

International Sources of Political Order in the People's Republic of China:
A Lacuna in the Fukuyama Framework

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Abstract: Fukuyama's conception of political order centers around the state, the rule of law, and popular accountability, but does not adequately account for how international factors shape these elements of contemporary governance. Focusing on the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the article notes how international sources of political order shaped each element of Fukuyama's framework: conflict and war strengthened the PRC's state apparatus; international institutions helped provide the rule of law that undergirded China's economy growth, and international norms influenced how the Chinese state sought and received popular legitimacy. Each of these factors will continue to influence the political development of the PRC going forward.

Key words: China, second image reversed, political order, international institutions, legitimacy, nationalism, rule of law.

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Introduction

Francis Fukuyama's two-volume treatise on political order makes an invaluable contribution by putting China at the center of our understanding of the state. As Fukuyama emphasizes, the de-personalized, hierarchical, bureaucratic state first emerged on a significant scale in the Middle Kingdom over a millennium before analogous entities emerged in Europe. Therefore a general theory of the state, now the primary institution of political order, needs to be grounded in a global historical context like the one Fukuyama provides, as opposed to the narrower Eurocentric, modern-era perspective that runs through much of the literature on state formation. In other words, China must be central to our explanation of the state.

Inversely, the state is central to Fukuyama's explanation of China. Highlighting the transhistorical persistence of the state in China (albeit with significant periods of wax and wane) helps Fukuyama explain why China has not, like European systems, developed robust mechanisms to provide the rule of law or popular accountability, which are the other two core elements of Fukuyama's conception of modern political order. Lacking a transcendental religion (perhaps more accurately, resisting the entrenchment of the various religious movements that passed through China over the millennia), China never developed a source of authority and legitimacy that could germinate into an independent rule of law to check state power, Fukuyama argues. Similarly, the lack of autonomous social actors like those that made up European civil society meant that the Chinese state was never forced to accept popular accountability. While both points could perhaps be disputed or qualified, Fukuyama makes the compelling general argument that a strong state has both blessed China with some of the benefits of political order while also impeding its development of other key elements.

Analogously, the centrality of the state in Fukuyama's general theoretical framework is both a strength and a limitation of the argument. It is a strength because the state is clearly the most important political institution human beings have ever created, and has been for centuries, and so rightly sits at the center of a general theory of political order. But it is a limitation because the state and domestic institutions are not the only vehicles through which political order is created. As globalization has expanded, and as countries have created thousands of international organizations to manage the resulting interdependence, the nature of political order has changed. At the same time, the political power of "non-state actors"—non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, terrorist organizations—which operate both domestically and transnationally, has given them a growing role not just as participants in political order but as creators of it.

In his treatise, Fukuyama explicitly acknowledges these shifts, noting that "international factors impinge to a much greater extent on individual societies than they did in the past" (Fukuyama 2012, p. 19). He argues that globalization has changed the conditions under which political order develops by exposing societies to transnational pressures, such as economic globalization. He also

notes that the faster transmission of ideas and information about political order allows institutional models (e.g. electoral democracy) to diffuse faster than they have in the past. He has less to say about the growing institutionalization of international relations that has developed since the 19th century, and especially after the Second World War, though he does echo the calls within political science to reduce the intellectual divisions between comparative politics and international relations (Fukuyama 2012, p. 478). He also acknowledges in the afterward of the second volume the increased attention to governance created by non-state actors, e.g. by companies or NGOs, though he describes the phenomenon as a worrisome trend that threatens to undermine political order (Fukuyama 2014, p. 556).

But having directly acknowledged political order beyond the state, Fukuyama explicitly leaves it to one side (Fukuyama 2014, p. 36). He justifies this form of what some have called “methodological nationalism” in the interest of parsimony, and it is difficult to fault an already expansive text for not expanding further.

Nonetheless, the objective of this brief commentary is to demonstrate the importance of sources of political order beyond the state. I argue that international politics and institutions can decisively shape political development, using the case of the People’s Republic of China to illustrate the larger claim. To make this argument the article examines how the three elements of political order that Fukuyama emphasizes—the state, the rule of law, and public accountability—have been shaped by international factors. While Fukuyama emphasizes historical processes of Chinese governance, I aim to show the importance of features of the international system. Following Gourevitch’s “second image reversed” framework, I show the international sources of domestic political order.

Prima facie, the People’s Republic of China presents a hard case for my argument. Its size insulates it from international forces compared to smaller states. The relative uniqueness of its political system may further insulate it from the transmission of institutional models. For much of its 70-year history it has been avowedly autarkic and isolationist, only belatedly joining many of the core intergovernmental institutions of the postwar order. And, as Fukuyama emphasizes, it has inherited some 5000 years of political culture and historically contingent institutions. Emphasizing these endemic features, much of the wider literature on China’s political development, mostly written by country or area specialists, implicitly accepts the idea that China’s political order can be explained largely by domestic, even uniquely Chinese, factors.

The contribution of this article is not to overturn these ideas, or Fukuyama’s state-centric framework, but to highlight their limits. An account of political order that does not account for international factors must be considered incomplete. Tellingly, Fukuyama’s sweeping historical account of political order includes many more international elements (e.g. colonialism) than the general theoretical concepts he distills from this narrative. Below I attempt to show what

more can be gained by more systematic consideration of international sources of political order.

The first half considers each of Fukuyama's core elements of political order in turn, showing how the PRC state itself, the "good enough" rule of law that undergirded its most recent economic expansion, and the way it seeks popular legitimacy have each been profoundly shaped by international factors. Following Fukuyama's contribution to this special issue, the second half of the article is instead prospective, considering how the international factors that shape Chinese political order today may do so in the future. Where Fukuyama sees China's future political development as largely a domestic struggle to establish constraints on state power, I ask how geopolitical conflict, economic transitions, and ongoing interdependence will shape that process, again with reference to the Chinese state, the rule of law, and popular accountability. I conclude that international factors will play as decisive a role in shaping China's future as they have in molding its past.

1. War made the party-state

War makes that state, and the state makes war, Charles Tilly memorably wrote, arguing that the existential exigencies of military conflict force political actors to develop state institutions to tax, govern, and field armies (Tilly 1990). Those that fail to do so will be defeated and absorbed by those that do. As others have done, Fukuyama relies on this logic in his account of state-building in China, recounting how the state of Qin conquered its neighbors in the 3rd century BCE by developing a superior bureaucratic apparatus to transform resources into military power (Fukuyama 2012, p. 110.) While Fukuyama does not emphasize this aspect, it is important to note that the Tilly model of state formation is inherently international. It is principally through external competition that states are made and strengthened.

But once a state has emerged, there is no guarantee that it will remain. To wit, having unified Chinese territory for the first time, the new state of decayed fairly quickly before the Han Dynasty reasserted control. Fukuyama notes how Chinese history has cycled through periods of political order and political decay, but emphasizes the persistence of a strong state through these shifts. One might instead choose to emphasize the ongoing *process* through which the Chinese state has continually been "made," a process in which international factors have played a large role throughout history. For example, as Fukuyama writes, Chinese dynasties' frequent conflicts with groups on their borders, and these groups' occasional conquest of, and absorption by, the Chinese state, drove much of the ebb and flow of political order throughout Chinese history. So Fukuyama is certainly right that something about a strong state has engrained itself in Chinese political institutions and culture, and that these persist over time. But it seems equally important to note the ongoing external competitive dynamics that have forced the Chinese state to bolster and even reconstitute itself throughout history.

Such considerations are particularly apt regarding the emergence of the PRC. Space limitations prevent a detailed account of this period here, but there are salient parallels between the Warring States period that Fukuyama emphasizes as crucial to state formation and the decades that preceded the emergence of the PRC. In the early years of the 20th century the Chinese state was at one of its historical low points, the weak Qing dynasty having given way to a nascent Republic and powerful regional strongmen. Civil war erupted between the Communist Party and Chiang Kai-Shek's ruling nationalist party (KMT) in 1927. Shortly thereafter, the Empire of Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and launched a full-scale assault on the Republic of China in 1937, sporadically leading the Communists and Nationalists to unite against it. The Communists managed to establish government control over several areas during these years, though the Party's central leadership was largely routed by the Nationalists in 1934 and forced to retreat to Yan'an in the remote west of the country. Here the CCP, though materially reduced, was able to establish the key bureaucratic institutions of the modern state.¹ From this base, the Communists were then able to expand back eastward, taking advantage of the ongoing Japanese assault on Nationalist territory. By the time the Japanese were defeated by the Allies in 1945, the Communists controlled a sizeable territory with a significant bureaucratic apparatus. War between the Communists and Nationalists then resumed in earnest following the departure of Japanese forces, with both the US and the USSR intervening. In 1949 the Nationalists fled to Taiwan and Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the PRC in its new capital, Beijing.

The key point is that the modern Chinese state, like its predecessors, was born out of decades of civil and international war. Two mechanisms that converted this interstate competition into strong state institutions are worth highlighting. The first is material. Like Qin, the CCP had to build a social organization that could convert resources into military power or face defeat. At the same time, it had to provide the services and functions that people living under its control expected in order to secure their loyalty, and thus ensure its resilience against the Nationalists. Had it not built strong bureaucratic institutions to achieve these ends, it would have perished, as Tilly and Fukuyama would emphasize. Indeed, the inability to establish strong, legitimate government institutions was largely the downfall of the Nationalists, despite their superior material resources.

Second, and less directly discussed in the Fukuyama framework, is the importance of international war in defining the CCP's legitimacy. As the country's founding mythology emphasizes, the period from the first Opium War to the Second World War marked a "century of humiliation" for China at the hands of external powers. Only under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) did China finally "stand up" and assert its sovereignty. In this way the formation of the PRC in many ways prefigured the nationalist, post-colonial revolutions that proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s. The narrative of national liberation

¹ The Yan'an period was not the only time and place in which the CCP developed state-like functions, but, with Mao located there, it was the area where Maoist practices were first deployed (Selden 1995; Saich and Cheek 1997).

continues to play a fundamental role in the CCPs self-perception and legitimation, and thus in political order, some 70 years later.

It is difficult to imagine a strong state in China today without this history of existential competition and struggle for independence and survival. The first element of China's contemporary political order therefore arguably owes as much to the geopolitics of the 20th century C.E. as to the legacies put in motion in the 3rd century B.C.E.

2. Global institutions help provide the rule of law to sustain the Chinese economic model

From 1979 onward, the PRC has engineered the most extraordinary period of economic growth in modern history, lifting more people out of poverty in a shorter period of time than ever before. While much of this success is attributable to country-specific factors such as the developmentalist policies of the Chinese state, the country's large labor pool, and the low economic baseline at which the PRC began, it is difficult to imagine the PRC sustaining decades of rapid economic growth outside the context of the liberal, institutionalized, globalized world economy that emerged after WWII. As I argue below, international sources of political order help explain a seeming paradox in Chinese political economy: how was a relatively unconstrained state able to provide the rule of law needed to become one of the world's largest trading economies, one of the largest destinations of foreign direct investment, and one of the holder of the world's largest currency reserves? As Fukuyama emphasizes, the rule of law is an essential component of modern political order, especially for complex economies. He attributes China's economic success in part to its ability to provide "good enough" rule of law (Fukuyama 2012, p. 248), though the country only ranks at the 43rd percentile for rule of law according to the World Bank's World Governance Indicators database.² This only become "good enough" in an institutionalized global economy, I argue.

It is important to recognize that much of China's economic growth has in fact been nationally driven. Especially toward the beginning of the reform period, when foreign trade and investment remained low, the rationalization of the Chinese economy (e.g. agricultural de-collectivization) brought substantial gains. But as the economy grew and the low-hanging fruit of domestic reform were plucked, the importance of cross-border trade and investment has grown both as a share of overall GDP and, more importantly, as a source of the technologies, businesses practices, and skills the Chinese economy needs to increase productivity and continue growing into the future.

It is difficult to imagine how this type of growth would have been possible without the very specific international economic context in which the PRC emerged. Globalization, particularly the growth of trade and investment, along with concomitant shifts in the nature of production processes and the creation of extended supply chains, allowed Chinese firms to insert themselves into the

² For a discussion of how this ranking was compiled see Kaufmann et al. (2010).

global economy. Only under such a system could the Chinese government successfully emulate the export-led growth strategies pioneered by Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea (which benefited from the same features of the global economy). Several crucial conditions undergirded this success (notably, especially in the early period, the networks of Chinese communities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and elsewhere). Here I focus on those that relate to Fukuyama's second core element of political order: the rule of law.

As Fukuyama notes, the rule of law is crucial for complex economic exchange because it gives firms and investors confidence that deals to trade, invest, license, franchise, or otherwise contract will be predictable across time and space. In contemporary China, global institutions help provide this critical function in three ways.

First, the global trade regime has ensured that the PRC has generally faced low tariffs by historical standards, especially after its ascension to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. The constraints China's trading partners have put on themselves to keep trade barriers low have allowed Chinese firms to operate under relative certainty about market access for their products. Perhaps even more importantly, international trade rules have given the Chinese government a way to credibly commit itself to economic openness. Because of international institutions, other governments and foreign firms know that protectionist moves by the Chinese government would result in costly WTO disputes that could deny Chinese firms market access on which they depend. This gives trading partners a much higher degree of certainty that China will refrain from protectionism in the first place, a confidence that has been bolstered by China's generally positive record of compliance with at least the letter of WTO rulings (Zeng and Liang 2013; Webster 2014; Zhang and Li 2014). China's ongoing efforts to negotiate additional bilateral and regional trade agreements on top of the WTO highlight the continued importance of international rules to the Chinese economy.

Second, a similar story can be told with respect to international investment. Since the 1960s, a proliferation of bilateral investment treaties have granted foreign investors the right to sue host governments that expropriate their assets. These disputes are tried not in public courts, but by private arbitrators, with the bulk of cases falling under the auspices of the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). In this system, states agree to constrain themselves under transnational institutions in the hope of attracting further investment (though the evidence that this constraint truly affects decision-making by investors is decidedly mixed).

China has enthusiastically joined the international investment protection regime, signing 145 bilateral investment treaties, which since the late 1990s give foreign investors the right to sue the PRC in arbitration should the Chinese government expropriate their assets. For an government unwilling to accept domestic constraints on its operations, conceding to submit itself to suit by foreign firms in a legal system beyond its control is highly significant.

Third, and perhaps most interesting, is China's embrace of transnational commercial arbitration, a public-private form of dispute resolution that plays a major role in the global economy. Many crossborder trading, licensing, or sales contracts for goods and services between firms contain clauses that mandate disputes to be settled not in courts of law but in alternative dispute resolution institutions. Like in the investment regime, in many industries this often takes the form of arbitration, in which a panel of private lawyers selected by the parties to the dispute "judge" the case and issue an arbitral award. These private rulings, which occur in hundreds of private arbitral bodies around the world, are enforceable in domestic courts in every major economy under an international treaty, the 1958 New York Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards and related legal instruments. Various characteristics of arbitration make it a compelling choice for many firms, including the fact that the proceedings occur in secret, under rules and adjudicators chosen by the parties (and therefore arguably free of nationalists biases), with a result that is more internationally enforceable than a domestic court decision. A significant portion of the world economy therefore relies on this hybrid system for cross-border contract enforcement.

Chinese firms have become significant participants in the transnational commercial arbitration regime (Hale 2015, pp. 320-349). The country ratified the New York Convention in 1987 and gave it substantive force to it through the 1994 Arbitration Act. More importantly, the government has taken the radical step of mandating that every court in China, should it decide to not enforce a foreign-related arbitral award, must automatically submit its decision to review by the Supreme People's Court, the country's highest and most professional judicial body. Consequently, almost all foreign related arbitral awards are enforced in China today. This means that a foreign firm contracting with a Chinese firm can substantially side-step the Chinese legal system by selecting private arbitration and, even if the resulting arbitral award needs to be enforced in a Chinese court, the foreign firm can rely on the highest level of judicial scrutiny, minimizing the danger of "local protectionism." This policy represents an extraordinary outsourcing of judicial authority to private, transnational entities. Notably, domestic firms engaged in arbitration with each other receive much less deference from Chinese courts.

These examples show how international institutions and rules are necessary if not sufficient elements of the "good enough" rule of law that has allowed the Chinese economy to flourish. But it is also important to note how international rules and institutions can penetrate into domestic politics and affect national political order directly. In China, as in any country, economic openness is shaped by political contestation between beneficiaries of liberalization and those who stand to lose from it. Commitment through international institutions can give advocates of liberalization structural advantages in these contests. International treaty commitments, for example, often require supermajorities to overturn. And over time, economic openness builds a constituency of economic actors connected to the global economy while eroding the economic importance (and ultimately political weight) of protectionist interests. These dynamics are very much at play China today. Reformers within the Chinese government have

consistently tried to use international commitments as a way to discipline the Chinese economy to become more rule-bound and liberal. These efforts are of course highly incomplete, and below I consider how they may play out going forward. But the point remains: the expansion of the rule of law in the PRC has been deeply connected to international economic processes and institutions.

3. International norms affect how the Chinese state legitimates itself to the Chinese people

The third element of Fukuyama's framework for political order is accountability. Some mechanism, such as, but not exclusively, popular suffrage, is required to ensure the government advances the interests of a broad swathe of society. If not, the government will lose support and political order will decay, Fukuyama argues. A crucial element of accountability is how the government seeks and earns (or fails to earn) legitimacy from various sectors of society and from, in some aggregate sense, "the people." In regimes like the PRC where there are no national elections and only limited institutional accountability processes between government and society (for example, the petition system), the importance of ideas and narratives around legitimacy is heightened. As Fukuyama rightly emphasizes, ideas about popular accountability are crucial (Fukuyama 2012, p. 442). In this context, I argue that international forces have had a strong role in shaping the legitimization strategies available to the PRC.

The first and most obvious example is the PRC's origins as a Leninist revolutionary movement. While the early CCP adapted Marxist and Leninist ideas to the Chinese context, and Mao added a significant set of modifications after his rise to power, it nonetheless remains the case that the present Chinese regime (like many others) owes its founding ideology to European intellectuals. To be fair, these ideas played a progressively smaller role as the Mao era unfolded, as Mao replaced standard Marxist-Leninist doctrine with his own forms of "mass line" popular participation, which, along with Mao's claim to have a direct mandate from the masses, became the dominant mode of popular legitimization. Mao's ideas proved to be powerful but short-lived tools of legitimization. The chaos of late 1960s and 1970s greatly diminished (at least for a time; see below) the utility of Leninist or Maoist ideas as sources of regime legitimacy.

In the post Mao period, then, a new source of legitimization was required. The fact that this search overlapped with the third global wave of democratization likely had an important effect. The democratic transitions occurring in southern Europe, Latin America, and elsewhere posed a grave ideological challenge to the party-state's legitimacy. As Fukuyama famously wrote in *The End of History* (1992), there appeared to be a growing consensus on democracy and capitalism as preeminent models for social organization. These trends worried the CCP, with the government concerned both about gradual reform and sudden transition, especially after the popular demonstrations in 1989. Though a number of government officials pursued more reform-oriented lines, the dominant response was instead to reinforce the twin pillars of nationalism and economic performance to support party-state's legitimacy. Though the Leninist emphasis

on national liberation was retained from the revolutionary period (and took on strong Third World-ism overtones during the Mao era, with China casting itself as the global supporter of anti-colonial movements), economic performance emerged in official and popular discourse as perhaps the primary benchmark of government success and legitimacy. Deng Xiaoping's 1994 Southern Tour, the first significant thawing of official policy after the Tiananmen incident, underscored this idea.

In some ways, a performance-based claim to legitimacy was the only option available to the CCP. Domestic experience and international trends had both removed Leninism-Maoism as viable options. At the same time, the PRC could not join the global trend to democracy without compromising party rule. In this way, the diffusion of ideas internationally shaped the way in which the CCP defined its legitimacy vis-à-vis its people by essentially leaving economic performance as the single viable choice.

4. War made the party-state; will the party-state make war?

Having explored how international factors have sculpted Fukuyama's three elements of political order over the history of the PRC, I now ask how external forces will shape their future. First, consider how the external security environment has continued to shape state power in China since the origins of the PRC. External military threats continued to pose a significant challenge to the PRC in its early years, especially the Korean war and the potential conflict with the Soviet Union. Border wars with India and Vietnam also created a need for effective military capacity. But since the 1970s (following its acquisition of nuclear weapons and rapprochement with the United States), China has enjoyed a very peaceful neighborhood relative to both China's own history and to the experiences of most other rising powers. The postwar order has been characterized by a number of unique features that contribute to this peaceful context: the creation of a collective security system in the United Nations with the PRC, since 1971, on its Security Council; the US-Japan alliance which ensured that China's only potential regional rival remained effectively demilitarized; the stability that came from the bipolar distribution of power in the Cold War and the unipolar distribution thereafter. In sum, though born in conflict and challenged in its early years, the PRC has spent most of its history in a relatively benign geopolitical context.

But as China's power has grown, tension has risen with neighbors in the South China Sea and with Japan. Military conflict over sea borders is well within the realm of possibility, though it seems less likely that such conflicts would escalate into a larger regional war (Yahuda 2013).

The determinants of China's behavior in these regional disputes are complex, but on balance they can be seen to stem more domestic sources than international ones. Some structural Realists in China and outside it take the hardline view that China's rising power makes military conflict with the United States and its allies inevitable, or at least highly likely (Mearshimer 2001). But this is not a dominant view. Moreover, very few independent observers find sufficient economic or

strategic value in the various islands, reefs, and other contested territorial features in East Asia's coastal waters to justify the costly and potentially risky efforts China is making to establish control over them. Rather, it seems likely that China's more aggressive regional stances are significantly driven by a) nationalist interests groups in the Chinese military and political system; b) the CCPs reliance on nationalism as a key pillar of popular support. As I have mentioned above, these dynamics stem significantly from the state's origins. Part of the Chinese state's legacy from its bellicose origins is a strong institutional role for the military in Chinese political order. While firmly under Party control, the People's Liberation Army and other military forces are perhaps the single most important interest group in Chinese politics. And while there are diverse views within the military, military leaders make up a significant portion of the more nationalist voices in Chinese political discourse.

It thus seems a distinct possibility that the second clause of Tilly's logic—the state makes war—may prove prophetic. If it does, we can expect the military bureaucracy and nationalist ideas to play an ongoing and central role in Chinese political order, strengthening the state element further and likely undermining efforts to strengthen the rule of law and ensure popular accountability (see below). It should be emphasized, however, that Tilly's logic is not determinative. Under strong political leadership, it would be very possible to avoid regional conflicts while channeling the Chinese military toward new tasks (e.g. China recently fielded its first combat troops as part of a UN peacekeeping operation).

5. Can China continue outsourcing the rule of law?

China has demonstrated that it is possible for a poor country to integrate into the global economy via an export- and investment-led growth model despite a relative lack of legal constraints on state power. As I have argued above, international and transnational institutions provide some of the "good enough" rule of law that explains this paradox. But the PRC now seeks to transition away from the economic policies of the past to a model more reliant on domestic consumption and innovation. The question arises, then, whether the rule of law systems that China has relied on to date will continue to prove efficacious. Given the centrality of economic performance to government legitimacy, the transition of the country's growth model is perhaps the most important policy objective of the current generation of leaders. Creating effective institutions to manage the transition must therefore be seen as an urgent priority.

It seems clear, however, that international institutions will not be able to help China sustain a domestically oriented economy in the same way there were able to support an investment and trade-led one. Consider, for example, the area of financial regulation. A key part of China's economic transition is reforming its banking and financial sector so that capital is allocated more efficiently, especially toward smaller, innovative, and profitable firms, as opposed to state-owned enterprises that serve political or other non-market objectives (such as benefiting key interests groups, regional redistribution, maintaining employment, etc.). International banking and financial regulations (such as Basel III or the macroprudential processes around the Financial Stability Board) set

standards around the financial health of banks or other financial organizations. These are important, but they do little to address the types of regulatory challenges required to shift the processes of capital allocation in the contemporary Chinese economy. Nor do they touch on the large numbers of “shadow banks” that have arisen in China, which potentially hold enough unregulated debt to significantly disrupt the economy (Elliot et al 2015). In other words, if China is going to build a more effective financial sector, it will likely have to do so itself. A similar logic applies to other areas in which the Chinese government would like the economy to move, such as intellectual property protection.

For these reasons, the seeming paradox—how China was able to grow so quickly without a strong rule of law—may not be a paradox after all, but just a temporary exception possible due to the specific nature of China’s political economy in the reform period and the globalized, institutionalized nature of the world economy at that time. To sustain growth going forward, China may find that “good enough” rule of law is no longer good enough.

If true, this creates two possibilities. On the positive side, the absolute imperative to maintain economic growth may force the Chinese government to generate the kind of independent, professional, autonomous legal and bureaucratic entities needed to sustain a modern economy. Alternatively, China may fail to create such institutions, imperiling the economy and, with it, political order more broadly.

6. Can the PRC manage the tradeoff between economic performance and nationalism as sources of legitimacy?

The choices laid out above—increased militarism or constraint, deep institutional reform or economic stagnation—highlight a dilemma the PRC faces regarding popular accountability and legitimacy. The two pillars of economic performance and nationalism on which its legitimacy rests are increasingly in tension with each other. It is essential for the Chinese government to seem strong against foreign threats, and yet overt military conflict with neighbors—or, worse, with the United States—would threaten the international economic flows in which the economy is now deeply immersed. At the same time, an economic downturn could force the regime to rely on nationalism even further to sustain legitimacy, potentially stepping up conflict. Note the international nature of this Gordian knot. The economic interdependence on which the PRC has come to depend has put its twin pillars of legitimacy in conflict with each other.

This unappealing choice could perhaps be mitigated if deep institutional reforms allowed the domestic economy to shift to the new growth model as planned. Such a move could simultaneously reduce the economy’s dependence on other countries while raising growth. But such reforms, to work, would likely reduce the CCP’s absolute control over the government’s judicial and regulatory mechanisms, and it remains to be seen if the CCP leadership will fully endorse such a move.

It is perhaps understandable, then, that in recent years Chinese leaders have attempted to articulate an alternative source of popular legitimacy. Bo Xilai, before he was removed from power, found guilty of corruption, and sentenced to life in prison, elaborated an explicitly nostalgic ideology and political discourse that attempted to resurrect the ideas of the revolutionary period. Other top leaders, including President Xi Jinping, have also adopted more self-consciously Maoist or Leninist rhetoric than their predecessors. That many of these leaders are themselves children of prominent figures in the founding of the PRC reinforces the sense that ideas once thought to be consigned to the dustbin of history have been resurrected.

Could the PRC restore its founding ideology as an effective tool of popular legitimacy, and therefore escape the dilemma highlighted above? Bo Xilai's success in mobilizing popular support as Party Secretary of Chongqing suggests that the idea is not entirely farfetched. However, it is at present difficult to imagine such ideas becoming so compelling as to substitute for economic growth or nationalism as core sources of legitimacy. Instead, it seems likely that neo-Maoist ideas will be folded into more basic nationalist appeals as part of an authoritarian capitalist model not dissimilar from Putin's Russia. The core dilemma imposed on the PRC by economic interdependence is therefore unlikely to dissipate.

Conclusion

This article has made three claims regarding Fukuyama's core elements of political order. It argues that the strength of the current Chinese state owes much to the particular international context in which it emerged, that international institutions have helped provide the rule of law necessary for economic growth, and that international norms have shaped the way in which the Chinese state seeks legitimacy from its citizens. The article has also conjectured how international factors will shape Chinese political order in the future. It notes that rising regional conflict threatens to increase the power of the state at the expense of the rule of law and popular accountability, that international institutions will not be able to provide the rule of law China needs to transition its economy to a new model of growth, and that international independence increasing puts the legitimacy based on economic performance in tension with legitimacy based on nationalism.

Underlying each of these points is the centrality of international factors in determining political order. Even a political system like the PRC, so often seen as a world unto itself, is fundamentally shaped by political institutions and forces beyond its borders. Fukuyama has made an important contribution with his global history of political order. But his theory is ultimately "global" only in the sense that it compares cases from different regions. "The international" is missing. As the world grows more globalized, future students of politics will need to fill this lacuna in order to fully understand the origins of political order and political decay.

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