

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Arts and Science
Department of Politics

POL-GA-3501. Sec 001
China: The Civilization-State
(a comparative-politics course)

4:10-6:00 p.m.
Spring 2018
Prof. J. Hsiung

Syllabus

Since Lucian Pye (1992: 235) first described China as a “civilization-state, pretending to be a [nation-] state,” no one has yet developed this theme more than superficially. To be true, Huntington’s seminal work on “clash of civilizations” (1996) calls our attention to civilizations as a factor in world politics. In doing so, he set off a decade-long debate on civilizations as primordial entities fraught with conflict potentials in post-Cold War international relations. His thesis, however, was emphatically countered by Katzenstein and his colleagues (2009), who saw civilizations as malleable cultural identities that orient the ideas and practices of states and peoples. While this means that we need not view civilizations necessarily as animating sources of conflict, what is still lacking is a more focused mode of analysis that addresses civilization as a crucial factor - - if not determinant-- in shaping or guiding domestic politics as well as international behavior of nations, especially in the case of China, given its uniquely long and rich civilization.

In this course, we will ascertain the real and hidden meanings of China as a civilization-state -- and more. We will attempt to bring things up to date, by examining China’s second rise-- after a century and a half in decline-- and its implications, including what has made the “China Model” tick (i.e., rapid and sustained development in the absence of a Western-type liberal democracy), and its challenge to theory (both comparative-politics and IR theory) .

China is the only one of the ancient civilizations that has survived the test and scourge of time, and continued till this day, only in reinvigorated form. Many tantalizing puzzles remain to be explored, beginning with the “why” of its immense longevity (over 5,000, and possibly up to 7,000 years, uninterrupted). Since the Chinese imperial state first took shape in 206 B.C., the land mass that makes up the heartland of the East Asian

subcontinent has remained under the roof of one unitary polity. The study of China as a civilization-state, we will find, belies the myth surrounding the (European) notion of a “singular civilization” emerging only since the 18th century, to the effect that in the modern world only the Christian Europe was civilized. It proves, in addition, that China cannot be understood in the same context of the usual (European-derived) sense of nationalism or that of the ordinary nation-state as a “unit” of the Westphalian system.

For over a millennium (713 A.D.-1820 A.D.), during its first rise, China’s GDP topped the world, surpassing that of the entire Europe combined (Maddison 2003; 2007). Yet, why it went down (though not out) under the impact of Western (& Japanese) inroads --punctuated by domestic decay and unrest – after the mid-19th century, is another giant puzzle. Interest in the latter was revived in 2011, the centennial of the Xinhai Revolution (1911) that ended 23 centuries of the dynastic cycle and signaled the rise of the atypical modern Chinese nationalism, in contrast to its own past “culturalism” and distinct from the European and Japanese variants of nationalism.

Other super puzzles include (a) the enduring influence of the Confucian culture on Chinese society and politics, plus its contemporary resurgence; (b) the non-development of capitalism following the end of China’s feudal system (*qua* system, in 3rd century B.C.), as it did in comparable times in Western history; and (c) the rise of Communism to power by the mid-20th century in a deeply Confucianized China that valued social harmony in contradistinction to class struggle. The most recent puzzle, besides, is its amazing record of sustained, spirited, rapid economic growth, following three decades of sluggish performance during the Maoist period, in what has become known as the “China Model” of development. After the 2008 Wall Street meltdown and the ensuing global financial tsunami, this Chinese model of rapid economic growth became the envy of many in much of both the developed and the developing worlds. It simply defies *laissez faire* economics, as its average growth of 9% annually, over a stretch of three decades, combines socialism with partial marketization, in which the visible hand of the state guides the invisible hand of the market. How these two opposites (socialism and market) can work together in synergy— so that 1 + 1 is larger than 2---, to reiterate, is a particular puzzle deserving our exploration.

Besides its extraordinarily long, unbroken history, the Chinese civilization- state is also distinct for its huge geographic and demographic scale and diversity. Just as national unity is its first priority, plurality is the condition of its existence. This is why China can subsume Hong Kong and Macao in a “one country, two systems” formula, something alien to a typical nation-state. Diversity requires a necessary centrality of purpose if the country is to remain viable and to thrive. This, the Communist regime has proven adept at enforcing, against dissent, revolts, and severe external criticisms.

The difficulty in the task of deciphering China is the lack of a frame of reference by which we can compare it with nation-states in our Westphalian system. Comparison is the social-scientist’s equivalent of laboratory work for the natural scientist. Comparative politics, as a field, has advanced from its initial preoccupation with institutions to a post-behavioralist stage of comparing functions and structures (as inspired by Parsonsian sociology ¹), even comparing “whole political systems” (a la Easton 1965, and Almond and Powell 2010). It has even shown versatility in applying social-science theories to the comparative study of the (former) Soviet-bloc systems (e.g. Fleron 1969), an enterprise that has been extended to a nascent sub-filed of “post-Communist” studies after 1990.

But, none of this offers us much help in deciphering China, which is both a Communist state (in form, structure, and spirit) and a “post-Communist” state *sui generis* (due to its abandonment of the centrally planned economy, in favor of partial marketization). Yet, as the Chinese civilization-state is gaining in strength in its second ascent, it is fast “socializing” into the Westphalian system of nation-states (as Brzezinski and Mearsheimer (2005) cogently observed). Yet, its “Eastphalian”² tradition from a totally different era vaguely identified as a “tribute system of states,” which existed prior to and outside the Westphalian system, is said to be still relevant to an adequate understanding of China’s approach to external relations today (Kang 2010).

Building upon the Weberian scheme of public and private authorities, Charles Lindblom (1977) advanced a taxonomy that groups political-economic systems into three generic structures: authority, exchange, and persuasion. Like Adam Smith and Karl Marx before him, Lindblom understands (what we too often forget) that the biggest difference

¹ Named after Talcott Parsons. See all full citations in the References section below.

² Eastphlia” is a term used in Kim (2009), Fidler (2010), and Ginsburg (2010), for a tradition, a system of institutions, or way of thinking in contrast to what is usually represented by Westphalia in the literature.

between one regime and another is the degree to which market replaces government or government replaces market. In this scheme, it was possible to see Maoist China as showing a “preceptoral” structure, in which Mao relied on ideological persuasion aided by organization, whereas by contrast Stalin relied mainly on organization, only peripherally aided by ideology. They both replaced market by government.

In this course, to sum up, we will ascertain if contemporary China, during its current second ascent, can be more properly understood, and appreciated, in light of its enduring civilization. What complicates our tasks of comprehension, however, is the wide divide separating Maoist China and the post-Mao stage of development. In the latter, Dengist reforms not only reoriented the CCP revolution away from the Maoist brand of Communism, toward building what was billed as “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” But, the reforms were executed by way of a “revolution from above” (Hsiung 2009: 34f), another departure from Mao’s mass revolution from below. While the state (the government) in the Dengist legacy still dominates the market, in Lindblom’s language, the distinct feature is that state and market are coalescing into an integral entity (known as marketized socialism) that is unprecedented and defies easy explication. Such is the challenge for a course like this one.

Books for Purchase

^Daniel A. Bell, *The China Model: Political Meritocracy & the Limits of Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2015);

^ Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 2nd ed. (W.W. Norton, 2004)

^Tony Saich, *Government & Politics of China*, 3rd ed. (Palgrave, 2011)

^James C. Hsiung, *China into Its 2nd Rise: Myths, Puzzles, & Challenge to Theory* (World Scientific, 2012)— which is also on the reserve list.

Books on Reserve

*Gregory Chow, *China as a Leader of the World Economy* (World Scientific, 2012);

*James C. Hsiung, *China into Its 2nd Rise: Myths, Puzzles, & Challenge to Theory* (World Scientific, 2012);

*Richard McGregor, *The Party* (Harper-Collins, 2010);

*James Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Politics*, 7th ed. (Prentice-Hall, 2002)

*Chien, Tuan-sheng (Qian Duansheng), *The Government and Politics of China*. (Harvard

University Press, 1967 (reprint))

*Deng, Zhenglai & Sujian Guo, eds., *China's Search for Good Governance* (Palgrave, 2011).

*Zheng, Yongnian, *De Facto Federalism in China* (World Scientific, 2007)

N.B.: For all full citations, please see the References below.

Class Calendar and Readings

1. Intro: Meaning of the "Civilization-State" and Chinese Political Culture: Relevance to the Present
 Lecture
 +Pye (1988); Gernet (1982), ch. 1;
 +Jacques (2009), 194-232
 +Blair & McCormack (2008) (Wn civ with Chinese comparisons)
2. Chinese Civilization: Origins and Longevity; Confucian Culture; & Legacy of the Imperial System
 ^*Hsiung (2012), chs. 1 & 2
 ^Bell, 63-109 (Asian values; and the value of virtue)
 *Chien, 3-48
 ^Lieberthal, pp. 5-19
 +Fu (the autocratic tradition)
- 3, Response to the West; Rise of Chinese Nationalism, and the Chinese Revolution (in comparison with other revolutions)
 ^*Hsiung (2012), 71-92
 ^Lieberthal, 19-26
 *Chien, 49-93
 +Brinton
4. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Ideology, and CCP's Rise to Power
 ^*Hsiung (2012), 93-113
 ^Lieberthal, 39-56
 ^Saich, 21-33; 108-141
 *Wang, 38-40; 70-82
 *McGregor, *passim*
5. Political Structure & Process
 ^Lieberthal, 173-242
 ^Saich, 142-170; 179-209
 *Wang, 69-195
 *Zheng Yongnian, *passim*

6. Politics under Mao, 1949-1976

- ^*Hsiung (2012), 114-126;
- ^Lieberthal, 60-83; 84-122; 290-294 (state over society)
- ^Saich, 34-66; 241-249 (state-dominated society)

7. The Military in Chinese Politics

- ^Saich, 170-178
- * Wang, 238-268
- *Chien, 177-190
- *McGregor, 104-134
- +”Civil-Military Relations in China: Assessing the PLA’s Role In Elite Politics,” INSS, Nat’l Defense Univ, available from <www.ndu.edu.inss>.

8. The Politics of Post-Mao Transition

- ^*Hsiung (2012), 127-130
- *Wang, 48-68 (“de-Maoization”)
- +Li & White (1993).
- +Ezra Vogel (2011)—on Deng’s role in transforming China; Preferably read with Bernhard (2011, on Bismarck’s “revolution from above”), as reviewed by Bernhard (2011)

9. The Great Leap Outward: The Dengist Reform & Legacy

- ^*Hsiung (2012), ch. 6
- ^Lieberthal, 125-168
- *Wang, 139-160 (Legal Reform); 301-335 (Economic Reform); 338-370 (Pols of modernization)
- +Shirk (the political logic of China’s economic reform)

10. The China Model, & the Dengist Legacy

- ^*Hsiung (2012), ch. 7
- ^Lieberthal, 316-336
- *Chow, esp. Part I and Part II
- ^Bell, 63-178 (esp. 157-175)
- +Walter and Howe (on China’s fragile financial foundation)
- +Hsiung (2009) (“revolution from above”)

11. China’s First Rise (713-1820), & the Tribute System of International Relations, in Retrospect

- ^*Hsiung, (2012) ch. 3
- +Frank, 108-117; 218-25
- +Kang (2010), 54-138

12. China’s Second Rise: Challenge to World Order or to IR Theory? Telescoping Pax Sinica

^*Hsiung (2012), chs. 8 & 9
 +Hsiung (2015), 132-137

13. Toward Good Governance in China; an outlook for the future
 ^Saich, 250-261 (state & Society under reform); 210-240
 (participation & protest); 297-335 (social policy: success &
 frailties)
 ^Bell, 179-198
 *Deng and Guo (2011), esp. chs. 1, 5, & 6.
 *Chow, Part III
 *Wang, 338-370

Legend: ^ = Book required for purchase
 * = on reserve
 + = Recommended, but not required, nor on reserve

OTHER REQUIREMENTS OF THE COURSE

Class attendance is absolutely essential, as we attempt to develop a fitting analytical device for deciphering the Chinese civilization-state, such that will (i) unravel all the noted puzzles, (ii) dismantle the myths, and (iii) have the potential of enriching the “craft” of comparative analysis with the insights we gain from our study. In this enterprise, student participation will be welcome. The extent and form of such participation will depend on the size of the enrollment.

Unless we decide to do otherwise (this largely depends on the size of the enrollment), a term paper is required, due at the end of the semester. The topic of the paper should be chosen in consultation with me no later than the third week of class. A one-page précis on research design, including the major hypothesis, a brief bibliographic note (please consult the References below first), and your expected findings, is due during the fifth week. My office hours are Wednesdays 3:30-6:00 p.m.; and other times by appointment. My office is located at 19 West 4 Street (Rm. 222). My direct phone line is: (212) 998-8523; and e-mail address: <jch2@nyu.edu>.

REFERENCES

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- _____. 2012. *China into Its Second Rise: Myths, Puzzles, and*

- Challenge to Theory*. New Jersey, London, and Singapore: World Scientific.
- Hsiung, James. 2015. "Utility vs. Inadequacy of Realist IR Theory: Assessing China's China," *International Studies Review*, vol.17, no. 1 (March), 132-137.
- Huntington, Samuel P. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Making of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
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- Katzenstein, Peter J. 2009. *Civilizations in World Politics: Plural and Pluralist Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
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