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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>

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Book Reviews

Popular Political Support in Urban China by Jie Chen. Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2004. 246 pp. Cloth, \$55.00; paper, \$21.95.

Jie Chen conducted random sample surveys in the urban part of Beijing in 1995, 1997, and 1999, and made the important discovery that the Chinese Communist regime commands high levels of political legitimacy. Levels of agreement with six propositions measuring what David Easton (*A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, New York: Wiley, 1965) defined as “diffuse support” (for example, “I respect the political institutions in China today”) ranged from 66 to 98 percent of the respondents, with most of the percentages in the 80s and 90s.

The importance of this finding might seem to be vitiated by the special features of Beijing. Beijing is a government company town, as we see when Chen classifies his respondents’ occupations into the eight categories of state enterprise workers, state enterprise cadres, white-collar professionals, students, government bureaucrats, military, private entrepreneurs, and retirees (p. 87). There are no peasants, as is to be expected when the sampling method excludes both residents of the municipality’s rural districts and temporary peasant migrants into the urban districts. And there are no workers in non-state enterprises, casual laborers, household workers, self-employed craftsmen or pedlars, or unemployed.

Still, Beijing is a politically crucial locale. It was the site of the 1989 Tiananmen protests, and is the place where popular disaffection would have the greatest effect on the fate of the regime. And many other people around China may think as Beijing residents do. Chen nuances his findings by pointing out that diffuse support for the regime, although fairly stable, declined over the four years of the study; that it is stronger among older and less-educated people and Chinese Communist Party members than among the dynamic modern sectors of the population, and that it is not undergirded by a favorable evaluation of the regime’s policy performance (“specific support” in Eastonian terms). Thus, he argues that the regime cannot be complacent about political stability.

Chen explores the impact of a variety of sociodemographic and attitudinal variables on political support. He carefully lays out the theoretical reasoning for the impact of each variable and provides conscientious literature reviews. He culminates his investigations with regression analyses in which the effects

of each variable on diffuse and specific support are estimated when other variables are taken into account. Here, one wishes that he had combined the three samples, which he could have done because they were drawn from the same population close in time and showed only small differences among themselves in the relationships among variables. With a combined sample of about 2,100 instead of about 700 in each of the separate samples, Chen could have achieved statistically significant findings on more variables. This would have been especially desirable in his analysis of the determinants of specific support (policy approval), where few of the coefficients achieve statistical significance. Using combined samples would also have strengthened his analysis of the impact of diffuse and specific support on voting and political contacting.

As always in survey research, different questionnaire items might have produced different results. The measures of diffuse support that Chen selected, while validly rooted in one sub-tradition of legitimacy research, consist of propositions that sound like official Chinese ideology and may tend to produce high levels of agreement. On the other hand, his measures of specific support probably underestimate public approval of government policy. Given that the government has neglected social policy to advance economic growth, one might find higher levels of specific support by asking whether respondents' living standards have advanced instead of asking about the government's performance in handling a series of general social issues such as corruption and pollution.

All survey research projects are subject to such "roads not traveled" questioning. Chen has made his methodological choices and has made good use of the findings to throw light on the most consequential and contested question of China's domestic politics today, its prospects for stability.

ANDREW J. NATHAN
Columbia University

The United States and the Rule of Law in International Affairs by John F. Murphy. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004. 378 pp. Cloth, \$85.00; paper, \$31.99.

Few scholars or publicists write about international law to satisfy the general reader. A notable exception, the late J. R. Brierly, warned against either underestimating or overestimating international law (J. L. Brierly, *The Outlook for International Law*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1945, p. 1). Cynics conclude that, as law, international law is and always has been a sham. The sciolist comes to the opposite conclusion, that laws fully codified and applied to international politics could eliminate the struggle for power. In Brierly's words: "They both assume that international law is a subject on which anyone can form his opinions intuitively, without taking the trouble . . . to inquire into the relevant facts."

John F. Murphy misreads what nonspecialists require in a treatise on international law. His book deals not only with his chosen subject but with every-