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Analysis in Limbo: Contemporary Chinese Politics Amid the Maturation of Reform

LOWELL DITTMER AND WILLIAM HURST

> *Chinese economic and political development have forged ahead "from stone to stone in crossing the river," increasingly aleatory in its progress as it moves into deeper waters. We contend in this essay that the analysis of Chinese politics has so too fallen into a sort of limbo. There is no longer a "key link"—such as Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, politics in command, or class struggle—to explain the movement's direction. Despite the resurgent vitality of the transformation overtaking the country, the precise source and thrust of that dynamism has diversified and become far less obvious. The field of Chinese political analysis has*

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changed and grown as China has changed and grown, becoming increasingly polycentric, ambiguous, and sophisticated.

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Over the past two decades, China has gravitated into a state of limbo between plan and market, between extensive and intensive growth, between the consolidation of democratic centralism and first steps toward political reform, and between the institutionalization of politics and growing signs of politico-economic decay. Over the same period, the study of Chinese politics has also slipped into a limbo among substantive concerns, among levels of analysis, and among methodological approaches. As China has undergone continuing transformation in the decade since Deng Xiaoping's (鄧小平) famed "southern tour" (南巡), the China field has seen the rise and fall of several important research paradigms and substantive debates. Our purpose here is to sketch a road map of these developments in the field, flagging approaches, methods, and debates along the way that seem likely to remain salient over the next decade and beyond.

This essay consists of seven sections. Sections one to five focus on the shifting substantive foci of the China field. These include respective examinations of central politics and elite analysis, local and regional politics, ideology and political culture, state-society relations, and Chinese foreign policy. The last two sections respectively cover two analytical approaches which have seen considerable movement over the past decade: levels of analysis and methodological techniques. Despite the regime's obvious reluctance to countenance meaningful political reform, headlong economic modernization has altered politics willy-nilly, as the political system beyond the center has accommodated itself to the market and to a reawakening society. Moreover, as politics has changed, so has the study of Chinese politics. The proliferation of data and multiplication of analytical approaches, moreover, has raised the issue of how to coordinate different approaches to the same problem.

The Central State

The substantive focus of the China field has shifted in recent years (though in many respects regrettably so) away from analysis of the state—at least of the central Party-state apparatus. From Franz Schurmann, to Stuart Schram, to Benjamin Schwartz, to Tang Tsou, a generation of China scholars offered progressively refined interpretations of the ideological lines, organizational forms, factional struggles, and power dynamics of China's top ruling elite.[1] Since the death of Mao Zedong (毛澤東), however, the central leadership arena—once the site of nation-transforming drives and dramatic, high-stake elite power plays—has become increasingly institutionalized.[2] True, there has since Tiananmen (天安門) been a growing reconcentration of power at the center, arresting the decentralization and devolution trends of the 1980s. The new leadership, socialized in the discipline of engineering, has, however, adopted a more conventional, buttoned-down administrative style and its initiatives have been far more measured. Internal disagreements still occur, but the losers—though still evicted from the magic circle—are no longer made object lessons in mass campaigns mobilized for the moral edification of the "masses." Such a fate would be inconsistent with the new elite subculture of civility that has been cultivated since the death of Mao. The emphasis has been on discretion and on keeping disagreements contained within the Party; although factional differences still seem to manifest themselves (e.g., in the politics of protégé promotion), one now finds it quite difficult to identify the various factional groupings with distinctive policy agendas.

In the face of this determined blandness, the political analysis of

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[1]See, for example: Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Communism and China: Ideology in Flux* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); Stuart R. Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Tang Tsou, *The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

[2]By which we simply mean, consistent with ordinary language usage, the implementation of the systematic planning of change in order to reduce uncertainty and risk. Thus institutionalization is often linked to rationalization and routinization.

central elites seems to have fallen into relative desuetude. To be sure, there are significant exceptions. The contemporary study of high-level central politics has focused on key political actors (i.e., individual biographies, small groups, or aggregates), implicitly conceding that political structural reform has been minimal during this period. Indeed, not all of the finest works produced during this period have focused on current developments. The works of Roderick MacFarquhar, Frederick Teiwes, Jing Huang, and Qiu Jin have all taken advantage of the latest archival, memorial, or interview data to cast new light on that heyday of elite power politics, the Maoist period.

MacFarquhar completed his magisterial trilogy—focused on the 17-year period culminating in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (無產 階級文化大革命)—with a final volume equal in length (733 pages) to its two antecedents.[3] Whereas MacFarquhar's compilation of data is demonstrably exhaustive (at this point in time), his interpretation of that data may not be the last word. Indeed, his perspective tends to shift in the course of the three volumes. There is an early acceptance of Mao's paranoid vision, in which the great helmsman maneuvers to make a comeback from a position of internal exile on the second "front," to which he had been banished after the Great Leap Forward (大躍進). MacFarquhar's concluding position, however, is that although Mao had indeed launched the Cultural Revolution to entrap and destroy his opponents, the great helmsman's political supremacy had never really been at risk. Mao was not surrounded by enemies or "time bombs," but by somewhat bewildered supporters intent upon consolidating the revolution, a project Mao himself had come to consider fundamentally misconceived. The substantive picture that emerges is essentially a "Mao in command" model, in which an aging leader ruthlessly manipulates his dwindling arsenal of political resources to maintain his own hegemony to the last breath.

The MacFarquhar approach to Chinese leadership analysis, as illus-

trated in this as in previous works,[4] is to focus not on an individual leader but on a watershed event, flashing back to an elaborate reconstruction of the elite actions and motives leading up to that particular outcome; the implicit assumption is that of a top-down dynamic.[5] This approach involves the careful consideration of appearance data and other Aesopian indicators, under the assumption that each high-level CCP cadre is not only a decision-maker and something of an original theorist but also a public performer, whose every public act is carefully gauged to signal certain cues to one's confederates and to attract new supporters (hopefully without antagonizing rivals).

Frederick Teiwes, Qiu Jin, and Jing Huang use essentially the same approach, with somewhat greater reliance on interviews. Qiu Jin brings to her study much more "inside dope" (内部資料, *neibu ziliao*), by virtue of her close relationship to one of the principals in the Lin Biao affair (林彪事件), which leads her to greater emphasis both on the role of family dynamics (e.g., the clash between Ye Qun 葉群 and Jiang Qing 江青, and the strain between Ye and her two children) and on the elite subculture in which these stories were played out. Otherwise her account corroborates that of Teiwes and Sun, who rely for the most part on public sources.[6] Jing Huang's study is in a sense the most ambitious of this genre to date, tracing elite factionalism from its alleged origins in the territorial "mountaintops" (山頭, *shantou*). These mountaintops arose due to the physical inaccessibility of isolated base areas during both the Sino-Japanese War and the war of national liberation, and were allegedly maintained all the way through the Cultural Revolution (due to the assignment of whole groups of cadres to particular regions in the post-liberation period). Where others see

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[4]E.g., cf. Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers* (London: Stevens, 1960).

[5]Volume 3 departs from the previously exclusive top-down approach in affording a somewhat greater role to society, especially in the agrarian crisis that followed the Great Leap Forward.

[6]Jin Qiu, *The Culture of Power: The Lin Biao Incident in the Cultural Revolution* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999); and Frederick Teiwes with Warren Sun, *The Tragedy of Lin Biao: Riding the Tiger during the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1971* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996).

episodic confrontations, Huang sees the historic rise and fall of the "Yan'an [延安] round table," a hub-and-spoke arrangement of informal patron-client ties among whom lateral communication (seen as "factionalism") was forbidden, allowing only vertical communication with the Chairman.[7]

These studies are premised on the common assumption that primary group ties have the tenacity to withstand the shocks of intra-elite power dynamics, leading not only to the reliance on patronage to build loyalty groups or factions, but also to the increasing reliance on nuclear family members (the wives of Liu Shaoqi 劉少奇, Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Kang Sheng 康生, and Zhou Enlai 周恩來; and the children of Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao). Only David Bachman diverges from this model of an ambivalent network of informal ties in his innovative interpretation of the factional dynamics of the Great Leap Forward as a clash between a financial clique and a heavy industry/central planning group.[8] Although this interesting notion will require further empirical research, a model of elite interest aggregation based on the functional differentiation of labor may be ahead of its time amid the tumultuous Great Leap Forward. (The same model of bureaucratic politics was applied far more comfortably to a reform context by Susan Shirk.[9]) Yet if we resort to informal politics, a big puzzle is how to account for such an exception to primary group loyalty as the Chairman himself, who repeatedly betrayed (and ultimately destroyed) his factional network in the course of a series of policy volte-faces, most spectacularly by throwing in his lot with a motley congeries of passionate youth during the Cultural Revolution. True, Mao also had a conventionally recruited factional network that consisted of relatives, former bodyguards, and secretaries, but his loyalty could never be taken for granted—even by his wife.

The leading analysts of contemporary Chinese elite politics—Joseph Fewsmith, Richard Baum, and Cheng Li—have introduced both meth-

[7]Jing Huang, *Factionalism in Chinese Communist Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[8]David Bachman, *Bureaucracy, Economy and Leadership in China: The Institutional Origins of the Great Leap Forward* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[9]Susan Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

odological refinements and new substantive insights to factional analysis. Fewsmith has broadened his purview to include policy intellectuals and ideological discourse in his analysis (though the empirical linkage to policy "lines" calls for further research), taking into account the opening of ideology from Caesero-papist "directives" to inter-group formulation; substantively, he has subjected Tang Tsou's model of an inevitable "struggle to win all or lose all" to empirical test, introducing refinements to take into account the aim-inhibited tension between Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun (陳雲) over the pace and direction of reform in the 1980s.[10]   Richard Baum's thorough study of reform in the 1980s introduces the dynamic of opening and closing (放 *fang* and 收 *shou*), originally used to characterize the liberalization of media controls, to help us understand the spasmodic pace of reform.[11]   Cheng Li has emerged as the outstanding quantitative analyst of elite dynamics, reviving—in more systematic and comparative fashion—the time-tested criteria for understanding the transformation of the membership of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and the National People's Congress (NPC, 全國人民代表大會): birthplace, age, education, career background, gender, nationality, and work unit.[12]   In his most recent work he also revives and amplifies the concept of elite generations, first systematically employed by William Whitson during the Cultural Revolution, noting inter alia that the Hu Jintao (胡錦濤)-Wen Jiabao (溫家寶) group was socialized by the Cultural Revolution.[13]   This approach should be useful so long as it avoids the ecological fallacy of gen-

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[10]See Joseph Fewsmith: *Dilemmas of Reform in China: Political Conflict and Economic Debate* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994); *Elite Politics in Contemporary China* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001); and *China Since Tiananmen: The Politics of Transition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[11]Richard Baum, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[12]Cheng Li, *China's Leaders: The New Generation* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

[13]William W. Whitson, *The Chinese High Command* (New York: Praeger, 1973). The concept was since further developed by Hong Yung Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), and by Xiaowei Zang, *Children of the Cultural Revolution: Family Life and Political Behavior in Mao's China* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2000), inter alia.

eralizing a group characteristic to any one individual member of that group. Kevin O'Brien and Murray Scot Tanner have subjected the NPC to renewed scrutiny, demonstrating how limited structural reform has enhanced the political power of the national legislature, once mocked as a "flower vase" (花瓶, *huaping*) or "rubber stamp" (橡皮圖章, *xiangpi tuzhang*).[14]

There is general agreement among these scholars of contemporary elite politics that (despite specific glaring exceptions) an elite subculture of civility and discretion has since been established, minimizing the public discussion of ideological or policy differences, regularizing the convention and procedures of decision-making forums, and giving rise to at least the appearance of increasing stability and managerial competence. To be sure, formidable pitfalls still jeopardize the progress of China's gradually maturing reform, not least of which is the increasing paucity of legitimate and relatively undistorted channels of political feedback from the masses to the elite.

Local and Regional Politics

In the relative absence of work on the central Party-state, there has been growing interest in the local state, stimulated no doubt by the decentralization and devolution of power during the Deng Xiaoping period, as notably analyzed by Susan Shirk. Whereas the focus in the early 1980s had been on the grass-roots levels—the village, the township, and the county, by the late 1980s the emphasis had shifted to the province, a level relatively neglected since the Cultural Revolution. A rich analytical harvest ensued, including much monographic literature on the individual provinces, comparative studies of center-provincial coordination of anti-inflation efforts, fixed-asset investment policy, and so forth; even a journal specifically ad-

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[14]Kevin J. O'Brien, *Reform Without Liberalization: China's National People's Congress and the Politics of Institutional Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Murray Scot Tanner, *The Politics of Lawmaking in Post-Mao China: Institutions, Processes, and Democratic Prospects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

dressed to provincial issues was launched.[15] Although this literature is so rich that it is difficult to generalize (indeed, that is one of its raisons d'être), we may perhaps infer from this body of research three main points.

First, contrary to the image of totalitarian *Gleichschaltung*, China is extremely diverse. Many central policies are hence discretionary, and those that are general are often adapted to local circumstances in the course of implementation. The first casualty of this finding was Shirk's conception of "bureaucratic politics," which properly highlights the importance of provincial and local leadership but glosses over regional differences.

Second, the balance of power between center and province is constantly fluctuating, and provincial leaderships gained economic resources in the reform era via marketization, privatization, and the expropriation of extrabudgetary funds, as well as by the shift from "two down" to "one down" (i.e., after 1982, the center could appoint only the top tier of provincial cadres, leaving the provincial leadership to appoint their own subordinates). While delegating economic authority, the center, however, continues to exercise political sovereignty through its control of the military, and by appointing or rotating the provincial leadership.[16] Nor is the balance of power zero-sum, for the provinces are agencies of the center, with a modicum of cooperation being mutually advantageous.

Third, since Deng's southern tour, center-provincial relations have been moving toward institutionalization. These relations were previously

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[5]See Hans Hendricksche and Feng Chongyi, eds., *The Political Economy of China's Provinces: Comparative and Competitive Leadership* (London: Routledge, 1999); Peter T.Y. Cheung, Jae Ho Chung, and Zhimin Lin, eds., *Provincial Strategies of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1998); Linda Chelan Li, *Centre and Provinces: China 1978-1993, Power as Non-Zero-Sum* (London: Clarendon, 1998); Zhiyue Bo, *Chinese Provincial Leaders: Economic Performance and Political Mobility since 1949* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2002); Yasheng Huang, *Inflation and Investment Controls in China: The Political Economy of Central-Local Relations During the Reform Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and John Fitzgerald, ed., *Rethinking China's Provinces* (New York: Routledge, 2002). The journal *Provincial China* has been published by the Institute for International Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney since 1997.

[6]Notwithstanding visions of "Chinese-style federalism," provincial representation on the Central Committee has statistically declined from the Cultural Revolution period through the reform era, though this trend seems to have been arrested at the 16th Party Congress. See Bo, *Chinese Provincial Leaders*.

characterized by an ambiguity that both sides sought to preserve as a bargaining cushion in case of future uncertainties. More recent reforms have, however, introduced a clearer delineation of jurisdictional boundaries and an articulation of respective rules (e.g., cf. the 1994 shift from the highly discretionary fiscal contractual system to tax sharing, the latter of which is characterized by uniform requirements and is moving toward legal codification).

Ideology and Political Culture

Interest in the role of officially sanctioned ideas, or "ideology," in inspiring and regulating the political system has languished along with the neglect of the central Party-state. The concept of political culture, moreover, has been even more egregiously neglected.

There are still a number of worthy contributions to the literature premised on the assumption that ideological or theoretical factors have been central to the restructuring of China's political economy. However, they seem to have been marginalized—in stark contrast to the reception given the classic of this genre, Franz Schurmann's *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*. For example, Yan Sun offers a carefully wrought account of Chinese discourse over the reform of China's political economy (with relative emphasis on economy), including the ideologically fraught issues of ownership, distribution, socialist transition, and class struggle. Her conclusion is that in balance, by retaining continuity within the overarching framework of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought (while making myriad quite drastic pragmatic adjustments of that framework to fit market realities), China has avoided many of the destabilizing consequences of overthrowing that framework completely, as occurred in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.[17] Feng Chen, too, in *Economic*

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[17]Yan Sun, *The Chinese Reassessment of Socialism, 1986-1992* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Transition and Political Legitimacy, focuses on the neglected role of ideology in Chinese structural reform and, like Sun, opines that "a total change of fundamental principles would shake the very foundations of the system."[18] Chen's narrative is also more effectively calibrated with the politics of economic reform than that of Sun, who tends to leave her discourses in their intellectual settings and to rely on a rhetoric of synchrony (*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*) rather than causally linking them to structural reform in the "real" world.

Such studies can be seen as a useful corrective to the recent tendency to assume, with Fukuyama, that ideology is essentially defunct since the death of Mao and the collapse of the communist bloc. They point out, to the contrary, that despite its far more elastic contours and attendant loss of popular credibility, Marxist ideology continues to rationalize regime maintenance of discipline over the masses and perhaps to encourage a more long-term perspective on elite political theorizing and collective agenda setting for the future. Ideology is still alive and important, but more for the leadership than the masses, and more semantically ambiguous and lower in profile. Ideology is also the product of increasingly disparate influences and no longer so completely monopolized by a Caesero-papist leadership. Both studies are in a bit of a conceptual quandary here, however, tending to fall back on the old hierophantic paradigm in which ideology functions as a "general line" to which society marches in lock step. Thus they fail to come to terms with the specific form of ideological secularization now overtaking China,[19] part of a more general spiritual disenchantment accompanying economic progress that has preoccupied students of religion in Western culture at least since Nietzsche.[20]

Political culture, like ideology, is concerned with the supramundane

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[18]Feng Chen, *Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy in Post-Mao China: Ideology and Reform* (Albany, N.Y.: University of New York Press, 1995), 209.

[19]For a recent contribution more alert to this tendency, see Kalpana Misra, *From Post-Maoism to Post-Marxism* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

[20]See, for example, Thomas Luckman, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1967); and Steve Bruce, ed., *Religion and Modernization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

world of symbolic meanings, but differs in being more eclectic and less logically coherent. In the context of ideological decay, one might have expected ideology to be increasingly subsumed by the local political culture; indeed, there is some indication that this is occurring, with greater intellectual tolerance—even active interest—being extended to Confucianism and other parts of China's rich traditional legacy.[21] Yet these tendencies have been dwarfed in the last decade or so by two competing tendencies. On the one hand, the economy (specifically economic growth) seems to have engulfed all spiritual concerns, providing an array of short-term motivations not requiring elaborate cultural interpretation.[22] Second, since the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown there has been a pervasive censorship (in large part self-censorship) of the sort of political culture once dramatized in such public demonstrations, which once provided grist for cultural analysis.[23] All of the above helps to explain why the entire field of political culture analysis seems to have dessicated of late, reflecting trends in the discipline.

Yet the Chinese continue to have a quite distinctive political culture, and so a new conceptual armory—in some ways more precise and serviceable than the old—has gradually made its appearance. First, we have the concepts of civil society and the public sphere, which enjoyed great popularity in the wake of the collapse of the communist bloc countries, in part due to the impression that the growth of a civil society in Eastern Europe had helped to undermine the old regime and build an invisible social alternative. Unfortunately, the PRC leadership was also aware of the role of the Catholic Church and Solidarity in Poland and the Protestants in East

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[21]See, for example, the articles by Kam Louie, Godwin C. Chu, and Roger T. Ames in Shiping Hua, ed., *Chinese Political Culture, 1989-2000* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).

[22]Lucian Pye makes a valiant (and quite insightful) attempt in "On Chinese Pragmatism in the 1980s," *The China Quarterly*, no. 106 (June 1986): 207-34.

[23]Thus both Lucian Pye's *The Spirit of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968) and Richard Solomon's magnum opus, *Mao's Revolution and Chinese Political Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), focused largely on the Cultural Revolution. The last set of books to define culture in this way focused on the 1989 demonstrations. Particularly noteworthy is the anthology by Jeffrey Wasserstrom and Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1992), which coins the concept of "political theater."

Germany. Thus, the proliferation of NGOs in the 1980s proved something of a "bubble," being followed by a sustained crackdown in the 1990s on both the Falungong (法輪功) and all conceivable manifestations of political dissidence. Intellectual interest in civil society and the public sphere subsided substantially.

A second conceptual innovation that has arisen to deal with cultural and intellectual currents has been that of discourse analysis, which tends to focus largely on those public debates or quasi-debates that impinge on the central policy "line." Joseph Fewsmith, for example, has typically paired his elite analysis with an analysis of politically relevant intellectual discourse.[24] Following the practice of many Chinese intellectuals, Fewsmith carefully divided prominent intellectuals into two main groups: liberals and the "new left." The new left is further subdivided between new nationalists, new statists, and post-moderns. Each of these categories of intellectuals, he argues, carries influence among a particular faction of politicians, though no single intellectual or group carries decisive weight in any policy debate. Although the exact empirical connection between elite moves and intellectual currents cannot be proved, the juxtaposition is persuasive and helps place the tiny elite arena in some sort of meaningful sociopolitical context. Other contributors to the study of intellectual discourse in China include: the bold reinterpretation of Mao Zedong's Yan'an rectification movement by David Apter and Tony Saich; Frank Dikotter's sweeping and controversial study of the discourse on race (only the epilogue of which is concerned with the post-1949 period); and Michael Sullivan's interesting discussion of the impact of Western thinking on Chinese views of the socialist transition.[25]

While these new conceptual tools represent an improvement of the

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[24]Fewsmith, *China Since Tiananmen.*

[25]See David E. Apter and Tony Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Frank Dikotter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992); and Michael J. Sullivan, "The Impact of Western Political Thought on Chinese Political Discourse on Transitions from Leninism, 1986-1992," *World Affairs* 137, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 79-92. See also Neil Renwick and Qing Cao, "China's Political Discourse towards the 21st Century: Victimhood, Identity, and Political Power," *East Asia* 17, no. 14 (Winter 1999): 111 ff.

language of political culture in avoiding sweeping holistic generalizations, neither is a wholly satisfactory replacement. The language of civil society and the public sphere is focused not on content but on the empty arena, and civil society is typically defined in an unrealistically liberal way, fitting few countries other than the United States. The language of discourse embraces substantive concerns, but is applicable only to the articulate intellectual community, and cannot really be said to represent an advance in conceptual precision.

State-Society Relations

The study of state-society relations has continued to thrive, chiefly in the form of analysis of the state's relationship to social groups. Such groups as workers, peasants, cadres, and intellectuals have all received a good deal of attention—and recently entrepreneurs have also begun to generate interest. This section is divided into two main parts. The first categorizes the main debates and findings regarding important social groups (i.e., *security personnel, working class, peasantry, cadres, intellectuals, professionals,* and *businessmen*). The second part presents our attempt to synthesize these disparate research lines into an overall schema.

Individual Social Groups
     Security personnel: Soldiers and constituents of China's security apparatus, however, have been something of a fifth wheel in this trend. With the exceptions of Murray Scot Tanner,[26] David Shambaugh,[27] and You Ji,[28]

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[26]Murray Scot Tanner, "Ideological Struggle over Police Reform, 1988-1993," in *Transition from Communism in China: Institutional and Comparative Analyses*, ed. Edwin A. Winkler (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 111-28; and Murray Scot Tanner, "State Coercion and the Balance of Awe: The 1983-1986 'Stern Blows' Anti-Crime Campaign," *The China Journal*, no. 44 (July 2000): 93-125.

[27]David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[28]See You Ji, *The Armed Forces of China* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

no recent attempts have been made by Western scholars to analyze either the relationship of the military to the state or the role of soldiers or other members of China's security apparatus in society outside of the foreign policy and national security contexts—which is not to deny the existence of excellent studies of these organs as organizational weapons. To the extent that analyses of soldiers, policemen, and other agents of state security in China have been done in the last ten years, the general conclusion has been that both the military and the security apparatus have been brought increasingly under the tight control of the central state/Party center. At the same time, there is general agreement that the relative economic status of police and soldiers has been falling steadily, certainly since the military was forbidden from running consumer businesses. Police and military salaries have stagnated, benefits have lagged, and the costs of living have risen.[29]

Urban working class: Recent analyses of Chinese workers or the Chinese working class[30] are generally in agreement as to workers' declining political, social, and economic position, at least in relative terms. They differ, however, in their theoretical frameworks, levels of analyses, and their findings on other aspects of workers' politics. Although there are some quantitative and macro-level studies, the vast majority of research on workers over the past ten years has been based on interview research and micro-level case studies. The interesting divisions, therefore, have occurred mostly in the realm of certain substantive findings rather than in method or approach. Specifically, the findings of researchers on workers' politics can be divided along three dimensions: the potential of workers

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[29]See James C. Mulvenon, *Soldiers of Fortune: The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Military-Business Complex, 1978-1998* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001). See also Solomon Carmel, *China and the People's Liberation Army: Great Power or Struggling Developing State?* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2000). We concur that the proportion of the central government's budget spent on the military as a whole over the 1990s has been rising by most estimates. Yet the economic position of police and soldiers themselves has stagnated or fallen over the same period.

[30]"Workers" and "working class" are meant here to refer primarily to the socialist proletariat as conceptualized by the CCP prior to the late 1980s—in other words, workers in state-owned and urban collective firms.

for collective action, the degree to which workers situate themselves in either the market or the state, and the level of "rights consciousness" or "legal consciousness"[31] among workers.

If we divide the extant literature, we find that some scholars—Marc Blecher, for instance[32]—view Chinese workers as having a low potential for collective action, seeing themselves as existing primarily within the market, and as having lost their rights consciousness[33] (or having been caught up by a new false consciousness of rights). Others, like Ching Kwan Lee,[34] view workers as having a high potential for collective action, as seeing themselves still very much as state rather than market actors, and as having a highly developed rights/legal consciousness.

Other researchers, like Mary Gallagher, land between these two extremes. Gallagher, in her studies of formal labor disputes, argues that workers are indeed becoming much more aware of their legal rights as citizens and workers under reform—and are using these newly discovered rights to take legal action.[35] On the other hand, she also finds that workers have relatively low potential for collective action and are rarely successful when they do engage in any form of dispute with their units. While she

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[31]These two terms are not entirely satisfactory, nor is their usage by most scholars in the field. The concept of "rights consciousness" is certainly much less restrictive than that of "legal consciousness," and most would likely agree that "rights consciousness" could easily exist in the absence of any rule of law. "Legal consciousness," on the other hand, seems to imply a widespread knowledge of the law, accessibility of courts or other legal fora, and a shared belief in the efficacy and fairness of the legal system. These conditions have not been demonstrated to exist in the case of Chinese workers, and the indiscriminate use of the concepts of "rights consciousness" and "legal consciousness" by Western scholars only obfuscates the empirical findings of their research.

[32]Marc J. Blecher, "Hegemony and Workers' Politics in China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 170 (June 2002): 283-303.

[33]Blecher does not use the precise term of "rights consciousness," but his conception of hegemony seems to amount to the suppression of rights consciousness for workers.

[34]Ching Kwan Lee, "The 'Revenge of History': Collective Memories and Labor Protests in Northeastern China," *Ethnography* 1, no. 2 (December 2000): 217-37.

[35]See Mary Gallagher, "Grafted Capitalism: Ownership Change and Labor Relations in Chinese Firms" (Paper presented at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, March 22-25, 2001), as well as Mary E. Gallagher, "Contagious Capitalism: Globalization and the Politics of Labor in China" (Ph.D. dissertation in Political Science, Princeton University, 2001).

does not clearly state whether workers situate themselves within the state or in the market, we infer from her work that they must be at the cusp between the two in a much more acute sense than seems to be the case according to either Lee or Blecher.

Still others—such as Feng Chen, William Hurst, and Kevin O'Brien[36] —have conceptualized rights consciousness in a much broader sense and in a manner more closely associated with moral economy arguments. These scholars argue that some workers (retirees and those facing genuine crises of subsistence) are more likely to engage in collective action than others, that workers still see themselves as part of the state rather than the market, and that a certain type of rights consciousness—one rooted firmly in what could be called the "socialist social contract"—exists among many workers. To the extent that these authors conceptualize rights consciousness more broadly and attempt to disaggregate the sorts of workers who might be more likely to engage in collective action, they operate in a slightly different frame of analysis from that of Blecher, Lee, and Gallagher.

Finally, some scholars, such as Dorothy Solinger, have focused largely both on questions of how to categorize workers in various types of employment relationships with state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and on the manner in which workers leaving the state have tried (without much success) to enter the market. Solinger's recent work[37] in particular draws into sharp focus both the dilemmas facing laid-off workers struggling to make ends meet in the informal sectors and the problems involved in even trying to count workers in various categories.

What all analysts of the politics of Chinese workers over the past ten years seem able to agree upon, however, is that the economic status of workers is declining (at least in relative, if not always in absolute, terms)

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[36]See Feng Chen, "Subsistence Crises, Managerial Corruption, and Labour Protests in China," *The China Journal*, no. 44 (July 2000): 41-63; and William Hurst and Kevin J. O'Brien, "China's Contentious Pensioners," *The China Quarterly*, no. 170 (June 2002): 345-60.

[37]See, for example, Dorothy J. Solinger: "Labour Market Reform and the Plight of the Laid-off Proletariat," *The China Quarterly*, no. 170 (June 2002): 304-26; "Why We Cannot Count the 'Unemployed'," ibid., no. 167 (September 2001): 671-88; and "The View from Wuhan: China's Uncountable Unemployed," *China Economic Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (2002): 34-39.

and that their social and political ties to various organs of the state are weakening far more than they are strengthening.

Peasants: Work on rural politics and Chinese peasants has centered around the relationship between rural residents and the local state. The two main thrusts of these analyses can be termed "taxation" and "representation"—that is, the state's capacity to extract resources and its agents' extractive behavior, juxtaposed with the role of village elections, the collective action of rural residents, and the new concepts of citizenship for rural migrants.

On the taxation side, we find scholars such as Thomas Bernstein and Xiaobo Lu[38] concerned with the study of "peasant burdens." These scholars argue that the agents of the local state—if not always its principals—seek ever-higher extractions from increasingly burdened farmers in many regions of China. Despite calls from the center to reduce tax and fee burdens on farmers, governments at the village, township, and county levels often turn to illegal or semi-legal fees and special taxes to fund projects ranging from road building and school construction, to investments in local township and village enterprises, to simple self-enrichment of corrupt officials. This especially occurs in central China, where resources are not as abundant as on the coast and central assistance is not as forthcoming as in the western regions.

On the representation side, the consensus is less clear. Here there are at least two primary strains of research—one that concentrates on elections and other "cooperative" channels of representation,[39] and one that focuses

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[38]Thomas Bernstein and Xiaobo Lu, *Taxation without Representation in Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[39]For a sampling of the rich literature on village elections in China, see: Melanie Manion, "Chinese Democratization in Perspective: Electorates and Selectorates at the Township Level," *The China Quarterly*, no. 163 (September 2000): 764-82; Melanie Manion, "The Electoral Connection in the Chinese Countryside," *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (December 1996): 736-48; Lianjiang Li and Kevin J. O'Brien, "The Struggle over Village Elections," in *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms*, ed. Merle Goldman and Roderick MacFarquhar (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 129-44; Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Accommodating 'Democracy' in a One-Party State: Introducing Village Elections in China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 162 (June 2000): 465-89; Jean C. Oi and Scott Rozelle, "Elections and Power: The Locus of Decision-Making in

on collective action, lawsuits, and protest.[40] Amid much diversity in both strains, there is a general consensus that peasants have become much more participatory in the local state—whether as voters or as activists—than they were as recently as 1990.

Finally, some—though far too few—scholars have paid a good deal of attention to migrant workers (over 70 million in number, by conservative estimates, as of 1997) who "float" from rural areas to the cities in pursuit of employment. The unquestioned leader in this research is Dorothy Solinger,[41] who argues that rural migrants have become a sort of second-class citizenry in Chinese cities in the reform period. Despite her general emphasis on their disadvantaged or secondary status, Solinger does admit that even these peasants in the city enjoy some form of citizenship in the Chinese context. One could argue that this is more than peasants in the villages enjoyed prior to reform. Also, the cash brought into rural economies or spent in cities by these migrants (in addition to the indisputable economic progress made in rural areas as a whole since decollectivization) has definitely improved the overall economic status of China's rural population relative to where it stood in the 1980s.[42] As this economic benefit has accrued, however, peasants have become increasingly bound to the

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Chinese Villages," ibid., 513-39; and Anne F. Thurston, "Rural Rule, Village Elections: Experiments in Governance," *China Rights Forum*, Summer-Fall 2000, 4-11.

[40]A nice summary of this literature can be found in Kevin J. O'Brien, "Collective Action in the Chinese Countryside," *The China Journal*, no. 48 (July 2002): 139-54. See also: Jing Jun, "Environmental Protests in Rural China," in *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict, and Resistance*, ed. Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 143-60; Lianjiang Li and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Villagers and Popular Resistance in Contemporary China," *Modern China* 22, no. 1 (January 1996): 28-61; Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics* 49, no. 1 (October 1996): 31-55; Elizabeth J. Perry, "Rural Violence in Socialist China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 103 (September 1985): 414-40; Jonathan Unger, "Power, Patronage, and Protest in Rural China," in *China Briefing 2000: The Continuing Transformation*, ed. Tyrene White (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 71-94; and Xueguang Zhou, "Unorganized Interests and Collective Action in Communist China," *American Sociological Review* 58, no. 1 (February 1993): 54-73.

[41]Dorothy J. Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). See also Hein Mallee, *Reform of the Hukou System* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), and H. Mallee and Frank Pieke, *Internal and International Migration: Chinese Perspectives* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999).

[42]This is not to say that every rural resident is now better off than before reform, but only

state: the state both extracts more from them and affords them more oppor-
tunities to exert at least limited influence on local governments and even
assume some quasi-official status and rights in the cities.[43]

Cadres: Research on cadres has focused largely on issues of corrup-
tion, but has also produced interesting findings regarding investment and
developmental policies. To date, the definitive statement on cadre corrup-
tion has come from Xiaobo Lu,[44] who argues that "bureaucratic involu-
tion," as one of several optional responses to reform and opening, has
frequently resulted in corruption among agents of the Chinese Party-state
(his focus, like that of the leadership, tends to be on the grass roots). As
the center loses its grip on local-level cadres, corrupt individuals (or entire
units) are able to pursue various illicit paths to self-enrichment. A more
optimistic picture of cadre behavior is painted by Jean Oi, who argues
that in many localities cadres shape local production and industrialization
in the manner of an efficient corporation. Although the role of corruption
is not a focus of Oi's analysis, it is clear even in her version of the story that
local cadres, under decreasingly close supervision from higher levels, have
often been quick to avail themselves of opportunities to enrich both their
localities and themselves.[45]

Intellectuals: The study of intellectuals has also revealed a sense of a
declining relationship with the state, perhaps exacerbated by the sensibility

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that significant gains have been made in absolute terms by farmers and villagers as a group
since 1978.

[43]See Li Zhang, *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Net-
works within China's Floating Population* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press,
2001).

[44]See Lowell Dittmer and Xiaobo Lu, "Organizational Involution and Socioeconomic Re-
form in China: An Analysis of the Work Unit," in *Informal Politics in East Asia*, ed. Lowell
Dittmer, Haruhiro Fukui, and Peter N.S. Lee (New York: Cambridge University Press,
2000), 185-214; Xiaobo Lu, *Cadres and Corruption: The Organizational Involution of the
Chinese Communist Party* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000); and Xiaobo
Lu, "Booty Socialism, Bureau-preneures, and the State in Transition: Organizational Cor-
ruption in China," *Comparative Politics* 32, no. 3 (April 2000): 273-94.

[45]Jean C. Oi, *Rural China Takes Off: Institutional Foundations of Economic Reform* (Ber-
keley: University of California Press, 1999). See also Jean C. Oi, "Fiscal Reform and the
Economic Foundations of Local State Corporatism in China," *World Politics* 45, no. 1 (Oc-
tober 1992): 99-126.

and articulateness of intellectuals. Thus Geremie Barmé has stressed the anomie felt by intellectuals, students, artists, and others in China's cultural elite under reform.[46] While somewhat less constrained in their pursuit of the creative arts and studies, these individuals still lack any real expressive freedom and are meanwhile also cut off from the state benefits and influence they had previously enjoyed. Trapped in a consumerist society that cares little for art or scholarship, intellectuals—in Barmé's vision—often look back on the days of ideological struggle as a time when at least their lives had meaning and the state and society cared about what intellectuals produced. Thus, in terms of both welfare and coercion, intellectuals have grown apart from the state. At the same time, the development of a market for intellectual and artistic products—from private tutoring and consulting, to visual and performing arts, to commercial publishing, and even (for the top five percent or so) links to international cultural markets—has afforded intellectuals hitherto never imagined opportunities to improve their economic status. Although some are falling through the cracks, on the whole, Chinese intellectuals today almost certainly enjoy a rising economic status. The unresolved contradiction of perspective may have to do with different research foci and sampling techniques: Barmé is chiefly interested in cultural and creative intellectuals (and in their spiritual no less than their material plight), whereas the income statistics measure the rising status of intellectuals as a socioeconomic group in the job market.

Professionals: The study of the rise of the professions, such as lawyers and their potential political role, is still in its infancy. To date, however, most findings have largely paralleled those about intellectuals. Whereas lawyers were until recently conceived as state legal cadres, Ethan Michelson's studies of Chinese lawyers[47] have found that attorneys have

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[46]See Geremie R. Barmé, *In the Red* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), as well as Geremie R. Barmé, *Shades of Mao* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

[47]See Ethan Michelson: *Lawyer Bao: Law and Morality in Contemporary China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming); "Tradition in the Shadow of Modern Legal Practice: Continuity and Change in the Delivery of Justice in China (I)," *Chinese Law and Government* 31, no. 5 (1998); and "Tradition in the Shadow of Modern Legal Practice: Continuity and Change in the Delivery of Justice in China (II)," ibid., no. 6 (1998).

largely left (or been ejected from) the embrace of the state (thereby losing much of their political influence), while at the same time their overall economic status seems to have improved. Much remains to be researched if we are to learn about the economic, social, and political lives of all the relevant groups of Chinese professionals, but so far the evidence points to their improving economic status and weakening ties to the state.

Businessmen: The study of private businessmen and entrepreneurs is still in its early stages in the China field (reflecting in part the relative immaturity of this group in the national economy), despite the fact that the CCP has begun making serious overtures to the private sector (NB the term "middle class" is not yet ideologically kosher) in the past few years. There are, again, important exceptions—notably Thomas Gold[48] and David Wank[49] who have, since the 1980s, studied the gradual social and economic rise of the *getihu* (個體户). Ken Foster has begun to tell us about business associations—which represent a mix of private firms and SOEs—and their relations to the local state in one locality in Shandong (山東).[50] Such worthy contributions notwithstanding, much research still needs to be undertaken before anything definitive can be said about private entrepre-

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[48]Thomas B. Gold, "China's Private Entrepreneurs: Small-Scale Private Business Prospers under Socialism," *China Business Review* 12, no. 6 (November-December 1985): 46-50; Thomas B. Gold, "Guerrilla Interviewing among the *Getihu*," in *Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic*, ed. Perry Link, Richard Madsen, and Paul G. Pickowicz (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1989), 175-92; Thomas B. Gold, "Urban Private Business in China," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 22, no. 2-3 (Summer 1989): 187-202; Thomas B. Gold, "Urban Private Business and Social Change," in *Chinese Society on the Eve of Tiananmen: The Impact of Reform*, ed. Deborah Davis and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990), 157-78; Thomas B. Gold, "Urban Private Business and China's Reforms," in *Reform and Reaction in Post-Mao China: The Road to Tiananmen*, ed. Richard Baum (London: Routledge, 1991), 84-103; and Victoria E. Bonnel and Thomas B. Gold, eds., *The New Entrepreneurs of Europe and Asia: Patterns of Business Development in Russia, Eastern Europe, and China* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).

[49]David L. Wank, *Commodifying Communism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and David L. Wank, "The Institutional Process of Market Clientelism: *Guanxi* and Private Business in a South China City," *The China Quarterly*, no. 147 (September 1996): 820-38.

[50]Kenneth Foster, "Embedded within State Agencies: Business Associations in Yantai," *The China Journal*, no. 47 (January 2002): 41-66. See also Christopher Nevitt, "Private Business Associations in China: Evidence of Civil Society or Local State Power," ibid., no. 36 (July 1996): 25-43.

neurs in China. There does seem, however, to be a consensus to date on a few issues. The first is that the economic status of entrepreneurs is rising, sometimes as much due to the class or family backgrounds of the entrepreneurs as because of their business acumen. Secondly, their ties to the state are growing closer, whether because of *guanxi* (關係) and informal ties to officials, because of increasing state regulation of private business affairs, or because of explicit CCP overtures to co-opt this energetic new class.[51]

Integrating Analyses of Social Groups

With the possible exception of the military and security apparatus, we have seen that studies of the relationship between the state and various social groups have been thriving in the China field. What so far has been lacking, however, is any attempt to relate the trajectories of these groups to one another in any systematic way. This type of analysis holds much promise for future research. As a preliminary schematization, we suggest roughly categorizing social groups along two dimensions: change in the nature of their relationship to the state, and change in their economic status (see table 1). As entrepreneurs and peasants have seen their economic status rise and their ties to the state strengthened, workers have seen their economic status decline while their ties to the state have also weakened. While cadres and intellectuals have managed to raise their economic status as their ties to the state have grown more tenuous, soldiers and members of the security apparatus have seen their economic status decline, even as the state has tried to exert increasingly tight control over them.

Benefits of this sort of dimensional thinking are that it helps to make clearer both the likely arenas and issues of social group contention or conflict, and it identifies a pair of particularly severe social cleavages. First, table 1 suggests that there are likely to be two loci of social contention and conflict, represented by the table's columns, as China continues its reform process: one within the state sphere and one beyond the state's reach. With-

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[51]For an articulate dissenting view, see Bruce Dickson, *Red Capitalists in China: The Party, Private Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Table 1
Social Groups' Economic Status and Their Relationship to the State

	Relationship to the State Becoming Closer	*Relationship to the State Becoming More Distant*
Economic Status Rising	Peasants Entrepreneurs	Cadres Intellectuals Professionals
Economic Statu. Declining	Soldiers Security Apparatus	Urban Workers

in each of these arenas economic losers are pitted against winners. Thus, soldiers and security agents are likely to see peasants and, particularly, entrepreneurs as their most immediate adversaries; urban workers, on the other hand, are likely to be most directly in conflict with cadres, intellectuals, and professionals. It is unlikely that severe social conflict will occur among the losers on the lower row or the winners on the upper row, but a potentially fruitful avenue for further study is the degree to which the two categories of winners or of losers are split by their differing relationships to the state and prevented from forming wider or more powerful class coalitions.

The diagonals of table 1, in turn, make clear two of China's most severe and salient social cleavages. It is easy for any visitor to Chinese cities to sense that urban workers and entrepreneurs are on fundamentally different trajectories in every sense, and that their group interests could not be more divergent. The division between workers who have successfully become entrepreneurs and those remaining in increasingly insecure state sector jobs or out of work altogether may possibly become the most important social cleavage in urban China in the years to come. An even more stark case is the relationship between elements of the CCP's original revolutionary coalition of workers and peasants. To the extent that these two groups directly interact today, these meetings are most often either in the form of upwardly mobile rural migrants outcompeting downwardly mobile laid-off workers for urban jobs, or in the form of even more desperate urban workers negotiating with wealthier farmers for jobs as hired farm

hands, as has begun to occur in certain regions of China (most notably the Northeast).

Along the other diagonal, the cleavage between cadres and professionals, on the one hand, and soldiers and security agents, on the other, may in many respects mirror the elite cleavage between liberal reformers and more conservative officials. Even though they have lost out economically, members of China's security apparatus have a fate that is intimately bound to the state, whereas their counterparts among cadres, intellectuals, and professionals have reaped economic benefits while doing the one thing soldiers and police cannot do—leaving the embrace of the state.

Turning from social groups to firms, the relationships between various types of enterprises and the state have also drawn a great deal of attention throughout the 1990s. As the intended "commanding heights" of China's industrial future (despite their current fiscal travails), SOEs have attracted increasing attention. So far the standard has been set in this area by the work of Edward Steinfeld.[52] Steinfeld argues that in many cases SOEs falter or are mismanaged not because of a failure to transfer property rights or due to lagging privatization, but because the very concept of property rights is not well defined in SOEs. Although a great deal of variance was present among the three steel mills Steinfeld studied, each fell victim to many of the same pitfalls resulting from this lack of specification of property rights. Whether this issue still looms as large as it did when the research was originally conducted, and whether this is something unique to the steel industry or can be generalized as an equally or even more severe problem in other sectors, are pressing questions that must await future research.

The study of the banking sector, particularly strategic as the financial intermediary that pumps capital into other SOEs, has generated a great deal of interest since Nicholas Lardy warned of its insolvency in his *China's Unfinished Economic Revolution* (Brookings Institution Press, 1998). Al-

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[52]Edward S. Steinfeld, *Forging Reform in China: The Fate of State-Owned Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

though Lardy has moderated his tone since then, others have taken up the cry, pointing to a portfolio of non-performing loans amounting to an estimated 44 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in their contention that the solvency of China's banking system is an Achilles' heel of China's economic prospects.[53] While much more research is needed before we can claim to fully understand the relationship between Chinese banks and the state, clear even now is that this relationship has been far from stable throughout the reform period. The entry of China into the World Trade Organization (WTO) promises, in many respects, to bring this relationship and its contradictions to a head. If China scholars are to comprehend the changes likely to come in the near future, surely we must give more attention to China's banking system and its search for financial equilibrium between state and market.

Inasmuch as China has recently overtaken the United States as the world's leading host of foreign direct investment (with FDI estimated at US$50 billion in 2002), much more attention has been paid of late to the foreign-invested enterprise (FIE) sector, whose output now comprises nearly 50 percent of China's total export value. In many respects, these firms form the core of the impressions of reform-period China held by many in the business and policy arenas of Western countries. Perhaps for this reason, most of the scholarly arguments seem to reflect dominant lines of thinking in these arenas about FIEs in China. Margaret Pearson, for example, maintains that FIEs are channeled into a sort of symbiotic relationship with the Chinese state, one that both serves state purposes and promotes the business interests of firms.[54] From another angle, Anita Chan exposes the depravation and horrors in the lives of workers in many FIEs

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[53]See Gordon G. Chang, *The Coming Collapse of China* (New York: Random House, 2001), for the direst interpretation of these implications. For an in-depth critique of this book, see Special Book Review Section: "Gordon G. Chang's *The Coming Collapse of China,*" *Issues & Studies* 38, no. 2 (June 2002): 235-63.

[54]Margaret M. Pearson, *Joint Ventures in the People's Republic of China: The Control of Foreign Direct Investment under Socialism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); and Margaret M. Pearson, "The Janus Face of Business Associations in China: Socialist Corporatism in Foreign Enterprises," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 31 (January 1994): 25-46.

in the famous Pearl River Delta region (珠江三角洲地區).[55] Still others have written more general studies of the role of FDI in China's politico-economic development.[56] For all of this progress in our understanding of the foreign-invested sector, the China field still has not produced any comprehensive analysis of the role of FIEs in the development and transition of China's socialist economy.[57]

Chinese Foreign Policy

The analysis of Chinese foreign policy has unfortunately remained a stepchild of the profession, characterized by a glut of relatively brief bilateral analyses but relatively few ambitious or conceptually innovative approaches.[58] This is particularly unfortunate in view of the sudden and dramatic changes of the international political ecology that have accompanied both the collapse of the communist bloc and the end of the Cold War; these changes have permitted China to redefine its role in a new world order (or disorder) given that Beijing can no longer enhance its strategic leverage by navigating between the two superpowers, as it did in the hey-

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[55]Anita Chan, *China's Workers Under Assault* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

[56]Yasheng Huang, *Selling China: Foreign Direct Investment During the Reform Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[57]There have been many statistical overviews and some fine-grained micro-level descriptions. There has been, however, no clear exposition of precisely what the social and political stakes and relationships surrounding the growth of FIEs are. Nor has there been any explanation of what new trajectories China may be embarking on at this critical juncture as a result of its increasing dependence on FDI. One example of such a work on this latter topic from the study of a different part of the world (and a different era) is Peter Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979). We hope the China field will be able to undertake a similar study in the near future.

[58]Notable exceptions in their attempts at integration include Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); Lu Ming, *The Dynamics of Foreign Policy Decision-Making in China* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997); and two carefully edited anthologies: David M. Lampton, *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001); and Samuel S. Kim, *China and the World* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1984, 1989, 1994, and 1998 editions). Note: David Lampton's edited volume is the subject of the Book Review Roundtable in this special issue.

day of the "strategic triangle."

Dittmer and Kim made at least an introductory sally at the concept of national identity, pointing out that if identity is at least in part a function of identification with certain international categories, China's post-Cold War national identity was in considerable turmoil because of the bankruptcy of one of its former international reference groups (viz., the Soviet bloc, or "second world") and the increasing ideological incoherence and developmental irrelevance of the other (viz., the Third World).[59] Yong Deng has capably pursued this line of analysis, hypothesizing that since the Cold War the international system has broken down into two basic categories: a developed "core" (consisting of some combination of NATO, the OECD, and the Group of Eight) and an underdeveloped "periphery," and that even after two decades of hyper growth, China's self-conception is that of being stuck in the periphery, whence it is now striving to become a "responsible great power."[60] The will-o'-the-wisp of great power status, as conventionally understood, also includes a military-strategic component, to whose construction Beijing has been contributing well over a tenth (often closer to a fifth) of its annual budget since the end of the Cold War—which of course begs the question of what Beijing intends to do with this growing arsenal.

There have been several thoughtful attempts to shed light on this important but ultimately imponderable question, usually via diachronic comparisons. In one exceedingly ambitious and methodologically demanding historical comparison, Iain Johnston analyzes Ming dynasty military texts, where he finds evidence that contrary to the myth of an irenic Confucianism, what he calls a parabellum strategic culture (roughly analogous to Western realism) has long been dominant—and suggests that it still is.[61] Aside from the risk of tautology, however, the central finding

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[59]Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, eds., *China's Quest for National Identity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[60]Yong Deng, "Escaping the Periphery," in *China's International Relations in the 21st Century: Dynamics of Paradigm Shifts*, ed. Weixing Hu, Gerald Chan, and Daojiang Zha (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2000), 41-70.

[61]See Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995). See also Xuezhi

of an enduring parabellum strategic culture is frustratingly open-ended. Michael Swaine and Ashley Tellis draw far more specific policy implications from their equally sweeping historical overview of China's grand strategy, anticipating that since China's historical territorial ambitions will await attainment of sufficient military power, China may be expected to make a bid to challenge U.S. "hegemony" in the Asia-Pacific region ca. 2015-2020.[62] There is no question that China has opened itself to its imperial past, following the collapse of the communist bloc, in its quest for a more historically integrated national identity. Yet so many relevant variables (e.g., revolution, modernity) are left out of such sweeping comparisons that Allen Whiting's more chronologically limited historical comparison—to eight cases of the use of force for deterrence or coercion in the history of the PRC—seems to us to be more immediately useful. Whiting points out, for example, that in such cases as the Korean War or the Sino-Soviet border clash (not to mention the Chinese revolution), Beijing has been quite willing to attack a superior adversary, striking boldly to teach a (political) lesson even for quite limited territorial gains.[63] The implications —for, say, Taiwan—are obvious.

An intervening variable in such discussions is the rise of nationalism, a change which may have helped motivate some of Mao's radical foreign policy initiatives but was ideologically taboo and never explicitly used or even discussed. Since Tiananmen, nationalism has been much more strongly emphasized by a regime increasingly concerned about the loss of its ideological raison d'être; the mass response has indeed been enthusiastic beyond all expectations. Yet the regime's tendency to define nationalism in opposition to democratization and Westernization raises the specter of future tension between Chinese nationalism, on the one hand, and the eco-

Guo's important book, *The Ideal Chinese Political Leader: A Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002), which compares the realist and the Confucian perspectives (but is not limited to foreign policy).

[62]Michael Swaine and Ashley Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2000).

[63]Allen S. Whiting, "China's Use of Force, 1950-1996, and Taiwan," *International Security* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 103-32.

nomic globalization to which the regime is likewise committed, on the other.[64] The policy import of Chinese nationalism, of course, depends on how this nationalism is perceived, and by dint of a series of recent studies we now have a much clearer idea how Chinese elites perceive a great many foreign policy phenomena.[65]

Levels of Analysis

The above five sections have focused on the recent substantive re-search foci of the study of Chinese politics. This section—and the one to follow—will switch gears to a discussion of analytical issues. The focus of this section is on issues related to levels of analyses.

Over the 1990s, the longstanding tension in the China field between macro- and micro-level analysis was heightened by the proliferation of the latter. During this period, Western scholars began to gain access to ever-larger numbers of research locales, with certain Chinese localities opening more and more of their archives, research institutes, and even government bureaus to academic study by foreigners. Due to these trends, the lure of intensive analysis of a single locality or small set of localities has also in-creased. Meanwhile, the release in recent years of increasingly detailed and abundant aggregate statistics and central government documents and reports, as well as the increasing willingness of central officials to be inter-viewed by foreign scholars on certain topics, have opened up more possi-bilities for the study of Chinese politics at the macro level. There have, of

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[64]See Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Baogang He and Yingjie Guo, *Nationalism, National Identity and Democratization in China* (Alder-shot: Ashgate, 2000).

[65]See Yufan Hao and Guocang Huan, eds., *China Views the World* (New York: Pantheon, 1989); Allen S. Whiting, *China Eyes Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); David Shambaugh, *Beautiful Imperialist: China Perceives America, 1972-1990* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); and Daojiang Zhu, "Chinese Under-standing of International Political Economy," in Hu, Chan, and Zha, *China's International Relations in the 21st Century*, 117-42.

course, been ever-larger numbers of scholars eager to take advantages of both sorts of new opportunities.

The China field has slowly moved from a field of data shortage to one of greater data adequacy[66] at both the macro and (especially) micro levels of analysis (with the notable exception of the increasingly opaque elite decision-making process). These data have not, however, become so easy to compile or digest as to afford scholars the luxury of working at multiple levels of analysis with any realistic prospect of success. Given this situation, most scholars have congregated at the poles—exclusively focusing on either macro-level studies in pursuit of sweeping generalizations about all of China, on the one hand, or single-locality fieldwork-based studies from which they too often generalize without any conception of the regionally specific character of their findings, on the other.

It is, however, encouraging that several scholars have recently produced nuanced macro-level studies, based on rigorously compiled data sets they built themselves. Others, moreover, have recently conducted careful and circumspect micro-level case studies. Even more encouraging is the work of several scholars—such as Edward Steinfeld and Dorothy Solinger[67]—who have begun to construct careful comparisons of localities rooted in multiple micro-level case studies, selected on the basis of macro-level analysis of regional and national trends, the combined results of which speak back to larger debates. It is unfortunate that this type of "middle-level" analysis has not progressed further and that even the most outstanding practitioners still have important shortcomings in their work.[68]

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[66]That is, a field in which much available data go unanalyzed—as opposed to a field in which much analysis is undertaken in the absence of data.

[67]See Steinfeld, *Forging Reform in China*; and Dorothy J. Solinger, "Clashes between Reform and Opening: Labor Market Reform in Three Cities," in *Remaking the Chinese State: Strategies, Society, and Security*, ed. Bruce Dickson and Chao Chien-min (London: Routledge, 2001), 103-31.

[68]Steinfeld's work is extremely thin on the ground in all three of the cases he examines, but particularly in the case of Ma'An Shan (馬鞍山); moreover, he does not do a very good job of linking back to any larger issues other than the already somewhat confused property rights debate. Solinger's work, moreover, is still based primarily on a single-city

Methodological Techniques

Prior to 1990, quantitative analysis was extremely difficult (and rare) in the China field.[69] Since 1990, it has become more widespread, as is the case in many other sub-fields of the social sciences. Nonetheless, quantitative analysis remains in a minority position in the China field for a variety of reasons ranging from the quality and availability of Chinese quantitative data, to the difficulties and restrictions surrounding survey research in China, to the sociology of knowledge and training in the field. At present, most graduate programs still do not emphasize quantitative training for China scholars, journals in the field still place much greater weight on qualitative fieldwork or archival historical research than on quantitative analysis, and inadequate resources are available to researchers for the construction and dissemination of new and better data sets. The qualitative/quantitative distinction is a crude one, and we do not argue that quantitative analysis ought to be dominant in the China field (as some have argued has occurred in political science as a whole). We do maintain, however, that in the interests both of advancing our understanding of China and of promoting the further integration of the study of China into social science disciplines, China scholars must take quantitative work more seriously.

That having been said, quantitative research on China has come a long way since the death of Mao. The earlier work of Tianjian Shi, Andrew Nathan, Melanie Manion, and Dali Yang[70] relied mostly on descriptive uses

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case study of Wuhan (武漢), and the other cities are added mostly in order to better situate this primary case.

[69]There are, of course, a few important exceptions to this claim. Much of the work of William L. Parish, Martin King Whyte, and a number of economists (such as Thomas G. Rawski) was largely quantitative, even before 1990. Emerson Niou, moreover, has been a pioneer in the application of game theory and other sophisticated mathematical models to Chinese foreign policy and, more recently, village electoral politics. That aside, much of the earlier quantitative work was primarily based on descriptive statistics and the use of either émigré interviews or official statistical data.

[70]See Andrew J. Nathan and Tianjian Shi, "Cultural Requisites for Democracy in China: Findings from a Survey," *Daedelus* 122, no. 2 (July 1993): 95-123; Andrew J. Nathan and Tianjian Shi, "Left and Right with Chinese Characteristics: Issues and Alignments in Deng Xiaoping's China," *World Politics* 48, no. 4 (July 1996): 522-50; Tianjian Shi, *Political Participation in Beijing* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); Melanie

or very basic operations most often employing official statistics. This has given way to more sophisticated work by these same authors, joined by others such as Wenfang Tang, William Parish, and Pierre Landry.[71] The decreasing reliance of quantitative scholars on spotty and unreliable official statistics and their increasing ability to compile new and more reliable data sets, combined with their rising levels of technical sophistication, are responsible for these developments, which (political constraints permitting) may be expected to continue. There has also been a growing trend toward quantitative analysis supplemented by a small set of in-depth interviews, one or more case studies, or ethnographic or archival work. Several recent dissertations have employed this methodological combination to great effect, including that of Yongshun Cai,[72] among others. The inverse combination—qualitative research supplemented by quantitative analysis (most likely in the selection of cases)—also holds much promise, but has yet to be used widely or to much effect.

Among those who remain entirely on the qualitative side of the fence, the old divide between primarily archival or document-based research and primarily ethnographic or interview-based research has persisted and intensified over the past ten years. Once again, this is due mostly to the proliferation of available sources and the opening up of previously closed access in both these areas. At the same time, new archives are opened to foreign

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Manion, *Retirement of Revolutionaries in China: Public Policies, Social Norms, Private Interests* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Dali L. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change since the Great Leap Famine* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996).

[71]See Tianjian Shi, "Cultural Values and Democracy in the People's Republic of China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 162 (June 2000): 540-59; Dali L. Yang, *Beyond Beijing: Liberalization and the Regions in China* (London: Routledge, 1997); Manion, "Chinese Democratization in Perspective," 764-82; Wenfang Tang and William L. Parish, *Chinese Urban Life under Reform: The Changing Social Contract* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Pierre Landry, "Markets, Performance, and the Political Fate of Chinese Mayors" (Paper presented at the 2002 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, August 29-September 1, 2002); as well as Pierre Landry "Controlling Decentralization: The Party and Local Elites in Post-Mao Jiangsu (China)" (Ph.D. dissertation in Political Science, University of Michigan, 2000).

[72]See Yongshun Cai, "The Silence of the Dislocated: Chinese Laid-off Employees in the Reform Period" (Ph.D. dissertation in Political Science, Stanford University, 2001).

scholars, and more localities, populations, and topics are also approved for interview-based study.

Interview-based research in particular has gained momentum over the past decade. Prior to 1990, very little interview-based research was conducted in China.[73] Instead, most scholars relied on émigré interviews in Hong Kong or elsewhere, since access to most localities and populations in China was not possible. With the opening of fieldwork in China came a flood of interview-based research in the late 1980s and 1990s, accompanied by an almost instant end to émigré interviews.

This development has had a mixed outcome. Although few would dispute the notion that interviews conducted with actors on the ground in China provide a far more proximate and generally more accurate picture of events than do émigré interviews, interview-based research in the China field has produced new problems. All too often researchers have conducted their interviews in one site only, and then attempted to generalize to other localities and regions. While practitioners of émigré interviews also faced problems of regional specificity—because most of their interviewees came from Guangdong (廣東), the better researchers endeavored to sample interviewees from as many regions as possible[74] or focused their sampling on one particular locality[75] in order to provide as complete a picture at the micro level as possible. For their pains, émigré interview practitioners were rewarded with samples of interviewees that were often far more representative (either across regions or within a single locality) of the complete population of interest in China than those typically used by

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[73]This is not to say that there was none at all. Several important books published at the end of the 1980s or the beginning of the 1990s relied largely on interview research. See, for example, Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988); and Dorothy J. Solinger, *From Lathes to Looms: China's Industrial Policy in Comparative Perspective, 1979-1982* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991).

[74]See, for example, William L. Parish and Martin King Whyte, *Village and Family in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); and Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

[75]E.g., Anita Chan, Richard Madsen, and Jonathan Unger, *Chan Village under Mao and Deng*, revised and enlarged edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

interview-based researchers in the country today.

Despite this problem, interview-based research has taken off in China and is improving rapidly. Few researchers would now conduct interviews at only one site and fail to place this in its proper context. There are still many researchers willing to make general arguments on the basis of evidence from only one or a very small set of sites, but this practice, too, is on the wane. Increasingly, interview-based research is the method of choice for many promising scholars, particularly those seeking to develop "middle levels" of analysis. For example, Susan Whiting's recent study, based on fieldwork in three villages in eastern China—Songjiang (Shanghai, 上海松江), Wuxi (Jiangsu, 江蘇無錫), and Yueqing (Wenzhou, Zhejiang, 浙江溫州), uses and advances neo-institutional theory to show how property rights may or may not contribute to growth depending on the "path dependent" history of institutions in the region; she also brings "corporatist" assumptions into question, pointing to the possible divergence of interest between local cadres and the enterprise bottom line.[76]

Archival and document-based research has also made great strides. While by the mid-1990s, researchers such as Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun had begun to produce more fine-grained analysis of single periods and localities[77] than was the norm in the past, by the end of the decade, some researchers were beginning to move beyond this approach. More and more researchers in this tradition are also seeking to build larger arguments out of small sets of comparative case studies of localities during multiple historical periods. Recent work by such scholars as Mark Frazier and Elizabeth Remick demonstrates the power of combining careful archival research with the middle-level analysis outlined earlier.[78] Whether describ-

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[76]Susan Whiting, *Power and Wealth in Rural China: The Political Economy of Institutional Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[77]See, for example, Elizabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993); and Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997).

[78]See Elizabeth Remick, "The Significance of Variation in Local States: The Case of Twentieth Century China," *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 4 (July 2002): 399-418; and Mark Frazier, *The Making of the Chinese Industrial Workplace: State, Revolution, and Labor Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

ing taxation across several cities or the rise of the *danwei* (單位, or work unit) system in some of China's leading industrial centers, the strength of such work shines through.[79]

Both archival and ethnographic types of qualitative research have made great strides since 1990, though of course both have a long way to go. While practitioners of both traditions have begun to conduct small sets of case study comparisons and have raised the bar for both types of data collection and analysis, most researchers have yet to begin choosing their cases as systematically as they could, and few researchers are sufficiently careful to avoid generalizations not well supported by their data.

Conclusions

Perhaps because the central leadership over-regimented the lower levels while allowing discretionary flexibility to high-level elites,[80] the inauguration of reform has pursued the relative emancipation of the lower levels in order to enhance their motivation to innovate and produce while subjecting the higher levels to greater institutionalization in order to stop them lurching from one ideological-cum-policy extreme to the other. In the light of this shift in the "action," and in the face of increasing data deprivation about the central decision-making apparatus, we have seen a movement away from the analysis of the Party-state and toward the study

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[79]On the other hand, we should not overlook the fact that these works still sometimes draw larger arguments than their evidence allows. In particular, Frazier's omission of the Northeast from his study of industrial organization in pre- and post-1949 China and Remick's similar failure to consider inland cities where little or no foreign influence occurred or to present any data from after 1949 both undermine attempts to make claims about processes that supposedly unfolded across the entire country in various periods.

[80]Thus workers and peasants were typically assigned to units from which they had little prospect of transferring, organized in military fashion into teams and brigades, and mobilized for recurrent "campaigns" against designated adversaries. Closely monitored for deviation, the results were retained in confidential personnel files. Cadres were also subjected to organizational discipline, but in an overwhelmingly top-down system, the higher that one ascended the hierarchy the more invulnerable one became (but Mao Zedong—with his trains, pools, women, and villas—was clearly an extreme case).

of social groups or categories of subordinate governments or firms.

If the China field continues this relative prioritization of research efforts, it must address at least three remaining gaps. First, while the field is beginning to come to some basic consensus about the economic status and political relationship of a number of different social groups to the state, we know almost nothing of the relationships among these groups or of the role of "interaction effects" in determining their bilateral ties with the state (e.g., the relationship between workers and factory management, or between basic units and employees). Second, the field has not yet begun to address the relationships between political actors and categories of firms or organizations. Rather, we have so far studied actors and organizations separately, as if the one bore no relationship to the other. Third, all of this empirical scholarship has yet to address many larger politico-economic questions. We may understand, for instance, that workers are losing their economic status and losing their close ties with the state, but we do not know what this means for the future of any putative working class or labor movements, the changing makeup of the CCP, or for the future shape of "socialism with Chinese characteristics." We may know that FIEs treat their workers badly and exist in symbiotic relationships with the state, but we have no clear idea what this means for China's continued economic growth or for the institutionalization of its political economy as its reform matures.

The China field is, generally speaking, more mature than it was at the close of the 1980s. We have now, however, reached a point at which we must take stock and see if we can discern what future paths can best help to integrate the study of Chinese politics and society into the wider disciplines of the social sciences, drawing from the insights of these disciplines without sacrificing a concern for issues of genuine substantive importance in China.

We offer, in conclusion, three modest proposals for potentially fruitful paths leading to the China field's further development. First, although promising theoretical contributions at any level are certainly always welcome, we suggest the utility of doing more work at the "middle level" of analysis discussed above. Thus we can perhaps avoid both the atheoretical,

Balkanized study of single localities or micro phenomena, as well as the often inaccurate or essentialist generalizations about "all of China" to which we have too often succumbed in the past. By closely examining a series of localities, phenomena, or time periods and comparing them with one another, China scholarship has begun to build more reliable and theoretically useful generalizations about China within certain temporal, spatial, and social ranges.

Second, the China field should begin to take quantitative analysis more seriously, and actively promote combinations of methods that draw on the complementary strengths of one or more additional methods to supplement the weak points of the primary method employed. While no method should dominate the field, no method should be left unexploited. Such an integration of methodological approaches and techniques would also promote the formation of more reliable conclusions about China and help point the way to possible applications of such conclusions to the construction of more general theories of comparative politics.

Finally, we must of course always be conscious of the field's substantive foci, fill in the gaps that exist where important groups or categories of organizations remain unstudied, and call on scholars to more carefully place their objects of study within the context of our understanding of China as a whole. By thinking more carefully about what we know and do not know empirically, we can begin not only to fill in gaps but also to construct broader arguments that speak to larger theoretical concerns. That means inter alia we should not simply abandon substantive concerns in response to the regime's shifting disclosure and concealment of data. The field of research should be defined by the intrinsic importance of the political processes taking place, not sheerly by the availability or accessibility of data. Thus political scientists confronting an increasingly opaque central decision-making apparatus should not succumb to baseless Kremlinological speculation, but rise to the challenge and make more resourceful and considered use of the available empirical indicators.