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COLLECTIVE ACTION AGAINST CHINA

Anne Clayton

The focus of this article addresses the issues as to why collective action on the part of important states in the international arena has not been a viable option for encouraging China to enforce international human rights standards following the Tiananmen Square massacre. Government leaders are vulnerable to domestic pressures and pursue policies in accordance with their current self-interest. Therefore, the failure of collective enforcement of human rights standards in China is due to self-interested motivations on the part of government leaders. To support this conclusion, analyzes of empirical evidence from four states including the United States, Japan, France, and the Netherlands are provided.

INTRODUCTION

In June of 1989, the Chinese government cracked down on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square, killing, according to official Chinese government statistics, at least three hundred unarmed protestors.1 Citizens throughout the world were appalled by this display of repression, and many states felt a need to respond to the abuse.2 As human rights have increasingly become a part of foreign policy for many states, traditional power and security relationships have been altered. Human rights may be encouraged by governments through economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure, or, in extreme cases, through military intervention. In the wake of the Tiananmen Square massacre, many states, including the U.S., Japan, and most European countries, placed economic sanctions on China in protest of the abuses. However, as time passed, governments began to re-instate normal trade relations with China, despite a lack of marked improvement in the human rights situation. This poses several questions for observers. First, why was collective action against China, manifest through sanctions and condemnations, not effective in promoting improvement in the human rights situation? Second, what motivates states to pursue certain foreign policies and then to reverse their policies without first achieving their aims? I argue that government leaders are vulnerable to domestic pressures and will pursue policies in accordance with those pressures they perceive to be most salient and most critical to their self-interest at the time. Therefore, the failure of collective enforcement of human rights standards in China in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square incident is due to self-interested motivations of government leaders, not simply power or security relationships. Leaders support or defect from supporting policies against China according to their perceived self-interests. This explains why state policies towards China, in light of its consistent human rights abuses, have been so varied over time. Through analyzing the policies of the United States, Japan, France, and the Netherlands towards China since the Tiananmen Square incident, I will demonstrate how their choices have been determined largely by perceived government interests and how identity may play a role in human rights support.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The failure to collectively push China to uphold human rights standards is explained by analyzing both collective action theory and perceived government interests. Democratic governments are subject to many domestic pressures. Because government leaders are essentially rational actors, they will succumb to the pressures that they perceive as most important to their aims. Particularly in democratic states, leaders feel compelled to respond to these pressures so as to maintain legitimacy and promote their political survival. Concepts of political survival and legitimacy determine leaders’ interests and will, therefore, influence their policy making. Leaders will make foreign policy decisions by choosing what they perceive as the best option among the available alternatives, given the political/institutional environment. State’s policy choices may vary over time because they reflect the varying pressures that leaders feel. Domestic pressures may come from constituents, lobbyists, or the overall political climate. Transnational actors are also able to influence states and leaders through persuasion and socialization using techniques such as information gathering, citizen/government education methods, and leverage politics. When these transnational actors are unsuccessful in encouraging states to engage in certain policies, this may be either due to ineffective framing of the issue as being part of the interest or simply that other interests posed to the governments have taken precedence. Whether it is in response to domestic or international pressure, government leaders act according to the most salient issues that affect their perceived interests.

The identity of the state, or state self-image, plays a significant role in determining whether or not states will respond to human rights pressures. States have certain identities which government leaders seek to maintain and are generally supported by public opinion. Virtually all states maintain a self-image that reflects attitudes towards political values and processes. The self-image or identity emerges out of the domestic political culture, and this identity will largely determine state aspirations and policy preferences and often will affect choices of decision makers. States will participate in human rights regimes to the extent that their self-image requires this emphasis over others. As the state identity encompasses human rights, leaders must choose policies that conform to that identity in order to legitimize their rule. On the other hand, state identity may be reflected in values that conflict with human rights, such as economic values. Additionally, there may exist conflicting identities within one state, which is demonstrated quite aptly by the U.S. and its varying policies. The dynamics of state identity will be discussed in relation to each of the chosen cases and their corresponding identities.

Other theories have been advanced to explain the same phenomena in the international sphere. Realist theories argue that international responses to human rights abuses have been weak because powerful states are not concerned with the enforcement of these rights. According to realist theory, states are also considered rational actors, but their overall goals are concerned only with power relationships and the stability of the state. In that case, human rights would be of concern only to powerful states if they threatened to undermine stability or security. Therefore, the inefficacy of other states enforcing human rights in China results from powerful states determining that the issue does not play a major part in their own security or self-interest. Only if the situation led to instability in the balance of power would states determine enforcement and intervention to be prudent. This theory, however, does not sufficiently explain why so many states did, in fact, initially enforce economic sanctions against China in response to the Tiananmen Square massacre and have continued to push for U.N. resolutions condemning China for several years after.

Another argument to explain the state actions taken towards China may include ideas of economic dependency. That is, the states most dependent on China economically are most likely to defect from collective action. However, in reviewing trade statistics between China and the four states considered in this study, I found little evidence to support this hypothesis. Japan and China demonstrated a significant trade relationship, which is to be expected. The only other state that showed China as one of the leading trade partners between 1989 and 1997 was the United States. In order to lend substantial support to this hypothesis, it would be necessary that a significant trade relationship be documented between China and France, the second state in this study to completely abandon collective action. Therefore, I reject this hypothesis according to the lack of conclusive evidence.

Despite the enforcement of sanctions against China, this attempt at collective action was unsuccessful. After only a short time of economic sanctions, states began to repeal the economic restrictions before China had made any improvements in its human rights situation. Japan was the first state to
end its aid suspension in July of 1990, and most other countries followed Japan’s lead. By 1993, nearly all governments had resumed normal trade relations with China while still verbally criticizing its human rights record. Governments began to view their interests changing with respect to China, and their policies corresponded to those changes.

The power in collective action strategies lies in the unified behaviors of actors, which provides sufficient pressure on those targeted to force them to undertake the desired changes. When the front becomes disunified, however, through defectors or divisions, the strategy loses its persuasive abilities as the targeted party is provided with additional options for action where they were once restricted. Collective action presupposes rationality for a group. Actors behave in a rational fashion when they weigh the available alternatives and choose the options which best serve their interests. Therefore, it is not surprising that members of these groups, if truly rational, may weigh their own interests too heavily to cooperate in a collective sense. Moreover, in any collective behavior where actors make sacrifices to achieve an end, the prisoner’s dilemma looms as a challenge to overcome. If the collective good is not achieved, the benefits of participation will not outweigh the costs, and thus actors may be weary of participation or may defect in pursuit of individual interests.

In the case of China, states such as Japan and France defected from the sanctions, which allowed China alternative trade partners and allowed it to more easily ignore the pressures from those states continuing with the negative trade policies. It served the economic interests of the defector states as it provided them with economic rewards at the expense of those states continuing with the punitive policies, as the trade between the countries increased greatly and important business relations were established. Finally, it allowed China to play actors against each other for its own gains with little incentive to continue with the negative economic policies towards China. As the collective action strategy broke down, the remaining sanctions enforcers were left with few incentives to continue with their policies, and thus, the interest of those governments also began to change. Therefore, the actions of the first defectors also altered the interests of the remaining states.

While arguments may be made that even the defector states continue to encourage human rights standards in China, even if only through different methods such as economic liberalization, they are, nonetheless, still motivated by domestic government interests. In other words, the government leaders’ perceptions on how to best enforce human rights in China change according to the policies that the leaders perceive to be in their interest. It is the leaders’ self-interest that determines whether or not to participate in collective action and largely guides foreign policy.

THE UNITED STATES

The United States has pursued inconsistent policies towards China since the Tiananmen Square massacre, which have been manifest by placing sanctions against China, only to later grant Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, and a continuation of condemnation through United Nations resolutions. Why has the U.S. policy towards China been so inconsistent? The answer to this question lies in the interests of American leaders and their attempt to pursue policies that best serve their interests. Their interests may be served through various means that must be balanced and prioritized in policy choices and decision making. Analyzing the U.S. response to the Tiananmen Square incident demonstrates this.

Following the Tiananmen Square massacre, the United States (along with many other Western countries) was quick to place sanctions on China to demonstrate support for democracy. The very essence of the massacre contradicted the American image and ideal of a democratic and freedom-loving country. The domestic population, as well as citizens of other nations, was outraged at the scenes it saw on the news and anti-China protests sprung up in many large cities throughout the world. American leaders felt compelled to respond through punitive measures, and President George Bush was the first major world leader to condemn the 1989 crackdown in China. It was in the interests of the American leaders to take such actions so as to represent the general public sentiment and embody those American values. Concepts of democracy and freedom form an integral part of the American identity and Americans saw these values violated through the massacres of pro-democracy demonstrators in China. However, when these values were not being threatened so directly and visually, government interests shifted to other priorities, particularly economic concerns. Interestingly, the shift of American government leaders to support economic engagement rather than economic punishment correlates greatly to American public opinion on this matter, as well as pressure from interest groups.

Prior to 1989, overall public opinion towards China was growing increasingly warm, following the
Cold War distrust, but this changed in light of the massacre. Public opinion polls show a severe drop in the numbers of those who held favorable opinions of China following the Tiananmen Square massacre. Moreover, those favorability ratings also corresponded to sharp increases in public support for pursuing human rights in foreign policy as a major objective. However, public opinion generally rises and falls with major events or crises, and as memories of the Tiananmen Square massacre generally subsided, other interests took precedence in American foreign policy. Public opinion is indicative of government decisions regarding foreign and trade policy towards China. In the height of distrust and resentment of the American public, government leaders sharply criticized human rights abuses. As the outraged of the public ebbed, government policies towards China turned to those of engagement through economic liberalization and trade.

Several active interest groups were also working to influence U.S. policy towards China. Following the Tiananmen Square massacre, business groups were very reluctant to lobby for trade relations with China because of the negative outlash of public opinion and media coverage of the incident. As time wore on, however, both the general public and businesses began to recognize the importance of the Chinese market, and businesses began mobilizing to lobby for trade with China. In addition to U.S. business groups and trade associations, American and Hong Kong Chambers of Commerce, Hong Kong-hired law firms and consulting groups, and even the Chinese government worked to lobby the U.S. in favor of profitable trade relations with China. These groups were effective in framing the issues in a manner consistent with government leaders’ interests, whereas opposing groups experienced difficulty mobilizing resources and presenting a unified front in order to frame the issues within the constructs of those interests.

The nature of the United States government helps to explain why interests perceived by government leaders may change. The U.S. government is elected democratically, which leaves candidates and incumbents at the mercy of voters to gain or maintain leadership. If Americans are dissatisfied with some aspect of government policy, they have a natural tendency to vote against the incumbent party. Therefore, government decisions will largely reflect the influence of domestic forces, whether they are public opinion, or interest groups, as these groups will affect the interests of leaders. The main interest of leaders is to retain or gain power; therefore, they will be that which will help them to achieve this. Therefore, shifting interests and policies may occur according to those things that best suit their needs, whether this includes economic concerns or promoting the national identity.

The American national identity is deeply rooted in the founding of the country. The original settlers often came to America in search of political, religious, or economic freedom. The founders of America saw this country as unique and morally superior to other nations from the beginning. While this may serve as a glorified, and perhaps a sometimes skewed view of reality, it has been deeply ingrained in the American psyche. As time passed, U.S. leaders advanced ideologies that reflected the ideal of the United States as a champion of freedom, democracy, and rights, the U.S. serving as a shining example to all other countries throughout the world. This is evident in statements from American presidents such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, who declared, “We are fighting today for security, for progress, and for peace, not only for ourselves but for all men, not only for one generation but for all generations.” More recently, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stated, “The American public has clearly understood the importance of standing up for sound principles and continues to take the lead in promoting freedom, democracy, and security at home and throughout the world. That is in America’s interest. It reflects the kind of people we are, and it is right.” The national identity has led to both involvement and isolation in international affairs; it is a force that government leaders must face when determining policy options.

President Bush’s original condemnation of China was in line with the national identity, but then other issues took precedence. Bush worked to promote positive trade relations with China as business interests grew and perceptions of the Chinese market became increasingly favorable, and he sought to justify these actions through concepts of engagement as promoting human rights. President Bush stated, “No nation on earth has discovered a way to import the world’s goods and services while stopping foreign ideas at the border.” And in 1991, Secretary of State James Baker said that cutting trade relations with China would “dismantle our leverage.” In other words, the Bush administration promoted trade as...
a means of encouraging China to achieve democracy and human rights standards.

Although the Clinton administration criticized Bush's dealings with China on human rights, claiming that more needed to be done, the new administration's policies soon closely resembled those of Bush. In fact, Clinton's rhetoric eventually changed to support engagement of China. In 1997, after renewing China's MFN status, Bill Clinton stated, "I believe if we were to revoke normal trade status it would cut off our contact with the Chinese people and undermine our influence with the Chinese Government." Through this means, the Clinton administration was able to best serve its interests by framing human rights support in a manner consistent with business interests. Concepts of economic liberalization emerged as one way in which government leaders could combine the two variables of human rights and economic interests into the overall perceived government interests. In this manner, leaders could pursue pro-business policies, while still maintaining ideas congruent with the national image of a democracy and human rights supporting nation. Thus, they were able to maintain business interest support as well as legitimacy in terms of the American national identity. If human rights can be linked to self-interest or somehow support that self-interest, then it is possible to build wide support for them in policy. Through this means, these leaders were able to gain broad support rather than be pressured by more radical pro-human rights organizations.

Non-governmental human rights organizations (NGOs) and networks serve to influence political leaders (or the public who in turn influence political leaders) only when they are sufficiently able to frame human rights issues in a manner that supercedes other interests. They must frame them so that they are perceived to be part and parallel to the other pursued interests. For example, the case of the United States sanctioning China following the Tiananmen Square massacre was framed in such a manner that condemning China was affiliated with promoting democracy and freedom throughout the world. However, these NGOs failed to sufficiently influence either the public or the government at later times when the issues were framed along the lines of economic liberalization as a means of achieving improved human rights practices.

Overall, collective action between the United States and other Western powers in response to China's human rights abuses was unsuccessful in its attempts to bring about change, mainly because coordinated actions were limited by self-interest. Following the 1989 massacre, the G-7 allies developed a common position in terms of restricting arms exports to China, as well as international bank lending and setting limitations on senior-level diplomatic exchanges. In June of 1990, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Solomon said, "Solidarity between the Western countries on this position has sent a powerful message to the Chinese leadership." However, business interests eventually reigned supreme in light of China's protests and threats regarding economic matters. None of the Western powers, including the United States, was willing to end MFN status for China as that would have put them at a great economic disadvantage, unless done so collectively. In his argument to grant MFN to China, Richard Solomon declared, "United States firms that have worked hard over the last 10 years to develop business ties and a market share in China would lose that business perhaps permanently to other suppliers mainly from Europe and Japan. No other Western country is planning to deny China MFN status . . . it would eliminate a key means of influencing China in the direction of reform." As this statement demonstrates, there existed a fear of losing opportunities by engaging in unilateral action, and collective action was uncertain. By engaging in collective action, the likelihood of influencing policies through leverage is increased, but the United States was weary of the commitment on the part of other states to participate. The U.S. leaders did not deem promotion of human rights in China through disciplinary economic measures to be in their interest, as other options such as engagement theories were available, which both supported economic considerations and maintained the national identity.

JAPAN

Japanese–Sino relations carry a different tone than do those of any other state that invoked sanctions against China. Japan has special interests in China for several reasons. First, the two countries are culturally similar and they have a long history of trade and cultural interactions. The geographical proximity of the two countries adds an important dimension to the Sino–Japanese equation. China looms as a potential geopolitical threat, and the Japanese want to integrate China as much as possible into the international arena as a stable partner so as to minimize the threat that it poses. Moreover, economics are an important factor in their relationship. Regional economic stability and integration will
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improve relations and reduce the threat of China by making it a responsible power with vested interests in maintaining the stability of the system. In addition, this would provide lucrative opportunities for Japanese investors and businesses. A stable geo-political environment leads to better financial endeavors as businesses and investors have more confidence. Because of these important issues, Japan also reacted to the Tiananmen Square massacre in a different manner than did many of its allies.

In order to understand the interests of the Japanese government, it is important to first understand the governing structure. The Japanese governing structure is set forth in the 1947 Constitution, which was essentially imposed upon the Japanese people by the United States at the end of its occupation of Japan. Constitutionally, the Japanese system greatly resembles the British system in that the Diet (parliament) is composed of two houses, the lower house being more powerful, with the executive power lying mostly with the Cabinet and prime minister. In practice, however, the ruling party, the bureaucracy, and interest groups have largely merged together to constitute the main feature of Japanese governance. Therefore, government decision making is greatly affected by the influence these groups are able to assert on the government leaders.

Analyzing the interaction of these groups in policy making helps observers to better understand the perceived government interests. Because of the close relationship between the bureaucracy, businesses, and the government, governmental policies largely reflect the interests of these combined groups. In order for the ruling party to maintain leadership in the government, they must choose policies which appease the desires of these powerful domestic groups. "Money is the lubricant which oils the Japanese political machine, and every . . . Diet member needs money by the suitcase full, in order to preserve his or her (usually his) standing and ensure re-election." Where does this money come from? Most of the money that funds the political machine comes from businesses, which are often guided by the bureaucracy. Thus, it lies in the interest of the political parties to pursue policies that serve business interests so that those members of the Diet may receive the necessary financial support to be re-elected.

However, at times, other interests may be perceived as salient for the government to pursue, even when they are contrary to the desires of the business groups. In the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square massacre, economic sanctions against China did not serve the Japanese economic interest. Although Japan initially engaged in sanctions against China, it was mainly due to pressures from Japan's allies, particularly the United States. At this point, the government's economic interests were overshadowed by security and strategic interests and the importance of maintaining positive relations with its allies by showing its support of such values as freedom and democracy. Japan works to cultivate its economic power as well as cooperation with the West. Had Japan not responded to the massacre with some punitive actions, the government would have faced major criticism from abroad and perhaps domestically. Moreover, national identity issues also had an important impact upon the minds of Japanese leaders.

To understand why Japan initially imposed sanctions, it is important to look at the national identity that Japanese leaders hold, which largely made it susceptible to its allies' influences. Japan generally sees itself as an advanced economic and political partner with Western nations, as well as an Asian leader. Japanese leaders have repeatedly stated that they are committed to pursuing common values with Western countries, such as democracy and human rights. These commitments demonstrate the saliency of liberal values in the Japanese national identity. Japanese leaders felt compelled, particularly when pressure was applied by their allies, to uphold those stated commitments. The nature of the national identity is such that political embarrassment is liable to prompt policy changes. Initially, Japanese Prime Minister Uno responded to the massacre by stating on 6 June 1989, "In essence, we are not thinking about taking punitive actions." The following day, however, the Japanese government did freeze aid to China in response to foreign and domestic critics.

It was Japan, however, that first repealed the sanctions, beginning with an end to its aid moratorium and finally by removing all sanctions by the end of 1990. This reversal in policy can be explained in light of the diminished pressure by its allies as well as perceived ruling elite interests.

Japan's actions lie in both perceived strategic interests as well as economic interests. Japan, in addition to cutting its own sanctions, worked to end the sanctions by other states as well. Strategically, Japan perceived an isolated China as dangerous and desired to integrate them into regional relationships. The lack of interdependence leaves few restraints on a potentially aggressive country and this could be destabilizing economically as well as in terms of power relationships. In addition, beginning in the 1970s,
China emerged as a great economic market with considerable potential. Economic opportunities with China were great, and Japanese firms and the government leaders wanted to ensure that they were able to take advantage of this as much as possible. Because of the government/business relationship, the government leaders' perceived interest paralleled that of domestic business pressures.

Therefore, government leaders' interests, defined in terms of economic and strategic interests, are served by economic integration with China rather than isolation. Because of overriding concerns for regional stability, which would affect financial situations as well as security, and potential economic ventures, Japanese officials defined their interests as continuing positive economic relations with China. These interests were largely influenced by the bureaucratic and business interests exerting their influence through interdependent relationships.

The action that Japan took in terms of ending its sanctions towards China is significant in the effect that it had on the collective action strategies to pressure China to improve its human rights record. Japan was the first to end sanctions, doing so in 1990, and in the space of only a few years, nearly all of the remaining states followed Japan's lead. China had emerged as a very important and promising market, and the Japanese economic interests prevailed. Other states were not willing to allow that market to be bypassed because of human rights issues. The concept of the prisoners' dilemma, where those states that defected would benefit from the enormous economic opportunities took hold and incentives to continue with sanctions rapidly diminished. Moreover, the efficacy of the sanctions diminished with each defector, as it allowed China additional avenues in pursuing economic goals and displayed disunity among the actors that China could use to play the actors against each other. Therefore, Japan was the beginning of the end of a successful collective action strategy against China.

FRANCE

For France, the most significant turning point in collective action against China was in 1997 when France declared that it would not support the United Nations' resolution condemning human rights abuses in China. France, as part of the European Union, had backed resolutions condemning China for its human rights policy each year since the Tiananmen Square massacre. However, beginning in late 1994, France began to turn from its critical stance. In June of 1994, China's minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation sponsored activities in France to solicit trade and investment and expressed the hope that France would compete to gain a share of the Chinese market. France moved even further from condemnation of China when, in early 1997, it engaged in two significant gestures to improve its trade relations with China. The first was the blocking of resolution in the European Union that would condemn China's human rights abuses, and the second was President Jacques Chirac's diplomatic visit to China.

Analyzing developments within the French government lends understanding to why France backed away from the condemning of China for human rights abuses. France is a parliamentary democracy, with three main branches including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. As part of the executive branch, the president serves as the head of state and manages foreign affairs. The president also appoints a prime minister who, as the head of the government, manages its daily operations and appoints a cabinet of ministers. Due to the democratic nature of the French government, as with the other countries discussed, it behooves the government leaders to choose policies that will gain support for their re-election. Therefore, we can assume that the interests of government leaders are to maintain their rule, or at least their party rule, through the next elections. Those methods that help leaders to achieve this, such as economic or foreign policies, are then conceived to be in their self-interest.

One of the greatest looming domestic challenges for French leaders in recent years has been the economy, in which economic policies have been constrained by the increasing interdependence of the European states. In 1993, France signed the Maastricht Treaty, which called for certain economic reforms to be made in the process of European monetary unification. In fact, for France to abide by European Monetary Union (EMU) criteria, several austerity measures would have to be increased, including deregulation and greater competition in the public sectors, as well as privatization of certain utilities. This had the potential to place great strain on an already struggling economy.

As French economic policies have been somewhat restricted by the European integration in monetary policies, other areas, such as international trade, have been targeted as areas in which policies can be made that favor the French economy. In April of 1994, French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur had traveled to China in hopes of developing better
trade relations with that country; however, his attempts proved unsuccessful. Instead, Chinese officials mainly insulted Balladur for meddling in human rights issues. From this point onwards, French criticism towards China was curbed. With a quelling of criticism about Chinese human rights violations, China's prime minister, Li Peng, visited France in April of 1996 and placed an order for approximately $1.5 billion worth of French-built passenger planes.44

In 1995, the right-wing oriented Jacques Chirac won the presidential election with pledges to assist the unemployed, the homeless, and the poor, but conditions did not improve. France continued to face severe economic challenges which eventually were manifest by an unprecedented 12.8 percent unemployment rate at the beginning of 1997.55 Despite the economic difficulties, and fearing that he would lose power in the 1997 elections, Chirac chose to dissolve the National Assembly on 21 April 1997 and called for new elections to be held at the end of May. The purpose of this was to hold elections in a time in which his competing parties would not have sufficient time to campaign for support enough to win the elections.56

In light of the economic difficulties, Chirac's 1997 campaign again centered on the pledge of job creation and economic growth.57 He tried to blame the economic problems on the previous socialist government with such statements as, "We are behind, and this delay has cost us dearly in terms of jobs, taxes, debts, and illusion too."58 Coincidentally, it was in May of 1997 that France declared that it would not back the U.N. resolution condemning China.59 Then, later in that month, Chirac visited China to sign several contracts worth about $2 billion for French companies.60 The steps that Chirac took in relation to China and the economy were done within the month that campaigns were being held. If these measures did not serve his interest as a political figure, it is unlikely that he would have taken them at such a critical time. The economic benefits were too great for the government to continue its human rights-critical policies with China at the expense of Chinese market advantages. Chirac, as president of France, deemed it in his best interest to develop favorable trade relations with China, which would help to improve economic conditions, in order to increase his chances of political survival at home.

In the case of France, a national identity that focused on human rights was salient in 1989 and in subsequent years when France and the rest of the European Union condemned China by introducing U.N. resolutions against it. China's actions were contrary to perceived French values and culture. However, as economic issues became more dominant in French domestic politics and the memories of the Tiananmen Square massacre faded, human rights support took a back seat to economic interests. Nonetheless, the idea that human rights remained an important aspect of French identity is evidenced by the fact that, rather than ignoring human rights issues in China altogether, the French government claimed to be taking a new approach towards the encouragement of human rights in China through the "engagement" process.69 Government leaders altered the context of the values of the state identity so that it legitimized decision-making interests.

France was the first to break the European Union's previous consensus condemning China which the EU had presented to the United Nations Human Rights Commission each year following the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989.67 Shortly thereafter, other European countries, including Germany, Italy, Spain, and Greece, each of them with growing economic interests in China, backed away from the resolution. Even Canada backed away.67 Once France had broken the collective European action, little incentive was left for other European countries to maintain the condemnation, particularly when economic markets were at stake. Moreover, France's action gave China more options and leverage to use in their international economic ventures. France, acting as a defector state from the collective condemnation of China, set the ball rolling for further defections and ineffective consequences of those countries that continued the condemnations. However, the French defection did not sway two European states, Denmark and the Netherlands, from backing the resolution. In the following section I shall discuss the reasons the Netherlands took the actions that they did.

THE NETHERLANDS

From the Tiananmen Square massacre until the 2000 United Nation Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) conference, the Netherlands had supported UNHRC resolutions, in conjunction with the European Union, condemning China for human rights abuses. Even when other European states broke the consensus in Europe and chose not to support the resolution in 1997, the Netherlands stood firmly behind Denmark's move to introduce the resolution despite blatant Chinese threats. China warned Denmark and the Netherlands that their relations would be damaged should they go through with the sponsorship of another resolution before a U.N.
Commission in Geneva. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Shen Guofang, commented, "We still hope Denmark will think seriously about the consequences of such action. I can say relations will be severely damaged in the political and economic trade areas." This same threat was applied to the Netherlands as well. One Chinese academic, who was asked why the Dutch and Danes had been singled out, as opposed to threatening the U.S. who was another sponsor commented, "These are small countries." Despite such threats, these small states never backed away from their intentions to sponsor the resolution.

The day before the resolution was to be introduced, China further threatened that they would "delay important exchanges of officials that are under discussion and halt exchanges and cooperation." Following the attempt at introducing the resolution in April 1997, Dutch business interests were indeed harmed in relation to Chinese diplomatic and economic ventures. A trade mission scheduled for June worth between $750 million to $1 billion in deals with China was indefinitely postponed the day following the attempt of the Netherlands foreign minister, Mr. Hans van Mierlo, to use his country's influence as holder of the European Union presidency to encourage others to support the resolution condemning China. The resolve on the part of the Netherlands to continue with their active support of human rights in the face of real economic and diplomatic threats from China is significant. It leads observers to question why these values were so important to this country, even with the risk of losing profitable economic gains, whereas they are not so important to other states.

The Netherlands provides an interesting analysis of international actions as it is a small European state, consisting of only approximately 15 million people, and yet it consistently champions human and social rights throughout the world. The Netherlands was one of the twelve European countries that backed Denmark on the 1997 United Nations resolution condemning China after the larger European states had rescinded their support in light of economic pressures. The Netherlands has depended on international trade and commerce for many years and has been very active internationally. If considering only economic and diplomatic concerns, one would likely predict that the Netherlands would attempt to maintain positive relations with China rather than being singled out against them. However, the national identity has prevented the government from choosing these options in the past.

The Netherlands' focus on human rights as part of the national identity largely explains why the Netherlands has taken the actions that it has. As explained previously, state identity reflects domestic values and political processes. In the Netherlands, there exists a strong domestic public opinion which favors pro-human rights foreign policies. Domestic pressures are placed on the government through NGOs and are embodied in political parties. Human rights have obtained nearly a sacred status in Dutch political life. The Dutch government largely responds to human rights pressures because of the influence of non-governmental organizations, and political party acceptance and support of human rights in foreign policy. Because of the public opinion in favor of such policies, government leaders find it within their interest to support active human rights policies in foreign relations so as to gain public support. One of the greatest manifestations of the overall public and government support of human rights promotion is the government Advisory Committee on Human Rights, which was established on a provisional basis in 1983 and then on a permanent basis in 1985. While this committee has never made any recommendations diametrically opposed to the policies of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, its existence is significant in that it represents the government and public acceptance of human rights norms in foreign policy.

Non-governmental organizations have long played an important role in Dutch policy and are largely responsible for making human rights an important policy issue. They have been formed around human rights issues beginning around the 1970s, often rallying around situations in particular countries. NGOs are able to influence policy by submitting suggestions and proposals to the government on how they can better pursue human rights issues in foreign policy. Some of the important human rights NGOs in the Netherlands include the Netherlands Jurists Committee for Human Rights, the Humanist Committee on Human Rights, and Amnesty International, who boast membership of approximately 185,000 in the Netherlands.

All of the four main political parties represented in the Dutch parliament include the pursuit of human rights in foreign policy as part of their platform, although in differing degrees. The radical D66 party is very extensive in its support of human rights in foreign policy, while the more conservative Liberal Party supports human rights in foreign policy but cautions that the Netherlands must be careful, and that group or collective action is preferred to acting in
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isolation. Members of parliament also have historically been very active human rights supporters, although this may have decreased in recent years. These political parties reflect the values and opinions of the Dutch constituency and how the Dutch identity includes human rights as an integral part. The commitment to human rights was stated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a policy memorandum issued in 1979 when it stated, “The Government regards the promotion of human rights as an essential element of its foreign policy.” If, in contrast to other nations, the Dutch identity so fully entails the pursuit of human rights in foreign policy, it is important to analyze from where this identity emerged.

Dating back to the seventeenth century, the Netherlands had a great interest in the rule of law, influenced by its geographic location, lack of resources, and need for international trade. International law was very much in the interest of this small state so as to protect its economic and security interests. Therefore, the promotion of peace and stability was important to the Netherlands and, in modern times, continues in the form of promotion of international aid and human rights support. However, there are other factors beyond state interests that influenced this identity.

Some scholars argue that it was Protestant-influenced political cultures that ingrained within the citizens of the Netherlands (as well as other countries such as Denmark and Sweden) a need to do good for others and protect rights. Others argue that there remains a sense of guilt from their colonial past and a sense of need to make up for the wrongs committed through colonialism; but even in their colonial experience, there was an element of moralism with much emphasis given to the Christian missionary programs. Whatever the origins, the Netherlands has developed a keen sense of identity in domestic politics that entails a high regard for human rights. The identity is then reflected in the foreign policy of that state.

The Netherlands was willing to participate in collective action strategies against China, and even advanced these ideals at some cost. However, when it became apparent that actions would not be taken collectively, with the majority of European Union members backing away from critical policies towards China, the Netherlands eventually backed away as well. The defection of European states from collective action increased the costs to be shouldered by the remaining actors. The costs were difficult to bear. Moreover, with the lack of criticism from other countries, China had various avenues to pursue in its trade and international policies, and the leverage through pressure from small states diminished considerably. Therefore, the benefits of condemning China were outweighed by the costs of doing so, and the Dutch government, which encourages multilateral and collective action, decided against supporting the U.S.-sponsored resolution to condemn China at the U.N. Human Rights Commission convention in April of 2000. The identity was not strong enough to withstand the great opposition, coming even from within the European Union.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the government leaders of the United States, Japan, France, and the Netherlands were all subject to domestic pressures in their policies towards China following the Tiananmen Square massacre. The experiences of these leaders illustrates why collective action against China was unsuccessful. The failure of collective enforcement of human rights standards in China following the Tiananmen Square massacre can be explained largely by self-interested motivations on the part of governments leaders. These leaders chose policies that best served their perceived interests, which interests revolved around gaining or maintaining leadership. Interests may be based on a national self-image that must be maintained for purposes of legitimacy or may revolve around economic concerns.
2. Talagi 1994, 100.
4. Snyder et al. 1962, 90.
13. Ibid., 25.
14. St. Lewis Post-Dispatch, 5 June 1989, 8A.
18. Folsom, qtd. in ibid.
19. Ibid., 60–63.
22. Davis and Lynn-Jones 1987, 22.
24. Franklin D. Roosevelt, qtd. in ibid., 25.
30. Forsythe 2000, 143.
32. Ibid., 144.
34. Ibid., 18.
35. Richard Solomon, qtd. in ibid.
37. Ibid., 79.
38. Ibid., 93.
39. Ibid., 104.
40. Ibid., 95.
41. Donnelly 1998, 120.
42. Inoguchi 1991, 110.
43. Arase 1993, 93.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., 938.
47. Uno, qtd. in Arase 1993, 943.
48. Ibid.
49. Grant 1997, 117.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 120.
58. Walsh 2000, 97–98.
59. Ibid., 99.
60. Lincoln 1994, 28.
63. Ibid., 99.
64. Lewis-Beck 2000, 48.
65. Ibid., 97.
66. Jacques Chirac, qtd. in ibid., 53.
71. The Independent, 16 April 1997, 15.
73. The Independent, 20 April 1997.
76. Ibid.
77. Baehr 2000, 58.
81. Ibid., 76.
82. Flinterman and Klerk 1993, 283.
88. Ibid., 51.
89. Ibid., 52.
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