

CP² Week 10: Control and Co-optation

Dr Chao-Yo Cheng

Plan for today

- ▶ Assessment: Reminders and Q&A
- ▶ Lecture: Control and co-optation
 - Puzzle: "The dictator's dilemma"
 - Coercive control as the means to prevent elite split and societal collective action
 - Co-optation and representation (and yet without electoral accountability) as the means to stay responsive and give the mass a stake in the regime's survival
- ▶ Discussion (also to be continued next week): The Covid-19 crisis in China

End-of-term Dim Sum Party



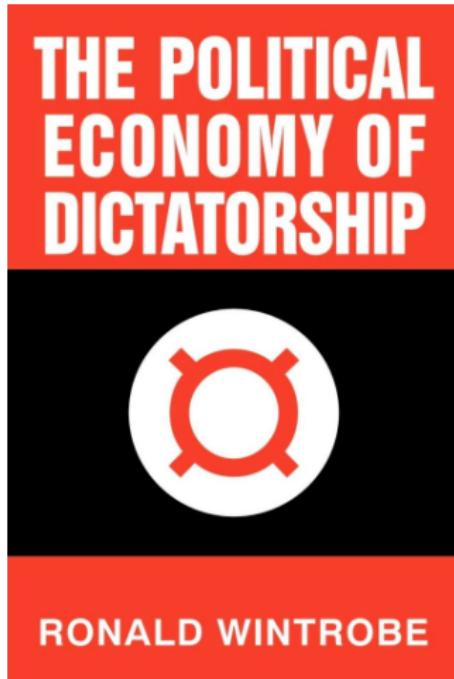
- ▶ Date TBD, but likely after the learning journal is due
- ▶ More details to come after the final lecture via email
- ▶ Everyone is welcome – let me know if you have any dietary restrictions



"I Want To Be A People's Representative" by Zhitian Jia (2013)

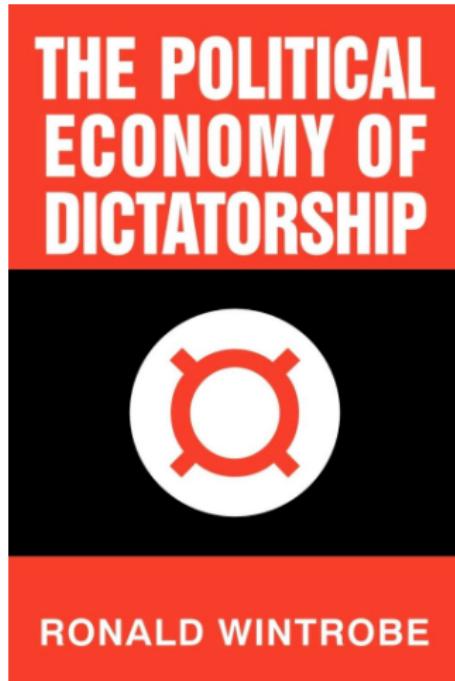
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“The dictator’s dilemma” (Wintrobe 1998)



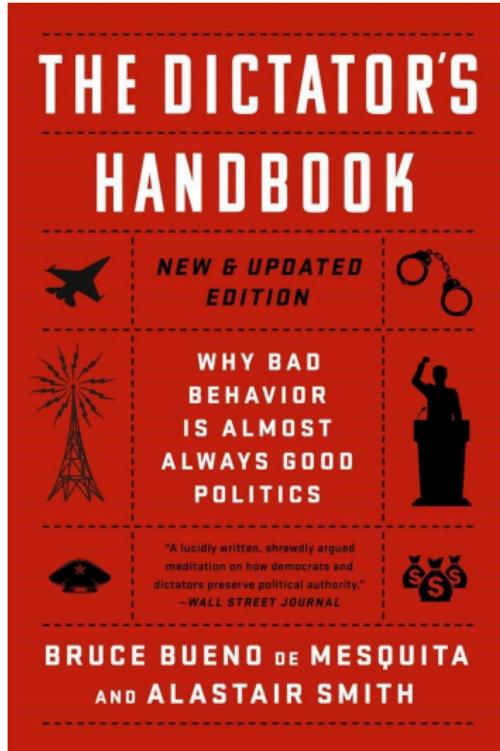
- ▶ Contrary to the popular belief, the use of repression can be counter-productive for dictators, usually dictatorship operates through political exchange (co-optation)
- ▶ The dictators seek the loyal support of interest groups, especially among the military and other political and social forces having the strongest capacity to depose them

“The dictator’s dilemma” (Wintrobe 1998)



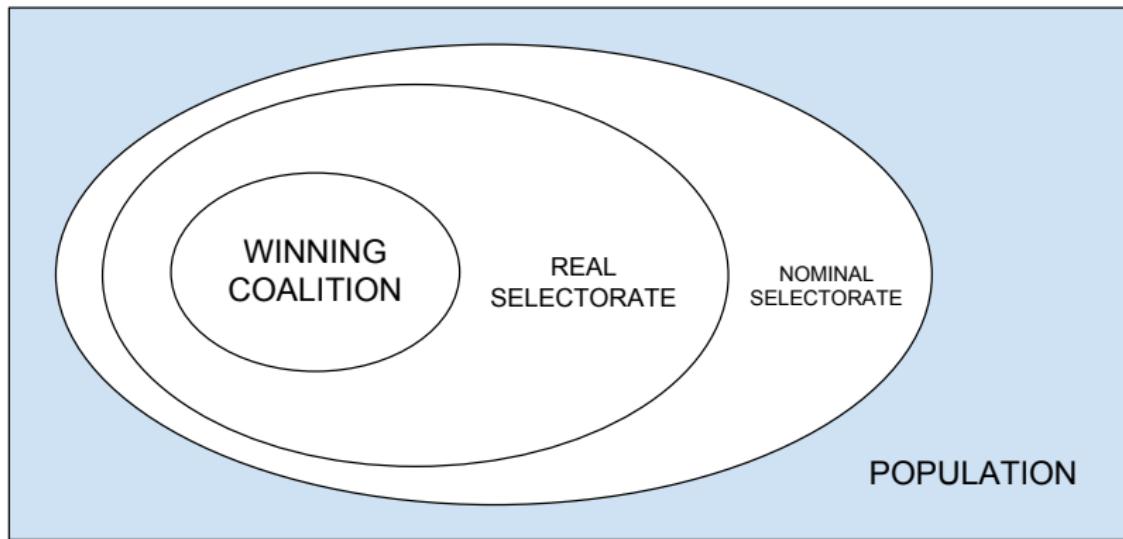
- ▶ Co-optation can be done by redistribution and incorporating groups into the regime apparatus
- ▶ democracies do not necessarily redistribute more than dictatorships; autocrats may distribute more to buy support

"The Dictator's Handbook" (Bdm et al 2011)

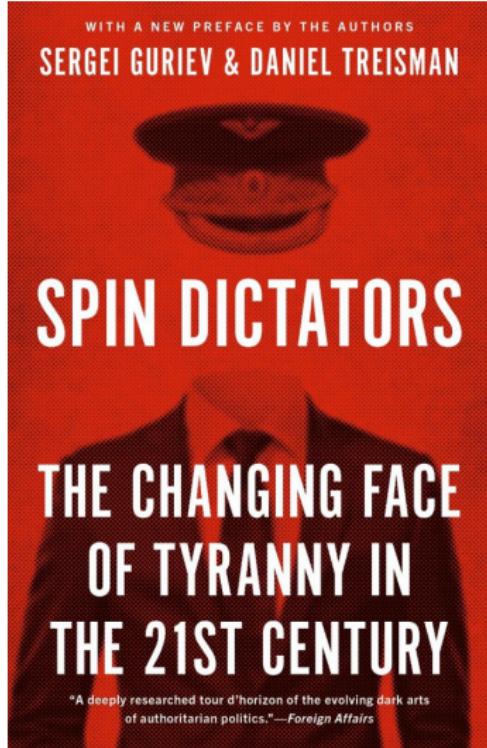


- ▶ The key to political survival is to properly manage the "3-D Politics": **Nominal selectorate**, real selectorate and winning coalition
- ▶ Any political leader, if conditions permitted, can reshuffle the members of these groups
- ▶ The relative size of real selectorate and winning coalition will determine the preference of redistribution using public goods or particularistic private benefits

Relative size of real selectorate and winning coalition is important



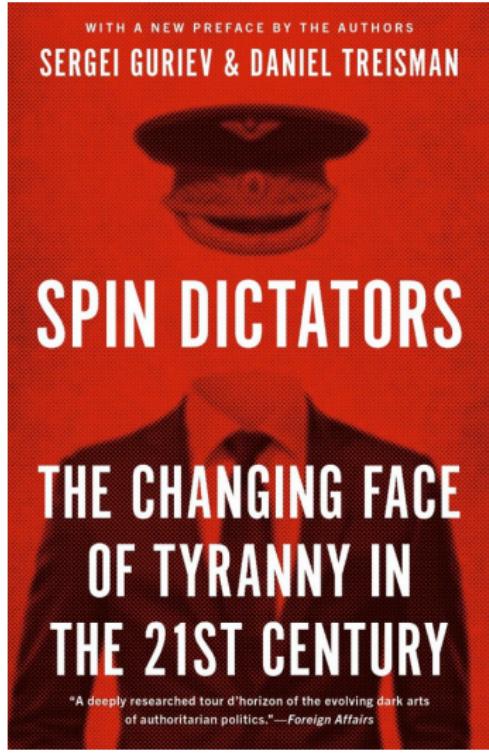
“Spin Dictators” (Guriev and Treisman 2022)



- ▶ **Fear dictators** maintains power by violently repressing and punishing opposition, controlling all communication tools, denouncing the pluralist democracy and blocking cross-border flows of information and people

- ▶ **Spin dictators**, in contrast, focus on shaping public opinion than directly repressing people, which appears to be a more efficient and less costly alternative

"Spin Dictators" (Guriev and Treisman 2022)



- ▶ Examples of "fear" dictators:
Stalin in the former Soviet Union,
Hitler in Nazi Germany and Mao in
China
- ▶ Examples of "spin" dictators:
Victor Orbán in Hungary, Lee
Hsien Loong in Singapore and
Erdoğan in Turkey
- ▶ Do you agree with the typology?
Any other examples you can come
up with?

Placing the discussion in the Chinese context

- ▶ Coercion and control: Preventing elite split and collective action
 - Elite purges
 - Surveillance over civil society
- ▶ Co-optation and representation: Giving the mass a stake of the regime's survival
 - Natl and local legislatures
 - Local elections
 - Party membership
 - Party-state employees

Coercion and control: Elite purges

- ▶ Cultural revolution under Mao, see Liu, Shih and Zhang (2018)
- ▶ Anti-corruption campaign under Xi (allegedly), see Lorentzen and Lu (2018)

"The Fall of the Old Guards" (Liu, Shih and Zhang 2018)

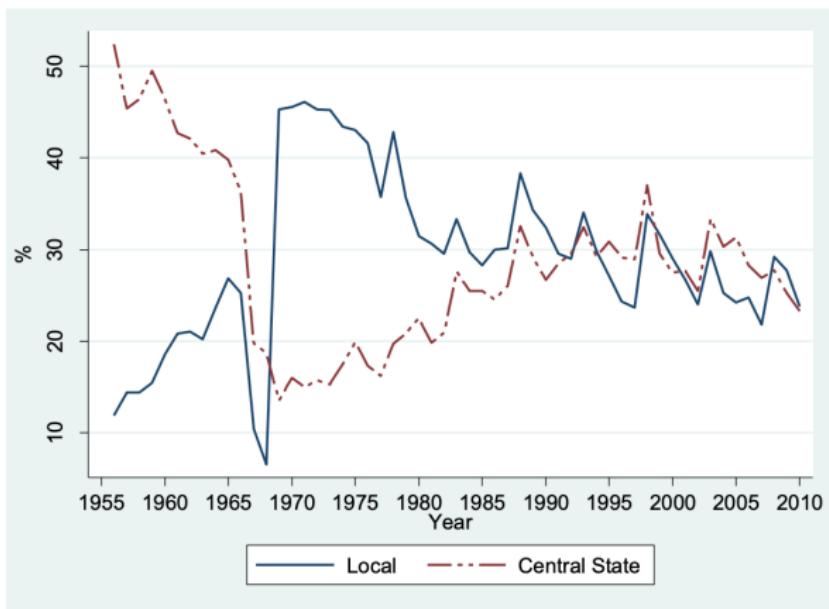


Fig. 4 Share of central and provincial officials in the CC. Source: COD & PHRC 2004

"The Cultural Revolution radically reoriented the composition of the elite selectorate from one favoring central agencies to one favoring local interests."

Lorentzen and Lu 2018

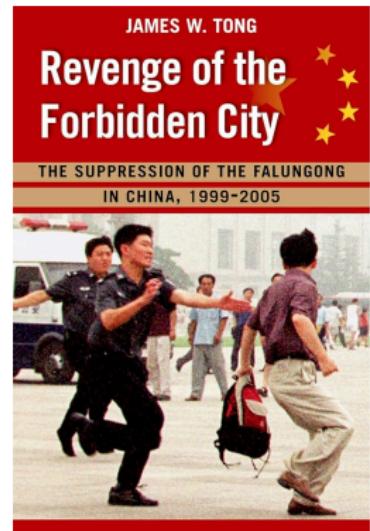
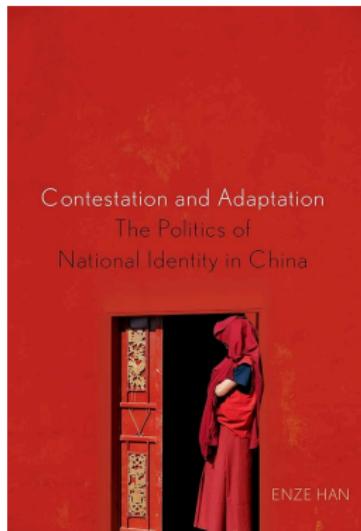
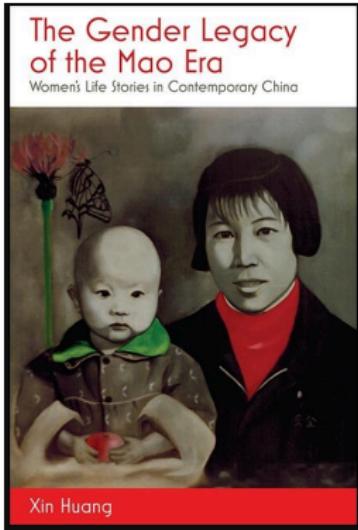
Table VI: Connections to Politburo Standing Committee and Likelihood of Indictment for Provincial Standing Committee Members ^a

	Indicted			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Connected to				
Any CPSC member	-0.0148 (0.0356)	-0.0142 (0.0347)		
CPSC members other than Xi and Li		0.00865 (0.0361)	0.00852 (0.0357)	
Xi Jinping			-0.112*** (0.0264)	-0.116*** (0.0293)
Li Keqiang			-0.0935*** (0.0293)	-0.0880*** (0.0305)
Administrative Rank	-0.0486 (0.0439)		-0.0509 (0.0454)	
Ln(age)	-0.0889 (0.269)		-0.0925 (0.265)	
Central-level experience	-0.0770*** (0.0215)		-0.0750*** (0.0212)	
SOE experience	0.0980 (0.0663)		0.0920 (0.0660)	
CYL experience	0.0229 (0.0327)		0.0273 (0.0350)	
Constant	0.0899*** (0.0203)	0.458 (1.073)	0.112*** (0.0233)	0.494 (1.054)
Observations	322	322	322	322
R-squared	0.001	0.037	0.031	0.066

“Almost no individuals connected to the Premier were arrested, but connections to the broader Politburo Standing Committee were not protective.”

Coercion and control: Surveillance over civil society

- ▶ Propaganda and media censorship (Week 9)
- ▶ Strategic repression of "key" societal groups, such as
 - Women and LGBT groups
 - Non-core ethnicities
 - Religious activities
- ▶ Innovative
 - Outsourcing state coercion to "thugs" (Ong 2018)
 - Societal atomization and technology-assisted "cellular" street-level governance (Zhou 2022)



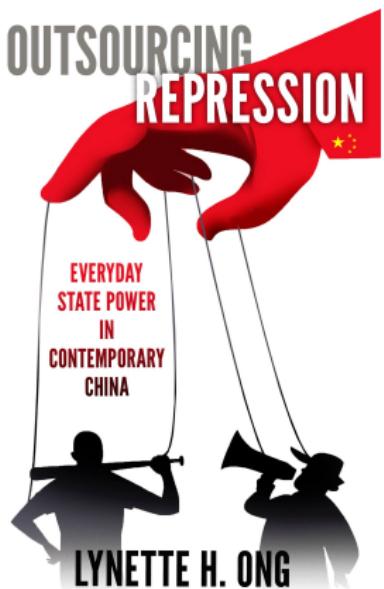
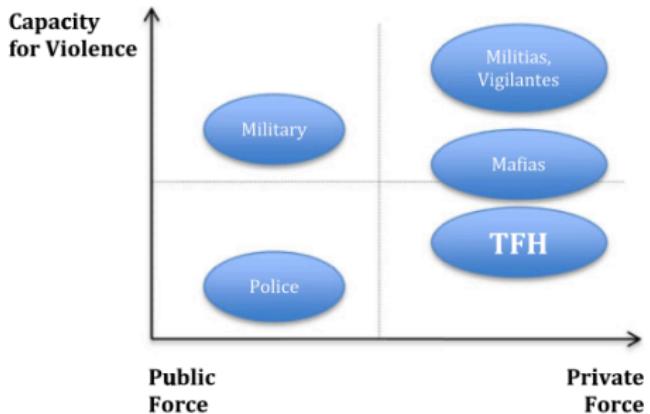
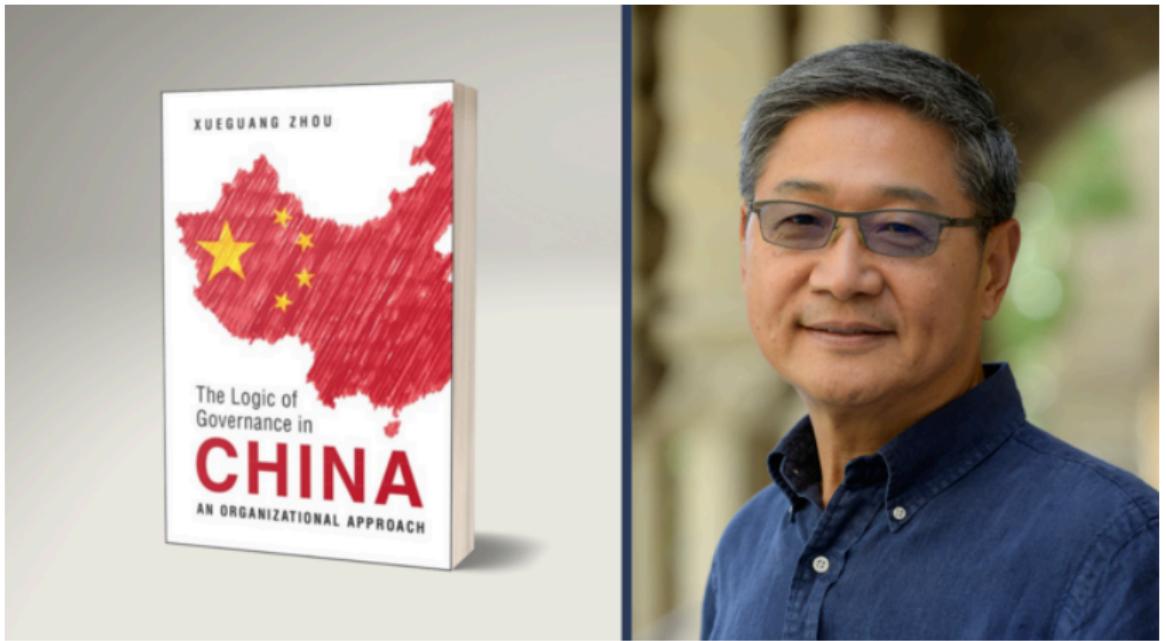


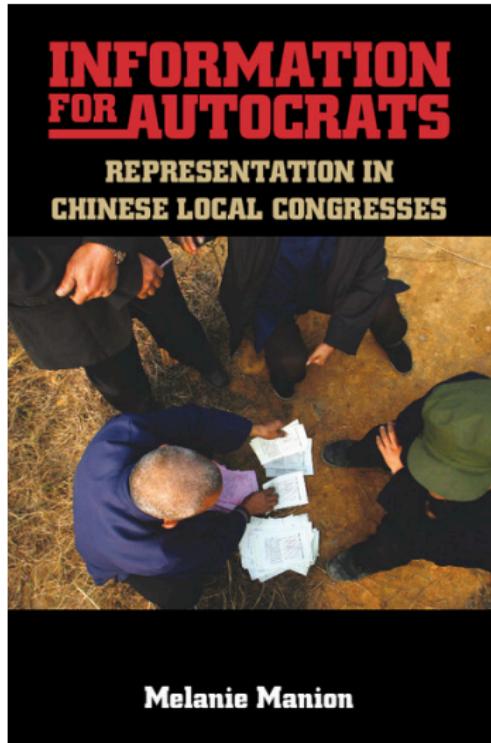
Figure 1
Public/private force versus capacity for violence





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Co-optation through natl and local legislatures



- ▶ Representation in a Leninist party regime might take one of the following forms: Mandate, Lennist and Trustee
- ▶ Chinese legislature as an institution of "authoritarian parochialism:" Deliever targeted public goods to geograpgic constituency through extra-legislative means
- ▶ The People's Congress system provides a key solution to alleviate the classical "dictator's dilemma:" Information and loyalty
- ▶ Responsive without accountable?

Table 2: Delegate Support for “Mandate” View of Representation, by Congress Level and Source of Nomination

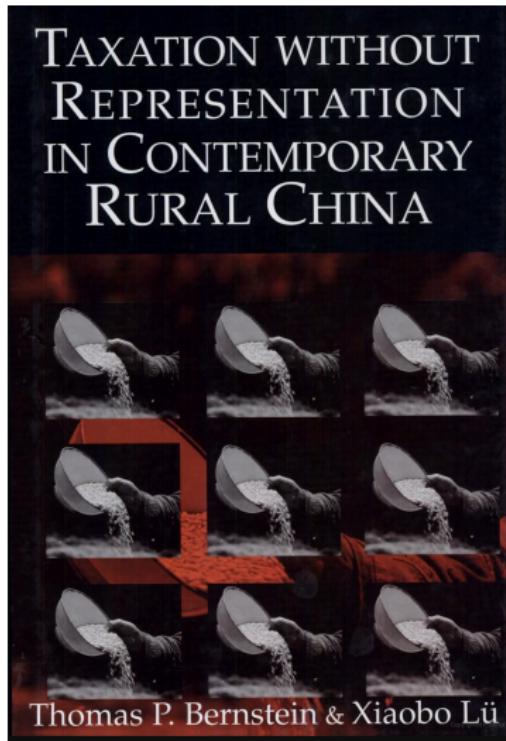
Source of nomination	Township delegates			County delegates			Municipal delegates
	Voters	Party	Both sources	Voters	Party	Both sources	
Agree	69.8	63.0	68.3	61.9	57.9	59.9	50.4
Basically agree	23.0	31.4	25.3	30.7	33.2	32.1	39.5
Somewhat disagree	4.4	4.2	4.2	5.0	7.3	6.0	9.0
Disagree	2.9	1.4	2.3	2.4	1.6	2.0	1.2
Total %	100	100		100	100		100
Observations	735	357		1,421	1,405		858

Source:

Author's surveys
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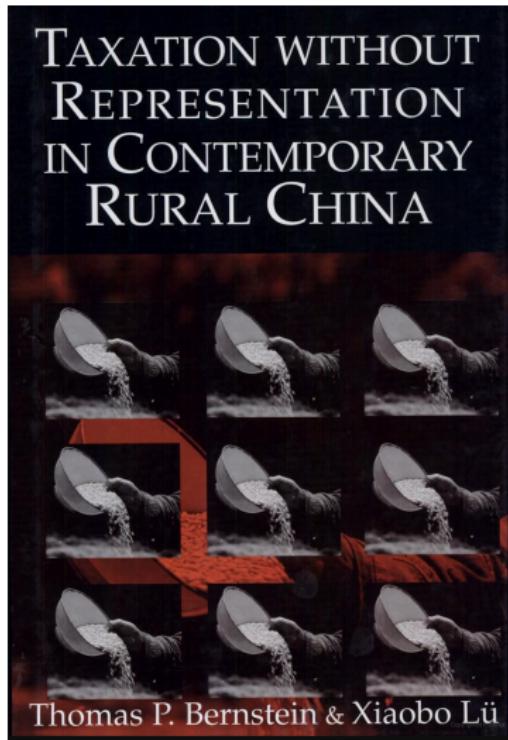
Survey data shows that Chinese local congressmen and women view themselves and act as "delegates."

Co-optation through local elections



- ▶ Currently, the Party allows for village elections as well as local elections for the People's Congress delegates
- ▶ While elections are not uncommon among authoritarian regimes, few have national and executive elections

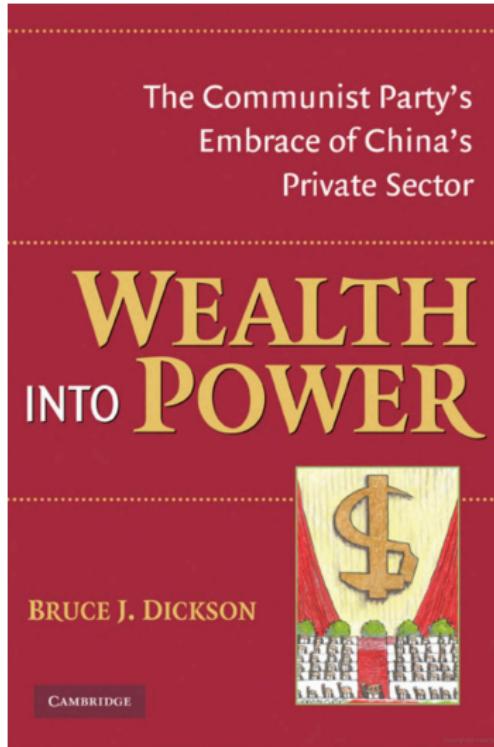
Co-optation through local elections



Thomas P. Bernstein & Xiaobo Lü

- ▶ In the case of village elections, they were introduced in the 1990s to tackle peasant grievances when it comes to fees collection (Berstein and Lu 2003)
- ▶ Broadly speaking, they provided an opportunity to monitor local officials and hold them accountable (Mayling Birney 2010)

Co-optation through Party

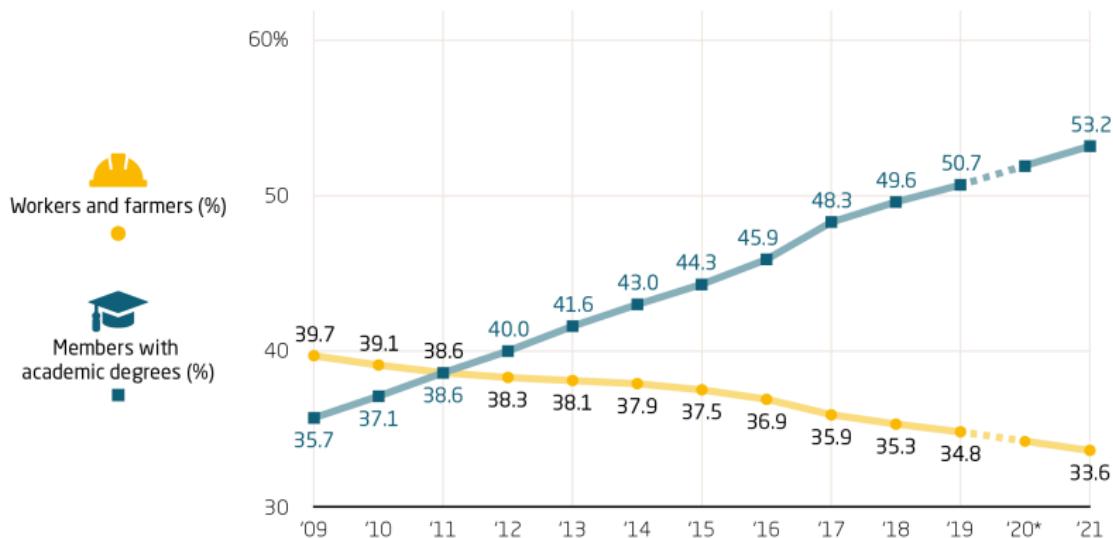


- ▶ People who joined the party under Mao were more likely to report ideological reasons; those in the post-1989 cohort mostly joined for the career benefits, and not just to work for the party or the government (Dickson 2013)
- ▶ Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" opened the Party's door to entrepreneurs, and it appears as a good business opportunity especially when these entrepreneurs were "elected" into the People's Congress (Truex 2014)
- ▶ The demographic composition of the Party Congress has changed a lot in the past two decades



The CCP is becoming more elitist

Share of different professional groups



*Interpolated data (No data available for 2020).

Source: Central Organization Department of the CCP

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The path to CCP membership

Five main application steps have to be taken



1) Written application

Candidates place a request with the local party cell explaining their interest and motivation. Within one month, the party cell sends a contact person to the candidate to outline the rest of the process.



2) Acceptance as a candidate

The candidate must provide a CV and information on their family, social connections and the political background of their parents. The party cell appoints two party members as mentors and supervisors.



3) One-year preparation period

The candidate must, at a minimum, complete a three-day course (e.g., at the party school). They must present a reflective report on Marxism-Leninism, the guidelines of the CCP, and current political developments every three months. The party cell verifies the candidate's information and political commitment by interviewing at least eight colleagues, neighbors and acquaintances.



4) Official acceptance process

Candidates can officially apply for party membership. They must name two guarantors (usually the two mentors). A superior party organization reviews the application in three to six months and interviews the candidate.



5) One-year trial membership

If the organization accepts the admission, the candidate is registered, sworn in, and begins a trial membership. Depending on income, members must pay between 0.5 and 2 percent of their net income annually as a membership fee.



6) Official membership

If there is no breach of party discipline or law, official membership is granted after one year.



Meritocracy as Authoritarian Co-Optation: Political Selection and Upward Mobility in China

HANZHANG LIU | Pitzer College, United States

Why does an authoritarian regime adopt meritocracy in its political selection? I argue that meritocracy can be used to co-opt large numbers of ordinary citizens by providing them with an opportunity of socioeconomic advancement instead of income redistribution, as long as the selection process is viewed as inclusive and rule-based. Focusing on the civil service examination in contemporary China, I examine how this meritocratic selection has shaped the relationship between college graduates and the Chinese regime. Exploiting a spatial-cohort variation in applicant eligibility, I find that the exam boosts college graduates' perceived upward mobility, which in turn weakens their demand for redistribution even in the face of growing inequality. These findings point to an alternative mode of authoritarian co-optation and highlight the role of upward mobility in regime stability.

Conclusion

- ▶ Dictators rarely rule by force only, and they will try all means to induce compliance and loyalty
- ▶ Authoritarian governance involves intense coalition building (within and outside the inner circle) and strikes the general equilibrium of coercion and co-optation
- ▶ China is no exception, and yet a number of puzzles remain to be answered:
 - How can the Party sustain a system of responsiveness without complete electoral accountability?
 - How can the Party strike the balance between the stick and carrot?

Next week: Looking back at China's Covid-19 crisis



See you next week!