Curriculum Vitae

Victor C. Shih
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Education

1997-2003: Harvard University. Ph.D. in Government with a focus on comparative political economy, Chinese politics, and international relations.


Employment

6/2010- : associate professor of political science, Northwestern University


Monograph


Refereed Publications


Book Chapters and Other Articles


**Working Papers**

“Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China” with Chris Adolph and Mingxing Liu (under review at American Political Science Review).

Are authoritarian leaders mainly preoccupied with promoting regime-wide interests or with maintaining power vis-à-vis other leaders? We make use of a new biographical database of Central Committee (CC) members and a previously overlooked feature of CCP reporting to test hypotheses about how Communist Party elite were ranked throughout the reform period. We analyze these data with a novel Bayesian model of partial ranks which can estimate individual-level correlates of ranks that are only partially observed. We find that educational qualifications and provincial revenue collection played substantial roles in elite ranking in the reform era, while provincial economic growth did not. Fractional ties with various top leaders and princeling status helped officials climb higher in the CCP elite throughout the reform period. Going beyond simple labels of the CCP regime as "meritocratic" or "clientelistic," our findings suggest that both regime strengthening tendencies and elite rivalries drove political advancement.
“Interest Group Influence in Authoritarian States: The Political Determinants of Chinese Exchange Rate Policy” with David Steinberg (under review at Comparative Political Studies)

Why do countries keep their exchange rates weak and undervalued? This paper argues that domestic politics is more important than systemic factors, but existing domestic political explanations do not fully explain how interest group preferences and political institutions influence exchange rate policy. We argue that tradable industries do not always demand an undervalued exchange rate, but only do so when they are unable to receive other compensatory policies. In addition, interest groups have a larger impact on exchange rate policy in nondemocratic regimes than is often recognized: autocrats select exchange rate policies that correspond to the preferences of the most powerful interest groups because lobby groups have access to the political process and leaders are sensitive to their preferences. A case-study of exchange rate policy in China supports these arguments.


In the absence of democracy, credible federalist institutions, and a welfare state legacy what would motivate transfer payments from the federal to the local level? By examining central transfer payments to Chinese counties, which deliver the bulk of the public goods, this paper discusses and tests an alternative set of motivations for transfer payments in autocracies. According to “authoritarian bargain” theories, autocratic governments have incentive to elevate the general welfare of citizens in order to prevent uprisings. In the “stationary bandit” tradition, however, autocrats are strongly motivated to pay off local defenders of the regime, and given sufficiently long time horizon, they also have incentive to promote development through awarding growth and supporting education. We test these competing logics on central and provincial transfer payments to Chinese counties between 1993 and 2005. Through GLS and 2SLS regressions with and without fixed effects, we consistently find that the size of the local government payroll has the largest impact on transfer payments, followed by the level of development and the share of school-age children. This gives credence to the “stationary bandit” hypothesis. Contrary to the prediction of the “authoritarian bargain” hypothesis, we consistently find that poorer counties and counties with higher share of the elderly receive no extra fiscal transfers.

“Credible Decentralization in Authoritarian Regimes: the Case of China” with Mingxing Liu and Dong Zhang

In the absence of a credible constitution, what mechanism can commit authoritarian leaders to preserving local fiscal autonomy? We explore the political origin of the puzzling economic decentralization in China, which persisted for two decades. Through a detailed analysis of the composition of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, we find that the Cultural Revolution radically reoriented the composition of the elite selectorate from one favoring central agencies to one favoring
local interests. This realigned elite incentive to favor decentralization policy. Even when Deng took power in the late 1970s, he had good reason to pander to local interests through enacting even more decentralization policies. This local bias of the Central Committee credibly committed the Chinese leadership in the 1980s to a path of decentralization. The recentralization of the Chinese economy in the 1990s can likewise be explained by changing elite composition.

**Presentations and Lectures**

“The Young, the Tainted, and the Specialized: Powerless Elite and Political Stability in the Chinese Communist Regime”

UC Berkeley Center for China Studies Colloquium, Berkeley CA 9/10/2010

“The Autocratic Difference: Information Paucity”

University of Chicago Comparative Seminar, Chicago IL 1/15/2010
Harvard University Political Economy Seminar, Cambridge MA 4/5/2010
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Comparative Politics Seminar, 4/12/2010
Northwestern University Political Science Department, Evanston IL 5/28/2010


University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies Workshop, Ann Arbor, MI 10/21/2009.
Midwest Political Science Associations Annual Conference, Chicago IL 4/24/2010
American Political Science Association Annual Conference, Chicago IL 9/2/2010

“Prospering from a Purge: The Strategic Use of Tainted Figures in the Chinese Communist Party”

Annual American Political Science Association Meeting, Toronto, ON 9/5/2009

“The looming problem of local debt in China”

Europe and China: A Strategic Dialogue, Brussels 5/19/2009


“Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining Advancement of Central Committee Members” with Chris Adolph and Mingxing Liu

Annual American Political Science Association Meeting, Boston, MA 8/30/2008
University of Chicago East Asia Colloquium 11/27/2008
Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania 2/12/2009
“Elite Politics and Inflation in China: Then and Now”
School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University 2/20/2008
Elliot School of International Affairs, George Washington University 2/19/2008
JP Morgan Investors Luncheon, Hong Kong 3/18/2008
Foreign Correspondence Club, Hong Kong 3/19/2008
The Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania 2/12/2009

“Measuring Party Fragmentation in the Chinese Communist Party” with Wei Shan and Mingxing Liu
University of Chicago East Asia Colloquium 10/16/2007
Northwestern University Linkage Colloquium 5/20/2008

“Major Risks Confronting China and Implications for US Policies”
National Fishery Institute, Boulder, CO 10/21/2007
Northwestern Alumni Continuing Education Course, Chicago, IL 3/24/2008

“Placating Credible Rebel: Chinese Fiscal Transfers to Religious and Non-Religious Minorities” with Mingxing Liu and Qi Zhang
University of Southern California Conference on Development in Western China, Los Angeles, CA 10/6/2007
Annual American Political Science Association Meeting, Chicago, IL 9/2/2007
Council on East Asia Colloquium, Yale University, 2/14/07


“The Nexus of Institutions and Unexpected "Unintended Consequences" in China's Fiscal Reform,” with Mingxing Liu and Xueyan Su
Munk Center for International Affairs, University of Toronto, 10/6/06
Annual APSA Conference, Philadelphia PA, 9/2/06

“When are Banks Sold to Foreigners? An Examination of the Politics of Selling Banks in Mexico, Korea, and China” Paper presented at the Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics Conference, Bloomington, Indiana, May 19-20, 2006


“‘Nauseating’ Displays of Loyalty: Credible Intra-Factional Communication through Ideological Campaigns”
   Davis Center Post-Socialist Workshop, Cambridge, MA 3/10/2006


“The ‘Eating Budget’: Determining Fiscal Transfers Under Predatory Fiscal Federalism” with Zhang, Qi and Liu, Mingxing.
   2005 Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference, Chicago, IL, 4/8/2005
   2004 American Political Science Association Annual Conference, Chicago, IL, 9/1/2004


“Credibility without Institution: Factional Politics and Dis-Inflationary Policy in China,” presentation at the IR/PS, Political Science Workshop, University of California, San Diego, 4/12/2004


Post-doctoral Awards, Honors, and Fellowships


2006-2007: Harvard CFIA Visiting Fellowship


2003-2009: Northwestern University Junior Faculty Support Fund

Peer Review Activities

2004: Reviewer for Social Science Research Council dissertation fellowship applications.


Teaching and Advising

1/2004-present: organized and taught a graduate seminar on the political economy of development, a senior seminar on the politics of finance and development, and lecture courses on comparative politics and Chinese politics.

9/2007-present: Head of Asian Studies Research Cluster of The Graduate School. Organize speaker events for Asian studies, organize graduate student outings, preside over cluster fellowship committee.

Skills

Languages: Fluent Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese Chinese, and elementary level of French.

Quantitative Methods: linear and non-linear modeling, dealing with heteroskedasticity and panel and time-series data, and simulations of predicted outcomes.

Computer skills: programming in Stata, Gauss, and SPSS, as well as operational knowledge of all standard software.