

BOOK REVIEW

## The Chinese Communist Party: A 100-Year Trajectory

Edited by Jérôme Doyon and Chloé Froissart. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2024. ix + 454 pp. AU\$59.95 (also available Open Access). ISBN 9781760466237

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*The Chinese Communist Party: A 100-Year Trajectory*, edited by Jérôme Doyon and Chloé Froissart, examines the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), marking the 100th anniversary of the CCP's founding in 1921. The proliferation of books on the CCP in recent years is understandable, given its complexity and significantly increasing impact both within China and internationally. Indeed, understanding the CCP is a prerequisite for understanding not only China's domestic politics, but also its foreign policies that are rooted in an organizational and ideological framework. Focused analysis is therefore essential but challenging, as this volume ambitiously covers the CCP's century-long history. In their introduction, Doyon and Froissart aim to move beyond the traditional periodizations (Mao, post-Mao) and the debate over the CCP's resilience. They emphasize how the CCP evolved through "leaps and bounds, setbacks and unexpected moves" (p. 7). To examine this, the volume is structured into four thematic clusters: the first two follow Franz Schurmann's classic distinction of organization and ideology in Communist China, and the latter two address China's path to modernization and territorial control and nation-building, described as the CCP's "two central historical missions" (p. 8).

Jean-Pierre Cabestan's contribution examines the CCP's often overlooked constitution, provocatively questioning whether the Party can democratize itself or China, ultimately concluding with a definitive "no to both questions" (p. 40). Remaining ultimately Leninist, the Party will remain "opaque and undemocratic" and rely on "a low degree of institutionalisation to survive" (p. 41). Patricia M. Thornton and Frank N. Pieke build on this theme by exploring the Party's expansion into civil society and the international arena. Thornton discusses the "party-state-society trichotomy," noting the CCP's encroachment on the autonomy of the state and voluntary sectors. In a somewhat similar vein, Pieke warns that the CCP "intends to remould the world to its own image" (p. 75). These chapters collectively underscore the Party's strength and its capacity to dominate other actors, imposing its values and culture both domestically and internationally.

In the second thematic cluster, Timothy Cheek examines intellectuals and ideological governance within the CCP. Through profiles of figures like Chen Bulai, Wu Han, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Shigong and others, Cheek argues that the Party relies on intellectuals to "tell its story and mobilise popular support" (p. 104), concluding that "the pedagogical state lives" (p. 121). Jérôme Doyon and Long Yang explore the evolving concepts of loyalty and "Party spirit," highlighting the merging of "political loyalty" with virtue to justify subordinating individual interests "to those of the Party's" (p. 148). Emmanuel Jourda's "discursive approach" (p. 158) to the United Front posits it as a tool for action when revolutionary fervour wanes. Kerry Brown uses the "China Dream" to illustrate how language in the CCP appeals to complex emotions, combining thought and feeling. Notably, despite being a thematic cluster on ideology, there is minimal direct discussion of the ideology itself.

The third thematic cluster takes the CCP's claims of modernization seriously, addressing political economy, the environment, the *hukou* system, rural policies and the Party's relationship with private entrepreneurs. Shaun Breslin and Giuseppe Gabusi describe the Party's "whatever it takes" approach to the political economy, emphasizing that markets must always serve China's economic goals and reinforce Party legitimacy, thereby imposing structural limits on liberalization regardless of potential long-term economic consequences. Coraline Goron and Genia Kostka analyse shifts in the CCP's environmental policies, noting an upgrade in bureaucracy and governance tools under Xi Jinping, who increasingly relies on "Party structure and the CCP's propaganda machine" (p. 234) to enforce environmental measures. Chloé Froissart discusses *hukou* system reforms, arguing they are designed less to grant rights and more to reestablish a functionalist social citizenship, where benefits are linked to contributions to urban economic development. Alexander F. Day examines rural policies over four periods, highlighting significant continuities and shifts in the relationship between improving peasant livelihoods and the changing role of the peasant as a social form. Finally, Gilles Guiheux explores the CCP's evolving relationship with private entrepreneurs, noting that while the post-Mao era differs from the Mao era, the CCP "finds a useful repertoire of actions in the founding years of the regime" (p. 341), demonstrating a blend of continuity and adaptation.

In the final thematic cluster on territorial control and nation-building, authors address ethnic policy, Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Vanessa Frangville argues that unity "implies a necessary adherence to a model of a supra-nation that was mainly defined in reference to the Han" (p. 366). Rémi Castets traces the acceleration of "Chinafication" of culture and religion in Xinjiang under Xi (p. 398). Samson Yuen and Edmund W. Cheng, analysing a dataset of 30,174 reports involving 3,869 organizations, find united front work in Hong Kong to be highly "decentralized and multi-layered" (p. 424), shifting from elite co-option to organizing pro-Beijing forces and counter-mobilization. Gunter Schubert, in his chapter on Taiwan, concludes that under Xi, the CCP has recognized the miscalculation in expecting "peaceful reunification," (p. 450) with Xi displaying more impatience than his predecessors.

Addressing 100 years of the CCP is undeniably ambitious, and the vast time frame challenges the ability to move beyond specific eras. The editors acknowledge the difficulty of encapsulating "the essence of such a changing political organisation" (p. 3). Nevertheless (or perhaps because of this difficulty), this volume is a valuable and welcome addition to the expanding body of studies focused on the CCP.