

Northeast Asia, Central Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia, and he also provides excellent analysis of six small powers' hedging strategies toward China. These six cases, however, do not include any small power in South Asia. This omission leads to two pertinent questions. First, could Kim's theoretical framework be applied to India's hedging strategies in terms of Sino-Indian asymmetry? Second, other small powers in South Asia (e.g. Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh) need to consider asymmetries vis-à-vis India and China. Would Kim's theoretical framework then be able to explain Pakistan's hedging strategies, such as in terms of Indian–Pakistan or China–Pakistan asymmetry?

Overall, *China and Its Small Neighbors* highlights China's asymmetric relationships with its Asian neighbours and extends the ever-increasing scholarly links between studies of asymmetric relationships and Chinese regional diplomacy. It addresses principal theoretical questions of policy significance and bridges the gap between theory and practice in Chinese foreign policy.

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Rejuvenating Communism: Youth Organizations and Elite Renewal in Post-Mao China

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Jérôme Doyon's impressively researched monograph begins with an initial puzzle: "How does the Chinese party-state manage to attract recruits and maintain their commitment over time, when ideology does not structure recruitment anymore, and a liberalized employment market provides alternative career options?" (p. 153). In the course of providing a persuasive answer, he also contributes important points on some of the key issues in Chinese politics more generally – including factionalism, meritocratic bureaucracy, fragmented authoritarianism, authoritarian resilience, the relationship between institutions and individual agency, and gender and politics – often providing alternative explanations to counter what sometimes passes as conventional or received wisdom. As he notes, his research findings have implications for the study of authoritarian politics beyond the China case.

Doyon's work makes an excellent companion volume to the recent book by Konstantinos D. Tsimonis (*The Chinese Communist Youth League: Juniority and Responsiveness in a Party Youth Organization*, Amsterdam University Press, 2021). Both monographs are based on extensive fieldwork and interviews, along with a thorough reading of both primary and secondary sources, and both are concerned with the role of youth in the perpetuation of the Chinese political system. Tsimonis takes a systemic approach and focuses on the failures of Hu Jintao's policy initiative to increase the League's responsiveness through a "Keep Youth Satisfied" campaign, tracing the failures to the role of the League as a subordinate organization to the CCP within the Chinese political system. Doyon, however, is less interested in the League as an organization, and focuses instead on the perspectives, ambitions and agency of individual student cadres, and how they are progressively inducted into the world of officials, developing an "undogmatic commitment" to a political career. The party-state creates a "sponsored mobility" framework where young officials are "embedded"



early on within the party-state hierarchy. As they rotate from one position to another in their political careers, their networks expand vertically and horizontally, with these cumulative multiple relationships producing a “diffuse allegiance” to the regime, rather than to any specific group or particular leader. Because they are embedded in these complex networks, the development of “factions,” or isolated cohesive groups, becomes very difficult.

Doyon’s fieldwork covered fourteen months between 2011 and 2015, focusing on four universities, in particular Peking University (Beida) and Tsinghua, where networking resources at the disposal of student leaders were far greater than elsewhere, and which carried over and remained essential to their post-graduation careers (pp. 94, 117). Indeed, as he documents in his discussion of the very limited opportunities for networking by female student leaders (pp. 98–100), males at elite universities have been the clearest beneficiaries of the sponsored mobility process. This is true not just at Beida and Tsinghua, but also, to a somewhat lesser extent, in elite universities at the provincial level, as he discovered during his fieldwork in Nanjing (p. 102). However, as Doyon to his credit notes, his fieldwork was conducted prior to some major new regulations under Xi Jinping that have strengthened the role that CCP cells play in student control, including such areas as extra-curricular activities and political education (pp. 36–37). This has led to the increasing importance of political criteria in cadre management, which have now become the “most essential criteria” for cadre recruitment and evaluation, with recruitment and promotion criteria linked to job performance now seen as “artificial” (p. 135).

These changes introduce a more activist component for officials as a replacement for what had been a “passive acceptance of ideological references and symbols,” with party-state careers “de-ideologized ... but not de-politicized in post-Mao China” (pp. 12, 134). They clearly have the potential to undermine the highly effective system elaborated by Doyon, in which the party-state is able to balance cohesion and pluralism within its ranks, and where undogmatic commitment and the diversity of views and personal networks contribute to the diffuse allegiance that is at the core of his argument.

Doyon is also to be commended for ambitiously – albeit gently and civilly – taking issue with those scholars associated with other conceptualizations of the Chinese political system, for example Daniel Bell (meritocratic bureaucracy, pp. 11–12) and Cheng Li, Bo Zhiyue, Kou Chien-wen, Andrew Nathan and Victor Shih (factionalism), although his impressive research and coherent arguments are not likely to sway adherents of these other approaches to understanding how Chinese elite politics works. For example, Doyon questions the existence of a “youth league faction” (*tuanpai*), in a section subtitled “Hierarchical ties: all Party leaders have their *tuanpai*” (pp. 140–142). However, when the recent 20th Party Congress concluded, those leaders associated with what Cheng, Bo and others have called the *tuanpai*, were all either dismissed, demoted or shifted away from Communist Youth League (CYL) work. Most notable of these was Vice-Premier Hu Chunhua, the former head of the CYL and close associate of Hu Jintao, who had been a member of the Politburo since 2012 and was only 59 years old, ten years younger than Xi Jinping. Although many China specialists expected he would become Premier, he not only was demoted down to the Central Committee, but also lost his Vice-Premier position at the March 2023 National People’s Congress. Xi’s attacks on the CYL are well known and covered well, if relatively briefly, by Doyon (pp. 149–152), where he makes the important point that the 2016 CYL reform mainly affected the League’s upper levels, leaving his sponsored mobility approach relatively intact. Xi’s new Politburo Standing Committee members are all close associates of Xi from different stages and venues in his career, with the Politburo also disproportionately weighted toward Xi associates, along with technocrats who generally lack strong networks within the Party. This suggests the politics of personalism and the weakening of the CCP as an organization. Indeed, Xi’s initiatives appear, at least for the moment, to have made any overt factional behavior very problematic, leaving only “the Xi Jinping faction.”

All that said, Doyon has produced a first-rate study that not only offers a persuasive conceptual framework on how the Party renews itself through a complex system of youth recruitment and

retention, but also raises thought-provoking questions on some of the key contentious issues in Chinese elite politics.

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Disruptions as Opportunities: Governing Chinese Society with Interactive Authoritarianism

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How has the Chinese Communist Party managed to remain in power over the last 40 years without democratization, despite the fall of so many other communist states? What is the source of its authoritarian resilience (to borrow Andrew Nathan's term)? How does a non-democratic, top-down state build flexibility and adaptability into its governance practices? In *Disruptions as Opportunities*, Taiyi Sun offers a compelling answer with his new theory of *interactive authoritarianism*. Sun's theory is based on an impressive wealth of rigorously analysed empirical data, and the resulting conceptual framework has the potential to be of great use for researchers studying state–society relations in China.

According to Sun, the strategy of interactive authoritarianism has three stages: toleration, differentiation and legalization. He illustrates the framework through three case studies: civil service organizations in Sichuan, social-media publications censorship and rideshare protests in Hangzhou.

The first stage is *toleration*. When state actors become aware of a new type of civil society organization or activity, their first reaction is to wait and see – even if these new activities are technically illegal. This allows local governments to collect information on the new organizations and allows them to develop to the point where they could be potentially useful. The toleration stage explains why Chinese NGOs were allowed to proliferate in the early 2000s, even though most of these organizations were in violation of laws and regulations. When rideshare drivers demonstrated against officials who tried to arrest them in the 2010s, the state did very little to intervene. Instead, state actors chose to sit back to see how the industry would develop.

In the second stage, *differentiation*, state actors sort out the new organizations, determining their capabilities and their intentions. In this stage, local governments also try out different interventions on the new organizations to see potential results. For example, the state eventually differentiated between the NGOs that serve the state by complementing its weaknesses (like environmental organizations), and the NGOs that could potentially threaten state legitimacy (such as human rights organizations). It differentiated between the social media topics that could lead to harm, and those that were harmless. It also differentiates between the interventions that are useful and the ones that are not. For example, the state has a wide array of censorship tools available, as state actors try to prevent social disruptions without suffocating useful discourse.

Legalization is the third stage. Here the state codifies the most useful practices into law and policy. In 2016, the new Charity Law made it easier for certain types of NGOs to become fully legal, while Foreign NGO Law restricted the activities of international organizations. Around the same time, the state instituted a new licensing system for rideshare drivers, as well as practices to defuse