

The Academy of Political Science

475 Riverside Drive · Suite 1274 · New York, New York 10115-1274
(212) 870-2500 · FAX: (212) 870-2202 · aps@psqonline.org · <http://www.psqonline.org>

POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

Volume 128 · Number 1 · Spring 2013

No part of this article may be copied, downloaded, stored, further transmitted, transferred, distributed, altered, or otherwise used, in any form or by any means, except:

- one stored electronic and one paper copy of any article solely for your personal, non-commercial use, or
- with prior written permission of the publisher.

Copyright © 2013 by The Academy of Political Science. All rights reserved.

opportunities for the rural poor, that is, those who lacked education, start-up capital, experience, and training. For instance, instead of giving preference to building large roads that connected major cities, Guizhou built inexpensive local roads that employed local people and that improved access of poor farmers to market towns. At the same time, this strategy was unable to benefit from economies of scale, so that production, where relevant, increased only moderately. In contrast, Yunnan built costly modern highways that contributed to economic growth but did not do much to help the poor.

Both provinces promoted tourism, but Guizhou's approach provided employment to more poor people than in Yunnan, which concentrated funds on a handful of major tourist sites while allocating fewer resources to smaller sites. The large tourist establishment provided employment to the poor, but this benefit did not extend to the rest of the province. In Guizhou, the poor were able to participate on a much wider basis.

Coal mining illustrates the trade-offs in strategies of improving the lot of the poor. In Guizhou, coal mining was highly decentralized, more informal, less efficient, and very dirty, but also costly in lives lost to accidents. But the incomes of poor miners increased. Yunnan decided to develop larger, less-accident-prone mines, but this excluded more poor people.

Donaldson did an immense amount of field research, interviewing officials and villagers in a variety of settings. Return visits to the research sites enabled him to further refine his analysis. In sum, this is an exemplary monograph.

THOMAS P. BERNSTEIN
Columbia University

Social Protest and Contentious Authoritarianism in China by Xi Chen. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011. 255 pp. \$90.00.

Western media attention on the political situation in China invariably focuses on state-society contestation. This relationship tends to be depicted one-dimensionally: a repressive authoritarian regime aloof from and unaccountable to its people. The people are therefore increasingly alienated and driven to express their discontent in demonstrations, protests, and riots all across the vast country. The image of hundreds of millions of irate Chinese out in the streets leads to speculation about the longevity of Communist Party rule. Official Chinese statistics do reveal that the numbers of protests and demonstrations have been growing since the early 1990s, but rumors of the regime's imminent demise appear greatly exaggerated. Indeed, several scholars have suggested that the Chinese political system has considerable staying power. Perhaps the most

widely read piece on the subject was written by Andrew J. Nathan [“Authoritarian Resilience in China,” *Journal of Democracy* 14:1 (2003): 6–17]. A decade later, we have the benefit of scholarship based on extensive field work, which provides considerable detail about some of the factors contributing to regime resilience.

Xi Chen’s volume is one such study. It offers a nuanced and multidimensional portrait of state–society interactions in China’s heartland. Chen examines a city and a county in the inland province of Hunan. He focuses on the time-honored system of *xinfang*, whereby citizens can petition authorities for a redress of their grievances. As Chen notes, this practice dates back to imperial China and was also a feature of Mao Zedong’s China (1949–1976). His research suggests that the authorities actually encourage or at least facilitate this process. China’s political rulers seem to find it a useful way to control discontent and channel participation. In the absence of other effective participatory and representative mechanisms, *xinfang* provides an institutionalized system for the management of popular grievances.

Contentious Authoritarianism reveals that contemporary Chinese politics defies simplistic descriptions of peasants and workers as powerless pawns at the mercy of tyrannical and unscrupulous officials. Certainly injustice is rife in China, and official corruption appears endemic. But indignant and angry ordinary people are willing to speak up and act out in the quest for justice. Although Chen’s research reveals a rather modest success rate, there appears to be a widespread belief that petitioning is legitimate and that under this pressure, the system can be made to work. Just as many Americans continue to believe that with hard work and perseverance anyone can become wealthy, so many Chinese continue to think that justice is attainable in their country’s existing system if only a person is willing to press hard enough.

But as Chen notes, aggrieved groups recognize that playing strictly by the rules is often ineffective, so they turn to creative types of collective action to raise the profile of their grievances. Most of these efforts appear to be shrewdly calculated to push the envelope of activities just far enough to get the attention of officials but not so far as to prompt a crackdown. Through a careful analysis of official provincial and county-level reporting, Chen is able to provide a wealth of detail about the types and frequency of petitions and protests in one province.

This book is a must-read for anyone seeking a better understanding of contemporary Chinese politics and society and the remarkable staying power of the Communist Party. It is also a must-read for anyone interested in the larger issues of social protest and collective action and in learning about the many

varieties of authoritarian regimes around the world, which are proving to be surprisingly resilient.

ANDREW SCOBELL
RAND Corporation

The Saddam Tapes: The Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978–2001 edited by Kevin M. Woods, David D. Palkki, and Mark E. Stout. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011. 392 pp. Paper, \$36.99.

Saddam Hussein is entirely familiar to most Americans, but assessments of his decision making have been largely second-hand, inferential, and presumptive. While his capture in late 2003 promised to shed light on his leadership choices, a more-surprising development has been the seizure, translation, and transcription of thousands of hours of recorded conversations between Saddam and his inner circle. Kevin Woods and his colleagues are among those taking the first major steps in analyzing these materials. The result is an astonishing collection of annotated transcripts, with introductory commentaries by the editors to contextualize the recordings. Originally prepared by the Institute for Defense Analyses, the book draws on captured audio, video, and document files. It taps into a larger collection now available at the National Defense University's Conflict Records Research Center, a treasure-trove of materials that will transform our understanding of the regime.

The book is organized non-chronologically, with eight thematic chapters, an introduction, and an epilogue. It presents selections from 87 recordings made between 1978 and 2001, especially from 1983 to 1996. Chapters address Iraq and the United States, Israel, the Arab world, the Iran–Iraq war, the Gulf war, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the embargo and UNSCOM, and Hussein Kamil. Recordings cover the Revolutionary Command Council, Council of Ministers, and security-related working groups. Captured tapes were found “in bags buried in a garden” (p. 10), being prepared for destruction, or intact in presidential offices. The resulting transcripts are rich and varied, complete with unexplained gaps, static distortions, unidentified voices, inaudible portions, whispers, laughter, throat-clearing, the clanking of dishes, the slamming of doors, the rustling of maps, and occasional pounding on the table—all duly noted by the transcribers.

The portrait of Saddam that emerges both confirms and challenges conventional accounts. As the editors note, Saddam comes across “as a highly competent, intelligent, but intellectually undisciplined decision maker—a lively, quick-witted, and fickle man given to restless digressions...” (p. 324). Not surprisingly, he is conspiratorial and given to occasional brutality, menacing his