Book Reviews

The Cultural Logic of Politics in Mainland China and Taiwan
TIANJIAN SHI
Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015
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When Duke political scientist, Tianjian Shi sadly passed away late in 2010, he left behind a manuscript already accepted by Cambridge University Press. Through the efforts of the series editor, Andrew Nathan, with help from reviewers Dorothy Solinger and Doh Chull Shin, that manuscript has been finalized and brought to publication. It is a fittingly ambitious and accomplished bequest to the fields of comparative politics and China studies, to which Professor Shi contributed so much. Theoretically sophisticated and empirically rigorous (there are 32 pages of appendices), this book will provoke great interest – and, as all ambitious books should – much contention and avenues for further research.

Shi argues that since many social scientists assume that people are instrumentally rational to varying degrees, when they find that similar social structures in different cultural contexts produce different outcomes, they tend to explain it in terms of variance in access to information, for instance through censorship and control of the media. Thus when people in China are observed to have a relatively high degree of trust in government, particularly central government, this finding has often been attributed to the effects of an authoritarian information regime that reduces access to the information needed to make "rational" decisions. Shi rejects this interpretation and instead advances a sophisticated yet forceful case for "bringing culture back in." Specifically, he argues that rationality is culturally embedded, and that a culturally defined normative rationality shapes people's choices in social and political life.

The crux of Shi's thesis is that rather than a universal, materialist concept of reality, individual interest calculations are based on "socially shared ideas about acceptable and expected behaviour" (p. 2). To counter the charge that culture is not an independent cause of behaviours but rather an effect or proxy for structural or institutional factors, Shi invokes the cases of China and Taiwan, two societies that share elements of Confucian cultural heritage, but which have developed very different political structures and institutions. Shi argues that the momentous processes of modernization in China and democratization in Taiwan did not cause significant cultural shifts in these societies. Indeed he cites survey data to the effect that these changes reinforced peoples' commitment to traditional cultural norms, which in turn are associated with greater trust in government, a lower likelihood of confronting the regime and an inclination to define democracy as government by benevolent guardians. Given the resilience, flourishing even, of the CCP and KMT under these changing conditions, it is an interesting argument.

Shi carefully explicates his approach to using culture as an independent variable to explain various puzzles relating to trust, political participation and understanding of democracy in China and Taiwan. For instance, why do high numbers of Chinese people evince strong support for the government while saying they want democracy? Or why do many Taiwanese say that their regime is more democratic than they actually want it to be? Two cultural norms are the major focus of Shi's exposition: orientations

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towards authority and definitions of self-interest. Using data from the Asian Barometer surveys, he shows how different cultural norms lead people to hold different expectations of government and, by extension, different standards for evaluating government performance. Cultural orientations, the basis for normative rationality, can thus produce different reactions to the same type of government behaviour (helping explain differences between Chinese and Americans for instance).

Although there is no democratic tradition in China, Shi argues that Chinese (and Taiwanese) may understand "democracy" via the idea of *minben*. In *minben* doctrine the goal of government is to benefit the people. It differs from Western forms of democracy in the means used to achieve this goal, the standards for evaluating it and the associated rights and responsibilities of the people in relation to government. Ultimately, the legitimacy of a government is judged solely by its policy outcomes for the people. Shi argues that a significant proportion of people with traditional cultural ideas have a particular understanding of government based on *minben*, a kind of "guardianship democracy." In Taiwan this would explain why "despite its authenticity as a [liberal] democracy, the political system in Taiwan is a disappointment to some of its citizens" (p. 9). And in China, traditional norms may serve to underpin the legitimacy of a CCP that styles itself as guardian of the people. If this is right, those seeking to understand "authoritarian resilience" in China would do well to incorporate culture.

Shi's careful exposition and rigorous analysis is generally convincing. However, one wonders how resilient traditional values will continue to be, particularly among the young on both sides of the Strait, who have grown up with rather different norms. For example, the norms associated with internet culture, where there is little deference to authority and obvious scepticism and distrust of government. One wonders how well the idea of guardianship sits with Chinese netizens or Taiwanese student protesters. Amid the drama of Taiwan's Sunflower occupation, there was an obvious clash of values elicited in the opinion polls of older and younger citizens. Will stability, a key concept for both the KMT and CCP, continue to enjoy such resonance with people if and when their values begin to change? How will parties react if and when support for guardian democracy recedes? These are just some of the questions raised by this accomplished and thought provoking book.

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China's Challenges
Edited by JACQUES DELISLE and AVERY GOLDSTEIN
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vi + 317 pp. $34.95; £23.00
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Since Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang came to power at the 18th Party Congress in 2012–13, the world has witnessed drastic changes in both China's domestic development and its foreign policy. Xi has thus been regarded as the most powerful political figure since the death of the Deng Xiaoping. Nevertheless, Xi's continuing ability to play a leadership role depends on whether his team can manage and solve many fundamental problems that China faces. The two editors of *China's Challenges,* Jacques deLisle and Avery Goldstein, have brought together established scholars from different fields

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