

Research Statement

Tianyang Xi

Assistant professor
National School of Development
Peking University

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My research centers around two themes: (1) How does the interaction between political institutions and state actors shape conflicts? (2) How do bureaucratic institutions in China affect development and state capability in a way different from, or comparable to electoral institutions in the West? Methodologically, I employ applied models and reduced form empirical analysis to study theoretically minded questions. My research topics are motivated by puzzles from the Chinese context and cross country comparison, such as: Why do political elites share power with some groups (but not others) in response to the threat of societal conflicts? Through what mechanisms does the central government contain opportunistic behaviors of local leaders? How do incentive and selection in bureaucratic systems shape policies and development outcomes? How do economic and political environments shape power dynamics and policy choices of political leaders?

1 Institutions and conflicts

In the paper “**Reform or revolution? Theory and evidence on the role of the middle class in the rise of universal male suffrage.**” (published at *Journal of Theoretical Politics*), which is based on the first paper of my dissertation, I engage with two classical puzzles in theorizing the dynamics of political democratization in the European context (Xi, 2014). The first puzzle is the so called Tocqueville effect, as elaborated famously by Alexis de Tocqueville in *The Ancien Regime and the French Revolution*, “The regime that revolution destroys is almost always better than the one that immediately preceded it, and experience teaches that the most dangerous time for a bad government is usually when it begins to reform.” (Tocqueville, 2011, 1856, p.157) The second puzzle relates to Gregory Luebbert (1991)’s thesis that different political regimes in Interwar Europe can be attributed to diverging patterns of alliance formation among social cleavages, where the middle class took a leading role in the consolidation of liberal democracy in countries like Britain and France.

In the context of franchise extensions in Europe from the 19th century, the conventional wisdom suggested by Marxist sociologists and formalized by political economists

maintains that franchise was conquered by the poor under the threat of violent revolution (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000; Moore, 1966). This explanation not only is at odds with the arguments by Tocqueville and Luebbert, but also fails to account for rich variations in the historical pattern of franchise extensions. Reforms at an earlier stage rarely enfranchised the poor, but targeted the middle class in most cases. The expansion of franchise was often followed by escalated social antagonism or even violent revolutions, as observed by Tocqueville. Finally, some early extenders were able to maintain a “liberal hegemony” for decades, as suggested by Luebbert, before franchise was finally extended universally to all adult male citizens.

Motivated by these discrepancies, I set up a formal model of franchise extension as a dynamic game among three players: the elite, the middle class, and the poor. To thwart the threat presented by the poor, the elite often has to cede political power, and consequently, economic power (through redistributive policies), to the middle class, who in turn might have an interest in extending suffrage further, either immediately or in some future. My model shows that whether suffrage was extended to the poor in one step or first only to the middle class depended on the state capacity to repress and the strength of the middle class, along with the income level and inequality. Although the paper is primarily motivated by the European experience, its logic has broader empirical implications for understanding the cross country pattern of social conflicts. I make use of the Cross-National Time-Series Data by Arthur Banks (1996) to test the model. Consistent with the theory, the empirical investigation suggests that rebellious activities are not deterred by franchise extensions per se, but are negatively associated with economic growth and the proxies of military prowess of the ruling elite.

My theoretical interest also concerns the interaction among electoral competition and post-election conflicts, as well as its implication for democratic politics. In “**Elections as a conflict processing mechanism.**” (published at *European Journal of Political Economy*), coauthored with Adam Przeworski and Gonzalo Rivero, we formally study conditions under which societal conflicts are peacefully processed by competitive elections when the contending parties can revert to force as an alternative (Przeworski, Rivero and Xi, 2015). This research is motivated by a discrepancy between what the literature of democratic politics believe elections should do and what elections actually do in inducing different types of political orders. We collect comprehensive data covering political institutions and elections of all countries dating back to the 19th century and document historical patterns of government alternation through elections. We find that political power changed hands more frequently by the use of force than through elections during the past two-hundred years. From 1788 to 2009 governments around the world changed as a result of 577 coups and 544 elections. This phenomenon begs the questions why electoral competition for political offices can be peacefully processed in some societies but not in others, and how political parties might respond to calls for elections, knowing that the playing field is rigged and electoral outcomes may not be obeyed by losers.

We formulate these questions as a model of repeated interaction between two parties,

where the incumbent in each period decides whether to hold unto power by force or organize an election, which the incumbent may lose, and manipulate the probability of winning elections. The mechanism of peaceful electoral competition can be maintained only if both parties agree to hold elections *ex ante* and observe electoral outcomes *ex post*. In turn, the comparative statics show that the viability of the electoral mechanism depends on the balance of military force, the sharpness of divisions within a society, and institutions that moderate policies implemented by winners of elections. For elections to be held and their outcomes to be respected, the probabilities that they would be won by incumbents must bear an inverse relation to the magnitude of policy changes resulting from elections.

In my view, our paper offers two new insights into the literature. The first is a conceptual innovation for understanding democratic politics. Rather than using *a priori* knowledge to classify political regimes, we can at best establish whether a regime is democratic or not *ex post*, by observing the pattern of power alternation through elections. This approach provides a formalization of the minimalist conception of democracy first proposed by Joseph Schumpeter (2013,1943) and elaborated by Adam Przeworski (1999). Secondly, we show that elections are competitive when their outcomes make some but not too much difference. In turn, constraining the scope of policy divergence increases the range of the balance of force under which elections are competitive in divided, but not in homogeneous, societies. Hence, the co-existence of competitive elections and strong constitutional checks and balance may be historically accidental. Overall, our approach of modelling democracies through the lens of elections under the shadow of military forces may enrich the way scholars understand the interplay between political competition and conflicts in a time of emerging democratic backsliding.

A note for contribution: This paper was developed from an earlier draft by Adam on election and violence. I joined with Adam to work on a new version in the summer of 2012, together with Gonzalo Rivero. For obvious reason I should not take the credit of developing the original idea of elections as a conflict processing mechanism, which goes back to Przeworski (1991). My part in this project involves formulating the setup, characterizing the Markov perfect equilibria, and completing formal proofs, the results of which had to be jointly checked by the three of us. Adam and I worked together in New York in the summer of 2014 to finalize the draft. We are happy that this contribution has been received well in the recent literature on authoritarian politics as a theoretical innovation (Gehlbach, Sonin and Svulik, 2016). This paper is selected as a required reading in the PhD course “Formal Political Theory: Applications, Models of Politics, Democratization.” in the department of political science at Yale University.¹

In a related working paper entitled “**Partisan logic of woman suffrage.**” (Przeworski and Xi, 2019), Adam and I switch the research focus of franchise extensions from one with conflicting interests along the class line to one in which preferences of citizens

¹<http://campuspress.yale.edu/svulik/>

may be polarized both between and within genders. This research is motivated by several paradoxical facts: (1) Early extensions of franchise to women were mostly adopted by left wing parties in Protestant societies, and later extensions of franchise to women were often carried out by right wing parties in Catholic societies; (2) Turnout rate declined after extending franchise to women, suggesting that female voters were at average less enthusiastic in exercising voting rights than males; (3) Incumbent parties in countries where women suffragettes were most militant, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, faced particularly strong electoral pressure to defer to extension of franchise to women.

We set up a model in which voters vote retrospectively, attaching an intrinsic utility or disutility to the incumbent, depending on the incumbent's postures toward women suffrage. The model predicts that male politicians extended suffrage to women when the support for suffrage among women was not too low, and more importantly, when this support was concentrated among the partisan opponents of the extending party. This result sheds lights on the paradox that sometimes the expansion of civil and political rights were strongly opposed by eventual holders. This phenomenon occurred in the scenarios in which conservative women opposed the Equal Rights Amendment in the U.S., the poor opposed extensions of social rights because of racial or ethnic divisions, and religiously conservative people resisted freedom of expression. Our explanation identifies a novel mechanism underlying the political interests of incumbents in extending such rights: when the support for an extension is concentrated among their partisan opponents, extending rights universally may effectively deter the turnout for the opposition parties. Using historical data of electoral outcomes and turnouts, we are able to calibrate key parameters of the model and reconstruct some key features of franchise extension to women in history.

2 Bureaucracy and conflicts in Historical China

My research interest in the bureaucracy of historical China focuses on the interaction among bureaucratic selection, internal military conflicts, and the paths of state formation. I understand the Chinese bureaucracy as a fundamental institutional design, which goes beyond the Weberian dichotomy between rational bureaucracy and patrimonialism. In three papers, I respectively examine the role of the Chinese bureaucracy in facilitating power-sharing, instituting political representation, and enhancing fiscal capability of the state in the context of the Qing dynasty that lasted in 1644-1911. In "**All the Emperor's Men? Conflicts and Power-Sharing in Imperial China.**" (published at *Comparative Political Studies*), which is based on the third paper of my dissertation, I investigate how the bureaucratic system in the Qing dynasty adapted to changing environments of internal military conflicts and helped maintain the political survival of the ruler (Xi, 2019). Being part of the minority ethnic group, the Manchus, the Qing ruler inherited the institutional design of bureaucracy from the conquered Ming dynasty, and to a large extent delegated subnational affairs to elites from the majority Han group. In

turn, the bureaucratic system of Qing served as a mechanism of political power-sharing between the Manchu and Han elites. From the perspective of the Manchu ruler, a performance based system of bureaucratic selection was instrumental for deterring local military rebellions and garnering political supports from Han elites; meanwhile, ethnic favoritism for Manchus was also necessary to ensure their dominance at the top bureaucratic level.

Empirically, the paper examines the relationship between the dynamics of internal military conflicts and the patterns of bureaucratic sanction, promotion, and appointment. To this end, I went through historical archives of high ranking bureaucrats and collect an original data set consisting of nearly 1,500 provincial governors, one of the most powerful executive positions at the province level throughout the Qing dynasty. Exploring rich information of career path and personal characteristics of governors, my paper establishes four features of bureaucratic selection: (1) Internal conflicts at the province level significantly increased the probability of sanction and reduced the probability of promotion for incumbent governors. (2) Internal military conflicts only mattered for the sanction and promotion of Han governors, but not for their Manchu counterparts. (3) An appointment of provincial governor was more likely to be Han with preexisting conflicts, and a new appointment was more likely to be a Manchu bureaucrat in a peaceful circumstance. (4) Consistent with the premise that Han bureaucrats were more skillful at delivering stability at the subnational level, we find that newly appointed Han governors were more effective at reducing internal conflicts than the Manchu counterparts.

I believe that this paper makes several contributions to the literature of comparative authoritarianism and bureaucracy. First, to the best of my knowledge, this paper is the first research to systematically investigate the mechanisms of bureaucratic/political selection in historical China. Second, it offers an in-depth case study on how ethnic power-sharing works in non-democratic regimes. Third, it enriches the literature on the loyalty-competence trade-off in bureaucratic selection by showing that the ruler considers the trade-off between competence and loyalty differently depending on the bureaucratic level. This paper was selected by Professor Melanie Manion as a recommended reading in the syllabus of the PhD course “Research on Chinese Politics: Frontiers and Foundations.” at Duke University.

In addition to studying high-ranking bureaucrats, I look at bureaucratic recruitment at the entry level. In a related working paper, “**Keju as political representation.**” (Hao and Xi, 2018), coauthored with Yu Hao from the School of Economics at Peking University, we argue that bureaucratic recruitment fulfilled a role of political representation in imperial China. In contrast to most European countries adopting parliamentary systems as the major form of representative institutions, the imperial China governed its provinces and prefectures through a centralized bureaucracy with merit-based examination as a primary recruiting mechanism. We propose a simple theoretical framework in which the ruler grants regional quota of admission in Keju examination as a reward to Confucius scholars for their loyalty and service. In doing so, the Keju system invests in local elites a stake of providing public goods and preserving social stability. Using a

comprehensive prefecture-level data on selection outcomes in Keju examinations through the Qing dynasty, this paper documents three empirical regularities in line with this argument. First, the size of admission in exams increased when a prefecture was exposed to extreme weather. Second, the presence of strong gentry power enhanced the state’s responsiveness in famine reliefs and tax reductions in the face of weather shocks. Third, strong gentry power helped mitigate local conflicts, particularly in the early and late Qing periods when the ruler was in higher demands for supports from elites.

Another working paper related to the bureaucratic system in imperial China is entitled “**The fiscal foundation of bureaucratic power sharing in the late Qing China.**” (Wei and Xi, 2018), coauthored with Jinlin Wei, who was a master student I supervised at Peking University and now a PhD student of economics at the University of Warwick. This paper examines the impacts of fiscal decentralization on political disintegration in the context of late Qing dynasty. We utilize the exogenous shock imposed by the Taiping Rebellion in 1850-1860 to explain the degree of fiscal autonomy in the Post-Taiping era. Using an instrumental variable estimation, we found that the amount of revenues of commodity tax (Likin) accruing to provincial governments were positively associated with the promotion of governors and Lieutenant governors. Moreover, this effect is more pronounced for promotions when bureaucrats remained in the same patronage network led by a specific governor general. We also find suggestive evidence that provinces with more fiscal autonomy had a lower degree of congruence with the center in several pivotal political events.

3 Political selection and incentive

My third line of research concentrates on political selection and incentive problems in contemporary China. Most research projects in this group were developed after I joined the faculty of the National School of Development at Peking University. The governing institutions of contemporary China bear an important feature of the so-called “regionally decentralized authoritarianism”, which combines a centralized personnel system and a decentralized administrative and fiscal system (Xu, 2011). This feature implies an important difference between incentive structures in Western democracies and China. Although local voters in the West are arguably more informed about the performance of incumbents, they are less concerned with comparing politicians with others across jurisdictions: formal yardstick evaluation matters less among politicians in the West. By contrast, local leaders in China are subject to systemic performance evaluation and their career advance is to a large extent shaped by horizontal performance comparison with their peers. Moreover, the central government plays a decisive role in appointing local officials and transferring them among different jurisdictions. Motivated by these features, my researches examine the interplay between policies and mechanisms of personnel management implemented by the central government and the behaviors of local governments.

The paper “**Race to safety: Political competition, neighborhood effects, and**

coal mine deaths in China.” (published at *Journal of Development Economics*), coauthored with Xiangyu Shi, who was a master student I supervised and a PhD student of economics at Yale University, we focus on coal mine safety in Chinese cities to study how relative performance evaluation shapes incentives of local leaders with regard to secondary policy issues (Shi and Xi, 2018). In reaction to public infuriation over coal mine deaths, the central government implemented comprehensive reforms after 2000 and revise performance evaluation scheme for local leaders to enhance coal mine safety. This setting grants us an opportunity to study the incentive role of local leaders by estimating the effects of peer performance on a city’s own coal mine deaths. We employ quarterly data of coal mine deaths at prefecture level, and deal with the problem of simultaneity bias by using the quasi-maximum likelihood approach proposed by Lee and Yu (2010) to estimate a spatial autoregressive panel data model with two-way fixed effects. We find that the level of coal mine deaths in a city moves in the same direction with those in its political neighbors. Moreover, the neighborhood effects are confined by provincial borders, but do not change along with the distance between cities. We also find evidence that the neighborhood effects are amplified by regulatory reforms and political cycles, which increase the salience of coal mine safety. The findings about spatial interactions on coal mine deaths among Chinese cities in the same provincial jurisdiction are consistent with the logic of relative performance evaluation (RPE) as a mechanism for shaping policy outcomes.

The paper “**Capability and opportunism: Evidence from city officials in China.**” (published at *Journal of Comparative Economics*), coauthored with Muyang Zhang (Shanghai University of Finance and Economics) and Yang Yao (Peking University), switches the attention from incentive scheme to political selection (Xi, Yao and Zhang, 2018). The conventional wisdom in the literature holds that reelection or promotion motives play a fundamental role in determining performance. In contrast, some theoretical models based on heterogeneous agents highlight the importance of personal attributes such as policy congruence and capability, and analyze the interaction between politicians’ attributes and their behaviors. Our paper investigates how political opportunism of local leaders in China is neutralized to the extent that economic performance is shaped by one’s inherent capability rather than short-term efforts. On the methodological ground, this paper follows a previous contribution by Yao and Zhang (2015) to estimate leaders’ capabilities as their personal fixed effects to local economic growth (net of city and year fixed effects), taking advantage of China’s institutional setup with ample bureaucratic transfers among cities. Our paper documents robust evidence political business cycles - a typical form of political opportunism - as manifested by a significant boost in the growth rate and fiscal spending preceding the Communist Party’s national congress. Meanwhile, more capable leaders generate more modest political business cycles. These findings suggest that, to the extent that political selections are associated with the long term reputation of officials, career-concerned opportunism is partially moderated by selection based on long term performance. This paper thus provides evidence corroborative

with reputation models of political agency á la Holmström (1999) and Martinez (2009).

My coauthored paper “**Purifying the leviathan: the anticorruption campaign and governance models in China.**”, with Yang Yao (PKU) and Qian Zhang (PKU), proposes a strategic account on authoritarian governing institutions for controlling corruption, and examines its implication for political selection. We argue that when rulers cannot commit to a strictly merit-based scheme of political selection, corruption provides a substitution for career-concerned incentives. However, corruption incurs a damage to popular support and political loyalty. Our theory predicts that the ruler may switch from a permissive scheme to a punitive scheme when the institutional loophole of corruption is sufficiently large and when the popular discontent against corruption is high. Consistent with this argument, our empirical analysis on the recent anticorruption campaign in China documents a positive correlation between officials’ economic performance and the probability of investigation, as well as a decreasing importance of performance for the promotion of city leaders after the campaign.

In a recent working paper, “**Sponsored Human Capital: Bureaucratic Transfer and Economic Performance.**”, joint with Lixing Li, Feng Wan, and Yang Yao, we study the impacts of transfers on the performance and career development of Chinese bureaucrats. Using an originally collected data covering more than 2,000 officials holding prefecture leader positions, the paper finds that pre-mayor transfers have a significant positive effect on the terminal rank of an official’s position. Moreover, more frequently transferred officials exhibit a higher level of capability for managing economic affairs. The findings reconcile the implications of favoritism and meritocracy in political selection in the previous literature of organizational economics.

In paper “**Administrative Bidding, Performance, and Political Incentives: Evidence from National Health Cities.** (in Chinese, published at the Journal of Public Management (Gonggong Guanli Xuebao))”, coauthored with Songrui Liu and He Wang, two graduate students at Peking University, we examine the interplay between cities’ performance in public health and environmental quality and local leaders career incentives in the campaign for National Health City, an honorary title granted by the central government (Liu and Xi, 2020). We find that cities being rewarded National Health City register a significant increase in the performance indicators on public health and environment. Moreover, local leaders presiding over the cities through the campaign for winning the title of National Health City are significantly more likely to be promoted in the long run. We propose a theoretical argument that the evaluation of National Health Cities consists a bidding mechanism, which subscribes local leaders to a performance competition around secondary policy agendas that would otherwise be underplayed following routinized policy implementation.

4 National leaders

My fourth area of research interest focuses on the interaction between personal characteristics of political elites' and their political-economic dynamics around the world. I started to work on the biographic data of national leaders in the Post-WWII period in 2014 in collaboration with Yang Yao at the National School of Development, Peking University. These data supplement rich information of the pre-tenure career records and other aspects of personal background (education and family) of national leaders to existing data sets of leaders such as *Archigos* and *LEAD*. I have completed three papers using that data.

The first paper, “**Empowering knowledge: Political leaders, education, and economic liberalization.**” (published at *European Journal of Political Economy*), coauthored with Jingheng Li (a former master student at PKU) and Yang Yao, argues that educational background of leaders plays an important role in shaping leaders' ideas and beliefs, which in turn shapes policies with regard to economic liberalization (Li, Xi and Yao, 2020). The paper uses cross-national time-series data to document a robustly positive relationship between leaders educational attainment and faster liberal reforms, and most pronounced for majors in economics, social science, and natural science. Moreover, the effect is preserved after accounting for the impact of regime type, partisan politics, geopolitical factors, and public sentiment about liberalization. This paper lends support to the argument that the ideas and beliefs of policy makers matter for policies notwithstanding important influence of political institutions.

The second paper is coauthored with Junyan Jiang (assistant professor at Columbia University) and Haojun Xie, entitled “**In the shadows of great men: Leadership turnovers and power dynamics in autocracies.**” (Invited for Revise and resubmit to *American Political Science Review*). In this paper, we study intergenerational power dynamics in authoritarian regimes through examining the influence exerted by living predecessors on the personal power of incumbents. To that end we utilize two massive online databases, Google Books Ngram and Wikidata, to obtain a novel measure of personal power. We find that incumbent leaders ability to consolidate power becomes more limited when operating in an environment where influential former leaders are present. Moreover, the presence of former leaders is most effective in reducing incumbents' ability to unilaterally appoint or remove high-level military and civilian personnel. This paper sheds lights on how informal political constraints associated with leadership turnovers may shape intra-elite power dynamics.

The third paper is coauthored with Xiangyu Shi and Yang Yao, entitled “**Better than on-the-job training: National executive's political experience and economic performance.**” This working paper studies how the pre-tenure experience of national executives affect their economic performance. Drawing on the literature of organizational economics, we argue that diverse political experience of national executives enhances leaders' general human capital and personal power, which consequently contributes to

the competence of economic governance. Our empirical investigations show that the variety of pre-tenure political experiences of national executives is positively associated with economic growth. In particular, diverse work experience helps prevent economy from collapsing in the face of major economic or political crises. We also find that experienced national executives are able to preside over growth of a higher quality, and they have a better record of maintaining political stability.

5 Institutions and development

In addition to political economy, my research interests extend to various issues broadly defined as “institutions and development” in the Chinese context. One may be wondering what place is a political scientist in to contribute to research projects related to Chinese economy. For economists and social science scholars who have been closely studied China the answer is obvious. Many important features of economic development and social problems in China are attributable to its fundamental political institutions and governing state apparatus. As a one-party state with a long history of centralized bureaucracy and plan economy, many seemingly peculiarities come into place to circumvent institutional frictions and help economy and society move forward. Paradoxically, these arrangements often create new kinds of loopholes, aggravating issues like corruption, inequality, and environmental degradation; however, development and state building would have been hardly sustained without these ad hoc arrangement. My research interests in studying the Chinese economy aim to understand the constraints that give rise to institutional peculiarities and examine their pros and cons as economy grows. In the following projects, I work on the research design together with my colleagues, and are responsible for the writing of the final manuscript.

In the working paper “**Price Shocks and Entrepreneurship: Evidence from Chinese Cities**” (R&R at *Journal of Urban Economics*), coauthored with Ruochen Dai (Central University of Finance and Economics), Lixing Li (Peking University), and Xuanli Xie (Peking University), we examine the dynamics of entrepreneurship in coal producing cities in China amidst global coal price decline after 2012. Coal abundant cities in China have a long history of plan economy and typically suffer from a problem of repressed entrepreneurship due to natural resource dependence. We adopt an instrumental variable strategy to explore the exogenous interplay of global coal price and local coal reserve and find that global coal price shock led to a drastic reduction of coal production at the city level, and in turn, relieved the reliance on coal in those cities. This pattern is consistent with the implication of lowered opportunity cost for other productive investments due to a shrinking coal sector. Thus, the negative shocks to the coal sector helped lift institutional hurdles to entrepreneurship.

Another working paper “**Moving umbrella: Identifying collusion through bureaucratic transfers and investment flows.**” (R & R at *Journal of Development Economics.*), coauthored with Xiangyu Shi, Xiaobo Zhang (Peking University), and Yi-

fan Zhang (CUHK), examines how the allocation of entrepreneurial activities may be shaped by the collusion between local leaders and the business. Empirically, the paper explores a unique data of firm registration in China and investigates the correlation between bureaucratic transfers across regions and interregional investment flows. We find that transfer of a leader from prefecture city A to B is associated with 3% investment growth in the same direction. However, the new investments associated with bureaucratic transfers are concentrated in high-rent sectors and acquired new lands from local governments at a lower price. The presence of connected firms blocks new firm entries and inhibits the innovations of other firms. The paper also provide suggestive evidence that the amount of induced investments are amplified by rent-seeking opportunities and mitigated by bureaucrats' career concerned incentives.

In a recent working paper, “**Evading by any means? VAT enforcement and payroll tax evasion in China.**” (forthcoming at *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*), coauthored with Lixing Li (PKU), Zhengcheng Liu (HKUST), and Zhuo Nie (PKU), we study how the enforcement of value-added tax affects Chinese firms' evasion of payroll tax, which is separately collected by the weakly empowered social security office. We use the central government's 2005 repeal of the agricultural tax to construct a measure of fiscal squeeze, and subsequent VAT enforcement, of the county government. The instrumental variable estimation finds that the VAT enforcement led to significantly increased evasion of the payroll tax. Investigations of firm heterogeneity and real responses support the argument that increased evasion stemmed from cost optimization by small and cash-constrained private firms. This study suggests that the lack of coordination among tax authorities hinders fiscal capability by aggravating tax evasion in weakly monitored areas.

6 Future research agenda

As a political science scholar working in a development & policy school, with a majority of my colleagues being economists, I am reminded that my research topics extend to a fair number of different areas. I am grateful to my training and research experience in the PhD study, which oriented me to work on the relationship between institutions and conflicts and bureaucracy in historical China. I am also grateful to the working environment at the National School of Development of Peking University, which gives me an unique opportunity to learn about and do research on Chinese institutions and development. These two areas provide complementary perspectives for me as a researcher seeking to understand how the governing institutions of China (contemporary and historical) speak to the general theoretic questions in political science & political economy.

I have two research agendas ahead looking into the next five years. The first research agenda is a book on the political economy of bureaucracy in the Qing China. This book will include a theoretical chapter on the ruler's strategy of political/bureaucratic selection and three chapters which respectively examine ethnic power-sharing, Keju examination,

and the decentralization in the late Qing periods, as elaborated in Section 2. The book will include a new chapter examining the so called “twice served ministers”, high ranking Ming bureaucrats who had surrendered and worked for the Qing court in 1644.

The second research agenda is also concerned with history, notwithstanding relatively new, of the political and economic reforms initiated by the leadership of Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s. The first paper in this line focuses on the adoption of mandatory retirement age (coauthored with Shuo Chen at Fudan University), which helped set a norm of de facto term limit for Chinese leaders. We argue that this reform was Machiavellian to the extent it reduces the stake of factional conflicts and marginalizes Deng’s opposition. The second paper is an empirical paper examining the dynamics of policy experimentation for the Household Responsibility System which grants peasants partial property rights in agriculture (coauthored with Zhaotian Luo at University of Chicago and Shuo Chen at Fudan University). This paper will utilize a unique county level data on the timing of the Household Responsibility System to test the argument that the location of policy experimentation was strategic and shaped by the power struggle between the reform and conservative factions in the 1980s.

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