

Preface

The academic articles contained in this special edition of Politics, Culture and Socialization represent a combination of Western and Chinese scholars' attempts to discuss developments within the Communist Party of China (PRC) and they address current issues facing China. At the origin of this initiative is the organization (September 18-20, 2013) of an International Expert Conference of the IPSA's Research Committees on Political Socialization and Education (RC21) and Psycho-Politics (RC29) at China University of Mining and Technology, Xuzhou, China. The subject of the conference was "Comparative Study on the Role of Higher Education and Communication in the Process of Political Socialization from the Perspective of Globalization". Scholars from ten different countries, like the USA, Britain, Russia, Belgium, Japan, Denmark, India, Poland, the Netherlands and China attended this conference.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is a young modern nation founded in October, 1949. Its founding leader, Mao Zedong, led the Communist Party of China (CPC) and engaged in two major revolutionary movements after the establishment of the PRC. The first revolution was during the 1950s when land was collectivized and a new education system was established. From 1966-69 a Cultural Revolution occurred attempting to eradicate the upper middle class composed of bureaucrats, educators and various bourgeois professionals. Red Guards composed of youth attempted to erase the vestiges of ancient China. Throughout the nation remnants of pre PCR China were destroyed by the Red Guard, such as the raising of stone tablets featuring the teachings of Confucius in Qufu. These developments are central to the publication of Politics, Culture and Socialization for they represented a political attempt to change Chinese culture and establish a new political socialization process.

This period in Chinese history was followed by a reform process begun in the 1970s by President Deng Xiaoping who initiated a more conciliatory process within China as well as a softening of relations with other nations. Importantly, he began a dramatic economic change known as state capitalism. China entered the global consumer market manufacturing commodities at a cost which made ensuing prices highly competitive making China a rich nation. One result for China was avoiding the fate of the former Soviet Union which ceased to exist in 1991 partly because of a lack of economic growth. The development of wealth in China was such that, for example, infant mortality was reduced to 1/5th compared with previous years. A modernized infrastructure including high speed trains, telecommunications, and sanitation pushed China to become the second biggest economy in the world.

Whereas China entered the capitalist economy, it retained its original political mechanism of a single party state with a President/Chairman of the CPC, Prime Minister and a Politburo as the prime movers of political policy.

Guest Contributor Zou Fangming (China University of Mining and Technology, Xuzhou, China) demonstrates, in his article about “The Roles of Higher Education in Political Socialization”, the reintegration of ancient China with contemporary political thought. He cites Confucius as saying that when a leader is righteous the people will follow. Of course Confucius accepted the role of Emperor (and other rulers such as a king) as a leader and therefore would not exactly be in zinc with modern China’s ruling elite. Menchus (pupil of Confucius) notes that schools are designed to prepare students to govern (i.e., political socialization). Zou refers to Sun Yat-sen as stating that power should be for the people. The mission of today’s trained leadership should be the betterment of the people.

In their study on “Chinese citizen’s attitudes towards the EU and the China-EU relationship. In search of an explanation”, Van der Noll and Dekker (Fernuniversität, Hagen, Germany, and Leiden University, The Netherlands) note that Chinese citizens have positive attitudes toward the European Union (EU). These orientations are generated by those few who have visited EU nations and television. Attitudes toward the EU typically are not based on direct experience, e.g., travel to Europe.

Gao Xian (China University of Mining and Technology, Xuzhou, China) presents an analysis of 200 students in the China University of Mining and Technology (CUMT) showing that internet use and direct political participation increase student’s political efficacy (“Chinese College Students’ Political Efficacy and its Influencing Factors in the Information Age: A Sample Survey of CUMT”). Gao states that Chinese student’s political efficacy levels are below those of Western students. Miao Hongna (School of Government, Nanjing University, China) concludes in her article (“Sources of Political Support for China’s Reformation: Political Socialization of Working Class in Transitional China”) that mass media (e.g., People’s Daily and Worker’s Daily) during the Deng Xiaoping period (1970s–1980s) of economic reform positively affected Chinese peoples’ determination to contribute to production and accept reform policies.

Wenqi Dang (Faculty of Management and Governance, University of Twente, the Netherlands) problems as did Europe in the 1950s-1970s. Europe went through stages of citizen, political party, non-governmental organization (NGOs) and government action to reduce pollution (“Public Participation in Environmental Protection: What China Can Learn from The European Experience”) addresses China’s daunting environmental pollution (air, land & water). The Chinese government might examine these stages to assist it in grappling with pressing environmental degradation issues.

Ann-Sophie Poulain, Christ’l De Landtsheer & Lieuwe Kalkhoven (University of Antwerp, Political Communication Research Unit) show in their article that harmony and social stability dominate Chinese leaders’ view of the Arab Spring. Abrupt reform is opposed in an examination of the former President Hu Jintao and the Minister of Foreign Affairs’ (Yang Jiechi) speeches (The Arabic Spring in the Eyes of Chinese Political Leaders. A Critical Discourse Analysis of Chinese political rhetoric).

As the guest editors (and organizers of the IPSA RC21-RC29 International Expert Conference at China University of Mining and Technology), coming from China, Europe and the USA, we are very happy with the enormous effort of the scholars who produced the academic pieces contained in this special issue of Politics, Culture and Socialization. It is our hope that China and these Western nations move to a common ground of understanding as a result of these contributions which address education, governing, pollution and people-oriented topics.

Guest editors of the special issue:

Song Yingfa

Miao Hongna

Daniel B. German

Christ'l De Landsheer