

CP² Week 3: Structures of the Party-State

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Recap: From empire to nation-state (1911-1949)

- ▶ The transition from an empire (i.e., Qing) to a nation-state would require the central state authority to establish a compelling national identity with effective control over its territory
- ▶ State building was challenging
 - Unruly subnational political forces (e.g., warlords under Beiyang govt and CPC under Nationalist govt)
 - Competing revolutionary visions (i.e., CPC v KMT, see next slide)
 - External threats and influence: Japan, the Soviet Union and USA
- ▶ Nation building as unfinished business (to this day)
 - Taiwan as a Japanese colony
 - Peripheral areas (Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet/Xizang)

CPC v KMT



- ▶ KMT started as a loose alliance of anti-Qing rebel groups in the late 19th century; recreated in 1919 by Sun Yat-sen with the help from Moscow
- ▶ Chiang Kai-shek with his control over the Nationalist Army managed to become the leader of China through the "412 Incident" in 1927 and Northern Expedition between 1926 and 1928
- ▶ KMT remained fragmented (with some help of ideology)

CPC v KMT



- ▶ CPC started as an urban Communist party in 1921; retreated to the countryside in 1927 to rebuild its support base
- ▶ Mao Zedong rose to lead the Party by defeating the faction in favor of following the "guidance" from Moscow during the Long March (1934-1935)
- ▶ Mao managed to build a coherent party through a series of political movements in the 1940s

Revolutionaries for Railways

Chengyuan Ji¹  and Xiao Ma² 

Abstract

This study explores the sources of regional favoritism in government-invested infrastructure projects. We built an original county-level dataset that matches the biographies of 1614 retired communist revolutionaries with information on the expansion of China's state-directed high-speed railway program. Our findings indicate that a surviving revolutionary makes his birth county significantly more likely to receive the central government's approval for railway investment. This pattern is robust after accounting for a wide range of alternative explanations and a natural experiment design that exploits variations in the timings of revolutionaries' natural deaths. Additional evidence suggests that the empowering effect of the retired revolutionaries stems most likely from their assistance in their birth counties' bottom-up lobbying of the central government. Their moral authority as the founders of the regime helps boost local requests for investment in the eyes of central policymakers. Our findings highlight a bottom-up intergovernmental dynamic that translates personal influence into policy benefits.

Hong Yung Lee
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From Revolutionary
Cadres to Party
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in Socialist China**

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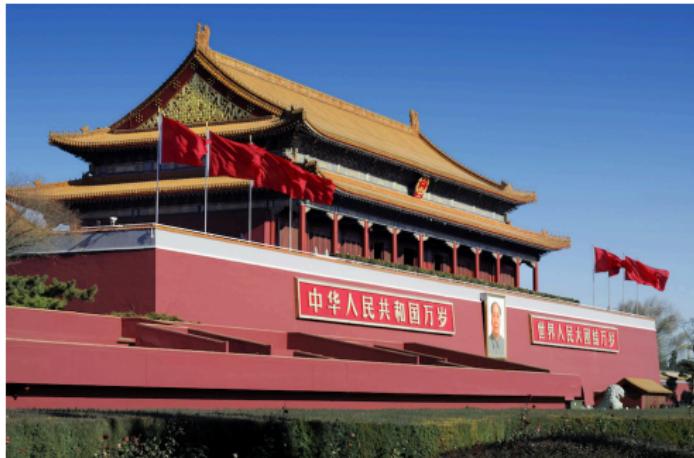
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Local states in the early 20th century (Remick 2002)

- ▶ Key idea(s): The behavior and capacity of local states vary significantly in China, as these two are shaped by central policy and local social contexts (history, limitations and ideology)
- ▶ Some questions to consider:
 - What is a state and state "capacity?" How did Remick define it? Why is state-building an important question? Why did she and many scholars choose to focus on taxation and public finance?
 - Why do we need to look central and local state-building as two distinctive and yet interrelated processes?
 - She mentioned a couple of countries to put her argument in a comparative perspective. Why? Does it make sense to you? Any other cases you can think of?

Week 3: Party-state Structures

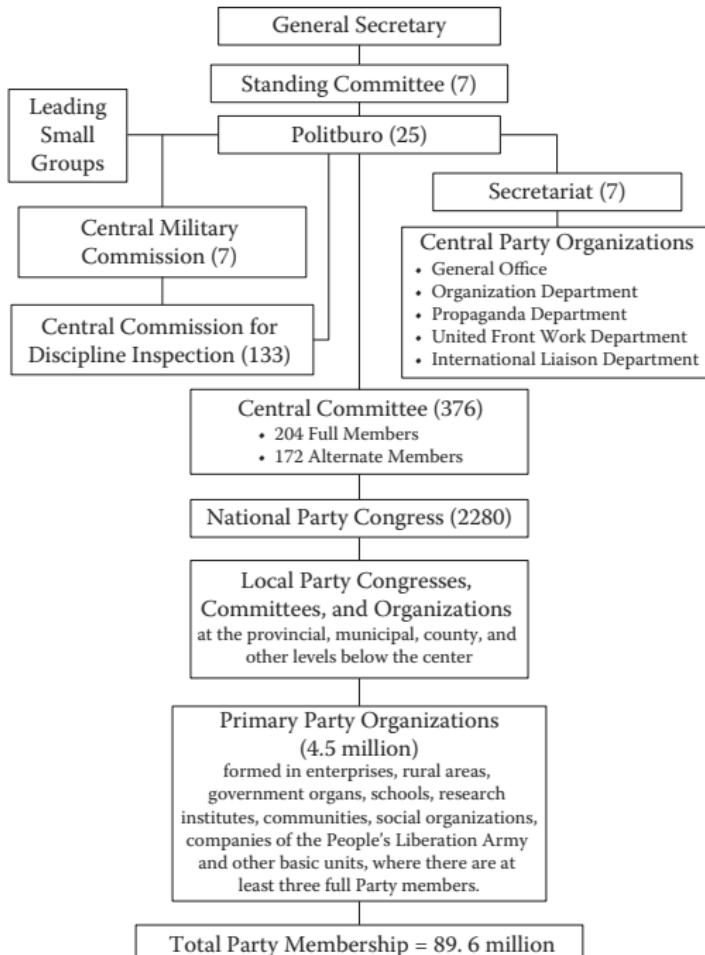


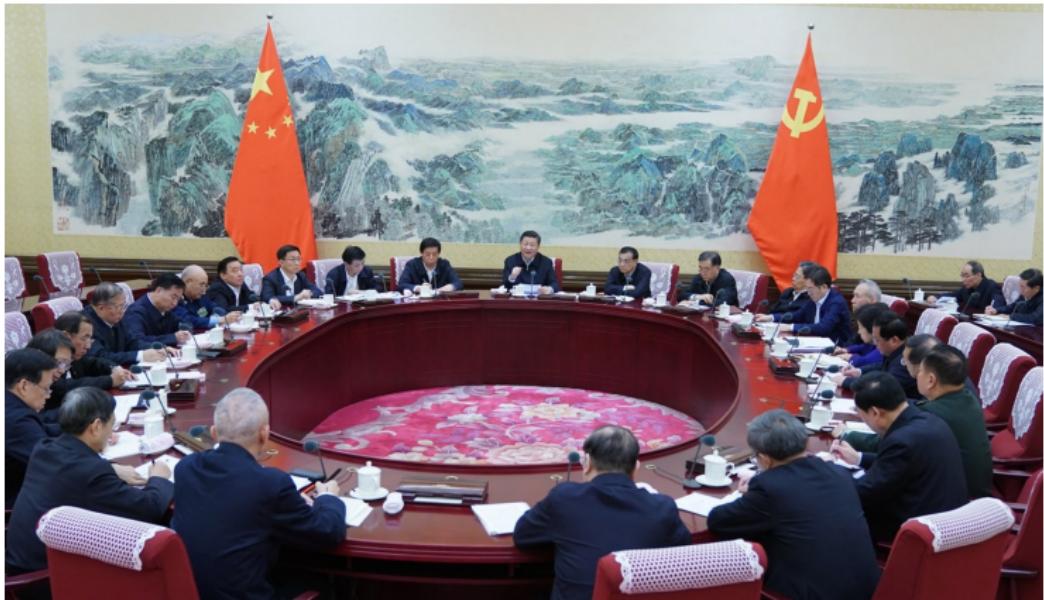
Overview

- ▶ The Chinese Party-state: Key elements and characteristics
 - The central Party leadership
 - The central state
 - Presence of the Party in the state
- ▶ Institutionalization of the Chinese Party-state
- ▶ Chinese Party-state in comparative perspective

The Party's Central Leadership

- ▶ The highest decision-making body is the **Standing Committee** of the **Politburo**, headed by the **General Secretary**, under them there are
 - Central Party Offices: General, Organization (*nomenklukla*), Propaganda (Publicity), United Front and Intl Liaison
 - Secretariat (i.e., secretary of individual Politburo SC members)
 - Central Military Commission
 - Central Commission for Discipline Inspection
 - Leading Small Groups
- ▶ Politburo members, including the General Secretary, are chosen through "internal" elections

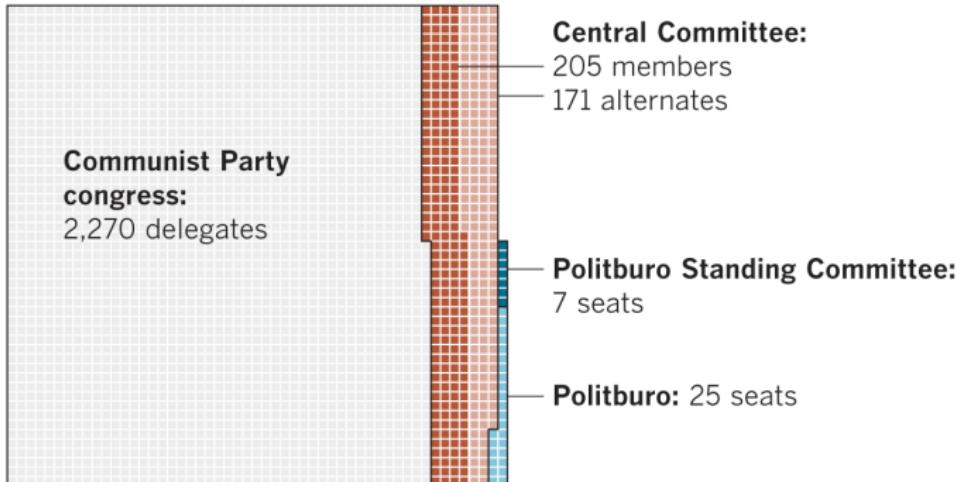




Politburo is the apex of the system

- ▶ The delegates of the **National Party Congress**, which meets every five years, elect the **Central Committee**
- ▶ The **General Secretary** is "elected" during the First Plenum (or Plenary session) of the **Central Committee**
- ▶ The **General Secretary** was only confirmed the highest leader of China after 1992 under **Jiang Zemin**
- ▶ The current post holder is **Xi Jinping**

China's Communist Party congress (as of 2012)



Source: Los Angeles Times reporting

Angelica Quintero / @latimesgraphics

The selection process illustrates the notion of "**democratic centralism**"
("more candidates than available seats" elections)

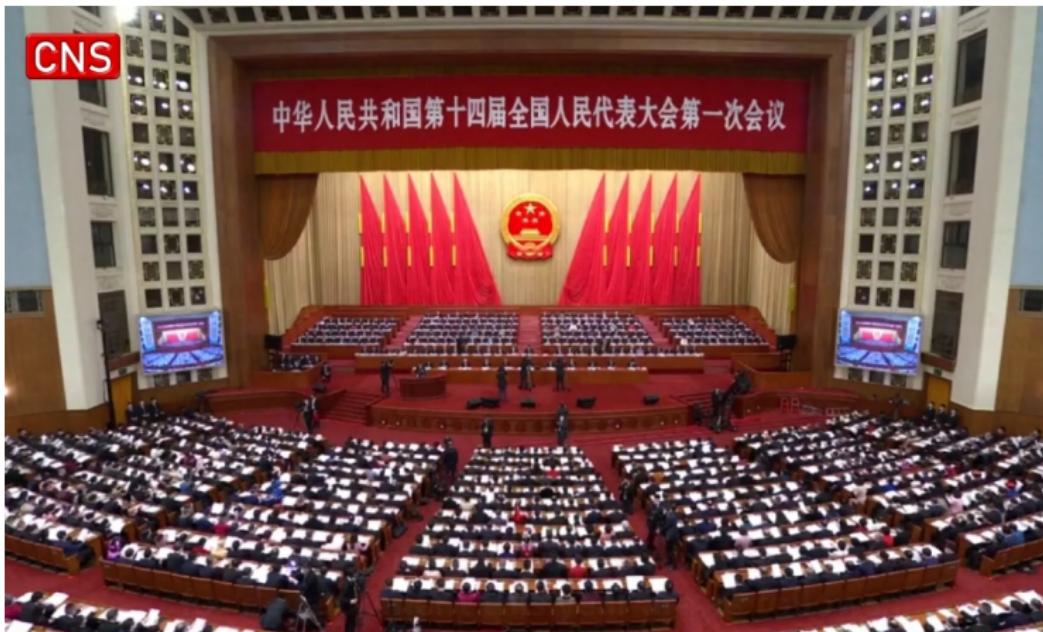
The Central State

- ▶ **Legislature:** National People's Congress (NPC)
 - Meets every year in Beijing
 - Elects the **President** and ruling cadres of other state organs every five years
 - Operates daily through the Standing Committee and Special Committees
 - Provides descriptive representation of different social groups and parties
- ▶ **Executive:** The State Council
 - Headed by the **Premier** (or Prime Minister), appointed by the **President** and approved by NPC
 - Operates through Ministries and different central commissions and Leading Small Groups



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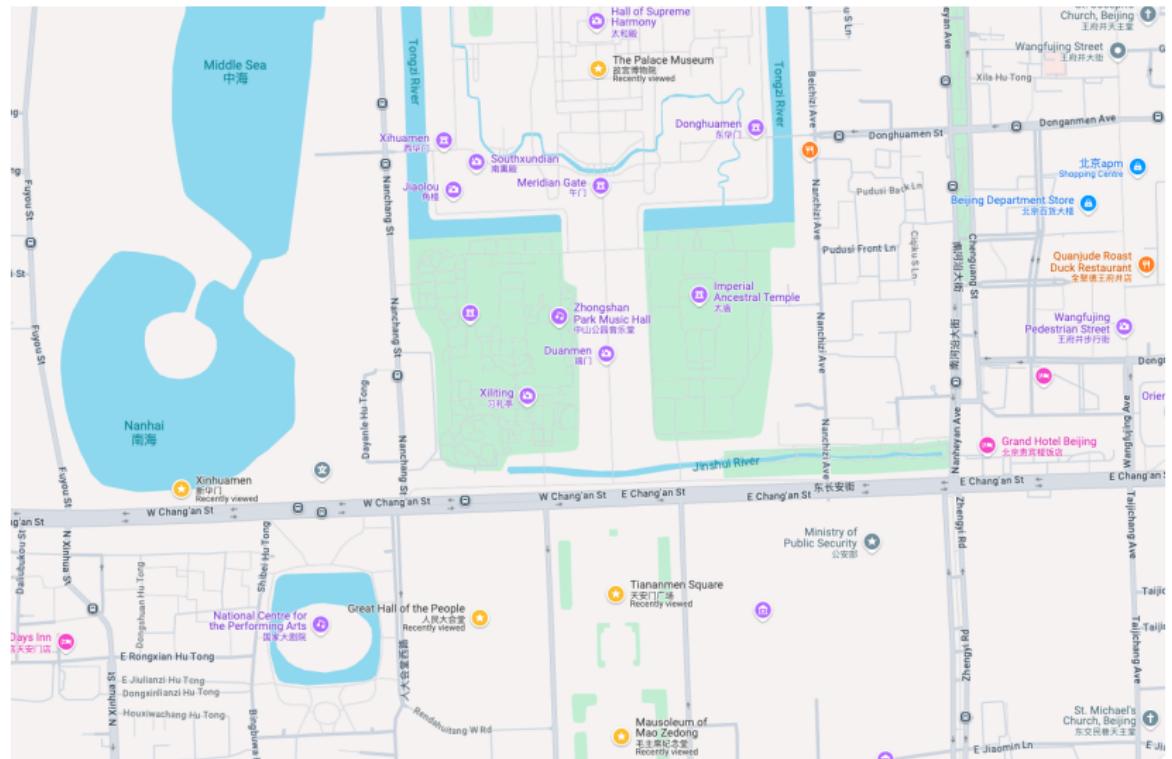


The First Meeting of the 14th National People's Congress in March 2023

The Returns to Office in a “Rubber Stamp” Parliament

RORY TRUEX *Yale University*

Are there returns to office in an authoritarian parliament? A new dataset shows that over 500 deputies to China's National People's Congress are CEOs of various companies. Entropy balancing is used to construct a weighted portfolio of Chinese companies that matches companies with NPC representation on relevant financial characteristics prior to the 11th Congress (2008–2012). The weighted fixed effect analysis suggests that a seat in the NPC is worth an additional 1.5 percentage points in returns and a 3 to 4 percentage point boost in operating profit margin in a given year. Additional evidence reveals that these rents stem primarily from the “reputation boost” of the position, and not necessarily formal policy influence. These findings confirm the assumptions of several prominent theories of authoritarian politics but suggest the need to further probe the nature of these institutions.



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Party-state: Key characteristics and debates

- ▶ Party-state helps to characterize the Party's ruling position in the Chinese political system
 - **Party committee** is present in every government department and office
 - The central Party offices "manage" and coordinate different functional government departments (e.g., Propaganda/Publicity and Ministry of Education)
 - Leading Working Groups reported to the Party center
 - Key Politburo members leaders also have posts in the government
 - Key important offices are separately listed but actually the same one (e.g., Central Military Commission)
 - Key Party and government offices work jointly despite being two different offices (e.g., Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the Ministry of Supervision)
- ▶ Scholars in China (and the Party) advocate to use the term "**Party-government**" to demonstrate the Party's extensive presence in the Chinese bureaucracy

Institutionalization of the Party-state over generations

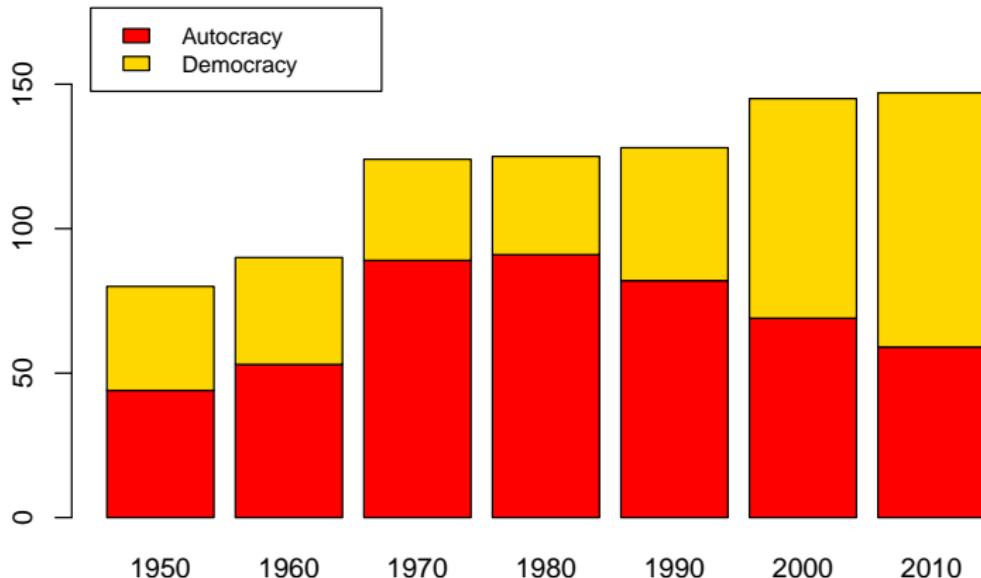
- ▶ Political succession, developed by Deng Xiaoping and confirmed in the early 1990s
 - Term limit (except the President and Vice-President)
 - Retirement age
 - Successor-in-training
 - Grandpa-designated successor
 - Comprehensive takeover
- ▶ Collective leadership, established by Deng after the Cultural Revolution

Defining authoritarian regimes (Geddes et al 2015)

- ▶ An executive achieved power through **undemocratic means** (anything other than direct, reasonably fair, competitive elections)
- ▶ The government achieved power through democratic means, but subsequently **changed the formal or informal rules**
- ▶ The **military** prevented parties that substantial numbers of citizens would be expected to vote for from competing and/or dictated important policy choices

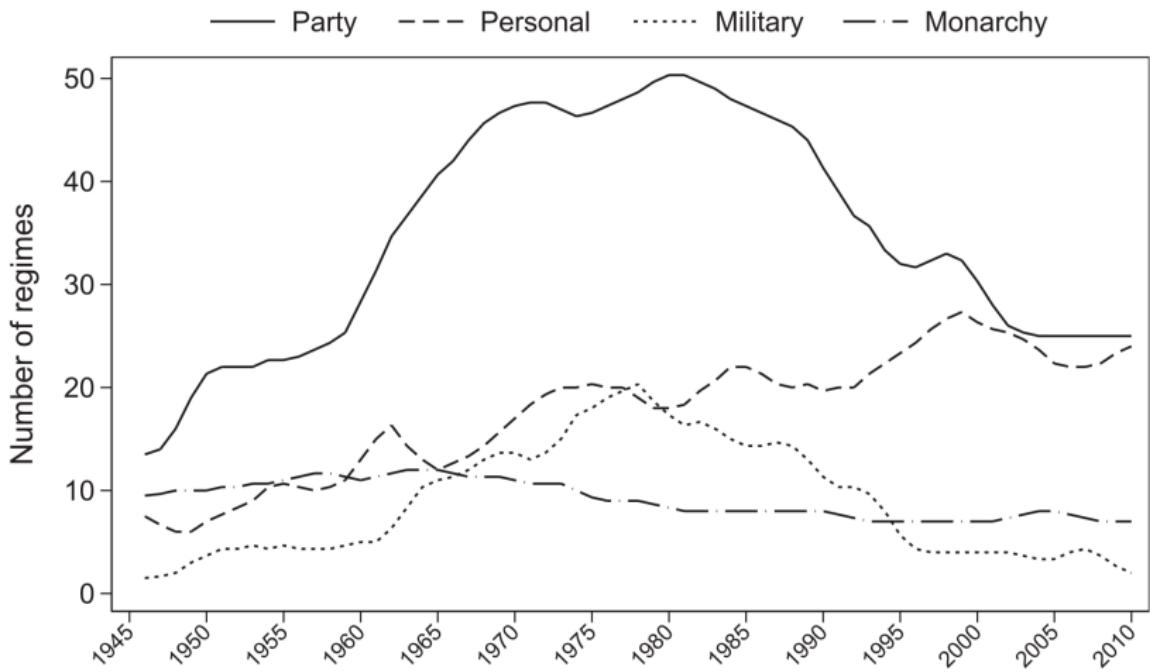


Autocracy vs. Democracy in the World (Geddes et al)



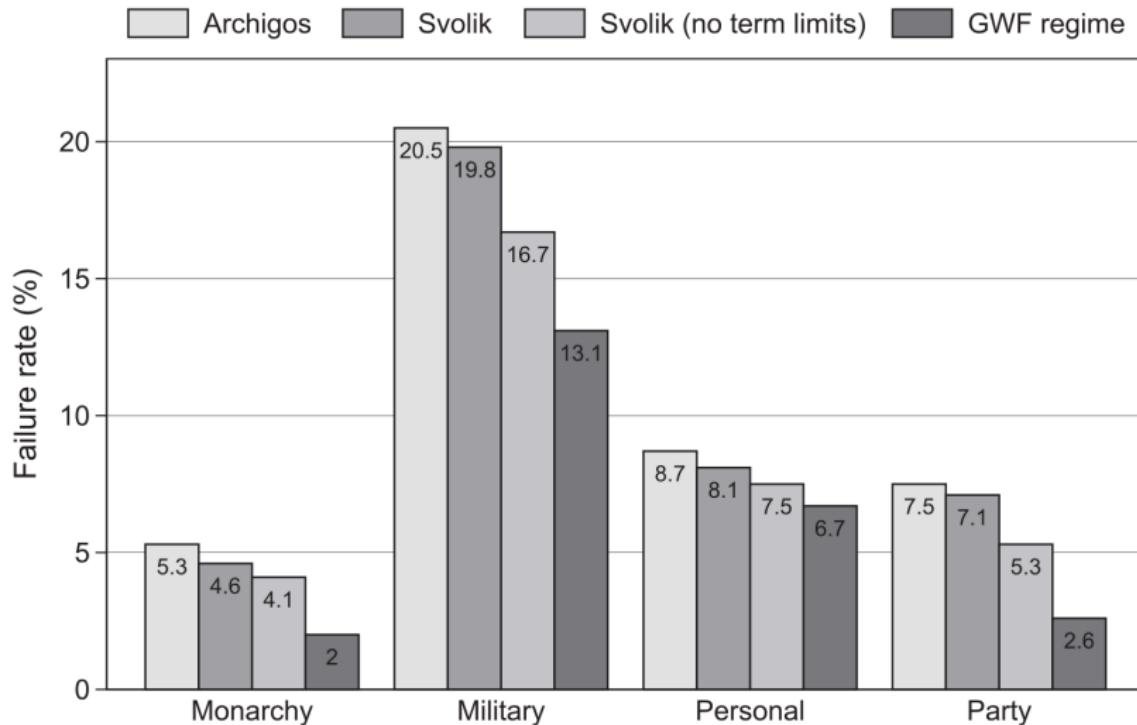
Varieties of authoritarian regimes

- ▶ **Personalist**: Access to office and fruits of office depends on much more the discretion of an individual leader; not identical with **monarchy**
- ▶ **Military**: A group of officers (e.g., junta) decides who will rule and exercise some influence on policy; carrying with the seeds of disintegration on their own while elites in other two types of regime have more incentives to cooperate with each other
- ▶ **Single-party** (or hegemonic party): Access to political office and control over policy are dominated by one party, though other parties may legally exist and compete in elections
- ▶ **Mixed** or hybrid



<https://sites.psu.edu/dictators/>





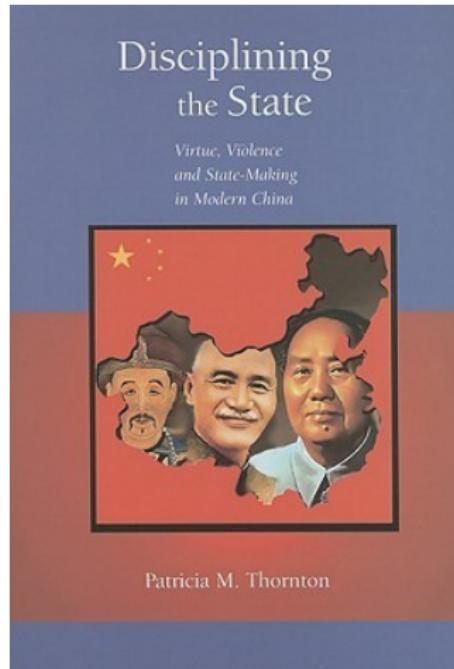
What makes single-party regimes special

- ▶ Key to survival is to make sure elite cohesion through rents and economic success (especially in the case of China)
- ▶ Single-party regimes favor internal and societal co-optation
 - Party holds organizational capacity to control the career paths of officials, organizes the distribution of benefits to supporters, and mobilizes citizens to show support for party leaders in other ways
 - Party cadres simply want to hold their offices and tend to stand by to observe the winners of internal struggle
 - Party has broad basis of popular support and has the institutional and organizational sources to stay responsive and co-opt for greater participation (Ghandi 2008)
- ▶ Caveat: Parties with weak external rival and easy rent access (e.g., the Philippines) tend to be divided and collapse (Smith 2005)

“The Institutional Turn in Comparative Authoritarianism” (Penpinsky 2014)

- ▶ Why institutions matter for authoritarian survival?
 - Institutions are constraints: Elections, parties and legislatures contain factional conflicts while regulating the mobilization of mass support
 - Institutions are dictator's instruments: They do what their creators want them to do (e.g., co-optation and power distribution) and can be adjusted
- ▶ Why institutions are important for the study of comparative authoritarianism
 - Path dependence and increasing returns: Institutions reproduce the political and social order
 - Institutions shed light on problems of redistribution and policy making that motivate regime behavior

Discussion: “Party All the Time” (Thornton 2021)



- ▶ What are some of the key differences between being a ruling party and a revolutionary party?
- ▶ How does CCP manage to succeed both as a revolutionary before 1949 and as a ruling party after the PRC was established?
- ▶ Why do many authoritarian leaders rule through the party? How do they build their parties?

Concluding remarks: More questions to think about

- ▶ Institutional durability and (policy) changes in authoritarian regimes
- ▶ One-party dominant regime (e.g., Japan and Italy) and hegemonic party regime (e.g., Mexico and China)
- ▶ Domestic politics and foreign policy

See you next week!

