

Jessica C. Teets, *Civil Society under Authoritarianism. The China Model*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014, xii + 239pp., £55.00/\$85.00 h/b.

THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT OF TEETS' NEW BOOK IS THAT IN THE PAST 20 YEARS, interactions between civil society in China and the Chinese state have generated a new model, which she calls 'consultative authoritarianism' (CA). Two distinguishable features of the CA model are that, compared to the corporatist model, on the one hand it gives more operational autonomy to civil society organisations (CSOs); and on the other hand, the state imposes more sophisticated controls on CSOs. By adopting this CA model, which can be regarded as not only a rational learning process of Chinese officials but also the result of it, the Chinese state has managed to encourage the beneficial aspects of civil society, for example, the function of service delivery, and discourage its dangerous aspects, such as the potential for overthrowing the government.

Teets, whose research focuses on governance and civil society in authoritarian regimes, starts the first chapter by tracing the contemporary policy failure in China regarding social service delivery. She argues that this policy failure, together with the inescapable rise of civil society in China, has initiated a rational learning process among Chinese local officials. In the second chapter, Teets analyses the CA model in Beijing and Yunnan, where, as she argues, the model originated. The cases of Shining Stone and China Development Brief in Beijing, and AIDS Treatment, Eco-ethnic tourism and Water Warriors in Yunnan are discussed. In the third chapter, Teets moves to the CA model in Jiangsu and Sichuan, where a more confrontational relationship between state and civil society existed at the beginning. Through analysing typical cases such as the Amity Foundation in Jiangsu and Wenchuan Earthquake relief in Sichuan, Teets illustrates how the confrontational model has gradually transformed to the CA model in these two provinces. While the second and third chapters focus on the learning process of local officials, the fourth chapter reveals the agency of CSOs. Teets uses the cases of Friends of Nature and the Global Environmental Institute to explain how CSOs improve relationships with local officials and even achieve policy change over the long term through group strategies such as information dissemination and interpersonal connections. Teets concludes by exploring the international diffusion of the Chinese CA model, focusing on 'sovereign democracy' in Russia that reveals autonomous and consultative features at the same time.

Teets' theoretical contribution to civil society analysis is outstanding in the sense that she builds her argument on the autonomous civil society found in the liberal model and the mechanism of state control found in the corporatist model, the result of which is a more nuanced model. The CA model demonstrates well the rational learning process of Chinese local officials and the role of CSOs in creating these opportunities for learning, which is not only very innovative, but also captures the agency of Chinese civil society overlooked by other models. Moreover, while many authoritarian civil society researchers only concentrate on the revolutionary or democratic potential of civil society, Teets is willing to articulate the value of the CA model in spite of its illiberal potential. She realises that though the CA model decreases the likelihood of regime change by advancing the governance of an authoritarian regime, 'the improvement of human welfare in authoritarian regimes around the world is nontrivial' (p. 3).

Teets' work also provides insights into the study of authoritarian policy. The existing research on authoritarian policy change mainly focuses on formal institutional structure change, such as the modification of legislatures. Teets is among the few who have noticed the endogenous institutional change that can result from the process of authoritarian learning, which is exactly the case in Chinese policy renovation.

All of the above and much more in Teets' book is excellent, but it might be suggested that she does not pay enough attention to the work of Jennifer Y. J. Hsu and Reza Hasmath in arguing against the corporatist analytical framework in contemporary China. In order to persuade readers that the state-civil society relationship in China has truly shifted from corporatism in the 1990s to CA in the 2000s, Teets should first deal with the ideas of Hsu and Hasmath more thoroughly.

This small criticism aside, Teets demonstrates superb skill in capturing the complexity of civil society in authoritarian regimes and drawing together the intricate social and political context of the Chinese case. The outcome is a piece of literature that should not be missed by scholars of civil society and authoritarian regimes, who will find it substantively eye-opening and helpful, as well as anyone who is interested to know more about contemporary Chinese society and governance.

Masaryk University

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