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How Cheap Is Identity Talk?— A Framework of Identity Frames and Security Discourse for the Analysis of Repression and Legitimization of Social Movements in Mainland China

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This article approaches the repression and legitimization of mainland Chinese social movements through a framework that combines the theories of identity frames and securitization. Using the Democracy Wall movement of 1978-81 and the Student Democracy Movement of 1989 as its cases, the article shows how various identity frames, which both the movements and the authorities produce in their interactions, can be seen as attempts both to legitimize protest and make it illegitimate through security

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discourse. This combination provides a framework which can be used to analyze and conceptualize the interaction between protest movements and authorities that has been lacking in studies on Chinese protest even though there is extensive research on the subject.

KEYWORDS: **China; social protest; securitization; repression; identity.**

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China-watchers and scholars have extensively scrutinized contemporary mainland Chinese protest. The 1989 movement, especially, has attracted wide academic attention and a multitude of studies.[1] The methods by which the protestors attempted to legitimize their movement have also attracted attention and wide conceptualization in this body of research. For example, Elizabeth J. Perry notes the importance of the "casting" of various roles in protest and the "theatrics" in and of the events during the movement.[2] In their turn, Joseph W. Esherick and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom have analyzed the importance of political "street theatre" and the repertoire of protest activities that were designed to mobilize support and defuse opposition by following the script set by the May Fourth Movement of 1919.[3] In a similar vein, Frank N. Pieke argues that through what he refers to as "recontextualizing" the 1989 movement as the bearer of the historic mission of the past popular movements in China, the activists

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[1]See, e.g., Zhao Dingxin, *The Power of Tiananmen: State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Craig C. Calhoun, *Neither Gods nor Emperors: Students and the Struggle for Democracy in China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994); Perry Link, Andrew J. Nathan, and Zhang Liang, eds., *The Tiananmen Papers: The Chinese Leadership's Decision to Use Force Against Their Own People—In Their Own Words* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001); and Han Minzhu and Hua Sheng, eds., *Cries for Democracy—Writings and Speeches from the 1989 Chinese Democracy Movement* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[2]Elizabeth J. Perry, "Casting a Chinese 'Democracy' Movement: Legacies of Social Fragmentation," in *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China*, ed. Elizabeth J. Perry (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe 2002), 309-35.

[3]Joseph Esherick and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, "Acting Out Democracy: Political Theatre in Modern China," in *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, ed. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Elizabeth J. Perry (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994), 35-54.

gained very potent political leverage that rendered them hard to suppress.[4] Craig C. Calhoun has drawn directly on the new social movement literature and pointed out the importance of studying "identity politics" in the 1989 movement and in Chinese social mobilization in general.[5]

Less attention has been given to the older case of the Democracy Wall movement[6] where studies focusing on the use of identity frames have been quite rare,[7] as have studies where the two movements have been compared to each other.[8] However, these movements have formed the greatest challenges for the central authorities and one-party rule in post-Mao Zedong (毛澤東) China. They also produced a well-documented body of sources for analysis of the activities of both activists and the authorities. It is argued here that by drawing on these sources and using a comparative approach, more durable patterns of rhetorical techniques used in protest legitimization and repression in mainland Chinese politics may be revealed.

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[4]Frank N. Pieke, "The Use of Making History: Chinese Traditions of Protest," *Issues & Studies* 30, no. 1 (January 1994): 13-36.

[5]Craig C. Calhoun, "Science, Democracy and the Politics of Identity," in Wasserstrom and Perry, *Popular Protest*, 93-110.

[6]See, e.g., David S.G. Goodman, *Beijing Street Voices: The Poetry and Politics of China's Democracy Movement* (Lawrence, Mass.: Marion Boyars, 1981); Andrew J. Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985); Chen Ruoxi, *Democracy Wall and the Unofficial Journals* (Studies in Chinese Terminology, no. 20, Center for Chinese Studies, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1982); Merle Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy: Political Reform in the Deng Xiaoping Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Liu Sheng-chi, "The Democratic Movement in Mainland China in Retrospect," *Issues & Studies* 17, no. 4 (April 1981): 47-66; and Liu Sheng-chi, *Zhongguo dalu dixia kanwu yanjiu, 1978-1982* (Research on the underground journals in the Chinese mainland, 1978-1982) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1984).

[7]For analysis of identity constructions in the Democracy Wall movement see Lauri Paltemaa, "Individual and Collective Identities of the Beijing Democracy Wall Movement Activists 1978-1981," *China Information* 19, no. 3 (November 2005): 443-87. Merle Goldman has analyzed the Democracy Wall movement from the point of view of emerging citizens, but used this as an analytical concept, not as an identity avowal taken from the movement activists' argumentation. See Merle Goldman, "The Reassertion of Political Citizenship in the Post-Mao Era: The Democracy Wall Movement," in *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China*, ed. Merle Goldman and Elizabeth J. Perry (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 159-86.

[8]One exception is Guang Lei, "Elusive Democracy: Conceptual Change and the Chinese Democracy Movement, 1978-79 to 1989," *Modern China* 22, no. 4 (October 1996): 417-47.

The use of identities in the mobilization of protest has been discussed in some of the research on the more recent protests on the Chinese mainland. For example, in the recent book *State and Society in 21st-Century China* various authors deal with the question of the legitimacy of the contemporary Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime and the legitimization of protest against it. Vivienne Shue argues that the way the Communist regime has legitimized itself offers a "grammar of protest" to activists who can use it to legitimize their protest.[9] Patricia Thornton notes how the type of legitimization talk the regime directs at different social groups (such as workers, peasants, and students) is important, as those groups are likely to seize these group-specific legitimizations and use them in their own favor.[10] Kevin J. O'Brien develops the term "rightful resistance" to describe the nature of typical low-key protest in contemporary China, whereby protestors usually draw on various existing sources of legitimization for their protest, such as the legal code, CCP proclamations, social values, and moral codes, that they hope will help to deflect repressive actions by the authorities.[11]

It is well established in these studies that the way the CCP legitimizes its rule is important for the ways the protestors legitimize their collective actions in mainland China. However, most studies on Chinese protest have a certain bias to them, namely that they tend to look at the protest and its legitimization from the side of the protestors and overlook it as an *interaction* between the authorities and protestors. Although various conceptualizations discussed above do capture relevant features of the process of protest legitimization, little attempt has been made to use these concepts to explain the activities of the authorities. Models in which the interaction

[9]Vivienne Shue, "Legitimacy Crisis in China?" in *State and Society in 21st-Century China*, ed. Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 1994), 26-49.

[10]Patricia Thornton, "Comrades and Collectives in Arms: Tax Resistance, Evasion and Avoidance in Post-Mao China," in Gries and Rosen, *State and Society in 21st-Century China*, 87-104.

[11]Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics* 49, no. 1 (1996): 31-55. See also Kevin J. O'Brien, "Neither Transgressive nor Contained: Boundary-Spanning Contention in China," in Gries and Rosen, *State and Society in the 21st-Century China*, 105-22.

has been conceptualized through bringing both the protestor's and the authorities sides together under the same theoretical framework are therefore largely missing, and it is this state of affairs that this article aims to amend.

Conceptualizing Repression

It is argued here that in order to understand the dynamics of Chinese protest we need to understand Chinese repression. The need to see protest legitimization as a result of an interaction is apparent when one remembers that in totalitarian or authoritarian states such as China,[12] social movements and protracted protests generally operate under some degree of repression, which is often also the primary motive for the activists to produce protective identity framings. However, to analyze repression one has first to define it. According to Charles Tilly, repression means "any action by another group which raises the contender's cost of collective action."[13] Following this, repression can further be divided into hard and soft forms, as suggested by Myra Marx Ferree. As she argues, states engage in hard repression through use of force, and in soft repression when they try to limit and "exclude ideas and identities from the public forum" in nonviolent ways. Such soft repression is specifically directed against movements' collective identities and ideas that support "cognitive liberation" or "op-

[12]Totalitarianism and authoritarianism have often been used as political terms in labeling undesirable regimes. Here, however, they are used only as analytical concepts in a three-fold categorization of political systems, i.e., democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian. Authoritarian systems are *exclusionary* regimes in which the government attempts to control the number and nature of legitimate political actors in society. See Bruce Dickson, "Dilemmas for Party Adaptation: The CCP's Strategies for Survival," in Gries and Rosen, *State and Society in 21st-Century China*, 141-58. On the political use of totalitarianism, see Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (London: Verso, 2002), 4; and Kimmo Elo, *Die Systemkrise eines totalitären Herrschaftssystems und ihre Folgen. Eine aktualisierte Totalitarismustheorie am Beispiel der Systemkrise in der DDR 1953*. Akademische Dissertation (Munster: LIT, 2005), 42-44.

[13]Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978), 100.

positional consciousnesses."[14] This understanding also comes very close to Johan Galtung's seminal work on direct and structural violence in society.[15]

Although Marx Ferree limits her scheme to a liberal political setting, it is argued here that it can also be used to analyze repression in China. Moreover, it is likely that in an authoritarian or a post-totalitarian[16] system like China, the use of soft repression (e.g., labeling) is an integral part of hard repression (e.g., sending dissidents to labor camps). Both are used in unison, so that soft repression precedes hard repression.[17] Indeed, soft repression can begin quite rapidly after the initiation of protest and continue even after means of hard repression have been deployed, as the case of the student movement of 1989 shows.[18] Only initially, then, do protestors/activists frame their identities and goals without the counter-frames that the authorities' soft repression offers. And even in this initial stage

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[14]Myra Marx Ferree, "Soft Repression: Ridicule, Stigma, and Silencing in Gender-Based Movements," in *Repression and Mobilization*, ed. Christian Davenport, Hank Johnston, and Carol Mueller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 128-58.

[15]Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167-91; Johan Galtung, *Strukturelle Gewalt—Beiträge zur Friedens- und Konfliktforschung* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1975); and Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 291-335.

[16]For post-totalitarianism, see Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965-1990*, ed. Peter Wilson (New York: Vintage Books, 1992 [1978]), 124-214.

[17]A good example of this from an eroding totalitarian socialist setting was the social movement that caused the collapse of East Germany in 1989. As Steven Pfaff has shown, the revolution in the GDR was conducted under the slogan, "We Are the People," which the protestors framed as their collective identity to thwart the prospect of a "Chinese solution" to the demonstrations. See Steven Pfaff, "Collective Identity and Informal Groups in Revolutionary Mobilization in East Germany 1989," *Social Forces* 75, no. 1 (1996): 91-118). The ruling party, the SED, attempted to frame the demonstrators as counterrevolutionaries, but failed and finally had to cede power. Ole Wæver has emphasized that the fall of the SED was, *inter alia*, due to the failure of the securitization moves of the ruling party. See Ole Wæver, "Conflicts of Vision: Visions of Conflict," in *European Polyphony: Perspectives beyond East-West Confrontation*, ed. Ole Wæver, Pierre Lemaitre, and Elizabieta Tromer (London: Macmillan, 1989), 283-327; and Ole Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 46-86.

[18]For analysis, see Juha Vuori, "Security as Justification: An Analysis of Deng Xiaoping's Speech to the Martial Law Troops in Beijing on the Ninth of June 1989," *Politologiske Studier* 6, no. 2 (2003): 105-18; and Juha Vuori, "Illocutionary Logic and Strands of Securitisation—Applying the Theory of Securitisation to the Study of Non-Democratic Political Orders," *European Journal of International Relations* (forthcoming).

of collective action the knowledge of past protests and the ways of repressing them can guide activists in framing their movement's collective identities and goals in a preemptive manner. Teresa Wright, for example, has shown this convincingly in the case of the 1989 movement's exclusionary organizational strategies, which were guided by the students' fear of repression.[19]

Especially in authoritarian states, the course of protest and its success or failure depends largely on the forms of repression that the authorities direct at it,[20] and this also holds true for soft repression. Once soft repression begins, it becomes the natural focus of refutation and thereby protest legitimization. It forces the activists to talk about their own protest/movement and its goals among themselves and to their audiences in terms that will, it is hoped, render the repression ineffective as well as mobilizing popular support and giving the protest a sense of common cause. Indeed, it can be argued that in an authoritarian state most of this kind of "identity talk"[21] by protest movements is produced under soft or hard forms of repression, and China is no exception to this rule. Tellingly, in both of the movements studied here most of the identity talk was produced *after* soft repression had begun and often as a direct refutation of it.

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[19]Teresa Wright, "State Repression and Student Protest in Contemporary China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 157 (March 1999): 142-72. Wright also notes occasionally how fear of repression also influenced the movement's rhetoric strategies but does not analyze this any closer.

[20]It has been noted in comparative research on social movements how policing significantly influences protest behavior. See Della Porta, "Social Movements and the State: Thoughts on the Policing of Protest," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, ed. Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Mayer Zald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 62-93.

[21]"Identity talk" refers to processes whereby social movements' identities are constructed and expressed through communication among the movement's participants and with nonparticipants. It occurs, for example, when the activists explain the movement to others, recruit new members, proselytize their message by making public pronouncements, and engage in disputes and debates. Identities are also expressed in cultural materials, viz., names, narratives, symbols, verbal styles, rituals, clothing, and so on. See David A. Snow and Doug McAdam, "Identity Work Process in the Context of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity/Movement Nexus," in *Self, Identity, and Social Movement* ed. Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens, and Robert W. White (Minneapolis: University on Minnesota Press, 2000), 53-54; and Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *New York Annual Review of Sociology*, no. 27 (2001): 285.

Identities and Protest Legitimization

Another important concept utilized here is that of *identity frames*, which has been developed in order to explain how social movement activists assign meanings to their collective action. Framing refers to the processes whereby activists produce organizing ideas for collective action that make it meaningful and guide it.[22] As Doug McAdam et al. argue, these frames assign meanings and interpretations to "relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists."[23] Using various identity frames is therefore a part of the political speech through which movements try to influence their audiences and antagonists. As, for example, Polletta and Jasper argue: "How successfully groups frame their identities for the public thus affects their ability to recruit members and supporters, gain a public hearing, make alliances with other groups, and defuse opposition."[24] The rhetorical function of identity frames is apparent in this.

As such, there is nothing new in the notion that social movements and regimes interact with each other on the level of identities that play a key role in mobilization and repression. Indeed, the idea that the success or failure of social movements is largely dependent on the interaction between activists and authorities (the state) was already clear in the "political opportunity structure" approach to social movements of Charles Tilly.[25] It has also been noted that this interaction holds true on the level of

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[22]William A. Gamson, "Political Discourse and Collective Action," in *International Social Movement Research—From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research Across Cultures*, ed. Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Sidney Tarrow (London: JAI Press, 1988), 1:222.

[23]David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," in Klandermans, Kriesi, and Tarrow, *International Social Movement Research* 1:198.

[24]Polletta and Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," 295.

[25]Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, passim. That movements' identity frames depend also on the way outsiders frame movements is also noted in the new social movement research, for example, by Rachel L. Einwohner, "Bringing the Outsiders in: Opponents' Claims and the Construction of Animal Rights Activists' Identity," *Mobilization* 7, no. 3

identities. As Sidney Tarrow argues, the state always engages in a "struggle over meanings" with the movements,[26] and this struggle includes identity avowals and imputations on both sides.[27]

Furthermore, it has been noted that framings are not built from scratch but usually employ "resonant ideas" in society. According to Doug McAdam, the central task in framing is to advocate a view that both legitimizes and motivates protest activity, and its success is partly determined by the "cultural resonance" of the frames the activists draw on.[28] The audience of protests is therefore seldom offered new, and perhaps alien, ideas. Instead, mobilization draws on existing ideas which are applied creatively to the situation, something which is called "frame alignment."[29] Alternatively, Chaïm Perelman terms this phenomenon the "precontracts" or "premises" that form the self-evident beginning-point for the argument a political speaker is making to the audience.[30] The speaker attempts to fuse the obviousness of the shared undercurrent with the argument s/he is presenting. Precontracts have cultural resonance, which makes the movement and its identities appear natural and its message familiar.[31] They can also help to evoke emotions that are needed to get collective action going.[32]

(October 2002): 253-67. That identities are constructed also with strategic goals in mind is noted by David L. Westby, "Strategic Imperative, Ideology, and Frame," *Mobilization* 7, no. 3 (October 2002): 287-304.

[26]Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22.

[27]Scott A. Hunt, Robert D. Benford, and David A. Snow, "Identity Fields: Framing Process and the Social Construction of Movement Identities," in *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*, ed. Enrique Laraña, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 185-86.

[28]Doug McAdam, "Culture and Social Movements," in Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield, *New Social Movements*, 37-38.

[29]Snow and Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," 204. Frank Pieke refers to what is basically the same phenomenon through the concept of "recontextualization." See Pieke, "The Use of Making History," 26.

[30]Chaïm Perelman, *L'empire rhetorique – Rhétorique et argumentation* (Paris: Vrin, 1988 [1977]).

[31]Gamson, "Political Discourse and Collective Action," 227.

[32]Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 111. In China this has been observed, for example, in the

The use of identity frames has the same function for the authorities who try to repress movements they deem undesirable. Authoritarian leaderships, like the one in China, often frame themselves as the savior and guarantor of the nation, which excludes alternative representation of the state and alternative political or social orders and actors within it.[33] In this vein, the legitimization of CCP rule has rested on its claim to be the sole guardian of "benevolence, truth, and glory" as Vivienne Shue puts it.[34] The nation is also built on a narrative or myth of struggle, with a pantheon of national heroes ranging from glorious workers to the fathers of ideology. For example, the preamble of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China emphasizes the struggle against imperialism and feudalism, and the role of the CCP in this arduous struggle.[35] In China, the unification of the country and the hostility of foreign powers, as well as some "bad elements" of Chinese society, are the building blocks of national history writing, and much of official popular culture. Such reification of an encircled "us" by the regime renews discipline, legitimizes the use of repression, and maintains a crucial link between the leadership and the people.[36] This also informs the images and labels the regime is likely to give those it deems its enemies.

Ideologies are an especially salient source of frames and resonant ideas in totalitarian settings, and they can therefore guide both individual and collective identities and actions. Ideologies also provide a ready value base upon which social movements and their activists can con-

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way the CCP mobilized its revolutionary movement through highly emotional frames deliberately designed for this purpose. See Elizabeth J. Perry, "Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution," *Mobilization* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2000); and Snow and Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," 198-99.

[33]Ulla Holm, "Algeria: Securitisation of State/Regime, Nation and Islam," in *Contemporary Security Analysis and Copenhagen Peace Research*, ed. Stefan Guzzini and Dietrich Jung (London: Routledge, 2004), 217-28.

[34]Shue, "Legitimacy Crisis in China?"

[35]*Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, fourth edition (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999 [1987]).

[36]Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991 [1982]).

struct their identities and legitimization.[37] Ideologies do indeed "dignify discontent" as David Apter notes,[38] but they also dignify repression, as ideology is a tool for legitimizing the totalitarian system.[39] Totalitarian ideologies define the actions and policies of power-holders as correct and legitimate, as they work in accordance with and toward attaining the only permitted world-view and set the goals of a totalitarian system. Having only one accepted ideology also legitimizes the use of force in protecting it. It follows that if a movement wants to avoid repression, it has to align its identity framings with the official ideology.

Securitization

Like mobilization, repression needs its justification and has its cost; no government can endlessly keep on repressing without legitimization. Legitimacy is perhaps the most significant element in the survival of any social institution, and all governments must exercise a minimum of both persuasion and coercion in order to survive. This applies to both democratic and non-democratic systems; even the most despotic states are headed by individuals who depend on the favorable beliefs of some key figures in the polity.[40] Even authoritarian regimes therefore have to legitimize their use of extraordinary measures,[41] and in this respect security is a strong source of legitimacy. As Christian Davenport argues, authoritarian regimes usually frame repression as a necessity on account of political threats, not as something that is done because it can be done.[42]

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[37]Milton Rokeach, *Understanding Human Values: Individual and Societal* (New York: Free Press, 1979); and Mark Warren, "Ideology and the Self," *Theory and Society*, no. 19 (1990): 599-634.

[38]Quoted in Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 21.

[39]Sujian Guo, *Post-Mao China: From Totalitarianism to Authoritarianism?* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000); and Elo, *Die Systemkrise*.

[40]Elo, *Die Systemkrise*, 128-31.

[41]Holm, "Algeria," 219.

[42]Christian Davenport, "Repression and Mobilization: Insights from Political Science and Sociology," in Davenport, Johnston, and Mueller, *Repression and Mobilization*, xv.

The framework presented here combines the concepts of soft repression and identity frames with a third concept, *securitization* as developed by the Danish researcher Ole Wæver for security studies.[43] As Wæver argues, securitization is a political process which identifies conditions of insecurity, points out threats, and constructs objects of security. This process then enables the state (or other "securitizing actor") to legitimately use repressive measures against its moral code. Security issues rise to the top of the political agenda as "survival comes first."[44] The urgency and primacy of security issues (i.e., survival) also relieve the securitizing actor from the rules that normally bind politics and behavior.

Security issues are often understood as something objective, of which we can have correct or illusory perceptions.[45] However, it is only through the intersubjective and self-referential social process of securitization that an issue becomes a question of security concern;[46] even though many phenomena can jeopardize the existence of something, issues receive the status function of (national) security only through a process of social construction, achieved through speech acts.[47] This process is thought to have various political and social functions and purposes. The theory of securitization directs the focus on the "performativity" of security issues.[48]

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[43]Ole Wæver, "Security the Speech Act: Analysing the Politics of a Word," Working Paper no. 19 (Copenhagen: Centre for Peace and Conflict Research, 1989); and "Conflicts of Vision," "Securitization and Desecuritization," and "The EU as a Security Actor: Reflections from a Pessimistic Constructivist on Post-Sovereign Security Orders," in *International Relations Theory & European Integration: Power, Security, and Community*, ed. Morten Kelstrup and Michael C. Williams (Florence: Routledge, 2000), 250-94. See also Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

[44]Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Harvester Wheatsleaf, 1991).

[45]Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

[46]Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*.

[47]Speech act theory was developed by John Austin. See John Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1975 [1962]). See also John Searle, *Speech Acts, an Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Boston: Beacon, 1971 [1968]; and Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*.

[48]On performativity see, for example, Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*; and Judith

An act of securitization is an illocutionary speech act[49] where an existential threat is produced in relation to a referent object; an act of securitization classifies an issue as an existential threat requiring drastic measures. If the securitization is successful, legitimacy created through the widening social process, consisting of increasing cases of the act of securitization, enables the speaker to break the rules that normally bind behavior and policies, after which the question can be moved into an area of "special politics." The perlocutionary effect of securitization is political legitimacy; securitization legitimizes action otherwise deemed non-legitimate.

Securitization acts require both a correct "illocutionary grammar" and sufficient "social assets" from the speaker: in order to invoke the social magic of (national) security, the speaker has to be in the correct social position (e.g., chairman of the Central Military Commission) and use the correct form of speech (e.g., "We have to take these resolute measures in order to safeguard social stability and unity"). Aspects related to the threat itself also facilitate or impede securitization (issues are easier to produce as threats if similar issues are generally considered to be threats). Neither the linguistic nor the social felicity conditions of securitization are entirely determining, however. No one can be guaranteed successful securitization, as this is up to the audience. Both the linguistic and social felicity conditions are necessary, but neither are sufficient conditions for successful securitization. As an open social process, securitization can always fail.

The construction of security issues is a very useful political tool for power-holders. However, this political move can also be resisted. The counter-strategy or move to securitization can be termed *desecuritization*, which has largely been understood in terms of deconstructing collective identities in situations where relations between "friends" and "enemies" are

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Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).

[49]There are three types of speech acts: locutionary (an act *of* saying something), illocutionary (an act *in* saying something), and perlocutionary (an act *by* saying something). See Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1: *Reason and Realization of Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 289.

constituted by existential threats; i.e., they are securitized. For Wæver, desecuritization is a process by which security issues lose their "securityness," and are no longer restrictive by nature.[50]

It is argued here that especially in an authoritarian setting such as the PRC, securitization and desecuritization provide the logic of protest legitimization and repression respectively, while the vocabulary of both of these is drawn from the resonant values, myths, laws, and proclamations of the regime. As an attempt to raise the cost of joining in protest, the authorities resort to framing the protestors with identities that make them appear as a threat to certain referent objects which are usually some valuable goals of the regime. The protestors attempt to desecuritize their movement by invoking identities that are aligned with these same values and framing their activities as conducive to them, not as threats. Although constructing identities for a movement serves other important functions as well (such as the mobilization of popular support and providing the participants with the sense of belonging, commitment, and legitimacy of collective action),[51] these functions are not mutually exclusive. A good frame satisfies all of them. However, the necessity of responding to the issue of security is forced on the protestors by the authorities and becomes a prime constraint on the protestors' identity framings.

The question of social assets is also related to identity framings. It would seem that, almost by definition, social movements lack the social assets needed for desecuritization, assets which the authorities have stored in their formal positions. Desecuritizing the movement is nevertheless something that movements must try to do if they are faced with soft repression (denial of their identity frames by the authorities) in the form of

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[50]Wæver has outlined three options for this: (1) simply not to talk about issues in terms of security, (2) to keep responses to securitized issues in forms that do not create security dilemmas and other vicious spirals, and (3) to move security issues back to "normal politics." See Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization" and "The EU as a Security Actor," 253.

[51]Viktor Gecas, "Value Identities, Self-Motives, and Social Movement," in Stryker, Owens, and White, *Self, Identity, and Social Movement*, 95-100; Polletta and Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," 283-305; and Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1996).

securitization (imputations of negative identities on them). As argued here, this is made possible by direct appeals to various audiences through the use of resonant collective and activist identities that carry moral authority and therefore endow their carriers with social assets, such as popular support and approval. Furthermore, movements can also engage in the persuasion of the leading authority figures in the authoritarian polity in order to make them declare the movement acceptable. Through the use of resonant collective and individual identities the activists also try to utilize the fissures within the authorities and make those they deem responsive use their social assets to desecuritize the movement and thereby grant its activists the right of social activism.[52] Next we turn to an analysis of these processes in the cases of the Chinese democracy movements of 1978-81 and 1989.

Soft Repression and Resistance to It in the Two Democracy Movements

The Democracy Wall movement of 1978-81[53] can be considered as the beginning of the contemporary Chinese democracy movement. The movement had a complex background in the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and the Red Guard youth radicalism and social discontent that developed

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[52]As Kevin J. O'Brien notes, trying to find political leaders or organizations who are sympathetic to the protestors' cause is typical of contemporary protest in China, where protestors know that they need official sanction to succeed in their endeavor, and that they can utilize the differences between the various levels and organizations within the state. See O'Brien, "Neither Transgressive nor Contained," 105-22.

[53]The actual dates of the Beijing Democracy Movement are debatable. Some authors, such as Henry Yuhuai He, contend that it began earlier than mid-November 1978. See Henry Yuhuai He, *Dictionary of the Political Thought of the People's Republic of China* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2001). He and others, such as Roger Garside, argue that it lasted only up to the first major wave of arrests of activists in March-April 1979. See Roger Garside, *Coming Alive: China after Mao* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981). However, even in Beijing the movement's activities continued and journals appeared until late autumn 1980 when the last original major journal *Jintian* (今天, Today) was silenced. After this the movement continued in the provinces, especially in southern China, and only the third crackdown on it in the spring of 1981 (which coincided with the anti-bourgeous liberalization campaign and was part of it) ended the movement.

during it. The political opportunity for the movement occurred as a result of the factional power struggle within the CCP leadership between the supporters of the reformist Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) and the Maoist CCP Left in the aftermath of Mao Zedong's death in 1976.[54] During the vicissitudes of this battle, Deng Xiaoping briefly drew on the popular support provided by the Democracy Wall movement, which began in Beijing in November 1978 with his personal encouragement and lasted until mid-1981.

The democracy movement of 1989 was a culmination of the student activism of the 1980s. The reform period that had begun in 1978 had not shared out its fruits evenly in Chinese society, and students and intellectuals were concerned about their future and the corruption that seemed to be chronic in the CCP. The continuation of economic reforms was under threat from leftist conservatives, while many proponents of the economic reforms also advocated reforming the political system. The seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Movement—a movement which in many ways has been constructed as *the* patriotic youth movement in modern Chinese history—was also approaching in the spring of 1989. Student activists were already prepared for political activity, when the sudden death of deposed reformist CCP general secretary Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦) provided them with a chance to begin protest activities early. The authorities' initial tolerance of the mourning cum protest gave the students a political opportunity to widen their activities, which then spread quickly from the campuses to Tiananmen Square (天安門廣場) in Beijing and to other cities and provinces.

Both movements ended in hard repression. The Democracy Wall movement suffered from three consecutive crackdowns between 1979 and 1981, when the authorities first silenced its more radical members and then the moderates. In 1989, the protests dragged on for almost three months before the crackdown on June 4, as factional struggle prevented

[54]These adversaries were essentially the remaining Maoist forces in the CCP, although they were never attacked under the label of "Maoism." "Mao Zedong thought" (毛澤東思想) was used instead of the term "Maoism" in China.

the CCP leadership from taking a decisive stance on the protests. Similar factional indecisiveness had also been the case with the Democracy Wall movement. However, in the end, both movements were subjected to hard repression, although only the latter included the use of military force leading to bloodshed. In both cases, the crackdowns were preceded and followed by intensive soft repression and countermoves against it, which are analyzed below. As the aims of this article are theoretical, however, it will not bring out any new sources for these movements as such. Instead, it offers a new reading of existing sources in an attempt to conceptualize and explain the interaction between the movements and the authorities on the level of rhetoric and identity construction.

The Authorities' Tactics: Divide and Rule

The central securitization tactic the authorities employed against both movements was to divide their participants into a minority of "bad elements" and a majority of hapless but innocent people, who allegedly were being misled by the minority of degenerate "troublemakers" and "counter-revolutionaries" with ulterior motives. This "bad element" tactic was employed time and again in the authorities' attempts to destroy the moral grounds for both movements and thus deny their social assets. Perhaps the best example of this against the Democracy Wall movement is to be found in "Central Directive No. 9" of February 1981, which heralded the third crackdown on the movement.[55] The Directive stated that the activist groups "are seducing, deceiving, bewitching, and inciting a minority of politically naïve and inexperienced young people in order to achieve their evil political ends. They ignore the interests of the state and the nation

[55]For similar tactics during the first crackdown against the Democracy Wall movement activists see "Jianjue weihu zhengchangde shehui zhixu, shengchan zhixu, gongzuo zhixu" (堅決維護正常的社會秩序、生產秩序、工作秩序, Uphold normal order in society, production, and work), *Renmin ribao*, February 12, 1979; and Deng Xiaoping, "We Can Develop a Market Economy under Socialism," in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, vol. 2 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1995), 236-37. For the second crackdown, see Deng Xiaoping, "The Present Situation and the Tasks before Us," ibid., 251-53.

and are only afraid that the world is not in chaos."[56]

Precisely the same tactic was used in 1989 when it was claimed the bad elements were colluding with anti-China forces within and outside the country to deceive and manipulate the naïve masses. This was already evident in the initial public securitization of the 1989 movement in the *Renmin ribao* (人民日報, People's Daily) editorial of April 26:

> Taking advantage of the situation, an extremely small number of people spread rumors, attacked the CCP and state leaders by name, and instigated the masses to break into the Xinhua Gate at Zhongnanhai [中南海新華門].... The students on the square were themselves able to consciously maintain order.... However, after the memorial meeting, an extremely small number of people with ulterior motives continued to take advantage of the young students' feelings of grief.[57]

The same stance was evident throughout the securitization process of the 1989 movement and it was maintained even after the declaration of martial law and after the military had been ordered to clear Tiananmen Square.[58] The real target of the harsh action, it was claimed, was not the masses of patriotic yet naïve students but the anti-China forces who had manipulated the students and exploited the movement as part of their counterrevolutionary plan targeted at the socialist system and Chinese sovereignty. As Deng Xiaoping argued: "The opponents are not only the masses who cannot distinguish right from wrong, but also a group of reactionaries and a large segment of the dregs of society. They are attempting to subvert the state and overthrow the CCP which is the essence of the issue."[59]

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[56]Document, "Directive Concerning Illegal Publications, Illegal Organizations, and Other Related Problems," *Issues & Studies* 19, no. 11 (November 1983): 106.

[57]Editorial, "Bixu qizhi xianming di fandui dongluan" (必須旗幟鮮明地反對動亂, The necessity for a clear-cut stand against turmoil), *Renmin ribao*, April 26, 1989.

[58]See Vuori, "Security as Justification"; Juha Vuori, "Desecuritising the Tiananmen Incidents," in *Perspectives on China: Papers from the Nordic Association for China Studies Conference at the University of Helsinki, June 7-9, 2005*, ed. Raisa Asikainen (Helsinki: Renvall Institute, 2005), 151-79; and Vuori, "Illocutionary Logic and Strands of Securitisation."

[59]Deng Xiaoping, "Zai jiejian shoudu jieyan budui jun yishang ganbu shi de jianghua" (Address to officers at the rank of general and above in command of the troops enforcing martial law in Beijing), in *Deng Xiaoping junshi wenji* (Collected writings of Deng Xiaoping on military affairs) (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 2004 [1989]), 3:302-9.

While the authorities therefore divided the movements into innocent (or at least less guilty) mass followers and the evil core activists, they remained quiet about who these bad elements were in practice. This left it open for the authorities to sow insecurity within the ranks of the activists, thus raising the psychological cost of joining the movements and therefore lowering the cost of hard repression. In practice, the "troublemakers" were the leaders of the movements, which also raised the cost of becoming one. It also made it possible to justify crackdowns while claiming that the authorities were not against rank-and-file protestors, who were too numerous to be "a small handful" anyway. Cracking down on them, even in rhetoric, would also have brought the CCP awkwardly close to opposing the "masses" or "the people," and rendered its securitization speech less potent.

The Movements as a Threat to Socialism

As noted in the new social movement research, not all identity framings need to be essentialist in their nature. Identity avowals and imputations can refer both to the essential qualities of the actors, such as bravery and selflessness, and the social outcomes of their activities.[60] Indeed, all talk where the activists refer to themselves in terms of "we/us" or "I/me" and give some additional attributes to these can be regarded as identity talk. Framing the activists as people who are creating a better tomorrow, or alternatively turmoil, could therefore be as compelling as more vague labels of patriots or counterrevolutionary dregs. Such instrumental identities were fully used by both sides in the movements. The authorities securitized the movements by framing their activists as people who were basically after the destruction of socialism, the overthrow of the CCP "leadership," and the creation of social instability, if not outright social

[60]Gecas, "Value Identities, Self-Motives, and Social Movement," 93-94, 96-98; and Polletta and Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," 293.

chaos—all major threats to a socialist country and its law-abiding citizens.

One of the major securitizing acts of the reform period (since 1978) was conducted by Deng Xiaoping in preparation for the first crackdown on the Democracy Wall movement, when he set out the "four cardinal principles" (四項基本原則) in his speech of March 30, 1979. These inviolable principles were: keeping to the socialist road, upholding the proletarian dictatorship, leadership of the CCP, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought.[61] They became the referent object of securitization, and they were used against both movements. Already in his speech on the cardinal principles Deng described how "certain bad elements" in the Democracy Wall movement had caused trouble by raising unreasonable demands and making accusations, "openly opposing the dictatorship of the proletariat" and "slandering Comrade Mao Zedong." They had allegedly proclaimed that the "proletarian dictatorship is the source of all evils" and "criticized the Communist Party of China."[62] The other central referent objects for securitization were the modernization policy and social stability. As Deng argued: "Departure from the four cardinal principles and talk about democracy in the abstract will inevitably lead to unchecked spread of ultra-democracy and anarchism, to the complete disruption of political stability, and to the total failure of our modernization program."[63]

The same cardinal principles, modernization, and social stability were used as referent objects in the 1989 securitization process. This time Deng argued that the movement represented "bourgeois liberalism" and was directly opposed to the four cardinal principles.[64] The hard-line premier, Li Peng (李鵬), also characterized the essence of the movement as an issue of bourgeois liberalism versus the cardinal principles in his report on the work of the government in 1990: "In essence, it [the 1989 movement] manifested the sharp conflict between bourgeois liberalization and the Four Cardinal Principles and an acute struggle between infiltration and

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[61]Deng Xiaoping, "Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles," in *Selected Works* 2:174-75.
[62]Ibid., 182.
[63]Ibid., 184.
[64]Deng, "Zai jiejian," 305-6.

anti-infiltration, between subversion and anti-subversion, and between the forces of peaceful evolution and against peaceful evolution."[65]

A *Renmin ribao* editorial of April 26, 1989, also labeled the protestors as creators of "turmoil" and, referring to the four cardinal principles, continued: "This is a well-planned plot ... to confuse the people and to throw the country into turmoil ...; its real aim is to reject the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system at the most fundamental level.... This is a most serious political struggle that concerns the whole Party and nation."[66]

This framing became the central issue in the desecuritization moves of the 1989 student movement, as the frame made the movement appear to be an explicit threat to national security. After the editorial, the students began to desecuritize their movement by framing it as a patriotic student movement.

Collective Identities and Desecuritization

Faced with the actual securitization moves of the authorities, but probably also in anticipation of them, both movements framed their collective identities on existing precontracts of acceptable and desirable social activism in mainland Chinese society. In the Democracy Wall movement this could be seen in the way the movement's activists constructed their collective action as a part of the greater narrative of the unfolding revolution in the PRC and the line struggle in the CCP. In doing so, the activists drew heavily on the resonant Marxist explanations of social movements as conduits of popular interests and the communist lore of revolutionary heroism. They also employed the same framing technique the Red Guards had used during the Cultural Revolution, i.e., claiming to be on the progressive side of history and identifying themselves with true socialism,

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[65]Li Peng, "Continue to Work for Stable Political, Economic, and Social Development in China," in *The Third Session of the Seventh NPC of the PRC* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1990), 7-56.

[66]See note 57 above.

the revolution, and *the* masses, and declaring their adversaries to be the enemies of these valuable goals.[67]

In this vein the Democracy Wall movement was constructed as a movement of the youthful and patriotic revolutionary vanguard and enlighteners. The movement was portrayed as a historically necessary counter-force to the "bureaucratic class/stratum" that had emerged in Chinese society. In general, the movement's demands for democratic reforms and its opposition to bureaucratism and false Marxism were described as an unstoppable tidal wave to underline the movement's historical necessity.[68] Activists also affirmed that the movement expressed the interests of the people, for example, by asserting that its journals were "run by the people."[69] One activist journal named *Zhongguo renquan* (中國人權, Chinese Human Rights) put this relationship as follows: "We can only have this one conviction: that the democracy movement accords with the progressive direction of history; its existence is imperative in China; it represents the people's interests; and because of this it will achieve victory."[70]

Having been framed as the movement of the revolutionary vanguard, the identity of enlighteners of the masses also came naturally to the Democracy Wall movement activists, because this had been understood to be the role of progressive youth movements in Chinese history since at least the May Fourth Movement of 1919. It also accorded with the activists' shared awareness that they were up against false Marxists in the CCP. For example, an early *dazibao* (大字報, poster), reprinted in the journal

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[67]Klaus Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left: At Home and Abroad* (Berkeley: University of California, Center for Chinese Studies, China Research Monographs no. 4. 1969), 47.

[68]See, e.g., Zhou Xun (舟迅), "Minzhuqiang xiang hechu qu: jian lun shehuizhuyi minzhu" (民主牆向何處去—兼論社會主義民主, Where is the Democracy Wall going: on socialist democracy), *Siwu luntan* (四五論壇, April Fifth Forum), no. 8 (June 1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* (A collection of mainland Chinese underground publications), 20 vols. (Taipei: Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe bian, 1980-85), 5:38.

[69]"Lianhe shengming" (聯合聲明, Joint declaration), *Tansuo* (探索, Exploration), no. 2 (1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 2:24.

[70]See, e.g., Gao Shan (高山), "Minzhu yundongde lishi genju he lilun genju" (民主運動的歷史根據和理論根據, Historical and theoretical reasons of the Democracy Movement), *Zhongguo renquan*, no. 3 (1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 3:278.

Siwu luntan (四五論壇, April Fifth Forum), made the movement's enlightenment role clear. Addressing Chinese youth, the poster stated: "You should become the providers and participants of the new enlightenment and movement for the liberation of minds; you should be the heroes who smash the old thinking, old knowledge, [and become] the creators of a new history for our people, the ones who realize these new tasks with enthusiasm."[71]

The 1989 student movement used very similar framings. However, there were also differences in the way the movements laid stress on different aspects of their activism, which demonstrates how frame alignment of collective identities with contemporary resonant ideas worked in the movements. The Democracy Wall movement emphasized its role as the revolutionary vanguard, which had seen through the Maoist deception and bogus Marxism during the Cultural Revolution and therefore represented true Marxism,[72] whereas the 1989 activists stressed their patriotic nature and contribution to the development of the motherland. Thus, whereas the Democracy Wall movement stressed its role as a *socialist* democracy movement, the students in 1989 were keen to stress that theirs was a *patriotic* democracy movement. This can be explained by the different social situations of the two movements: in contrast to 1978, in 1989 there were no longer any influential Maoists in power who could attack the movement as not following the true Mao Zedong line. Furthermore, the Deng regime was no longer calling for the "liberation of minds" and "seeking truth from the facts" in order to correctly interpret Marxism as it had done in 1979, but rather for the modernization of the motherland. These differences were a matter of degree, however, as the theme of repre-

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[71]"Zagan" (雜感, Random thoughts), *Siwu luntan*, no. 14 (December 1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 9:37.

[72]This could be seen in the way the Democracy Wall movement activists constructed themselves as "an awakened generation." See, e.g., Zheng Ming (鄭明), "Shei shi hai qun de ma?" (誰是害群的馬, Who is the one that harms the masses), *Beijing zhi chun* (北京之春, Beijing Spring), no. 6 (1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 7:95; and Hua Chuan (花川), "Wenhua geming pouxi" (文化革命剖析, Analysis of the Cultural Revolution), *Kexue minzhu fazhi* (科學民主法制, Science, Democracy, and the Legal System), no. 11 (1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 15:33-38.

senting true socialism was also present in the 1989 movement's identity avowals, as patriotism was in those of the Democracy Wall movement.

Like the Democracy Wall movement, the 1989 student movement framed its goals as those of the socialist state. This was apparent, for example, in the aims of the Provisional Students' Federation of Capital Universities and Colleges, issued in the form of a handbill in Beijing in April 1989. These aims were supporting the CCP and socialism, as well as economic reform, democracy, and progress.[73] Showing how frame alignment was deliberately sought by the protestors in order to reduce the risk of hard repression, Teresa Wright reported how after the *Renmin ribao* editorial of April 26 had been broadcast in Beijing, students of the Beijing Normal University (北京師範大學) decided to call a demonstration in which the editorial's claim that the demonstrators had shouted "Down with the Communist Party!" was countered with the slogan "Long Live the Communist Party!"[74]

Drawing, *inter alia*, on the primacy of the modernization policy to the regime, a leading activist in the 1989 movement, Wuer Kaixi (吾爾開希), framed the movement's collective identity as follows:

> This student movement has but one goal, that is, to facilitate the process of modernization by raising high the banner of democracy and science, by liberating people from the constraints of feudal ideology, and by promoting freedom, human rights, and rule by law.... Fellow students, fellow countrymen, prosperity for our nation is the ultimate objective of our patriotic student movement.[75]

In both movements, collective identities were also brought to the fore when the activists reacted directly to the authorities' securitization moves. A typical refutation of the soft repression that accompanied the first crackdown on the Democracy Wall movement in March-April 1979 appeared in the journal *Kexue minzhu fazhi* (科學民主法制). The crackdown was described thus:

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[73]"Provisional Students' Federation of Capital Universities and Colleges Special Bulletin on April 26," in Han and Hua, *Cries for Democracy*, 72-73.

[74]Wright, "State Repression and Student Protest in Contemporary China," 154.

[75]Wuer Kaixi, "New May Fourth Manifesto," in Han and Hua, *Cries for Democracy*, 135-37.

> [A] counterattack by those who are using the feudal fascism and slavism of Lin [Biao, 林彪] and Jiang [Qing, 江青] toward people who explore matters and revolutionary people who demand democracy and the four modernizations. They try to continue employing the base method of using the distorted thoughts of Mao Zedong to suppress the people and make them stupid.[76]

During the third crackdown on the Democracy Wall movement in May 1981, some democracy activists in the south of China asked the authorities: "Is suppressing the ardent patriotic youth and harming those democratic personages who strive for socialist democracy really the way an enlightened ruling party behaves?"[77]

As noted above, in the 1989 movement the issue of being labeled the "creators of turmoil" became the crux of the matter for the students. The reversal of this "verdict" was on all the lists of demands the students presented to the authorities, and it also featured in many posters denying the allegations of the *Renmin ribao* editorial of April 26. As an open letter to the CCP Central Committee asserted: "What right do you have to label the actions that students rightfully take to show their concern for the welfare of the country and its people 'illegal activities incited and participated in by a small handful of bad people who aim to destroy the stability and unity of our country'?"[78]

Other students also demanded apologies from the media and authorities for labeling the movement as "turmoil."[79] It was also clear from the students' statements that they were very much aware of the need to get their own collective identity avowals over in public. This was seen in the way a student reacted to the tactics used by the authorities in a televised dialogue broadcast in late April that was regarded as a defeat by the protestors:

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[76]Bi Dan (碧丹), "Minzhuqiang zonghengtan" (民主牆縱橫談, A survey of the Democracy Wall), *Kexue minzhu fazhi*, no. 15 (1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 17:33-34.

[77]Lin Jianheng (林建衡), "Ping Zhonggong zhongyang dijiuhao wenjian" (評中共中央第九號文件, On the Central Document Number 9), *Yuehai yetan* (粵海夜談, Canton Sea Night Talks), no. 1 (March 1981), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 15:273-74.

[78]"An Open Letter to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council of China" (A small character poster by a Wuhan University student on April 28), in Han and Hua, *Cries for Democracy*, 50.

[79]"Provisional Students' Federation of Capital Universities and Colleges Special Bulletin on April 26," in Han and Hua, *Cries for Democracy*, 72.

> The most frustrating aspect of the whole affair is that the masses of brave young students who have risked their own safety in the pursuit of democratic reforms were made out to be nothing but a bunch of hot-headed, impertinent young whelps.... We now issue a stern warning to you: the time for clever antics has come to an end. The masses of students can see right through you. We hope you will act out of concern for the interests of the whole country, and recognize this huge patriotic student movement as the successor of the May Fourth Movement of seventy years ago.[80]

The two movements, therefore, used patriotic and progressive collective identities to mobilize support and as an attempt to desecuritize their movements after the authorities engaged in soft repression through securitizing them. However, there were also notable similarities between the movements in their individual activist identity avowals.

Activist Identities and Desecuritization

In social movements, framings in all identity fields always also include assertions on the nature of individual actors' consciousness and moral character.[81] However, it can be argued that imputations of individual identities are naturally also important acts of securitization/desecuritization. Movements composed of what are deemed "dangerous individuals" can be securitized straightforwardly, but if a movement's activists manage to project their identities as morally upright individuals with desirable goals, they can desecuritize their collective action more easily. This can be observed in both the movements, where activists worked hard to prove that they were, as individuals, in the vanguard of the revolution and patriots.[82]

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[80]"Was it Dialogue—Or a Lecture" (Shifan daxue students' handbill on April 30, 1989), in Han and Hua, *Cries for Democracy*, 113.

[81]Enrique Laraña, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield, "Identities, Grievances, and New Social Movements," in Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield, *New Social Movements*, 3-35; and Hunt, Benford, and Snow, "Identity Fields: Framing Process," 192-94.

[82]As Wright points out in "State Repression and Student Protest in Contemporary China," this was also a strategy to protect individual protestors from personal repercussions which could be severe.

The activists drew heavily on the way generations of mainland Chinese since 1949 had been taught to think about social activism,[83] and also on older ideals in Chinese tradition.[84] For example, Lucian Pye has noted how selfishness is actually one of the greatest sins in Chinese society and how this forced the 1989 protestors to make very abstract demands, although many of the motivations for protest were very practical, for example, having to spend time in the countryside, being paid less than a taxi-driver, and poor housing conditions.[85] In order to escape the charge of selfishness, the students raised lofty and idealistic slogans, claiming the moral high ground vis-à-vis the CCP leadership.

The Democracy Wall movement activists also tried to project individual characteristics of moral purity, patriotism, and a sincere search for the truth. As a *Siwu luntan* writer declared in November 1978:

> All of them [the visitors to the Democracy Wall] have investigated, studied, and thought deeply [about social matters], a great majority of them have a sincere attitude and come [to the Democracy Wall] because they care deeply for China; they are not "full-stomach idlers," "troublemakers," "newly born careerists," or "yet to be captured anti-CCP, anti-revolutionary, anti-socialist elements." They are anonymous innovators, the nucleus of democratic elements, good daughters and sons of the Chinese nation, pioneering heroes in creating a new world.[86]

A *Kexue minzhu fazhi* writer provided another typical self-characterization of the Democracy Wall movement activists in June 1979, noting that those activists who attacked the CCP Leftists were the "best boys and girls of the Chinese nation."[87] Also, in the 1989 movement there was a clear stress on unselfish motives as the driving force behind the individual

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[83]Of these values see Yang Guobin, "The Liminal Effects of Social Movements: Red Guards and the Transformation of Identity," *Sociological Forum* 15, no. 3 (2000): 391.

[84]Pieke, "The Use of Making History," *passim*.

[85]Lucian W. Pye, "Tiananmen and Chinese Political Culture: The Escalation of Confrontation from Moralizing to Revenge," *Asian Survey* 30, no. 4 (1990): 331-47.

[86]Pinglunyuan (評論員), "Minzhuqiang de xianshi yiyi he dangqian shiming" (民主牆的現實意義和當前使命, The real meaning of the Democracy Wall and its present mission), *Siwu luntan*, no. 1 (1978), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 3:46-47.

[87]Bi Dan, "Minzhuqiang zonghengtan," 21.

activists. As one protestor asserted: "I express these personal viewpoints simply as a Chinese citizen, and as one of the millions of college students. I have a loyal and patriotic heart, and I long for our country's prosperity and strength."[88] Or, as students of the Beijing Aeronautics Institute claimed: "We have no selfish motives, nor hidden ambitions. Our actions these last days sprang from our patriotic hearts, our pure and loyal love for our great motherland. We do not 'desire to plunge the world into chaos', nor are we a 'small handful' of bad people with ulterior motives."[89]

The hunger strike in mid-May 1989 was in itself the ultimate demonstration of self-sacrifice, and thus an act of desecuritization, which some of the activists felt forced to engage in after the CCP failed to withdraw from its securitization stance. The hunger strike vow contains a good example of the assertion of patriotic selflessness on the part of individual protestors:

> Our purest feelings of patriotism, our simple and complete innocence, have been called "turmoil," have been described as "ulterior motives," and have been alleged to have been "exploited by a small handful of people." We wish to ask all true Chinese ... and those who have concocted these accusations against us to place your hands on your hearts, and ask your consciences what crimes have we committed. Are we creating turmoil? ... Death is not what we seek. But if the death of one or a few people can enable more to live better, and can make our motherland prosperous, then we have no right to cling to life.[90]

Both movements resorted to the imagery of unselfish and politically aware individuals striving for the commonly held goals of progress and prosperity of the socialist motherland. The activists were framing themselves as persons who could never have constituted a threat to the People's Republic or socialism. Getting such activist identities over in public would therefore have effectively led to the failure of the authorities' securitization moves.

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[88]"An Open Letter to the Central Committee," in Han and Hua, *Cries for Democracy*, 57.

[89]"A Letter to the Citizens of Beijing," ibid., 75-76.

[90]Hunger Strikers at Tiananmen, "Hunger Strike Declaration," ibid., 200-201.

The Activists' Reverse Securitization of Their Adversaries

Consistent with their attempt to use socialism as their referent object of securitization and desecuritization (i.e., making themselves its guardians), the activists in both movements framed their adversaries, which in both cases were the hard-liners in the CCP, as the antithesis of socialism and the prosperity of the motherland. Such a method can be termed "reverse-securitization," i.e., framing the adversaries in exactly the same terms as they frame the movement. Indeed, the activists of both movements engaged in their own attempts to divide and rule the authorities by drawing on the fissures in the leading elite through arguments that the authorities should have targeted their repression on the CCP hard-liners, who constituted a fatal threat to socialism. The way in which this conflict was defined in openly Manichean terms in the Democracy Wall movement was well illustrated by a writer in *Taolun* (討論, Debate):

> The Chinese democracy movement that represents the revolutionary demands of the great masses to completely eradicate the system of feudal dictatorship and to develop productive forces, also represents the struggle to death against the revisionist and corrupt Whateverists [凡是派; i.e., Maoists] who try to restore feudalism. This is a struggle between light and darkness....[91]

The Democracy Wall movement activists argued that the undemocratic political system had made it possible for "careerists" and "conspirators" to infiltrate the socialist state and the CCP and turn them into their personal power base. This Leftist rule was described as "feudal fascist dictatorship" that was framed as the antithesis of socialism.[92] Another force that was projected as the mortal enemy of socialism was "bureaucratism," defined as a psychological tendency of officialdom to crave for power and privileges that made it lose touch with the people and become a

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[91]Cong Zhen (叢眞), "Jiaoxunde lishi he lishide jiaoxun" (教訓的歷史和歷史的教訓, How and what history teaches), *Taolun*, no. 1 (1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 18: 149.

[92]See, e.g., Cui Huaji (崔化紀), "Qilai, Zhonghua minzude zisun" (起來, 中華民族的子孫, Rise up, descendants of the Chinese nation), *Kexue minzhu fazhi*, no. 5 (1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 10:174-75; and Bi Dan, "Minzhu qiang zongheng tan," 14-39.

self-serving ruling stratum or even a class perverting Marxism. In this vein, a writer in *Siwu luntan* described bureaucratism as officials putting their own "rights first, duties second; personal position first, revolutionary work second; personal interests first and the masses' interests second."[93] The bureaucrats could even be accused of murdering Marxism and turning the system of public ownership into a new exploitative system that "ate people without even spitting their bones out,"[94] as one activist put it.

Many activists in the 1989 movement also framed the struggle as one against bureaucratism and occasionally also even against a "privileged class" in Chinese society,[95] which demonstrates how the critical diagnosis of the real socialist society that had been developed by radical Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution had survived into the late 1980s. Denunciation of cadre corruption also played a central role in the 1989 movement's frames, as activists argued that "out of ten officials, nine are corrupt" and portrayed bureaucrats as "greedy parasites incompetent in advanced knowledge and technology."[96] This could also become clear-cut securitization in some posters. One activist argued that bureaucrats and the system of "imperial descendants" (i.e., nepotism among high-ranking cadres) would throw China into "great turmoil."[97] Some accused the CCP of becoming "an underworld gang organized along the lines of a patriarchal family."[98] Most activists did not frame their criticism so drastically, but they still used

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[93]See, e.g., "Renmin qunzhongde zhiqing quan" (人民群眾的知情權, The people's right to know the facts), *Siwu luntan*, no. 11 (September 1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 7:32-33.

[94]Chen Erjin (陳爾晉), "Lun wuchanjieji minzhu geming" (論無產階級民主革命, On proletarian democratic revolution), *Siwu luntan*, no. 10 (June and July 1979), reprinted in *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* 1:88.

[95]See "A Memorial and Testament to the Privileged Class" (A poster in Beijing Shifan daxue, April 24, 1989), in *Cries for Democracy*, 41-42; and "Reflections on the History of the Chinese Communist Party" (A poster in the People's University, April 16, 1989), ibid., 59-60.

[96]See, e.g., "An Open Letter to the Central Committee," in Han and Hua, *Cries for Democracy*, 50-54.

[97]"Reflections on the History of the Chinese Communist Party," ibid., 60-61.

[98]"A Sketch of the Chinese Communist Party" (A poster in the People's University in April 1989), ibid., 42-43.

negative terms, like the writer who criticized one-party rule by asking: "How can this kind of closed organization be anything but a breeding ground for dictatorship, patriarchy, and personality cults?"[99] Furthermore, in both movements the target of counter-securitization tended to expand from the CCP hard-liners to include the whole CCP, as the protest dragged on and the hard-liners got the upper hand in dealing with the activists.

Conclusions

This article is a theoretical contribution to the study of social movements in the PRC and in authoritarian settings in general. As noted at the beginning, it is not that we have lacked conceptualizations of the ways protest has been legitimized in mainland China. This has been discussed by various authors with notable success with reference to the protestors. There have been few attempts, however, to apply such concepts as "casting roles," "theatrics," "giving a rightful face to protest," "grammars of protest," or "recontextualization" of movements to the repressive actions of the authorities. Moreover, these concepts do not explain the underlying logic of the interactive process of rhetorical struggle in which security discourse is used either to legitimize social actors or to block them from the political arena. The framework combining securitization/desecuritization with resonating identity frames is offered here to show how both protest legitimization and repression can be conceptualized within the same framework and how its underlying logic can be deciphered.

These findings are generally useful in social movement research for revealing the centrality of security discourse in repression and protest legitimization under authoritarian systems. The authorities in liberal systems can also resort to securitization of their opponents, as examples in Western history of the repression of radical left- or right-wing oppositions, or more

[99]"Reflections on the Chinese Communist Party" (A Beijing University poster, May 17 1989), ibid., 145-48.

recently Islamists, have shown. However, it can be argued that securitization is not the method of choice in liberal systems, where the political system can make the use of hard repression very costly for governments. In liberal systems the authorities are therefore more likely to employ other means in their repressive repertoire. They can, for example, belittle and ridicule protestors, or simply try to ignore them. These methods are also available in authoritarian systems like the PRC.[100] However, the exclusionary nature of authoritarian regimes makes it more likely that security discourse will be utilized, because of the need to legitimize the possible use of extraordinary means (i.e., hard repression) to prevent other political actors from emerging in society. However, we do not claim that there is an automatic or deterministic mechanism for deploying hard forms of repression after softer forms have been used. What we argue is that using soft forms of repression increases the likelihood of hard repression, as it lowers its costs both by intimidating protestors and justifying violence, and may thus eventually up the ante on both sides of the struggle. The way movements are repressed softly also tells us something about their possible fate. If the authorities merely ridicule the movement, they are unlikely to arrest its activists, but framing them as threats to precious values or objects in society is a different matter altogether.

The framework offered here also helps to explain the prevalence of some of the distinct features in mainland Chinese protest, viz., the appeal to tradition and official discourses. Successful rhetoric greatly depends on using existing cultural codes in order to evoke certain responses from audiences. When both parties to a political struggle over the meaning and legitimacy of social mobilization know this, the choices of identities and activities become similar to tactical moves in a game. The Chinese have a long tradition of being aware of this, which is clear from sayings such

[100]This can take many forms. One example of this would be the way the Falun Gong (法輪功) leader Li Hongzhi (李洪志) is described as an "ex-army trumpet player" in the Party's official expose of him, which was a part of the crackdown on this semi-religious sect/movement. See "Li Hongzhi qiren qishi" (李洪志其人其事, Li Hongzhi: the man and his deeds), *Renmin ribao*, July 23, 1999.

as "flying the red flag to oppose the red flag." The need to align their frames with commonly held beliefs and norms, the precontracts of political speech, makes the socially reformist movements appear close to official discourse and political tradition, although there may be fundamental issues at stake on a more concrete level. For the social movements, these can include some goals that may go against the authoritarian dogma, a change of state leadership, or even a violent uprising. For the regime, these procedures entail the use of violence for protecting the core values of the political order. Both parties legitimize their actions through resonating rhetoric in the form of security speech.

In answer to the title of this article, then, identity talk is not cheap. In the PRC, especially with regard to social mobilization and repression, the stakes of applied identity frames are high as they are about the right to take part in social activism and/or the survival of the regime. This is not to say that the activists (or even the authorities) use their identity frames merely as tools of cynical manipulation, although this is also logically possible. Most of them probably believe in their cause and the way it is framed. The approach presented here does not deal with the sincerity of the actors or their "real" motives. Regardless of the sincerity of identity frames, however, the approach explains why certain types of frames are more likely to be used than others if a movement wants to avoid hard repression and gain popular support, while the authorities want to justify the deployment of hard repression.[101] Even if the instrumental goals of the

[101]Although this article is limited to the two main democracy movements in contemporary mainland Chinese history, it is likely that this framework of analysis can be applied to other protests/movements in mainland China as well. One example from among the continuous stream of reports of protests from the mainland is the Dadu River (大渡河) dam protest of 2004 in Sichuan Province (四川省). This drew some hundred thousand participants protesting against the infringement of protestors' rights. The authorities declared the protest to be destabilizing and illegal, then attributed it to a small handful of troublemakers leading the hapless masses before cracking down on it. The authorities therefore securitized the protest through divide-and-rule tactics with social stability as their referent object, while the protestors framed their protest as legal and rightful based on their justified interests. Although the use of identities and drawing on resonant values is always context-specific, the security logic was also obviously present in this protest. See Liu Xiaobo, "Renmin quanli yishi yijing juexing" (The people's awareness of legal rights has awaken), *Kaifang* (Open Magazine), December 2004, 47-49; and Xu Xing, "Guan bi min

movement are in conflict with the regime, the movement must convince its audience that at a fundamental level it is still conducive to, and not a threat to, the more essential goals in society. Social movements in the Chinese setting have therefore a hard task: (de)securitize or be securitized.

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fan, Chuanmin da kangzheng" (Officials' repression leads to popular opposition, fierce resistance in Sichuan), ibid., 55-57. Similarly, Falun Gong have been portrayed as an "evil cult" in the service of hostile forces within and outside China that endangered individual people, social stability, and eventually even the sovereignty of the People's Republic. In response, Li Hongzhi tried to refute this label by referring to the lofty morals and the non-political aims of Falun Gong, while people sympathetic to Falun Gong have even resorted to reverse-securitization of the regime. For an analysis (in Finnish) see Juha Vuori, "Puolueen turvallisuus kansallisena turvallisuutena—Falun Gongin uhka Kiinan kansantasavallalle" (Party security as national security—the Falun Gong as a threat to the People's Republic), in *Kiinan yhteiskunta muutoksessa* (Changing Chinese society), ed. Raisa Asikanen and Juha Vuori (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2005), 217-43. For an example of Li's desecuritization moves see Li Hongzhi, "Letter to the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee and to the Leadership," *Chinese Law and Government* 32, no. 6 (1999): 24-25; for examples of reverse-securitization see *Jiu ping Gongchandang* (Nine commentaries on the Communist Party) (Sunnyvale, Calif.: Broad Press, 2004).

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