

CONFERENCE WITHIN THE CONFERENCE (CWC) AT SPSA 2018

STATE AND SOCIETY IN THE AUTHORITARIAN CONTEXT

Although most of the human being have historically and geographically lived under authoritarian rule, majority of the studies in political science have focused on politics in democratic countries. This conference-within-the-conference tries to fill this hole in political science. Why have some authoritarian regimes been resilient (like China so far)? What makes authoritarian governments stay in power? How do institutions help the regime to sustain authoritarian rule, if at all? How do authoritarian regimes face the challenges from popular protests and democratization movements? Interestingly, many authoritarian regimes have faced social unrest, and they have been democratized in some cases while they have survived in other cases. What explanations would account for this variation?

To answer these questions, the papers in the panels draw empirical evidence from politics in China, the Middle East, and other authoritarian countries. Panel 1 focuses on how rulers manage political communication and information to maintain the authoritarian regime, Panel 2 highlights the relationship among the state, society, and the market in authoritarian governance, and Panel 3 explores what factors explain the variation of regime resilience.

PANEL 1: IDEOLOGY, INFORMATION, AND MEDIA

Chair/Discussant: Hiroki Takeuchi (Southern Methodist University: htakeuch@smu.edu)

Nontransparency and Theory Generation in the Study of Autocracies

Martin K. Dimitrov (Tulane University: mdimitro@tulane.edu)

Opacity is a fundamental hurdle that confronts students of autocracies. Although some aspects of authoritarian politics can be observed with relative ease, many others are either invisible or can only be evaluated indirectly. One acutely important question that is especially difficult to study is the strategies that autocrats use to assess popular discontent. The classic literature has posited that this problem is insurmountable. More recent research on authoritarianism has identified competitive elections, unconstrained protests, and liberalized media as channels that reveal levels of popular discontent. This paper argues that elections, protests, and free media are undesirable from the autocrat's point of view because they provide publicly observable indicia of discontent that can increase the likelihood of anti-regime collective action. Channels that allow for the private transmission of information on popular discontent have considerably greater utility from the perspective of regime insiders. The existence of these private channels for information transmission raises the question of why autocrats hold competitive elections, tolerate some protests, and occasionally permit critical media reporting. The paper argues that these publicly observable spectacles are deployed as carefully managed tools for promoting resilience, rather than as mechanisms for collecting information on levels of popular discontent.

The Dynamism of Anti-“West” in Chinese Nationalism

Naoko Eto (IDE-JETRO, Japan: eto.naoko@gmail.com)

Chinese nationalism tends to excessively react to some specific problems which oppose to Japan, the United States, or West European countries in particular. This anti-“West” sentiment of the Chinese society is recognized as the “trauma” of history invaded by the Great Powers. Yet, when reconsidering Chinese foreign cognition after the national foundation in 1949, there were the times when the rise of Chinese nationalism didn’t connect to the anti-“West” assessment. For example, despite the observed rise of “patriotism” in the 1980s, public opinion was conciliatory to Western countries, especially to Japan. Similarly, from 2006 to 2010, it was observed that while the nationalism kept on surging, Chinese public sentiments towards Japan continuously improved. These phenomena can’t be explained by a simple logic that “the surge of nationalism promotes anti-foreignism.” The nature of anti-“West” need to be discussed in more precisely.

Considering the contemporary Chinese nationalism as a multiple political thought composed of plural elements, this paper examined the dynamism of its anti-“West” tendency by focusing on the logical components. The centripetal force of Chinese official nationalism is composed of the following four elements; national identity, socialism, economic development, and the notion of great power. Using these factors, this paper discusses the mechanism that Chinese nationalism links to the anti-“West” feelings.

In conclusion, this paper argues that the anti-“West” sentiments that often appeared strongly in Chinese society, was not only an extension of the historical trauma, but it was also promoted by official nationalism. At the same time, however, it was also pointed out two elements of the official nationalism—economic development and the notion of great power—logically functioned to offset the public anti-“West” feelings.

The Role of Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution

Shingo Hamanaka (Ryukoku University, Japan: oshiro@law.ryukoku.ac.jp)

The Egyptian Revolution of 2011 was broadcasted as “the Internet caused revolution.” The relationship between social media and participation in anti-regime demonstrations is in dispute and like in a black box. This paper explores the relationship to utilize a theoretical and an empirical approach. More specifically, by using survey data sets, we examine a hypothesis derived from a diffusion model of information as well as social movement theory. The result shows two findings. First, vanguards of the demonstration were more active in social media than followers in the revolution. Second, active bloggers have a tendency to take part in the demonstration against the Mubarak regime. These findings criticize a limited effect of social media in the literature and indicate that social media diminishes the collective action problem in the anti-government protests. They also point out that the concept of political opportunity structure is useful for understanding the revolution.

Values and Ideology in Contemporary China

Andrew MacDonald (University of Louisville: andrewwm@gmail.com)

This paper examines the personality characteristics determine how values translate into ideology in contemporary China and finds that while respondents have a relatively well ordered set of values, these values do not map strongly onto ideological constructs. In a forthcoming piece in *Journal of Politics*, Jennifer Pan and Yiqing Xu argue that Chinese citizens have a relatively consistent and ordered ideological mental structure. This result is curious given that there is no coherent ideological debate among Chinese elites that could help the average citizen develop such a structure.

Via a two-stage survey, the paper argues that what citizens actually have is a well-constructed set of values (openness to new ideas / conservatism) but citizens are unable to consistently transfer these values onto specific ideological arguments (the state should intervene in the economy); at best the connection is tenuous. This result is consistent with the literature on ideology in democratic countries and suggests that for a consistent ideological frame to develop, most Chinese citizens would need some tool to help map values onto specific policy preferences.

PANEL 2: STATE-SOCIETY-MARKET RELATIONS

Chair/Discussant: Yao-Yuan Yeh (University of St. Thomas; yehy@stthom.edu)

When the Market Fails to Serve Political Purposes: De-privatization of Urban Buses for Officials' Careers in China

Ning Leng (University of Wisconsin, Madison: ning.leng@wisc.edu)

Where and why is the Chinese state advancing into the realm of private sectors? With recent takeovers of private firms by China's central state-owned enterprises in key industrial and resource-based sectors, scholars warned of a return of state capitalism in China. Seldom noticed is a similar trend of local state advancement in Chinese municipalities. Unlike at the central level, such advancement often happens in highly-localized, non-strategic public service sectors. Why do local states advance into non-strategic public service sectors?

This paper examines this question by studying the de-privatization of China's urban bus services. Since the mid-1990s, most Chinese cities privatized their urban buses. However, starting in 2000, despite the central government's continued call for private investment in the sector, most Chinese city governments expelled private bus firms. Why do Chinese local governments de-privatize the urban buses, a non-monopolistic, thin-profit, and politically unimportant public service sector? By examining local variations and timing variations of de-privatization of the urban bus sector across Chinese cities, this paper provides a new explanation for de-privatization in the authoritarian context. I argue the Chinese political selection institution incentivize local government officials to use public service sectors as vehicles to launch self-promoting political projects for career advancement. Such political projects create tension between the local state

and private firms, and eventually lead to de-privatization. Applying a survival analysis on an original dataset of 233 cities, I show the negative impacts of officials' self-promoting political projects on the lifespan of private firms in the urban bus sector. I conclude that de-privatization of the urban bus sector is primarily a political measure whereby local officials remove resisting private bus firms when launching self-promoting political projects, rather than a policy borne out of economic or social concerns.

Trade, Security, and Authoritarianism

Hiroki Takeuchi (Southern Methodist University: htakeuch@smu.edu)

Would trade bring security and stability in international relations? While realist theories focus on zero-sum, conflicting interests in the anarchic nature of the international system, liberal theories argue, first, that economic interdependence in the market system produces common interests by decreasing conflict among states. Institutions, then, both international and domestic, can mitigate the effects of anarchy and, as a result, the scope for positive-sum, mutually beneficial cooperation is much more expansive than realism argues. In other words, while realists conclude that international cooperation is difficult, and conflict and insecurity are enduring features of world politics, liberals argue that market interactions and institutions can strengthen each state's security by promoting international cooperation. This paper advances this theoretical debate of international relations by examining the security implications of the emerging trade relationship between authoritarian and democratic countries. This paper argues that the security relationships in the region will be indeed marked by more international cooperation if they conclude a free trade agreement that requires structural economic reforms to the signatory nations.

When Your Boss Is Out: The Impact of Severing Factional Ties on Cadre Performance in China

Stan Hok-Wui Wong (Hong Kong Polytechnic University: shw.wong@polyu.edu.hk)

Yu Zeng (Southeast University, China: lesliezeng2012@gmail.com)

Some scholars attribute China's rapid economic growth to a cadre promotion system that values economic performance. Others argue that political promotion in China hinges on factionalism. Empirical studies that engage in this debate often assume that performance can be measured independently from the effect of factionalism. In this paper, we argue that factional ties have important influences on cadres' performance; in the absence of factional ties to higher officials cadres face greater performance pressure. In other words, performance and connections are likely substitutes. Our empirical analysis is based on a simple design: we examine the economic performance of prefecture-level cities before and after the change of provincial party secretaries. We find an immediate increase in the growth rates of prefecture GDP and government revenue in the year after the departure of former party secretaries. The growth enhancing effect, however, lasts only for two years on average.

Repress or Redistribute? The Chinese State's Response to Resource Conflicts

Jing Vivian Zhan (Chinese University of Hong Kong: zhan@cuhk.edu.hk)

How do authoritarian regimes respond to social conflicts that threaten their survival? Existing studies suggest that authoritarian states can deploy repressive apparatuses to suffocate conflicts; alternatively, they can use redistributive policies to appease aggrieved citizens and resolve conflicts. This research focuses on the Chinese Communist party-state's response to a particular type of social conflicts, namely resource conflicts aroused by the extraction of mineral resources. Through cross-regional and longitudinal statistical analysis on Chinese provinces between 1999 and 2015, it finds that resource-dependent regions, which tend to suffer more resource conflicts, choose to adopt redistributive rather than repressive strategies to cope with resource conflicts. Local governments in resource-rich regions commonly invest more fiscal expenditure on social security than in other regions as a way to provide safety network for their citizens and mitigate popular grievance. On the other hand, resource-rich regions spend notably less on public security apparatuses such as law enforcement departments and armed police, which suggests that they do not heavily rely on coercive means to repress social conflicts, at least when compared with less resource-dependent regions. The findings suggest that authoritarian regimes do not always use coercion to maintain regime stability but may prefer non-confrontational, redistributive policies to appease aggrieved citizens and resolve conflicts.

PANEL 3: KEY FACTORS OF REGIME RESILIENCE

Chair/Discussant: Martin K. Dimitrov (Tulane University: mdimitro@tulane.edu)

Power Concedes Nothing: Credible Commitment and Concessions in Autocracy

Sasha de Vogel (University of Michigan: sldv@umich.edu)

This paper provides a new theoretical framework for concessions as an outcome of collective action in autocracies. While the study of repression has generated large body of literature, concessions have received so little attention that the term is variously defined as accommodation, cooperation, democratization, liberalization, reform, and cooptation. This diversity of approaches obstructs our understanding of when and how protests produce positive results, in particular neglecting the commitment problem that arises when autocrats make promises in response to transitory collective action. I resolve this issue by proposing that concessions be seen as comprising a three-part process: a public commitment, made during a period of collective action, to enact a change; an implementation phase, wherein steps are taken within existing institutions to realize some elements of the commitment; and the delivery of the concession, whereupon some elements of the commitment become more or less fixed. Each stage of the concessions process has a direct effect on the level of popular mobilization. I employ a formal model to illustrate that as mobilization declines, so too does pressure on the autocrat to make good on his commitments to reform. By manipulating the duration of the implementation phase, the autocrat can weaken reforms if protesters are unable to sustain large scale protests and other

forms of pressure. Thus, while the autocrat might commit to liberalization or greater political openness, he can in practice deliver reforms that reinforce regime stability.

The Infrastructure of Authoritarianism: State-Society Relationships and Regime Resilience in Putin's Russia

Natalia Forrat (University of Notre Dame: forrat@u.northwestern.edu)

Using the comparison of four regions in Putin's Russia, my paper will distinguish two patterns of state-society relationships and demonstrate how they interact with state structures to produce different effects for authoritarian politics. When people perceive the state as the embodiment of their public will, they cooperate with state officials at the community level and allow creation of an efficient administrative machine, which routinely manages grass roots politics while being only marginally dependent on material redistribution. When people conceptually detach the state from the public will, they turn every request for cooperation into a bargain for material resources, making the regime dependent on the amount of redistribution and vulnerable to economic crises.

The Historical Origins of Long-Surviving Military Regimes: The Mode of Decolonization, Legitimacy Advantage, and Path Dependency

Yuko Kasuya (Keio University, Japan: ykasuya@a7.keio.jp)

Masaaki Higashijima (Tohoku University, Japan: isonomia11@gmail.com)

Why are some military regimes short-lived, while others remain in power for decades? While the conventional wisdom is that military rules survive shorter than the other types of autocracies, there is significant variation in duration among the military dictatorships. Employing the critical juncture framework, this paper argues that the mode of decolonization influences the duration of military rule: military regimes tend to survive longer when armed rebels led the country's independence than when civilian leaders peacefully negotiated the independence. We empirically examine our claim by combining cross-national analyses with an originally created data set and the case study of military regimes in Myanmar and Pakistan.

Corruption and Authoritarian Survival

Yao-Yuan Yeh (University of St. Thomas: yehy@stthom.edu)

Conventional wisdom and various micro foundations in the literature of authoritarianism claim that corruption is negatively associated with support for the government and thus tends to have a deteriorating impact on authoritarian regime survival. I argue that this negative impact of corruption on regime survival is not consistent across all authoritarian states. In particular, corruption can be seen as a tool in maintaining authoritarian regime stability in non-electoral competitive countries since the size of the winning coalition is small and its potential of success in engaging into rent-seeking behavior is higher. On the other hand, corruption damages

authoritarian government's ruling legitimacy and capability in electoral authoritarian systems as such countries allow citizens to channel their grievances through electoral process and corruption would be considered as a reinforcement of these grievances since the winning coalition is too large to be satisfied. I examine my argument through cox-ratio hazards models with all available authoritarian states between 1946 and 2010.