owsiak, "Democracy and Settlement of International Borders, 1919-2001," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62, 9 (2017): 1847-1875.

diversionary literature, and more broadly the comparative authoritarian literature regards the international environment as a background condition, without strong causal power regarding the development of various regimes, and by extension, their level of institutionalization.[141] Instead, the two focus on domestic genesis of institutions and regimes.

Oisin Tansey's work on the international politics of authoritarian rule does not focus on the international environment as a generating force for authoritarian institutions, and instead notes that even the conflict environment is multifaceted, and any response to authoritarian actions is met by multiple, instead of a single concerted response. There are often opportunities for international forces to bolster an incumbent regime, rather than generating entirely new ones. Noting that many nondemocratic regimes have proved very resilient even in the wake of the collapse of the USSR, being able to adeptly respond to many political opportunities increases the regime's lifespan.[142]   Svolik argues that interstate wars similarly seem to have a lacking effect on the propensity to embolden

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[141] Insofar as the external environment have a causal effect on the propensity to or composition of diversions, the field is mixed. It is well known that a state's potential list of diversionary targets is usually quite small thanks to differences in strength, trade relations, geography etc. Weak states thus need to find weaker targets, thought his too is a double-edged sword as reciprocity is often seen as necessary in a diversion. If States A and B had a huge disparity in power, nobody is likely to care much about the diversion, and the benefits accrued will be negligible. While rivals have been cited as a good targets for diversions, the ritualized interactions between such states may inadvertently blunt political utility. Finally, a permissive international environment and diversionary choice are not mutually inclusive. A personalist dictator may derive more benefit from a war than a diplomatic spat, but being surrounded by friendly, or valuable states may take the option off the table. There are no guarantees a diversion may occur at all, and an action without perceived benefits will not simply be pursued if it is the next option on the list. Engaging in a diversion is a calculated risk, and sometimes the calculation dictates that a diversion is not pursued. For lack of diversionary targets see Jack Levy, "The Causes of War and the Conditions of Peace," *Annual Review of Political Science* 1, no. 1 (1998): 139-165. For nonaggressive diversionary targets refer to Sung Chul Jung, "Searching for Non-aggressive Targets: Which States Attract Diversionary Actions?" *Journal of Peace Research* 51, 6 (2014): 755-766. On rivals see Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry," Steve Chan, *Enduring Rivalries in the Asia-Pacific*. (Cambridge University Press, 2013): 134-135 and Michael P. Colaresi, Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson. *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics: Position, Space and Conflict Escalation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 7, 28.
[142] Tansey, *International Politics*.

even military coups.[143] In an exhaustive study of the authoritarian politics more broadly,

Svolik had previously noted that conflict or any changes in the international level of

hostility are typically exogenous to the genesis of autocrats, as opposed to having an

effect on their creation.[144] This is echoed by Wright and Escribe-Folch who find that

contention capable of generating institutional change reaches its zenith inter-regime, with

even regime-altering change itself often being domestically produced.[145]

My work does not contest this, and the lack of theoretical or empirical findings

that the external conflict environment is a determining factor in institutionalization is

inconsequential to my case studies. I focus solely on the effect domestic political

institutions and the catalyzing effects have on preference to engage in particular types of

diversions. With that being said, another point that needs addressing is the relationship

between institutionalization and regime-type. While it may be confusing at first to

conceptualize institutionalization as dictating the overall type of regime, which in turns

privileges different types of diversions over others, thus complicating the basic

hypothetical relationship, my work does not conceive of the relationship in this way.

Based on empirical regularities found within the comparative authoritarian literature, the

relationship between regime-type and institutions runs in the opposite direction with

institutionalization being a function of regime type, and not the other way around (CITE).

As such, analyzing what type of diversion is most conducive to each regime type need

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[143] Milan Svolik, "Moral Hazard in Authoritarian Repression and Military Intervention in Politics," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57, 5 (2013): 765-794.

[144] Svolik, *The Politics*. This does not necessarily preclude the occurrence of exogenous shocks resulting in regime change, though the literature regarding such a phenomenon are typically concerned with democracies, possibly due to the far-reaching effects of the fall of the USSR. For a discussion on exogenous shocks and regime change, see Jan Teorell, *Determinants of Democratization: Explaining Regime Change in the World, 1972-2006* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 77-137.

[145] Wright and Escribe-Folch, "Authoritarian Institutions:" 283-309.

not include the exogenous consideration of institutionalization by itself because it is

endogenous to the given regime-type.

Case Selection

Currently there is no theoretical work within the literature that provides reasons

why certain types of diversions are preferred over war. Although the standard arguments

regarding the overall costs and risks inherent to losing war do have some merit, this fails

to explain why some nondemocratic states continue to opt for war outside of potentially

sunk costs and inherent risks. Rationalist explanations provide some guidance, but there

is little reconciliation between the two literatures.[146] Similarly it does not explain why

some authoritarian states may be motivated to engage in diplomatic disputes despite the

audience largely disconnected from the political process or simply not being "engaging"

enough. Potential diversions may be too little to be noticed. Major Datasets each have

their own definitions of "conflict," contributing to conceptual ambiguity, with the only

consistent finding is that true warfare is rare. Alternate types of conflict continue to

occur, and thus engaging states must see some type of utility from these actions. Until

comparatively recently however, alternate diversions have not been considered diversions

at all in a theoretical sense, with that honorific reserved for wars. This is due in part to

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[146] See the following footnote.

there being very few (if any) case studies regarding the choice of and method of diverting.[147]

Due in part to this lack of attention towards diversionary choice, my study analyzes maximal cases, which is to say ideal-typical cases in regards to authoritarian regime type. By utilizing this particular type of case found in critical case studies, I am able to begin to test the general plausibility of my theory, while simultaneously focusing on cases generally considered more important in the wider literature. To this end, I'm fortunate analytically speaking in that my choice of cases have been studied in some form or another within the diversionary literature, but typically through the lens traditional diversionary theory. Additionally, extant studies have focused less on both my classificatory schema, and chosen variables.

The Second Taiwan Strait crisis serves as a maximal case for personalism and the institutionalization (or lack thereof) that this type of regime entails. Mao Zedong enjoyed largely unfettered power in the aftermath of the Chinese Civil war, which had only begun to shake and wane prior to the second incarnation of the Great Leap Forward. Given his centralization of power and lack of intimate channels between his underlings and the population at large, a diversion had to be sufficiently large and spectacular in order to compensate for lack of dispersal mechanisms.[148] As I will show, even the state-controlled media was largely unwilling to acquiesce to Mao during his period of

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[147] Amy Oakes, *Diversionary War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012): 22.
[148] i.e., easily accessible information, free and fair press, transparent channels of governance etc. Less opportunities for civilians to "make up their own minds" and ascribe a level of organic import on the issue.

weakness, and it was only after the violent diversionary route was chosen did the state apparatus once again more fully support Mao's vision.

Perhaps the most detailed treatment of the Second Taiwan Strait crisis from a diversionary (or more broadly, domestic politics) perspective, is *Useful Adversaries* by Thomas Christensen, who argues that the crisis in question was motivated to "light the flame under the feet" so to speak, of the revolution once again and spur the peasants towards fervently pursuing the Great Leap Forward.[149] Additionally, he makes the claim that the crisis in question was meant to be sustainable, with no change to the status quo. According to Christensen, Mao wanted to simultaneously preserve the presence of the Kuomintang on the islands, while avoiding the direct involvement of the United States.

According to my theoretical propositions, the conflict was not meant to merely mobilize the peasantry, but towards the reconsolidation and recapitulation of power around Mao. A seemingly unmanageable situation played right into his hands in reaffirming his control over most aspects of the state and micromanaging the crisis as a whole. Additionally, though it is true Mao backed down against the threat of nuclear retaliation from Eisenhower, the involvement of the United States served to magnify the threat looming offshore, catalyzing the domestic response and circumventing the need for a sophisticated bureaucratic or institutional apparatus to disperse diversionary sentiment. In effect, though I argue Mao did want to seize Jinmen and Mazu, a desire he ultimately failed to achieve, he won on the home front by reaffirming his status as supreme leader.

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[149] Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

This case is unique from typical diversionary cases in that Mao did not necessarily face an existential crisis. Christensen's work argues Mao was strong, but needed a short-term boost to mobilize the peasantry. However, as I will argue, I argue was weakened by a combination of policy failure and international issues, and thus the crisis was motivated to once again centralize Mao along all aspects of state society. I do not argue that Mao was in danger of being ousted as paramount leader, but I do argue that situation was motivated not for international goals, but for domestic consolidation.

Galtieri's invasion of the Falklands serves as my choice of military regime's diversionary strategy. I choose it for a number of reasons, the most important of which is that Argentina has historically had a large amount of experience in regards to both coups and military regimes. This contributes to the ritualized operation of such a government, and thus contributing to its status as a maximal case. The fact that such a spectacle occurred under Galtieri's tenure, when a diversion became politically necessary, highlights the proposition that diversionary actions are both calculated and carefully chosen. The relatively long pause between coup and diversion accentuates the effect of weakening institutions and the reliance on extant functions of the government and how they can be operationalized for a given conflict. In essence, doing the best with what they have.

Similar to the previous case, existing studies of the war differ in both intention and end result. Levy and Vakili argue that the war itself was the intention of the regime, with the end-goal being continued solidarity amongst the Junta.[150] This however implies

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[150] Levy and Vakili, "Diversionary Action."

that the Junta in its current incarnation was meant to persist after the eventual seizure.

Given Galtieri's tenuous position in the military (concessions had been made to allow

him to keep his post), the lasting utility post-war was suspect. Amy Oakes makes the

claim that Galtieri sought a diversionary spectacle, similar to my argument, and that a

war was untenable. Additionally, by beginning her analysis on Galtieri's tenure, she

ignores the intra-regime and intrastate dynamics that had been at play in previous

years.[151] Given my attention to institutions, it is prudent to trace the progression of either

degradation or growth of institutional power to arrive a satisfying conclusions. Taylor

Fravel makes a similar claim, arguing that the Falklands war does not fit the mold of a

diversionary action given what he perceived to be a low threat of Galtieri's removal and

no urgency in diverting in previous years. Instead, the endgame was concession from the

British, not political consolidation.[152]

This argument detracts from the importance of regime dynamics and motivating

forces, as opposed to leadership whims. Focusing on a singular leader compartmentalizes

both motivation and goal, which is similar to previous incarnations of diversionary

scholarship, but hamstrings our ability to draw conclusions cross-case outside of a

singular leader. Additionally, as both authors conflate "support" with "utility," they

regard sovereignty over the Falklands as a victory unto itself, rather than how the

achievement would strengthen the military post-transition or in a broader functional

sense.[153]

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[151] Oakes, *Diversionary War.*

[152] M. Taylor Fravel, "The Limits of Diversion: Rethinking Internal and External Conflict," *Security Studies* 19, 2 (2010): 307-341.

[153] Oakes advances the idea that Galtieri was unwilling to revert Argentina back to a democratic state until the economy had been restored, but I demonstrate that this was not only completely impossible, but that

Finally, the ongoing dispute surrounding the sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands group between China and Japan serves as my maximal case of institutionalization. The Chinese Communist party serves as the representative single-party regime. Due to the advantages China possesses, the period in question allows me to intimately delineate how institutional endowment can magnify lower-level disputes with a high degree of safety, while still being utilized in a way which preserves and strengthens the regime.

This case is unique in that the dispute remains ongoing (albeit with significant differences currently), but that the extant body of work on the Senkaku islands has thus far avoided the eye of many diversionary theorists. Instead, various scholars ascribe the importance of the crisis on various security and economic factors.[154] One scholar who argues against the diversionary impetus is Taylor Fravel, who claims that a diversionary strategy is inappropriate for the given dispute. He notes that the importance of the islands lay (as previously stated) in their economic and strategic value, as well as their status as a symbol of nationalism. As such, though authoritarian regimes may be more willing to negotiate territorial issues when under duress, the reinforcement mechanisms he outlines prevents this from occurring here.[155] This proposition rests upon the idea that a dispute needs to end in some form in order to extract some diversionary benefit. As institutional complexity increases in accordance with my argument, states have a greater ability to manage multifaceted issues, including escalation/de-escalation and conflating small disputes with huge issues, all the while extracting political utility.

Galtieri was amenable to a civilian transition, as long as the institutional interests of the Junta were attended to. The military was most comfortable in the barracks, rather than the capitol.

[154] I survey this literature later.

[155] Taylor Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation: Explaining China's Compromises in Territorial Disputes," *International Security* 30, 2 (2005): 46-83.

A common theme in all of my cases is that of a variable catalyst towards diversionary choice. The reason for this approach is simple because regimes can weather different crises. However, as I show when the institutional strength of the regime as a whole is threatened, organizational self-interest works to bolster extant structures, rather than the outdated concept of "distracting" an audience. Additionally, victory during a chosen diversion is not tantamount to mission accomplished, as I demonstrate in varying contexts how affirming the status quo, failing to achieve a stated goal, or even preparing for a reversion of a given outcome can serve institutional interests.

Further Caveats and Caution

Due to the uncharted nature of my research program and lack of prior theoretical work, my study must be exploratory in nature. As such, because the body of work from which I draw my support is entirely under-theorized, my prime goal is to clarify my theoretical propositions, concretize my causal mechanisms regarding diversionary choice and provide a rigorous and convincing account of diversionary discretion in action. In short, I seek to provide a "hypothetical story about why acts, events, structure and thoughts occur."[156] Implicit in this goal is the rigorous focus on causal relationships and the temporality of chosen events – all the more prudent considering the widely-accepted hallmarks of diversionary actions.[157] Due to the unique attributes of diversionary events,

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[156] Robert I. Sutton and Barry M. Staw, "What Theory is not," *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 40, 3 (1995): 378.
[157] Ibid.

we need a more discerning eye in choosing our cases qualitatively.[158] I do not treat my

cases as sampling units and it would be counterproductive to choose them for such a

reason. Accordingly, I do not conflate the notion of statistical generalizability as a

similar modus of generalizing the results of case studies.[159] I thus strive for analytic

generalization and clarity, relying on theory in which to assess the empirical results of my

chosen case studies.[160]

This strategy however exposes me to some of the pitfalls and common criticisms

of exploratory case studies. The first of which is generalization. I focus on one case of

each specific regime-type. This is due to both the constraints of this project, and the fact

that this approach represents both a path-breaking and brush-clearing exercise into

diversionary theory. Additionally, many argue that that generalization is impossible from

case study research. This often refers to statistical generalization from survey-based

research in which samples are indicative of a larger universe of cases and not the analytic

generalization referenced above. It has been argued that thinking in terms of samples and

universes are inappropriate when conducting case studies.[161] This does not mean that this

strategy is impossible, just merely inappropriate for an exploratory study. In accordance

with proper theory construction, the use of exploratory, even singular cases works

towards validating or invalidating the precepts of my theory. This represents not only a

path forward into the waning theoretical side of the literature, but can provide a lens

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[158] I note in the literature review that quantitative studies should be more discerning when choosing their universe of cases as well, as they are often unsubstantiated by theory, nor does the stated universe of cases often fall in line with the proposed boundaries of the study.

[159] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods, 3rd ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2003): 30.

[160] Ibid: 32-33.

[161] Ibid: 37.

through which to refocus past work in the field. Additionally, situating this research project in case studies allows me to combat the question of spuriousness regarding my variables prior to the inevitable calls of statistical analysis.[162]

For these reasons, my study straddles two typologies of case studies. This project lies on the boundary between idiographic and hypothesis-generating studies.[163] I make the claim that it shares similarities with both due to the varied construction of this project. My work is guided by both a conceptual framework and theoretically bounded aspects of conflict, while engaging in rigorous historical analysis whilst tracing my cases. On the other hand, this work emerges from a theoretical vacuum, and so I intend to extrapolate my propositions in an empirical sense while hoping to promote a more nuanced understanding of diversionary foreign policy. By structuring my case studies in such a way, I intend to avoid simply describing singular cases as "an end in itself," but instead use significant cases to help construct large generalizations beyond my universe. The end result will hopefully be guiding the literature towards further distillation regarding the direction and focus of my research.[164]

As previously mentioned, diversionary "cases" are thought to be rare. If the theoretical fixation on war persists, the number is quite small. Due to this enduring perception, case studies are a necessary tool to compensate for a lack of similar cases. In the words of a qualitative research bible, we must then focus on "*whether* and *how* a variable mattered to the outcome," rather than ascertaining "*how much* it mattered."[165]

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[162] George and Bennett, *Case Studies*: 34.

[163] Jack S. Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, 1 (2008): 4-5.

[164] Ibid.

[165] George and Bennet, *Case Studies.*

Both are commons steps in any research program, but case selection, even cases selected on the dependent variable in a field devoid of comparable studies allows us to help assess whether or not causal variables matter (in terms of necessary or sufficient causality) to my theorized outcome. Future tests can mitigate early criticisms by testing case in which there is variation in the dependent variable.

This work offers a first attempt at synthesizing a new research approach regarding the choice of diversionary action based on institutional configuration. Because adequate bridges between the comparative authoritarian literature, the institutional constraints and diversionary literature are weak if non-existent, and because theoretical and empirical consensus within the diversionary literature is similarly unavailable, this work assumes the role of an exploratory study. Studies are deemed exploratory when, as noted, our accumulated knowledge is operationally insufficient to inform the construction of new theoretical propositions.[166] Levy and Vakili adequately summarize of the state of the theoretical and empirical realm when they note "Unfortunately, the theoretical literature is of little value in helping us understand the conditions conducive to the external use of force for internal political purposes."[167] In the nearly three decades since this argument, we are still experiencing the same stagnation within the diversionary literature.

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[166] Yin, *Case Study Research:* 30.
[167] Levy and Vakili. "Diversionary Action:" 121.

Chapter 5: Personalist Regimes: Violent Tools

Brief Overview

Most lay scholars are familiar with the animosity between the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China. Taiwan has proven itself an economic powerhouse with a high standard of living, but the contested sovereignty of the island has alternately resulted in diplomatic cooling, and outright violence. Though the communists had won the mainland, the Kuomintang, or nationalist party, consolidated their hold over Taiwan, including heavily fortifying the offshore islands of Jinmen and Matsu. In response, the mainland's forces began to heavily bombard nationalist holdings in the Taiwan straits in September of 1954, despite the proximity of the United States 7th fleet. China eventually seized the Yijiangshan Islands from Taiwan during the crisis, but eventually concluded their attack after Congress approved the Formosa Resolution, which authorized President Eisenhower to respond to Chinese Communist Party aggression in kind. Coupled with high-level talks and serious consideration on retaliating against the mainland with nuclear weapons, thus concluding the First Taiwan Strait Crisis in May of 1955. Peace was short-lived, with the second crisis occurring a few short years later.

The Second Taiwan Strait crisis offers scholars an opportunity to view the diversionary motivations of an all-powerful leader. The crisis, lasting little over a month between August and September of 1958, is not only uniquely suited for the study of diversionary theory due to the presence of a leader beleaguered by societal and economic ills, but the period of time immediately prior to the shelling of Jinmen and Quemoy islands engages certain motivations and mechanisms which remain critical to the study of personalist diversions. Additionally, this case deflates the notion that even a leader armed with a rampant cult of personality need not resort to diversionary behavior to bolster their position. Mao Zedong's actions against the outlying islands of Taiwan offer us a convincing account of the motivations and fears inherent in personalist regimes. This case illustrates the manner in which violent actions are particularly suited to tying up and engaging the disparate actors of a dictatorial societies in order to not only increase internal stability, but further cement political control around the dictator, aggrandizing not only his governing utility, but gratifying their continued status as leader.

The fierce verbal attacks Mao levied not only against Taiwan but the West in general seemed permanent in the aftermath of the first crisis in the Taiwan Strait. Mao was economically weakened in the wake of the lackluster performance of his first five-year plan for the domestic economy. Simple inability to sustain a large-scale attack against Chiang-Kai Shek bolstered by the west, and the technological backwardness of the People's Liberation Army seemed powerful reasons to not embroil the fledgling CCP in a violent quagmire against the island nation of Taiwan. However, as paramount leader, the failure of Mao's economic policies reflected poorly on the chairman, and the peasantry from which Mao traditionally drew his strength, the backbone of the economic

experiment, was not only lacking in revolutionary fervor, but in support for the regime.

Given the role of the cadres in driving previous economic experiments, ire was directed

towards many of Mao's subordinates. Additionally, and most unexpectedly, Nikita

Khrushchev, Stalin's successor as leader of the Eastern Bloc, despite having a mere

fraction of his predecessor's influence, began to systematically denounce and dismantle

the initiatives of the Soviet strongman.

Mao, one of Stalin's most ardent admirers was understandably afraid. The

Chairman, who had emulated much of Stalin's behavior, hoping to mirror the USSR's

success, saw the attack on Stalin's actions as an attack on his own, and by extension, a

personal attack. Knowing that Khrushchev lacked the authority to call the leaders of the

Communist world like his predecessor saw himself as the logical, and most "pure"

successor to Stalin. Sensing personal weakness from the Soviet Premier and intra-bloc

splitting, Mao endeavored to rally not only his own populace around a stunning new

centralized economic policy that would catapult China into "pure" communism, but also

serve as a model for the rest of the Communist bloc that Mao was a leader worthy of the

world's respect and could serve as a potential font of socialist guidance for the rest of the

second world.

Taiwan, and the violence directed towards it not only served to create a wartime

air of urgency to spur the populace into action with a successful (and wholly communist)

economic program, show through true action that Mao was committed to opposing the

West to the rest of his allies, rekindle his waning political power amongst the CCP in the

aftermath of several large disasters and ascend to the status he once held amongst his

people. A successful economic leap based on communist principles would affirm Mao's

revolutionary genius, head off a small, but growing level of dissatisfaction amongst the elite, as well as serve as a demonstrable model to the world that China was a nation to be emulated, with Mao as its center.

I trace the development of Mao as a wartime leader to a personalist dictator wielding charisma, influence and political power in varying measures. Next, I describe various conditions, both domestic and international that had an adverse effect on the ability of Mao to wield his political power, and thus placed limits on Mao himself. Due to the composition of the early Chinese communist party as one formed around (or, some argue forcibly molded around) a single individual, parallel institutions were either inadequate or insufficiently developed to deal with the political and social ills faced by the post-civil war administration. As Mao was originally the most significant portion of the governing apparatus, any degradation to his position would necessarily catalyze a reinvigoration to deal with looming issues. Given the lack of institutional complexity and availability of resources at the time, I then show how a violent attack on KMT-held islands was the preferred and most valuable strategy given the circumstances.

The Man, the Myth

Despite being brothers in arms against both the onslaught of the Imperial Japanese Army and the Kuomintang under Chiang Kai-Shek, the hierarchical order of the fledgling communist party was still in flux. Early contests of influence and superiority were not based on political maneuvering, but were decided by the ability to interpret Marxism.

Mao Zedong was aware of this, and the desire to sideline influential opponents was a goal

he committed to quite early. His unique brand of revolutionary thought, aptly named

Maoism put him at odds with not only Marxists within his own party, but the Kremlin as

well. Differing from standard Marxism-Leninism, Mao believed that the source of

revolutionary fervor should be the peasantry, for only they had the energy and the drive

to transform China.

These new interpretations led Mao to vie for power as well as supremacy

particularly between 1930-1944. Facing challenges during the Zunyi conference of 1935

and during the period of CCP-introspection in Yan'an, Mao matched wits with various

Moscow-trained communists including Zhang Wentian and Bo Gu. Unhappy with

Moscow's attempt at forcibly guiding Chinese Communism, Mao came to see the

Russian educated "28 Bolsheviks" as political rivals.[168] While intelligent and able

students of Marxism, the Yan'an period is significant in that it was a period of internal

reorganization amongst the remaining core of the CCP. Earning his stripes as a military

leader and serving as an inspiration to the peasantry, Mao was able to secure various

supporters within the party who acceded to his ideals of Maoism. The peasants had

strength, and such strength was necessary for Communist survival. Furthermore, Mao

had the unique ability to remove Marxism from its ivory tower, making it both accessible

and digestible enough in order to appeal to bases of support outside of academia. The

final opponent of Mao, Wang Ming, another Moscow disciple was finally outmaneuvered

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[168] Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-Tung,* (London, Simon and Schuster, 1966): 149-151, See also Kan Liang, "The Rise of Mao and His Cultural Legacy: The Yan'an Rectification Movement," *The Journal of Contemporary China,* 12, 34 (2003): 225-228.

during the rectification campaign and resulted in the consolidation of true ideological

power around himself. Maoism had won.[169]

Mao began to actualize his plans for the implementation of Maoism and the re-

arrival or China on the world stage as an economic powerhouse with an essay penned in

1949 entitled "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship." Assessing the current health of

the revolution as well as outlining a vision for the future, Mao was ardent in his belief

that the peasantry needed its latent potential realized, and party-led mobilization

programs were the only way in which Mao's vision could be realized. These mass-

mobilization campaigns and direct party involvement became the hallmarks of the

Communist China's early years.[170] Pushing the masses into motion was comparatively

easy during the Japanese invasion as the citizens of China had a vested interest in fighting

for their homeland (with even the CCP and KMT cooperating for a time), and the sense

of wartime urgency carried over into China's involvement during the Korean war.

Sending troops to oppose the advance of UN forces towards the Yalu River,

China entered the conflict as a major force to contend with. Sending over one million

soldiers to aid the North Korean's struggle, China went it alone. The Soviet Union,

hesitant to become embroiled in a direct conflict with the United States, failed to provide

China with adequate logistics or even proper weaponry.[171] Operating away from Stalin's

side but not his gaze forced Mao to support the struggle of the North Koreans

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[169] Mercy A. Kuo, *Contending with Contradictions: China's Policy Toward Soviet Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Sino-Soviet Split, 1953-1960* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001): 20-21.
[170] Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1990): 514.
[171] Yang Huei Pang, "Helpful Allies, Interfering Neighbors: World Opinion and China in the 1950's," *Modern Asian Studies* 49, 1 (2015): 205.

independently for a time. Though Stalin eventually relented and allowed his bombers to provide air cover for the Chinese Communists once Mao began to commit troops towards opposing UN advances, the burden and the "glory" belonged to Mao and the CCP.[172] However, despite paying for their involvement in the war with losses in excess of 900,000 soldiers, an important point was made.[173] The task of countering the "America threat" which Mao had warned the masses about since at least 1949 provided them with a sense of duty and purpose.[174]

China's performance in the Korean conflict exceeded expectations.[175] Because of their ability to stall the march of the invading forces not only to the border of China, as well as their role in partitioning the Korean peninsula and serving as a bulwark in Asia, Mao's efforts positioned himself as an ally, not a satellite of the Soviet Union. As opposed to the states of Eastern Europe which were not only subservient, but completely beholden to Stalin, Mao understood his relative inferiority to the Kremlin, but was not necessarily Stalin's lapdog.[176] Mao was still however an ardent supporter of Stalinist economic policies, and he was convinced that the Soviet model of industrial development was a panacea towards strengthening China for the continued revolution. Though Stalin in 1953, the resultant economic course Mao pursued had all the hallmarks of Soviet centralization. Ostensibly, Mao believed the effectiveness of direct planning had allowed

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[172] Zhen Zhihua, "China and the Dispatch of the Soviet Air Force: The Formation of the Chinese-Soviet Korean Alliance in the Early Stage of the Korean War," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, 2 (2010): 211-230.

[173] Pang "Helpful Allies:" 204.

[174] Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 16-20.

[175] The Soviets at the time expected much less of Mao, which in part is the cause for their delayed aid against U.S. backed forces towards the latter stages of the Korean War.

[176] Kuo, *Contending with Contradictions*: 29.

the USSR to not only grow to an economic giant in the 1930's, but strengthened it enough to survive the German onslaught of World War II.[177] These tangible results, as well as the apparent inability for Chiang Kai-Shek to effectively emulate a western development model convinced Mao to continue "leaning to one side" and pursue the soviet design.[178]

Once again demonstrating himself to be an ardent revolutionary and anti-imperialist, committed to resisting foreign interference on the Asian mainland to his populace, as well as remaining a consumer of soviet ideology, Mao was able to gain the necessary support of his own people, as well as the foreign capital necessary to embark on his first ambitious plan. Seeing in Mao a dutiful pupil of the Kremlin, this relationship began the period of close, concerted development between the USSR and China, with scores of Moscow-educated advisors (the so-called Soviet experts) entering China to steer them towards successful development.[179] Direct control reminiscent of their northern neighbors was a necessary component of China's mobilization, both due to the geographic size of Mao's territory and the complexity of the forthcoming societal reorganization. Socialism on this scale required authoritarianism.[180] To this end, he initiated a facsimile of Soviet-inspired and personalized "institutionalized unity" around himself in order to more efficiently order society.[181]

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[177] Though the Soviet's industrial capacity no doubt improved their chances against the onslaught of Germany during World War II, Mao seemed unwilling to accept the power of a virtually unlimited retreat, coupled with the devastating effects of Russia's winter in their ability to survive the German offensive.

[178] Spence, *The Search:* 541.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Michael E. Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): 218.

[181] Kuo, *Contending Contradictions,* 18-19. This of course has the dubious effect of any double-edged sword. Efficiency may have been streamlined and consolidated around Mao, but coordination and the resultant plans were now dependent on his involvement and "guidance."

The military had won the CCP the mainland but force of arms would not govern it. Revolutionary fervor in the aftermath of the Korean War and Soviet support translated into widespread enthusiasm towards collectivization. The resultant civilian mechanisms built to support the collectivization drive were both hastily constructed and mismanaged. Beginning with several thousand collectives in the first stages of Mao's first economic plan, the fall of 1954 saw the number quickly grow from 14,000 to 35,000 in total. Rapidly accelerating growth in collectivization saw the overall number of collectives ascend to 497,000 by years end. Such startling speed sobered Mao and convinced him of the need of a cool-down period of reassessment in February 1955, lest the new revolution quickly grow out of the control of himself and the party.[182]

Though ostensibly focused on the mobilization of the peasantry, Mao tried to mimic Stalin's success and so focused his efforts on China's rapid industrialization. Due to the backwardness of the previous Qing era, China saw the industrial revolution pass it by without benefitting the interior[183] of the nation. This in turn imposed new burdens on the peasantry as the vast majority of the necessary resources needed for rapid industrialization had to be extracted from the countryside and funneled to cities which had the infrastructure to attempt implementing Mao's plan. The presence of Soviet experts facilitated the commencement of heavy industrial and infrastructural projects which centralized capital in the coastal and urban areas, though the larger population was left without tangible benefits. Furthermore, in order to feed the growing demands of

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[182] Avery Goldstein, *From Bandwagon to Balance-of-Power Politics: Structural Constraints and Politics in China, 1949-1978* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1991): 98-99.
[183] A quick note in terminology. I often use the term "interior" or "inner provinces" to refer to the rural heartland of China, typically understood as the domain of the peasantry. As opposed to the coastal, more affluent areas of China wherein some level of localized industrialization did in fact exist.

metropolitan areas, Mao enacted a policy of "rigorous accumulation" which diverted much needed grain from the interior provinces to the cities to feed the growing urban population.[184]

It soon became clear that the current path of "development" was precarious at best. Due to the haste at which industrialization was pursued, cadres were ill-versed in management practices relevant to the newly formed collectives, with grassroots leadership eventually degenerating by 1956 into arbitrary and capricious orders towards the peasants. The logistical nightmare of governing close to a half-million collectivized units required that the bulk of confiscated resources be diverted towards sustaining administrative and production costs, with few benefits trickling back down to the masses. Both the process of industrialization and overall consumption were negatively affected. Between 1955-1956, overall industrial investment skyrocketed by 62%. This required a commensurate amount of raw materials that was outstripped by overall investment.[185]

Incessant government meddling with Mao at its center, and a focus on quick industrialization disenfranchised the peasantry and forced the economy into a self-defeating loop. Lack of available inputs saw a rampant rise in crime aimed at using illicit methods to secure badly needed resources causing inflation. The government-led directives and mismanagement led commercial enterprises to prioritize production, ultimately sidelining quality controls and flooding the market with poorly made goods which the peasantry had to consume, or reproduce continuously. Finally, and squeezing the rural backbone of the economy even further was the issue of migration which saw an

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[184] Spence, *The Search:* 554-550.
[185] David Bachman, *Bureaucracy, Economy and Leadership in China: The Institutional Origins of the Great Leap Forward* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 20-21.

exodus of over 6 million peasants to the increasingly crowded cities, which necessitated the reallocation of 3 million tons of grain to feed their increasing appetites.[186] While they were the driving force behind Mao's vision, their reward was lacking. The alienation and disenfranchisement of the peasantry eventually forced an imposed, but short-term reorientation of Mao's vision.

Mao Laid Low

Adhering to the central tenets of Maoism, the idea that man was an agent of change, and the peasantry was the font of manpower has some logical consistency in regards to theories of industrial centralization. However, the results of governmental meddling resulted in numerous problems that plagued not only the state economy, but the personal power of Mao as well. Enjoying his status as both an authority on Marxism and his role as a military leader against the Imperial Japanese Army and the KMT, Mao reveled in unparalleled power within the CCP, with all Central Committee documents needing his approval.[187] Furthermore, support from the Soviet Union inspired within Mao a confidence which made true Chinese communism seem all the more attainable. The Euphoria was short-lived, and the initial efforts to centralize production had largely failed, with revolutionary fervor waning and overall support for Mao declining as a result.

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[186] Ibid: 22.
[187] Ibid: 14.

Despite Mao's preeminent position within the CCP, his governing expertise was not as expansive as his authority. By 1955 the most influential economic advisors within communist China were Chen Yun and Li Fuchun, serving as the vice-premier and chairman of the state planning commission respectively. Though the formative stage of the first five-year plan saw Mao and his advisors acting in unison (aided by the guile of de facto emissary Zhou Enlai), their assessment of the state of the revolution began to diverge by the latter half of 1955. Chen Yun for instance was forced to admit that complete state centralization of industry was a mistake once he began to see the effects of government control firsthand and summarily agreed with Mao's later call for "balanced development." Li Fuchun however openly disagreed with his two comrades, continuing the call for complete state centralization.[188]

The imbalanced nature of the first five-year plan hit the countryside most. As noted earlier, the siphoning of raw materials and foodstuffs were geared towards the support of heavy industry and feeding the cities, while the same policies retarded the growth of the rural economy. For the first time Mao was forced to contend with widespread civilian noncompliance. While not encountering outright defiance towards the government in Beijing, at the time the most effective way to defy the government was by "sitting down," and in essence halting Mao's vision.[189] Disenfranchisement and outright exploitation had reduced the motivation of Mao's peasant base, and as such the revolution had stalled.

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[188] Bachman, *Bureaucracy:* 22.
[189] Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*: 215.

As if the blow of failure towards his conceptualization of Marxism and Maoist mass-mobilization was not enough, the harbinger of even more damage arrived from abroad. Nikita Khrushchev had succeeded Josef Stalin as the leader of the Soviet Union, and by extension the Eastern Bloc. However, unlike his imposing predecessor, Khrushchev had only a fraction of Stalin's presence within the Kremlin. Because of this, Mao seemed to believe early on that Khrushchev was not automatically worthy of leading the communist world. As likely successor to Stalin's position as prime interpreter of Marxism, Mao decided on more than one occasion to challenge the new premier on various esoteric issues of communist ideology. The feeling was mutual as Khrushchev similarly distrusted Mao, noting once that Mao "has played politics with Asiatic cunning, following his own rules and cajolery, treachery, savage vengeance and deceit…I was always on my guard with him."[190] Unwilling to aid Mao as his predecessor had done due in part to his inability to contain the ambitions of the Chairman, Khrushchev came to the conclusion in 1954 that sparring in some way shape or form was an inexorable consequence of continued dealings with China.[191]

Moscow continued token support for Mao in the aftermath of Stalin's death due to the need for Chinese political support, but old fears regarding whether or not "Maoism" actually contributed to the Marxist movement, or threatened the existing body as an alternate ideology, as well as concern over Mao's longevity as a continued student of the USSR were rehashed anew.[192] The Soviet Union had moved past the totalitarianism of

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[190] Nikita Khrushchev (Introduction and supplemental notes by Edward Crankshaw), *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1970): 461.
[191] John Wilson Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988): 60.
[192] Kuo, *Contending with Contradictions:* 20-21.

mass mobilization, and Mao's adherence to Stalinist policy further decreased the breadth

of cooperation with China. Had Mao remained a student of the Kremlin, mistakes the

USSR had long rectified would not have beleaguered China between 1953-1956.[193]

Khrushchev realized the dangers of adherence to archaic practices, and so he began to

distance himself and by extension, the communist world as a whole from Mao's vision of

communism.

During the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,

Khrushchev dealt the most devastating, if indirect blow to Mao. Standing before the

some of the greatest political minds of the USSR, the Soviet Premier launched into what

became known as the "de-Stalinization campaign" on February 25th 1956, by publicly

chastising his predecessor, exposing his various forms of treachery and systematically

attacking the cult of personality that had grown around Stalin.[194] Considering how

closely Mao followed past Soviet tenets in an effort to emulate the USSR's early success,

and his faith in totalitarianism as the best vehicle with which to modernize China, in the

words of one author "Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin's crimes were an unintended

assessment of Mao's recent mistakes."[195] Worse still, owing to the desperate need to

make sense of Khrushchev's "surprise attack," a special meeting of the Politburo on

March 17th that convened specifically to digest this new turn of events largely agreed

with Khrushchev's assessment. Moscow specialists Zhang Wentian and Wang Jiaxiang,

as well as Mao's right-hand Zhou Enlai came to the concerted conclusion that Stalinist

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[193] Goldstein, *From Bandwagon:* 115.

[194194] Kuo, *Contending with Contradictions:* 76.

[195] Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008): 49. There is little evidence to point to Khrushchev's secret speech as being directed towards Mao in any way, given the secret and controversial nature of Stalin's denouncement.

mainstays (and by extension Mao's as well) such as collectivization were regrettable mistakes.[196]

Though ostensibly pleased that the last great communist presence of World War II had been denounced and he now stood alone, Mao immediately focused on damage control. He began by issuing a statement two days after the Politburo had analyzed Khrushchev's secret speech. Mao was hesitant to completely denounce Stalin, but levied the most criticism of what Mao saw as sleights towards the chairman himself when China needed the Soviet Union the most. Actions (or rather, inaction) against China, according to Mao, had far outstripped the severity of Stalin's domestic mistakes. Using this scapegoating in an attempt to reaffirm his own position and personality cult, Mao sought to engage the incoming Soviet delegation (headed by Mikoyan) that was scheduled to land in Beijing on April 6th. Demonstrating his awareness of the parallels between himself and Stalin, in his essay "On the Historical Experience of the Proletarian Dictatorship," Mao attempted to couch the criticisms of Stalin in softer terms to avoid possible backlash, whilst simultaneously nesting the acknowledgement of mistakes in a way that would be unlikely to arouse the "unhealthy interest" of the Chinese people.[197]

These results were largely in vain, and Mao's image suffered tangible damage domestically as a result. The Eighth Party Congress of the Communist Party of China which began in September 1956 saw a number of public, if symbolic wounds to Mao's image. Any and all references to "Mao Zedong thought" were removed from the Chinese constitution due in part to the similarities between Stalin's and Mao personality cults.[198]

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[196] Ibid 49-50.
[197] Ibid: 51.
[198] Lorenz, *Sino-Soviet Split:* 53.

Furthermore, the collective party emphasized a need to diversify away from the focused model of concerted growth originally espoused by Mao, and instead advocated for a more balanced form of economic development.[199] Rejection of the class struggle – the cornerstone of the continuing revolution also reduced the influence of Mao's ideas.[200] He remained politically on top, but the unassailable status of himself as the prophet of socialism had been tarnished, which in turn reduced the ability to generate consensus and fervor within his own party.[201]

Denouncing of Stalin, at least to Mao, was damaging to Khrushchev's image, and the influence of the Soviet Union as well. As such, in Mao's mind, the weakening of the Soviet umbrella in the aftermath of Khrushchev's destalinization campaign released the grip of the USSR just enough to catalyze both the Hungarian revolution and the "Polish October" that rocked the communist world.[202] Mao and the Party began to press his perceived advantage in late October of 1956 after the situations in Hungary and Poland had come to a head due to mistreatment and "big-power chauvinism" at the hands of the Soviets.[203] Liu Shaoqi met with Soviet Ambassador P.F. Yudin to discuss the withdrawal

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[199] Bachman, *Bureaucracy,* 23. It should be noted however that Mao later advocated for a more balanced approach once his original adherence towards direct industrialization produced lackluster results. A cosmetic reorientation if there ever was one.

[200] Carlos Wing-hung Lo, *China's Legal Awakening: Legal Theory and Criminal Justice in Deng's Era,* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1995): 35. It may be of interest to some readers to note that even though Mao sought to reinvigorate the people's struggle later during his rule, this is a point even Deng Xiaoping revisits after his return from exile in the late 70's.

[201] Spence, *The search*: 568-569.

[202] Lorenz, *Sino-Soviet Split:* 54. There is evidence to suggest that the newfound weakness of the Soviet Union was more tangible than Mao's mere perception of Khrushchev's ineptitude. Documents from the Soviet foreign ministry released during the first half of 1957 revealed that multiple communist nations used this lapse in Moscow's control to press the Kremlin for various concessions. Such requests ranged from generic calls for "better" treatment, or even requests that further reduced Moscow's control like the removal of all Soviet advisors. Though in the past Stalin had the clout and personal presence to be able to simply deny such requests, the aforementioned documents reveal that the Kremlin actually approved most of these appeals. See Ibid. 64.

[203] Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 146

of Soviet advisors from much of the communist bloc, but owing for the need for Soviet

technical assistance, science-minded help was welcome to stay in China.[204] On a more

personal Level, Mao directed Zhou Enlai to survey the USSR, Hungary and Poland

(conveniently the two states in which Khrushchev witnessed the most alarming erosion of

support) in an effort to assess continued Soviet management of the communist world.[205]

Zhou's assessment was very critical. According to him, the Soviet Union lacked

the nuance and guile to effectively guide Eastern European states in matters pertaining to

communism, and that China was uniquely positioned as well as uniquely socialist to offer

a new alternative form of leadership in the Eastern Bloc.[206] However poignant his

criticism, Mao's attempts to curry further favor with socialist nations resulted in few

concrete developments, and Soviet influence endured throughout the communist

world.[207] By now it had begun to dawn on Mao that his ability to properly shepherd the

PRC internally and externally was due to the domestic problems within China, and not

the receptivity of other nations. His weakened state domestically had been borne out of

the failures of the first five-year plan, and the denouncing of singular leadership, the

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[204] Austin Jersild (Translator), "Diary of Soviet Ambassador P.F. Yudin, Memorandum of Conversation with Liu Shaoqi of 30 October 1956," November 22, 1956, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF f. 0100, op. 49, 1956, p. 410 d. 9, I. 202-03. Available at https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116814. Though Mao was not opposed to lessening his dependence on Soviet technical assistance, he was opposed to the complete and sudden removal of all Soviet advisors. Although it is possible that other Soviet satellites would be weakened by the removal of Soviet technical assistance, and by extension Soviet influence, Mao sought to mitigate his own detrimental effects of a Soviet pullback.

[205] Jian, *Mao's China:* 70. I don't mention Yugoslavia as an area of eroded support due to the fact the Yugoslavs had begun to distance themselves from the USSR almost ten years previously. Furthermore, Tito was often cited as an on-and-off-again friend of the USSR, and not a necessary foothold for either Stalin or for Khrushchev.

[206] Zhang Shu Guang and Chen Jian (Translators) "Report 'My Observations on the Soviet Union,' Zhou Enlai to Mao Zedong and the Central Leadership (Excerpt), January 24, 1957. Original source: History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Shi Zhongquan, Zhou Enlai de zhuoyue fengxian [Remarkable Achievements and Contributions of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1993), 302-305. Available at: https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117033.

[207] Lorenz, *Sino-Soviet Split:* 64-65.

brainchild of Peng Dehuai, had begun to not only put tangible limits on the Chairman's domestic political power, but also his ability to generate support. Before Mao could launch himself into a leadership position in the communist world, he first needed to assure himself that things were not as bleak as they seemed. A domestic consolidation of political ego was necessary.

A Final Push

Mao's attempts to diplomatically curry favor within the Eastern Bloc were met with little success as the Soviet satellites seemed reluctant to diverge from the Kremlin's party-line. Even if Khrushchev lacked the imposing authority of Stalin, the world could not ignore the sheer size of the armed forces at his command, nor the economy which controlled. Furthermore, the USSR was still considered the true authority regarding communism. If Mao was not yet viewed as a socialist authority, especially one fit to judge the Soviet Union, then this problem had to be rectified beginning with his own party. With the Eighth Party Congress placing limits on own personal power as well as symbolically tarnishing his image and the legitimacy of "Mao Zedong thought," the chairman was in a disadvantageous position vis a vis his own party and the international community.

Mao moved quickly to remedy these mistakes. Taking stock of the current state of the revolution within China, and by extension his own personal clout, Mao deemed it necessary to finally court the voices of academics and political outsiders – an idea that

was only barely mentioned prior to the Eighth Party Congress. This new "Hundred

Flowers Campaign" was an effort on Mao's part to identify potential problems within the

CCP and formulate proper responses. By allowing the unfettered voices of all citizens to

come forth, Mao was hoping for a resurgence in support for Chinese Communism, and by

extension, himself. However, political infighting in Beijing between Mao and other

hardliners meant that his original push to entice academic viewpoints were met with

some skepticism. Although there were undoubtedly naysayers within the middle

kingdom, fear of reprisal kept them silent.[208]

Further complicating the beginning of this new campaign, Mao was unable to

generate enough consensus within his own party to adequately entice the state to rally

behind his cause. Particularly problematic was that the chairman's grasp on propaganda

had been ceded to influential politburo member Peng Zhen, and only after months of

pressure was Mao able to secure to state propaganda apparatus, and the party itself to

support his drive.[209] Mao described the newly endorsed campaign as:

> "A movement of ideological education carried out seriously, yet as gently as a breeze or mild rain. It should be a campaign of criticism and self-criticism carried to the proper extent. Meetings should be limited to small-sized discussion meetings or group meetings. Comradely heart-to-heart talks in the form of conversations, namely exchange of views between individuals, should be used more and large meetings of criticism or 'struggle' should not be held."[210]

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[208] Lorenz *Sino-Soviet Split:* 71.
[209] Spence, *The Search:* 569.
[210] Ibid: 570.

Emboldened, and brought in by Mao's assurances that there would be no punishment for voicing one's concerns, intellectuals became enthused and began to finally participate in the campaign en masse.

Criticism began pouring in at the onset of the campaign on May 1st 1957. First from intellectual circles, and then in the form of mass student protests after the construction of the famed "Democracy Wall" in Peking university. Instead of affirming their support for the continued revolution, Mao's detractors emerged as legion. Common targets of scholarly (and later peasant-based) criticism included the slavish adherence to Soviet practices, China's poor living conditions, the stratified disconnect between the party and the people and even the collectivization campaigns enthusiastically endorsed by Mao.[211] Furthermore, some scholars levied their criticism that the fervor by which China had entered the first five-year plan had not been due to faith in Mao's communist genius, but by fear as the vast majority of participation was compulsory.

The blooming of the Hundred Flowers did not last long. Two weeks after attempting to light the fire under the feet of the Revolution, on May 15th, Mao was forced to contend with some harsh realities. Mao's attempt to put his finger on the pulse of his revolution had revealed just how many detractors he had within his own borders, and it became clear that the reform demanded by the naysayers was unattainable and a new centralization of power was needed.[212] Domestic consolidation and his international outreach in light of Khrushchev's speech resulted in alienation – Mao was beset on all

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[211] Roderick Macfarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals* (New York: Praeger, 1960).

[212] Peter R. Moody, *The Politics of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party in China* (North Haven: The Shoe String Press Inc., 1973): 101.

sides by political detractors and indifferent "allies." Early June of 1957 saw Mao reverse course and claim that the campaign was an elaborate trap all along for enemies of the state to reveal themselves.[213] With Mao's personal image severely damaged within the politburo and the rejection of his ideals from the peasantry, Mao insisted the state needed to counter attack, and thus authorized the detention and suppression of hundreds of thousands of dissidents.[214]

Aptly summed up by one scholar, "the lesson of the Hundred Flowers Campaign was thus obvious. The Party had actively to lead all aspects of Chinese life."[215] Mao's attempts to curry favor through diplomatic engagement with the Eastern Bloc had all but ended in failure. His governing apparatus, centralized around the cult of personality and his own ideals had resulted in a lopsided approach that sought more to validate his own views as opposed to the struggle of China. With the failures of the first five-year plan, and the realization that even the peasantry dared to speak out against Mao's policies, the chairman realized that appeasement towards his naysayers would result in the complete erosion of the underpinning of the CCP, and by extension a further reduction in his own power.

Assessing the Damage

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[213] Lorenz, *Sino-Soviet Split:* 71.
[214] Ibid: 72.
[215] Bachman, *Bureaucracy:* 27.

Despite attempts to reaffirm his place as the prime interpreter of Marxism, Mao's attempts did not resonate with his domestic populace, political comrades nor the international community. As is commonplace in personalist dictatorships, Mao's complete control of the state's party line had alienated himself not only from the peasantry he so adored, but his fellow politburo members as well. Furthermore, as his particular brand of Marxism did not readily translate well in the minds of his international compatriots, fellow socialist leaders were unwilling to adopt Maoism as a workable concept. In short, Mao found his ability to effectively wield state power severely limited. As his presence had become much of the state itself, his own personal weakness was translated into a weakness shared by China as a whole.

Mao may have once been very adept at political maneuvering as a way to counter problems or assuage concerns, but the gravity of his failings exceeded his current ability to compensate. His efforts to stimulate the economy bled substantively by the failures of central planning, and motivationally by his inability to rally the public. Repression had reached a critical mass. Though the crackdown in the wake of the hundred flowers campaign afforded Mao a momentary balm from discord, continued reliance on violence-based control utilizing a failing state apparatus was far too risky in the long run. Furthermore, the chance of receiving foreign aid to bolster China had all but dried out. Even with the guile of Zhou Enlai to aid him, Mao's lack of skills as a diplomat or negotiator had failed to court the USSR in a substantive manner, as well as the rest of the Eastern Bloc even in light of Mao's perception of Soviet weakness.

Mao needed to enhance his prestige once more to head off potential political challengers, consolidate control over the military (who represented an organized and

dangerous segment of the party), and make firm moves to reign in the populace.

Personalism required a solution which served to centralize power, and mobilizing the

peasantry was the way in which Mao was comfortable of doing so. As previously

demonstrated, the cash-strapped CCP was unable to ameliorate the concerns of the

peasantry as the economy sputtered. Discord reigned within the political sphere, and the

continued growth and professionalization of the people's militia continued to worry the

uniformed military. [216] Mobilization of sufficient size would require proper motivation,

while ensuring the ability to compel potentially unpopular programs into action.

Additionally, potential threats to Mao's own personal power needed to be curbed, while

investing in him unfettered access to the state once more.

A program which would ostensibly restart the Great Leap Forward in a much

more comprehensive way was proposed by Mao in 1956. His previous failures and the

visible damage to his authority which were manifested the same year saw widespread

condemnation for yet another revolutionary economic restructuring.[217] Isolated

internationally, prevented from ameliorating domestic problems stemming from the own

pitfalls of centralization and weakened politically by a party apparatus increasingly

disconnected from their leader, Mao needed alternate solutions.

Well aware of the prestige afforded to Stalin and later the USSR as a whole from

their external engagements and status as a pillar of communism, Mao's eyes drifted

outward. Previous attempts at accruing prestige abroad, from relying solely on

diplomatic acumen and promises of support towards potential eastern allies, had failed

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[216] Melvin Gurtov and Byong-Moo Hwang, *China Under Threat: The Politics of Strategy and Diplomacy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980): 67-70.
[217] Ibid.

due in part to the lack of confidence in Chinese efficiency and ability to deliver in

comparison the capabilities of the USSR. As a result, Mao's domestic position improved

anemically. If his personal power was going to continue to act as the lifeblood of the

fledgling nation, then a method which utilized, preserved and consolidated continued

control around the personalist apparatus was necessary. By deriving a catalyst from

abroad, Mao could cut through increasing bureaucratization, which slowed down his

preferred method of ruling, and consolidate the power he once enjoyed. Using his

previous experience as a beloved wartime leader and communist visionary, Mao sought a

target that would cut through the Chinese psyche and political malaise and provide him

with the catalyst he needed.

Several distinct goals needed to be met. The first was that the revolutionary

fervor of the communist revolution needed to be rekindled after the failures of the Soviet-

influenced economic experiments of the past decade. Despite the great deal of work the

Chinese peasantry contributed towards Mao's grand economic vision, their overall

reward was quite low. Enthusiasm was at a nadir. Though there was little chance of

having the disenfranchised peasantry rise up and openly challenge Mao due to the great

personal risk involved, widespread apathy could potentially be just as damaging, and

remained one of the most powerful tools of the disgruntled masses.[218]

Thanks to the comparatively quick mastery of on the part of the Soviet in the

production of weapons of mass destruction, successful testing of an ICBM and the launch

of *Sputnik* to much fanfare, Mao remained convinced of Soviet genius and the inherent

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[218] Christensen, *Useful Adversaries:* 215.

strength of mass mobilization. However, China was not threatened militarily and so to

attempt to mimic the fervor of the struggle against Imperial Japan by promises of yet

another (potentially disastrous) economic "leap" was understandably a hard sell. There

simply was no need for such fanatical work or sacrifice. This was particularly worrying

as this meant that the indoctrination Mao had long banked on had begun to wear thin.

This ideological weakening was seen in large part as a catalyst to the "Everyone a

Soldier" campaign which sought to inoculate within the average citizen a newfound

understanding of Mao Zedong thought by militarizing civilian life.[219] This would allow

for the regimental reordering of the general populace, and once again ensure Mao's

primacy as the nations' guide.

The general populace had become problematic not just due to their apathy, but

due to their militarization without true purpose. Frightened by the near instantaneous

implosion of the Hungarian armed forces in 1956, Mao was urged by Lin Biao that

communist indoctrination in its current form had failed, and more extreme measures to

disseminate the ideology to both civilians and soldiers were necessary.[220] Work began

immediately to create an effective program to feed to the masses, and the newly named

"Everyone a Soldier Campaign," was unveiled to instill within the general population the

virtues of communist fervor, increase morale and to give courage to China.[221] The

program expanded rapidly, and two years after the Hungarian lesson, the people's militia

counted nearly 300 million members.[222] The militarization of the countryside allowed for

a unified banner to cover the peasantry, but this mobilization was more reminiscent of

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[219] Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split:* 87
[220] Ibid: 86.
[221] Mao's Secret Speeches (see Christensen): 404.
[222] Christensen, *Useful Adversaries:* 217.

wartime preparation, not the five-year plans Mao still espoused. In the absence of a

necessary reason, the population stood weaponized, but without clear purpose.

This in turn caused Mao a great deal of trouble with the actual, professional

soldiers who served the party. This two-tiered system of soldiers did not converge upon a

similar goal, and the uniformed officers began to view the People's Militia as threatening

to the uniformed forces.[223] The rapid increase in indoctrination and subordination of the

peasantry, as well as an increase in revolutionary education for uniformed officers saw

concerted resistance from much of the CCP's top brass. Because indoctrination was a

cornerstone of the "Everyone a Soldier Campaign," its inclusion was nonnegotiable,

which elicited protest from Peng Dehuai, who saw this turn of events not just damaging

to the professionalization of the military, but to China as a nation, citing the massive

amount of resources and potential waste needed to service the campaign.[224]

It became clear to the military that continued party meddling was dangerous to

their organizational interests and efficiency. During conflict the military could streamline

the chain of command and focus on a succinct task, but during peace the bureaucracy of

the party had begun to seep in. The PLA had begun to struggle against a "crisis of

confidence" stemming from the civilian interference out of Zhongnanhai.[225] Apart from

directly interfering with organizational processes, the party saw fit to steadily decrease

the resources available to the PLA, with their budget falling from 20% of the gross

national budget, to nearly 15% from 1956-1958, with this occurring in tandem with a

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[223] Gerald Segal, *Defending China* (London: The Oxford University Press, 1985): 134
[224] Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*: 87
[225] Gurtov, Hwang, *China Under Threat:* 68

decrease of 500,000 enlisted soldiers.[226] Despite being at "peace," the military still had

the daunting task of becoming a more effective fighting force. General Su Yu was most

vocal in his opposition regarding the current state of affairs, noting that the task of

modernizing was nearly impossible with the burden of current austerity measures for the

military. For his views, he was removed from his post in 1958, along with virtually any

officer who voiced their concern about the state of the armed forces.[227]

Silencing voices did little to mask the substantive political cracks which had

begun to show. Let alone becoming a more proficient fighting force, the PLA had begun

to realize that simply maintaining an acceptable level of strength was becoming more and

more difficult. Malaise and political meddling had resulted in the aforementioned uptick

in political education for uniformed soldiers, and the lack of a succinct mission had

resulted in de facto dismissal of many soldiers to the civilian sphere. Between 1956 to

1958, the PLA had logged an alarming number of work days outside of uniformed

service, with a combined total of 4 million in 1956, to a staggering 59 million just two

years later.[228] Additionally the very presence of the people's militia had begun to take a

toll on the PLA's morale and organizational effectiveness. Outside of the diversion of

resources for the "Everyone a Soldier Campaign," which struck the military

substantively, the burden of actually training and professionalizing the peasantry had

fallen to the officer corps of the PLA, and thus further attention and resources were taken

from the armed forces in the absence of an institutional goal.[229]

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[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid: 69.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid: 69-70.

Challenges continued to emerge from the peasantry and the military, and although he anti-rightist campaign had removed many of the impediments to the Chairmen's unfettered control, the observable state China was in was difficult to deny, as was total control over the lower-ranked members of the CCP. Still reeling from the backlash of Stalin's death and Mao's personal failures, political confidence was still at a near-nadir. Due to their proximity to the chairman and their political influence, the upper echelons of the CCP were loudest, and Mao worked diligently to silence them. Though the increasingly outspoken Peng Dehuai was countered on some level by Lin Biao, the lower-level cadres proved a difficult challenge.[230] The malaise and sting of failure from the previous leap forward had left the party members in the countryside disorganized, disillusioned and subject to the same apathy Mao attempted to use militarization to evaporate. Though Mao's message could be read by all, interpreting it was a different matter, and disparate views of socialist progress ran rampant within the countryside. Compounding these difficulties was a widespread fear of yet another "reckless advance" in the name of socialism. Before such seeds could take root, the issue of consensus had to be tackled.[231]

Mao and Recentralization

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[230] Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split:* 87. Additionally, Peng had called for increased military cooperation between the USSR and the PRC against Mao's wishes given the level of mistrust that had been brewing. This was also seen as a potential reason Mao sought to militarize the peasantry independent of the PLA in order to hedge possible double-dealing from the armed forces. See Jurgen Domec, *Peng Te-Huai: The Man and the Image* (London: Hurst, 1985).

[231] Goldstein, *From Bandwagon:* 104.

Previous attempts to remedy domestic problems had been met with some success due to the residual fervor of Communism and Mao's unassailable image. However, as the cracks began to spread, further attempts to tackle pressing problems were met with failure. Furthermore, problems soon grew too far and too wide for the remaining centralization of authority and Mao's coordination to handle. When left to their own devices in the current state with diffuse goals and motivations, the economy, military, government and peasantry dealt with extraordinary challenges. These constituent parts had missions per se, but not a succinct goal – this lack of direction translated into a lack of political support for Mao and his initiatives. Faced with waning political support from the citizenry, military and his party, the issue of reform and domestic development took a backburner, and he resolved to mobilize the "national political power" of the fledgling PRC. By motivating the disparate elements of society behind a pressing, if imagined goal, Mao would focus the latent potential of Chinese society and firmly position himself once more as the ringleader of the state.[232]

Violent action was uniquely predisposed to help shore up Mao's political power and unite disparate strands of the nation once more for a number of reasons. The first is the simple fact that true violence with an external enemy has the almost inevitable tendency to mobilize all facets of society, as these events inspire within the populace feelings of insecurity or alternatively nationalism.[233] As they are incapable of fighting an external enemy effectively devoid of the state itself, even if the government is loathed beyond reconciliation, the population is forced to rally behind the state or alternatively

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[232] Christensen, *Useful Adversaries:* 11.
[233] Facets of this point were earlier discussed and qualified by the work of both Coser (1956) and Simmel (1989, 1956).

the leader as their best chance for survival – the quintessential rally effect. Additionally, as the institutions of the regime have suffered from malaise to the point of allowing the centralization of a single leader (or in the case of China, were designed with a singular leader in mind), and event of the utmost urgency such as armed conflict allowed for Mao to have a direct hand in micromanaging both the affair and the overall mobilization to actuate it.

Secondly, as armed conflict can potentially endanger the very existence of a nation should the event spiral out of control, the resources of the state as a whole, be they material, economic or human, need to be mobilized to grant the greatest chance of success. In the case of China, the languishing economy and manufacturing base had crumbled so that the military itself was largely worried about their ability to train and equip soldiers as previously mentioned. Any chance of outfitting an effective fighting force rested on the ability for Mao to mobilize the peasantry if only for resource extraction. To do so would require a reinvigoration of the communist principals Mao so espoused, and the true pursuit of yet another mobilization drive. More importantly, however, Mao would once again be able to dictate the day-to-day lives of the peasantry. All the more necessary considering the failures of delegating and empowerment of local cadres.[234] The failures of multiple interpretations of communism and tiered enforcement had revealed their shortcomings.

Third, an external target allowed Mao to tackle the problem of a disenfranchised military along two different fronts. The first was the matter of institutional boredom. As

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[234] Goldstein, *From Bandwagon:* 104.

noted earlier, the PLA had largely been relegated to one of a training force, expected to educate the peasantry on barrack life, and increasingly participating in civilian works programs. This was worrying to many senior leaders as it dulled their professional edge, while causing a decrease in strength and relevancy relative to the people's militia. The military was meant to fight, and performed best with a succinct target. Engaging externally provided that target, as well as providing a task that the PLA was institutional comfortable with completing, as well as providing a unifying force against possible fragmentation. Additionally, shaken by his experience with Peng Dehuai's seeming insubordination, and realizing that higher-level military figures represented a legitimate threat both ideologically and in terms of loyalty, an external target allowed Mao to cement his control over the officer-class in a way that converged his orders around a singular goal as well as legitimated his increased control.

Scholars do not doubt the centrality of Mao's position in terms of formulating state policy, but as has been shown, his undeniable power was not always as ironclad as one might be led to assume. The goal of any personalist regime is of course the centralization of power within the hands of a single individual, and Mao was no different.[235] Ironically, Mao was lucky in that the Kuomintang had retreated to the island of Taiwan, as opposed to fighting to the last man. This meant that a true, threatening enemy was still in the general vicinity, the specter of a possible invasion from the sea loomed heavy in the minds of many PRC citizens, and this fear could be repurposed towards something more socially and politically functional. To compound the KMT as

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[235] Michael M. Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950's: A New Look at the Taiwan Strait Crises and the Sino-Soviet Split," *Modern China* 34, 4 (2008): 479.

an ideal target based on both past experience and animosity, was the presence of the United States as a benefactor to Taiwan. The presence of the leader of the capitalist world further served to magnify the potential threat.

Though the communist party had won the mainland, challenges to their sovereignty remained as long as the Kuomintang survived across the straits on the island of Taiwan. A huge unfinished chapter from the Chinese civil war was the continued survival of their wartime enemy who similarly made claims to the mainland. Shared experience fighting against the KMT in the past had forged powerful bonds of unity between Mao, the military and the population as a whole, therefore from a political standpoint, the Nationalists proved an easy choice. However, even when once again attempting to spin a political issue into domestic utility, Mao's inability to galvanize the disparate parts of China as a cohesive entity remained an issue. The CCP and the KMT had exchanged smaller jabs since the end of the civil war, and due to the "new" China becoming known on the world stage, the residual conflict had begun to become subsumed within the larger east-west Cold War dynamic. This entailed the delicate use of both rhetoric and force.

Mao sought to mobilize China behind the continued crusade of communism, raise his status in the communist world and firmly cement himself within the domestic position he once enjoyed. To this end, the tried-and-true method of catalyzing wartime fervor was a method he was quite comfortable with. However, a new wild card now existed. Though Mao may not have feared a war with the KMT outright, the presence of the United States as an ally of Chiang Kai-Shek complicated the issue of violence as a political tool. A sufficient spectacle would have to be created to spark revolutionary

fervor, motivate citizens to renew their support of Mao's vision, occupy and recentralize the military while eliminating the pitfalls of political infighting – all while avoiding the potentially disastrous involvement of the United States.[236]

The presence of the US obviously did not just give a sense of security to the KMT by virtue of geographic proximity, but by developmental help as well. The first Taiwan Strait crisis has sufficiently scared the US into extending military support to the island, and so between 1954 and the second Taiwan Strait crisis, troop deployments and shipments of critical war material and weapons had increased substantially.[237] Additionally, the US went so far as to extend its nuclear deterrent directly to the "breakaway province," installing emplacements capable of launching nuclear-armed *Matador* missiles from the island.[238] Additionally the disparate institutions through which the United States would aid Taiwan were eventually consolidated into a single

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[236] Though I don't engage with it extensively in this analysis, Mao was given an additional blessing with the presence of Taiwan and the Kuomintang more generally in that it directly involved the presence and the actions of a military and ideological rival. There is a small, but significant literature that deals with the catalyzing effects of, or the benefits of engaging against rivals. Mitchell and Prins find that the presence of a rival may increase the tendency to engage externally when under economic distress, but the relationship evaporates when the rival is absent. The authors note the opportunity a rival represents as a ready-made target. See Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and Brandon C. Prins, "Rivalry and the Diversionary use of Force," *American Political Science Review*, 80, 2 (1986): 541-566, see also Chan, *Enduring Rivalries:* 134-135. Rivals are also politically poised to be targeted as a diversion. Vasquez and Leskiw argue that rivals are viewed as sufficiently threatening on both sides of the dyad, and so political jousts or escalations are relatively costless. Rivals are well-known threats in this respect, and must be guarded against. See John Vasquez, and Christopher S. Leskiw, "The Origins and War Proneness of Interstate Rivalries." *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, no. 1 (2001): 295-316. Rasler and Colaresi echo this in their discussion regarding the reduced political costs of engaging against a rival. As rivalries are typically mature (at their most base form) relationships, both sides often have institutionalized measures in place to manage the relationship, while the rivalry as a whole is embedded in the psyche of the population. They go so far as to contend that leaders who may move to terminate a reinforced rivalry may face negative political consequences. See Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson, *Strategic Rivalries*: 7, 28.
[237] John W. Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy in Asia* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 67.
[238] Sheng, "Mao and China:" 487.

entity, the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Command, ensuring that in the event that US military aid was needed, the process would be streamlined and efficient.[239]

Though the addition of US troops and advanced military technology seemingly handed the advantage to Taiwan once again, and the threat of nuclear reprisal once again had entered into Mao's calculations, he was seemingly undeterred by the rising might of his old enemy. Advances in the Soviet Union by way of the *Sputnik* launch and the seeming inability for the United States to catch up to the East led an emboldened Mao to famously state in November of 1957 that the "East wind prevails over the West wind," during a very public trip to the USSR.[240] Additionally, even the threat of nuclear war did not stop Mao from gearing up for conflict, proclaiming "I'm not afraid of nuclear war. There are 2.7 billion people in the world; it doesn't matter if some are killed. China has a population of 600 million; even if half of them are killed, there are still 300 million people left. I'm not afraid of anyone."[241]

The Crisis

The timing of the eventual attack as well as the planning stages speak more towards a story of domestic motivation than one of security concerns. Additionally, Mao's militant plans were often couched in terms of communism's global struggle

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[239] Zhang Shu Guang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations. 1949-1958* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992): 227.

[240] Lewis and Litai, *China Builds:* 68.

[241] Benjamin Shobert, *Blaming China: It Might Feel Good, But it Won't Fix America's Economy* (Lincoln: Potomac Books, 2018): 35.

against capitalist imperialism, and China's role as a champion of the ongoing revolution. Mao was wary of both residual KMT strength and the American presence in the region, and so provoking a potential three-front battle was unappealing to the chairman without the proper incentive. From the standpoint of pragmatism, the US' resolve did not need to be tested further, as its stance regarding the KMT-held islands had been quite clear since the end of the previous crisis, to question this balance could have dire consequences.[242]

To risk upsetting the (relative) calm in the straits, Mao had to have some reasonable assurance that damage China incurred would not be catastrophic, and that he could extract some utility out of the crisis. Though he had recently begun to decry the role of the United States in suppressing potential communist revolution among the Arab nations of the Middle East, or at the very least in suppressing pro-Soviet sentiment, Mao was unable project power that far and remained unwilling to directly challenge the Americans. He was left unable to take the leading role he craved in the communist world, as well as being left without a succinct rallying cry that the Chinese nation could stand behind. In the absence of a clear path forward, Mao resolved to be patient.

Mao's opportunity to coalesce his goals and his ambition around a succinct target came on July 15th, 1958. An American-led force landed in Lebanon in an effort to stabilize the region in light of a coup that had removed the Hashemite Dynasty of Iraq. The Americans, in particular John Foster Dulles feared the possibility of a "contagion

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[242] Mao later stated that the second crisis was meant to explicitly test American resolve, noting the ambiguity regarding a number of islands in the mutual defense agreement between Taiwan and the US. However, empirical evidence shows that the Americans were more than willing to work towards curbing aggression towards Taiwan's outlying territories, not just the largest island. See "Memoir of Wu Lengxi, 'Inside Story of the Decision Making during the Shelling of Jinmen'," *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Zhuanji Wenxue* (Biographical Literature, Beijing), 1, 1994: 8. Available at: https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117009.pdf?v=8c45e4291b3d5d7bc818b32c93c0d4e7

effect" in the region and sent US forces to Beirut to reinforce friendly regimes in the region, while the British took similar actions.[243] As this was direct evidence of Western Imperialism in the eyes of Mao, he sought to join in the struggle of the Arabs against the West to not only offer a sorely needed enemy, but to attempt to fill the power vacuum left in the East by the death of Stalin. Considering Khrushchev's initial reticence to respond to American deployments in Lebanon, the opportunity to raise the personalist stakes was apparent.[244] This ambition did little to garner international respect or even acknowledgement, and although the door was open thanks to the "peaceful coexistence" doctrine Khrushchev had adopted vis a vis the west, the harsh rhetoric of Mao and pledges for both moral and substantive support for the Arab peoples were soon dulled once again by the USSR.

Khrushchev almost immediately ordered that Soviet troops in the vicinity begin to engage in war games between the Turkish and Iraqi border as a warning to further western encroachment. Mao, hamstrung by his lack of military capacity relative to the USSR was once again relegated to a second-class role, with his support for the Arabs amounting to little more than words.[245] Khrushchev's actions galvanized Mao's plans for Jinmen and Matsu. The USSR once again asserted itself as the sword and shield of communism, and Mao was forced to inject the CCP into the fray through direct action as well. Attacking the islands of Jinmen and Matsu would force the ROC to respond. In so doing, Taiwan's American allies would inevitably become involved in some way, thus necessitating a portion of their armed forces to remain on-station and thus unable to

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[243] Kuisong Yang and Sheng Mao, "Unafraid of the Ghost: The Victim Mentality of Mao Zedong and the Two Taiwan Strait Crises in the 1950's," *The China Review*, 16, 1 (2016): 19-20.
[244] Spence, *The Search:* 586.
[245] Ibid: 21.

interfere in the Middle East. By occupying the US' attention in Asia, Mao was giving his

Arab brethren a fighting chance to continue their struggle, and thus contributing directly

to the broader global struggle against imperialism and the communist cause.[246]

With the international dimension of his plan now in place and the possibility of

increased prestige apparent, Mao began the planning process for his forthcoming attack,

deciding in a meeting on July 17th that Jinmen and Quemoy would be the first targets.

With an amphibious landing initially not part of the opening move, Mao sought to

bombard the islands via artillery, with the first assault scheduled on July 25th, though

further discussion pushed it a further three days. For the first time in several years, the

military was given a clear-cut objective, and the mobilization of the armed forced

accelerated rapidly for this new task.[247] Unfortunately for Mao however, the situation in

the Middle East soon stabilized and his justification for military preparations were thus

shattered. Additionally, the Soviet Union had responded in terms of actions, rather than

the words of Mao. Given the allocation of resources necessary for the military

mobilization Mao enacted, the buildup needed similar justification, as well as his heavy-

handed meddling in the military.

Now that the Soviets had countered the US with their war games display, Mao

was left with an incensed military floating just offshore. Fully realizing the strength of

the American military, Mao used the heightened tension to involve himself more

intimately in military affairs, disrupting carefully laid plans by Peng Dehuai. Mao, in his

role as paramount leader ordered Peng to hold off on attacking Jinmen island, and instead

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[246] Yang, Mao, "Unafraid of the Ghost:" 21.
[247] Sheng, "Mao and China's:" 488.

hoped for a preemptive strike by the Americans and the ROC.[248] Peng, who had

previously opposed Mao's policies when the chairman was at his weakest politically was

kept on a short and very micro-managed leash. Regardless, the decision was sound.

Considering the defensive nature of the US' alliance with the ROC (a view Mao himself

subscribed to), the odds of a preemptive strike were low. If such an attack did occur

however, the CCP would be placed on the defensive, offering a fantastic opportunity to

manipulate the perception of being under siege.[249] At the very least, the pause in the

action allowed Mao to find other socially functional ways to rally the public around the

contested islands.

Mao did exactly that. After no further word regarding the attack on either Jinmen

or Matsu island, Mao and much of the senior leadership of the CCP made their way to the

Beidaihe conference in the province of Hebei. Mao took the opportunity codify the

decision to go forth with creating the people's communes, extending his control ever

more over the lives of the citizenry. This in turn enhanced his cult of personality, which

became a central tenet of the Beidaihe conference, with Mao demonstrating just how

undermining the attempts to restore his cult was to the government, as evidence by his

literal theft of the powers enumerated to the party congress and "gift" of said powers to

the politburo. In essence, as head of this august body, the powers therein thus became

Mao's.[250] Previous attempts to justify centralization of power had failed largely in part

due to the lack of both a real reason and Mao's own weakness. When he famously

proclaimed in March of 1958 at a work conference in Chengdu "A squad should revere

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[248] Mao Zedong, "Letter, Mao Zedong to Peng Dehuai and Huang Kecheng," July 27th, 1958. Available at: https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117011
[249] Ibid.
[250] Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*: 88.

its squad leader, it would be quite wrong not to" was borne out of hubris and desperation, but the Beidaihe conference allowed Mao to once again take substantive steps in the personalist direction.[251]

The conference, which began on August 17th, itself did not initially include the shelling of Jinmen and Matsu on the agenda, and the proposed operation was not even included among Mao's "seventeen points" to discuss at the conference. However, Mao explicitly highlighted the domestic and international benefits of an external enemy, stating

> "In our propaganda, we say we oppose tension and strive for détente, as if détente is to our advantage and tension is to the West's advantage. Can we or can't we look at the situation the other way around…Tension can help gain membership for communist parties in different countries. It can help us increase steel as well as grain production…to have an enemy in front of us, to have tension, is to our advantage."[252]

By this time the idea of attacking the offshore islands specifically had all but left the minds of the military. Peng Dehuai, still the most influential military leader at the time saw it fit to take it upon himself to end the state of readiness of all forces in Fujian province, surmising that the chairman had lost his nerve in attacking the islands on August 19th.[253] Considering the lack of attention at the conference itself, and the

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[251] Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Chengtu Conference," March 1958. Available at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_06.htm The Chengdu conference differed from the later conference in Beidaihe in that there was a much more specific and much smaller agenda at the Chengdu work conference. Additionally, the timing was not right for Mao to re-assimilate power in that little had substantively changed on the economic front, and by extension the domestic political front. While his statements may be seen as planting the seeds of rebuilding his cult, it was not until the Beidaihe conference, and the escalated tensions surround the forthcoming attack on Taiwan was Mao able to provide good reason once more for a centralization of power.
[252] Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Beidaihe Conference," August 17th, 1958 in *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: From the Hundred Flowers Campaign to the Great Leap Forward.,* Roderick MacFarquhar (ed.) et al., (Cambridge Massachusetts: Council of East Asian Studies and Harvard University, 1989): 402-3.
[253] Jian, *Mao's China:* 179-180.

exclusion of both the propaganda and military officials necessary to "sell" the operation to the masses, this was not an unreasonable assumption. This was ostensibly an attempt by Mao however to exclude alternate viewpoints in the decision-making process, and no sooner had the military demobilized did Mao immediately contradict the uniformed officers the next day and state that the shelling was to begin as quickly as possible, to the surprise of many of his subordinates.[254]

This unexpected turn of events appears to have been calculated, as it was only when Mao once again set the war machine in motion were the officials responsible for the creation and dissemination of propaganda invited to the conference and given further orders. A similar situation occurred for the relevant military officers as well, only receiving instructions once they were invited to Beidaihe.[255] The mobilization of the mouthpieces of the party occurred much more quickly under this period of artificial stress as opposed to the efforts that hampered Mao during the Hundred Flowers Campaign – wherein mobilization occurred at a snail's pace. Under the threat of KMT attack however, both Renmin Ribao and Xinhua covered the situation night and day in an effort, as then Soviet embassy secretary Leonid Brezhnev described as being an effort to create the image of a "besieged fortress" because "non-economic methods of compulsion to work…demanded the creation of external conditions that could justify the use of extreme moral and physical measures to manipulate the workers."[256]

The heightened tensions also saw Mao use his reinvigorated position to interfere in the planning efforts of his military officials. Almost immediately after ordering the

[254] Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split:* 88. Sheng, "Mao and China's:" 490.
[255] Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*: 99.
[256] Ibid: 99-100.

mobilization of troops to attack Jinmen on August 20th, Mao saw fit to once again

directly meet with influential commanders, such as Ye Fei the Fujian commander. Fei

arrived one day later (accompanied by Peng Dehuai) only to be repeatedly asked whether

Americans were going to be killed, and whether or not it was possible to avoid such

collateral damage. When Fei replied that this was impossible, the meeting was

immediately terminated. Additionally, even when Lin Biao and Wang Bignan urged Mao

to warn the Americans of the forthcoming attack, despite his reservations of provoking

the US, Mao disregarded the suggestion.[257] This was understandably perplexing

considering Mao reservations about involving the Americans in the previous Strait crisis,

as well as the importance Mao attached towards retaining some sort of friendly

relationship with the Americans as understood by Ye Fei.[258]

Once again believing that the imminent attack had been shelved, Mao's

lieutenants were understandably surprised when he abruptly began the attack on Jinmen 3

days later on August 23rd.[259] Chinese artillery reigned thousands of shells upon the island

immediately killing several hundred KMT troops and two American military consultants.

Bringing the navy into the fold immediately after, PLAN warships successfully destroyed

two nationalist ships in the vicinity of Jinmen.[260] Ostensibly pleased with the opening

salvo, Mao delineated his prime goal of the shelling in lieu of a justification by stating

that the Americans should abandon their Taiwanese allies, and Chiang was to cede

Jinmen and Matsu to the CCP as announced on August 23rd. Citing the timing of his

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[257] Robert S. Ross and Jiang Changbin, *Re-examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001): 157-158.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Sulmaan Wasif Khan, *Haunted by Chaos: China's Grand Strategy from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping,* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2018): 78.
[260] Sheng, "Mao and China's:" 490.

bombing with the recent denouncing of British and American activities in the Middle

East from the UN, Mao used this as justification to link American's involvement with

Taiwan as consistent with imperialist meddling and thus serve to unite the socialist

camp.[261] Additionally, Mao asserted that further moves should not be based on

America's response alone, but the international response should dictate continued actions

as well, demonstrating high sensitivity to the Chinese image.

Though there was a strong response from the US very early in the attack, Mao

signaled very clearly that the CCP was willing to hold high-level talks once more, while

accelerating the attack on Jinmen.[262] Though this served to heighten the image of Mao as

a brave military leader, his reticence to directly attack Americans as well as hedging

diplomatic bets seemed geared towards keeping the military conflict confined to the

KMT, while rhetoric was geared towards anti-imperialism. Emboldened with how well

the initial bombing campaign was going, Mao made the mistake of reducing his direct

involvement. This lapse in control provided an environment for his subordinates to

interpret the operation. Mao's underlings, basing their belief upon Mao's Beidaihe

statements, interpreted the end goal of the operation as forcing the complete abandoning

of Jinmen Island. Because of these beliefs, various elements of the PLA, primed for a

fight, began to broadcast continuous warnings regarding an imminent invasion of Jinmen.

This was unauthorized by Mao as he did not wish to irreparably provoke the

Americans.[263]

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[261] "Memoir of Wu Lengxi."
[262] Yang, "Unafraid of the Ghost:" 22.
[263] Sheng, "Mao and China's:" 491.

The chairman was extremely upset. However, given his stated intention on the 23rd that Jinmen be vacated, the discovery on September 1st of this broadcast and the resulting reaction were perplexing. As noted earlier the US' resolve had been clear for several years in the straits, and should an invasion occur, their response would be predictable. Additionally, if seizing the islands was a true goal, the psychological effect of propaganda would be a useful boon. Finally, if Mao was truly scared of the Americans why was he silent in assuaging their concerns for a CCP landing? The lack of coherence regarding the power-politics aspect of the crisis speaks more towards a strategy of domestic political aspirations. Considering the rapid organization of anti-American and anti-British rallies occurring immediately after initial salvos, lends support for this argument, as anti-imperialism and standing with their Arab allies resisting the West served as a clarion rallying cry.[264]

Once again however, the White House made its stance clear towards the islands. The September 4th Newport speech jointly named both Taiwan and its offshore islands as integral to the US-ROC alliance, and the Americans would defend them accordingly.[265] Mao was in a quandary. He had consistently threatened the destruction of both the ROC and the US, while Chiang's forces remained his true target. Terrified of the full might of the United States, and desperate to save face, Mao continued his campaign targeting ROC supply ships while going out of his way to avoid hurting Americans. This included

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[264] "Memoir of Wu Lengxi."

[265] Eisenhower Library, Dulles Papers, Meetings with the President. No classification marking. Also printed in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1958*: 687–689. Excerpt available at: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v19/d68

directly ordering an astonished Ye Fei that the PLAN was to seek direct approval from the Chairman before firing upon any American warships – even if they attacked first.[266]

This continued "probing" via violent action despite clear signals from the US was perplexing. Mao clarified his eventual strategy in that he was not probing the US's resolve in defending Taiwan, rather he was probing the possibility whether or not they would force Chiang Kai-shek to evacuate the offshore territories. When the US eventually proposed a ceasefire, Mao fired back by demanding a complete retreat of all US forces in the region. Unwilling to fight the Americans head-on, while simultaneously artificially prolonging the battle led to sustaining tensions through September, with Mao finally directly stating that obtaining Jinmen was truly the goal, but the wild card Americans still served as an impediment.[267] Diplomacy became unfeasible due to sunk costs and the overtly hostile atmosphere – to back down would paint a picture of weakness. The US was not yet directly pulled into the conflict since the CCP relegated violence towards the ROC. The adversary was attacked, while the true threat was kept visible, but there was still no viable way out of the crisis for Mao.

With no apparent justification for the crisis, and with the tensions Mao created currently in stasis, the Chairman sought a victory despite his realization that firepower was not the silver bullet he had initially intended it to be. Attempts to diplomatically break the stalemate similarly failed. In secret meetings with his advisors including Zhou Enlai, Mao finally stated he would agree not to attack Taiwan or the island of Penghu if Jinmen and Matsu were abandoned. Despite strict orders to keep this option secret to

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[266] Sheng, "Mao and China's:" 492.
[267] Ibid: 493-494.

avoid accusations of weakness, Wang Bingnan immediately let this slip to his American counterparts on the first round of reinstated talks.[268] His image and political power weakened, force became the only option once more and Mao's demands changed to a unilateral withdrawal of American troops from the straits once more, as well as announcing that the bombing campaign would intensify, even if it did not occur each day.[269]

The leak was a blessing in disguise for the crisis however, and Mao's first true break came at the end of September, when John Foster Dulles remarked that the garrison of ROC troops present on Jinmen was perhaps excessively large. According to Dulles, it may be in the US' best interests to convince Chiang to demilitarize and reduce the garrison present on Jinmen to some extent – should the US receive the proper assurances. Additionally, Dulles took the strange step to state that the islands defense was not inevitable on the part of the United States, ostensibly in an effort to show Mao that the leaked "trade" and thus the security of Taiwan was more important than an insignificant island.[270] The crisis had dragged on long enough however, and Mao's strategy had evolved. Now paranoid that the US sought a "two China" strategy, Mao sought to leave the islands in the hands of Taiwan, ending the ordeal. To do so would allow a fragile, yet direct link to Chiang and his son, whom Mao suspected were not truly pro-American, and so the new dream of one day uniting the ROC and PRC under one anti-imperialist banner remained alive.[271]

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[268] Yang, "Unafraid of the Ghost:" 22.
[269] "Memoir of Wu Lengxi:" 7.
[270] Ibid. The defense however was inherent in the Formosa Resolution of 1955.
[271] Yang, "Unafraid of the Ghost:" 22-23.

Mao's tough-talking gambit worked, and he saw a general boost in international support, with both the Soviet Union and other sympathetic nations standing in line with Mao. Perhaps most significant was the newfound symbolic and public support of China from Khrushchev. This was most welcome, because once the crisis had begun, wary of being dragged into a Sino-Soviet conflict, the Kremlin made it clear that the fight was Mao's and Mao's alone. [272] Once the crisis had subsided however and Mao had demonstrated his worth as a bulwark against American aggression, Khrushchev performed an about-face and wrote to President Eisenhower directly that "An attack on the Chinese People's Republic, which is a great ally, friend and neighbor of our country, is an attack on the Soviet Union," ostensibly warming relations after a period of prolonged cooling, and offering Mao the much-needed moral support of the communist superpower. True to its duty, our country will do everything in order together with People's China to defend the security of both states, the interests of peace in the Far East, the interest of peace in the whole world."[273]

Mao on Top?

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[272] Melvin Gurtov, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis Revisited: Politics and Foreign Policy in Chinese Motives," *Modern China* 2, 1 (1976): 85-86.

[273] *The Department of State Bulletin* (Office of Public Communication: Bureau of Public Affairs, January 1st, 1958). Available for free download at: https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=-pOCJ4e5g7oC&rdid=book--pOCJ4e5g7oC&rdot=1. There is a body of literature that argues that the brazen attack against Taiwan was the final nail in the coffin for the USSR-PRC alliance, which had been under strain for some time. I do not contest that codified alliance behavior was not still strained and perhaps dying, merely highlighting that the Soviet Union, given the relevant circumstances at the time, sought to make proclamations in solidarity with their communist neighbor against the United States. Though the vocal support may have been ephemeral, it was opportune, which provided Mao with a short-term international boost, as well as a rough blueprint for further reactions amongst the communist bloc.

Though Mao was not considered to be the heir to Stalin, and thus the leader of the communist bloc, the end result of the second Taiwan Strait crisis was that Mao was undeniably strengthened both domestically and to a lesser extent internationally. Direct action had made use of what extant institutional power Mao and the CCP retained, while simultaneously cutting across the diplomatic pitfalls of negotiation and Soviet meddling. Additionally, given his status as a wartime leader and (on the surface), his image of a fearless anti-imperialist, it was Mao personally who garnered much of the benefit.

Reeling from Khrushchev's scathing assessment of Stalin's policies (and the broader de-Stalinization campaign) of which Mao was a devoted disciple, the crisis with Taiwan and the presence of the United States allowed Mao to reinvigorate the energy of which the Great Leap Forward was pursued. This was particularly important as the disappointing progress towards economic development had caused tangible harm to the country as a whole, with the people's faith in communism, and by extension Mao's interpretation of Stalinism, waning. In the view of Mao, the eternal revolution should never slow down, lest people lose their ability to elicit change, and the crisis provided perfect fuel for fervor.[274] Rehashing old methods of direct state control over the means of production and yet another 5-year plan was foolhardy, but with the sense of threat motivating the communes with increased fervor, Mao's image as a demagogue was restored, and the Great Leap Forward continued with new life. Given the recent end of

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[274] Chen, *Mao's China:* 174.

the anti-rightist campaign, which left large sections of the government neutered, Mao afforded himself the opportunity to showcase his leadership and administrative skills.[275]

Previously unpopular programs such as drastic increases in taxes, the further nationalization of private assets and the famous land seizures were tolerated in the spirit of furthering the war effort against Taiwan. In spite of Mao's domestic lack of credibility at the time, the progress made in light of a clear and present threat surprised even the CIA which was at a loss of how Mao sought to motivate the disheveled peasantry.[276] Additionally, the controversial construction of the People's Militia, which was often at odds with the official uniformed services, was given a purpose of meaning that stood in line with the conventional military, as both were dedicated towards defending the mainland from imperialist incursions. The creation of a shared goal allowed for a reduction of discontent between the parties, as well as common goal to which Mao could direct them.[277]

Mao increased control over the means of war during the crisis which allowed for the much-needed marriage between the civilian and military sectors of society. As noted previously, the rise of the people's militia which was seen as frightening and disruptive to the uniformed military. Mao initially struggled to assuage the concerns of top brass. As the "Everyone a Soldier" campaign inextricably pinned day-to-day life with the security of the nation, Mao was able to mobilize both the military for fighting purposes, while the

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[275] Ibid: 173.

[276] Christenson, *Useful Adversaries:* 212-214.

[277] Liu Zihao, "The Diaoyu/Senkaku Dispute and China's Domestic Politics," *Columbia Academic Commons* (2016): 131, available at: https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8CZ3K3M/download.

militia could be directed towards Mao's economic goals.[278] In the end, however, the

Great Leap Forward did not result in the fantastic progress Mao sought to achieve, great

domestic fervor aside. Rifts deepened between Mao and Moscow, Taiwan remained out

of reach and the Taiwan crisis had won Mao few friends in America. Regardless

however, the second Taiwan Strait crisis served as a model example of shoring up

political power based on manufactured tensions, with Mao enjoying once again the status

of a communist demigod in 1958.

Internationally Mao was emboldened. Recognizing that the world was largely

anchored by the Soviet Union and United States, Mao sought to make a name for China

in a world dominated by the two superpowers. The crisis in the straits proved to the

world that Mao and China were capable of disrupting imperialist plans and challenging

American interests. This was done in a way as distinct from the leadership of the USSR,

as evidence by the consistent lack of information relayed to the Soviets, as well as the

unilateral way in which Mao approached their own "response" to American

encroachment in the Middle East. Though this initially caused tension, the brief

reconciliation between China and the USSR post-crisis served as a much-needed

international boost for Mao, as well as an additional bulwark against the US.

Additionally, Mao successfully eroded the commitment the United States

maintained towards Japan via the dyadic crisis between Chiang and himself. By allowing

Chiang to *de facto* dictate American foreign policy, including deterrence strategy,

Washington risked disaster in East Asia. Because of the danger the United States faced

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[278] Christenson, *Useful Adversaries:* 217.

(including nuclear strikes) per Chiang's ambitions to retake the mainland while drawing

in his American allies, the United States began to pull back from the quest to retake

China, and began to pressure Chiang to seek reunification via alternate means. As the

United States began to reduce its unequivocal support of Taiwan, or at least offer greater

resistance should Chiang try to rope Washington into future crises, the perceived threat

Mao faced from both the US and Taiwan, as the latter was unlikely to attack the mainland

alone, had finally abated, offering not just psychological security to the CCP and the

populace, but a demonstrable success to the continued global revolution.[279]

Maintaining such a strong stance against the United States marked the beginning

of China taking the moral high ground, with Mao seeking to undermine the international

perception of communist values as penned by the USSR, while consistently denouncing

imperialism.[280] Additionally the elevated tensions created by Mao allowed for a rapid

acceleration in China's pursuit of nuclear weapons, with uranium mining being given

high priority. This served to alleviate concerns stemming from the breakdown of the

technical advisory relationship between the USSR and the CCP, as well as accelerating

China's efforts at constructing their own atomic weaponry – inching it closer to great

power status.[281] Though it would be some time before atomic weaponry was added to

Mao's arsenal, the crisis did act as another vehicle for Mao to demonstrate his

competence internationally and domestically, as the crisis itself served as a useful

opportunity for Mao to assert his recent 12-mile nautical claim of Chinese territory, and

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[279] Appu K. Soman, "Who's Daddy" in the Taiwan Strait? The Offshore Islands Crisis of 1958," *The Journal of East-Asian Relations* 3, 4 (Winter 1994): 373-398.
[280] Jian, *Mao's China: 204.*
[281] Lewis, Litai, *China Builds:* 61.

hold it against encroachment by imperial forces, while simultaneously demonstrating his competence towards the nation as a whole.[282]

The Debate Continued

Scholars have explained the 1958 crisis through a multitude of other lenses, not the least of which was that of realism. Given the circumstances at the time of the Cold War and under the umbrella of bipolarity, many students of IR were essentially forced into viewing the world via such a dominant theory. This is not to say that their arguments are not without merit, but the primacy of structural explanations hamstrung our ability to offer richer explanations of international phenomena given the lack of attention traditionally devoted towards domestic-level variables and motivations.

Once such interpretation is forwarded by Alexander George and Richard Smoke. They posit that Mao's motivation regarding the shelling of Jinmen and Matsu was due to a combination of the American and Nationalist Chinese threats and their growing capabilities offshore, as well as the growing capabilities of the proposed CCP-Soviet bloc now that the Soviet Union had drastically increased its nuclear capabilities. The military strength of the KMT had been more or less stable in the Taiwan Strait, but when coupled with American might, the situation became more complicated. Once the US announced that it sought to install nuclear-capable *Matador* missiles on Taiwan, putting them within

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[282] Yan Xu, *The Battle of Jin Men, 1949-1959*, (Shenyang: Liaoning People's Press 2010): 174-179.

striking distance of the mainland, Mao realized his security or the tenuous balance of power in the strait was less-than assured.[283]

Though on the surface Mao's thought process may seem unclear or oxymoronic, the installation of such powerful ordinance was interpreted by Mao as an indirect assertion this his military strength too had grown, and the United States seemingly needed to bolster its forces in the area. In a self-reinforcing loop, Mao began, as the authors assert, to contemplate that the USSR and the CCP could begin to employ a strategy of brinksmanship of their own in order to erode the advantage or the commitment of the United States and KMT in the Straits of Taiwan. The situation, if left unchecked was risky at best, and a harbinger or conflict at worst. Worried, and yet emboldened, Mao believed the new artillery capabilities of the CCP would be enough to present a chokehold over Jinmen and Matsu through either coercion or denial-of-entry tactics, while the soviet umbrella would prevent a threat of nuclear reprisal.[284]

The realist argument is theoretically sound based on security and structural concerns, but it fails to truly consider the state of CCP-Soviet relations and how this in turn catalyzed Mao's desire to forge a path forward separate from that of Khrushchev, rather than continue to be reliant on the Soviet umbrella for security. Mao had made fairly aggressive moves to distance his foreign policy direction from that of the USSR, first in the Middle East, and then by acting in an increasingly independent manner. When his support was overshadowed by Soviet actions, Mao needed a new opportunity to put the focus back on him and increase his stature. For this reason, as I have shown, the

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[283] Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974): 371-376.
[284] Ibid: 371-372, 375.

decision to engage in the shelling of Kinmen and Matsu was brought about my Mao's

assumption that he would be working alone, not in tandem with Khrushchev. Any

resultant benefits needed to go towards Mao alone, not dispersed amongst the Eastern

bloc. By eroding the US' commitment to the region, tying down the Americans in the far

east or simply showing the courage to counter imperialism, Mao would be afforded the

coveted respect of not only the Communist bloc, but of his people as well. Given the

influence afforded to him as a wartime leader, a resurgence of this familiar stature would

allow for consolidation of control over the military, as well as the overall direction of the

people's revolution.

Though ostensibly allies, this hidden jockeying belied the overall lack of

cooperation Khrushchev and Mao actually shared in regards to security concerns. Had

the situation in the strait been as threatening as realist theory predicts, the logical

outcome would have been for the USSR and the PRC to actually cooperate and present a

united front. Western Europe was relatively stable and the Middle East similarly did not

present an enticing avenue for an attack on the Soviets from the West. Similarly, it was

highly unlikely that a land-based force would trudge through Central Asia to attack Mao.

Despite Eastern Russia's lack of intrinsic value, the sea still presented to most likely

vector of attack on both Communist nations. Previous attempts to cooperate on naval

issues failed, with negotiations lasting until three weeks prior to the commencement of

the crisis in the straits. Khrushchev had previously proposed the construction and joint

operation of both radio stations and submarine bases on the Chinese coast.[285]

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[285] Lorenz, *The Sino-Soviet*: 92-94. The location on contiguous China made sense given the inhospitable terrain and colder waters of the Russian far east.

Mao was more concerned with autonomy rather than security, and given his previous track record of forging an independent destiny from the Kremlin, he viewed this joint proposal as a veiled attempt by Khrushchev seizing control of China's maritime sphere. Khrushchev actually became aware of this sentiment, and in a show of goodwill, he secretly traveled to Beijing where he was personally treated to lackluster accommodations, lack of air conditioning and hordes of mosquitos.[286] The meeting achieved nothing, with the only tangible outcome being the agreement that the USSR would pay for the construction of a new radio station, but Mao sought to capitalize even on this. Claiming to have stood up to "Russian great power chauvinism," he once again sought to paint himself as an independent strongman capable of sparring with the superpowers.[287] From a domestic standpoint, this makes sense, as any prestige granted by the new naval capabilities would be dispersed amongst, rather than Mao's side. Acceding to this outcome ran the risk of Mao's fear of being overshadowed playing out in earnest.

On the other side of the straits, the rapid abandonment of the United States' support for a military solution for reunification similarly speaks to an overall apathy towards war with China, thus deflating the realist threat. Given the US' past experience with the Chinese during the Korean War, this is understandable. If the eventual plan was

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[286] This is also the meeting where the famous photos of Mao and Khrushchev swimming together were taken. The Soviet premier was less than graceful in the water relative to Mao, and the image of Khrushchev struggling in a bathing cap and flotation device whilst the chairman swam laps served to humiliate the Russian leader. Finally, as the story goes, Khrushchev exited the water and sat with his feet dangling in the pool, so that Mao was now beneath him. For a brief and humorous account of personal power-politics on display, see Mike Dash, "Khrushchev in Water Wings: On Mao, Humiliation and the Sino-Soviet Split," *Smithsonian Magazine* (May 4th, 2012). Available at:
https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/khrushchev-in-water-wings-on-mao-humiliation-and-the-sino-soviet-split-80852370/
[287] Ibid: 92-94.

to facilitate diplomatic actions across the Straits of Taiwan, as well as Mao's seeming acceptance of these terms post-crisis, this does not explain his decision to reorient his strategy after the shelling and not before. Prior to Mao's gamble, he lacked the personal power to dictate such a diplomatic gambit with any confidence. However, once he ostensibly achieved some form of victory in the 1958 crisis, he was secure enough in his position that he could accept Chiang and a "weakened" American deterrent offshore.

The most detailed analysis of the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis is that of Tom Christensen. Christensen posits that Mao's motivation to shell the islands of Jinmen and Matsu came from his desire to continue to pursue a second attempt at the Great Leap Forward, after the disaster of the first five-year program. Due to the failure and the sacrifices inherent in the first attempt, the population of China had been left disillusioned with mass mobilization, Mao's leadership and communism as a whole. Mao, seeking to manufacture the air of urgency and sacrifice present during the Chinese Civil war, targeted Taiwan's island territories to motivate the populace. This was a crucial goal as the new five-year program was designed to be even more radical than the first. Paradoxically, there was no stated reason to fully mobilize the population in economic terms, as the hypothetical threat Mao was guarding against simply did not exist.[288] Christensen argues that Mao deliberately sought to mitigate damage towards KMT-held islands and ensure the status quo regarding ownership remained. Similarly, according to Christensen's work, the shelling was in no way attempting to test American resolve nor

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[288] Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*: 217.

court Soviet favor, instead focusing on galvanizing the civilian population for the Great Leap Forward. Chen Jian also goes on record to support this particular interpretation.[289]

Though mobilizing the civilian population was an essential component of Mao's overall plan, both Christensen and Jian downplay the overall level of domestic weakness Mao was forced to contend with in light of not only the Soviet's secret conference denouncing Stalin and their continued overshadowing of China as the true leader of the Eastern bloc, but just how institutionally weak Mao had become internally. As I have shown, several facets of the state had begun to unraveling at the seams, and it was not merely the peasantry which needed to be brought back into the fold. Christensen and Jian ignore the pre-crisis regimentation of militia, and the rift created between the uniformed and non-uniformed services. Without a synthesis that justified the continued existence of the militia, Mao was bound to continue to contend with a wayward military, as well as its officers as the outspoken behavior and subsequent treatment of Peng Dehuai showed. If Mao truly wanted to continue to keep the status quo, the expected boost nation-wide from merely rehashing an old issue was likely to be minimal or compartmentalized amongst the civilian population who were not privy to grander policy. However, remaining defiant and escalatory even in the face of America for some time justified Mao's status as a wartime leader as well as the creation of the militia as support for the militaries continued operations in the strait. This prevented domestic strife, while allowing Mao consolidate control over the armed forces broadly defined.

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[289] Jian, *Mao's China.*

The aforementioned "domestic weakness" is not tantamount to Mao being politically vulnerable. Indeed, Mao remained relatively strong within the government, contending instead with a dilution of his political power as opposed to an existential challenge. This is significant as it draws attention once again to the broader applicability of diversionary strategies available to a given regime, and that such paths can be pursued when necessary or faced with the opportunity, rather than internal conditions forcing the pursuit of diversions. While the diminished prestige he held may not have posed an immediate threat to the Chairman's tenure, the compartmentalization and continued dispersal of political power, as discussed previous, is an accepted method of governmental change towards a single-party model.

Furthermore, the model of mobilization furthered by Christensen is quite convincing in isolation (and his emphasis on in-depth archival research may serve to further said isolation), but when countering the work with further studies regarding the domestic determinants of conflict, Christensen's conception of politicizing conflict speaks to old assumptions at best. The population-at-large intersects both external conflict and political weakness the regime may be facing and thus is the target of any diversionary action. This is nothing new from a diversionary standpoint and in reality, may be the problem. This model assumes a static conception of both audience and diversionary value.[290] Control over the peasantry and their mobilization therein was damaged by continued failures, but even at a slower pace, Mao was able to glacially increase the pace of the revolution. With this being said, Christensen overlooks the

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[290] One could also imagine a plethora of challenges stemming from BDM's et al. "selectorate theory," previously cited and discussed in this dissertation.

domestic political challenges and blows to Mao's international prestige as an accelerant to act externally (not just in the Taiwan Straits) in an effort to recentralize his own standing. As a direct-effects approach was most useful in Mao's attempts to reassert himself due to his perceived marginalization,

Finally, both authors downplay the *international* detriments faced by Mao in the preparation stages of the Great Leap. An often-inextricable part of personalism is the myth of unassailability and the subsequent cult the charisma of the leader generates. Oftentimes it is quite difficult to pierce this veil, but Mao existed in tandem with a colleague who loomed larger over his subjects than he did – Stalin. The denouncement of Stalin and the continued endurance of Khrushchev as the prime interpreter of Marxism-Leninism eroded Mao status as a demagogue given that his adherence to Stalinism not only resulted in several domestic disasters, but was widely rejected by the rest of the communist world. This unease had begun to enter into the minds of Mao's advisors and agents, not to mention the malaise towards mass mobilization felt throughout society. This speaks to Christensen's assertion that China sought to demonstrate its strength and resolve, but I diverge from earlier works in that the international audience can just as easily grant prestige towards their colleagues, especially one in a personalistic position.

Mao needed to reaffirm his commitment to the continued revolution and his chosen strategies. Violence in the straits against the KMT served to speak to the Chinese psyche, but opposing American interests was directed towards the world. As a true impediment to imperialism in the Far East, Mao sought to be afforded the same level of respect and influence his northern counterpart enjoyed. Though this was not a true

affirmation towards his economic strategies, the status Mao won could be operationalized domestically, painting him as a leader intimately entwined within all segments of the government, increasingly shielded by his inextricable position within the state.

Chapter 6: Military Juntas: Galtieri's Gambit

Overview

This chapter traces the progression of domestic ills within Argentina and the subsequent efforts for the military regime in power, ultimately under Galtieri, to compensate. In accordance with my theory, this study considers not only the domestic situational context of the resultant diversion but the institutional context as well. With that said, this chapter highlights the institutional degradation and the resultant state Galtieri inherited as one of ineffective bureaucracies and languishing civilian institutions. Due to the weakness of the extant governing structures, the military, as a highly regimented bureaucracy, was the best alternative to run the nation, relying upon the institutional capacity they themselves maintained. Due to the familiarity with battle and military affairs, I show how the political maneuvering of a military Junta in the realm of civilian affairs was doomed to fail due to ineptitude and lacking capacity. As the methods by which the country could stay afloat, so too did the value and possibility of success regarding alternate diversionary choices. This reinforcing path of failure and familiarity eventually led Galtieri to accept a limited invasion of the Falklands as the best possible road towards domestic consolidation.

The overall level of research done on the Falkland Islands war is expansive owing to the fact that it was one of the largest wars involving joint naval and air-based combat since the end of World War II, and the fact that it was a conventional war involving a great power. This makes no mention of the substantial and often contentious history regarding sovereignty of the islands. One of the most recent conventional wars is not the only anomaly in Argentine history. The country itself remains rife with natural resources and human capital. Despite having all of the resources to become a first-rate global player, Argentina, time and time again, has historically succumbed to the seemingly endless cycle of coup and civilian transition. While this may be unfortunate for Argentina's development, it has allowed a fairly ritualized state of affairs from an institutional standpoint, which facilitates consistency in terms on analysis. Argentina's Junta's are among the most studied due to this fact, with the Invasion of the Falklands perhaps the most studied episode in Argentine history.

While negotiations over the Falklands occurred for decades prior to the war itself (a point to be touched upon later), diplomacy was cast aside in favor of more direct actions only once during the British tenure of nearly 150 years. As instability was a hallmark of Argentinian politics for most of their independent existence, what spurred the military regime in Buenos Aires to act the way they did? Furthermore, despite their military strength at the time, seamless capture of the islands and seemingly significant international sympathy, why did the Junta opt for a surgical capture of the islands, and not one rife with the fanfare as theoretically characteristic of a diversionary action? This case traces the progression of institutional degradation in Argentine politics prior to the installation of Leopoldo Galtieri as president. I make the claim that the basic governing

institutions and the civilian Peronist government had eroded in such a way that the

military entered the fray to stabilize the nation, inheriting the dysfunctional governing

apparatus and relying on the only pillar of stability they had: their status and experience

as a highly regimented bureaucracy, most suited and most comfortable with combat-

related operations.

In doing so, Galtieri was faced with the daunting prospect of stabilizing the

nation, winning the respect of the populace, retaining the strength of the military and

ensuring an orderly transition back to civilian rule.[291] Galtieri thus sought a target that

was easily manageable, would not risk the bulk of his support base and ensure enough

residual popularity that the military would be afforded a position of prominence and

respect in any new administration. My argument states that the war with Britain was an

unintended consequence, and Galtieri only ever sought to engage in a military operation,

devoid of casualties as opposed to a lengthy war. This view contends implies a much

more calculation and political acumen than is typically afforded to military Junta's, and

argues that with the institutional makeup of the regime itself, the moderate level of

institutionalization was predisposed to benefit most from a lower-level military action as

opposed to the stereotypical diversionary war.

The first probable point of contact occurred in 1600 when a Dutchman, Sebald de

Weert de facto discovered the islands. Subsequent Dutch expeditions in 1614 later

referred to the land as the "Sebald Islands." French and British explorers too noted the

location of the island chain, with the French establishing the first true area of habitation

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[291] Most military regimes are prone to short tenures, as politics represents an unknown quantity to many military officers. See Geddes, Frantz and Wright, "Military Rule:" 148 and Geddes, *Paradigms and Sandcastles*: 126.

in 1764, only to see the same land subsequently surveyed by the British the following year, though the two parties either were oblivious to their dual exploration, or simply didn't care.[292] Spanish and eventually Argentinian involvement began in 1770 when the pseudo-colony was sold to the Spanish Crown, who then undertook a naval operation to expel the British from their new land. War was threatened between the European great powers, and the Spanish agreed to restore the previous British arrangement in 1771, while also reaffirming the ownership of the land to Spain.[293]

The Spanish administered the islands from the Argentinian capital until 1806, when pressures from the various movements for Latin American independence began to cause the Spanish to lose ground in the region. Their island was abandoned in 1806, but remained inhabited until 1811. Once Argentina gained independence in 1816, they seized the island and appointed a governor to the land. However, Louis Vernet, the stated governor began to seize American vessels in the vicinity of the islands, forcing the United States to send a force to quell the piracy, while simultaneously putting pressure on the Argentinian government to continue to hold the islands. Amid international pressure, Buenos Aires was unable to effectively govern the islands, and the colony was considered inviable. The United States, unwilling to remain in the immediate region, was willing to let the British seize the islands in 1833, against the hardline stance of the Monroe Doctrine. The British have thus retained control over the islands ever since.[294]

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[292] Alfred P. Rubin, "Historical and Legal Background in the Falkland/Malvinas Dispute," in Alberto R. Coll and Anthony C. Ared, eds., *The Falklands War: Lessons for Strategy, Diplomacy and International Law* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985): 9-12.

[293] Ibid: 12-13.

[294] Ibid: 13-15, Alejandro Dabat and Luis Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the End of Military Rule* (London: Verso Editions, 1984): 43.

Since then, subsequent incarnations of the Argentine government in Buenos Aires have consistently called for the return of the Falkland Islands. This stable political stance stands in contrast with political instability, with Argentina seeing 38 different presidents between 1928-1962.[295] The "Presidents" range from military dictators to popularly elected officials, though all echo the same desires regarding the Falkland Islands. The significance of the islands to the Argentinian psyche cannot be understated. Other than the normal socio-cultural attachment to territory, the Falkland Islands represented the last vestiges of colonialism to the country, and the recapture of the islands would be seen as a boon for any incumbent government.[296]

The Crises Before the Crisis

Argentina represents a paradox of sorts. With high natural resource endowment, significant human capital and an educated society, the inability of Argentina to truly consolidate has puzzled social scientists for some time. In fact, it has been stated that the most consistent feature of Argentinian politics, has been consistent inconsistency, with a narrative of institutional weakness and political shakeups persisting through virtually the

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[295] Daniel Chudnovsky and Andres Lopez, *The Elusive Quest for Growth in Argentina* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1984): 24. The authors note that this governmental instability had actually accelerated throughout the stated time, with 12 executive changes between 1928-1962, and 16 changes between 1962-1988.

[296] The psychological importance of territory is an oft-repeated theme in International relations. Some works addressing this phenomenon include Manus Midlarsky, *The Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Cambridge MA: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 13-14, Tir, "Territorial Diversion:" 413-425, John A. Vasquez and Brandon Valeriano. "Territory as a Source of Conflict and a Road to Peace." The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution, eds. Jacob Bercovitch, Victor Kremenyuk and I. William Zartman (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2009): 193-209.

entirety of the nation's history.[297] Regardless, one name stands out above all others in Argentinian politics, where he remained a political mainstay for over three decades: Juan Domingo Peron. Entering Argentine politics in 1943 as a military officer, he participated in a coup in the same year wherein his gregarious personality and commitment to populism quickly saw his notoriety eclipse his fellow conspirators. As a testament to his appeal amongst the common man, Peron saw himself jailed by his allies, only for a massive public outcry demand his successful release. This is seen as the formative moment of his unique brand of politics: Peronism.[298]

The newly formed Peronist party was unique in Argentinian politics not just due to its incredible strength amongst the citizenry, but also the ease of accessibility regarding politics enjoyed by the masses. Compound this with material incentives and political symbolism invoking Argentinian culture, and the broad appeal of Peronism is apparent.[299] Peron was an institution in and of himself, with vast tracts of the government indelibly changed by his policies. This Janus-like system belied megalomaniacal tendencies. Through his position in power he extended luxuries such as social safety nets, accessible healthcare and vacation time. These gifts masked that which he took from citizens however.[300] The freedom of the press suffered under his rule, journalists and political dissidents were routinely jailed and badgered, while his substantive assaults on

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[297] Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murillo, "Building Castles in the Sand? The Politics of Institutional Weakness in Argentina" in Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murillo, eds., *Argentine Democracy: The Politics of Institutional Weakness* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2005): 22.

[298] Ibid: 23.

[299] Ibid: 23-24.

[300] James W. Mcguire, *Peronism Without Peron: Unions, Parties and Democracy in Argentina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

the government included favorable redistricting, constitutional reforms in his favor and various instances of court-stacking.[301]

These double-edged policies championed by Peron advanced the material wellbeing of the citizenry, while irreversibly engraining himself in the government. His opponents, unwilling to play second-fiddle to an increasingly powerful demagogue, removed Peron in 1955, wherein he remained in exile for many years.[302] Though Peron was removed, his namesake movement remained. The conspirators who had acted against the executive found themselves unmatched in any election with a Peronist running for office. When Peronists were allowed on the ballot, they found themselves winning, as Arturo Frondizi did in 1962, and Arturo Illia in 1965. Each was removed in a subsequent coup in 1962 and 1966 respectively.[303] To combat this advantage, Peronism as a political party was banned, de facto disenfranchising huge segments of the population. Labor remained a bastion of Peronism however, and as the coup splintered, the parties arising from the ashes found themselves unable to synthesize an equally attractive party platform and win the votes of Peron's supporters.[304] This period is known as the "impossible game." Though the temptation to allow Peronists to run and vote persisted, the cycle seemed doomed to repeat itself.

The period from 1955 to 1972 emerged as a period of political insolvency and institutional degradation. By removing Peron's party from legitimate political participation, his bastion of power, labor, often resorted to protesting and general strikes

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[301] Levitsky and Murillo, "Building Castles:" 23-24.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Chudnovsky, Lopez, *The Elusive Quest:* 24-25.
[304] Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946-1976* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

to convey their displeasure outside of the electoral process. As the banner of Peron was largely held by the labor and industrial sectors of society, the constant unrest had the worrying tendency to widen the previously small divide between export and import-oriented segments of the society further destabilizing societal foundations even amongst Peron's supporters. The constant unrest remained inadequately addressed by subsequent the coup-election cycle, and by engaging in civil disobedience outside of the given institutional channels, the institutions themselves were subject to further malaise.[305] Though the Argentinian people enjoyed a decade of economic growth between 1964-1974, this good fortune was too little to stem the tide of societal unrest, and the threat persisted throughout the decade. It seemed prosperity without commensurate political evolution would not a cohesive state make.

Societal schisms accelerated heading into the 1970's. Large uprisings, in 1967, 1968 and finally the "cordobazo" in 1969 occurred in tandem with increasing factory strikes and the rise of guerilla harassment on the incumbent Argentinian regime. Regional rebellions, armed insurgencies and the threat of an economic downturn caused the already stressed institutions necessary to govern society, to nearly buckle under this increased pressure. Ill-suited to governing, such institutions "had to be taken out of the closets where they had been kept in disrepair."[306] In a last-ditch effort to restore order to the country, Juan Peron was brought back from exile and allowed to run in government elections, winning the majority of the vote and ascending to the presidency once again in 1972. Unfortunately, this effort too was in vain, and he himself was unable to cope with

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[305] Levitsky, Murillo, "Building Castles:" 24.
[306] Juan E. Corradi, *The Fitful Republic: Economy, Society and Politics in Argentina* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985): 108.

the sheer amount of institutional and societal degradation which occurred during his absence. Peron's populist message lacked the appeal he enjoyed two decades prior, and his ability to mobilize societal demands along a clear path were hampered by the ever-changing whims of the increasingly disenfranchised and abandoned populace.[307]

Peron died after only two short years in office, and the country was left in the hands of his widow, the equally beloved Isabel Peron. Her political weakness on full display, the possibility of yet another coup was becoming increasingly likely. Struggling under a new economic plan introduced in 1975, the average citizen suffered under rapidly increasingly prices of public goods, staples and general services. Compounded with very high inflation, sharp currency devaluation as well as a national ban on excessively high wage increases, the overall position and wellbeing of the labor movement was in shambles.

In an effort to stifle inflation, the government instituted a series of measures which banned excessive wage increases. This was perhaps the most damaging aspect of austerity. In the first two months after the plan had been announced, Argentina was suffering under the burden of a 102% inflation rate. As the ban on wage increases was capped at 40%, the average citizen found any relief given to them by their employer literally unable to beat inflation, and thus make a difference, all while inflation continued to outpace net-wage growth.[308] Peron's wife attempted one final time to restore order, and in accordance with an IMF-approved plan, saw a further restructuring of the

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[307] Klaus F. Veigel, *Dictatorship, Democracy and Globalization: Argentina and the cost of Paralysis* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009): 31.

[308] Daniel K., Gibran, *The Falklands War: Britain Versus the Past in the Couth Atlantic* (Jefferson NC: Mcfarland and Co Inc., 1998): 59.

economy in March of 1976. This balm did little to assuage concerns relayed by military officials about the situation in the streets, and the decision was finally made to restore order, once again via a coup. Isabel Peron was deposed in a bloodless coup on March 24th, and although beloved by the people, the coup was celebrated as a potential return to law and order.[309]

Repairing or Destroying?

Headed by Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla, the new military Junta faced the daunting task of reigning in a wayward populace, an economy intent on sinking ever lower and the rise of guerilla harassment by armed militia groups. Viewed as the root of all problems, the new Junta launched a concerted effort to address the rapidly deteriorating economy by adopting an internationally-oriented strategy, and to do so he called upon Jose Martinez de Hog of Harvard as the new Minister of Finance. De Hog's attempts to court both foreign investment and a source for Argentina's exports unfortunately were in vain however, as the international community was unwilling to involve themselves in the current unstable incarnation of Argentina.[310]

These problems remained even in light of a campaign of excessive foreign borrowing which saw Argentina's deficit climb by billions. Similarly, opening up

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[309] Richard Ned Lebow, "Miscalculations in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War," in *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 6, 1 (1983): 11.
[310] Gibran, *The Falklands War:* 60-61. The Author aptly notes that the Junta's best efforts at stabilizing and enhancing the Argentine economy amounted to little more than "a monumental failure," underscoring their ineptitude at governing, rather than fighting. See p. 60.

Argentina's economy to the wider world proved just as ineffective and even detrimental to the economic wellbeing of the economy. The industrial sector, which had previously existed behind protectionist barriers saw itself unwilling to cope with the streamlined process of international competitors and suffered as a result of this new openness.[311] Though Argentina had the natural resources and human capital to advance, the strategy of internationalization was cobbled together, and a full, rather than gradualist approach to the international market proved more appealing but ultimately more dangerous.

The former level of systemic repression being unable to stem the increasingly prevalent and organized level of both civilian protests and opposition by armed guerilla groups, the Videla regime was led to engage in a campaign to quell opposition with renewed vigor. The "Dirty war" (In Spanish *Guerra* sucia) of 1976-1980 heralded one of the most repressive periods in Argentine history. Banning all political participation, the Junta actively targeted perceived threats to the incumbent regime with methods including indiscriminate detention and subterfuge. Guerilla groups were not the only targets, and those deemed potentially problematic, including intellectuals, business figures and activists were labeled as potential enemies of the state.[312] Though brutal, the dirty war was largely successful on two fronts: threats to the regime were quelled, and institutional alternatives towards military rule were destroyed. Any groups capable of reconsolidating along efficient organizational lines were left in disarray. The remains of these former governing institutions remained on life-support extended by the military, who used the neglected constitution to coopt these languished institutions and don a shell of

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[311] Levitsky and Murillo, "Building Castles:" 25
[312] Gibran, *The Falklands War*: 60-63.

legitimacy.[313] This did little to improve the image of the Videla regime, and the only bright spot during his tenure was Argentinian national team winning the world cup in 1978 – an event lauded by the media as a much-needed societal boost.[314]

Videla was succeeded by Roberto Viola after five years in office, in a move inconsistent with the monolithic image portrayed by the military. Already in power for a half-decade, disagreements within the military junta regarding both the direction of Argentina, particularly its economy and the rite of succession began to appear on the surface. Inheriting a country rife with capital flight, a recession in overall manufacturing and the open opposition of the Navy, Viola was forced to break the mold so to speak in order to attempt to stem the tide of further economic weakening, or worse – outright rebellion. The military found itself unable to agree upon, let alone act in a way to resolve these issues. Though able to declare victory in the "dirty war" against the "terrorists," Viola's intended positive impact on the nation was effectively nil, as the looming death of the Argentinian economy and the further degradation of what little remained of the government served as an abscess during his tenure.

These difficulties were not unknown or even unexpected to those within the regime, the general population and the small number of civilian ministers and advisors who still held some position of import within the military Junta. Argentina had endured a cycle of seemingly endless regime changes since 1912, and each breather the civilian inheritors were granted between coups was little time enough to create the façade of a functioning government, let alone allowing new institutions to mature enough to prove

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[313] Corradi, *The Fitful Republic:* 121.
[314] Gibran, *The Falklands War:* 63.

effective in their roles. Overall faith in the government was low, as was the belief that any new regime would prove effective in governing. These expectations forced Argentina into a so-called "institutional instability trap," wherein relevant actors (or in the case of democratic transitions, the general public) have become effectively numb to the constant institutional weakness of their state, and so there is little incentive for them to attempt to cultivate efficient institutions.[315]

The end result was that the people and de facto governing officials (military included) needed to create alternate forms of government and governing institutions. There was little need or incentive to follow the precepts of democracy or electoral legitimacy, and so informal relationships, specialized skills and organizational practices were necessary to fill the void left by the decaying governmental shell. In the military could be found all three of these qualities.[316] The military (in most, if not all nations) is an institution in which stability, regimental order and ritualized practice is hallowed above all else as these contribute to overall strength. In short: the military is deliberately designed not to change.[317] The story was largely the same during Videla's incumbency, but the transition to Viola, and his seemingly discordant views within the Junta on the economy and civilian involvement began to strain the image of a military monolith.

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[315] Gretchen Helmke, *The Origins of Institutional Crises in Latin America: A Unified Strategic Model and Test* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007): 28. As noted, Argentina may have significant endowments of both resources and human-made capital, but the inability to efficiently allocate either was a chronic problem for the state. Regarding the futility of Argentine institutions, scholars coined the phrase "Kakistocracy," literally meaning "rule of the worst." See Eduardo Conesa, *The Argentine Economy: Policy Reform for Development,* (Cambridge Mass: Lanham University Press of America, 1989): 9.

[316] Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murillo "Variation in Institutional Strength," *Annual Review of Political Science,* 12, 2009: 124.

[317] For more on the monolithic nature of the military as an organization see Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1991). Though this image has persisted with strength until today, alternate theories now portray the military as a multi-faceted institution.

Viola deviated from the party-line in terms of economy policy, further devaluing the peso in an effort to increase the competitiveness of exports, and borrowed more heavily from abroad – increasing the national debt to $19 billion. This had the opposite effect, with all indications portraying a recession gaining strength, not weakening, with the use of foreign reserves being used to compensate for the mounting deficit.[318]

Though Viola's initial appointment was opposed by the Navy, his meddling with alternate measures to boost the Argentinian economy caused the opposition to his appointment to become even more obvious in the public sector. In an effort to retain not only his personal legitimacy and semblance of loyalty in the military, Viola sought to loosen the restraints on civilian participation within the regime. Including not only civilian politicians, but business leaders in his cabinet, Viola sought a wider selection of potential solutions for the political and economic ills of the country, and thus enlisted alternate viewpoints. This however eroded what remained of his support within the Junta, with many leaders, even those outside of naval positions criticizing Viola for diminished capacity as a leader and personal weakness.[319] This perceived change of course towards the liberalization of the political arena and a potential transfer back to civilian rule spelled the end for Viola.

Continued opposition from the Navy had joined with several influential factions within the wider military, not the least of all top brass within the Army. Faced with a discordant Junta Viola suggested once more making the government, particularly the

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[318] Martin Honeywell and J. Pearce, *The Falklands/Malvinas: Whose Crisis? (*London: Latin American Bureau, 1982): 74. This overcompensation was so taxing that on a single day, Argentina saw its foreign reserves drained by $308 Million.

[319] Luis Alberto Romero (Translated by James P. Brennan), *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*: *Updated and Revised Edition* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013): 240-241.

selection of his successor, more accessible to the wider population. Viola often faced

fierce opposition from the likes of Leopoldo Galtieri, the Commander in Chief of the

Army and his subordinate Cristino Nicolaides, in public. Galtieri was particularly

scathing in his attacks on Viola, aptly noting that the president was always answerable to

the Junta, and not some metaphorical electorate.[320] Now assaulted from the outside by

general unrest, an ailing economy and waning support within the Junta, Viola found

himself largely impotent as the Argentinian president. His waning image was further

weakened by the announcement that he was in poor health on November 9th, 1981.[321]

Unable to effectively govern or balance the Junta in his condition, His colleagues

announced that his poor health inhibited his ability to effectively wield the presidency,

and his tenure ended on November 21st 1981.

His successor, Galtieri, moved quickly to seize the mantle of the presidency,

while still holding his military commission within the army. With the support of the air

force, many influential members of the army and most importantly Admiral Anaya of the

navy, Galtieri assumed the presidency on December 22nd 1981. Unlike his predecessor

however, any semblance of stability inherent in the remaining civilian institutions had

been worn down by the suppression of Peronism, and the increasingly arduous tenure of

the Junta. As the only bastion of stability within Argentina, Galtieri made good on his

frequent criticisms of Viola as a weak leader and democratic sympathizer, and

endeavored to ensure solidarity remained within the Junta at all costs. Ruling was

becoming increasingly taxing for the military however, who had to rely on a constantly

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[320] Veigel, *Dictatorship:* 86.
[321] Eddy, Linklater and Gillman, *War in the Falklands:* 61.

evolving governing apparatus with a high turnover rate to maintain some coherent course. These constant demands had begun to tear at the fabric of the regime, as evidenced with Viola's departure, and Galtieri too faced similar problems.

The Junta that Galtieri "led" was essentially a three-man tribunal, but as opposed to the caretaker role they had entered in 1976, the Junta had now actively governed for a half-decade. The three-man ruling panel was beholden to their senior commanders, who in turn had to answer to their direct subordinates which reinforced a glacial pace, increased discussion and by proxy the potential of schisms within the regime.[322] The goals were thus clear for not only the president, but the regime as well. Galtieri had to 1.) ensure solidarity within the Junta, 2.) preserve the remaining status, capability and legitimacy of the Junta and 3.) Given the long pattern of civilian governance punctuated by coups, he needed to prepare for the possibility of returning to the barracks, albeit within a regime that afforded the military the institutional privileges and resources befitting them. In short, he had to look beyond ruling, and envision an ideal-type environment in which the military was potentially "ruled."

The Junta Weighs the Options

Galtieri, as the new executive, began to feel the sting of discord and waning popularity early on, just as his predecessor had. Faced with (by now) an inflation rate of

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[322] Ibid.

150% and increased unrest, the military needed a reorientation of its previous strategies

to maintain the peace.[323] The old strategy of pawning off extant problems on a newly

minted civilian administration was seen as inviable for several reasons. The first of

course was the fact that civilian institutions had languished to such an extent as to leave

the military (or heavy military involvement) as the only possible steward for the state.

Secondly was that the dirty war had been won. Previously, the presence of "terrorists"

had provided a convenient target for the military to flex its muscles and seize more and

more political power. The war was over however and survivors of the crippling

repression remained, the fresh memories of the militaries most brutal side stung the

general populace. A transition to civilian rule at this time could potentially lead to an

increase in international scrutiny as well as arrests at the hands of a new government.[324]

Additionally, if democracy was pursued, it was highly likely that any officer would be

shut out of democratic elections, as the hearts of the citizenry had turned cold towards

their overlords over their tenure.[325]

Galtieri had early success in bolstering the economy with a flair unknown to his

predecessors. He immediately took a hard shot at inflation, made some headway in

boosting exports and developed an understanding of the public's desires in a way

reminiscent of Peron. Though never reaching the dizzying heights of popularity as Peron

and his wife had, he still reveled in his own unique level of celebrity.[326] However, this

was not to be, and the failures of military rule extending into civilian institutions and

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[323] David Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1982: From Spanish Colonization to the Falklands War* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985): 374-375, Eddy, Linklater and Gillman, *War in the Falklands: 62.*

[324] Gibran, *The Falklands War:* 64, Eddy, Linklater and Gillman, *War in the Falklands:* 64.

[325] Dabat, Lorenzano, *Argentina:* 77.

[326] Gibran, *The Falklands War:* 64.

economic guidance similarly faltered and ground to a halt as it had previously done. Any

attempt under the military to create an effective blueprint of the economy failed. The

junta's inexperience in such affairs, as well as the nonexistent pool of civilian talent

served to sabotage all efforts towards growth. In short: the total destruction of the state at

the expense of the military-industrial complex resulted in a total collapse of the

economy.[327] The old methods providing short-term relief utilized by previous presidents

been exhausted. However, there was a potential font of more permanent popularity that

had not yet been tackled in earnest. In order to galvanize the military for continued

relevance in a post-Junta world and retain their operational capacity on the wings of new

popularity, Galtieri turned to Argentinian foreign policy as palliative for the Juntas ills.

Why did Galtieri look outward? The classic diversionary calculus dictated the

externalization of strife. Faced with such terrible circumstances domestically, the old

options of repair, repress or regale surfaced. There were no resources available to fix the

problems that served as the source of unrest, as both institutions and economic capital

had been irreparably damaged. Consistent with a Junta's role as caretaker, stability was

key to their tenure, not rebirth.[328] Additionally, leaving the weak institutions in place

during military rule affords officers convenient targets for scapegoating, as the blame for

poor performance can be shifted elsewhere.[329] Repression was equally unattractive, as

barely contained resentment of the civilian populace stemming from the dirty war could

easily reignite and unsustainably tax the regime. Both were roles a professional military

were uncomfortable with. A solution involving the military, but with an external target

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[327] Dabat, Lorenzano, *Argentina:* 64.
[328] Nordlinger, *Soldiers.*
[329] Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes* 2nd ed.: 33.

allowed their most functional institution to flex and prove it's worth, while sparing

Argentina from further direct damage.

To fully capitalize on international affairs as a bolster for continued military rule,

Galtieri first had to shore-up the armed forces, ensure they were well-stocked, organized

and equipped with the capabilities to not only continue ruling, but to operate externally.

Furthermore, by bolstering the strength of the military, Galtieri ran the chance of drawing

in wayward officers by promises of enhanced institutional resources. By realizing the

longstanding dream of *Argentina Potencia*[330], Galtieri and his supporters would have the

ability to survive in a post-transition state with all the rights and privileges afforded to a

respected institution. Fate offered him a chance to do just that, and the election of Ronald

Reagan proved a boon to the Junta's plans. Though a number of high-level exchanges

had occurred between the two nations, Galtieri himself saw it fit to visit the American

executive in November of 1981.[331] With the Carter-era human rights focus removed in

favor of the containment policies of Reagan, the US had begun a rapprochement strategy

with various Latin American regimes that actively opposed communism. Argentina

happen to be chief among them.[332]

In order to secure future American support, Galtieri made various concessions to

the Reagan administration, including the possibility of long-term leases in Patagonia to

serve as military staging grounds. In return, Galtieri sought the expertise and

international investment of the USA to help develop Argentina's fledgling oil sector,

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[330] This term often appears in describing the return of enhancement of Argentinian power and prestige on the international front.
[331] Conveniently this is when it became clear that existing inter-regime strife proved unsustainable to Viola.
[332] George Phillip, "Argentine Politics and the Falklands Issue," *RUSI and Brassey's Defense Yearbook* (1984): 156.

which would serve as a sorely needed source of income for the shambling Argentine economy, as well as a steady source of exports in the future.[333] More importantly however, the United States hoped to count on Galtieri's support in their anti-communist operations in central America, which had begun to sour. Fatigued after their experience with anti-insurgency operations in Vietnam, the US government had limited American involvement in the region. Galtieri was more than happy to provide the support necessary, sending an estimated 200 advisors to El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.[334]

To ameliorate potential problems in Argentina's efforts to suppress communism, the Reagan administration had agreed to restore military exchanges and weapons programs with Galtieri. Though the Junta had consolidated its power and increased its strength since coming to power in 1976 (as any resources were best spent towards stability, and thus the military), the restoration of old supply relations proved a boon to Galtieri.[335] With the military sufficiently strengthened to weather the continued economic downturn for the immediate future, Galtieri finally had the capacity to utilize the international environment for his domestic needs – necessary as all homegrown attempts at growth or support had failed under the Juntas watch. The challenge became one of utilizing a strategy to repair and enhance the prestige of the military, without undue risk. After many failures, there was no comprehensive plan to reorganize the economy at the current time, and a return to civilian rule in the state Argentina was in

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[333] Rock, *Argentina:* 374-375.

[334] Lebow, "Miscalculations:" 23

[335] For a precise accounting of Argentinian strength between 1976-1982, see Adrian English, "Argentina's Military Potential," *Navy International* (1982): 1046-1050. The military would reach the apex of its power in 1982.

would require the stability of the military.[336] Without the civilian institutions in place to manipulate the external environment, diplomacy was rendered obsolete, and the military stepped in.

Galtieri and the regime had a number of external options in order to potentially boost public support. The first option was an increased role for the military in Central America. With Argentinian advisors already hard at work training anticommunist forces in tandem with American wishes, such an operation meant that the two states could continue to work in prosperous harmony. However, extending their operations outside of their traditional range was not necessary for Galtieri to court the United States initially, and they had benefitted immensely from the lifting of weapons restrictions even with the paltry force of 200 advisors aiding the United States. Tangible benefits had already been accrued, and continued anti-communist activities would do little to quell civilian unrest.[337] Furthermore, these new counter-insurgency operations amounted to little more than an artificial continuation of the Dirty War. Accelerating such a controversial course of action ran the risk of not only rubbing salt into a fresh wound in the minds of the broader populace, but Galtieri ran the risk of being accused of being a puppet of the US government. Doing such distasteful work for Reagan had the potential to conjure up images of neo-imperialism and thus serve as a rallying cry to the dormant Peronists and broader left-wing public.[338]

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[336] Peter Calvert, *The Falklands Crisis: The Rights and Wrongs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982): 28-29.

[337] In fact, the agreement to become more involved in Central American interventions was an integral facet of the agreement to remove the arms embargo from Argentina. It seemed the United States was unwilling to provide weaponry to the Junta, in light of their recent operations, if there was no clear-cut advantage for the American side. See Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina:* 93, 184.

[338] Rock, *Argentina:* 375.

The second option was to escalate an ongoing dispute between Chile and Argentina. The Beagle Channel, which rests at the southernmost point of South America constituted disputed territory. More specifically however, the dispute centered on three islands that lie at the mouth of the channel: the islands of Nueva, Lennox and Picton. The tensions themselves had stretched back nearly a century, and although Chile administered the islands since 1881, the first claims from the Argentinian side arose in 1904, and the islands sat in dispute ever since.[339] Their claim was based largely on the fact that the Boundary Treaty of 1881 did not explicitly name the islands, and their borderline location made their ownership suspect in Argentine eyes. Aside from the international taboo of willingly ceding territory to a foreign state, Chile had a vested military interest in retaining the islands. Argentina's goals were largely the same as well.

If Chile continued to administer the islands and consolidate their claim over the land, then their access to Antarctica would be enhanced. Furthermore, the region was well-equipped to mount expeditions to the southern pole, and subsequent claims and operations on the island would be further enhanced. Argentina had naval bases in the geographic vicinity, nearly 50 miles due west of the island of Picton, at the settlement of Ushuaia. Though nearby, this location did not afford Argentina the level of control over the region as Chile enjoyed. By securing their claim over Picton, Lennox and Nueva, the international boundaries on the high seas would not only be altered, but any and all ships, not the least being Argentinian vessels returning from Antarctica would have to journey

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[339] *Dispute between Argentina and Chile concerning the Beagle Channel: Beagle Channel Arbitration Between the Republic of Argentina and the Republic of Chile, Report and Decision of the Court of Arbitration* (United Nations Arbitration Reports, February 18th, 1977). Available at: http://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol_XXI/53-264.pdf

through Chile's sovereign waters.[340] Negotiations and saber-rattling for nearly a century

had begun to overbearingly tax both sides, and so both Chile and Argentina jointly agreed

to finally offer the decision of to international arbitration. The five-member panel which

had been convened under the auspices of the British crown convened in 1971. In an early

blow to the new Junta which had taken power in 1976, the international panel awarded

the islands to Chile in 1977.[341]

On the eve of Chile accepting the decision of the international body, the Junta

declared the decision illegitimate in January of 1978 and refused to comply. Instead, the

Videla regime sent a substantial naval force to the area in an unprecedented show of

brinksmanship. The boisterous actions of Argentina actually proved to be profitable for

the regime. Chile delayed its official acceptance of the islands, and in a bid to ward off

tension, referred the issue to the Vatican, which had agreed to serve as a moderator in the

dispute.[342] As two deeply Catholic countries, the word of the Pope was well-respected,

and there was hope that the issue could be resolved peacefully. However, the effects

from the show of naval force had been substantial, and the Junta enjoyed some popularity

and utility from the display.[343]

There was no guarantee however that Galtieri and his incarnation of the Junta

could recreate the success of Videla. On one hand, the Vatican had previously ruled in

favor of Chile in the dispute in 1980, and to go against the word of the Pope would spell

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[340] Gibran, *The Falklands War:* 65-66.
[341] UN Decision, 1977.
[342] Sir Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign, Volume I: The Origins of the Falklands War* (London: Routledge, 2005): 105.
[343] George Phillip, "Argentine Politics:" 155.

disaster for the Junta's image amongst the populace.[344] On the other, war had been

avoided before due to the intervention of the Vatican, and now (with Papal backing) the

position of Chile would have no doubt hardened. The potential threat of a protracted war

with their direct neighbor was unattractive to the Junta which desperately needed to

maintain their strength to continue to maintain some semblance of order. Loss in a direct

confrontation with Chile would be catastrophic for Galtieri, but loss of manpower and

military capability due to expended resources could be equally damaging to their ability

to rule. Compound these threats with the looming possible interference from Brazil.

Such a fear was based on the fact that a substantial amount of war material would need to

be transported over the Andean mountains. Decision makers at the time saw this as a

potential avenue for intervention from Brazil, and to a lesser extent Peru, Ecuador and

Bolivia.[345] The number of concerns and uncertainties helped to make an escalation of the

Beagle channel dispute less attractive.[346]

The Junta in Unfamiliar Territory

Galtieri desperately needed a win. There was no sake in exacerbating an

unpredictable international situation for the sake of making a potentially pointless show.

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[344] At this point in time, the stance of the Catholic Church in Argentina was mildly supportive at best regarding the Junta, but neutral most consistently. This worked in the Regime's favor as the Catholic Church was a bastion of legitimacy from which the regime could borrow some support. To lose this lifeline would be severely damaging to their image.

[345] Alejandro Corbacho, "Predicting the Probability of War During Brinksmanship Crises: The Beagle and Malvinas Conflicts," *Universidad del CEMA Documento de Trabajo* 244 (2003): 12. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1016843&download=yes

[346] Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1982:* 374-375.

By now all options had been exhausted. The regime did not have the resources or the institutional capability to operate outside of the immediate comfort zone of the military, and their ability to repress dissent had run its course. A crackdown of any intensity after years of the Dirty war ran the risk of throwing the state into complete chaos. Galtieri continued to lack the institutions to reform the civilian sector and was very reticent to risk a potential war with Chile.

Even if Galtieri had prevailed in a war with Argentina's neighbor, the Chilean military was quite capable, and there would be significant losses, as well as the construction of an overtly hostile environment between the two neighboring countries which would weaken the Junta's ability to maintain domestic control. The disputed islands were mostly military in nature, and so the ability for a war to rally the civilian population was suspect as it was not an issue to public cared much about due in part to a lack of a storied history, as well as respect for Papal mediation which had already weighed in favor of Chile.[347] In this vein, earning the ire of the Pope would reduce the tacit support of the Catholic Church and destroy the final bastion of non-military support Galtieri could lean upon. Previous strategies were equally unattractive as the Junta was unwilling to tarnish their reputation with more subterfuge in Central America. Galtieri was left with one final option. Seizing the Falklands, a last vestige of colonialism and a rallying cry for Argentinian nationalism would buy the Junta time, and provide the

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[347] This idea is spoken about in the diversionary literature. A potential diversion, target or adversary has to be seen as sufficiently important, and an adversary sufficiently threatening to even be worth the attention of the audience. See Tir, "Territorial Diversions." Overtly weak opponents and useless prizes have no utility as diversions, as they can be considered far too insignificant for the audience to care. Given the potential losses in a war with Chile, and the possibility of unrest from the civilian population, the Beagle Channel was less-than ideal. Consequently, the diverted and lost resources would result in a weakened Junta at home, which was already struggling to contain the problems Argentina's worsening conditioning were causing.

regime with the legitimacy necessary to attempt much-needed reforms in the government.[348]

Though the negotiations over the Falkland Islands had existed for decades, subsequent coups and civilian rebirths of the government had not provided the Argentinian people with a stable bargaining platform, and Britain had long retained the upper hand in negotiations. Prior to the conclusion on the Beagle Channel issue under the Peron regime, the issue had begun to run into the same stalemate which later forced Argentina to act decades in the future. Because of this lapse in negotiations, the prospect of regaining the Falklands had become increasingly important for all incumbent governments.[349] The most recent incarnation of stalled negotiations can be attributed to British proactivity in terms of decolonization. Once World War II had concluded and colonization of such a vast amount of territory was no longer viable, the U.K. submitted to the U.N. an exhaustive list of 40 extant territories which the British pledged to decolonize, with the Falkland Islands included on this list.

Further attention was brought to British decolonization with the penning of U.N. Resolution 1514 in 1960 which was a set of prospective guidelines of independence for those still living under colonial governments. Emboldened by this success, the Argentine government redoubled their efforts in 1964, and involving themselves more heavily in global colonial affairs, affirmed their claim over not only the Falklands, but the South Sandwich Islands and South Georgia Island as well. Further UN resolutions bolstered the

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[348] Seizing the Falklands had it all. Domestic support, military longing and the potential to afford the regime resources and respect even in the event of a civilian transition back to democracy. I extrapolate on these points in the coming pages.
[349] Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (London, Faber, 1990): 4.

Argentinian position, and resolution 2065 adopted in 1965 (with British opposition)

passed without hindrance and stipulated that the islands in question are applicable to

resolution 1514, that negotiations should be pursued immediately and that the UK should

cede the islands even if the islanders preferred living under the Crown.[350]

At this time the civilian institutions necessary to continue delicate negotiations

were still serviceable, as the military had not been overburdened by years of fractured

rule. Furthermore, the support from the UN was a boon to the Argentinian cause, as it

was concrete proof that world opinion was on their side.[351] However, the early successes

of Peronism had begun to wane, and the subsequent Juntas that had outlawed the party

found themselves in unfamiliar diplomatic waters as well as facing a new and

coordinated enemy. Alternately termed the Falkland Islands Pressure Group or the

Falkland Islands Committee (henceforth FIC), had rapidly formed in London following

international pressure on the UK, as well as apparent British acquiescence to de-

colonialization. Created by William Hunter-Christie in 1967, a British official previously

serving in Buenos Aires, the interest group became a coordinated obstructionist force

against Argentine sovereignty.[352]

A disruption of this magnitude was unfortunate as true progress was underway.

Despite some lingering bitterness in the face of international scrutiny, the British dealt

with the Argentinian delegations amicably. Proceeding talks were pleasant, once

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[350] Ruben O., Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict: The War for the Malvinas* (New York: Praeger 1989): 3

[351] Each pro-decolonization resolution passed with sweeping approval.

[352] John E. Marr, Lieutenant Colonel, *War in the Falklands: Perspectives on British Strategy and Use of Airpower* (Air War College, Air University, Alabama: Maxell Air Force Base, April 1988): 13. Available at : https://ia802804.us.archive.org/22/items/DTIC_ADA202643/DTIC_ADA202643.pdf

negotiations had begun in earnest beginning in 1965, and a "memorandum of understanding" was penned between both nations in late 1968.[353] The details of this development were finalized several months later in during a visit from Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart to Argentina. He had arrived to convey that the British government had come to the decision that year that the islands would be handed over to Argentina within a four to ten-year timeframe.[354] The 1970 rise of the Labour party in British politics however represented a roadblock towards progress. Nearly as conservative as the FIC, the new UK government scorned not only calls from Argentina to continue negotiations but the United Nations' recommendations that talks continue – not to mention the vast international support Argentina enjoyed. Britain was put on the diplomatic defense, especially in light of Argentinian goodwill efforts towards the islanders and their immediate needs. A 1971 Joint Declaration saw to it that the mainland would provide the Kelpers[355] with schools, medical facilities, communications capability as well as basic needs such as fuel and information.

Receiving Argentinian support but not offering reciprocal diplomacy, the UN took notice, passing resolution 3160 in 1973. The general assembly lauded Argentinian attempts to raise the quality of life of the Falklands in the face of British stonewalling, while simultaneously bringing the international discussion more directly towards the issue of sovereignty.[356]   Argentina had reached the height of not only its diplomatic strength, but level of international support as well in the subsequent years. The

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[353] Freedman, Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War:* 8.
[354] Moro, *The History:* 4.
[355] A common, colloquialism for the islanders living on the Falklands.
[356] (XXVIII): Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), 2202 Plenary Meeting, 14th December, 1973: 108. Available at: https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/docs/A_RES_31_60-Eng.pdf

Organization of American States (OAS), with the support of the majority of Latin America rehashed their support for the Argentine struggle, with repeated calls to finally settle the issue of sovereignty and the psychologically damaging issue of residual colonialism. The same body proceeded to officially back Argentinian claims in 1976 over the islands, concluding that Buenos Aires not only had a firm foundation regarding claims of sovereignty, but that these claims could be effectively defended as well.

International support skyrocketed soon after, with the OAS' support evolving into opposing British activities in the Western Hemisphere more generally, and the nonaligned states uncharacteristically began to openly support Argentina as well.[357] This period represented the absolute pinnacle of Argentinian diplomatic strength through all previous incarnations of their government, civilian or otherwise. If they were unable to achieve control of the Falklands via words at this point in this, any degradation of institutional and diplomatic strength would further erode their chances. The fact that Argentina habitually and radically changed governments did not help the situation.

Negotiations predictably went through a fundamental change when the Junta led by Videla usurped rule in Buenos Aires. As typical of Argentinian politics, this shake-up led to a change in leadership, but not an improvement in governmental affairs. Furthermore, the relatively new Labour government in the UK still remained largely unfamiliar with the nuance that had afforded cordiality to negotiations between the two sides in the past. Faced with a neophyte government in Britain, and the military

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[357] Moro, *The History:* 4. The Inter-American Juridical Committee concluded on 1/16/1976 "That the Republic of Argentina has an undeniable right of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands," quoted in the text of the OAS Resolution on the Falkland Islands. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/1982/04/29/world/text-of-oas-resolution-on-the-falkland-islands.html

assuming the role of negotiators, the only "constant and coherent actor" throughout the

diplomatic process was the FIC. They hindered further progress by being a constant

source of opposition, as well as attempting to sway islanders away from the Argentinian

side – worrying, as many islanders held a positive view of the support offered by Buenos

Aires.[358] Any rapport that either side had built with one another was in danger of

deteriorating rapidly: with the job of running Argentina becoming more difficult by the

day, and the new UK administration content to follow the lead of the FIC, relations began

to fall apart. Further exacerbating the situation, the FIC succeeded in lobbying the House

of Commons to consider the "wishes of the islanders" in negotiations, effectively

detaching any conversation of sovereignty from reality.[359]

The Junta was in a quandary. With the current state of their extant government,

they were unable to effectively continue negotiations with any hope of success while

simultaneously jealously guarding any progress that had been made in the past. The issue

ground to a halt, and with the military digging in, and the FIC continuing to guide

influential islanders, the issue of sovereignty remained under British control despite

continued Argentinian assistance, and apparent British abandonment of the islanders and

their domestic (as well as defensive needs).[360] The reality of the situation however was

that the islanders themselves had little actual say in negotiations. As the discussion about

sovereignty was now inextricably linked with the desires of the Kelpers, the FIC saw it fit

to cull those influential citizens who participated in all referendums. The result was that

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[358] Virginia Gamba, *The Falklands-Malvinas War: A Model for North-South Crisis Prevention* (London: Allen and Unwin: 1987: 95-97.

[359] Freedman, Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War:* 8-9.

[360] The decision to decommission the HMS *Endurance*, an icebreaker ship that represented the only constant naval presence in the area was seen by some as an admission of British nonchalance. I will touch upon this later.

the wishes of the islanders were secondary to that of the wishes of the UK.[361] Events

transpired rapidly, with both sides recalling their ambassadors over a British vessel

prospecting in the disputed waters. A Labour party member, David Owen attempted to

break the stalemate and forge new talks, but the typical stalling tactics of the FIC

persisted and no talks occurred. New ambassadors would not be exchanged until 1979.[362]

This new development was celebrated as a turning point in the dispute, and the

reignited negotiations showed some promise. For the first time, the prospect of a lease

agreement was spoken about openly, and under the provisional plan, Kelpers would hold

dual citizenship, with ownership reverting to Argentina after 99 years. Buenos Aires, for

their part, would continue humanitarian efforts to improve life on the islands.[363] Residual

progress from the previous years as well as the ongoing goodwill campaign of the Junta

served to preserve the relative strength of Argentina's bargaining position, and Ridley

returned to the islands in 1980. He had been authorized by the British cabinet to pen a

provisional plan of which there were three potential cornerstones: joint control, the

aforementioned leaseback proposal, or to shelve negotiations for the time being. Ridley

himself favored leaseback, as did an estimated 1/3 of all native islanders. He was

opposed however by Margaret Thatcher, as well as the handpicked legislative council of

the FIC effectively blocked any further discussion of the issue. Viola's own power was

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[361] Moro, *The History:* 5.
[362] Ibid: 5-6
[363] Ibid: 6. Though the length of this agreement may seem excessively long, a similar arrangement was reached between the UK and the Qing Dynasty. The Second Convention of Peking saw the British lease the territory of Hong Kong for 99 years from the weakened imperial government of China. Once the lease had expired, the land was returned to China without incident.

waning, as was his health, and he was unable to be diplomatically flexible enough to continue negotiations outside of unilateral sovereignty.[364]

Ridley for his part continued his crusade to resolve the issue, being politically attacked by scathing criticisms in the House of Commons upon his return to the UK.[365] Both sides were now faced with the prospect of any and all talks utterly collapsing. London, though diplomatically capable, refused to negotiate under the guise of assessing the Kelper's wishes. Argentina however saw the remainder of their civilian institutions decay, and their position was relegated to preserving past progress, and desperately attempting to engage the UK. Ridley made a final effort in 1981 in New York whereupon he attempted to convince Argentina (under the watchful eyes of FIC representatives present at the meeting), that a 10-year moratorium on negotiations was the most appropriate course at the current time. As if foretelling the coming political shakeup in Argentina, the Viola regime demanded that sovereignty must come first, and the wishes of Britain could be assessed later. Ridley left his post in the foreign office of the UK, and with him left that last British politician with any interest in resolving the issue.[366]

Argentina now suffered from a lack of diplomatic acumen, a reduced bargaining position and the loss of a fairly friendly mediator of the British side. The military however, still intact and capable, continued their goodwill missions on the island, providing logistics, transportation and supplies to the Kelpers in times of need. Still, any

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[364] Ibid: 7
[365] It's been said that the berating of Ridley occurred at a level unheard of in London in recent memory. This was largely seen as a testament to the FIC in the House of Commons.
[366] Ibid: 7.

pro-Argentina voices were largely muted by the puppetry of the FIC, and so negotiations languished further. Galtieri, who succeeded the post of Argentinian president as well as inheriting a diplomatic mess saw the full extent of his political weakness through his new emissary, Dr. Nicanor Costa Mendez, when all of his attempts to restart negotiations for his tenure failed. Not two months after his appointment as president, both sides met one final time in February 1982 in a last-ditch effort to jumpstart talks, though all attempts died on the vine. Galtieri's diplomatic weakness could not overcome the diplomatic strength of the FIC and their allies in the House of Commons. Diplomacy had effectively failed.[367]

Clausewitz Restrained: Continuing Politics by Other Means

After inheriting a political quagmire upon his ascension to the presidency, Galtieri experienced firsthand the sting of diplomatic insolvency. Though the Falkland Islands represented the final, and most viable international target, as well as the most promising way to galvanize Argentine society behind the Junta, the way in which to achieve this was viewed fairly favorably. In the words of one scholar, "It may seem natural to assume that a military government will want a military solution to a diplomatic problem," but in reality, this belies significant nuance inherent in these words.[368] As evidenced by the behavior of the officers preceding him, war was not the only option and a military

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[367] Ibid: 7-8.
[368] Calvert, *The Falklands Crisis:* 49.

solution *became* preferable. Not just because it offered the best chance to achieve

domestic support, but because their experience in pursuing said goal through either

diplomatic efforts or a charm offensive, did not come to fruition. This further highlights

the fact that a Junta is a military first, and a regime second.

Galtieri's government in Buenos Aires was in an increasingly untenable position.

The economy remained in shambles, the country was internationally isolated despite

support for their claims over the Falklands, and military rule had frankly begun to drag

on. A transition was becoming increasingly tenable, not just for Galtieri who was due to

retire as Commander in Chief of the Army in 1982, but for the military as a whole who

had tread water in unfamiliar territory for too long. If Galtieri hoped to persist in politics

without his military commission (his position as president was theoretically secure until

1984), some sort of radical development had to occur under his watch to cement his

position in any incumbent government without the backing of his troops. To attempt to

remain in politics without forging either the proper legacy or connections, the General ran

the risk of repeating the experience of Viola, who retired from his post with little

substantive power.[369] Furthermore, both he and his fellow Junta members, along with

their subservient officers had to retain their strength and solidarity, for if democracy was

to follow their rule, the looming threat of International observers revisiting the atrocities

of the Dirty War weighed heavily in their minds.

The Falklands still remained the most viable option to survive institutionally

strong, and as a force in the likely event of a civilian transition, but the method in which

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[369] Eddy, Linklater and Gillman, *War in the Falklands:* 64.

they finally won the islands had to be carefully considered. Diplomacy, which was merely an extension of the status quo, had failed after much promise. In retrospect, while this would have potentially given the Junta the boost that they so craved, credit would not be as widely dispersed as would be required in a council-form regime. Arguably the most progress was made prior to Videla coming to power, with each subsequent officer inheriting less and less residual bargaining strength in the face of the House of Commons and the FIC.

If Galtieri was to succeed in negotiating sovereignty from the British, he ran the risk of centralizing benefits upon himself, ostracizing his fellow Junta members as the status of his minor, but considerable celebrity status grew. Credit for the success would go to Galtieri, and not the military as an organizational interest. Additionally, as the islands would have been peacefully acquired, the military itself would lack a mission to converge around. In a world where the islands were taken via a military operation, significant reinforcement and combat preparations would need to be undertaken in the event of a British counterattack, necessitating a continued mission as well as increased institutional resources. All would benefit. In a negotiated settlement, the population may support Galtieri, and perhaps the Junta more generally, but this fanfare would do little to strengthen the Junta as a whole, given the ongoing status of Argentina's ills. On a personal level, Peron has shown subsequent regimes the dangers of unbridled charisma and fame, and the current incarnation of the Junta was deliberately "designed to prevent any individual leader from centralizing power and personalizing state institutions, including the military itself."[370] Should this occur, even after losing his commission as

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[370] Weeks, *Dictators at War:* 108.

Commander in Chief, Peron had instilled in the military a fear of residual support for past leaders, and such a risk could not extend to Galtieri.

Additionally, though unified behind their shared stewardship of the country and the remaining institutional skeleton, the *military* remained largely autonomous within *their* respective branches. This served to retain their command-and-control chain inter-service, but as the Commander in Chief did not function as the equivalent in other nations, the significant autonomy would necessarily need to be expanded in their event of a largescale engagement in order to ensure efficiency. However, an engagement of this magnitude would be the deliberate pursuit of a war. A violent seizure of the islands may be the most direct, but it was not the most desirable, despite the prevailing thesis that Argentina deliberately sought a diversionary war with Britain. While war is always a distinct possibility in questions regarding territory, and while war may have given each branch of the military a clearly delineated job to ensure solidarity, war held political, as well as logistical risks.[371]

As the Falklands were small and geographically nearby, a full-scale assault with the intent of luring the United Kingdom into conflict was possible, but vastly inefficient. Furthermore, operationalizing all three branches of the armed forces to share equally in the wartime burdens and spotlight would be very difficult. Seizing the Falklands resonated most loudly with the Navy. The army was large and ill-equipped for such an operation, while the head of the Air Force was a mere brigadier general, which meant he

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[371] The risk of war in issues regarding territory is not conjecture. It has been argued that territory has been the most frequently warred upon issue. See for reference: Jaroslav Tir, "Territorial Diversion." See also Vasquez and Valeriano, "Territory as a Source."

was consistently outranked by his counterparts in other branches.[372] While the navy

would offer the best chance at succeeding in the mission, it would additionally risk

empowering what was seen as the most influential and nationalistic branch of the armed

forces, and thus a domestic rival of Galtieri.[373] The current incarnation of the Junta had

already fended off heated debates to reclaim the Falklands earlier. In 1977 the Navy was

an ardent supporter of a takeover, as well as the most gung-ho branch. This was

dangerous to the stability of the regime, as the rampant nationalism of the naval branch of

the armed forces risked uncontrollable escalation of hostilities. These calls were only

silenced by Viola and Videla putting forth a unified front to quell the Navy.[374]

The voice of the Navy was never fully silenced however, and their status as the

most influential and patriotic branch ensured the Falklands issue was always at least a

half-thought to the regime. Galtieri knew this well. He in large measure owed his

ascension to the presidency to the Navy, specifically Admiral Anaya. It has been

suggested that the Falklands were the token price named to Galtieri for the continued

support of the Navy during his presidency.[375] In fact it was unlikely he would have ever

reached such heights without Anaya.

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[372] Calvert, *The Falklands Crisis:* 49-52. The Falklands did not have domestic air capabilities, as evidenced by the Junta offering logistic and transportation services for the islands in recent years. Additionally, history has shown that a war cannot be won solely from the air.

[373] Romero, *A History:* 243. This was not a new phenomenon, as previous calls for a more hardline stance on the Falklands from the Navy were just barely restrained by joint opposition from both Videla and Viola, highlighting the political strength of the Navy. This influence persisted during Galtieri's tenure, as it was widely known that he only ascended to the presidency through the direct support of Admiral Jorge Anaya, the head of the Argentine Navy at the time.

[374] Romero, *A History:* 243. This is where serious discussions are often said to have begun.

[375] Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the "Malvinas:" The Argentine Forces in the Falklands War (London, New York: Viking, 1989):* 1.

As the most nationalistic branch of the military the Navy had been calling for the recovery of the Falklands for over 20 years, with the "Goa Plan," a plan to seize the islands, being penned two decades earlier.[376] Anaya was known for being in line with his branch as an ardent proponent for seizing the Falklands. According to some sources, Anaya acquiesced to Galtieri's ascension to executive office so long as the reborn Junta would give serious consideration to the issue of sovereignty.[377] In return, Anaya was willing to overlook the fact that Galtieri sought to retain his commission as an officer of the Army. This was the lynchpin of Galtieri's ascension, as the governing statues of the time which dictated president-junta relations explicitly stated that the current executive could not be a commissioned member of the military.[378]

Regardless of the domestic balance of power, a conflict with Britain could not end in defeat. Deliberately expending the resources for a war with the UK meant weakening their capabilities as a whole. While the Junta may have been able to weather such an outcome while riding on the wings of victory, defeat meant the certain exacerbation of domestic difficulties. With no guarantees of victory, and some sort of domestic boost necessary, Galtieri needed the best of both worlds. A win, but one which engaged with, and made best use of what "institutional" strength was available.

The Falklands had to be taken, but in a way that did not overtly shackle the junta with the outright risk and subsequent cost of full warfare. Preservation of the existing

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[376] Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina:* 92. Though the Goa Plan had a long life as a pipe dream, there is little evidence to suggest a concretized timeline or even workable plan had become a reality in the interim period, and the dream of invading the Falklands remained a dream, albeit a passionate one amongst members of the Navy and military more generally.
[377] Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas: 1*.
[378] Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina*: 184.

strength of the military was an absolute necessity. Although the military had been in power for some time, the burdens of governing were becoming great. The timing of the weariness was unfortunate as 1982 was the year in which political parties were set to appear once more in Argentine politics, thus diversifying the governing landscape with a plethora of voices and personnel. Such a world had the threat of eroding not only the relevance, but the image of the military, as unrest had begun to reach critical levels. Galtieri needed to create a powerbase which could endure through elections as well as protect officers from inquiries stemming from the Dirty War, and a strong (as well as intact and victorious) military seemed primed to complete this task.[379]

A full-scale military seizure of the islands exposed the Junta to undue risks. Complete mobilization of the military to quickly seize the islands, remove the small garrison and entrench the military on the Falklands would require coordination and efficient resource allocation, as well as planning in such a way as to perhaps delay the event horizon of taking the Falklands. Considering the Juntas rapidly deteriorating position, this was unacceptable. Furthermore, though such a grandiose display of military prowess would undoubtedly provide for a large spectacle in Buenos Aires, similarly it would provide a large show abroad. A massive provocation, especially resulting in the undue loss of life would dictate a harsh response. Should Galtieri outright attack the Falklands, the prospect of a war with Britain would become a certainty. Despite the quiet vote to decommission the HMS *Endurance*, the House of Commons,

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[379] Eddy, Linklater and Gillman, *War in the Falklands:* 64-65.

spurred by the FIC had actually voted to solidify their naval presence in the South

Atlantic, ostensibly to secure access to Antarctica.[380]

British intentions regarding the South Atlantic had been probed several times

before in incidents between Buenos Aires and the Britain, and each time the United

Kingdom seemed content to rely on diplomacy, rather than force to address event blatant

provocations. Perhaps the most poignant was an incident during an economic expedition

led by Lord Shackleton to Antarctica in early February 1976. On February 4th 1976, the

RRS Shackleton was fired upon by the Argentinian destroyer *ARA Almirante Storni* as the

Royal expedition drifted close to Argentina's territorial waters.[381] Despite noting that

that the area had been the site of more frequent provocations, and having a research

vessel fired upon by an Argentinian Destroyer, the British endeavored to "take every

possible diplomatic initiative to cool the situation."[382]

Though parliament had previously discussed the lack of military forces in the area

as both a weakness and tempting target for Argentina, as well as discussing the dangers

of scrapping the *Endurance,* decommissioning and lack of military attention occurred

unabated.[383] The 1982 removal of the sole British warship in the area simply reinforced

the interpretation by Argentina that the British military commitment to the islands was

mired in symbolism and diplomacy, rather than aegis. This similarly bolstered the

Junta's view of the British commitment to diplomacy, rather than forceful reprisal. This

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[380] Moro, *The History: 7.*
[381] Bernardo A. Duggan and Colin M. Lewis, *Historical Dictionary of Argentina: New Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan and Littlefield, 2019): 302.
[382] House of Commons Debates, *Falkland Islands (RSS "Shackleton"), (*February 5th, 1976): Available at: https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1976/feb/05/falkland-islands-rrs-shackleton
[383] Ibid.

view was solidified once more on March 19th 1982, when a civilian businessman by the

name of Constantino Davidoff, working under a private contract out of Argentina to scrap

the remains of an old whaling station located on South Georgia Island. Argentina's navy

had been interested in the expedition despite being a civilian salvage operation, as

evidenced by the transport of Davidoff's workers on military vessels, including an

icebreaker in 1981, and a troop transport in 1982.[384] Though Davidoff and his men were

eventually removed once Britain lodged formal complaints, Argentinian marines

eventually landed upon the islands to secure the Davidoff's remaining employees. The

British never responded to the troop landing with force.[385]

Regardless, in the event of an actual war, Galtieri had reason to be confident in an

Argentine victory. Reinstituted exchanges with the United States mentioned above had

provided Argentina with advanced weapons and combat systems. Symbiotically, this

relationship had begun to allow their own domestic weapons industry to start to flourish,

with Argentina themselves providing war material to states as far away as Pakistan, and

close rivals such as Chile. Readily available manpower totaled an estimated 185,000

soldiers, and the overall distance from which Britain had to fight would greatly diminish

their wartime effectiveness. The UK enjoyed no obvious advantages both numerically or

qualitatively, with even the Argentine Air Force (seen as the least-capable branch) having

the edge over the UK in terms of the skies.[386] Despite qualitative and numerical

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[384] Magdalena Lisińska, *Argentine Foreign Policy During the Military Dictatorship, 1976-1983: Between a Nationalist and Pragmatic Approach* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, under Palgrave Macmillan, 2019): 163.

[385] Calvert, *The Falklands Crisis*: 59-60.

[386] Dabat, Lorenzano, *Argentina*: 94-96. This was particularly significant. The Junta maintained both Mirage-class and Skyhawk-class fighters, which were seen as more capable than the comparatively inferior Harriers, which composed the majority of Britain's air force. However, the UK was noted to be very capable on the seas. A strong Air Force however, well-utilized, could erode their edge on the waves.

superiority, losses would be definite however, and a victorious, though weakened military thrust back into coinciding with a civilian government ran the risk of being marginalized as their relative strength declined.

There was one option however which had the potential to be a panacea to both the Falklands questions, and the Junta's ailing support. A military solution, with surgical precision. A low-level military action, i.e. bloodlessly seizing the islands via the military in a way that would not explicitly courting violent reprisal would allow the Junta to achieve their goal of repatriating the Falklands, providing the public with a much-needed victory after severe impotence, maintain their current level of military power and return to the negotiating table from a drastically improved position of strength. By pursuing a bloodless, lower-level action to achieve their domestic goals, it was more likely that the UK would return to negotiations, as opposed to if talks were pursued during warfare. Even if negotiations remained inconclusive, the military would ensure its relevance during an incoming civilian administration, as the need to defend their provisional claim would endure.

Was such a scenario possible, and did such an attempt exist? Although war occurred in the end, this was an unfortunate outcome for Galtieri. There is a large body of work which points to the Junta going to great lengths to mitigate damage to the Falklands and keep the incident "small." Furthermore, he had reason to believe that world opinion would remain on his side, and that the likelihood of a British retaliation was quite small.

Endgame

Contingency plans are second nature to any professionalized military, and considering the historical and political importance of the Falkland Islands, it is no surprise that multiple plans existed for eventually settling the question of sovereignty, with the planning stage stretching back to the early days of the current incarnation of the Junta. This is significant as the eventual timing of the operation to seize the islands lends support for the diversionary hypothesis, and the careful planning of the seizure itself implies careful calculations to take advantage of inherent institutional strengths and maximize the potential benefits. As such, the decision to seize the Falklands was not made hastily.

With negotiations surrounding a lease-back agreement effectively dead, the economy in shambles, opposition organizing against the military regime with inter-branch struggles threatening to tear the government asunder, Galtieri had to act. Alternative measures were now being considered in earnest, with the Argentine Military Commission convening in March of 1982 to discuss ways in which to settle, or at least jumpstart the Falklands issue once more. Though the military was a possible method in which to re-engage the British, negotiations were still coveted as a safer way of shoring up their own domestic position – albeit, negotiations from a strengthened position rife with pomp, circumstance and domestic fervor. Simply engaging the UK in talks was seen as futile, and bringing charges against them in the UN was seen as unrealistic as

well. Utilizing the military apparatus to seize the islands as quickly and quietly as possible was most viable.[387]

The military was to be their instrument, but care had to be taken to avoid unnecessary provocations, avoid needless deaths and to ensure the seizure remained manageable for the beleaguered Junta. Though war was to be avoided, should the worst happen, as noted above Argentina had the advantageous position, but efforts were made to ensure that such an outcome did not occur. Galtieri had every reason to believe that the UK would not respond militarily, as that this would merely be seen as an effort to restart talks in a serious manner. On the one hand, the British were seen as "too civilized" to resort to violence in response to Argentine military actions, as well as their noncommittal attitudes to the South Atlantic in general.[388]

Galtieri also had various international precedents to lean on as well. In recent history there had been multiple instances of various states using strategic seizures of comparatively small territories, often islands. Parallels were seen with situations shared by China and Vietnam regarding the Paracel and Spratley islands respectively, as well as Iranian actions regarding the 1971 seizure of Abu Musa and the Tunbs in the Persian Gulf. Additionally, even with particularly brutal "annexations" such as was seen in the Indonesian Seizure of East Timor, huge international protests resulted from external belligerence, but the end result persisted.[389] The prevailing view at the time seemed to be

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[387] D. George Boyce, *The Falklands War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 31.

[388] Calvert, *The Falklands Crisis: 59.* British resolve in the face of limited operations had been previously tested during the South Georgia Island incident when scrapper Constantino Davidoff and his crew were contracted to disassemble an old whaling station. Though he was forced off the island by the British, Argentinian Marines eventually arrived on the island (British sovereign territory), to secure the remainder of the expedition. Despite this perceived "invasion" as discussed in the House of Commons, this provocation was not met with force.

[389] Hopple., "Intelligence and Warning:" 108.

that if the territory was fairly small, and de-colonialization remained popular, the resultant response could similarly be expected to be small.[390] This possible outcome was preferable. As his reign on both the domestic situation and military unity was slipping, Galtieri had every intention of ensuring the military did not split off into autonomous branches in the event of a British counterattack. Reigning in the likes of the Navy was difficult enough, but with the possibility of a protracted conventional war, and his commission as head of the Army on its last legs, stability was key.

The Junta used the planning stage of the confrontation to make every effort to ensure the seizure of the island would remain fairly small, manageable and as unprovocative as possible while still remaining visible. If the military was to transition out of a leadership position, doing so with the bulk of their strength straight off of a symbolic victory would ensure a powerful support base for the future civilian government. As Galtieri aspired for a continued tenure in politics after his commission was to expire, this support would be necessary given his background.[391] Additionally the protection necessary to stave off trials stemming from the dirty war and a (now more relevant than ever) military to continue to monitor potential Falkland negotiations.[392]

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[390] Though there is little evidence to suggest Galtieri considered the potential precedent seizing the Falklands would set for the United Kingdom for places such as Hong Kong and Gibraltar, it is unlikely this would have deterred him regardless. Given the lack of attention paid to the Falklands over places such as Hong Kong (which was already well on its way to de-colonialization) and Gibraltar, which was on the metaphorical doorstep of Britain, the Falklands seemed an outlier of sorts regarding remaining overseas holdings. Additionally, it may be doubted that this would set a precedent at all, given the fact that the United Kingdom had been steadily losing remaining colonies after the end of WWII, and prevailing international sentient was one of de-colonialization. Additionally, even if we consider the norm of territorial integrity and the perceived illegality of using military forces to ensure the seizure of territory, Galtieri's view of the situation was fairly consistent with the prevailing norms of Latin America at the time, in that relict territories from still under the control of the West's colonial period were similarly illegal and should be returned to Latin America. See Mark W. Zacher, "The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force," *International Organizations* 55, 2, (Spring 2001): 229.
[391] Oakes, *Diversionary War*: 81.
[392] Eddy, Linklater and Gillman, *War in the Falklands:* 64.

The force that guarded the Falklands was paltry. With the UK keeping only half an eye on this overseas territory, the island defense force consisted of a small professionalized unit of Royal Marines, and a volunteer force made up of Kelpers. To strike with overwhelming power against such a small troop contingent would undoubtedly have led to the complete annihilation of the British, but would have also been very likely to harden their position, making continued negotiations an even more distant dream.

As the object of the operation was in no way a provocation of the British, or a deliberate act of war on the part of Buenos Aires, casualties were to be avoided.[393] A fait accompli strategy based on low casualties yet a massive application of force would require similar mobilization and support-levels in order for the British to respond.[394] Overwhelming the islands in such a way would act as a retardant to violent reprisal, and perhaps shock the British into negotiating. No casualties meant less of a chance of a knee-jerk response from the British, as well as negating the possibility that martyrdom could be invoked on the domestic front in the UK. Additionally, as the junta was dealing with a democracy, special care had to be taken in moderating the opinion of the civilian population of the UK, lest it motivate a hardline policy from the House of Commons.[395]

The final stages of the operation were completed by March 16th, but in a final consultation with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the plan was passed with affirmative responses from each branch. However, contingent within this agreement was that this was approval for an *operation.* The armed forces were not signing off on a *campaign* or extended

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[393] Boyce, *The Falklands*: 31
[394] George and Smoke, *Deterrence*: 536-537.
[395] Freedman, Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War:* 105-106.

engagement more generally.[396] Merely the message of continuing politics via a military

operation was seen as valuable enough to the Junta so much so that the initial planning

between Anaya one of his highest ranking officers, Vice Admiral Juan Lombardo,

included the stipulation that the island had to be taken, but they did not necessarily need

to be kept in Argentine hands.[397] Such a move was meant to convey to the British that

negotiations were in urgent need of being revisited, and that the Junta was still capable of

action.

Following massive labor protests throughout Argentina, and the popularity of the

Junta plunging to lows unseen since 1976, the plan to retake the Falklands

commenced.[398] While the entire crisis has been defined largely by the war, which did see

conventional combat, the operation to actually seize the island was by comparison,

deliberately small, quiet and fairly anticlimactic. With a minimal garrison of a few dozen

Royal Marines and even fewer civilian volunteers, actual victory was a foregone

conclusion given the proximity of the entirety of the Argentine military.[399] For the

operation proper, a multitude of military vessels, including several destroyers acted in

concert with landing ships laden with a complement of over 1,000 troops consisting of

both marines and army soldiers.[400] Despite some knowledge and warning from the

United Kingdom, the governor of the Falklands, Rex Hunt, did not truly know of the

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[396] Ibid.

[397] Middlebrook, *The Fight:* 1. The initial plan actually did not even include a defensive strategy for the islands. They were to be left undefended. See Ibid: 3. The final plan settled for a drastically reduced garrison while negotiations were being restarted.

[398] Eddy, Linklater, Gillman, *War in the Falklands:* 64-65.

[399] A survey of the literature finds inconsistencies between the actual number of uniformed soldiers on the British side. Most estimates range from the 40 marines on the lower end, to nearly 70 with more generous estimates. At any estimation, the Argentines outnumbered their foes soundly.

[400] Freedman, *The Official*: 6

Argentinian presence until the marines had landed. Given the two primary targets on the

island, the Moody Brook barracks where the royal marines bunked, and the governor's

mansion, the initial landing force split into two parties.[401] The barracks were empty, as

the Islanders had already taken defensive positions in strategic locations. Though

numerous other landings occurred throughout the island, these forces did not take place in

the minute battle, and served largely as a show of force or to neutralize radio contact.

The second group of Argentine forces made their way to the Government House,

where governor Rex and his remaining forces had fallen back to. Though the initial

attempt to seize the building had been repulsed by the occupying forces, the Argentines

did not suffer any casualties, nor did the British. Reticent to attempt to take the house via

overtly violent means, Lieutenant-Commander Giachino utilized the small force he had

under his command to make one more attempt at seizing the de facto headquarters of the

Islanders. As the mansion had become the final fallout point for the defenders, this was

the singular instance in the invasion wherein the British outnumbered the Argentine

Marines. Emboldened by this, the British began to exchange fire with the approaching

forces.[402]

During the brief firefight, actual bloodshed was minimal, with the entirety of it

resting on the side of Argentina. Giachino was severely wounded attempting to enter the

Government House, and dispute the urging of the British combat medic, he died of blood

loss. Three other Argentinian soldiers were wounded in the shootout. The British, to

their credit, refused to actually surrender until the invading forces had begun deploying

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[401] Ibid: 6.
[402] Middlebrook, *The Falklands:* 39.

artillery positions on the perimeter of the property, and only reluctantly.[403] Just prior to

9:30 A.M., on April 2nd, the British surrendered.[404] Though Governor Rex remained

defiant and famously refused to shake hands, the defending soldiers were congratulated

and praised by the victors, noting how valiantly they fought against overwhelming odds.

The departing marines were allowed to return to the barracks, retrieve their personal

effects, but were then escorted to a waiting aircraft to return to Britain.[405]

For all intents and purposes, the operation was a resounding success which had

achieved all of its goals. The Union Jack was lowered on the governor's mansion, with

the flag of Argentina raised in its place, the British were taken entirely by surprise,

heading off reinforcements and reducing the severity of the crisis, and most importantly

the operation had been completely bloodless for the British, thus potentially tempering

knee-jerk reactions. The amicable way in which the two sides "parted ways" spoke more

to the political aspect of the operation over military concerns, and even British civilians

were given unprecedented access to the battlefield. This proved to be a mistake, as the

British forces who had surrendered were briefly told to remain on the stomach, face

down, only to then be told to stand up and warmly congratulated. British journalists

however took several provocative shots of Royal Marines, face down, being watched

closely by the Argentines, with such images being weaponized in the United Kingdom.[406]

As stipulated in the plans, the garrison left on the island which would remain on-

station for the duration of the talks was composed of newly-minted recruits as opposed to

[403] "3 Britons Recount Fall of Falklands," *New York Times,* April 6th, 1982.
[404] Boyce, *The Falklands:* 39-40.
[405] "Rex Hunt, British Governor at Time of Falklands War, Dies at 86," *The Washington Post,* November 12, 2012. David Brown, *The Royal Navy and the Falklands War* (UK: Pan and Sword Books, 1987): 59.
[406] Boyce, *The Falklands:* 40.

veteran soldiers. This ensured a calculated weakness in the Argentine presence, as well

as maintenance of the agreed-upon precepts of the plan regarding a token garrison at

best.[407] This signaled a commitment to returned negotiations, and the immediate opening

of a line of communication with the British was an attempt to immediately defuse any

possibility of violent reprisal.

On a domestic level, the seizure of the Falklands was met with a massive amount

of support and a reinvigoration of the Junta's popularity.[408] Nearly immediately after the

announcement that the Falklands were in Argentine hands, the Plaza de Mayo in front of

the presidential palace was soon swarming with citizens from all walks of life

celebrating.[409] With goals ostensibly achieved, the Junta assumed a strategy of

maintenance and diplomatic engagement in order for the support to last, and by

extension, the relevance, prestige and overall support of the military to endure,

potentially post-transition. However, this jubilance was not to be, and the British

response surprised even outside observers.

Nearly immediately after the conclusion of the invasion, the British brought the

issue to the UN, which immediately declared Argentina the aggressor nation. However,

under Resolution 502, the UN urged both sides to withdraw military forces and come to

some sort of peaceful settlement. Though harsh, this was less damaging to Galtieri than

expected. Tangible damage was forthcoming however. Despite the belief that the

Reagan administration would see Argentina as an indispensable anti-communist ally, and

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[407] Dabat, *Argentina:* 95.
[408] Hopple, Intelligence and Warning: 116.
[409] Moro, *The History:* 32, Jeremy Morgan, "Argentine Invaders Claim the Falklands have Surrendered,"
The Guardian, April 3rd, 1982. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk/1982/apr/03/falklands.world

remain on the sidelines during the invasion, sentiment quickly turned and the Americans offered material, as well as the strategic use of Ascension island for the massing British force, greatly enhancing prospects for warfighting.[410] Though Latin America, the OAS and even some countries in the non-aligned movement openly declared their support for Argentina, they offered no material aid, only verbal support throughout the duration.[411] Finally, once the situation had evolved from a limited engagement to a pending war, domestic support for the Junta instantaneously dried up, including a loss of tentative support from the Catholic Church, speaking to the preference of a bloodless action, but distaste for war.[412]

This development was significant for a number of reasons. The Junta had become increasingly sensitive of its image domestically and globally and deliberately sought to assuage concerns on both fronts. Aware of the taboo of war in the current era, and the citizenry's disgust for more killing after the previous decade, a limited engagement was well-suited to drum up support. This ensured the prestige of the military, as well as the lion's share of its strength was preserved. It was only after the war became inevitable however that domestic sentiment turned against Galtieri. However, this resulted in the cessation of outright celebration. The citizens did not see the precarious position the military found itself in as a moment of weakness, and instead returned home to wait out

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[410] Middlebrook, *The Fight:* 46, Romero, *A History:* 244, Moro, *The History:* 21. United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 502*, April 3rd, 1982. Available at: https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/502(1982)

[411] Stella Paresa Krepp, "Between the Cold War and the Global South: Argentina and Third World Solidarity in the Falklands/Malvinas Crisis," *Estudos Historicos* (Rio De Janeiro, 2017): 143. English Text Available at: https://www.scielo.br/pdf/eh/v30n60/0103-2186-eh-30-60-0141.pdf

[412] Dabat, *Argentina:* 107.

the storm quietly. The broader population simply returned to day-to-day life and watched the war unfold without engaging in a single anti-regime mass demonstration.

The eventual defeat of Galtieri utterly drained the military. From its remaining capacity to govern, its prestige, domestic sentiment and perceived strength – all of the qualities a military seeks to preserve to maintain its effectiveness. The eventual surrender of Argentina on June 14th preceded the removal of nearly all remaining top-brass in the armed forces. Effectively neutered as an organization, physically and politically hurt from its encounter with the UK, the Junta finally found itself unable to sustain even the facsimile of rule, and the transition, once more to civilian rule was now inevitable.[413]

Diversion or Reaction? Alternate Explanations

As noted, the war in the Falklands is often cited as a case of diversionary action based on the antecedent domestic troubles which preceded it. As a controversial theory however, consistent agreement is rare, and certain scholars have made calls that the seizure of the Falklands does not accurately portray a diversionary action. However, these naysayers tend to congregate around outdated assumptions of diversionary behavior and theoretical mechanisms which were developed during the theory-wide focus on democratic regimes.

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[413] Levy and Vakili. "Diversionary Action:" 135.

From a theoretical standpoint, perhaps the most poignant counter to diversionary theory regarding utilitarian explanations for external conflict comes from prospect theory. However as one is typically concerned with substantive benefits, and the other is concerned with a rally effect, issues in terms of measurement and definition have thus far ensured that two traditions run parallel to each other rather than intersect. A recent prospect-theoretic analysis of the Falklands war claims to argue against the diversionary hypothesis, but the authors rely on classical diversionary assumptions rather than my update amendments.

Schenoni, Braniff and Battaglino make the case that the Falkland Islands war is better explain based on prospect theory rather than the diversionary hypothesis. Using a trove of recently declassified documents, their article portends to fire back against some long-held assumptions regarding the genesis of the conflict.[414] New empirical information is always useful, but as their argument is primarily theoretical - utilizing a static conception of diversionary theory deflates their argument somewhat. According to their article, the authors argue that the focus of the Falklands spectacle was to restore the standing of Argentina in the region, spurred in part by the slow decline of the regime. They point to substantive gains such as territorial restoration and the sentiment of the domestic populace as goals. The aforementioned tangible losses made Argentina risk-acceptant, coupled with their insulation from civilian agencies within the government whom would have had the effect of being "de-biasing forces" regarding Galtieri's decisions.[415]

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[414] Luis L. Schenoni, Sean Braniff and Jorge Battaglino, "Was the Malvinas/Falklands a Diversionary War? A Prospect-Theory Reinterpretation of Argentina's Decline," *Security Studies* 29, 1 (2020): 34-63.
[415] Ibid: 35-38.

The authors do make a strong case against classical diversionary theory, but as I have previously outlined, many assumptions are inappropriate for nondemocratic regimes. Risk-acceptant behavior may be present in democratic regimes with set term-limits, or personalist regimes wherein the leader is often insulated from political backlash, but not so in my theory. In accordance with my argument, a Junta is primarily concerned with institutional rather than regime-specific benefits. A win for the military could result in a loss for the state, and the diversion could still be considered a success. A rally effect would mean little to the Junta as the military, regardless of being in a position of civilian power or home in the barracks, was an indispensable part of the state, and thus had a lifespan no matter what the leadership in Buenos Aires consisted of. Maintenance of military power and relevance was most important. Schenoni et al., note in fact that there was no psychological campaign waged in tandem with the invasion so as to sway public opinion in an attempt to discredit the diversionary hypothesis, but from the standpoint of institutional preservation, such a strategy would have been unnecessary given the substantive, rather than psychological focus.[416]

Though I have noted the measures the Junta took to ensure the seizure of the Falklands was as surgical and bloodless as possible, tensions and even an attack by the U.K. would play into Galtieri's hands short of true warfare as it would continue to privilege the military and their institutional relevance. The "sunk costs" of *Argentina Potencia* thus did not necessarily lead to war from a prospect theoretical standpoint, and the accelerating frequency of ASW's for three decades prior to the Falklands invasion

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[416] Ibid: 46.

speaks to my hypothesis of relying on extant institutions rather than decaying civilian rule. [417]

It may be impossible to sever the link between diversionary theory and literal diversions. Between democratic and authoritarian regimes, the difference is actually quite slight. Elected officials hope a distraction lasts long enough to ensure support in the polls, and autocratic regimes wish to remove the risk of outright clashes with the population. However, autocrats are not beholden to an electorate in the same way as an elected official. Mass demonstrations thus may represent a large headache, but as they cannot be removed via elections, the headache is often manageable. Removal of nondemocratic rulers via mass movements is a marked rarity in the literature.[418] Military regimes are further insulated as indispensable institutions for the wellbeing of the state as a whole. Responding to large instances of unrest may not singularly serve as a catalyst to diversionary behavior as Jessica Weeks for instance claims. Noting that the largest anti-regime demonstrations occurred on the 30th of March, while the invasion occurred on April 2nd ostensibly seems like a standard diversionary cause-and-effect scheme, she noted that ships left for the Falklands on March 28th, before these protests occurred.[419]

Mass uprisings were never of paramount importance to the Junta, though they were a constant source of annoyance. Adding the institutional configuration to the diversionary calculus reveals a forward-thinking strategy which saw institutional preservation and increased utility (in opposition to the traditionally outdated definition of "diversion,") in terms of political popularity, military integrity and resource endowment

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[417] Ibid: 58-59.
[418] Weeks, *Dictators at War.*
[419] Ibid: 111.

as the driving impetus of Galtieri and his predecessors. Though the Junta had more

effective, and brutal methods to ensure the populace fell in line, they abstained more due

to the idea of negative imagery of themselves achieving an unintended longevity, and not

due to fear of hardening popular sentiment against them. There is no evidence that the

Junta was in danger of being overtaken by a popular uprising, and if the regime was to

maintain prominence during a civilian transition (with several officers maintaining

electoral aspirations), brutality was to be avoided.

Though I note later that the substantive strength of the military was at its highest

point during the latter half of Galtieri's presidency, and the act of repression would have

been more than possible (and quite likely to handle significant unrest), this was an

untenable solution to the executive looking forward. The Junta was less concerned with

the issue of distracting the population as per classic diversionary goals, but more

concerned with preserving institutional strength and boosting prestige. Given the cycle

of military coup and civilian transition which had plagued Argentina for literal decades, it

seemed nigh inevitable that should Galtieri seek to remain a prominent figure in

Argentine politics, his status had to be bolstered in a way that would endure past his

commission as a uniformed officer, which as I have explained earlier, was forthcoming.

Seizing the Falklands, even if they were not kept maintained to the British that he was

serious about the sovereign status of the islands, and if his effort to jumpstart stalled

negotiations succeeded, there was no reason why Galtieri could not continue his mission

as a civilian.

A second issue regarding the seizure of the Falklands points more to the question

of *urgency* rather than *utility.* This line of criticism argues that the events on South

Georgia Island and the threat of Britain increasing its naval presence in the area

necessitated a now-or-never strategy of taking the Falklands. Taylor Fravel notes that

removal of Royal Marines who had interfered with the aforementioned Davidoff

Expedition complicated the Falklands issue. However, the threat of an increased British

force in the South Atlantic did not seem to enter into the Junta's calculations. To match a

growing force with a commensurate presence in the region would have caused the

situation to escalate to potentially uncontrollable levels, and any attempt to continue

negotiations would not prevent a British reorientation to the region.[420] Additionally,

barring a glacial expansion into the region, Galtieri would have been alerted to British

activity as the Falklands had seen a gradual buildup of Argentine forces in the vicinity

since 1976.[421] Prior to the invasion, Galtieri's colleagues were not in institutional danger,

as their resources had swelled to new highs, and even if they had decided to allow a

civilian transition to occur, they would be able to return to the barracks with their position

intact.

The timing of the operation itself further weakens the urgency argument advanced

by Fravel and Weeks. Had Galtieri postponed the operation for eight weeks, many

British Warships would have been located, or en route to the Indian Ocean, with the

remainder of the fleet dispersed globally, reducing the ability to effectively respond in a

rapid fashion.[422] Furthermore, and perhaps more optimistically, though the regime was

embattled and Galtieri was nearing the end of his commission, if we accept that the issue

of political utility was a regime-based issue, Argentina could have feasibly pushed the

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[420]Boyce, *The Falklands:* 31.
[421] Gibran, *The Falklands War:* 67.
[422] Hopple, "Intelligence and Warning:" 107.

operation back for another 18 months. This would have allowed the military to continue

to rapidly modernize as they had been for years, while simply outlasting the United

Kingdom's ability to field any carrier-based capabilities as both the HMS *Hermes* and the

HMS *Invincible* were both slated to be struck from the fleet.[423]

As far as urgency is concerned, Fravel asks the question, why now, why not

before? Why did Galtieri wait until things had reached a critical mass prior to seizing the

Falklands, would the situation not have been more manageable if the campaign had been

attempted earlier?[424] Fravel operates under the assumption that the seizure of the

Falklands was a given issues and goal for any Argentinian administration, without

considering what would be actively gained in such an event. Between the inhospitable

environment, lack of extant resources and the miniscule contribution sheep-shearing

would make for the economy, previous regimes had been content to pursue the goal via

diplomatic means, as the status quo was neither damaging nor pressing enough to escalate

the situation. This is not to say Fravel does not raise a crucial question: Videla and Viola

both faced domestic problems, so why Galtieri?

As shown earlier, Both of Galtieri's predecessors faced domestic problems, but

none were as pressing as those faced by his own administration. The economy,

governing institutions and residual legitimacy inherited from Peronism seemed sufficient

enough to stave of major uprisings, even if it did not promise a continued font of support.

The most visible action that had the effect of boosting the prestige of previous regimes,

the Beagle Channel dispute pursued by Videla was initiated primarily out of both

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[423] Jeffrey Record, "The Falklands War," *Washington Quarterly* 5 (1982): 44.
[424] Fravel, "The Limits:" 16.

geospatial and economic concerns, citing Argentinian access to the South Pacific and Antarctica as well as the risk of having naval access forced into a bottleneck. The resultant popularity enjoyed by Videla after the dispute was unintentional, and nothing substantive emerged from the dispute given the Pope's mediation in Chile's favor.

Given the period between the Beagle Channel dispute and the Falklands invasion involved a transition of power to Galtieri, a necessary period of consolidation and consultation would be necessary prior to any new conflict, and the Junta could not risk a two-pronged war before 1982. This is event more salient given the previous animosity between Chile and Argentina, and that the risk of war with Chile was generally seen as greater than the British. The longevity of the previous dispute similarly made earlier administrations reticent to stir up another externa dispute, as the dispute in question continued to be relevant and relatively unsettled until 1980.[425]

Weeks argues that Galtieri seizing the Falklands was due in part to the threat of a naval buildup from Britain. Moves prior to the operation however, showed that Argentina was unconcerned with British logistics, and more concerned with making the strike visible, manageable and bloodless. It took several weeks for the British to muster a battlegroup capable of retaking the Falklands, and this was during preparations for full war. This precious time was misappropriated by Galtieri. In the interim period before the storm, the general had ample opportunities to galvanize the nation before war broke out, but he chose not to. Port Stanley, being on the metaphorical doorstep of the conflict for instance could have served as a viable airbase (one of the areas in which Argentina had a

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[425] Freedman, *The Official:* 121.

qualitative edge against the British), yet the Argentinian military was forced to rely upon

bases 400 miles from the epicenter of the conflict.[426]

Additionally, this lack of seeming forward-mindedness was previously stated to

be deliberate. War was not pursued, war was unwelcome and as far as the Junta was

concerned, war was unlikely to occur. In the initial preparations for the operation, it was

explicitly stated by Admiral Anaya that the clear-and-present was to seize the Falklands,

not necessarily hold them. This was the reason the Junta had settled on the installation of

a token garrison. Once their point had been made with the British preferentially seeing

the seizure as a political rather a military move, stalled negotiations could once again

continue from a position of renewed vigor. The invasion was to provide the political high

ground, not literal ground to occupy.

I've also brought the often-overlooked question of diversionary benefits to the

forefront, given that diversionary actions are pursued with some sort of political goal in

mind. Amy Oakes provides us with the most recent systematic discussion regarding the

seizure of the Falklands. Oakes rehashes concepts of what she terms "alternative

approach" and "state extractive capacity."[427] The alternative approach she mentions is in

regards to the toolbox of options a regime has when faced with domestic unrest, i.e.,

reform and repression. State extractive capacity is exactly as it sounds, the ability of the

state to extract resources necessary for a given diversion. I note these are rehashed

concepts in that some amount of rationality is discussed in all analyses of foreign

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[426] Schuyler Foerster, "Clients and Conflict: Soviet Perspectives on the Limited Wars of 1982," in James
Brown and William P. Snyder eds., *The Regionalization of Warfare* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction
Books, 1985): 222.
[427] Oakes, *Dictators:* 434, 437.

conflict, and the alternative approach concept is well known throughout the diversionary literature.[428] In terms of absolute capability, the Junta certainly *could* have engaged in further repression, as their military strength was at its zenith under Galtieri. Continued unrest and outrage would have made governing more difficult than it already was, but the idea of the Junta being overthrown in anything short of a coordinated nation-wide armed uprising is unlikely to say the least. This brings into the discussion how the Junta viewed Argentina's future, and their existence as an institution – whether leading or "being led."

In terms of the future after the Falklands had been seized, Levy and Vakili offer us some insight, but their argument similarly fails to take into consideration institutional characteristics and goals, rather than simply the retention of power. As I note earlier, the two authors argue that war with Britain would serve to increase the solidarity of the Junta as they were now devoid of an institutional goal.[429] This does have some intuitive consistency, as there was some disagreement regarding the direction of the nation as a whole. Increasing solidarity may have streamlined intra-regime debate, but there still remained no consensus on broader Argentinian goals. The Junta had already shown itself to be uncomfortable and fairly inept in terms of civilian governance, so increased solidarity may have been useful to the military, but not as a substantive boon to enact real change.

My analysis diverges in that the goal was not a war, but rather a relatively harmless show. This would allow Galtieri to resume talks for a position of renewed strength. As Galtieri did have civilian aspirations in the government given that his role in

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[428] I call this the "diversionary calculus" in the literature review.
[429] Levy and Vakili, "Diversionary Action."

the military was winding down, this outcome was essentially the best of both worlds. His commission was set to expire in 1982, though he was capable of retaining the executive position until 1984. In the event of a civilian transition, Galtieri would enjoy widespread popularity, new strength in a historically important dispute and the support of the military, effectively synergizing the uniformed and civilian sectors of the government – an outcome unseen for some time in Argentinian politics.

Amy Oakes' work similarly supports the scapegoat hypothesis, and her argument may be predicated on classic diversionary theory in regards to weighing options, but it still relies on the outdated concept of "distraction," rather than a concrete goal in terms of political consolidation. Devoid of a question as to what the Junta hoped to achieve with the newfound adoration, they would have merely found themselves in the same quagmire as the fervor wore off.[430] This discussion is complicated by the fact that the invasion of the Falklands eventually evolved into a full-scale war in which Galtieri was defeated. The literature thus far as typically judged diversionary events based on success due to ease of analysis, but this takes away the question of intention in its entirety. A diversionary hallmark is not contingent upon success, only that the event in question was initiated in order to bolster or preserve the political status of the initiating party. Every initiated conflict is rife with the unknown, and so it is always possible that diversions may fail or wind up exacerbating damage rather than fixing it. This does not mean that these events are not diversionary, only that they have failed.[431]

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[430] This too is referenced in the literature review. Diversions based on achieving positive outpourings of support are widely accepted to be fleeting. This can be empirically assessed based on widely available polls in democratic states.

[431] Haynes, "Diversionary Conflict:" 340.

Without the discussion of future intentions, the Junta would have been better off simply staying the course. As I've shown, their institutional power was at its peak, there was little threat of being overthrown for their economic incompetence, and any sort of revolution would have simply resulted in a civilian transition as per the pattern of Argentinian politics. As for the possibility of members of the Junta being persecuted for previous actions during the Dirty War or due to their repressive actions, this would be contingent on two possibilities. A concerted international response may have been able to bring charges against some of the officers, but given the support of the United States and overall status of Argentina in South America, this risk was low. Additionally, a particularly strong civilian government would need to take control post-transition in order to persecute the likes of Galtieri and his subordinates, but given the death of Peron, the likelihood of this was similarly low.

If we accept both the institutional resources at their disposal and the lack of pressing threats to their professional status, there is little evidence that points to the invasion of the Falklands as diversionary in that it was meant to divert attention. My political utility thesis speaks more to the question of motivation and actual justification of the operation. Galtieri and the Junta needed to prove their competence in continuing to lead the nation, with him in particular being pressured due to the expiration of his military commission. Given his minor celebrity status and political aspirations in the civilian sphere, his competence and strength would serve his image well in the event of an election, not to mention in continuing to negotiate over the sovereignty of their islands should his gambit succeed. While sentiment, civilian support and personal ability may not have been as pressing to his fellow Junta members, given his future goals, cultivating

these feelings was necessary in the civilian sphere. Fravel and Oakes both make the mistake of considering the seizure of the Falklands a victory unto itself. As I mentioned earlier, support is not tantamount to utility outside of a succinct goal. In this case however, Galtieri was concerned with the future.

Finally, and perhaps the most broadly is the issue of temporality. Previous analyses of the invasion of the Falklands have been compartmentalized within Galtieri's tenure alone. This ignores the question of institutional evolution and degradation that is central to my theoretical propositions. Regimes under pressure are not invariably destroyed by their incompetence. North Korea has weathered fairly devastating circumstances and yet still stands. By accounting for a broader timeframe, I respond to the issues of "why now, why not before?" Previous problems, external events and governing capacity need to be considered given that motivation and timing is central to diversionary hypotheses

Chapter 7: Single-Party Regimes: The Magnification Effect

Overview

To outside observers, a few rocky outcroppings and uninhabited islets in the East China Sea may seem insignificant. The Senkaku Islands (Diaoyutai in Chinese and the Pinnacle Islands to neutral parties), claimed by both Japan and China are critical however, and represent probably the most significant flashpoint between the two Asian giants, as well as a potential catalyst to future armed conflict.[432] The salience of territorial integrity interposed with the historical experiences and shared animosity between the two nations has proven itself to be a recipe for enduring tension. Insignificant or not, territory is both the most warred upon issue, and the issue which most of the populace will be sensitive to. Given that people are in part defined by territory, any loss of such "inspires feelings of state insecurity."[433] Because of this, a negotiated settlement is extremely unlikely on either side. Should China relinquish their claim over the islands, their weakness internationally will be tantamount to political suicide domestically. Should Japan cede the islands which they currently administer,

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[432] I refer to the islands as the Senkaku Islands. I do this not out of the desire to take sides, but because Japan currently administers the islands.
[433] Manus Midlarsky, *The Origins:* 14.

there is the possibility it will be domestically interpreted as bowing to an international

bully, and be punished via the polls.

Depending on the Chinese or Japanese side, this case extends back several

centuries, with Ming dynasty records claiming ownership of the islands for centuries.[434]

The international legal aspects of this case (which this study focuses on) begin after the

passage of the Okinawa Reversion Treaty, which returned Okinawa back to Japan after

being administered by the United States following the end of World War II.[435] As the

Senkaku Islands had been part of the Okinawa prefecture, implicit in the agreement was

the return of the Senkaku chain as well.[436] Though this is only a "loose" starting point to

the contemporary issue at hand, the enduring nature of this dispute is clear. This provides

me with a significant length of time through which we can observe trends and changes to

an otherwise persistent issue.

I focus on the Senkaku Island case for a number of reasons. The first is that

China represent a quintessential single-party regime. Additionally, the Chinese

Communist Party (henceforth CCP) stands as a "maximal" case for overall censorship,

public guidance and bureaucratic administration. China is of course not the only state on

earth to employ oppressive and penetrating measures to secure itself, but the overall

extent of the repressive apparatus is unparalleled. By this measure in accordance with

theories of authoritarian governance, China is foremost in terms of institutionalization as

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[434] James C. Hsiung, *An Anatomy of Sino-Japanese Disputes and U.S. Involvement: History and International Law* (New York: CN Times Books, 2015): 10-22. Additionally, for the most comprehensive analysis of the dispute in question, see Tadayoshi Murata, *The Origins of Japanese-Chinese Territorial Dispute: Using Historical Records to Study the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Issue* (Toh Tuck Link, Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd, 2016).

[436] Monika Chansoria, *China, Japan and Senkaku Islands: Conflict in the East China Sea Amid an American Shadow* (Oxon, U.K.: Routledge, 2018): 15.

is characteristic of single-party regimes.[437] Due to the institutional strength of single-party regimes, they are the most versatile in their ability to respond to, initiate and manipulate international crises for domestic purposes. This simultaneously minimizes risks due to both compartmentalization of the governing apparatus, and the monitoring mechanisms borne from their bureaucracy. The result is the ability to orchestrate diplomatic conflict to respond to domestic unrest or capitalize on external developments to even preemptively galvanize the populace. They are unique in their freedom in that they can more readily let opportunity find them as compared to personalist or military regimes.

Furthermore, this capacity allows for the capitalization of even extant conflict. The causal logic of my argument is consistent with this case even if China was not the prime initiator. In standard diversionary theory, the diverting states initiates a dispute in order to pursue domestic goals. Strong institutions however afford a modicum of control that can be retained even if the state desiring diversionary benefits does not initiate the dispute. Wresting some control and escalating a conflict offers the same causal logic of classic diversions, even if the diverting state does not initially initiate the dispute.

As the focus of this case is the diversionary dynamics of single-party regimes, I focus on the presidency of Hu Jintao up to the very early stages of Xi Jinping's presidency. Though China has been classified as a party-based regime in many datasets, the presence of leaders in the government whom are often archetypically described as

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[437] Christopher Marty Cairns, "China's Weibo Experiment: Social Media (Non-) Censorship and Autocratic Responsiveness," (Cornell University: Dissertation, 2017): 12. Fjeld, "Generals, Dictators and Kings:" 199.

personalist disrupts that image to a large degree.[438] For this reason, the tenures of Mao

Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and even that of Jiang Zemin are excluded.[439] Hu Jintao

operated outside the influence of a personalist leader or their remnants, and the analysis

largely focuses on this timeframe. Xi Jinping also began his tenure as leader of China in

a single-party based fashion, however power consolidation during his tenure and the

rebirth of the concept of a "cult of personality" draws into question the future of China's

political landscape.[440]

Due to the timeframe associated with the territorial dispute in question, the

Senkaku Islands dispute is characterized by varying stages of "heating and cooling" in

terms of intensity. Because of this the dispute as a whole is often subsumed under a

singular umbrella, though in reality there has occurred numerous distinct disruptions of

the status quo. This offers us a unique ability to witness the behavior of a single-party

regime utilizing diplomatic conflict for domestic benefits as the need arises and

dissipates, demonstrating a level of control that only the highly institutionalized nature of

a mature single-party regime is capable of. This scenario also demonstrates why alternate

methods of dispute management are less than attractive. This case utilizes the updated

precepts inherent in including institutional composition in the diversionary theory of war

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[438] Geddes Wright, Frantz, "Autocratic Breakdowns:" 313-331.
[439] Jiang Zemin, while the titular "head" of China, was overshadowed during key moments by the enduring presence of Deng Xiaoping. Deng was not above entering politics when he deemed it necessary, and his word was still often considered more powerful – notably shown during the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis in many instances. See for example: Lilian Wu, "Taiwan: Chiang Reports Mainland Forces Moving Towards Coast," Taipei CNA in English, 13 Feb 96, in FBIS-CHI-96-030, 13 February 1996. And "PRC: Document Cites Deng Remarks on Taiwan Blockade," Hong Kong HONGKONG STANDARD in English, 13 Feb 96, in FBIS-CHI-96-030, 13 February 1996.
[440] Term limits for China's presidency were removed at the 2018 National People's Congress in March.

to answer previous studies that have argued the Senkaku Islands case is incompatible with diversionary theory.[441]

Finally, it must be said that this case is unique in the diversionary literature in that it does not follow an economic crisis or grand disaster - the typical catalysts in the literature. It does however illustrate an evolution of strategy commensurate with a changing and evolving government. Additionally, the dispute in question is not a singular event, but rather a series of events of varying intensity – sometimes rapidly heating up, other times remaining quiet and stable for lengths of time. Both points are meant to demonstrate not only the versatility of single-party regimes, but the strength of their constituent institutions. Previously highlighted in my theory, single-party regimes remain some of the most robust on the planet, and the Senkaku Islands case demonstrates not only the shifting priorities therein, but diverse management strategies cross-regime.

One Party, Under Mao

Though mainland China has been under control of the Communist Party since 1949, the presence of a single party did not necessarily mean that the qualifications surrounding what it means to truly be a "single-party regime" were automatically present. The first incarnation of the CCP was borne out of the civil war against the nationalist

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[441] Most significantly is Fravel's "Regime Insecurity:" 49-50. His analysis is based on classical assumptions of diversionary theory, while ignoring the composition and priorities inherent in single-party regimes.

Kuomintang party, and the encroaching Imperial Japanese Army prior to World War II. The Marxist message of land redistribution, wealth equality and egalitarianism in most respects was uniquely appealing to the rural peasantry of China, who had lived in a literal dynastic cycle of poverty under the Chinese emperors and successive warlords. As the vanguard of communism, the early CCP was able to extract the necessary manpower to overcome the technological and logistical advantages of Chiang Kai-Shek and his nationalists to eventually seize the mainland.

Motivated in part by the threat of an extended foreign occupation and domination by a government unattractive to the masses, the new revolution drew strength from the ideological legitimacy and belief in a nationwide struggle. This investiture in communism as a guiding force allowed for the near deification of their foremost leader, Mao Zedong, and instill within him almost unlimited power. While this allowed for efficiency in orders when developing an entirely new nation, the near total control of all aspects of the country resulted in gross abuses of power and massive failures due to radical social experiments. Personalism and centralization of political power remained a hallmark of Chinese politics primarily through the tenure of the first two "paramount leaders." However, though political omnipotence was unsustainable, residual personalism remained a powerful force. Mao only ever bowed to public opinion in extreme circumstances due to his position, and Deng Xiaoping did so only when the demands of the public remained complementary to his own goals.[442]

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[442] David M. Lampton, "How China is Ruled: Why It's Getting Harder for Beijing to Govern," *Foreign Affairs,* 93, 1 (2014): 80.

With Deng's famous market reforms removing much of the functional vestiges of communism from China, radical social change emerged, with past politics losing much of its ideological appeal in the wake of capitalist development. Mao's experiments were a stain on the legacy of the CCP, and Deng believed that he had substantively damaged the legitimacy of the party. Additionally, the emerging middle and educated classes in China meant that the population had become magnitudes stronger than in ages past. Coupled with the weakening of Chinese leaders, this necessitated the development of a strong and varied bureaucracy to govern the world's most populous nation.[443] Increases in education and wealth meant changing demands and priorities, and the dream of a revolutionary China fell by the wayside, particularly amongst the first generation growing up under Deng's reforms.[444] While cracks had appeared in domestic solidarity from time to time, the growing disconnect between the party and the population was on full display during the protests in Tiananmen Square In 1989. With the stability of the nation as a whole hanging by a thread, Deng was forced to come to terms with the failings surrounding previous attempts to unite the country.[445]

If China was to survive and evolve, the decline of personalist power had to be remedied and finally replaced by an institutionalized bureaucracy. The nation had flirted with bureaucratized rule in the past, but the presence of a paramount leader tended to complicate this equilibrium. As noted in chapter 4, Mao was prone to reinserting himself at the forefront of the government when he felt he was being marginalized. There was no

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[443] Ibid: 74-75.

[444] Rou-Lan Chen, "Trends in Economic Inequality and Its Impact on Chinese Nationalism," *Journal of Contemporary China,* (2019): 15.

[445] Dian Matteo, *Contested Memories in Chinese and Japanese Foreign Policy* (Cambridge MA, Chandos Publishing, 2017): 192-193.

dire need for overt bureaucratization in the past - established autocrats with consolidated

power did not have to court allies or rule via proxy. Examples of personalist meddling

are common, such as when Stalin effectively destroyed the politburo of the Soviet Union

in the 1930's and centralized himself in further deliberations, or when Mao seized the

powers of China's politburo after dealing with political weakness for over a year.[446] The

bureaucratization of politics and the rise of institutions in China were a direct result of

fading personalism, along with the "long march" generation. As such, the legitimacy of

the CCP shifted from being the caretakers of communist ideology to successful

performance of the market and the ability to "deliver" progress to the increasingly

demanding public.[447]

Despite some retention of state maintenance of the economy (including outdated

state-owned enterprises), coupling the stability of the nation and de facto trust in the CCP

to the market is a risky endeavor. To administer not only one of the largest nations in

terms of territory, but the absolute largest in terms of population, China has created a

highly sophisticated governing apparatus that employs vast societal penetration,

departmentalization and sensitivity to increase the chances of political stability.

According to one scholar, China may actually be more responsive to public opinion than

the US government, as such a heightened ability to manage social forces is only possible

through the construction of institutions and complex domestic controls.[448]

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[446] Svolik, *The Politics*: 96, Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*: 88.

[447] Pei, *China's Trapped Transition*: 167. Jintao Ren, "Ideology, It's Role in Reform and Opening," in Joseph Fewsmith (ed.) *China Today, China Tomorrow: Domestic Politics, Economy and Society* (Plymouth UK: Rowan and Littlefield, 2010): 181-192. Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Ideological Erosion and the Breakdown of Communist Regimes," in Martin K. Dimitrov (ed.) *Why Communism did not Collapse,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 67.

[448] James Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State: The Rise of Public Opinion in China's Japan Policy,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012): 35.

Responsiveness offers a whole host of benefits. In a self-reinforcing loop, the Chinese

government is accurately able to gauge "problem areas" and make the minute

adjustments necessary to stave off unrest in a process Jessica Teets refers to as

"consultative authoritarianism."[449]

The CCP has ample resources to deal with prospective problems. The social

stability budget, funds used for internal domestic control, surpassed the budget for that of

national defense in 2012.[450] Parallel to the uniformed services, China employed over 1.5

million citizens as paramilitary officers under the Peoples Armed Police, which serve as

an internal security and police force during times of peace.[451] Additionally, the internet,

aptly serving as the information super-highway, serves as a pressure gauge for Chinese

politicians. Able to use both the "great firewall of China," the overt censorship

mechanism on the internet which blocks information deemed necessary by the CCP, and

their force of "cyber soldiers" and "ghost writers" who tirelessly work to steer

conversation in favorable directions, the Chinese government demonstrates a remarkable

perceptivity to the grapevine.

The considerable focus on domestic sentiment makes China perhaps the most

attentive authoritarian nation (let alone single-party regime) to the opinions of the

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[449] Teets, *Civil Society*: 25-33. As opposed to democracies where electoral polls can accurately be used to gauge political sentiment, no such parallel exists in China. To alleviate this blind spot, the government frequently relies on several agencies to construct an approximate proxy of public sentiment. For instance, the Party Affairs Department, found in many Chinese universities allows for the surveillance of both student and intellectual thought, while funneling such information to the government.

[450] Cheng Li, "The End of the CCP's Resilient Authoritarianism? A Tripartite Assessment of Shifting Power in China," *The China Quarterly,* 211 (2012): 595-623

[451] Jian Yang, "China," in Karl Derouen Jr. and Paul Bellamy eds., *International Security and the United States: An Encyclopedia, Volume 1 (*Westport Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2008): 152. Though the actual size of China's total paramilitary force is magnitudes larger, the PAP is the most likely force to be turned inward during instances of domestic unrest. The number of 1.5 million was initially reported in China's 2006 defense white paper, and the number has remained largely stable over time.

masses, as well as being highly desirous to guide and temper them.[452] These shifting

priorities and subsequent acceleration of institutionalization worked largely in the

governments favor for some time. In the aforementioned absence of communism as a

guiding and homogenizing source of legitimacy, the market served as effective guarantor

of social stability as the country became more economically developed. In tandem with

economic change however, was social change on an unprecedented scale. Rising wealth

is often commensurate with rising demands. Additionally, China's population

distribution (due to both rising standards of living and the "one-child policy" have

indicated not only a rapidly aging population, but a decrease in the overall number of

young people. As such, the shrinking of the labor force surfaced as another looming

problem.[453]

The government ostensibly delivered on the promise of sustained economic

growth, and when social unrest and organized protest did in fact occur, the targets were

initially (at best) CCP peons and local low-level offices. However, the rise of overall

protest within China continued to grow, and the CCP was compelled to reassess the way

in which it utilized its institutional strength to deal with a more powerful public.[454]

Decentralization continued as a defense mechanism to preserve the strength of the

national government. Once called the "world's most decentralized autocracy," the

government in Beijing was largely seen as unassailable. The constantly shifting targets

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[452] Jessica Chen Weiss and Allan Dafoe, "Authoritarian Audiences, Rhetoric and Propaganda in International Crises: Evidence from China," *International Studies Quarterly* 63, 4 (2019): 964-968.

[453] Steven Hess, "From the Arab Spring to the Chinese Winter: The Institutional Sources of Authoritarian Vulnerability and Resilience in Egypt, Tunisia and China," *International Political Science Review* 34, 3 (June 2013): 257.

[454] Daniela Stockmann, *Media Commercialization and Authoritarian Rule in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 25.

of popular protest ensured that most animosity was directed towards the lower levels of the pyramid, and not the regime as a whole.[455]

Unsurprisingly, the market is a fickle foundation, and relying on performance legitimacy as societal cement was a risky endeavor for two distinct reasons. The first was the uneven distribution of gains wrought from China's economic miracle. While the economy enjoyed double-digit growth rates for a period of 30 years, the concentration of wealth tended to cluster along the coastal areas. In 2011 alone for instance, every coastal province of China was above the mean in terms of rural income, while the overall per capita income (annually) in most coastal provinces (save Jilin, Hebei and Heilongjiang due in part to geographic features) was similarly well above the mean with some provinces such as Guangdong and Zhejiang boasting numbers 50-100% above the mean.[456]

For the nearly 200 million strong migrant workforce who move from the interior of China to the coastal cities in search of work, this remains as "best of a bad situation," as the eventual accumulated wages made little substantive impact in the inner territories, and the income inequality gap continued to widen.[457] The GINI coefficient, which is an

[455] Hess. "From the Arab Spring:" 23.

[456] Matt Schiavenza, "Mapping China's Income Inequality: The Economic Gap between Coastal and Inland Parts of the Country is just as Important – if not More so – than the Urban/Rural Divide." *The Atlantic,* September 13th, 2013. Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/09/mapping-chinas-income-inequality/279637/

[457] China Labor Bulletin, "Migrant Workers And Their Children," Available at: https://clb.org.hk/content/migrant-workers-and-their-children Additionally the massive explosion in the number of rural migrants has been linked to the breakdown of the "township enterprise program" which began to become ineffective in the 1990's. See Carl Minzer, *End of an Era: How China's Authoritarian Revival is Undermining its Rise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 37.

aggregate measure of economic inequality, rose within China from a worrying, but manageable .43 two decades prior, to an estimated level of .73 in 2012.[458]

Perhaps most significantly is the basic deceleration of economic expansion as the overall economy matures. While it was quite easy to maintain double-digit growth in China due to the relative lack of public amenities such as modern roads, railways and telephone lines, the unlimited font of growth stemming from construction could not be maintained forever. Though the Chinese economy was somewhat insulated during the 2008 recession, and uplifted by a massive stimulus package unrolled by the CCP, the economy struggled soon after. Annual growth sharply decreased from 14.2% prior to great recession, and has been falling ever since.[459] Between the slowing economy and the looming demographic issues, the national government has had a more difficult time in recent years remaining above popular protest, and in keeping discontent down in general. From 1993-2005 for instance we witnessed a tenfold increase in the number of popular demonstrations.[460]

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[458] Johnathan Kaiman, "China Gets Richer, but More Unequal," *The Guardian.* Online, July 28th, 2014. A nation that has a GINI coefficient of .4 or above is considered to be at an elevated risk for a decrease in social stability.

[459] Ibid.

[460] The numbers end in 2005, but this is only because records were made classified, though there is no evidence to suggest that the multiplication was set to slow down. Elizabeth Perry, "Popular Protest, Playing by the Rules," in Joseph Fewsmith ed., *China Today, China Tomorrow: Domestic Politics, Economy and Society* (Plymouth UK: Rowan and Littlefield, 2010): 11-28. Scholars run into considerable difficulty when attempting to create accurate gauges of the sheer number of protests even today. For various attempts at creating protest datasets, see the *Chinese Academic Institution of Social Science,* which documents 871 protests between 2000-2013 which exceeded 100 participants. Also of note is Andrew Wedeman, "Enemies of the State: Mass Incidents and Subversion in China," APSA 2009 Toronto Meeting Paper: Available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1451828. This work is later analyzed in Victor Cheung Yin Chan, Jeremy Backstrom and David T. Mason, "Patterns of Protest in the People's Republic of China: A Provincial Level Analysis," *Asian Affairs: An American Review,* 41 (2014): 91-107 wherein they find a similar tenfold increase between 1994-2010.

Though the overall number of protests increased over time, the economy was more than enough in the past to handle the bulk of public ire, but a gradual change in the source of the CCP's legitimacy belies a growing concern of social unrest. Whereas subsistence living may have been a concern in an impoverished China, Chinese citizens began to consider things such as official corruption, and by extension the state of the national government a cause for some concern.[461] Seeking a source of legitimacy that they were more likely to control, the CCP turned to the double-edged sword of nationalism. A military regime lacks the expertise and resources to alter such an important societal facet so drastically, and a personalist regime would require decentralization and heavy evolution to effectively change. The fact that CCP could even consider a gradual shift from economics to nationalism speaks to their institutional strength and resilience.

The New (Nationalist) Normal

Nationalism as a boon to societal cohesion has always been an integral part of the governing culture of the Communist party, though attention to nationalism has waxed and waned depending on changing political circumstances. Mao recognized its value during the struggle against Japan and subsequently the KMT, while Deng recognized the importance of nationalism and loyalty after the damage done on June 4th, 1989.[462] While

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[461] Hess, "From the Arab Spring:" 259.
[462] Christensen, *Useful Adversaries:* 216, Matteo, *Contested Memories:* 192-193.

not nearly as powerful as a strong market to ensure communist supremacy initially, Deng Xiaoping and the party cautiously approached nationalism hoping to use it as a manageable tool. 1992 heralded a more coordinated effort aimed at producing "patriotic education" materials aimed at homogenizing the sentiment of the population along the veins of nationalism.[463] This served as the vanguard to powerful societal change.

Implementing Deng's multi-pronged strategy occurred rapidly. While Chinese children have enjoyed compulsory education since 1986, 1993 saw a departure from standard procedure when the overall study of "history," as seen in many classrooms throughout the world was replaced with a new class named "ethics and society studies." More socialization than actual study, the tenets of this class emphasized learning "character building and behavior rules," as well as lessons pertaining to "patriotism, collectivism and socialism." Chinese culture as a whole was emphasized, along with various subsets of political and social studies with "Chinese characteristics." While this provided a potential base for broad loyalty and appreciation for the state, secondary school accelerated the process by providing the foil of the "century of humiliation," thus providing justification for social cohesion and stoking historic xenophobia regarding foreign powers.[464]

Operating under the strategy of "yulun daoxiang" (舆论导向) which emphasizes the strategic guidance of public opinion via news and other media outlets, Jiang Zemin sought to guide the sentiment of the broader public to stand with the party line. The plan

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[463] Ibid.
[464] Li Shubo, "Configuring a Threatening Other: Historical Narratives in Chinese School Textbooks," in Thomas Hollihan (ed.) *The Dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands: How Media Narratives Shape Public Opinion and -Challenge the Global Order* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 27-28. The "century of humiliation" often refers China's mistreatment by Western powers and Imperial Japan.

provides contingency options should negative sentiment stray outside of acceptable

bounds as well as methods to remedy potential problems. Many of these programs are

directly geared towards the lower-rungs of society including the impoverished,

disenfranchised or uneducated.[465] Nationalism is particularly suited towards unifying

Chinese society by bridging the gap across all strata due in part to the shared pride of

China's regional hegemony and performance, as well as the general accessibility of

history as well as essentially preying on the fears of outside interference. Under the

overarching myth of nationalism properly embedded, all peoples are equal in the eyes of

the state and thus society becomes a "horizontal comradeship."[466]

The century of humiliation and the feelings the CCP perpetuates surrounding

foreign interference may provide the most effective tools to perpetuate Communist rule

devoid of an economy that grows at a satisfactory rate.[467] With possibly the largest and

most monolithic bureaucratic apparatus, China's level of institutionalization had the

ability to effectively homogenize digestible messages to the masses in order to cultivate

solidarity. Initially, this was a slow process. School textbooks saw historical revisions

and many attempts were made to revitalize the image of ancient cultural symbols – idols

that were seen to be wholly Chinese (and thus solely under CCP control) in nature.[468] At

various times it became mandatory to watch certain patriotic movies almost exclusively

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[465] Stockmann, *Media Commercialization:* 26

[466] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (New York: Verso, 1991): 7.

[467] Denny Roy, *Return of the Dragon: Rising China and Regional Security* (Columbia University Press, 2013): 14.

[468] Minxin Pei, "The Chinese Political Order: Resilience or Decay?" *Modern China Studies* 21 (2014): 12.

showing the overwhelmed communists in a heroic role, an underdog story on par with the Chinese Civil War.[469]

By presenting itself as the only thing standing between China as a nation and potential mistreatment from foreign powers, the CCP enshrines itself as a shield to guard against unequal treaties, bullying and humiliation. Maintenance of the party as the legitimate leader of China is thus the only possible way to ensure humiliation remains in the past.[470] Any talk of viable alternatives to CCP rule is quickly stifled, and the institutional capacity of the government provides for powerful tools to undermine revisionist elements throughout the nation. The slow, deliberative nature of Chinese politics has allowed for proper target and strategy assessment, as well as curbing the potential for reckless behavior and fire-fanning – all the more important given the ease at which anti-enemy protests, can transform into anti-government unrest.[471]

Who Owns What, and When do They Own it?

As noted earlier, the Senkaku Islands dispute is a unique case to study possible diversionary motives in that it has been an extremely long-lived issue between China and Japan,[472] it has not escalated to violence or other armed confrontation. Similarly saber

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[469] Jing Sun, *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012): 12.
[470] William A. Callahan, "National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation and Chinese Nationalism," *Alternatives* 29, no. 2 (2004): 199-218.
[471] Lampton, "How China is Ruled:" 78.
[472] Taiwan has claims as well, but due to their rather "weak" international position in the dispute, they are excluded from this analysis. This however may have also had a formative effect on the endurance of the

rattling with military forces has been quite low. Most importantly though, the dispute has

warmed and cooled many times previously. This is essential due to the potential insight

we may acquire from analyzing these seemingly random incidents that speak more to

sustaining the dispute rather than resolution. By choosing a potential diversionary case

that includes no warfare or overt conflict, I am able to get at the true 'goal' of

diversionary behavior – the maintenance or increase of political utility. By this logic, the

manipulation of small-scale and seemingly insignificant issues can become quite valuable

should a particular regime have the ability to properly harness it. Given the institutional

strength of China and single-party regimes more generally, the Senkaku Islands case is

theoretically promising.

Often proclaimed to be one of the major flashpoints between great powers, one

which could potentially lead to war, the Senkaku Islands dispute habitually captures

headlines. Given the past animosity between Japan and China, as well as the tendency

for the media to prey on alarmist sentiment, the dispute is taken for face value, as

opposed to intimately analyzed.[473] Motivation has alternately been attributed to the

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crisis. Because Taiwan claimed to be the "true" China at the time, they claimed that the islands were part of the province of Taiwan (of which the CCP and ROC agree on even today), they were able to petition the United States to exclude the possibility of Japanese ownership under the terms of the Okinawa Reversion treaty, ostensibly with the hopes that they could further use their relationship with the United States to gain control over the islands in the future. Regardless, the United States' refusal to explicitly name Japan as owners of the chain left significant grey-areas for the crisis to occur in the first place. My thanks to Avery Goldstein for making this point.

[473] Authors frequently style their articles with headlines that constitute "clickbait," which is to say giving typical, or even mundane articles provocative titles to elicit clicking by scrolling internet users. For alarmist clickbait examples of the dispute being a potential cause for "World War III" see Eric Posner, "Why are China and Japan Inching Toward War Over Five Tiny Islands," *Slate* 2/25/2014, available at: https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2014/02/the-senkaku-or-diaoyu-islands-where-world-war-iii-could-start-because-of-an-ownership-clash-between-china-and-japan.html and Harvey Gavin, "World War 3 WARNING: Small 'Miscalculation' over Disputed Islands Could Spark MAJOR Crisis," *Express UK,* 12/16/2018, available at: https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1058689/world-war-3-china-japan-senkaku-islands

possibility of oil and hydrocarbon reserves under the seafloor, the military significance of the islands or the economic incentives of holding them.[474]

To counter, an equal number of scholars cite the islands small size and indefensibility as evidence of lacking military value, the fact that hydrocarbon reserves are both unproven and at best relatively small, and the overall malaise in attempting to negotiate some sort of mutually beneficial economic arrangement. The conflict is then attributed to various domestic forces and nationalism, as well as the innate "worth" of territory.[475] Similar confusion arises when legalistic precedents are accepted in the case by one or both parties as disagreement often arises on *how* to accept them. For instance, as both Japan and China consider the Senkaku Islands part of their territory, they each claim an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around them. As the distance between China and Japan is too short for each side to retain a 200 nautical mile EEZ, this shortcoming can also act as a sustaining force in the dispute, especially when either side is unwilling to accept a median point between their territories.[476] In keeping with the tradition of diversionary theory, scholars investigating domestic factors of the dispute often converge

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[474] At the genesis of the conflict, Zhou Enlai himself stated to Kakuei Tanaka (Then Japanese Prime Minister) "I would rather not discuss the Senkaku Islands issue at this point. Now is not a good time for this discussion. It has become an issue because of the presence of oil. Neither Taiwan nor the United States would care without the oil." See John Rossman (Translator), *Perspectives on Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Relations* (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation, 2017): 85. For potential military interest as a motivating factor see Ke Wang, "Rethinking Chinese Territorial Disputes: How the Value of Contested Land Shapes Territorial Policies," (University of Pennsylvania: Dissertation, 2014): 234. Economic proponents are many, from controlling the fisheries surrounding the island, to manipulating vital sea lanes.

[475] The islands themselves are a mere 1,700 acres of uneven terrain, and Japan had never utilized the islands for military purposes over their century of administration. For military insignificance and lacking strategic value see Paul O'Shea, "How Economic, Strategic, and Domestic Factors Shape Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation in the East China Sea Dispute," *Asian Survey,* 55, 3, (June 2015): 560. For lack of economic urgency see Sheila A, Smith, *Intimate Rivals: Japanese Domestic Politics and a Rising China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015): 2014.

[476] O'Shea, "How Economic:" 551.

around the common theme of internal forces, yet consistency eludes us, as does satisfying explanation as to why the issue appears the way it does.

The myriad explanations, propositions and contradictions have proven puzzling to scholars for some time. Regardless of varied motivations, the only certainty in the dispute is that both sides attribute great importance regarding their claims over the islands.[477] Additionally, both sides have claims which rest on diametrically opposed bases. Japans claim is based heavily on international law and the concept of "terra nullius," which is essentially unoccupied land. China's claim however rests upon historical interpretations and documents, some dating back centuries.

On the side of the Chinese, records regarding the "Diaoyutai" are present from the 13th century. Accounts of having been visited by an imperial expedition in 1403 make note of the islands by their given name in Chinese. Subsequent guides and even naval strategy maps show the islands as a part of the coastal defense frontier of the Ming dynasty from 1561-1603.[478] Though the role of the islands themselves is often disputed, the outcroppings are most frequently cited as navigation aids to guide ships.[479] Unfortunately common in old historic disputes, inconsistencies arise in China's story. Use as navigational aids to claim ownership is not affirmed by international law. The CCP itself has even been complicit in increasing uncertainty. The post-1945 world saw several official maps published which state the Senkaku Islands to be Japanese territory,

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[477] I exclude sociological explanations regarding a seemingly innate human attachment towards territory as it has previously been covered in the literature review of this dissertation.

[478] Balazs Szanto, *China and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Dispute: Escalation and De-escalation* (New York: Routledge, 2018): 51-52.

[479] Seokwoo Lee, *Territorial Disputes Among Japan, China and Taiwan Concerning the Senkaku Islands,* Edited by Shelagh Furness and Clive Schofield (Durham UK: International Boundaries Unit, 2002): 12.

and official government communications have similarly referred to the islands by their Japanese names.[480]

Japanese claims may be based on international law, but inconsistencies obscure their story as well. According to the Japanese side, an extensive survey of the islands beginning in 1885 and lasting a decade found the islands to be *terra nullius*, essentially unclaimed land. The Japanese formally annexed the islands as part of the Okinawa prefecture.[481] To demonstrate habitation and use, Japan points to a lease application from an Okinawan fisherman which eventually led to the cabinet decision which formally incorporated the islands. Local enterprise soon rose, mainly centered on fishing and the islands once hosted around 200 citizens.[482] The islands briefly passed into the hands of the United States after WWII, but by 1972 the islands were handed back to Japan – an arrangement that persists today, and is accepted internationally sans China.[483] Much like China, Japan's claims also face scrutiny. The timing of the annexation is often attacked, as Japan had just defeated China in the Sino-Japanese war, and opportune predation is a powerful motivator. Additionally, the CCP argues that as Taiwan and the Senkaku chain were taken in tandem, the territory is thus linked, and so based on the Cairo declaration of 1943, Japan must relinquish *both* territories. Unfortunately, the San Francisco treaty of 1951 does not explicitly name the Senkaku Islands.[484]

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[480] Author Not Cited, "China Cracks down on Erroneous Maps," *Xinhua China,* Online: 1.9.2013. and Author Not Cited, "1950 Chinese Diplomatic Draft Sees Senkakus as Part of Ryukyus," *Kyodo News*, Online: 28.12.2012.

[481] Paul J. Smith, "The Senkaku/Diaoyu Island Controversy: A Crisis Postponed," *Naval War College Review* 66, 2 (2013): 29.

[482] Chansoria, *China, Japan:* 8-11.

[483] Roy, *Return:* 91.

[484] Kazuhiko Togo, "Japan-China-US relations and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Dispute: Perspectives from International Relations Theory," *Asian Perspective* 38, (2014): 244.

Though this study does not readily involve the role of the United States, the sustaining effect of America in regards to the dispute deserves a mention. Because it was the United States that initially administered the islands during the interregnum period post-WWII, the handover of the Senkaku Islands back to Japan despite inconsistencies between governing treaties was tantamount to great power acceptance of Japanese rule. The US at the time refused to discuss sovereignty. The handover simply reinstated the status quo prior to the war. Finally, and most concerning for the Chinese is that although the US considered the dispute an affair from which they are distant, that has not stopped America from explicitly stating that the Senkaku Islands chain falls under the Mutual Defense treaty enjoyed by Japan. This was first affirmed in 2010 by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, followed by President Obama, and then once more by Secretary of Defense John Mattis in 2017.[485]

The Dispute: Acknowledge, Forget, (and Conveniently) Remember

The dispute over the Senkaku Islands has gone through several phases, with actual discussion regarding the territory often going dormant for many years. However, it is only comparatively recently that we have seen deliberate involvement of the civilian

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[485] Ibid: 249 and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *The Senkaku Paradox: Risking Great Power War over Small Stakes* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2019): 41. Though this does not clarify the question of ownership over the island chain, in a substantive sense manner, the islands would be treated as any other Japanese territory, and would be defended as such on the part of the United States. Though titles are important, substantive action similarly has potential to irk China.

element in regards to the overall dispute. Inconsistent with previous decades of

repression and control, the latter years of the Senkaku dispute has seen not only the tacit

acceptance of nationalist protest, but also the encouragement of said mobilization at

various levels of the government. This divergence represents the idea that this particular

brand of civilian unrest, properly manipulated serves a broader social function which the

CCP intended to capitalize on.

Though it was not until later that the CCP ostensibly began to utilize the islands

as a basis for diversion, the change in behavior coincided with fundamental institutional

changes as well. The onset of the dispute as a whole was unostentatious. That the

dispute exists at all is unique, as most border disputes were aggressively settled post-

communist consolidation.[486] Starting in the early 1970's ostensibly due to the proposed

presence of oil, the overall precedent for dealing with the issue was created in 1972,

whereupon both parties de facto agreed to "shelf" the issue for a later date.[487] This was

explicitly restated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 that both sides were ill-equipped to resolve

the question, opting instead to leave it to a wiser generation of leaders.[488] Given the

personalism at the time, and the rebuilding after the Cultural Revolution, as well as the

changes sweeping China, external conflict was wisely sidestepped.

The latter years of Deng's tenure demonstrated that even if repression was not the

moral way to handle unrest, it was still feasible insofar as the CCP did not have to worry

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[486] Andrew S. Erickson, "China's Military Modernization: Many Improvements, Three Challenges, and One Opportunity," in *China's Challenges* eds. Jacques DeLisle and Avery Goldstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014): 178. As of today, only small areas with India and Bhutan remain in dispute.
[487] William Choong, "Perceptions, Postures and Instability," *The Adelphi Papers,* 54, 445 (2014): 110.
[488] Reinhard Drifte, "The Japan-China Confrontation over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands – Between "Shelving" and "Dispute Escalation,"" *The Asia-Pacific Journal, Japan Focus.* 12, 30 (2014): 10.

about crackdowns destroying the regime. The actions in Tiananmen Square occurred in over a hundred cities in China, but the violence in Beijing was effective in quelling the populace. Befitting of personalist regime, Deng remained powerful. Much like his predecessor, in the words of a Chinese diplomat in 2002, "Mao and Deng could decide…current leaders must consult."[489]

China was also somewhat unique in global governance in that leadership transitions could occur, with a new administration coming in, but the previous administration and their bases of support remaining extremely influential. Under Jiang Zemin's presidency, Deng Xiaoping often remained on the sidelines as his successor guided Chinese foreign policy. On several occasions he broke this complacency and was content to throw his hat back into politics when either direct action was needed or he simply disagreed with Jiang on particularly salient issues.[490]

As personalism waned under Jiang Zemin and single-party dynamics began to take hold, Chinese priorities and foreign policy under duress also changed. Wary of unrestrained protest immediately after the Tiananmen Square incident, the response was muted when Japanese activists began to renovate a lighthouse on the Senkaku Islands in 1990, with the government actively stifling protest.[491] A similar situation arose in 1996 when a similar lighthouse was constructed, which awoke the ire of China. Occurring nearly the same time of the Third Taiwan Strait crisis however meant that the CCP had a much larger, and more pressing issue at hand. Escalating a second dispute (involving the

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[489] Lampton, "How China:" 76.
[490] "PRC: Document Cites Deng."
[491] Jessica Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014): 105-106.

all-important question of fragmentation) was unwise.[492] As noted earlier Deng Xiaoping

still exerted influence from time to time, and the residual power he wielded was an

undeniable force. Even when Deng's health began to decline, and his physical dynamism

in politics began to wane, Jiang still had to be deferential to and in some cases reined in

by the Deng clique, which had formed around the previous leader and retained a great

deal of political power. It was not until the CCP was fully bureaucratized did we see a

new responsiveness to not only public opinion, but the disputed islands as well.

Blame for the ongoing nature of the dispute does not rest solely on the shoulder of

one party. The Japanese government is unwilling to declare that a dispute persists,

therefore basic negotiations regarding sovereignty simply cannot exist. China is willing

to negotiate, but it would require Japan to admit that the territory is in dispute, and by

extension admit that the Chinese case has some merit. Doubly frustrating to international

relations scholars is the seeming inability for international organizations to become

involved in the dispute. While this may be advantageous for both sides, involvement by

international legal bodies can be potentially problematic for the Chinese cause due to the

fact that Japan's sovereignty, outside of cases made by China, and to a lesser extent

Taiwan, is unchallenged internationally.[493]

Accepting arbitration from an extralegal body takes the potential element of

control out of the hands of the CCP, as there are no guarantee negotiations will be in their

favor. Additionally, China's preference of bilateral negotiations and simply not abiding

by international rulings further reinforces the propensity for the dispute to remain in its

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[492] Ibid: 114-125.
[493] Roy, *Return*: 91-93.

current form.[494] On an historic basis, there is also the possibility that by virtue of the size

and uninhabited status of the islands, international bodies such as the International Court

of Justice would be unwilling to hear cases surrounding the Senkaku Islands based on

precedent outside of any economic or security issues sans the 12 nautical mile coastal

territorial boundary. Small, uninhabited islands such as this have been given lacking

attention in international arbitration.[495]

A Tool Emerges, the 2010 Situation

Separate crises occurring in 2010 and 2012 illustrate not only the institutional

power of the CCP operate as a result of social unrest and malcontent, but also

demonstrate a powerful level of responsiveness and remedial measures to make use of

external actions to quell the populace. Well aware of the tenuous hold on performance

legitimacy, and already wary about the double-edged nature of their nationalism fallback,

the party was forced to admit that manufactured programs meant to foster internal

solidarity had begun to fail. Even the effects of progress were starting to put a strain on

the ability of the CCP to maintain complete control, as rising standards of living,

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[494] For a recent example of noncompliance, see Jane Perlez, "Tribunal Rejects Beijing's Claims in South China Sea," *The New York Times,* January 16th, 2016, available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/world/asia/south-china-sea-hague-ruling-philippines.html

[495] For an example of small islands being discounted outside of nautical border concerns, see International Court of Justice, Reports of Judgements, Advisory Opinions and Orders, *Maritime Delimitation in the Black Sea: Romania V. Ukraine* (Judgement of February 3rd, 2009): 19. Available at: https://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/132/132-20090203-JUD-01-00-EN.pdf

technological progress and ease-of-access to information can have disruptive effects on society, especially one that was relatively new to such advances.

Continued efforts to promote solidarity from a social standpoint orchestrated by the government were met with mixed results. A cornerstone of Hu Jintao's administration was the "Harmonious Society" initiative, aimed at creating societal cohesion – though these programs largely failed to meet their goals.[496] The traditional diversionary calculus thus makes manipulating foreign actions attractive. As the Chinese economy matures, growth slows. To compensate nationalism is espoused. Victimization allows the CCP to maintain legitimacy as the shield of the nation, but due to the deliberative nature of the party, consensus is slow. War is thus unattractive, as are overly provocative actions as rampant fervor can become anti-government activism. The institutional complexity of single-party regimes thus allows them to capitalize on low-level disputes in a way other authoritarian regimes cannot, as I will show.

On September 7th 2010, a fishing trawler captained by Zhan Qixiong was operating in contested waters close to the Senkaku Islands, ostensibly engaged in fishing. Due to the disputed nature of the waters and the proximity to Japanese territory, the Japanese Coast Guard responded within operational parameters. When the vessel was ordered to cease operations and submit to boarding and inspection, the captain refused to yield and attempted to escape. The chase that followed saw the Chinese trawler collide with a Japanese coast guard vessel and the subsequent detention of the captain and the entire crew. As noted, the islands are legally administered by Japan as sovereign

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[496] Mark Frazier, "Popular Responses to China's Emerging Welfare State," in Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen eds., *Chinese Politics: State Society and the Market* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010): 271.

territory, so the Japanese government initially sought to handle the incident via predictable legal channels.[497]

The ritualized expulsion of foreign incursions was a well-known feature of the dispute. In 2004 when Chinese activists landed on the islands, the matter was over very quickly, as Tokyo accosted the nationals and deported them back to Japan without incident.[498] Additionally, in a situation with similarities to the current one, a Taiwanese fishing vessel once crashed into a Japanese Coastguard patrol skiff and subsequently sank. Japan initiated the rescue of the fishermen and later apologized while offering compensation.[499] Beijing was initially optimistic that this procedure would be handled in a similar fashion, and immediately entered negotiations to secure the release of the captain and crew. China had hoped that the "secret deal" between the PRC and Japans Liberal Democratic party would speed all detained persons home, and so initial reports of the incident were largely objective.[500]

However, the first damaging sleight towards PRC prestige began immediately after the arrest of Zhan Qixiong whereupon the Chief Cabinet secretary of Japan, Yoshito Sengoku seemingly answered Chinese ambassador Cheng Yonghua's claim that the islands are not Japanese territory, therefore the fishing was legal when Sengoku firmly noted that a dispute regarding the ownership of the islands does not exist on September

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[497] Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots:* 168-169.

[498] Sanaa Yasmin Hafeez, "The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Crises of 2004, 2010 and 2012: A Study of Japanese-Chinese Crisis Management," *Asia-Pacific Review,* 22, 1 (2015): 73-99.

[499] Jenny W. Hsu, "Japan Apologizes for Boat Collision," Taipei Times, (June 21st, 2008) available at: http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2008/06/21/2003415342

[500] JJ Sutherland, "Violation of 'Secret Deal' May be at Root of China-Japan Dispute," *NPR,* (October 19th 2010) Available at: https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2010/10/19/130668119/violation-of-secret-deal-may-be-at-root-of-china-japan-dispute

8th.[501] The response from Beijing was still muted, still hoping to conclude the issue

swiftly. Unable to stifle all news regarding the incident, the same day saw a small-scale

protest occur outside of the Japanese embassy in Beijing, whereupon the overall level of

support for this seemingly spontaneous demonstration was largely positive based on web

activity.[502] Japan continued to handle the situation by the books, dealing the second blow

to the CCP.

   As the incident was being handled in a black-and-white fashion in accordance

with Japanese law, this strategy was tantamount to the empirical exercise of legal

sovereignty over the disputed islands. This in turn laid bare the idea that China had an

equal hand in the management of the issue as the Japanese legalistic approach revealed

that the extent of Hu Jintao's power did not reach substantive levels.[503] This revelation

came at an inopportune time as the political weakness coincided with increased calls by

the Chinese public to take a hardline approach towards Japan. In the eyes of Chinese

netizens, the Japanese were exercising control over sovereign Chinese territory – an

unacceptable arrangement. Still reeling from the lack of bargaining chips, Beijing

continued to attempt to handle the situation calmly lest nationalism continue to spiral.

   Retaliation was mild. Small bilateral talks were postponed regarding joint

development of natural resources between the two nations. The CCP simultaneously

worked hard to suppress grassroots mobilization efforts to intensify anti-Japanese

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[501] Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots*: 169.

[502] Yoko Nishikawa and Ben Blanchard, "Beijing Protests as Japan Arrests Chinese Boat Captain," *Reuters,* (September 8th, 2010) Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-china/beijing-protests-as-japan-arrests-china-boat-captain-idUSTRE6871BX20100908

[503] Antoine Roth, *Conflict Dynamics in Sino-Japanese Relations: The Case of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Dispute,* (George Washington University: Masters Thesis, 2013): 58.

protests, with the state security apparatus disrupting attempts to mobilize in several major

cities throughout the mainland. Larger cities were prepared for spontaneous protests, but

the organic activism in peripheral cities was worrying to the CCP.[504] Additionally, the

censorship apparatus was engaged, going so far as to censor many buzzwords relevant to

the issue at hand in an effort to reduce the possibility of social unrest, especially given

concerted calls to protest on September 18th, the anniversary of the Manchurian

incident.[505] China remained in a quandary. The Japanese had international law on their

side and Beijing still remained optimistic that the issue would abate soon given their

relatively muted response to the arrest.

In a show of good faith, the Japanese released the entirety of the Chinese trawler's

crew, sans the captain. Given the captains defiance in the struggle as well as the outright

refusal to yield to Japanese vessels (up to and including charging through water cannons)

dictated *some* tangible response on the part of the Japanese. Coupled with the suspicion

that civilian vessels operate with the encouragement, if not tacit acceptance of the CCP in

disputed waters to cement territorial claims, raised the punishment profile of the Captain

in a substantive manner.[506] Though the return of the 14 person crew was touted as a

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[504] James Manicom, *Bridging Troubled Waters: China, Japan and Maritime Order in the East China Sea,* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014): 56.

[505] Author Unknown, "China Postpones E China Sea Negotiation with Japan," *Xinhua* (9/11/2010) Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-09/11/content_11288437.htm. Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots: 170.* The Manchurian incident refers to an act of self-sabotage of a Japanese railroad as a pretense for the Imperial Japanese army to invade the province of Manchuria.

[506] Hirose Hajime, "Japan's Effective Control of the Senkaku Islands," *Review of Island Studies,* Available at: https://www.spf.org/islandstudies/transfer/research/docs/a00005r.pdf For a brief overview regarding the use of civilian vessels as unregistered agents of the state see James Kraska "How China Exploits a Loophole in International Law in Pursuit of Hegemony in East Asia," *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (January 22nd, 2015) Available at: https://www.fpri.org/article/2015/01/how-china-exploits-a-loophole-in-international-law-in-pursuit-of-hegemony-in-east-asia/ It should be noted that similar strategies involving entire fleets of Chinese fishing vessels have occurred in disputed waters between China, Vietnam and the Philippines.

victory of Chinese negotiation, the retention of the captain did little to abate calls for

Japanese protest online, as Japan had previously stated that they intended to hold the

captain through September 19th. Anxious to conclude this incident and wary of the risks

of holding the captain past the politically sensitive date of the 18th, local officials sought

to "guide" nationalist sentiment in an effort to reduce unattainable demands on the

government, or possibly condemnation of their handling of the crisis.

The previous months had already been taxing on the government. Under

immense pressure throughout the nation due to a multitude of labor strikes and work

stoppages, the government was busy fighting criticism from labor groups regarding

working conditions, poor pay and lack of economic opportunities for factory workers.[507]

Steady anti-government protest over the preceding months was vividly illustrated in a trio

of self-immolations of a Chinese man and his family to protest their forced eviction by

the government from their homes.[508] Capitalizing on the turmoil was none other than

artist-activist Ai Weiwei, who sought to divert the seemingly meaningless attention to an

insignificant chain of islands into real anti-government protest to illicit change.[509]

Though cause for concern, the government continued to seek a calm exit rather

than one of populism. Given ample situations from which the government would have

liked to divert attention, the "core" systems of the government remained largely

unscathed early in the dispute, and the patriotic calls against Japan were within

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[507] News coverage was extensive. Just as a point of reference see Keith B. Richburg, "Labor Unrest in China Reflects Changing Demographics, More Awareness of Rights," *Washington Post* (June 7th 2010). Author Unknown, "China's Summer of Labor Unrest," *Forbes* (July 23rd, 2010) Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/07/23/chinas-summer-labor-unrest

[508] Author Unknown, "Party Officials Removed After Self-immolation Protest," *Xinhua, (*October 11th, 2010) available at: http://www.china.org.cn/china/2010-10/11/content_21097539.htm

[509] Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots:* 171.

manageable levels, with the state apparatus enough to quell greater nationalist eruptions. As the captain remained detained however, the continued stifling of anti-Japanese protest and general pro-China sentiment began to puzzle the Chinese populace. The tipping point came on September 19th, when the government of Japan announced that the detention of Zhan Qixiong was to continue for another 10 days, evoking a massive outpouring of anti-Japanese sentiment that dwarfed previous calls – calls which greatly concerned the central government.[510]

The level of state penetration may have been able to quell initial outbursts of nationalism, bilateral relations with Japan as well as the hope that the captain would come home quickly made way for damaging rhetoric against the upper echelons of the CCP. Reeling from domestic and international weakness, China's strategy changed literally overnight, with coverage of the incident increasing dramatically and diplomatic pressure rising against Japan. The new nationalism utilized as a legitimacy buffer for the CCP was pierced not only in the seemingly limp-wristed handling of the captain's detention, but lack of a strong protest in regards to Japanese administration of the incident by the books. The perception of CCP as a failing shield against an old enemy spread like wildfire online, and the authority's strategy of "drinking tea" with the protestors to prevent widespread discontent had evoked feelings of disgust and concern. Sentiment online reflected opinions that the government was stifling patriotic feelings, spineless or ineffective. Some radical netizens even called for an equal level of struggle against the CCP leadership itself. [511]

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[510] Author Unknown, "Chinese Public Screams for Release of Captain," *Xinhua* (September 20th, 2010) Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-09/20/content_11326540.htm
[511] Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots:* 173

Diverting, in a pure sense of the word became necessary as even the compartmentalized nature of the bureaucracy was unable to shield the core leaders from public scorn. The government began by taking the then-unprecedented step of arresting someone regarding an online web post. This was the tacit announcement that any further public discussion regarding the CCP's handling of the crisis needed to be overwhelmingly positive and the government switched to damage control in an effort to harness patriotic sentiment.[512] This increased attention was a function of the public's overall responsiveness and rage. Given the overall attention paid to an incident the central authorities attempted to keep minor, the outpouring of patriotism was disproportionately large. The situation necessitated guidance, but within reason to not stoke the flames of unrest too much. This led to the first clear indication of a political reorientation. The office of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Ma Zhaoxu, threatened that should Japan prolong the detention of the trawler captain, China would "take strong counter measures, for which Japan shall bear all the consequences."[513]

Though the government's initial weak-handling of the crisis provided a permissive condition for criticism and activism, the muted response left ample room for the CCP to escalate the issue. Previously acting as a damper on patriotic activities, the Chinese government reoriented its rhetoric to be in line with the people's, ceaselessly covering the issue on television and allowing largely unfettered discussion of the incident online.[514] The hardening of the Chinese position was greeted warmly. Sentiment ranged

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[512] Robert S. Ross, "Chinese Nationalism and It's Discontents," *The National Interest* (November, December 2011): 47.

[513] Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ma Zhaoxu's Remarks, September 20th, 2010. Available at: http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/fyrth/t753988.htm

[514] Previously words such as "Diaoyu" were excluded from Weibo, but Chinese bloggers soon learned that they could circumvent censors by referring to the islands by their Japanese name.

from calls for greater mobilization and boycotts, to protestors comparing the captain's

detention to stealing Chinese dignity.[515] Where once there was forced restraint, unified

anger now prevailed and the government responded in kind. Chinese Premier, Wen

Jiabao, released several strongly worded statements towards Japan as well as cancelling

high-level talks while at the UN (despite signals from Japan that the captain may be

released soon). On the mainland four Japanese nationals were arrested for military

espionage in Hebei Province, as well as the general encouragement of anti-Japan protests

throughout the countryside.[516]

As the nation rallied around the seeming defense of Chinese dignity and national

integrity, Beijing took the unprecedented step of halting the export of all rare earth

metals, components vital to technological manufacturing and a cornerstone of the

Japanese economy, to Japan.[517] Despite repeatedly denying such an embargo existed,

citing trade quotas for the blockage, Beijing was unable to adequately explain how all

rare earth exporting firms, both domestic and internationally owned ceased exports at the

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[515] Clarissa Ward, "Tensions Rising Between China and Japan," *ABC News,* September 21st, 2010. Available at: https://abcnews.go.com/International/rhetoric-ratchets-china-japan-dispute/story?id=11687325   Author Unknown, "Japan Defies Fact, Draws Protest on Diaoyu Islands," *Xinhua,* September 21st, 2010, Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-09/21/content_11336424_2.htm

[516] Tania Branigan and Justin McCurry, "China Prime Minister Demands Captain's Release," *The Guardian*, September 22nd, 2010, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/22/china-demands-captain-release. Kyung Lah, "China Arrests 4 Japanese Against Backdrop of Diplomatic Battle," *CNN World*, September 24th, 2010, Available at: https://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/09/24/china.japanese.arrests/index.html.

[517] Author Unknown, "The 2010 Senkaku Crisis" *NATO Stratcom Centre of Excellence,* Download link: https://stratcomcoe.org/download/file/fid/80785. Additionally, see Sophia Kalantzakos, *Resource Competition, Mineral Scarcity and Economic Statecraft* (Oxford Scholarship Online, November 2017) Chapter 1, p. 14. Additionally, see Alastair Iain Johnston, "How Assertive is China's New Assertiveness?" *International Security* 37, 4 (2013): 7-48. This work highlights the measurement difficulty in analyzing just how extensive the embargo was, given the compartmentalized nature of rare-earth use. Simply put, different industries utilize different metals (some exclusively), and so an aggregate measure is difficult to compile. He does point to a steep decline in the import of Yttrium during the reputed embargo phase however.

exact same time.[518] Faced with a slew of boycotts, widespread condemnation by the

Chinese public and reeling from the severing of bilateral diplomatic engagements, Japan

was forced to concede that the need for amicable ties with China was greater than

persecuting a trespassing trawler. Zhan Qixiong was released on September 24th.

Instead of heralding the return of the captain as a victory, much like the release of

the crew nearly two weeks earlier, China was emboldened by their success and sought to

capitalize on the newfound support from the populace. China acknowledged the need for

good relations with their neighbor, but before diplomacy could return to a state of

normalcy, China demanded an official apology from Japan for detaining the captain, and

asked for compensatory damages as well – a request quickly rejected by Japan.[519] The

request of an official apology from Japan was quite significant in that China had reserved

such requests for issues pertaining to Japan's wartime atrocities committed during their

occupation of China. By demanding such a formal apology from Japan for the seemingly

trivial issue of a detained fisherman, China forged an indirect, but visible link between

the incident and popular nationalism, thus affirming their "shield" status to the public, as

well as concretely responding to Japan staunch exercise of sovereignty over disputed

territory.

Though the incidents root cause had been dealt with, tensions remained high with

both the public and politicians on both sides clinging to their narratives. Japan reiterated

its sovereignty over the islands, and the Chinese public reacted quite positively to the

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[518] Keith Bradsher, "Trade Officials Ponder China's Rare Earth Stance," *The New York Times,* October 13th, 2010, available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/14/business/global/14rare.html

[519] "The 2010 Senkaku Crisis:" 185. Yoko Kubota and Chris Buckley, "Japan Refuses China Demand for Apology in Boat Row," *Reuters,* September 24th, 2010, Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-china/japan-refuses-china-demand-for-apology-in-boat-row-idUSTRE68I06520100925

resolve Premier Wen Jiabao showed in the face of Japan, however the public remained

hungry for retribution against Japan. With right-wing nationals criticizing Prime Minister

Kan's weakness in the dispute and anti-Chinese protests occurring throughout Japan, the

CCP provided great coverage of these protests which in turn allowed for more guided

patriotism.[520] Beginning October 16th, much larger anti-Japanese protests occurred in

multiple cities around China, with crowds in large cities such as Xi'an reaching 50,000

participants.[521] Demonstrations were encouraged, but unruly crowds were eventually

dispersed. The rare earths embargo continued unabated, with Japan announcing that their

reserves may soon be depleted.[522]

As the residuals of the dispute continued however, bilateral relations between the

two nations became increasingly strained. Unwilling to forego potential progress in the

future, and emboldened by the seeming support from the domestic populace, China saw

fit to begin to wind-down protests – though this time in a way that didn't invoke ire from

the population. Protests tapered down until October 26th, with many Chinese news

outlets calling for restraint once again in patriotic activities. The fact that tensions

continued and even accelerated as a result of Zhan Qixiong being released can be viewed

as a response to Japan continued actions to garner international support for their struggle,

as well as outshining any coverage on rampant labor protests.[523] By continuing their

current course with the support of the population, the CCP strengthened its image in the

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[520] CNN Wire Staff, "China Accused of Invading Disputed Islands," *CNN World,* October 2nd, 2010. Available at: https://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/10/02/japan.anti.china.protest/index.html
[521] Patrick Chovanec, "China-Japan Rare Earth Fracas Continues," *Forbes,* October 17th, 2010, available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/china/2010/10/17/china-japan-rare-earth-fracas-continues/#7a5feec24885
[522] Author Unknown, "Japan's Rare Earth Minerals may run out by March: Govt," *Phys*, October 21st, 2010. Available at: https://phys.org/news/2010-10-japan-rare-earth-minerals-govt.html
[523] Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots:* 183.

eyes of the citizenry, as calls for protests against and criticism of the CCP's leadership rapidly drying up. The dispute simultaneously sent a loud, visible message to the world that China would not be bullied by foreign powers. Without the diplomatic pressure to draw attention away from ostensible weakness, the CCP would have been faced with the threat of increased unrest and failing support in any attempt to repress protest.

The 2012 Nationalization

The next significant event in the Senkaku saga occurred parallel to the once-a-decade handover of political power from one administration to the incoming generation. A similar cocktail of events reminiscent of 2010 also appeared in 2012, dictating not only a need for diplomatic escalation, but substantive measures as well. Much like the 2010 crisis, domestic perceptions of instability and weakness may have motivated the central government to escalate an otherwise easily handled issue to compensate for incurred political damages. 2012 saw China wracked with some of the largest anti-Japanese protests and diplomatic saber rattling of the decade, yet despite the heated words on both sides the dispute largely stayed within the diplomatic realm, and featured high levels of orchestration on the part of the CCP.

The year 2012 was significant for the CCP for a number of reasons, most of all was due to the fact that it heralded the 18th Party Congress of China, whereupon the old leadership would retire to make way for the new administration. Due to the economic and political successes of previous generations, but wary of growing unrest, the desire to

have a completely smooth entrance into the new era was critical. Any signals of instability at the top, could send worrying signals to the bottom. Further controversy surrounding Bo Xilai, then party secretary of Chongqing and a rising star in the CCP revealed not only an entwined nest of corruption approaching the highest levels of government, but a mess of political infighting as well. As this was perhaps the most significant controversy of the last decade, the public was attuned to every event during the incident, necessitating the CCP to take steps to divert negative sentiment.

Though the events surrounding businessman Neil Heywood's mysterious death in a Chongqing hotel room on November 14th 2011 raised some eyebrows, media coverage intensified a few months later when Wang Lijun, chief of police of Chongqing and confidante of Bo Xilai abruptly appeared at the US Consulate in Chengdu ostensibly with incriminating evidence regarding the death of Heywood.[524] The journey to Chengdu occurred nearly immediately after Lijun was demoted from his post in what was interpreted as a breakup between himself and Bo Xilai. In a bold but telling move, Xilai used his clout to mobilize a battalion of from Chongqing's security forces to travel to Chengdu in an effort to silence any potential information from being leaked by the former police chief.[525] On the surface this may have seemed like an inter-party squabble, albeit a large one. However, sources within China claimed that it was in fact then president, Hu Jintao who initially set the cogs in motion for the CCP to investigate Bo Xilai.[526]

[524] Yongnian Zheng, "China in 2012: Troubled Elite, Frustrated Society," *Asian Survey* 53, 1 (Jan/Feb 2013): 162.
[525] Gordon G. Chang, "China's Great Leap Backward: China's leadership in Crisis," *World Affairs* 175, 2 (July/August 2012): 23.
[526] Ibid: 25.

Rumors had circulated prior to the Heywood revelation that Bo Xilai had been marked by the president. Xilai had become immensely popular not just in his home province of Sichuan, but China more generally. Xilai espoused a model of state-led development based on a Maoist revival approach, in stark contrast to the Deng Xiaoping-inspired models espoused by both Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao. Despite opposition from the first and second in command, Xilai's approach was warmly received by the Politburo Standing committee, with the majority visiting Chongqing to observe the results. The general consensus was largely positive. Wen and Hu on the other hand, did not visit the city, nor offer praise. The revelation here was that general consensus on sustained growth had eroded, and Xilai's rapidly rising popularity, as well as his penchant for the spotlight portrayed him as a politician on the fast track to central leadership. When it was revealed Xilai had ordered his underlings to even wiretap the president, some form of retribution became necessary.[527]

Though China's censors were rapidly able to gauge the overall level of discussion regarding Wang Lijun's actions and respond accordingly, the situation was still largely manageable, and online discussion was allowed to a large extent due to citizens simply wanting to know what was transpiring. However, as discussion continued, rumors swirled as well. Speculation included the idea that Hu Jintao sought to disenfranchise Bo Xilai prior to a leadership transition in an effort to pave the way for Li Keqiang to become president. As Bo had a strong relationship with Xi Jinping (the most likely heir),

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[527] Zheng, "China in 2012:" 166-167, Cairns, "China's Weibo:" 156.

bringing one down, would weaken the other. A timely intervention from Jiang Zemin however is said to have disrupted this plan.[528]

The truth of said rumors were irrelevant, as the discussions mere existence was considered harmful. Once Wang Lijun's actions were consumed by the masses, as well as the overall scope of Bo's seeming overcompensation to assure his silence, the censorship firewall went up in earnest, and virtually all references to corruption were considered taboo.[529] Wang Lijun, who had been convinced to leave the American compound was soon apprehended by police and subsequently disappeared. This muted response to such a grandiose escape served as foreshadowing for the now diminished presence of the limelight-loving Bo Xilai. Though solemn, Bo still saw fit to hold a spontaneous press conference on March 9th, whereupon in his own defense he stated his handling of the Wang Lijun was in line with larger efforts to combat crime, going so far as to say his actions were in tandem with those of Zhou Yongkang, a politburo standing committee member. As Bo attended annual meetings in the capitol, he was condemned on March 14th by none other than Wen Jiabao, and subsequently stripped of his Chongqing post the next day.[530]

The implication of Zhou Yongkang was significant for a number of reasons. The first of which is that Zhou was a big supporter of the Maoist principles espoused by Bo Xilai, which would disrupt the current developmental course of China if they gained traction. Alarmingly, this revealed potential corruption in even the highest body in China

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[528] Chang, "China's Great Leap:" 25, Zheng, "China in 2012:" 167.
[529] Cairns, "China's Weibo:" 161.
[530] Alice Miller, "The Bo Xilai Affair in Central Leadership Politics," *China Leadership Monitor* 38 (2012): 1-2. Available at: https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/CLM38AM.pdf

– inconveniently at a period of transition.[531] Various leaders petitioned for his removal

from office, and though he was due to retirement regardless, he lost the ability to name

his successor, and his previous initiatives were removed. He was subsequently

investigated and sentenced post-retirement.[532] Additionally, under the patronage-esque

advancement system known as "mishu," the condemnation of leaders often results in the

downfall of subordinates, as was the case of Wu Wenkang, Bo's aide during his time in

Chongqing. Should the accusatory storm spiral out of control, chaos could ensue as the

lower levels were purged. Without the aid of an "elder statesman," such as Deng

Xiaoping to alleviate tensions, the situation looked dire.[533]

Dealing with issues regarding stability necessitated a calm and measured

approach to allegations of corruption, and the government had to put on a strong face to

ensure control. The timing was fortuitous, as Japanese relations were about to be brought

back into the forefront. On April 16th, less than a week after it was announced Bo and his

wife were under investigation for the murder of Neil Heywood and his political post

seized, the Governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara announced that the city government had

tentative plans to purchase three of the privately-owned Senkaku Islands from their

owner. Ishihara, known for somewhat nationalist views, cited the dispute as need to

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[531] To remedy the potential "contamination" Zhou Yongkang may have brought to the rest of the nation, 3,300 cadres from the security sector of the CCP were sent to Beijing to be given extensive ideological training. See Barbara Demick, "China Coup Rumors may be Wild, but the Tension is Real," *Los Angeles Times* (March 22nd, 2012) available at: https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2012-mar-22-la-fg-china-coup-rumors-20120323-story.html

[532] Mamta Badkar, "Who is Zhou Yongkang?" *Business Insider* (July 29th, 2014) Available at: https://www.businessinsider.com/who-is-zhou-yongkang-2014-7

[533] Wen-Hsuan Tsai and Nicola Dean, "Lifting the Veil of the CCP's Mishu System: Unrestricted Informal Politics Within Authoritarian Regime," *The China Journal* 73 (2015): 179. Chang, "China's Great Leap:" 26.

consolidate control over the territory.[534] This development was not out of the ordinary.

The government had previously leased several islands in 2002, and the China's response

was largely restrained – culminating in several protestors landing on the islands, only to

be smoothly deported in ritualistic fashion. The government subsequently allowed a very

small protest in front of the Japanese embassy in Beijing.[535]

The initial response here was similarly calm, despite the anti-Japanese heights the

last issue regarding the islands had evoked. Given the sensitive nature of the succession

issue, and the understanding that nationalism could be highly destabilizing at the current

time as well as damaging to bilateral relations, the Chinese response merely rehashed old

claims, noting that there was no basis for the Japanese purchase.[536] The calm response

was all the more impressive given Ishihara's inflammatory remarks, citing Chinese

subversion over Japanese control of the islands.[537] Bo's fortunes deteriorated further in

the aftermath. Between Ishihara's announcement and July, Both Bi Xilai and Zhou

Yongkang are effectively ostracized from the party, with Bo's image attacked on multiple

fronts. Bo's successor, Zhan Dejiang explicitly notes the damage done to the party's

image.[538] Noting the increasing public discontent, the CCP's top leadership saw fit to

reorient their previous strategy in dealing with Japan to capitalize on potential tensions.

Concerned with instability at the top and troubled by Japan's new move, the

Chinese public reacted with outrage against the CCP, calling their moves vis-a-vis the

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[534] International Crisis Group, "Dangerous Waters: China-Japan Relations on the Rocks," *Asia Report 246* (April 8th, 2013): 5

[535] Anna Costa, *The China-Japan Conflict over the Senkaku/Diayou Islands: Useful Rivalry,* (New York: Routledge, 2018): 138-139.

[536] Szanto, *China:* 83-86. Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots:* 194.

[537] ICG, "Dangerous waters:" 5.

[538] "Bo Xilai Scandal: Timeline," *BBC News* (November 11th, 2013), available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-17673505

islands slow and ineffective.[539] Aware of the sensitivity both the CCP and Chinese

citizens had towards the islands, and not wanting to degrade relations once more, the

national government of Japan stepped in. Prime Minister Noda, in an effort to keep the

issue under control and avoid excessive tensions openly declared that Japan was

considering nationalizing the islands in question for all of Japan. The purchase could be

completed smoothly as it was no different than the purchase of any other parcel of land,

at least on paper.[540] Functionally however, the situation was more complex. Noda's

involvement was actually an attempt to deescalate the situation, and remove the

contentious issue from private hands as well as the hands of Ishihara, both of whom were

considered to be nationalistic and inflammatory. National control could allow a slower,

more deliberative pace to take over, and perhaps a return to ritualized dispute resolution

enjoyed previously.[541]

Though the CCP's response remained measured, Chinese citizens reacted with

outrage, with the perfect cocktail of bad news fanning the flames of unrest. The trial of

Gu Kailai, wife of Bo Xilai and accomplice in the apparent murder of Heywood was

announced on August 3rd, and began on the 9th of the same month to great notice. The

status quo regarding the islands remained stable, but sentiment in China did not. On

August 12th, in a marked departure from previous attempts, activists from Hong Kong left

port and were allowed to sail to the largest island. Previous attempts had been stopped,

with protestors directed back to shore. Though Hong Kong remains a special territory of

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[539] Ryosei Kokubun, Yoshihide Soeya, Akio Takahara, Shin Kawashima, Translated by Keith Krulak, *Japan-China Relations in the Modern Era,* (New York: Taylor & Francis 2017): 183.

[540] ICG, "Dangerous Waters:" 5-6.

[541] Peter Hays Gries, Derek Steiger and Tao Wang, "Popular Nationalism and China's Japan Policy: The Diaoyu Islands Protests, 2012-2013," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, 98 (2016): 264-265.

China, it is largely thought that authorities operate under the auspices of Beijing, stopping or allowing protestors as the capitol dictates.

The timing of this successful attempt was interesting.[542] Additionally, the landing was televised via state-run TV, enflaming protests – which in turn were also covered by Xinhua. As a self-reinforcing loop was created, protests magnified, but were finally terminated. Though they were detained and released very quickly, the small interim period of August 18th saw the most ardent criticism against the government and their seemingly weak-handling of negotiating for the release of the activists. In tandem with anti-government rhetoric by the populace, Beijing relaxed nearly all censorship regarding the Senkaku Islands dispute, affectively drowning out negative calls in favor of patriotism.[543] The same day the government saw fit to end protests, was the day in which Gu Kailai received a suspended death sentence – largely seen as preferential treatment towards one guilty of corruption and murder.[544]

Though the protests began to grow larger prior to August 20th, the government still saw fit to advertise the dispute-in-motion, despite the belief from previous escalations that such coverage could increase unrest. Still, the landing was a captivating excuse to divert attention from the Chongqing incident. The government similarly demonstrated their capability to end any protests, seeing fit to do so on the eve of more bad news, demonstrating that the "allowed" protests were socially functional. Though

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[542] Cairns, "China's Weibo:" 188, Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots:* 199.

[543] Cairns, "China's Weibo," 207-208.

[544] Zhan Zhang, "Fanning the Flames of Public Rage: Coverage of the Diaoyu Islands Dispute in Chinese Legacy Media," in Thomas Hollihan ed., *The Dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands: How Media Narratives Shape Public Opinion and Challenge the Global Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 90-91.

paused, the crisis soon continued again due to Noda proceeding with his plans to

nationalize the islands – a deal which was finalized on September 11th 2012.[545] Despite

military analysts in Beijing noting the status quo remained unchanged, the symbolism

was damaging regardless. In reality, Japan sought to conclude the issue prior to China's

leadership transition to avoid "punch[ing] the new [Chinese] leaders in the face,"

concluding that the new administration may be more amenable to a peaceful solution.[546]

On the Chinese front, the government was worried for a number of reasons. The

first is that although the citizenry was angry with Japan, there was a lower-level of

outward anger than Beijing would have hoped for, and an alarming level of anger

towards their own government, with online discussion largely reflecting this.[547] Even the

very popular pro-government "Strong Nation Forum," saw nearly a fifth of all messages

post-nationalization as critical towards Beijing.[548] Discontent had been rising for some

time, even prior to Japan's nationalization. Signs of infighting had been bubbling to the

surface since the Chongqing incident, and although the government has a vested interest

in ensuring a smooth handover, several events were unable to be hidden out of the publics

gaze.

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[545] The date September 11th is the most commonly given date regarding the finalization of the purchase, however alternate sources also frequently cite the 10th as the date the purchase was formalized. It is unclear whether the authors are noting the completion in Eastern or Western time zones.

[546] International Crisis Group: 6-7. This plan to nationalize the islands was originally known to the previous Chinese administration, and as both sides were aware of the possibility of nationalization, the strong response from the PRC was not unexpected. What was unclear however was how the government of China would substantively react.

[547] Christopher Cairns and Allen Carlson, "Real-world Issues in a Social Media Sea: Nationalism and Censorship on Weibo during the 2012 Diaoyu/Senkaku Crisis," *The China Quarterly* 225 (2016): 36.

[548] Rou-Lan Chen, "Chinese Youth Nationalism in a Pressure Cooker," (93-114) in Lowell Dittmer ed., *Taiwan and China: Fitful Embrace* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 102.

Cognizant that an image of strength, stability and capability was never more important than during a power transition, China responded nearly instantaneously after the Japanese purchase.[549] A date for the ceremony had not yet been set, which signaled behind-the-scenes jockeying. To make matters worse, the heir apparent, Xi Jinping, had not been seen in public for nearly two weeks, disappearing on September 1st. The rumor mill began to churn with reasons for his absence including a heart attack, soccer injury, suffering an attack by a military official or even being hit with a chair at a meeting.[550] More credible reports noted that a back injury may be the cause of his absence, and once this information was revealed on September 6th, all searches related to the term "back injury" began to be censored on Weibo.[551] As Xi was expected to succeed Hu Jintao, such public visits were important to maintain continuity and to demonstrate incoming leaders were well-versed in global affairs. The cancellation sparked heated discussion. Once the formalization of the islands purchase had been finalized, and responding to the seemingly "soft" stance China had taken toward such an insult, all references to Xi Jinping were censored from Weibo period. These new censors only were put into place on the 12th of September, at least one full day after the deal had been completed.[552]

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[549] The period prior to the 18th Party Congress also coincided with an extensive uptick in the detention and arrest of those disruptive to social stability. See Verna Yu, "Anxious Authorities Crack Down on Critics Ahead of Party Congress," *South China Morning Post*, Oct 28th, 2012. Available at: https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1071454/anxious-authorities-crack-down-critics-ahead-party-congress

[550] ICG, "Dangerous Waters:" 7. Ian Johnson, "Communist Leader's Absence sets off Rumor Mills in China," *The New York Times,* September 11th, 2012. Max Fisher, "The Secret Story behind Xi Jinping's Disappearance, Finally Revealed?" *The Washington Post,* November 12th, 2012.

[551] Keith Zhai and Teddy Ng, "Xi Jinping Cancels Meeting with Hillary Clinton in Surprise Move," *South China Morning Post* (September 6th, 2012). Available at: https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1030345/xi-jinping-cancels-meeting-hillary-clinton-surprise-move

[552] For a visual representation of not only the censorship of back injury-related searches, but Xi Jinping more general, see Fei Chang Dao, Chronicling Free Speech with Mainland Chinese Characteristics, specifically: http://blog.feichangdao.com/2012/09/following-reports-that-xi-jinping-hurt.html and http://blog.feichangdao.com/2012/09/jinping-as-in-xi-jinping-now-censored.html.

Though faced with every incentive to keep any sort of tension down to as low a level as possible, a diplomatic escalation offered a fairly safe and effective method of diverting attention. China announced for the first time their new territorial boundaries in the maritime sphere – significant in that this was the first time such a move had occurred over disputed territory. All Japanese incursions would henceforth be treated as violations.[553] Interviews conducted in Beijing by International Crisis Group between September and November of 2012 confirmed that the baseline plan had been created previously. An earlier revelation would offer nothing valuable to the CCP, but the opportune time of this escalation served to redirect attention back onto Japanese chauvinism and away from the transitional government.[554]

Though the public's attention to the Bi Xilai incident had not abated, and the government was under significant pressure to wrap the entire ordeal up in order to calm the waters prior to the 18th Party Congress. Paradoxically however the government also needed to ensure the nation that the regime was still strong, which prompted not just concrete actions as noted earlier, but increasingly hardline rhetoric, while relaxing censorship regarding the online discussion of the dispute. Beginning on September 11th, the government simultaneously saw an explosion of posts discussing the Diaoyutai (the Chinese name for the islands),[555] Fueled by a mixture of bellicose remarks, extensive coverage by the state-run media and official condemnation by the government, Japanese

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[553] J. Ashley Roach, "China's Straight Baseline Claim: Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands," *American Society of International Insights* 17, 7 (February 12th, 2013). Available at: https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/17/issue/7/china%E2%80%99s-straight-baseline-claim-senkaku-diaoyu-islands

[554] ICG, "Dangerous Waters:" 13.

[555] Cairns, "China's Weibo:" 205.

protests accelerated throughout China, with many cities witnessing nationalist protests.[556]
Protests, coverage and online discussion offer a convenient alternative to discussion
regarding Xi's whereabouts.

The war of words worked, with protests becoming increasingly destructive and
violent as China approach the September 18th anniversary of the Mukden incident. It
became so fevered that the government saw fit to initiate an internet census of anti-
Japanese sentiment, and purge all calls for mass mobilization and overall destruction of
property or lawlessness.[557] The media followed suit, with coverage on domestic protests,
largely fuel for previous demonstrations, tapering off over coverage of protests in Hong
Kong and Macau.[558] Though continued patriotic activity was encouraged by the
government, the decision to send hundreds of civilian fishing vessels near the islands on
September 17th served to slow the progress Beijing was making in quelling unrest, while
the same day Beijing warned of potentially 20 years of economic retaliation should Japan
maintain its course.[559]

Attention to the Senkaku dispute remained high, but the government took a more
direct approach in organizing demonstrations. Attacks on Chinese citizens, Japanese
nationals and businesses could irrevocably damage relations, and so the state apparatus
sanitized dissent. Although the government had succeeded in rallying the public against
Japan, corruption still loomed heavily in the minds of the citizenry, and the state worked

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[556] Julie Makinen, "Anti-Japan Protests in China Spread to More Cities," *Los Angeles Times*, (September 16th, 2012).
[557] Joshua Keating, "Why is China Afraid of the Louisiana Purchase?" *Foreign Policy,* (September 17th 2012), available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/17/why-is-china-afraid-of-the-louisiana-purchase/
[558] Zhang, "Fanning the Flames:" 91-93.
[559] Wang, "Rethinking Chinese:" 253. Alan Taylor, "Anti-Japan Protests in China," *The Atlantic* (September 17th 2012).

hard to stifle tangential protests.   Some protestors even checked in with local law enforcement to see if they could call for anti-corruption measures to be enforced, only to be told to maintain their focus against Japan.[560] Dissenting discussion regarding the Chongqing affair had been all but stamped out by censors. In fact, the trial of Wang Lijun had begun on September 17th, and concluded only one day later, all without allowing news of the trial to leak. It was not until September 24th that news of his sentence, as well as a tangible symbol of anti-corruption efforts was revealed to the masses.[561] Censorship too began to change. In the days after the Wang Lijun trial, words related to the Senkaku Islands dispute were increasingly censored and the universe of taboo words grew, while the day Wang Lijun's sentencing was announced, all censorship relating to him as a person or his trial was removed, allowing relatively unfettered discussion.[562]

Conclusion

Attention directed towards the Senkaku Islands dispute had bought the CCP time while they consolidated power and made a formal showing of anti-corruption, as well as

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[560] Author Unknown, "Protesting too much: Anti-Japanese Demonstrations run the risk of Going off-script," *The Economist* (September 22nd, 2012), available at: https://www.economist.com/china/2012/09/22/protesting-too-much See Sandeep Chakravorty, "China-Japan-Korea: Tangled Relationships," ORF Occasional Paper #39, *Observer Research Foundation* (March 2013) available at: https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/OccasionalPaper_39.pdf for implications regarding the potentially destabilizing effects of nationalist protest.
[561] *BBC,* "Timeline."
[562] Jeffrey Knockel, "Measuring Decentralization of Chinese Censorship in Three Industry Segments," (Diss: University of New Mexico, May 2018): 48.

offering concrete steps towards stability prior to the 18th party congress. The additional

revelation that Bo Xilai had lost all communist party credentials and backing, as well as a

forthcoming punishment from Beijing further served to placate the nation, and by

October of 2012, most coverage and discussion regarding the Senkaku Islands dispute

had been largely phased out, along with any residual protest.[563] Beijing soon felt secure

enough in their new position to finally stop censoring both the names of Bo Xilai and the

name of his son, Bo Guagua. Given that these names had been largely censored since

2011, and the firewall finally came down on September 28th, the same day of the

announcement of his expulsion of the CCP, means that the Chinese government had less

to fear from anti-government activism as they did in the previous weeks.[564]

In such a case, due to the penetrative nature of the CCP and the vast resources it

has at its disposal both in terms of law enforcement and societal controls, the government

in Beijing did not need to resort to an overtly flashy nor violent spectacle in accordance

with classical diversionary theory. Adept manipulation of an ongoing dispute via

diplomatic escalation proved a strong enough catalyst to not only divert attention away

from a particularly grueling period of introspection on the part of the CCP, but also rally

the populace behind the government as they fought against an external power despite

some internal weakness. Given the caution on the part of Beijing and the painstaking

efforts to ensure anti-Japanese protests did not spiral out of control, it is highly likely that

an armed confrontation, or one in which the military was called to secure the islands in an

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[563] Zhang, "Fanning the Flames:" 98. Cairns, "China's Weibo:" 205. This decline in attention regarding the islands is often simply said to be the result of censorship, but during the month of September, overall censorship regarding the protests remained constant within a narrow band. See Ibid: 207.
[564] Fei Chang Dao, "Xinhua Says Bo Xilai Expelled From Party, Sina and Tencent Weibos Stop Censoring "Bo Xilai" and Son "Bo Guagua"" (September 30th 2012), available at: http://blog.feichangdao.com/2012/09/xinhua-says-bo-xilai-expelled-from.html.

event devoid of bloodshed had the potential to spark uncontrollable levels of activism on the ground. Instead, the monitoring and implementation mechanisms in the communist machine allowed for a comfortable level of external diplomatic conflict, which was skillfully manipulated. This allowed for state-guided patriotism in an effort to shore up internal power, strengthen the single-party on the eve of transition and make a true effort to deliver on the promise of the CCP as a strong, stable shield.

Not only did domestic benefits offer more in terms of payout, but under my analysis we are given a story which explains the sustained nature of the dispute, rather than the less satisfying explanations concerning either security concerns or economics. Proponents of alternate explanations cite either proposed resources or strategic considerations, despite lack of exploitation in either arena. Even in instances when joint development has been proposed, concrete steps toward this goal have gone unrealized, yet the dispute remains. If strategic or economic benefits are not worth the resolution of the dispute, domestic benefits offer us some clarity. Regardless, geostrategic explanations remain the most numerous.

One of the earliest instances of proposed military use came not from China or Japan, but the United States in the period after World War II. Despite cooperation against Germany, the US sought to consolidate their hold over the islands and fortify them in an effort to hinder a potential growth of soviet influence in the region following an extensive report from the CIA in 1948.[565] These plans never materialized, and the islands themselves remain undeveloped both militarily and in a civilian sense. This is

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[565] Jean Marc F. Blanchard, "The U.S. Role in the Sino-Japanese Dispute over the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands," *China Quarterly* 161, (2000): 104-105.

strange given their proposed importance. If the islands are capable of tilting the balance

of power in the region, or at one time serving as a shield against the expansion of a

superpower into East Asia, allowing these critical outcroppings to remain underutilized is

puzzling. If the shield would work against the USSR, why not the CCP? For this matter,

if China was to seize the islands, there is no reason why they could not be operationalized

against Japan or the US. China never attempted to seize the islands, despite having the

opportunity post WWII (as realism would predict), and Japan had never militarized the

territory even after extensive administration. It should also be noted that even during a

period of primacy, the United States never made use of, or developed the islands in any

way, even though they could have done so militarily unchallenged.[566]

The answer as to why the islands remain fallow is partially linked with their

overall size. Though some residual military interest may remain, most scholars relegate

the potential use as that of hosting a single radar station.[567] This, along with possibly

hosting a helicopter landing pad is a best-case scenario, as development is both unlikely

and unprofitable given the diplomatic costs associated with building such a station, and

the negligible benefits given the close proximity of other critical war material.[568]

Furthermore, from a functional standpoint, the installation of a radar station, missile

battery or even helicopter landing pad is equally feasible on sea-based platforms.

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[566] Several islands have been utilized by the United States for target practice. This represents the extent of military utilization of the islands. See Todd Hall, "More Significance than Value: Explaining Developments in the Sino-Japanese Contest Over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands," *Texas National Security Review* 2, 4 (August 2019): 20. Available at: https://2llqix3cnhb21kcxpr2u9o1k-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Hall_TNSR-Vol-2-Issue-4.pdf

[567] Wang, "Rethinking:" 234. Hsiung, *An Anatomy:* 34.

[568] O'Shea, "How Economic:" 560.

Given the fluid nature of the surrounding area, mobile emplacements, ship-based radar stations or even helicopter carriers make more sense from a strategic and economic standpoint. Any emplacements actually erected on the islands would be highly vulnerable during an armed conflict. The small size of the islands is also a glaring weakness, as there is little in the way of contingency plans available for territory so small. The central location in the East China Sea means that anything upon the islands would likely be targeted, and destroyed by an opening salvo should conflict arise.[569] For this reason, the total developable land area does not offer the security or value of what can be installed on sea-based platforms, with Japanese acknowledging this fact.[570] Additionally, the central location affords very few advantages against Chinese or Japanese naval vessels, as any ship that wishes to avoid the island chain can easily sail around them.

Staging their own vessels in the region may be an attractive incentive for China to attempt to consolidate control over the islands, and a number of scholars contend interest is high enough that a working submarine or refueling base may be constructed upon them.[571] Though this may hold some promise, it is worth noting that Japan has never acted upon the islands in such a way, even before the dispute began. Though the argument that the US reigned in Japanese militarism may be seen to erode some of the argument, Japan was allowed to keep some naval forces in an effort to curb USSR expansion in the region. Scholars who claim the islands can be militarized for submarine

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[569] Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, US Airsea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 7–48

[570] Hall, "More Significance:" 15.

[571] Ke, "Rethinking:" 234, Szanto, *China and the Senkaku:* 36-37.

warfare fail to consider the much cheaper and easily-controlled option of island-building

which the Chinese have pursued in earnest with the dealings with the Philippines. This

allows for the construction of the bases in more strategically important areas rather than

in the middle of the sea. While construction may be provocative with diplomatic jabs

occurring often, the islands themselves have not been dismantled.

In speaking of the role of the Senkaku Islands in terms of economics, though it

has been briefly mentioned before, the potential economic benefits granted by the islands

is probably the most cited justification for the dispute. This can be divided further into

two types: proposed resources and potential strategic value.[572] The question of proposed

resources is complex, with scholars noting the dubious nature of potential hydrocarbon

reserves. Though initial estimates were highly optimistic in assessing potential reserves

of the area, with a United Nations survey claiming that the region had potential in 1969,

no further international assessments have been made in the region. The report itself does

not explicitly claim the presence of recoverable resources, and despite administering the

islands for decades, Japan had restrained domestic survey companies conducting

exploratory missions until 2004. Perhaps most significantly however, despite then-

premier Zhou Enlai stating the catalyst to the dispute was oil, the timing was

inconsequential given the lack of technology available to even begin extracting said

oil.[573]

Updated estimates regarding potential energy reserves that have been made public

show a deflated outlook regarding the East China Sea. The US Energy Information

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[572] Not to be confused with military significance.
[573] Drifte, "The Japan-China:" 18.

Administration cites potential reserves of 1-2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. When

accounting for the equipment and construction of rigs necessary to extract this paltry

amount, the economic benefit is negligible.[574] By comparison, the Gulf of Mexico has

proven reserves of over 200 trillion cubic feet.

Fisheries remain a more clear-and-present target, though the likelihood of armed

conflict over fish is currently very low, despite the growing appetite of both nations.

Outside of concrete resources are diplomatic resources that are potentially afforded by

controlling the islands. The first of which is access to the various shipping lanes in the

region. The East China Sea is heavily trafficked by merchant vessels, and the sea lanes

see substantial movement each year which contributes greatly to the economy of the

region. Given the export-oriented nature of both nations and the significant trade cross-

borders, a disruption by one side can be highly damaging to the other. Some argue that

controlling the islands offers control over such shipping routes.[575] Given China's

penchant for economic retaliation, this has the potential to be a valuable prize. The sea-

lane proposal however is countered by the fact that control of the Senkaku Islands is not

necessary to gain access to the Pacific given their centrality in the East China Sea. This

stands in stark contrast to the Ryukyu island chain which serves as a true barrier between

the two bodies of water, affording more strategic importance.[576]

Finally, there is the question of overall economic need or urgency. Though I have

noted the relatively small quantity of oil more authoritative figures have given regarding

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[574] "East China Sea," *US Energy Information Administration,* 9/17/2014, available at:
https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/regions-of-interest/East_China_Sea.
[575] "China Warship Sails Near Japan-Controlled Islands," *BBC New* (January 11th, 2018). Available at:
https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42651067
[576] O'Shea, "How Economic:" 560.

the ECS seabed. If the need for oil was as dire as would be foreseen given the growing

Chinese economy and commensurate energy demands, as well as significant enough to

serve as catalyst for the dispute in the first place, calls for joint development of the fields

would have been accepted rather than scorned.[577] The lack of concretized measures

regarding available resources also stands against any claims that the island chains true

value is that of the 200 nautical mile sea boundary allowing for resource exploitation.

Given uncertainty as to what is actually available, urgency claimed by both sides is

dubious at best. Something is often better than nothing, and China's unwillingness to

accept a midway point, effectively splitting the East China Sea in half, also detracts from

the economic standpoint. Should this proposal be accepted by China, both the Japanese

and Chinese would have unfettered access within their own respective, slightly smaller,

exclusive economic zones.

Given the lack of empirical support for both military and economic uses of the

islands, theoretical explanations for the dispute would fill a necessary gap in the

literature. However, the recent (comparatively) occurrence of the crisis relative to other

cited diversionary events, the body of work surrounding the Senkaku Islands is actually

quite small, and questions abound whether or not this crisis fits the criteria of being

considered a diversion. According to Amy Oakes' diversionary criteria, this situation fits

all three hallmarks: a need to divert, an unwillingness or inability to respond to domestic

discontent, and a readily available target.[578] Nothing is said of initiation, and the fact that

the CCP responded to Japanese provocation actually has the tendency to act in their

[577] Roth, "Conflict Dynamics:" 52.
[578] Amy Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands," *Security Studies,* vol. 15, no. 3 (July-September 2006): 433.

favor, as China can make claims of responding to international bullying. Consistent with my definition and the broader literature is the desire to extract some sort of domestic utility out of a dispute, and not merely end it without damage. China's manipulation of the crisis aptly speaks to a desire to utilize the extant issue for political gain, regardless of initiation credit.

Taylor Fravel however is one of the few who directly responds to the diversionary thesis, arguing that it is inappropriate for the dispute with Japan. Through his analysis on Chinese territorial concessions, Fravel argues that the consistent pattern within the PRC thus far has been to compromise on disputed territory when faced with domestic unrest.[579] Given that the vast majority of Chinese territorial disputes were finalized in the period after the Communist party had won the Chinese mainland, this explanation takes institutional strength and capacity out of consideration. Given the war-weary, isolated status of the fledgling nation, compromise may not have been calculated, but necessary.[580]

Puzzlingly, he argues that diversionary explanations are inapplicable to the Senkaku islands case given their nationalistic importance. Additionally, he cites the strategic and economic value of the islands as further reinforcing China's course.[581] This explanation implies that the dispute in question would need to be settled to extract some sort of benefit, and a disruption or perhaps escalation of the status quo runs the risk of enflaming nationalist sentiment and potentially backfiring on the regime. Similar to his

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[579] M. Taylor Fravel, "Regime Insecurity:" 49-50, 81-82.
[580] M.T Fravel, "Explaining Stability in the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands Dispute*" in Gerald Curtis, Ryosei Kokubun and Wang Jisi eds., *Getting the Triangle Straight: Managing China–Japan–US Relations* (Tokyo, Japan Center for International Exchange, 2010): 144-164.
[581] Fravel, "Regime Insecurity:" 81-82.

temporal inconsideration, this too neglects the role of extant institutions. With the institutional capacity available to the CCP, careful manipulation of the crisis allows for the escalation and de-escalation of the issue as I have described, all the while managing potentially damaging backlash, while providing a clear target for public ire. In the meantime, as I have shown, the international crisis provides much needed cover for the regime as it played damage control after the revelation of apparent corruption in its highest offices.

In short, previous accounts of the dispute over the contested islands pay too much attention to the potential, though unproven endowment of natural resources, as well as overestimating the strategic value of actually administering the islands. Furthermore, temporality and institutional composition has been an unexplored avenue for the initiation of the dispute. Diversions are not merely attempted with no consideration, nor is the most convenient target or action necessarily the best one. This dispute illustrates the proper manipulation with a singular institutional goal in mind, with the CCP adeptly manipulating a diplomatic crisis through its considerable governing capacity, while reducing the chance of nationalist contagion, and strengthening the regime after a period of marked embarrassment. This underscores my argument that tangible strengthening or preservation is paramount in utilizing diversionary actions. I have demonstrated the publics close attention to potentially damaging information regarding the party, while further showing that such attention is diverted. This did little to assuage address the issues of corruption or nationalist fury, and it was only after the issues in question had been more-or-less resolved were the public once again allowed to converse relatively freely.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

Summation

This dissertation offers the diversionary tradition one of the first attempts at bridging the organizational constraints literature with the broader diversionary program, and subsequently linking it to discretionary behavior on the part of regimes with the comparative authoritarian literature. By broadening the discussion in a qualitative sense to nondemocratic regimes as opposed to democracies, or large N studies, I was able to ask and answer the question of "why?" Though the initial discussions regarding democracies offered us promise and logical consistency, these cases enjoyed certain privileges we do not have with authoritarian regimes. Scholars studying democracies can point to election results, polls or simply benefit from greater transparency in data collection than authoritarian scholars. Additionally, these tests often operationalized one type of benefit – electoral popularity, a metric rarely seen with some validity in various authoritarian states.

The discipline-wide and longstanding move towards quantitative testing has not clarified some of our most crucial questions diversionary behavior. Namely, the question of benefits. As I just noted, applicable benefits for democratic states do not have a real place within authoritarian regimes. However, quantitative studies are often content to include the external behavior of all states, broadly defined within their analysis. This

muddles the question of gains, as the appropriate metrics of success for one type of regime, are often incompatible with another. Therefore, these studies share the common similarity in that they concern themselves with the overall propensity to engage in foreign conflict being the point of interest.

Unfortunately, this has led the literature towards misleading conclusions as well as the reinforcement of various misconceptions. Scholars working in ways such as this operate under the assumption that all externals actions under periods of economic or domestic political distress are diversionary. This transcribes a uniformity of attention, utility, capability and priority across all regimes. This homogeneity has remained one of our largest roadblocks. The conflict datasets often referred to in this dissertation make note of hundreds or thousands of instances of external conflict, along with several dozen true wars. When controlled for potential domestic catalysts, we have potentially hundreds of instances of diversionary conflict. I note however that this population lacks properly specified controls for all observed states. All international actions under periods of domestic duress are considered diversionary actions, and the diversionary theory of war should be equally concerned with the question of *intentions*, not merely that of catalytic conditions.

This dissertation is unique in that it broadens our common understanding of what may constitute a diversions, outside of the theoretically described instance of war, while simultaneously narrowing this expanded field into the appropriate units of analysis. Regimes operate differently. They fear different scenarios, and their contingent capabilities to handle crises similarly differ. A crisis of cohesion may be an existential threat to a single-party regime, whilst a personalistic regime can thrive on, or even

encourage compartmentalization. Similarly speaking, a global economic crisis can push a personalistic dictator towards drastic solutions, while a single-party regime can bring to bear substantial resources to secure the state against further economic ruin. The question of institutional capability and institutional desires are inextricable.

The study of diversions has been treading water for some time now, and the lack of knowledge accumulation for a theory of such intuitive sense is frustrating to say the least. Instead of moving forward, moving back was the more prudent move in an attempt to finally codify and solidify what we know about the moving parts of this theory. This is why I have focused on autocratic regimes. The previous literature, for all its faults has done a fantastic job of formulating every possible hypothesis, hashing out all conceivable scenarios for democracies and potential diversionary behavior. While frustrating in that it had inhibited the study of all regimes while privileging the few, it was valuable in that several meaningful conclusions have been discovered and reaffirmed by the focus on democracies. Frustratingly, these findings have been misattributed to operate in a similar fashion within authoritarian states.

It was thus necessary for me to begin with a discussion as to how authoritarian states actually operate. How do we know one from another? Free and fair elections are a hallmark of democratic regimes, so it must persist that the lack thereof is an authoritarian mainstay. However, some are more oppressive than others. Civilians can have a greater or lesser role depending on the state. Politicians may be sidelined, or hold a greater level of power and influence across different states. In short, how do we know what kind of regime we're looking at? The answer lies in the way they operate, or rather the institutions they have to *rely* on to operate.

All external conflicts are not diversions, and so care has to be taken to tailor a particular external action to make best use of available resources, to better bolster or benefit the necessary ruling components. Diversions are pursued when reform, repair or repression are untenable. In this same vein, deliberately weakening integral institutions to address domestic grievances could spell disaster for the regime. An empirical analysis of the three main regime types allows for a mechanistic not only in regards to proper exploitation of a crisis, but also the way in which autocrats benefit from their preferred diversion. Preference of course implies a conscious decision, which is particularly relevant to diversionary studies in that the literature must evolve past the dogmatic call of war as the be-all, end-all of domestic ills. Even more pressing given the atheoretical inclusion of any and all types of "conflict" without so much as a lengthy discussion as to why they are part of various studies.

War, violence, death and destruction all still have a place within the diversionary war. Theory, even under intense scrutiny, does not so easily shed its initial precepts. Given the logical consistency regarding war and the rally effect, it is likely that war does have a place within nondemocratic regimes, but which, why and how are the pressing questions that have needed addressing. The analysis of Mao Zedong and the Second Taiwan Strait crisis offers some insight towards a satisfying answer. Personalistic regimes are unique in that there is an ungainly amount of political power invested within a single individual. This concentration of power is exceptional, even within authoritarian regimes. Oftentimes responsibilities delegated to entire political bodies are assumed by a single individual. Mao embodied the Sidious doctrine of "I am the senate." Because his status as cult-like ruler was largely unassailable for a large portion of his early tenure,

parts of the state could languish around him without a commensurate level of damage, as his personal influence was enough to stave off most disasters.

Only once his mystique had begun to tarnish did the cracks in the state begin to show in earnest, and as Mao's own personal power began to weaken, the similarly emaciated institutions around him were unable to pick up the slack so to speak, and a concerted effort to bolster the Chairman's image was a necessary undertaking for the fledgling Communist party. While personalist leaders are privileged in the lack of restraints on their temporal governance, with arbitrary and capricious applications of power as common as mood swings, they are disadvantaged in terms of diversionary strategies. Because the constituent institutions that are given an active role in other regimes are rubber stamps and placeholders in centralized autocracies, when the leader is weakened, latent institutional power cannot be relied upon to push through a crisis. In contrast to heavily institutionalized regimes with a great deal of societal penetration, singular leaders rely on centralization.

To cut through institutional and personal weakness, as well as widely disseminate the effects of a potential diversion in lieu of effective channels of communication, such regimes need to rely on the diversionary gold standard – war and violence. Large instances of violence require mass mobilization of huge segments of society. This in turn allows for the recentralization of the dictator during coordination and execution. Mao's tenuous position at the time dictated the use of violence to consolidate domestic control for a number of reasons. The first of course was that low-level actions offered neither the urgency nor spectacle necessary to foster a rejuvenation of his status. Institutions necessary to disseminate news of a diplomatic victory were weak or nonexistent, and the

peasantry had far bigger concerns. Diplomacy also sidelined the military, and the civilian advisors who would be privy to such talks were not afforded appropriate power to do their jobs, thus relegating the lion's share of the work towards Mao, whom had much to desire as a diplomat. Mere saber-rattling may have evoked more urgency, but the military could posture as it was, rather than how it needed to be, nor did the civilian population need to reorganize to support hypothetical conflict.

Attacking the islands of Jinmen and Mazu had everything. High visibility, societal costs, urgency and the need for efficient organization. The entire country was reminded of the presence of offshore existential enemies, the Chairman's status as wartime leader and the innate need to defend the hard-won mainland. Peasants needed to make sacrifices to support the nation in the coming uncertainty, the military had a distinct goal to rally behind, civilian institutions need clear leadership, and even the paramilitary forces under the People's Militia now had a justified role in tandem, rather than opposition to organized interests. This cocktail culminated once again into Mao reaffirming his status as the paramount leader, with all the rights and privileges therein.

War is risky however. Personalist dictatorships typically do not have ritualized modes of leadership replacement – they can expect to retain their office for life. If a change in leadership does occur, it's often from death, coup or outside intervention. Still, they are advantaged in that personalist dictators often do not exit the political stage in the event of a loss, offering some small insurance should violent diversions go south. In a military regime however, wherein a Junta behaves like a council, the Generals in charge may not need to fear the broader population should a diversion fail, but their equally power colleagues offer a credible check on the leader's actions. Because of this, a

spectacle, midway between diplomacy and violence, is best suited to benefit military Juntas.

As I note several times within this work, Junta's are rarely long-lasting. This is a deliberate choice by the ruling panel, as generals are often ill-suited to the rigors of political life, being suited more for the orderly discipline of the barracks. Diversions must be geared towards preserving or expanding the institutional strength of the military, rather than civilian sectors of the nation. This is due to the fact that even post-transition, should an alternate regime succeed the Junta, the military inevitably survives as a necessary component of the state. In fact, I doubt there is a single instance of a military being completely dismantled in a post-Junta society given their necessary existence in terms of security. Leadership has the potential to be purged, but the institution itself endures. The lesson here is clear – Junta's need to have an eye towards their future condition, not merely weather the present storm.

Galtieri and the invasion of the Falklands illustrates this point perfectly. The military, taking the reins of the state in an effort to stabilize Argentina in the face of a crushing economic crisis, found itself unable to properly reform the problematic segments of the civilian government. Lousy economists with lacking diplomatic skills, Galtieri and the Junta could not risk experimenting with reform in order to rejuvenate the nation. Diversionary actions thus needed to engage the necessary ruling segments of society, while retaining the lion's share of institutional strength given the pattern of coup and transition. Should a transition actually occur, Galtieri sought to construct an environment both friendly and conducive to the militaries continued status. Additionally, having the beloved armed forces on his side would undoubtedly be a boon towards his

own political career, as he himself and aspirations of participating in a new democratic government.

Taking the Falklands via military force short of violence or warfare was a panacea to all of the Junta's concerns. Though the economy was a looming issue, this was a job to be solved by a forthcoming administration, especially given the failures the Junta had run into in attempting to foster growth since 1976. Unable to effectively negotiate ownership of the islands through diplomacy, and unwilling to overtly court war with a great power, a bloodless seizure of the islands gave the military its coveted diversion, without undue risk. The ambition was to seize the islands, ensure the vast majority of military resources be retained, and then bring the UK back to the bargaining table from an advantaged position. In the event of a successful seizure, the future looked bright. Galtieri would have granted the Argentinian people a victory over the stain of British colonialism, his forces would have a cohesionary goal to strive for and the residual popularity he would have won would carry over into his hypothetical career in civilian politics. Additionally, the tension created by the seizure, properly orchestrated would necessitate a greater role for the military within a democratic administration, and would likely result in expanded resources as the armed forces continued to safeguard Argentina's new prize.

The flaw in Galtieri's plan was that he underestimated the importance attached to the Falklands on the part of the UK, perhaps misinterpreting the slowness of their negotiations for apathy in regards to ownership. As the UK and Argentina engaged in the Falklands war, the Junta rapidly began to unravel before the British onslaught, with the military itself quickly returning to the barracks in disgrace after defeat. Their career in

politics over, with their institutional strength shaken so much that even conciliatory diplomacy after their gambit being both impossible and useless.

When an autocratic regime is highly institutionalized however, they have a larger toolbox of potential strategies at their disposal, with the sheer societal penetration and resources at their disposal allowing for unparalleled monitoring and response capabilities. These situations are found in single-party regimes. Given their comprehensive control over all aspects of state governance, they are able to adeptly manipulate crises for political ends with greater ease than their other nondemocratic counterparts. The CCP under Hu Jintao most adequately mirrors this situation, with the Senkaku islands dispute, a low-level diplomatic row, being operationalized for benefits far beyond the significance of the islands.

As I note several times during this analysis, the overt value of the disputed Senkaku islands are dubious at best from both a strategic and economic standpoint. Scholars do agree somewhat on their symbolic value, but to what end and how this struggle is operationalized given the differing domestic constituencies offers some difficult variation to reconcile. When the institutional strength of the CCP is considered however, the picture becomes clearer. War is unlikely to occur over the islands given their low value and relative strength of both participants (not to mentions the US wildcard), but outside of structural concerns, there is far more value from the Chinese standpoint as a diplomatic target to repeatedly exploit.

With the level of societal penetration the CCP has enjoyed, they are able to carefully cultivate and disseminate appropriate narratives that are deemed necessary or beneficial for society. In addition to these psychological orchestrations, intimate control

over all aspects of the civilian sector, and unity amongst the central government allows

for comparatively small issues to be interpreted as matters of grave national importance.

This level of institutional power similarly affords the party the ability to shelf and

unshelve the issue should domestic concerns ever dictate a distraction. This is exactly

what the CCP has done each time some type of vulnerability has been exposed within the

central party. Given their status as, and desire to be seen as a stable monolith, weakness

in the center represents a grave threat to their continued role as sole legitimate party of

the PRC. This image must be carefully cultivated and preserved through any means

necessary.

While true damage to the image of the CCP did occur throughout the Bo Xilai and

pre-transition periods of communist rule, the party was adeptly able to demonstrate to the

population that the government remained strong and committed to their role as shield

against outside forces. Though the tensions with Japan were highly manageable and

often deliberately misinterpreted to the public, the CCP could control the narrative, news

flows and uniquely tailor the message towards the masses while working diligently to

repair any substantive damage behind the scenes. In a sense, single-party regimes are

unique amongst nondemocratic states in that their diversions operate most closely to the

true definition of "diversion."

Caveats, Limitations and the Path Forward

While I would argue this dissertation is ambitious and offers a modest contribution to the diversionary literature, I do not overestimate the importance of this work. I do not propose a new theory in this dissertation, though I do offer both new theoretical interpretations, while proposing and elaborating upon highly-debated theoretical propositions. The question of benefits, choice, diversionary strategy and capable actors have long plagued the literature and contributed to large debates, but disagreement abounds and the lack of knowledge accumulation is unsettling. By concretizing questions such as who is capable of diversionary behavior, what these actions look like, why is there such variation and how do interchangeable states hope to benefit from a given strategy offer scholars an empirical path towards theory testing, construction and affirmation.

Many of the limitations inherent in this dissertation are due to my choice of method. I have already noted the issue of generalization regarding process-tracing and case studies, but given my goal of affirming my theoretical propositions and utilization of maximal or typical cases regarding authoritarian governance, some generalization regarding the constituent mechanisms can be ascertained from my case studies, though to be doubly sure, more empirical work needs to be conducted per ideal-type. Due to the constraints of this dissertation and the sheer variation within cases, I was unable to qualitatively test a universe, or even group of like-cases, but with my theoretical footing is firmer due to this work, I hope to either contribute to, or test myself further cases along the chosen regime types.

This work also does not concern itself with frequency. While the propensity to engage in a given type of diversion along state-lines is undoubtedly an interesting and

important question, and could very well benefit some work within the diversionary tradition, I have strived to distance my work away from the frequentist model, as generalizability in terms of propensity does not necessarily equal propensity to divert. As I have said previously, not all instances of external conflict, both armed and diplomatic are to be considered diversionary. Even when disputes are controlled for things like preceding economic degradation or increasing domestic unrest, a relevant question needs to be asked as to whether or not these problems are grave enough to warrant diversionary behavior. Can the state weather these ills? Is their institutional strength capable of addressing these problems sans international strife? Generalizability in terms of initiated conflicts has been an integral part of the diversionary literature for over 30 years, but we have reached several points of stagnation. A frequentist approached tempered with theoretical explanations of variation and diversionary hallmarks allows for a much richer and satisfying explanation of diversionary behavior. If anything, this criticism is a call to arms for a mixed-approach, synthesizing mathematical rigor, with mechanistic explanation with the hopes that the two theoretical traditions can one day be reconciled in a way that does not arouse such disjointed debate.

Finally, I must make note of the overall character of my work here. Despite the didactic and seemingly compartmentalized nature of this dissertation given the inconvertibility of regime-types, I do not regard my model and overall explanations as static, immovable as they seem. A proper test of my diversionary propositions would dictate a similarly rigorous empirical study of states in transition, and unfortunately my dissertation has been limited in terms of time and resources. The field itself is limited by cases that would offer the same level of control, with variation only being exhibited in

terms of institutional priority. However, there are some promising contemporary cases

begging future study. For instance, I make note of excluding the most recent

developments within the Senkaku Islands dispute under Xi Jinping's administration given

the proposed move in the more personalist direction observed by me and many China

hands. However, this offers a fantastic opportunity to observe a diversion in transition

given the same issue, same opponent, same (relative, though this is certainly debatable)

strength of both parties, with the only thing changing as China's method of governance.

This is a case I hope to analyze in the future, and perhaps explore the idea of a

diversionary continuum in future work. Promising cases have also emerged in regards to

the political developments seen most recently in Turkey under Erdogan as well, another

instance of proposed transition I wish to analyze in the future.

Overall it is my ambition that this dissertation shed more light on how

authoritarian regimes can divert externally just like their rich and democratic

counterparts, albeit with variation in terms of accrued benefits and strategy, and hopefully

breaking the outdated notion of success in war as a one-size-fits-all panacea to domestic

problems. This has had the added benefit of responding to enduring call from long ago

that actions short of war be given an equal seat at the analytic table. In so doing, my

work provides a roadmap not only to assessing the validity of cases cited as diversionary,

but also a metaphorical checklist of sorts for future work. This inclusion of alternate

diversions and authoritarian regimes helps to move the diversionary literature away from

its status as theoretically fixated on warfare, towards building an overall theory of

diversionary theory of foreign policy.

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