



## The Rise of Political Intellectuals in Modern China: May Fourth Societies and the Roots of Mass-Party Politics

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Granted, certain elements of the vision, such as principles and practices of scientific management were indeed capitalistic, for they were imported from innovations in capitalist enterprises in the United States and designed to improve efficiency and maximize profit. On the other hand, other elements of the vision were not necessarily or causally related to capitalism. For one, entrepreneurs and industrialists incorporated time-honored Confucian principles and practices into enterprise management. For two, enterprise provision of services and welfare was a widespread practice found not only in private enterprises but also in many public—both state-owned and province-owned—enterprises. Since these public enterprises were, by definition, non-capitalist enterprises, enterprise provision of services and welfare was not necessarily capitalist in nature.

More important, Sheehan's work points to the need to critically reexamine the Chinese Revolution of 1949. Although Sheehan does not explicitly raise this issue, it seems clear that the Sino-Japanese War witnessed the transformation of the relationship between business enterprise and the state. If the prewar Nationalist state contributed to Dongya's development and operation during its formative period, then the wartime Japanese occupation state subjected Dongya to direct state supervision and control and used Dongya's product—gunnysacks—to meet its military and strategic needs, effectively making the corporation a cog in the state machine. Seen from such a perspective, the Chinese Revolution of 1949 should perhaps be seen as a continuation and extension of the transformative changes that had taken place during the Sino-Japanese War.

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SHAKHAR RAHAV, *The Rise of Political Intellectuals in Modern China: May Fourth Societies and the Roots of Mass-Party Politics*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. xvi + 235 pp. \$74.00. ISBN 10: 0199382263

As the title (and subtitle) suggest, this book attempts—and largely succeeds—at doing many things at once. It is a biography of sort of Yun Daiying, an important yet understudied protagonist of both the May Fourth era and the early CCP years. Following Yun's activities, the volume offers new perspectives into the complicated process leading from New Culture activism to party politics. By focusing on everyday life and associational matrixes, Shakhav Rahav also produces a fresh reinterpretation of May Fourth political mobilization and its legacy. Finally, by choosing Wuhan as a case study, *The Rise of Political Intellectuals in Modern China* demonstrates the crucial role of China's hinterland cities in shaping modern political activism. This last feature alone would be enough to recommend this book, as it complements and enriches a scholarly production centered mainly around Beijing and Shanghai. Rahav proves that activists in the provinces were well connected nationally yet not derivative in their political and intellectual endeavors. More importantly, he also shows that theories and organizational models did not flow from the center into the periphery; rather, May Fourth ideas and activism were the product of a bidirectional dialog between the two poles. In doing so, Rahav provides a new geographic scope to May Fourth historiography.

The most interesting aspect of Rahav's work is his focus on practices, on minute organizational aspects, on structural and social relationships among intellectuals. He purposefully moves away from a history of political activism as a history of ideas and chooses instead, through a "quasi ethnographic 'thick description'" (10), to look at the social infrastructure through which ideas were expressed, tested, realized and distributed. Central to this analysis is what Rahav calls "sociality," meaning the connections and interactions—both at a direct personal level and mediated through the press—that allowed radical intellectuals to relate their modest (and at times short-lived) experiments in hinterland urban centers to a nationwide movement. It was through these interactions that radical politics took shape and eventually came to constitute the foundation for mass political parties.

Thanks to this attention to localized practices, Rahav is able to illustrate in detail how political intellectuals in the May Fourth period moved from their personal commitment to self-betterment and moral integrity onto experiments with associational form that protected and expanded that commitment, thus making the everyday into a tool for changing themselves, the people around them, and eventually society and the nation. That is, making the everyday a tool for revolution (61). In that, I believe this book provides an excellent case study of the process that I would call political militancy (this is a term the author does not use, but I think it is an apt descriptor). With the microhistory of Wuhan activists, Rahav gives us an analysis of the process by which people became involved in politics, of how this involvement was filtered through personal commitment and surveillance (collective and individual) of one's own behavior, and of the continuous negotiation between that commitment and the organizational structures that were created to embody and express it.

In this respect, the sections of the volume centered on the "Benefit the Masses Book Society" (*Liqun shushe*) and the Young China Association (*Shaonian Zhongguo xuehui*) are particularly enlightening and well crafted. In his analysis of the Book Society—an anarchist-inspired experiment combining communal living with a new form of commercial enterprise—Rahav shows a keen eye for the minutiae of the quotidian and admirable precision in examining the physical embodiment of political choices. The chapter on the Young China Association illustrates instead the relevance of personal interactions, facilitated by the burgeoning radical press, in shaping a national network for May Fourth politics, and thus in making May Fourth a national movement. Here Rahav produces a sophisticated interpretation on how ideas and social networks interacted, shaping each other in a dialectical relationship, and how national politics evolved through the mutual imbrication of old networks based on personal relationships and new ones based on the abstract and impersonal contacts negotiated via the radical press.

If there is a flaw in this book is the modesty with which Rahav articulates its goals. He tells us in the introduction that this study looks not at *why* May Fourth intellectuals became involved in politics but *how* they did so. Yet, in the following pages, Rahav shows that the how and the why are not so easily separated, and that the motivations leading young students and teachers in Wuhan to form anarchist associations, open a communal living bookstore, and join (or not) the Communist Party are actually visible and understandable only through the actual practices in which they were embodied. In that, more than anything else, *The Rise of Political Intellectuals in Modern China* provides not only a contribution

to the history of May Fourth or modern Chinese activism, but also a model for the study of activism in general.

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GORDON H. CHANG, *Fatal Ties: A History of America's Preoccupation with China*.  
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. 314 pp. \$27.98 (cloth).  
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Today both Chinese and Americans have fixed their attention and imagination on each other, the world seems to be obsessed with Sino–American relations as well. This well written and eloquently argued book is timely and a must read for anyone who is interested in finding out how the Americans have paid attention to China since the founding of the United States of America. Gordon Chang, a Chinese American who teaches history at Stanford University, perhaps is the most qualified person to write such a book. The book discussed American obsession with China from the early days of American independence to the present. His arguments are simple and straightforward. Chang argued in his book that “No other country has so inspired American imaginations over so long as time, from the beginning of the country to the present” (p. 257). He also suggested that the China–America connection is likely to determine each country’s future. This book’s major focus is on how American imagination of China meant or might mean for the United States. Chang suggested China and the US have long developed a particularly unique relationship of a sort that neither of the two countries has constructed with other nation. This unique relationship has consumed each other in their foreign policies and foreign relations. Today Americans are fixated on China more than ever. For American elite, China was a country in which Americans had invested special significance and meaning for its own definition and future (p. 142).

Chang began his book with the argument that “There was China before there was an America, and it is because of China that America came to be” (p. 1). From the very beginning, leading Americans believed that China was essential for America’s fate and its national identity. According to Chang, “China has been a central ingredient in America’s self-identity from its very beginning and in the American preoccupation with national fate. This cultural and intellectual study considers that long, troubled history” (p. 8). In the early days of the American history, Americans were attracted to China due to their appreciation of Chinese high culture and civilizational values as well as Chinese resources and wealth. Chang further explained that in the 18th and 19th century American westward movement and expansionist urge to become a Pacific nation, to a great extent, was due to the lure of China. Even after China was shamed and humiliated at hands of great powers after the Opium War, American physical and spiritual connections with the Chinese grew stronger. Americans chose not to get involved in occupying Chinese territory as many other powers did. Instead starting in the 1850s U.S. pursued cooperative policy with Qing court and other powers. At the end of the 19th century, it declared Open Door Policy in China. Diplomatically Americans might be a bit passive for most part of 19th century and early