STUDIENKURS POLITIKWISSENSCHAFT

Nele Noesselt

Chinese Politics

National and Global Dimensions

Nomos

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List of Acronyms

ACFTU	All-China Federation of Trade Unions
ADIZ	Air Defence Identification Zone
ANC	African National Congress
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ALBA	Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de nuestro América
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARATS	Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CAC	Central Advisory Commission
CAN	Comunidad Andina de Naciones
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CASCF	China-Arab States Cooperation Forum
CASETF	China-Arab States Economic and Trade Forum
CBDR	Common But Differentiated Responsibilities
CCDI	Central Commission for Discipline Inspection
CCF	China-CELAC Forum
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	Central China Television
CDB	China Development Bank
CFAU	China Foreign Affairs University
CELAC	Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños
CIC	China Investment Corporation
CICA	Conference on Interactions and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia
CIIS	China Institute of International Studies
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Company
CNR (Group)	China Northern Locomotive and Rolling Stock (Industry)(Group)
CNSA	China National Space Administration
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CRCC	China Railway Construction Corporation
CSSTA	Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement
DABP	Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
EC	European Community/European Communities
ECFA	Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement
EETO	European Economic and Trade Office
EIA	Energy Information Administration
ENGO	Environmental NGO
EPL	Environmental Protection Law
ESA	European Space Agency
EU	European Union
EUR	euro
EXIM (Bank)	Export-Import Bank
FALG	Foreign Affairs Leading Group
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment

FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMD	Guomindang (or: KMT, Kuomintang)
(GO)NGO	(Government-Organized) NGO
ICBC	Industrial and Commercial Bank of China
ICANN	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICU	International Clearing Union
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IGF	Internet Governance Forum
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty
IR	International Relations
IS	Islamic State
ISD	Integrated Surveillance Decision
ISS	International Space Station
IT	Information Technology
KMT	Kuomintang (or, in Hanyu Pinyin, Guomindang)
MEE	Ministry of Ecological Environment
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources
MOOTW	Military Operations Other Than War
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDB	New Development Bank
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIMBY	Not In My Backyard
NPC	National People's Congress
OBOR	One Belt, One Road
OFDI	Outward FDI
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAC	Pan African Congress
PBoC	People's Bank of China
PFP	People First Party
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRICS	Polar Research Institute of China
RATS	Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RP	Responsible Protection
RwP	Responsibility while Protecting
SAFE	State Administration of Foreign Exchange
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SASAC	State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SDR	Special Drawing Right
SEF	Straits' Exchange Foundation
SEPA	State Environmental Protection Agency
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SU	Soviet Union
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense

UN	United Nations
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
UNCCC	UN Climate Change Conference
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
US	United States
USD	US dollar
VoC	Variety of Capitalism
WGIG	Working Group of Internet Governance
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

1. Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has risen to global power status. Its new role as investor in Europe and the US, as architect of the globe-spanning New Silk Road, and as advocate of major reforms of existing international institutions in the name of the so-called Global South has refuelled the "old" debate about the uniqueness and singularity of the Chinese case: is it possible to analyse Chinese politics based on theoretical frameworks inspired by European history and developed by scholars based in Western democracies? Or do non-Western states display patterns of (domestic) governance and international relations rooted in their distinct historical-philosophical foundations and cultural traditions? If so, this would imply that one would have to resort to alternative analytical frameworks to understand the hidden drivers and determinants of these countries' deviation from the "universal" model.

Regarding the causal nexus between domestic system patterns and the PRC's position as an actor on the global stage, two (opposing) theory-guided approaches can be identified:

The first approach starts from the assumption of a direct causal relation between a state's political regime patterns and domestic economic structures, as well as philosophical-cultural foundations, and its foreign strategy and global positioning. A socialist state-actor would accordingly display behavioural patterns different from those of a pluralist, liberal democratic system. For example, Democratic Peace Theory postulates that democracies would not fight each other. Non-democratic systems, by contrast, are expected to pursue an assertive, expansionist foreign policy and to oppose the liberal international order.

The second approach postulates that the inclusion of the PRC into international institutions and organisations would cause an internalisation of international values and compliance with international rules and regulations. Over time, the integration of a socialist state into a capitalist world (trade) system was expected to trigger a transformation towards capitalism and democracy. The currently observable development – that a rising non-democratic system might climb within the existing international institutions and participate in the reform and restructuring of the international order, but not necessarily plot its overthrow – has initially not been reflected by studies subscribing to this second approach.

The signals sent by the PRC often appear slightly contradictory, at least when viewed from the perspective of an outside observer. The Chinese leadership resolutely rejects and denies pursuing any hegemonial power ambitions or striving for supreme global leadership (*bu dang tou*). Nonetheless, at a working meeting of the Commission for National Security in February 2017, Xi Jinping framed the concept of "twofold guidance" (*liang'ge yindao*): to "guide the international community to jointly build a more just new world order" and to "guide the international community to jointly maintain international security". In terms of terminology, this is in line with the PRC's axiomatic foreign policy principles, as it draws a clear divisive line between the concept of "guiding" (*yindao*) and the

notion of "leading" (*lingdao*). Nonetheless, the PRC's global role conception has undergone some internal revisions: China is actively participating in multilateral bargaining rounds on global trade and finance as well as on global politics and (non-traditional) security.

This textbook introduces the reader to the basic patterns and guiding principles of Chinese politics, covering both the domestic and the global level. It discusses the interplay between formal and informal dimensions and includes the political psychological level of Chinese politics through images, perceptions, and role claims. The textbook summarises the existing English-language state of the art, complemented by select streams of contemporary inner-Chinese debates and theory models. These debates amongst Chinese scholars and frameworks developed by Chinese political scientists are often excluded from textbook introductions to the political system of the PRC. They are, however, essential for understanding the concepts and calculations underlying the dynamic institutional adjustments and policy innovation in China. When institutional change becomes visible, this is normally the outcome of an internally discussed re-steering process that has been prepared over a long time. By decrypting the debates amongst scholars and think tanks advising the government, one might be able to identify these shifts before they are ultimately proclaimed. It goes without saying that during these phases of internal institutional restructuring China's visible political actions might appear irrational, as they are not in line with previous practices.

The PRC is a dynamically learning system, permanently adapting itself to changes in its domestic and global environment. A textbook which provides the tools and techniques to analyse Chinese politics can, therefore, only pinpoint current basic features and core patterns of Chinese politics and tentatively sketch potential future development trajectories. A multitude of governance concepts and ways of positioning China at the global stage are being discussed amongst Chinese scholars and policy practitioners – out of which the decision-making elite can cherry-pick and amend the official model accordingly. As the following chapters will show, the Chinese political system has never been an ideologically ossified, monolithic system – with the Mao years being no exception. Novel structures and instruments are experimentally tested, informal mechanisms and practices dominate formal system settings. Knowledge of the PRC's formal institutional order and administrative structures is generally important, but one should not forget that in a (Communist) one-party state the party has the final say and stands above the law and the state apparatus. To understand the functional mechanisms of Chinese politics and to assess their current transformations, one has to wear both structure- and agency-focused analytical lenses and to reflect on the ideas and policy paradigms underlying the system's ordering principles.

This textbook is located at the intersection of political science research and modern China studies. To allow the reader to go deeper into the details of the topics addressed, each chapter ends with a list of recommended reading. The textbook employs illustrative case studies to point out recent transformations, often not yet covered in English-language secondary literature. For these specific case studies, Chinese primary sources are referenced. Over the past few years, these illustrations

have proven useful in seminars taught in Vienna, Göttingen, Hamburg, Duisburg-Essen and Zurich: they put flesh on the bones of the often rather abstract and blurry concepts of Chinese governance, and illustrate the variations and flexible (re-)interpretations of key concepts. The in-depth decryption of Chinese political science debates and governance innovation by the fourth and the fifth generation of Chinese political leaders was kindly sponsored and supported by the German National Research Foundation (DFG Project NO 1041/2–1). In this textbook, the results of my project-related fieldwork trips to China are not dealt with in full detail, but they are referenced whenever the internal scholarly debates seem crucial for understanding the most recent transformations of Chinese politics.

The audience addressed by this textbook includes undergraduate and graduate university students and scholars from the fields of political science, international relations, law, economy and China studies. It might also serve as policy consulting material for governmental and political institutions in this field.

The textbook is composed of six topical sections that reflect the historical and philosophical foundations of the PRC's political system, taking a closer look at the interplay between formal and informal system structures. Moreover, it looks at the causal relations between the national and global dimension of Chinese politics. The main contents of each chapter are summarized below to guide the reader through this book:

Chapter II starts with political philosophy and governance theory that determines and shapes Chinese politics. Knowledge of these historical-philosophical foundations is not just relevant to historians but is of crucial importance for being able to read and decrypt official political statements by the PRC's political elites. When drafting new policies, the political elites and their team of advisers debate not only the lessons to be drawn from policy experimentations in other systems but often undertake a retrospect evaluation of governance solutions documented in China's historical records. When proclaiming a new policy, the framing often borrows from China's (pre-modern) political philosophy or creates related neologisms (such as the Harmonious Society *hexie shehui*). The formula *yi shi wei jian*, to take history as a mirror, is almost omnipresent in these internal debates. Along these lines, in 2008 Wen Jiabao, in his role as premier, stressed that there would never be a relaunch of the Cultural Revolution in China – thus framing this episode of the PRC's history as a negative counter-image to the fourth generation's quest for harmony. The dissolution of the Soviet Union (SU), amongst others, is another cautionary historical example quoted to justify policy innovation and institutional reforms as the only way to avoid a state collapse. Recent studies by Chinese scholars come to the conclusion that the big-bang transformation of the Soviet economy and the neglect of ideology, in combination with a loss of control over the military, were the main drivers and causes of the SU's decay. Immediately after his appointment as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Xi Jinping undertook steps to secure the army's loyalty to the party and started to redefine the PRC's core socialist values (inscribed as Xi Jinping Thought into the CCP's constitution at the 19th Party Congress). The Chinese Empire's dynastical records, and the reasons reported for the previous dynasty's decline therein, present the ruling dynasty as the one restoring

order, fixing the reported aberrations of their predecessors. Political historiography hence forms part of the PRC's official narrative to justify and legitimise reforms. One lesson from the Tang dynasty, for instance, was that empty talk causes the decline of the empire; this has been quoted to explain and justify the top-down enforcement of reforms (and the sanctioning of local officials in case of underperformance) under Xi Jinping. Operating with a symbolic path-dependent development narrative, the Hu–Wen administration (2002/2003–2012/2013) introduced novel political formula inspired by Confucian traditions. Likewise, Xi Jinping's speeches are full of direct and indirect quotes from the Chinese classics and pre-modern (political) philosophy. In addition to Xi Jinping's collected core speeches (available in English under the title *The Governance of China*) compilations of his quotations from the Chinese classics can be purchased in Chinese bookstores. These compilations list both the original quote as well as the context of Xi Jinping's speech in which this reference was made. They thus offer important clues to delve below the surface of Xi's official speeches and statements. English-language translations of Xi's speeches generally include the translation of the quote but do not provide the reader with any background information about the original quote's context and its exegesis by Chinese scholars and political scientists. In some cases, small deviations from the original quote imply that the formula has been adjusted slightly to fit into Xi's speech and send a decrypted message to some members of the audience (in some cases, this adjustment is done by using homophones, i.e., by replacing one character for another that is pronounced the same way – these messages are only visible in the printed version of the speech). The quotations from the Chinese classics serve the construction of a unified "Chinese" value and reference scheme that presents Chinese governance concepts as unique and sui generis. In addition, Xi Jinping has also reconfirmed Maoist concepts both in political debate and political practice – e.g., the "mass line" and campaigns to "rectify cadres' work style".

Likewise, groups of Chinese intellectuals look at contemporary developments against the backdrop of China's historical past and argue that any denial of the country's distinct (political) history would equal the end of China's political system. Liang Zhu's (Peking University) pamphlet against "historical nihilism" fuelled an emotional debate on the Chinese Internet, during which the fragmentation of China's scholarly community and the incompatible positions of competing factions within the CCP became visible once again. The bone of intellectual contention was the parallel that Liang Zhu outlined between the de-Stalinisation and historical nihilism under Khrushchev and the developments in the contemporary PRC (Liang 2012).

The official governance model coined by the fourth and the fifth generation of the PRC's political leaders should not be mistaken as a unified monolithic model, synthesizing the various sources of Chinese governance philosophy. Instead, these philosophical reference systems (Confucianism; Daoism; Buddhism; Marxism/Maoism; and Western values) coexist and are only loosely combined under one overarching roof. Depending on political developments, some frames and elements might be (temporarily) deactivated or removed from the official governance canon.

A clear line of demarcation has been drawn rhetorically between the Maoist era of revolution and class struggle and the post-Maoist era of reform (of the economic system). However, the debate on "historical nihilism" and the concept of "permanent, continued class struggle", initiated by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, demonstrates the persistence and the legacy of Maoist concepts and terminology in the 21st century.

Chapter III provides the reader with an overview of China's institutional order and the operative mechanisms of the Chinese party-state. The notion of the "party-state" illustrates the close intertwined relationship between the CCP and the PRC's state apparatus. This parallel, mirror structure of party and state is re-duplicated at all levels of the administration, down to the level of the county. However, in the PRC's political history there have been periods of radical restructuring or abrogation of China's state institutions – as, for example, during the Maoist mass campaigns. The post-Maoist generations of China's political leaders are guided by the proclaimed goal of setting up a modern, transparent administration with robust checks and balances. After internal turbulences and interruption of these reforms, the fourth and the fifth generation have undertaken efforts to enforce the implementation of these restructuring measures. However, any institutional reforms or adjustments of the governance process can be expected to generate resistance of the bureaucratic state apparatus and groups of state officials whose (institutional) power would be curbed by these reform measures. Mass mobilisation or anti-corruption campaigns are one possible way to enforce the employment of new political personnel and to ensure compliance with the central authorities' reform agenda. The anti-corruption campaign initiated by Xi Jinping persecutes "tigers and flies", i.e., cadres at all ranks and levels of the party-state (including the military) (Noesselt 2014). Anti-corruption campaigns might have multiple goals and drivers. They can be deemed necessary to restore the efficiency and performance of the state apparatus – and they can be used to get rid of counter-elites and opposition movements. On the other hand, they can be an attempt to win back people's trust in the political regime and to generate symbolic support for the CCP and its governance approach. Corruption and power abuse by local party cadres and state officials have shaken people's trust in the system. In the perception of Chinese (local) society, the family members of high-ranked cadres are seen as enjoying multiple privileges. The lawsuits against "tigers" (and "flies") have accordingly been publicly documented by Chinese state media.

Another Achilles' heel of the one-party state is the phenomenon of so-called "naked cadres", i.e., cadres who managed to transfer their family and fortune to other countries and are the only ones of their family staying on. At internal meetings, Chinese analysts have remarked that a similar phenomenon of capital flight occurred in the final years of the Soviet Union. Before this background Xi's anti-corruption campaign goes far beyond those launched by his precursors in terms of scope and range. Operation Fox Hunt (*da liehu*) targeted Chinese officials who had escaped abroad (Xinhua 2015). Until 2017, this operation was coordinated by Wang Qishan, a close ally and companion of Xi Jinping, in his

function as head of the CCP's Commission for Discipline Inspection. Whilst, with the PRC's entrance into the period of reform and opening, this commission did not attract much attention, the role and power of this party organ have been reinforced from 2012 onwards. Operation Fox Hunt was succeeded by Operation Skynet which persecuted Chinese nationals in the US and Great Britain accused of having committed economic crimes. In March 2018, the National People's Congress passed a revision of the Chinese state constitution that included the establishment of a National Supervisory Commission (*Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui*) with regional sub-branches. In 2019, a second investigation round of Operation Skynet was launched (*Renmin Ribao* 2019).

The fine-tuning and modifications to the PRC's state apparatus also imply a re-distribution of power and responsibilities between the party and the state as well as amongst the central ministries. Super-ministries have been reorganised and sub-divided into smaller units. Additional mechanisms of internal supervision and checks and balances have been introduced. The fifth generation's governance model follows a "top-level design" (*dingceng sheji*): power has become recentralised. Albeit in political practice, the central party-state still relies on cooperation with the lower levels of administration instead of enforcing top-down decisions without prior consultation. It also continues to cooperate with local (civil) society; formats of local self-administration are regarded as essential for the successful implementation of central level regulations (and their adaptation to local conditions).

The formal institutional order of the state apparatus, as documented in the PRC's constitution, is hardly revealing when analysing the complex interactions between central and local levels as well as between party and state, and regarding the PRC's special administrative units. Hong Kong and Macao are parts of China but – under the formula of "one country, two systems" (*yi guo, liang zhi*) – are allowed to have their own multi-party system structures. Likewise, Taiwan is de jure treated as a province of China – even though the CCP government in Beijing never exerted direct power and control over the island. Chapter III concludes with an assessment of the political history of Hong Kong and Taiwan and discusses the outcome of recent elections and their implications for Beijing.

Chapter IV starts from the Fourth Plenum's (2014) announcement to strengthen legal reforms and the legal system. This chapter places these developments in the historical context of China's past processes of state-building and constitutionalisation. It outlines the parallels between Xi Jinping's proclamation of rule-based governance (*yi fa zhi guo*), complemented by the idea of constitution-based governance (*yi xian zhi guo*), and the intellectual debates and initiatives in the late 19th century to transform China into a constitutional monarchy. In the 20th and 21st centuries, the PRC's ruling elites repeatedly discussed the function of legal frameworks and institutionalised modes of governance to stabilise the one-party state. The Fourth Plenum in 2014 was, however, the first of its kind to formally highlight the importance of rule-based governance. The concept of constitution-based governance, which was discussed simultaneously, was later dropped. This points at internal controversies within the CCP. In January 2013, the Guangdong-based weekly newspaper *Nanfang*

Zhoumo (*Southern Weekend*) reported that the new year editorial, originally entitled as "Chinese Dream, Dream of Constitutional Governance" (*Zhongguo meng, xianzheng meng*), had been censored. Other newspapers and journals also elaborated on this notion – including *Yanhuang Chunqiu* (English title: *China through the Ages*), whose webpage was down after an essay had been posted that identified constitution-based governance as a necessary prerequisite for a general restructuring of the political system (Yuen 2013). The official party organ, *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*), intervened in this dispute and published three editorials that documented the official definition of the Chinese governance model and rule-based governance. Since August 2013, constitutionalism and democracy, as well as Western values, have obviously been put on a blacklist.

The internal controversy back in 2013 over the concept of constitutionalism insinuates that one should not look at the Chinese configurations of the law (and law-based governance) separately, but in connection with the concepts of democracy, socialism and capitalism. In Western political science, democracy and rule of law are widely seen as causally interrelated. In the Chinese debate, these concepts have been redefined and adapted to the political reality of the one-party state.

In principle, the strengthening of rule-based governance accompanies the recent modifications of the PRC's economic development strategy and its institutionalisation. Chapter IV thus concludes with some reflections on the transformation of the Chinese economy and the debate about a distinct "Chinese" variety of capitalism.

With **Chapter V** the textbook turns to the visible pluralisation of actors directly or indirectly involved in Chinese politics (and policymaking). During the Maoist years, tensions between factions – competing interest groups within the CCP – had reached their peak in the "struggle between two lines", i.e., between those labelled as "revolutionary-proletarian" and those falling into the category of "capitalist-bourgeois" forces. These cleavages have survived and continue to erupt from time to time. Tensions and conflicts also occur amongst China's economic elites – between the state-owned sector and the private economy, between advocates of a neo-Maoist development approach and those favouring a neo-liberal agenda. One of the CCP government's central tasks is to restore and maintain social harmony and cohesion and to mediate between the competing socio-economic actor groups. In 2018, the PRC's Gini coefficient, describing the inequal distribution of income, reached 46.8 (down from 49.1 in 2008, but up from 46.2 in 2015).[1] This indicates a severe imbalance that could threaten social harmony and regime survival.

The economic reforms initiated in 2013 aim at reducing state subsidies for state-owned companies and to strengthen market-based competition. The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), an agency under the State Council, outlined some basic reform ideas in its 383 Plan. This plan proposes the simultaneous expansion of market economy principles, the reform of administrative

1 https://www.statista.com/statistics/250400/inequality-of-income-distribution-in-china-based-on-the-gini-index/.

system structures and the strengthening of rule-based governance. To foster competition, the NDRC recommends a further opening of the market for private and foreign investors, especially the sectors of banking and finance – and to further internationalise the Chinese renminbi. The plan also includes the liberalisation of the energy and telecommunication sectors. With regard to the situation of Chinese peasants, the 383 Plan devises the strategy of reforming land use rights regulations. The prospective legalisation of rural–urban labour migration also requires the establishment of (private) social insurance systems. Access to social security and welfare systems should no longer depend on people's original *hukou* registration.[2] The Third Plenum (2013) finally passed a 60-points reform package that remained far more abstract than the original NDRC reform proposal.

The reform package of the Third Plenum formally stands for a top-down imposed re-steering of China's economy. Indirectly, the reform proposal reflects the positions and demands of relevant societal actor groups. Under certain conditions – outlined in Chapter V – mass protests and contestation movements are tolerated, as they serve as seismographs that provide the central government with information about local (mis)developments and allow the formulation of policies designed to pre-empt people's demands. The CCP has undergone a transformation from a revolutionary party of workers, soldiers and peasant to a ruling party that represents the Chinese "people" in its entirety. This also includes the group of the so-called "red capitalists" – private entrepreneurs maintaining a symbiotic relationship with the party. But the CCP also pays special attention to rural areas, maybe also due to historical legacies, as the revolution that brought the CCP to power heavily relied on its power bases in the countryside. Furthermore, as historical records reporting on the decay of several Chinese dynasties highlight, religious movements and peasant rebellions were the main reasons for the fall of the ruling dynasty and the instalment of a new – sometimes local only – government led by the revolutionary forces.

Chapters **VI** and **VII** turn to the global dimensions of Chinese politics and assess the links and dependencies between the PRC's global positioning and reforms and developments at the domestic level. **Chapter VI** begins with a short overview of the international perceptions and views on China's role as an actor in international politics, contrasting them with the PRC's officially proclaimed national and global role conceptions. In international political science, as well as in debates amongst Chinese academic communities, one central topic is the modes and effects of the rise of a state to global power status. Whilst neorealist scholars categorically deny that such a process could occur peacefully, the political and political science debate in China operates with the paradigm of Peaceful Rise (*heping jueqi*) and postulates that the PRC is cooperatively rising within the existing international system structures. The Peaceful Rise (also framed as Peaceful Development Road (*heping fazhan zhi daolu*)) is – like the Harmonious World (*hexie shijie*) – one of the PRC's magic formulas to defuse threat perceptions and to counter scenarios of an inevitable conflict between rising powers (China) and the old gravitational centres of world

2 The 383 NDRC document is available online: http://www.xatdj.com/article/11003.html.

politics (the US). Chapter VI moves beyond the official narratives of China and the US by assessing concrete actions and developments in select sub-fields of global politics – especially in those characterised by under-regulation and seen as emerging fields of global power competition: outer space, cyberspace and the Artic region. To assess global power shifts, the chapter examines the PRC's refined approach to Africa and Latin America – the latter being historically regarded as the strategic backyard of the US. The expansion of Chinese economic (and political) activities is an undeniable fact – as the emergence of the PRC as an investor in Europe and the US, also covered in Chapter VI, corroborates. The exploration of global markets and the PRC's infrastructure and investment in other world regions have led to a readjustment of China's security strategy. China did not only modernise its army – the annually announced increase of its military spending adds fuel to the debate on Beijing's "new assertiveness" – but also set up a blue water navy and special forces trained for global missions. The PRC participates in UN peacekeeping missions and, under Xi Jinping, for the first time in its history, also contributed combat forces. This indicates that crises and conflicts in other world regions are seen as detrimental to Chinese economic development interests – and, clearly, Beijing seeks to position itself as a responsible global power contributing to the resolution of global challenges. These image campaigns might also explain the PRC's new positioning in the fields of global climate change and global finance. Whilst, over the past few decades, the PRC refused to sign any contracts that would include binding quota for emission reduction, since the Paris Summit (2015) the PRC actively advocates the re-steering of national and global economies towards green and sustainable development. Two developments might lie behind this strategic turn: firstly, the PRC enforces a more sustainable, low-emission growth model at home and heavily invests in the development of green technologies – which could be exported to other regions undergoing a similar re-steering process. Secondly, the PRC's positioning as an advocate of combatting climate change happened when the Trump administration withdrew from the Paris protocol. At the World Economic Forum and at G20 meetings, the PRC also pushed for "green finance" and put forward its own concepts to stabilise the global financial system.

Chapter VII takes a closer look at recent power shifts and transformations of world politics that are still at an early stage but have the potential to trigger additional modifications in China's foreign and security strategy (this already happened in some cases). With the New Silk Road (also known as One Belt, One Road (OBOR) or Belt(s) and Road(s) Initiative), the PRC has put forward the idea of constructing a globe-spanning network of trade corridors managed and coordinated by Beijing. This New Silk Road also means that the PRC's relations with the Arab world will be deepened and expanded. This diversification of the PRC's foreign relations and its reaching out to "new" world regions has implications for the Chinese-imagined cartography of the world as composed of major power centres. The Chinese term *duojihua* (multipolarisation) stands for a transition from the US-centred world system to one in which China would play an important role but not act as supreme leader. In the Chinese political debate of the 1970s/1980s, the rather broad concept of multipolarity was broken down to pentapolarity, a world composed of China, Europe, Japan, Russia and the

US. Chapter VII re-assesses these four bilateral relationships by looking at their historical evolution and most recent transformations in the 21st century.

A retrospect view on the theories and paradigms guiding research on Chinese politics evidences that scenarios and interpretations tend to be overshadowed by the researcher's position in time and space and impacted by global power constellations and power competition. Sometimes, analyses might have also been inspired by normative views and thus do not document facts but provide the reader with an *ex cathedra* interpretation of Chinese politics.

The evaluation and classification of Xi Jinping's leadership style by international analysts illustrates that the interpretation of Chinese politics is subject to rapid changes of views and opinions (of course, reflecting unexpected shifts and turns of Chinese politics). Initially hailed as liberal reformer, Xi Jinping, for example, activated slogans and steering mechanisms of the Mao era. In official party terminology, he is referred to as core leader (*hexin lingdao*), his theory on Chinese socialism – Xi Jinping Thought – was inscribed into the CCP constitution at the 19th Party Congress. At this congress, Xi was also reconfirmed as CCP General Secretary. In March 2018, the National People's Congress passed a revision of the state constitution that would allow him to remain in his position as State President for life (before the revision of the constitution, this had been formally limited to two consecutive office terms). Hence, international observers now see him more as charismatic-authoritarian leader and conservative defender of one-party rule than as a liberal reformer (see, inter alia, Economy 2014).

Even the cult of personality appears to have been restored. There has been no second red book or wide-spread launch of propaganda posters (though wall slogans and posters carrying core political statements can be found across the country). But one should not forget that Xi Jinping's speeches have been compiled and translated into various languages; the third volume was released in 2020. Additionally, short video clips and animated cartoons on the PRC's reform policies are being circulated on the (Chinese) Internet. Some of them address the Chinese audience, others are reaching out to the English-language community (such as one cartoon on the advantage of Chinese meritocracy as compared to Western democracy, and one music cartoon clip on the PRC's 13th Five-Year Plan). The analysis of visual documents – images, graphs and maps printed in Chinese newspapers; posters; animated cartoons; videos and documentaries broadcast by Chinese state media – offer additional ways to get access to the "hidden" dimensions of Chinese politics. Whilst the official political narrative operates with rather obscure frames and concepts that are open to definition, the visualisation of these frames by the state media hints at some of the content elements linked to these frames which are currently being discussed. Regarding the fifth generation of Chinese political leaders, these visual dimensions of Chinese politics have remained rather under-theorized and under-explored. Given the opaqueness of the Chinese political system and the partial self-censoring of the public (intellectual) debate, visual documents provide the analyst not only with the official narrative of the party-state but might reflect elements of the various competing policy images and reflections on China's future developments that are

neither publicly displayed nor documented in official political statements or official journal publications.

These contemplations on the dynamic fluidity of Chinese politics imply that a textbook written to provide the reader with the knowledge and skills needed to identify and interpret contemporary developments of Chinese politics can only document the basic patterns and facts and outline views and interpretations documenting the state of Chinese governance at the moment of the conclusion of the textbook manuscript. This textbook aims at raising the reader's awareness of the importance of the informal dimensions of Chinese politics and the temporary oscillations of the system (which should *not* prematurely be read as indicators of a lurking regime collapse).

In order to allow the reader to "jump" between the chapters and to use this book also as reference book to look up basic definitions and core facts, some definitions and episodes mentioned in the opening parts of this book are taken up again at a later point – so that each (sub-)chapter can also be read as independent (learning) unit.

In addition to the list of references and the list of recommended literature at the end of each chapter, this textbook includes a list of central databases and online portals on Chinese politics. Throughout the manuscript Hanyu Pinyin is used for romanising Chinese characters – unless an older (e.g., Wade Giles) transcription is commonly used for certain names of people or places in the English-language literature.[3]

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3 E.g., Chiang Kai-shek is used instead of the pinyin transcription as Jiang Jieshi; Sun Yat-sen instead of Sun Yixian.

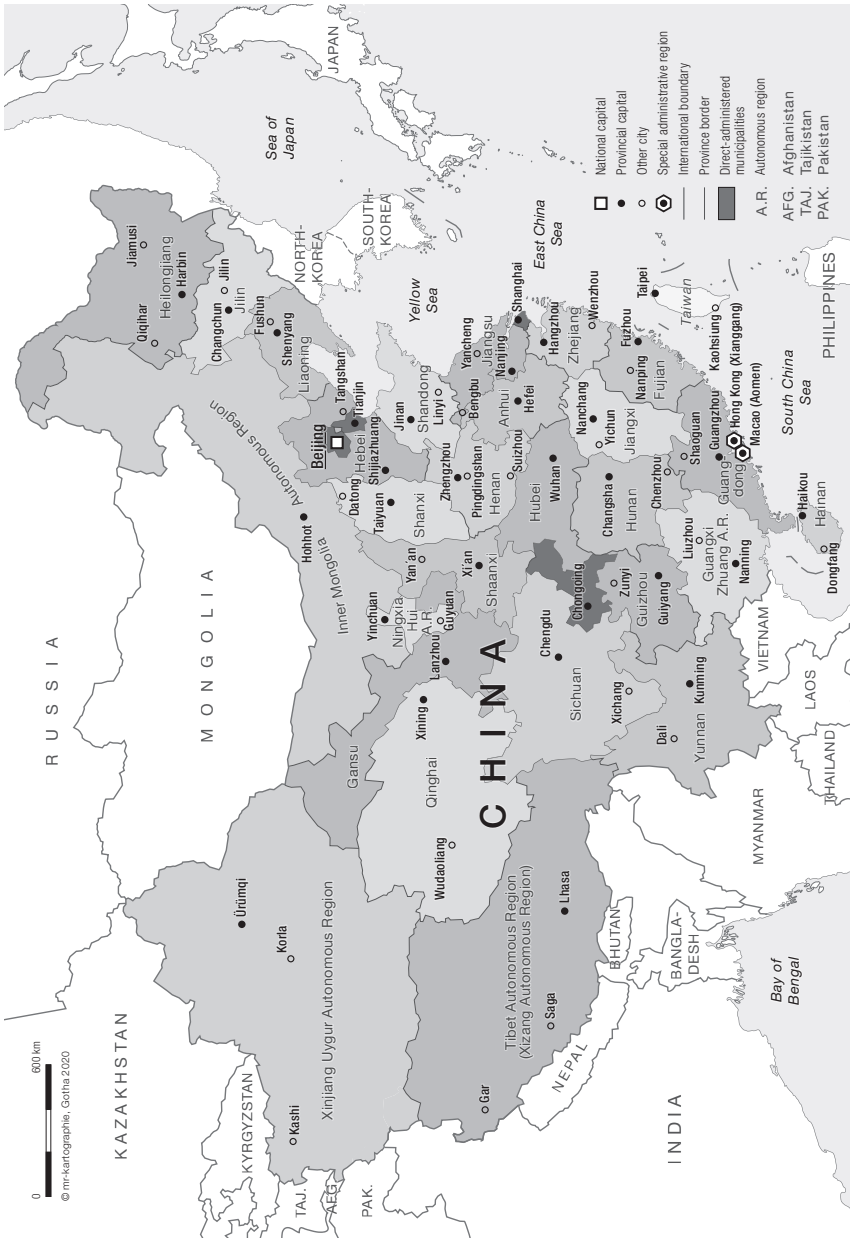

Figure 1: Map of China

2. Philosophical and Ideational Foundations of Chinese Politics

Key Content and Learning Goals

- Overview of typologies of political systems and their legitimation strategies
- General knowledge of the various philosophical streams and governance ideas guiding Chinese politics: reinventions of Marxism and Confucianism in the 21st century
- Differentiation between symbolic-rhetorical and operational levels of Chinese politics, between (strategic) particularity claims and universal patterns of political theory

This chapter introduces the reader to the issue of political legitimacy and legitimation strategies, and sheds light both on the theory-based configuration of legitimacy in the context of the Chinese one-party state as well as on the system's concrete justificatory legitimation instruments in the post-Mao era. Contrary to the widely voiced belief that politics after 1978 would be characterised by pragmatism and a farewell to ideology, ideas (and "ideology") are still playing a decisive role in the making of Chinese politics. This chapter sketches the plurality of ideas and philosophical traditions shaping and influencing the Chinese concepts of political rule and legitimate order. Although it seems nigh on impossible to reduce these multiple traditions of thought to just one single unified concept, the chapter will provide the reader with an overview of those ideas that serve as the reference system and conceptual yardstick upon which the Chinese one-party state builds its legitimacy. Whilst some ordering principles might serve as the justification for and as the symbolic consolidation of the existing system structures, others might inspire (and legitimate) future-oriented institutional reforms. However, not all reference elements originate from China itself. The chapter thus addresses both the re-activation as well as the reinvention of Chinese traditions.

The "Chinese" political system is often associated with the concepts of Socialism and Maoism, standing in sharp contrast to the apparently increasingly capitalist production modes of the Chinese economy. Simultaneously, there has been a re-emergence of religious and spiritual traditions – especially Buddhism and Daoism – within Chinese society. In addition to this "religious renaissance", *Guoxue* Studies, as a more academic response, turn back to the reading of pre-modern philosophical texts and discuss the meaning of Chinese cultural traditions for a post-industrial society. Again, the official political debate quotes Mao and Marx to stress the system's unique identity and particular features. This raises the tantalising question of whether a system can, all at the same time, be Confucian, Maoist and capitalist, or whether these ideational streams are mutually exclusive and only become dominant during distinct stages of development.

The concept of "imagined communities", as developed by Benedict Anderson (1983), implies that the formation of any political community requires the existence of joint narratives and ideational reference systems. In this case, the plurality and fragmentation of China's "ideological" canon directly leads to the question of how the modern one-party state manages to govern its multi-ethnic,