

## Reviews

Bruce J. Dickson, *Political Implications of Red Capitalists in China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

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As the Chinese Communist Party (the CCP) shifted its key task from class struggle to economic modernization in 1978, China entered a new era of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Although there are many definitions of Chinese characteristics in mass media and scholarly works, the most important two features in the period of reform and opening are the CCP's monopoly on political power and the private entrepreneurs' rise as economic power. In *Red Capitalists in China*, Bruce J. Dickson tries to explore the political consequence of economic reform by analyzing the impact of privatization on party building and the CCP's adaptation to the new environment. It helps to better understand the massive changes that have taken place in Chinese politics and economy during the last decades. The study not only adds fresh material gleaned from author's interviews and surveys, but also contributes unique perspectives to the academic research on Chinese politics.

In comparative politics, the conventional wisdom is that economic development is the prerequisite for political development and democratization. In Chinese political studies, many scholars believed that formation of a private sector and rise of private entrepreneurs would lead, directly or indirectly, through the emergence of civil society, to political change and ultimately to democratization and collapse of the CCP rule just as indicated in Barrington Moore's famous aphorism 'no bourgeoisie, no democracy'. However, Bruce Dickson's research suggests that private entrepreneurs in China have been reluctant to promote democratization. This is because the party has adopted the two-pronged strategy of creating corporatist links between the state and the business sector and co-opting individual entrepreneurs into the CCP. This strategy has been successful so far in pre-empting demands for increased autonomy or citizenship rights. His book represents a new direction in Chinese political studies in which the inherent and unique logic of Chinese politics has been explained.

The private entrepreneurs cannot play the role as agents of political change and democratization as in other countries, especially western ones for complex reasons. First, the growth of the private sector in recent years is the product of market-oriented reforms adopted by the CCP and many private entrepreneurs have done their business and become richer under the auspices of party and government officials at all levels. Second, although there are great

achievements in advancing private sectors, private entrepreneurs as a whole remain a small group if not marginal one, and do not enjoy the prestige and influence comparable to other social strata such as cadres and intellectuals. Third, private entrepreneurs have economic resources but do not master the political skills; in other words, most of them cannot transform their economic resources into political ones. This is because there are few channels for them to do so in a one-party system, on one hand, they have no political training, on the other. Fourth, as a result, private entrepreneurs in China tend to maintain harmonious relationships with the party and government officials rather than challenge them and seek autonomy in order to seek more personal benefits. Dickson's study presents convincingly the symbiotic relationship between private entrepreneurs and the party-state in China.

However, his explanation for the symbiotic relationship is not irrefutable. The author identifies some of the unintended consequences of economic reform on party building, such as the declining prestige of the CCP and its members, the weakness of party building in the expanding private sector, the decay of party organizations in rural areas. As a response to these problems, according to Bruce Dickson, the CCP devised the two-pronged strategy in order to adapt itself to the new situations. One is the corporatist strategy of developing business associations in order to link itself to the expanding private sectors; the other is the strategy of co-opting business elite into the ruling party. It is the two-pronged strategy that has led to private entrepreneurs' reluctance to play an important role in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy. It is also this strategy that has made the symbiotic relationship between private entrepreneurs and the party-state. Although the author has depicted a clear picture for the CCP's adapting strategy, unfortunately there has not been such neat and consistent strategy in the CCP's reform and opening policies during recent decades. As known to all, there has been only the goals of development and economic modernization, but no any strategies for how to realize the goals as indicated in Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic slogan 'groping for stones to cross the river'.

It is hard to say that the CCP has taken any substantial measures to cope with the business associations. The Organization Law, passed in draft form in 1989 and revised in its final version in 1998, codified the implicit corporatist strategy of the CCP. There are a huge number of social organizations and associations in China among which the private entrepreneurs' business associations are not prominent in number and character. The CCP wants to keep watch and control on the important associations, such as trade unions, youth leagues, women's associations and academic associations. Relatively, the private business associations are not important targets. In fact, there is not direct links or connections between the CCP and the private business associations. Originally, the private business associations were set up in order to collect taxes efficiently from private entrepreneurs under the guidance of the Industrial and Commercial Administrative and Management Bureau. Therefore, all private business associations have this government unit as their supervisory organization, responsible for their daily affairs.

It is more difficult to ascertain that the CCP has devised a strategy of co-optation. Based on the tradition and nature of the CCP, there are considerable objections to the recruitment of private entrepreneurs into the party. Although a number of owners of private firms were party members, most of them had been party members before they began to operate private firms. Even the presence of newly wealthy entrepreneurs in the party irritated some party veterans who thought they could not coexist peacefully with the class enemies. Fearing that bourgeois influences were spreading into the party, the CCP banned the new recruitment of private entrepreneurs into the party in August 1989 immediately after the crackdown on the Tiananmen demonstrations.

From then on until July 2001, the organization department repeated that the party would not admit private entrepreneurs because they are capitalists bent on exploiting the labor force. Although there are debates about the recruitment of private entrepreneurs into the party, the party policy had been clear and consistent. Therefore, the CCP had had a strategy of exclusion of private entrepreneurs from the party membership before Jiang Zemin recommended that private entrepreneurs be allowed to join the CCP on 1 July 2001, the eightieth anniversary of the CCP. Because of the strategy of exclusion, many private entrepreneurs felt frustrated in social prestige and political status when they became the new-rich. As a response, the CCP decided to lift the ban and open the door to them.

From the beginning of the reform and opening, the CCP set two contradictory goals, that is, four modernizations and four principles, or put simply, economic development and the CCP leadership. The CCP always tries to maintain balance between market dynamics and macro-control, authoritarian style and democratizing forces, autonomy of associations and embeddedness in the state, decentralization and centralization, etc. Bruce Dickson analyzes those contradictions and seeks to unveil the duality of private business associations' and private entrepreneurs' role in Chinese politics. He grasps the gist of Chinese politics and raises the level of Chinese studies. His historical and comparative perspectives enrich the researches and will foster further studies in Chinese politics.

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Keiko Hirata, *Civil Society in Japan: The Growing Role of NGOs in Tokyo's Aid Development Policy*  
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In Keiko Hirata's own words, 'This study focuses on Japanese NGOs [i.e., nongovernmental organizations] involved in ODA [i.e., overseas development assistance] reform efforts, to examine how political, economic, and cultural change has led to increased influence of NGOs, fragmentation of power, and changed state-civil society relations in Japan' (p. 3).

In its heyday, Japan's developmental state marginalized civil society, but Hirata argues that two powerful long-term trends, one internal and one external, have led to profound structural and normative changes that have eroded the developmental state and empowered civil society: globalization and a maturation of industrialization. The integration of the Japanese economy into the global economy weakened the developmental alliance of the bureaucracy, business, and the Liberal Democratic Party. As Japan came under pressure to liberalize its economy, weaker firms could no longer count on state protection, and the interests of internationally competitive firms, which no longer needed such protection, began to diverge from those of the state. As its international influence grew, the Japanese state became more accountable to global norms and demands. Many individuals abandoned the traditional values that had buttressed the developmental state, and the spread of information provided Japanese with new organizing skills.

On the domestic front, the close ties between business and state that accompanied developmentalism eventually resulted in corruption and prolonged economic stagnation that eroded the legitimacy of the developmental state and prompted frustrated citizens to mobilize

against the dominance of political and economic elites. At the same time, improved living standards led younger Japanese to embrace such postmaterial goals as personal freedom, quality of life, and the welfare of disadvantaged people inside and outside Japan.

As well as empowering civil society in general, these trends directly affected NGOs interested in ODA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), their main contact ministry, Hirata contends. For many years, NGOs had little contact, let alone cooperation, with state officials and foreign aid served primarily to promote Japan's own economic development. That began to change in the late 1980s, however. Individuals who came to embrace global norms like humanitarian assistance and benefited from the global skill revolution began gathering in NGOs. As a result, NGOs are now able to pressure the state to broaden Japan's aid agenda beyond its traditional focus on self-serving, capital-intensive infrastructure projects. In response to domestic and international pressure, MOFA officials themselves have begun to adopt the norms of the sustainable human development paradigm, which stresses the role of NGOs as providers of grassroots aid.

As Hirata herself points out, normative shifts aside, MOFA was also motivated to adopt sustainable human development and incorporate NGOs into its ODA program for instrumental reasons: to take advantage of their expertise in grassroots aid implementation, to gain their support in bureaucratic turf battles, to improve its image among Japanese citizens and other aid providers, and so on. In addition, Japan's recurrent scandals and budget deficits and the growing distance between the state and business have created openings for NGOs because they are regarded as less corrupt and more cost-effective than the corporations that used to profit from Japanese ODA.

As NGO-state relations gradually shifted from confrontation to cooperation, the government started funding NGOs involved in aid activities, established channels for policy dialogue, and engaged in operational collaboration. Although many observers tend to see the NGO-state relationship exclusively in terms of conflict or co-optation, Hirata maintains that some NGOs can simultaneously be highly critical and highly cooperative; they maintain their autonomy even as they work with the government. She concludes that 'NGOs have become an integral part of Japanese ODA' (p. 97) and, more generally, that 'it is not an exaggeration to say that NGO activism has changed the relationship between the state and civil society. NGOs have been fashioning a new type of politics in Japan, and . . . the state has had to incorporate their demands in the domestic political process by establishing new procedures of political participation' (p. 127).

I would critique this book in several ways. First, it is often repetitive and not professionally proofed. More important, Hirata overstates the originality of her argument and the conclusions that can be drawn from her research. 'Surprisingly, the growth of NGOs in Japan has been largely ignored within the academic world' (p. 6). That may have been true when the author began her research, but in recent years, a growing number of Japanese and Westerners (e.g., Jeffrey Broadbent, Robert Pekkanen, Tsujinaka Yutaka, Yamamoto Tadashi) have been writing about civil society in Japan, and even about Japanese NGOs involved in ODA (e.g., Menju Toshihiro, Kim Reimann). And broad as Hirata's scope is, she does no more than mention institutional reforms (e.g., the NPO Law of 1998) that should help civil society organizations and state regulations (e.g., the rarity of tax deductibility of contributions) that continue to hinder them.

'Japan's Official Development Assistance policy reflects most clearly the demise of the developmental state and the changing relations between the state and NGOs' (p. 3). Hirata simply

asserts this point, and although I concur with the general thrust of her analysis, other readers may be leery of extrapolating from the book's small subset of civil society organizations. And because she is most attentive to the organizations whose experiences support her conclusions, one has to wonder how representative her cases are of NGOs focused on ODA, to say nothing of others. 'Civil society actors . . . have begun to cooperate with the state, when necessary, on equal terms' (p. 3). Although that might well be true in certain instances, this overarching generalization is difficult to justify.

That said, *Civil Society in Japan* synthesizes a great deal of recent research in a highly readable way. It will be useful to readers interested in long-term socioeconomic and normative trends underlying state-society relations in Japan and on issues facing contemporary Japanese ODA.

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Richard J. Samuels, *Macchiavelli's Children: Leaders and their Legacy in Italy and Japan*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003, pp. xiv + 361 + notes, references and index.

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Despite valiant efforts aimed at circumscribing, assessing, indeed even measuring political leadership, we are still facing a closed pyramid in front of which we stare, fascinated, but also overwhelmed, as we cannot pierce the mystery of this fascination. Perhaps, as Professor Samuels rightly tells us, political scientists have concentrated too much on 'the forces of history'. Perhaps, too, not enough has been done, despite the Georges, the Burnses, the Greensteins, to study systematically and comparatively the concrete characteristics of that leadership. Perhaps, indeed almost certainly, there have not been enough of us, and enough of us continuously and imperviously (I plead guilty on this last charge), who endeavoured to pierce the mystery. There ought to have been a crowd: there have been a few great pioneers, but even these, in general, have lost heart in the middle of the enterprise.

We must therefore be grateful to Professor Samuels for having joined the small band of those who feel that political leadership needs to be studied and assessed. He has done so by following loosely the guidance of Plutarch and examined, more or less pairwise, two dozen leaders of Italy and Japan over the last hundred and fifty years. In undertaking such a task, Professor Samuels was no doubt aware that he was attacking the pyramid from its most difficult aspect, one in which there are almost no openings at all. For, as is indeed a puzzle to so many, Italy and Japan are the only two key countries of the contemporary world to have been able to achieve greatness without apparently needing truly successful leadership. Japan clipped the wings of its leaders by forcing them to abandon the top post with near-clocklike regularity. In Italy, the two greatest leaders, Cavour and De Gasperi, by a strange quirk of the wheel of fortune, died before being able to consolidate the changes they were bringing about. Think of what German politics might have been since the Second World War if Konrad Adenauer had died in 1950 or 1951 instead of staying in office up to 1963; think of what French politics would have been since 1958 if Charles De Gaulle had died in 1960 at the height of the Algerian War. The only Italian leader who stayed

in office continuously for a truly long time was Mussolini – and the greatness of Italy almost died with him!

Thus Professor Samuels did attack the pyramid from its most difficult aspect by choosing two countries which relish in being without ‘real’ leaders. The author launches his attack by presenting portraits of those who, in his opinion, markedly affected Italian or Japanese political life from the time Italy moved towards unity and from the time of the Meiji onwards. These portraits are examined in parallel on the basis of the general hypothesis, which is repeated perhaps a little too often and which is valid only to an extent, that the two countries have much in common and that by looking jointly at their political leaders, consequently, one will learn much more about what these leaders could (and could not) do.

The scholarship required to amass and subsequently synthesise the material is impressive. We thus know much more not just about these leaders but about the political context within which they operated. Of this there is absolutely no doubt. Yet Professor Samuels does have to pay a large price for having chosen to undertake such a broad survey of the two countries. For it is simply impossible to demonstrate, with respect to two dozen leaders and within the framework of a single book, even a relatively large one, the extent to which these men (there are no women among them) may have *truly* affected the course of the history of the country he led. The problem is too complex, the variables are too numerous for such a demonstration to be made, if such a demonstration can ever be made. Thus we are in the end confronted with extremely well-crafted short biographies of the leaders, but there is no measurement enabling us to assess any impact with any degree of precision. We must indeed congratulate Professor Samuels for having brought together these biographies, even if, on the Italian side at least, some of the judgements are somewhat ‘embellished’ (to good and evil)! Yet the ultimate paradox of the volume is that its final lesson has to be that political leadership in either country proved unable to do the real thing, namely to change the way in which politics was being played, and this despite repeated complaints among the public about the failure of politics.

Precisely because of the vast historical fresco which is being offered, however, anyone who is intrigued by the mystery of Italy’s and Japan’s success in almost every aspect except political leadership has to read this book. Readers will discover in this way how varied have been the attempts to modify the ‘system’ in both countries, in particular since the Second World War; but they will also have to conclude that little has been achieved as a result of these efforts. Italy is said to be the country of ‘trasformismo’. Perhaps the notion applies to both countries as ‘trasformismo’ means that leaders attempt to incorporate and typically succeed in incorporating wide numbers of politicians, including those from the opposition, into the system. This method has indeed been widely practiced and it proved able to maintain politics afloat in both countries. It seems to have been the real effect of political leadership, as leaders, good or bad, strong or weak, have all contributed to the maintenance of this system by obeying the rules of ‘trasformismo’.

J. Blondel