

*Strong State, Smart State: The Rise of Public Opinion in China's Japan Policy*

JAMES REILLY

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Many have claimed that public opinion affects Chinese foreign policy-making, but have they really established causality or a nuanced understanding of Chinese responses to popular pressures? In *Strong State, Smart State* James Reilly provides convincing evidence and more: the book lays out an innovative conceptual framework that can be applied to the study of Chinese foreign policy and state–society relations alike.

Reilly argues that China undergoes cycles of public mobilization, typically coming in four stages. The wave usually begins with a small event that quickly picks up in speed and mass, consisting of a rise of political activism, sensationalist media content, and shifts in public opinion observed by political leaders. During the second stage the state responds to this wave of public mobilization by either tolerating the expression of public opinion or repressing it, but if it grows, public pressure has the potential to influence foreign policy, leading to a third stage. Five avenues of impact are possible, including limiting the policy options under consideration, affecting negotiating strategy, shaping official rhetoric and public debate over policy, and affecting the timing and direction of specific policy choices. The wave ends with repression and persuasion of political activism by the state.

To study these dynamics, Reilly carefully traces shifts in public opinion, media content, and state responses on China's policy towards Japan over time, addressing the most important alternative explanation that Japan's policy towards China influences Chinese foreign policy outcomes. In a brilliant conceptual move he relaxes methodological constraints regarding the representativeness and reliability of the data. Assuming the perspective of the Chinese leadership, he defines public opinion as "effective public opinion" that is publicly expressed and channelled to the central leadership by means of public opinion surveys, political activism, and commercialized media (pp. 27–29). While the book explores data from public opinion surveys, it draws on these results to explore the kinds of survey data, "accurate or not," that are incorporated into the policy-making process in China (p. 29). Reilly complements survey data with a rich variety of unique sources and material, including in-depth interviews with Chinese activists, academics and policy-makers, Japanese scholars, officials and business people, scholarly and internal (*neibu*) publications, as well as quantitative and qualitative content analysis of media reporting.

The above conceptualization of public opinion has important implications for the conclusions drawn from the study. While appropriate to test most hypotheses, it is not entirely consistently applied throughout the book. Reilly pulls together aggregate results from various media sources and surveys to draw confident conclusions about representativeness and causal relationships based on trends over time. Ultimately, however, it remains unclear whether these data can dispute existing research that point into other directions.

Having said that, Reilly's overall argument does not require any claims about representativeness. From the perspective of effective public opinion we can claim that public opinion surveys, even if not representative, *create the impression amongst the leadership* that it is the combination of repression and persuasion that is effective

in appeasing an angry public. If the Chinese leadership accepts those data as truthful information about public opinion, it is important to study trends in such data.

More broadly, the book's strength lies in two important contributions to the scholarly discussion in Chinese studies. First, the conceptual framework termed "responsive authoritarianism" in the book has implications for the study of state–society relations in China. This term was first used by Robert Weller in *Political Change in China: Comparisons with Taiwan*, edited by Bruce Gilley and Larry Diamond (Lynne Rienner, 2008, pp. 117–33) to describe the tension between the provision of societal feedback and the threat of social disorder and authoritarian collapse. Reilly uses the term to describe similar dynamics, whereby balance between toleration and control of societal forces strengthens the legitimacy of authoritarian rule. Responsive authoritarianism reflects a broader trend among scholars of state–society relations to acknowledge that patterns of liberalization and control can co-exist, and that state and societal forces can mutually reinforce each other.

Most importantly, the book refutes common assumptions that anti-Japanese protests are initiated by the Chinese state. Instead, popular pressure arose primarily due to external events and unpredictable developments inside China, whereby toleration of popular mobilization played an enabling role. Reilly convincingly shows that societal forces influence foreign policy-making in China, and maybe even authoritarian regimes more broadly.

This is an important book that I expect to be cited in many years to come. Readers interested in nationalism, foreign politics and state–society relations may particularly enjoy reading this book.

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*The Politics of Community Building in Urban China*

THOMAS HEBERER and CHRISTIAN GÖBEL

London and New York: Routledge, 2011

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*The Politics of Community Building in Urban China* is empirically rich and theoretically well grounded. To my knowledge, it is the first book-length treatment of the changing nature of urban governance in China. It joins a growing body of literature in Chinese politics that tries to understand how the Chinese party-state adopts different kinds of governance techniques, including seemingly neo-liberal methods of governance, in order to maintain its legitimacy and social stability. The book makes an important contribution, not only to the study of urban politics in the field of Chinese politics, but also to comparative studies of governance and community elsewhere in the world.

Heberer and Göbel argue that the recent Chinese leadership's efforts at community-building have succeeded in increasing the "infrastructural power" of the party-state, but have failed to lighten its burden. The main reason for the failure of the latter goal is that community self-governance is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means to an end, namely the regime's stability. Thus, it is not surprising that the empirical findings of the book suggest that urban residents do not find participation and self-governance all that meaningful. The authors conducted semi-structured