The People’s Republic of China: History, Institutions, and Contradictions (?)

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What’s the deal with China?

- Historical view of 20th century China:
  - 4 generations of leadership
  - Development of Chinese communism

- Institutions:
  - The “party-state,” political centralization
  - Political rights and liberties

- Contemporary Issues:
  - Trade, foreign relations
  - Is political closure + economic openness a contradiction? Is it sustainable?
Chinese History (early 20th c.)

- Pretext
  - Boxer Rebellion against foreign ambassadors, Set the pace for isolation, source for nationalism
  - Warlordism
  - Foreign imperialism, Japan

- 1911: Revolution over Qing Imperial Dynasty

- 1927-37: Nationalist Revolution
  - Chinese Communist Party split from Guomindang [Kuomintang] nationalists
  - Chiang Kai Shek vs. Mao Zedong
  - Red Army, Long March, Mao consolidates power

- 1949: end of civil war, CC Revolution
The era of Mao Zedong (‘49-‘76)

- “Great Leap Forward” (‘58-59)
- Maoism
  - Countryside over urban proletariat as revolution source
  - Political ideology w/ military strategy
- Cultural Revolution (‘66)
  - Down with intellectual and bourgeois influences by the Red Guard
  - Little Red Book
  - The End: Gang of Four
- Economic crisis
Enter Deng Xiaoping (’78-’89)

- fast economic modernization and market liberalization under authoritarian political system
  - “Reform and openness”
  - Four Modernizations: agriculture, industry, science and technology
  - “Socialism with Chinese characters”
  - "It doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice"

- Export-led growth and foreign investment, Special Economic Zones

- Party advancement also changed; party loyalty to meritocracy
Jiang Zemin (’89-ish to ’03-ish)

- Aim was stable and equal economy – abundant prosperity
- WTO and globalization
- Private entrepreneurs allowed in CCP (Theory of the Three Represents)
- Invoked Chinese nationalism as legitimizing principle for party
Hu’s on First (’03 - )

**President** (head of state)

**General Secretary** (of the party)

**Chairman of military**
(Central Military Commission)

New Generation of Leadership
Overhauling Communism

note: both revisions of Marx’s old-school style

Soviet Union:
- “party-state”
  - Power in party
  - Absence of rivals
- State ownership and centralization
  - Land collectivization and nationalization of industrial property
  - State-directed industrialization (command economy)

China:
- Still very much a “party-state” model with centralization
- But, economic policy has turned towards marketization
- Mao added an agrarian element, and Jiang added private entrepreneurs!
Party and Government:

The Structure of the Government

**Party Institutions**
- Politburo Standing Committee
  - Politburo
- Central Committee
  - National Party Congress

**Government Institutions**
- State Council Standing Committee
  - State Council
- NPC Standing Committee
  - National People's Congress

Formal selection procedures
Actual lines of control
Other Institutional “Branches”:

- **Military**: People’s Liberation Army
  - Party-state control
  - “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”

- **Central Secretariat**:
  - bureaucracy and portfolios (propaganda, liaison)

- **Judiciary**: Supreme People’s Court
  - Law is subject to the leaders
  - Human rights – capital punishment

- **“Other Political Parties”**: China Democracy Party, Falun Gong

- Local committee elections and participation
What does this image convey?
Tiananmen Square

- Response to death of Hu Yao Bang
- Student and urban worker demonstrations calling for greater democracy and liberalization within the CCP
- Captured on TV
- Lenient response → martial law
- June 4, 1989: enter the PLA and hundreds were massacred
- US-EU weapons embargo
Political Rights and Civil Liberties

- citizens cannot change their government democratically, except at village level
- Press freedom severely limited
- Internet access restricted and monitored
- Little respect for religious freedom
- Freedom of assembly and association restricted
- Independent trade unions illegal
- Human rights violations (prison, torture, discrimination, women’s issues)
Exploring the Chinese Market

- Socialist market economy
  - “Iron Rice Bowl” - system of guaranteed lifetime employment and extensive social benefits in state enterprises.
  - State-owned enterprises (SOEs) v. private (“2nd”) sector
- Huge economic inequalities
  - GINI between 4 and .45, GDP total v. per person
  - Urban versus the rural provinces (ex: water)
- Why do we owe China $200 billion?
  - Piracy and IP rights, revaluing the yuan, jobs, price-sensitivity
- Economic growth → political and social stability
  - New turn from export-led growth to increasing internal wealth, demand and equality?
  - Focus of President Hu
China’s Trade Partners

US $ (in billions)

- Japan
- US
- EU
- Hong Kong
- ASEAN
- Korea
- Taiwan
- Russia
- Australia
- Canada

Imports
Exports
Foreign Relations

- Isolation versus opening
- Aspirations for regional hegemony
  - ASEAN-ARF, APEC
  - North Korea and multilateral talks
- Sino-US relations
  - G.W. Bush and WTO
  - Strategic competitor v. strategic partner v. competitive cooperation
Explaining Stability and Change (I):

**Q: Can the Chinese model of party-controlled, authoritarian capitalism endure?**

**YES IT CAN:**
- Authoritarianism as a precondition for modernization (Huntington, modernization/development literature and the role of elite)
- Economic development, such as the timing and sequence of promoting FDI, explains how broad economic reforms can occur with continued political authoritarianism (Gallagher)
- Others explanations? Comparative cases?
- Yes, it *should*!? Builds foundations (middle class, institutions, law)

**NO IT CAN’T:**
- Evidence already?
  - semi competitive elections at provisional level? Contestation at village level
  - Ideology itself has changed: Core socialist principles (state ownership, economic justice) → nationalism and global competitiveness
- Globalization and integration of markets will impel liberal reforms
- Spirit of democracy
- What are some other arguments?
Explaining Stability and Change (II):

Q: Could the demands for social-political change come from within?

BOTTOM UP:
- Forms of legitimacy – no regime (even totalitarian ones) can sustain without legitimacy. Which applies to China?
- Sociopolitical conditions change attitudes, which in turn influences the nature of the regime
- Culture – totalitarianism v. individualism, generational change

TOP DOWN:
- Does one-party system ensure stability (avoid “messy, unpredictable” outcomes of democracy) or feed instability (corruption, bureaucratic politics)?
- Relationship between market & state - How might the experience of unemployment (Floating Population) and competition feed change
What does the future hold for China?
Happy Thanksgiving!

See you next Monday!