

## CONFERENCE WITHIN THE CONFERENCE (CWC) AT SPSA 2021

### **STATE, SOCIETY, AND THE WORLD IN AUTHORITARIAN POLITICS**

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? And do authoritarian states behave differently in international relations?

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 examines how domestic actors (especially market actors such as businesses) influence the resilience of authoritarian regimes, Part 2 discusses information and censorship for the resilience of authoritarian regimes, and Part 3 focuses on how rulers manage public opinion and popular participation to maintain the authoritarian regime.

#### **PANEL 1: STATE, MARKET, AND SOCIETY IN THE AUTHORITARIAN CONTEXT**

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

#### **A New Standard of Cooperation? Implications of Japan-China Business Cooperation in Third Countries**

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

This presentation comparatively analyzes the strategic foreign public relations of Japan and China. At the strategic level, it examines the interaction between China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) narratives and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) narratives, and the evolution within each. Beijing's adjustment of BRI narratives reflected its admission of the critical shortcomings in such a vision, such as the rising distrust of host countries in China's intention to act for the common good and in the lack of solid planning that resulted in stagnation of some infrastructure projects. Japanese narratives on the other hand have reflected Tokyo's stance to simultaneously promote competition and cooperation with China. With security tensions with China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue as a backdrop, FOIP was proposed as a multilateralist vision but it has since become more 'inclusive' in vision, working to avoid excluding China. Such an inclusive vision culminated in the proclamation in 2018 by the two countries of "Business Cooperation in Third-Countries" (BCTC) and the signing of 52 MOUs related to infrastructure investment in third countries in order to emphasize their cooperation in Asia. This presentation employs a discourse analysis of the BRI and FOIP strategic narratives, complemented by an

analysis of local perceptions of BCTC at the tactical-level, taking as a case study example the Japan-China collaboration on the Amata Industrial Park construction in Thailand.

### **State Ownership, Environmental Regulation, and Mining Pollution in China**

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

Compared with private enterprises, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which are under tighter state control and less pressure on profitability, are believed to be more compliant to government regulations that may hurt their economic interests. However, by conducting a case study on the highly polluting coal industry that is under increasingly stringent environmental regulations in China, this research reveals a more nuanced picture about state ownership and regulatory compliance. Based on statistical analysis on coal production and environmental pollution data in Chinese provinces, this research finds that whereas SOEs managed by the central state are more compliant to environmental regulations and less polluting than private enterprises, SOEs managed by local governments ironically perform worse than both central SOEs and private companies. I argue that the entangled political connections and shared economic interests with local governments shield local SOEs from the environmental enforcement that central SOEs and private companies must comply with. Therefore, the distinctive local interests and connections facilitate regulator-regulatee collusion and pose serious challenge to environmental regulations.

### **Winning Economic Elites in China: The Role of the United Front Apparatus**

Zhu Zhang (Tulane University: zzhang11@tulane.edu)

In the literature on authoritarian politics, contemporary China is often used as a showcase for repressive and coercive institutional strength. Yet, few studies exist of China's bureaucratic institutions that engage with the co-optation of non-party elites. In this paper, I show how the Chinese Communist Party relies on one of its key co-optation institutions—the United Front Work Department (UFWD)—to manage the private sector's rising economic elites. Drawing on rich empirical evidence including in-depth interviews and an original biographical dataset of the top 500 wealthiest people in China, I demonstrate the structure and four major steps of the UFWD's embrace of the private sector. Building upon existing literature on China's economic elites' participation in political bodies such as the People's Congress, I argue that the purpose of providing seats in the legislature is not only to co-opt the elites but also—following the sequence of the four steps—to institutionalize and control the rising super-rich in China. My work fills the gap of how co-optation institutions work in communist regimes and what the party-state seeks from the private sector. This paper also enriches a burgeoning literature on the importance of dynamic institutional innovation and adaptation in explaining authoritarian regime resilience.

## **Thought Reform, Political Control, and Students' Daily Lives in China: 1951–1953**

Haolan Zheng (Keio University, Japan: zheng@sfc.keio.ac.jp)

How does an authoritarian state control young people's thoughts and behavior, and how do young people respond to the political control in their daily lives? This paper selects the Thought Reform Campaign which was carried out in China from 1951 to 1953 as a case study to examine the relationship between the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) political control and the daily lives of the university students.

The Thought Reform Campaign was primarily intended to eliminate the intellectuals' bourgeois thoughts and promote the revolutionary ideologies. It was also a campaign through which the CCP removed old cadres, dispatched new cadres to universities and established the party systems at the grassroots level in universities. However, most of current research emphasizes the CCP's "brainwashing" control over intellectuals or the adjustment of university departments. Little attention is paid to the impact of the campaign on university administration and students' thoughts and daily behavior.

Based on the local archives and unpublished personal archives (including diaries and study notes), the paper attempts to achieve three main goals: first, to examine the process of how the CCP established the political control system in universities in the early 1950s; second, to examine how university students participated in the Thought Reform Campaign and how they adapted their lives to the revolutionary ideologies; and third, to analyze what kind of tensions and conflicts there were between political control and the students' daily lives. Through such analysis, the paper aims to reveal complex and tense relations between the Party-state and university students in the 1950s, and to explore implications of the Chinese experiences for the literature of comparative authoritarianism.

### **PANEL 2: INFORMATION, CENSORSHIP, AND REGIME RESILIENCE**

Chair/Discussant: Erica Frantz (Michigan State University: frantzer@msu.edu)

#### **Cultural Security in Chinese Understandings of State Security**

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

Though it forms an integral part of Chinese understandings of state security (*guojia anquan*), the concept of cultural security (*wenhua anquan*) remains unexplored in the English-language literature. This is a serious lacuna, as cultural security presents a valuable lens for analyzing how China engages with the outside world. Overall, cultural security is a broad concept covering a wide swath of activities that present a potential threat to the Chinese polity by disseminating harmful foreign ideas. A partial list of the specific vectors through which this external ideological influence may impact China includes the spread of literary and creative works; the diffusion of traditional media (newsprint, radio, and TV broadcasts); religious proselytizing, cult propaganda, and NGO activities; international scholarly exchange; and the circulation of harmful content

through the Internet and social media. This paper first defines the concept, then discusses the specific strategies deployed to safeguard cultural security, and concludes by offering some reflections on how concerns about cultural security can explain a range of domestic political choices made in China over the last several decades.

### **Disappearing Research: Academic Censorship in Chinese Universities**

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Much of the literature on censorship in China has focused on state censorship of popular publications, news outlets, and the Internet (MacKinnon 2008; Stockmann and Gallagher 2011; King, Pan, and Roberts 2013, 2014; Lorentzen 2014). But censorship pervades the Chinese system, affecting all types of publications from mainstream to academic. Recent scholarship has begun to investigate academic censorship in China from the point-of-view of foreign scholars, surveying experiences of repression in the field and perceptions of self-censorship (Greitens and Truex 2019).

However, the experiences of Chinese scholars may give a more complete picture of the state's censorship goals. Which research topics are off limits for Chinese scholars? Are certain topics tolerated, but only when published in English? What are the other manifestations of state censorship and control from the viewpoint of Chinese students and scholars?

Using interviews with Chinese faculty and graduate students studying political science and public affairs abroad, the authors first describe the censorship experiences and perceptions of faculty and students at Chinese universities. Second, the authors code and analyze the CVs of Chinese scholars with foreign PhDs in these disciplines employed at top Chinese universities and compare them to a matched sample of scholars at top American universities to determine if (and how) their publication records differ. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of how scholarship produced in China is affected by state censorship.

### **The Pathway to the Personal Rule in Nicaragua: From the Perspective of Domestic and International Politics**

Suguru Osawa (Surugadai University, Japan: osawa.suguru@surugadai.ac.jp)

This presentation examines how the personalization of Nicaragua has progressed under the second Ortega administration by the process tracing from both domestic and international perspectives.

In Nicaragua, Somoza regime was overthrown in 1979 and the Sandinista government was established. Though insisting on the communism, the administration shifted to civilian rule. However, being influenced by the Cold War, antigovernment forces incited a civil war and the administration lost to the right-wing forces in the 1996 election. Though democracy continued for

a while, Daniel Ortega, who came back to power in 2007, pushed for the personal rule. Since then the democratization in Nicaragua has been backward until now.

Although studies on personalization are being theorized (e.g., Geddes, Wright and Frantz 2018), the previous studies on personalization in Nicaragua has not gone beyond the current status analysis. This presentation is planning to theorize the personalization in Nicaragua and clarifies what factors have led to the personalization in the country.

Specifically, Nicaragua has traditionally promoted power sharing among its elites, and this historical background has pushed the birth of the second Ortega administration and the trend toward greater personal control. Nicaragua, a small power in the region, has to have long sought survival between the United States and major regional powers. Therefore, in short, the establishment of a revolutionary government, its subsequent democratization, and the birth of the second Ortega administration can be evaluated as a result of being tossed about by the regional strategies of major powers. However, it is also true that domestic political processes have been hugely influenced by international situation. In fact, the current administration is trying to take advantage of international relations to grab greater political power.

Thus, this study aims to contribute not only to Nicaraguan studies but also to the theory of personalization in general by examining the influence of domestic politics and international relations on the path to the personalization in Nicaragua.

## **Chinese Politics and Comparative Authoritarianism**

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With the expansion of China's sphere of influence, more countries have now been attracted and turned to the "Beijing model" of authoritarian rule, which is what *The Wilson Quarterly* in its Autumn 2017 issue defined as a model of "state ownership, state-led industrial strategy, currency controls, and authoritarian politics." This "no strings attached, no judgment, no intervention" tradeoff with China has proved surprisingly appealing even to relatively new democratic countries such as Hungary, the Philippines, and Turkey. Andrew Nathan once noted that "weak legitimacy, overreliance on coercion, overcentralization of decision making, and the predominance of personal power over institutional norms" all make authoritarian regimes inherently unstable.

China's authoritarian regime has been so far very resilient. What has made the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) stay in power? How have institutions help the CCP to sustain one-party rule, if at all? How has the regime faced the challenges from popular protests and responded to people's dissatisfactions with society and the regime? This review essay discusses how the growing literature of comparative authoritarianism helps (or does not help) us to examine these questions. We discuss three books—one on comparative authoritarianism and two on Chinese politics. In *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse*, the authors (i.e., Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz) test various hypotheses exploring the central political processes that shape the policy choices of authoritarian regimes and how they compel reaction from policy makers in the rest of the world. They examine how some authoritarian leaders

concentrate great power in their own hands at the expense of other members of the regime's elite. Authoritarian leaders who can monopolize decision making in their countries cause much of the erratic, warlike behavior that disturbs the rest of the world. Are their findings consistent or contradictory with observation of China's authoritarian regime? To answer this question, empirical evidence is drawn from Bruce Dickson's (2016) *The Dictator's Dilemma: The Chinese Communist Party's Strategy for Survival* and Min Ye's (2020) *The Belt Road and Beyond: State-Mobilized Globalization in China, 1998–2018*.

### **PANEL 3: PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

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

#### **Political Mobilization and Its Impact on Voter Turnout: Based on a Survey Experiment in Iraq**

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This article aims to clarify how political mobilisation affects voter turnout in a post-conflict society by analysing the Iraqi case using survey data.

Voter turnout had been high in postwar Iraq. However, the voter turnout in the fourth election held in May 2018 declined by 20 points from the previous one in 2014, mainly because of widespread political distrust due to corruption among the political elites and their embezzlement of public funds, neglect of people, and the breakdown of social services after the intensive operation against the so-called Islamic State.

Political mobilization during electoral campaigns usually encourages voters to go to polling stations. However, amidst widespread political distrust in a post-conflict society, how does political mobilisation affect voters' behaviour in elections? In order to tackle this research question, we conducted a survey experiment during the 2018 electoral campaign to analyze the effects of political mobilisation on voters in Iraq.

Through quantitative analysis of the survey data, this paper clarifies that voters are more likely to refrain from visiting polling stations if they are mobilized by political parties during the campaign. Thus, it can be said that political mobilization actually discourages voters from participating in elections when there is widespread political distrust.

#### **Impacts of Coalition Unity on Electoral Performance in an Electoral Autocracy**

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Many scholars of electoral autocracies argue that elite cohesion is an important predictor of electoral performance. Extant empirical works, however, find mixed results, partly because of the difficulty to measure unity. I develop a quantitative measure of coalition unity by taking advantage

of fine-grained election data from Hong Kong's legislative elections. The merit of the Hong Kong case is the electoral rule: proportional representation, which invites multiple parties from both the ruling and opposition coalitions to participate. This creates a dilemma for coalition members: should they coordinate to fight the rival camp or compete with each other? I operationalize coalition unity by applying a machine-learning algorithm to measure the extent to which coalition members engage in geographical vote coordination. Statistical analyses show that (1) the ruling coalition is more coordinated than the opposition and (2) the chance of getting elected is significantly higher for coordinating members.

### **The New Source of Legitimacy in Chinese Politics: From the Perspective of the *Weiquan* Movement**

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The introduction of economic reforms has brought more than just wealth to China. An inevitable result has also been an awakening of people's rights. After the 1990s, the resistance to the infringement of rights and the demand to maintain them in various fields—that was the *weiquan* movement. With the participation of the media and intellectuals, the movement of safeguarding rights for the whole society has gradually become a movement of pursuing the basic rights of citizens and demanding the establishment of a new system. There is a glimpse of the reality of the new state—social relations and bottom up political participation. In this presentation, I carefully analyze the movements in various fields, clarify the formation process and mechanism of the movements, and discuss the changes in modern Chinese society and the influence on politics. I also speculate, however, that the social changes generated by economic modernization up to now will be a source of future political dynamism, and the new source of legitimacy that the rulers should try and procure.

### **Public Perception of Soft and Hard Power Under the Sino-U.S. Tensions**

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According to the Pew Research Center, 73 percent of the U.S. public expressed unfavorable views of China in July 2020. This number marks the highest anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States between 2005 and 2020. It is also the result of an increasing trend starting from 2018. Sino-US relations have been deteriorated since the beginning of the Sino-US trade frictions beginning in the mid of 2018, and the pandemic, COVID-19 in 2020, has also worsened their relationship. In the past, China has been using soft power (e.g., the Confucius Institute) to influence public opinion toward China in the United States and the world. China is also ranked second on the military expenditure, marking it the second largest military power in the world. How would the U.S. public perceive and be influenced by Chinese soft power and hard power, and how would the increasing tensions between the United States and China alter the public perception? To answer these questions, we conducted two online survey experiment. The first was implemented in July 2018

(before the Sino-US trade frictions began) and the second was conducted in September 2019 (during the Sino-US trade frictions/negotiations). We provide soft power and hard power narratives as our treatments along with a difference-in-difference (DID) analysis to examine the impact of the Sino-U.S. trade frictions, as a proxy to the Sino-U.S. tensions. The results provide critical policy implications to policymakers in the United States and China, and international observers in the world.