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Protest in China: Further Readings

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With protest in the news, here are some places to turn for accessible academic readings that help place unrest into perspective. One thing worth noting in the list is that while some touch upon, none specifically focuses on Tiananmen per se. The events of 1989 are important; we've put up material related to them before; we doubtless will again, especially as the twentieth anniversary of the June 4th Massacre approaches. Still, sometimes the shadow of the 1989 protests can make it harder to discern the meaning of current events, especially when the outbursts don’t take the form of student-led demonstrations.

1. David Strand’s *Rickshaw Beijing*. This is a work that evokes many aspects of Republican era Beijing, not just protests, but includes a sensitive treatments of the sources of discontent and outbursts of the most exploited transportation workers of the day—the men who pulled the rickshaws of the book’s title.

2. We’ve blogged about and interviewed Elizabeth J. Perry before, but no list of major works on protest would be complete without at least one book by her. So we’ve chosen a collection of her essays, *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven*, which analyzes unrest among different social groups in different historical periods, from the Qing up to the present.

3. Sociologist Ching Kwan Lee has done several important ethnographic studies of workers, and in her most recent book, *Against the Law*, she helps us understand the grievances and patterns of action.

4. *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict, and Resistance*, edited by Mark Selden and Elizabeth J. Perry is a wonderfully diverse collection of scholarly essays (with some names on the contributor list besides Perry’s and Selden’s that will be familiar to many *China Beat* readers) on different kinds of expressions of discontent.

5. Finally, even though recent unrest has not involved this sect, David Ownby’s pathbreaking study, *Falun Gong and the Future of China*, sheds important light not only on the organization itself but on the way that the Chinese Communist Party responds to challenges that it views as particularly threatening.

For a few updated online readings on the current China protests, check out David Bandurski’s continuing analysis today of what China Media Project has dubbed “Control 2.0,” “The Longnan Riots and the CCP’s Global Spin Campaign”; as well as John Pomfret’s piece (with many thoughtful reader comments), “Will China’s Miracle Train Derail?”

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