

Introduction: Parties from Vanguardists to Governments

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Over the course of the twentieth century, a broad array of parties as organizations of a new type took over state functions and replaced state institutions on the territories of the former Ottoman, Qing, Russian, and Habsburg Empires. In the context of roughly simultaneous imperial and postimperial transformations, organizations such as the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) in the Ottoman Empire (one-party regime since 1913), the Anfu Club in China (parliamentary majority since 1918), and the Bolshevik Party in Russia (in control of parts of the former empire since 1918), not only took over government power but merged with government itself. Disillusioned with the outcomes of previous constitutional and parliamentary reforms, these parties justified the takeovers with slogans and programs of controlled or supervised economic and social development. Inheriting the previous imperial diversities, they furthermore took over the role of mediators between the various social and ethnic groups in the respective territories. In this respect, the parties appropriated some of the functions which dynastic and then constitutional and parliamentary regimes had ostensibly failed to perform. In a significant counterexample, in spite of prominent aspirations, no one-party regime emerged in Japan, for there the constitutional monarchy had survived the empire's transformation to a major industrialized imperialist power.

For most of the twentieth century, one-party and single-party regimes – regimes led by dominant or single parties in the absence of electoral competition (Greene 2010, 809–10; Meng 2021, 1) – thrived on both sides of the Cold War and in some of the non-aligned states. The ideologies of the ruling parties relied on nationalist and socialist discourses, or, quite often, their combination. Even though most of the one-party regimes were based on competing ideologies of state socialism and extreme nationalism, they demonstrated structural similarities on several levels, including their appeals to the masses defined in national or class terms. Whereas several state socialist single-party regimes collapsed in 1989–1991 (Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia), some of the communist parties have continued to rule without electoral competition (China, Laos,

North Korea, and Vietnam). Furthermore, new parties managed to establish controlled political regimes across Eurasia, for instance, in Russia and Turkey.

Bringing together twelve case studies of one-party regimes from the interconnected Eurasian contexts, including Eastern Europe, West and East Asia, this volume explores the performance of these (in most cases) extraconstitutional organizations as governments and their approaches to development in global and comparative contexts. It pays special attention to nation-building through the party (including its multiethnic versions), to institutions (both constitutional and extraconstitutional), and to the global and comparative aspects of one-party regimes. The volume addresses the geneses of one-party regimes, the roles of socialism and nationalism in the parties' approaches to development and state-building, as well as the pedagogical and tutelary aspirations of the ruling parties in China, Czechoslovakia, Japan, Korea, the Soviet Union, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and other postimperial and postcolonial polities. Hence, by revisiting the dynamics of the transition from empire via constitutionalism to single-party government, and by exploring the internal and external dynamics of single-party regimes after their establishment, the volume helps to more precisely locate this type of regime within the contemporary world's political landscape.

Historians have predominantly studied one-party regimes and the parties at the helm within the respective national contexts (Ciddi 2009; Gill 1994; Zheng 2009), paying particular attention to leaders (Apor et al. 2004; Hanioglu 2017; Khlevniuk 2015; Taylor 2009; Terrill 1999) and violence under one-party regimes (Conquest 2008; Kaplonski 2014; Lankov 2002; Naimark 2016; Yan and Gao 1996). Whereas comparative outlooks, as well as theoretical and institutional studies of one-party regimes have been common in political science (Hess 2013; Magaloni and Kricheli 2010; Meng 2021; Rothman 1967; Swain 2011), historians have rarely paid attention to the mechanics of the one-party regimes and the fusion of parties with governments. There have nevertheless been studies, both involving diachronous comparisons within the same national contexts (Ayan 2010), and taking transnational and global perspectives, but mainly on communist parties (Bergien and Gieseke 2018; Feliu and Brichs 2019; McAdams 2017; Pons and Smith 2017; Naimark et al. 2017). Broader comparisons, involving nationalist (and fascist) and state socialist regimes and their institutions have been especially rare (Jessen and Richter 2011; Paxton 1998).

Political parties entered the global stage in the nineteenth–early twentieth century, together with the spread of parliamentarism. The turn toward constitutions and parliamentary institutions was not limited to Western Europe and the Americas. Japan's adoption of a constitution and convocation of the Imperial Diet in 1889/90 crowned its process of political reforms, which had been initiated in the middle of the century through the clash with the Western imperialist powers, and turned the country into a major imperialist power. Thereafter, Japan developed into a powerful point

of reference throughout the globe (Colley 2021). Between around 1905 and 1910, in the wake of Russia's military defeat against Japan, the ruling elites and influential oppositional circles of several large Eurasian empires engaged in a roughly concomitant effort to introduce constitutions and parliamentary institutions (Kurzman 2008, Moniz Bandeira 2017). The Russian Revolution of 1905–1907 took a constitutional turn and resulted in the formation of the imperial parliament, the State Duma, in 1905/1906. The events in Russia contributed to the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906. Two years later, in 1908, the Young Turk Revolution reinstated the Ottoman Constitution of 1876. The government of the Qing Empire, trying to avoid the difficulties faced by Russia and Persia, decided to follow suit after a long reform period of “constitutional preparation,” but published an outline of a constitution in 1908 and convened preliminary assemblies thought to be precursors to the eventual imperial assembly.

Given that these Eurasian constitutions and parliaments were established as answers to existential crises, they were predominantly, although far from exclusively, aimed at strengthening the state or reorganizing it from the perspective of the political elites (Sablin and Moniz Bandeira 2021, 3–4). Constitutions and parliaments were deemed to be the key to transform dynastic regimes into nation-states (Banerjee 2017; Moniz Bandeira 2022) or more regulated and cohesive empire-states (Stoler 2009, 49); they helped to promote nationalism (both inclusionary and exclusionary), imperialism, and militarism (Grotke and Prutsch 2014). Parliamentary institutions were established as political talent pools and as communication avenues between governments and populations; they served as avenues for political mobilization as well as for the management of imperial diversities.

In these imperial contexts, political parties were only begrudgingly accepted and struggled to find their place in the new constitutional systems. In Eurasia, imperial officials and conservative members of the public (who often cited Western critics of political parties and, by extension, of parliamentarism) tended to view political parties and factionalism as divisive and ultimately detrimental to their cause of national strengthening (Sablin 2020, 266–68). As Robert A. Scalapino (1962, 68) writes on the Japanese case, the emerging parties at the time of the Meiji Constitution's promulgation “still existed in the political demimonde.” Stringent anti-factionalist laws curtailed their action, the government did not acknowledge their inevitability, and they had not yet any political or legal significance. However, the Japanese case is peculiar among those covered in this volume in so far as the new constitution promulgated in 1889 remained in force for several decades to come and witnessed Japan's economic growth and rise as an expansive imperialist power. In this context, the political parties which had evolved since the 1880s came to play a significant role, and even laid the groundwork for the country's postwar party system (Scalapino 1962, 68).

Parties were often successors to and reconfigurations of various pre-existing forms of political associations. By 1906, when the Qing Court

announced its intention to prepare for constitutional government, constitutionalist intellectuals increasingly conceived of themselves as a “party” united not by personal bonds like the factions of old, but by ideas and an impersonal, lasting relationship to the “nation” (Blitstein 2018, 177–81, on the concept of nation in China see Matten 2012). Consequently, they called for the development of institutionalized parties as an element of political modernity (Zhu 2002; Chen 2013). Yet, they tended to conceptualize parties less as pathways to channel particularist interests than as vehicles to increase societal cohesion and train political elites (Zhu 2002, 96). Like all other elements of political modernization, the need for parties was interpreted in light of the country’s political and economic weakness and the ambition to overcome its internal and external problems. One pseudonymous essay in the *Sein min choong bou* (*Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報), a magazine edited in Yokohama by the paramount reformist intellectual Liang Qichao 梁啟超, is illustrative in this respect (Yu zhi 1906). Having dramatically begun with the statement that China’s very existence depended on the development of political parties, the essay reflected on the relationship between Chinese reformers and revolutionaries, and extensively discussed the cases of Russia and Japan. It narrated that after violently suppressing political parties, the Japanese government had had to accept parties as a political fact and acknowledge their value for the implementation of constitutional politics, pointing to a coming parallel development in China (Yu zhi 1906, 13–14; see also Scalapino 1962, 146–199). The author pondered that a balance between progressives and conservatives was necessary and stressed the positive function of politicians outside of government. Thereby, he saw two main functions of political parties, namely controlling the government and guiding the people. Yet, while he vociferously criticized the current Qing government as utterly corrupt, the writer emphasized the common interest of the constitutional state served by the parties within it, and the function of the parties to overcome individualism. Concluding his essay by stating that the state was “the subject and the individuals and factions” were “all the objects of the state,” the author again adduced the example of Japan. He was impressed that, as soon as the wars against China (1894/95) and Russia (1904/05) erupted, all Japanese parties immediately set aside their differences. Despite still having a multiparty configuration in mind, the explanation of the second function of parties as vanguards of political development pointed toward what would become one of the main features of single-party regimes in Eurasia, and which Liang Qichao himself would forcefully argue for in the early years of the Republic:

Now, as a country’s political thought is not immediately popularized in the whole country, it needs to rely on visionaries (*xianjuezhe* 先覺者) to promote it. Only then will self-aware citizens arise. There is nobody but political parties to nurture this political thought and to gather these visionary gentlemen. Therefore, political parties are truly the morning

stars (*shuxing* 曙星) of a society's first enlightenment, and the harbingers (*xianhe* 先河) of constitutional politics.

(Yu zhi 1906, 17)

These words appeared in a paper located in Japan, where thousands of Qing students and intellectuals across the political spectrum were vying to shape China's political future. In fact, many parties in Eurasia emerged as non-parliamentary, underground or émigré, organizations ahead of parliaments. Such were the CUP in the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), and the Socialist Revolutionary Party (PSR) in the Russian Empire, as well as the Revolutionary Alliance (*Tongmenghui* 同盟會), the predecessor of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomintang, Kuomintang, or KMT), founded in Tokyo in 1905. Although parliamentarism was on their agenda, the members of these organizations did not shun away from anti-parliamentary considerations. The debates at the Second Congress of the RSDLP, which took place in Brussels and London in the summer of 1903, and those around it are illustrative in this regard. After the members of the Jewish Labor Bund departed the Congress out of protest, the remaining delegates adopted a program of two parts, "minimum" and "maximum." The maximum part set socialist revolution as the Party's ultimate goal and the dictatorship of the proletariat as its prerequisite. The minimum part aimed at establishing a democratic republic in Russia and featured *inter alia* the creation of a parliament. Georgii Valentinovich Plekhanov, one of the first Russian Marxists and later a leader of the Menshevik faction, voiced a rather cynical opinion on parliament during the debates.

If, in an impulse of revolutionary enthusiasm, the people had elected a very good parliament – a kind of *chambre introuvable* [*unobtainable chamber*] – we [the Social Democrats] should try to make it a long parliament, and if the elections had failed, we should try to disperse it not in two years but, if possible, in two weeks.

(Shanshiev 1959, 182)

These words evoked protests from some of those present and other imperial intellectuals. Although Plekhanov eventually changed his position and called for the RSDLP's participation in the State Duma elections, the Ukrainian legal scholar Bohdan (Fedir) Oleksandrovich Kistiakovskii later dismissed such a position as "monstrous" and emblematic of the low level of the Russian intelligentsia's legal consciousness (Kistiakovskii 1916, 558–59). Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, who would come to power at the helm of the RSDLP's radical Bolshevik faction, by contrast, applauded Plekhanov's 1903 statement and quoted it, for instance, when justifying Red Terror in late 1917 (Lenin 1974, 185).

The activities of the non-parliamentary parties and their members involved interactions in imperial borderlands, for instance, between Russia and Iran, and across the whole of Eurasia (Deutschmann 2013; Harper 2021). When an attempt at political reforms was botched in the Qing Empire in 1898, some of its intellectual leaders, including the aforementioned Liang Qichao and his preceptor Kang Youwei 康有為, fled to Japan. For them, the emerging parties of the Qing Empire were not limited to political borders, but transcontinental associations resting on a non-territorial Chinese nation (Blitstein 2018, 181). Kang travelled the world to promote his ideas, especially among Chinese diaspora communities. In Mexico, whither he intended to bring Chinese immigrants to build a “New China,” he met with President Porfirio Díaz, whom he described as an “autocratic” ruler whose dictatorial government was necessary to develop the nation, a strand of thought which had also been quite widespread in nineteenth century Latin America (Blitstein 2016, 241–43). Liang, too, was a *persona non grata* on Qing territory, but nonetheless came to decisively shape the late Qing constitutional reforms. His Political Information Society (*Zhengwenshe* 政聞社) was founded in Japan in 1907 and moved its headquarters to Shanghai in 1908. Although it was soon disbanded by the Qing government, it became one of the predecessors of the the Qing Empire’s first officially recognized political party, the Association of Friends of Constitutionalism (*Xianyouhui* 憲友會), which was founded in summer 1911.

Kang’s globe-trotting activity rivalled with that of the revolutionary leader and founder of the Revolutionary Alliance, Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙. When visiting Europe in 1905, Sun met Belgian socialist leaders Émile Vandervelde and Camille Huysmans and tried to join the Second International (Spooner 2011). A year later, in 1906, Sun met Grigori Andreevich Gershuni, one of the PSR’s founders, in Japan and discussed the forms of underground political struggle in person with him (Sablin 2018, 48). Revolutionary leaders like Sun, the Philippine Mariano Ponce, and the Vietnamese Phan Bội Châu and Phan Châu Trinh built far-reaching Pan-Asian networks (Bui 2012; CuUnjieng Aboitiz 2020). Inspired by both Liang Qichao and Sun Yat-sen, political associations connected to Phan Bội Châu, like the Modernization Association and the Restoration Association, fought against French colonialism in Vietnam, first promoting constitutional monarchism and later taking inspiration in the Republic of China (Bui 2012).

Although most of such organizations became involved in late imperial and revolutionary parliamentary institutions, the brief global parliamentary moment of the 1900s–1910s soon gave way to a new form of political organization, namely the one-party dictatorship. Although the first one-party regime had emerged elsewhere, with Liberia’s True Whig Party remaining in power between 1878 and 1980 (Meng 2021, 7), it was in postimperial Eurasia that such regimes became especially widespread.

The first Eurasian one-party regime was established by the CUP in the Ottoman Empire. The CUP, which started as a secret revolutionary

organization, played a key role in the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the reestablishment of the constitutional regime and the imperial parliament. As argued by Ferdan Ergut, the transition from indirect to direct rule was especially important for the CUP leadership, and after the 1908 Revolution the main goal of the CUP regime was to eliminate the intermediary societal forces (Ergut 2003). While the 1908 Revolution itself was dominated by a model of a state as a provider of legal liberty and equality, state organicism – the belief that a state acts like a natural organism – came to play an important role in the political thinking of the 1910s, elevating the power of the political elite and rulers (Turnaoğlu 2017, 156–57). The CUP did not seek unrestricted control of the government immediately after the Revolution, first acting as a competitive political party (Ergut 2003, 53, 59). However, it did not manage to increase its popularity and temporarily lost power in 1912 (Zürcher 2010, 93). In the context of the Balkan crisis of late 1912, the CUP organized prowar mass rallies and launched a massive propaganda campaign against the government. Alleging that they were “saving the state” (Zürcher 2010, 117), the CUP staged a coup on January 23, 1913. Later the same year, it launched a harsh campaign against opposition, including socialists and the ulema, and established total control of the bureaucracy (Hanioglu 2008, 156–57, 159).

As noted by M. Şükrü Hanioglu, the CUP developed some features of a mass party, including broad membership. At the same time, it avoided full institutionalization, retaining conspiratorial qualities, and never formally outlawed other parties and organizations. Initially, the CUP’s main objective was the preservation of the diverse Ottoman Empire, for which it adopted a policy of inclusiveness. This made the Party’s platform essentially conservative and also meant that it had no ethnic or class basis for membership. Furthermore, the vague notion of Ottomanism undermined the Party’s internal cohesion. The CUP, however, became increasingly influenced by Turkist ideas, with the difference between “Ottoman” and “Turkish” becoming ever more blurred, which stimulated particularistic movements on the peripheries (Hanioglu 2008, 160–61, 166–67). During the First World War, its leadership opted for a violent approach to imperial diversity and organized mass violence, against the Armenians in the first place, as part of building a homogeneous Turkish nation in the heterogeneous imperial space (Kévorkian 2011; Kieser 2018; Suny 2017).

Simultaneously with the existence of the CUP regime, China saw a period of political upheaval. The Qing government’s attempt at gradual constitutional preparation was run over by the country’s rapid societal and political development. In late 1911, a provincial troop mutiny set off a domino chain of provinces falling off from the empire, eventually forcing the negotiated abdication of the Emperor in early 1912 (Chen 2017). The newly established Republic of China tried to build a political system in which the parliament was of paramount political importance, under a provisional constitution that took much inspiration from the constitution of the French Third

Republic. Suffrage was expanded from 0.39 to 10.5 percent of the population (Chang 2007, 55, 80 91–96), and political parties proliferated, taking center stage in the new system (Chang 1985; Wang 1988; Liu and Liu 2015, 45–51). The Revolutionary Alliance evolved into the KMT, while the late Qing Association of Friends of Constitutionalism evolved into a number of successor parties, most notably the Progressive Party (*Jinbudang* 進步黨). Yet, the political practice of the young republic turned out quite different from what had been hoped for. It was shaken by traumatizing political strife, including the assassination of the KMT leader Song Jiaoren 宋教仁 in March 1913, possibly at the behest of President Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (Yao 2008). In 1914, Yuan, a leading figure of the late Qing reforms who had negotiated the Emperor’s abdication and secured considerable continuity between the Qing Empire and the Republic, disbanded the parliament and took steps to consolidate his own power. After passing a new constitutional compact and creating a new advisory council acting as his private consultative chamber, he eventually attempted to establish the Empire of China with himself as Emperor (Moniz Bandeira 2021, 164–72). Encountering unsurmountable resistance to this move, Yuan was forced to abdicate and died shortly thereafter.

Yuan’s death, in principle, meant a return to the constitutional system of 1912–1913 – but not for long. The resulting power grab of 1916–1917, again, gave pluralist party politics a bad name. A year later, as a reaction to the perceived chaos, China saw another short-lived attempt at monarchic restoration, this time a coup trying to reestablish the Qing dynasty with Emperor Puyi at the helm. In the wake of these events, a new and hitherto understudied force gained prominence in Chinese politics: the Anfu Club, which appropriated the institutional arrangements laid down by the erstwhile Progressive Party and remained in power between 1918 and 1920. Whereas it had been judged in overwhelmingly negative ways in historiography, Ernest Ming-tak Leung (Chapter 1) uncovers its historical significance as East Asia’s first *de facto* one-party developmentalist regime. Relying on rarely used and newly discovered sources, Leung offers a revision of the dominant narrative by addressing the birth, life, and death of the “Progressive–Anfu System.” Not unlike the Ottoman Empire, organic state theory had gained a prominent place in Chinese political thought since the last years of the Qing Empire. Shaped by this intellectual trend, the Anfu leaders, who were themselves mostly educated at prestigious institutions abroad, envisioned a societal order in which the old mandarin-literati class would take the reins of the state and become an industrializing elite. The Club also set out to change the constitutional structure of the state, coming to propose an ultimately unsuccessful bill to reform the Senate, which would have turned the institution into East Asia’s first corporatist chamber. Due to its secrecy, the Anfu Club was barely visible to the outside as a political party at the time, but in fact developed a sophisticated corporatist party structure, which it was keen to expand to the provinces. Yet, due to its own

mistakes as well as to external factors, the Anfu regime remained a rather short episode in Chinese history, being toppled in 1920.

At roughly the same time, an organization of a different kind managed to erect a more long-lasting single-party regime in the former Russian Empire. The Bolshevik Party, which emerged as a separate organization from the RSDLP's eponymous faction, came to power in Petrograd on October 25–26, 1917, as part of a radical coalition with the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party, formerly a faction of the PSR. The coalition proved short-lived, and since 1918, the Bolsheviks controlled parts of the former empire as a single party. By that time, Lenin had developed a dynamic, flexible approach to party-building. As argued by Paul Le Blanc (2015, x), “the political program of revolutionary Marxism and the living movement and struggles of the working class” were the two things of fundamental importance for Lenin, and the function of the revolutionary party was to bring the two together. He sought to build a Russia-wide party, integrated into an international socialist movement, whose members worked to realize this dual commitment. In organizational terms, the theme of class leadership was at the center. As summarized by Lars T. Lih (2011, 14–15), this theme had two levels: leadership by the class – that is the proletariat’s leadership of the whole people – and the party’s leadership of the proletariat, that is, its role as the “vanguard” of conscious revolutionaries.

Over the course of the Russian Civil War (1918–1922), the Bolshevik Party consolidated its regime in most of the remaining imperial territory and became the center of a new imperial formation, the Soviet Union (Suny and Martin 2001). During its first decade in power, the Party developed from a small disciplined organization into a hierarchical mass organization, which fully controlled the government and most spheres of public life. The developments in the Soviet Union were projected onto the international level, with world revolution, both in its social and anticolonial dimensions, expected to unfold along the Bolshevik path (Sablin 2021).

At the same time, Lenin argued that the “vanguard” and its course of action had to be context-specific:

To seek out, investigate, predict, and grasp that which is nationally specific and nationally distinctive, in the concrete manner in which each country should tackle a single international task: victory over opportunism and Left doctrinairism within the working-class movement; the overthrow of the bourgeoisie; the establishment of a Soviet republic and a proletarian dictatorship – such is the basic task in the historical period that all the advanced countries (and not they alone) are going through. The chief thing – though, of course, far from everything – the chief thing, has already been achieved: the vanguard of the working class has been won over, has ranged itself on the side of Soviet government and against parliamentarianism, on the side of the dictatorship of the proletariat and against bourgeois democracy.

[...] Victory cannot be won with a vanguard alone. To throw only the vanguard into the decisive battle, before the entire class, the broad masses, have taken up a position either of direct support for the vanguard, or at least of sympathetic neutrality towards it and of precluded support for the enemy, would be, not merely foolish but criminal. [...]

The immediate objective of the class-conscious vanguard of the international working-class movement, i.e., the Communist parties, groups and trends, is to be able to lead the broad masses (who are still, for the most part, apathetic, inert, dormant and convention-ridden) to their new position, or, rather, to be able to lead, not only their own party but also these masses in their advance and transition to the new position (Lenin 1920).

Vsevolod Kritskiy (Chapter 2) analyzes the institutional aspects of the Bolsheviks' approach to world revolution, focusing on the early years of the Communist International (Comintern) in the context of interwar internationalisms. The Bolsheviks sought to control the Comintern's proceedings, opposing those who preferred a more democratic structure for the organization. While the Comintern was supposed to facilitate the fusion of national communist parties with the respective governments, the re-configuration of the international system after the First World War gave it an opportunity to stake a claim on the system itself, replacing it with a party-of-parties. Kritskiy explores these processes of capture – by the Bolsheviks of the Comintern and by the Comintern of the international system – in the context of the radical left's competition with the liberal internationalism of the League of Nations and the moderate socialist internationalism of the remnants of the Second International, which consolidated into the Labour and Socialist International in 1923. Kritskiy argues that the lack of unity on the left at the international level facilitated the growth and establishment of the liberal system of international relations.

For most of the 1920s, there was also a lack of unity within the Bolshevik Party itself, which Alexander V. Reznik (Chapter 3) explores in his study of the discourses and practices of “democracy” and “parliamentarianism” within the Party in 1923 and 1924. Rejecting the mainstream notion of mere factional “struggle for power” among the higher echelons of the Soviet party-state, he analyzes the actual political practices of both the leaders and rank-and-file party members during open political contests. Although the Bolsheviks were famous for their vocal rejection of (bourgeois) parliamentarianism and democracy, they continuously argued for “workers' democracy.” Reznik argues that the controversies in 1923 and 1924 over the meaning of “democracy” are crucial for understanding the limits of political action and reforms, as they need to be put into the context of the actual practicing of “intraparty democracy,” a process that included long, active debates in press and at assemblies, elections of different bodies,

petitioning and protesting cases of unsatisfactory results, and so on. His analysis of the Left Opposition's rhetorical approaches to intraparty democracy reveals their complex ideological and organizational nature, weakening the Opposition's claims against "bureaucratization."

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed the spread of one-party regimes across the whole Eurasian continent. With the exception of the Soviet Union,¹ nationalism became the ideological foundation of the absolute majority of one-party regimes during this period. In most Western European cases, single-party regimes were based on the extreme nationalist ideologies of fascism (for instance, in Italy and Spain) and Nazism (in Germany). In the post-imperial settings of Turkey and China, vernacular versions of nationalism, associated with the mythologized founding fathers of the modern nations, Kemal Atatürk and Sun Yat-sen respectively, became the main ideological underpinnings of controlled state-building and developmentalism.

Paul Kubicek (Chapter 4) locates the experience of Turkey's Republican People's Party (CHP) as a single party in 1923–1950 within the global context by focusing on the historical and intellectual roots of the CHP, its praxis, and its performance as a model for other single-party regimes. Kubicek discusses the envisioned tutelary role for the Party, which both identified with and sought to serve the "general will" in terms of nation-building and modernization. While the CHP shared some features with the CUP, the main inspiration for much of its guiding philosophy, featuring republicanism, nationalism, secularism, and populism, came from Western sources. The CHP, which served as an appendage to the state, sought to develop a unifying national identity, one that denied any class, ethnic, or sectarian divisions, and made the existence of alternative parties unneeded for the unity of the people. Although the CHP's regime was celebrated as a success, its Western origins and orientation limited its ability to serve as a model for non-Western development.

In China, the KMT established control over most of the country in 1927–1928 and remained the dominant force until the Japanese invasion of 1937. Christopher A. Reed (Chapter 5) explores the themes of "the pedagogical state" and nation-building through the party through the KMT's propaganda establishment and its political publishing program. Examining propaganda as a key tool in modern party- and state-building processes, Reed explores how the borrowing from the Soviet "propaganda state" via the Comintern led to the emergence of the KMT's own "propaganda state," in which the Party's Department of Propaganda performed as a propaganda ministry, supporting the KMT's more general effort to take over state functions. Drawing on internal Party documents as well as on published contemporary sources, Reed focuses on the issues of party-state organization, jurisdiction, inner party dynamics, message control, and mobilization in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Some of the single and dominant parties in Eurasia opted for formalizing their status in the legal documents of the respective states. The KMT became

the first ruling party to formally include itself and its own “political tutelage” over the country’s development in the Provisional Constitution of 1931 (Hsia 1931). The Italian National Fascist Party (PNF) was formally subordinate to the state, but in practice it became a massive bureaucracy which played an important role in the state architecture, with Party membership becoming compulsory for teachers and state employees after 1933 (Whittam 1995, 54). The Bolshevik Party was mentioned in the Soviet Constitution of 1936 (Trainin 1940, 188), but was never formally made the only legal party, unlike the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) in Germany. When working on the new constitution and consulting foreign legal documents, Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, who chaired the drafting committee, underlined the opening sentence of the Nazi Law against the Foundation of New Parties of July 14, 1933, which read “In Germany, the National Socialist German Workers’ Party exists as the only political party,” and wrote “ha-ha” on the margin.² One can only speculate about the meaning of this reaction. At the time when the new Soviet constitution was being drafted, it was not yet clear if the new elections would be contested, while it had never been formally illegal to form political parties other than the Bolshevik (Communist) Party in the USSR. The Soviet legislative elections of 1937 and all subsequent ones until 1989, however, were uncontested (Hazard 1974; Velikanova 2021).

In some cases, dictatorial regimes and regimes based on nationalist ideologies, however, did not have a formal ruling party. The unchallenged National Union of Portugal, for instance, was created as a “civil association” and “non-party,” designed to restrain rather than mobilize the “public,” and it was not mandatory for officials to join it (Gallagher 1990, 167). In Japan, the political parties, which, from their troubled beginnings in the 1880s, had evolved to play a considerable role in Japanese politics, declined amidst the rising militarism of the 1930s (Berger 1977). Yet, they managed to maintain a foothold on power, and the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (*Taisei yokusankai* 大政翼賛会, IRAA), established in 1940, never quite became a mass political party. Although most parliamentary leaders accepted posts connected to the IRAA in the hope of regaining their influence, the power struggles surrounding the new organization eventually led it to focus less on political mobilization than on public spiritual identification with the throne (Berger 1977, 326–329). Bruce Grover and Egas Moniz Bandeira (Chapter 6) discuss the ultimately frustrated aspirations for the creation of a mass political party in Japan in the 1930s and the 1940s, focusing on the “Alliance for a New Japan” (*Shin Nihon dōmei* 新日本同盟), a group consisting of some of Japan’s most important bureaucrats, and the writings of the magazine *Ishin* 維新 (“Restoration”), which brought together many reform-minded military officers. Chapter 6 shows that, while they did not put the role of the parliament as such into question, the focus of these thinkers lay on representing the “will of the people” through the Diet beyond liberal party politics, positioning Japan within the global trend toward reconstruction of political systems. They envisioned a temporary tutelage of the

people with the terminal goal being the independent, critical awareness of politics, and a rule through principle and culture rather than arbitrarily through bureaucrats.

The Second World War did not mark the end of nationalist one-party regimes, which thrived in many postcolonial settings, but state socialist one-party regimes became especially widespread in Eurasia, thanks to the Soviet efforts in exporting the model (Naimark 2019). Ivan Sablin (Chapter 7) provides an overview of dependent constitution-making under one-party regimes in Albania, Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, North Korea, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia during the first decade after the Second World War. Relying on the concept of the informal Soviet empire, he compares the adoption and authorship of the constitutions, as well as their texts, and surveys the role of non-constitutional institutions in political practices and in propaganda. Sablin concludes that the standardization of governance in the informal Soviet empire manifested itself in the constitutional documents only partially, while nonconstitutional institutions, parties and leaders, as well as the involvement of Soviet representatives in state-building, were especially prominent.

Shortly after the spread of one-party regimes in Eastern Europe, however, a strong intellectual response to them emerged in the form of vernacular dissident movements, which often had connections across borders. Here, Milovan Djilas's book *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (1957), which was published abroad while the author was incarcerated in Yugoslavia, proved especially influential. Djilas, who was a leading Yugoslav Communist before becoming a fierce critic of the Party (the League of Communists of Yugoslavia), argued that a new class became dominant in the state socialist countries, namely the class of privileged party bureaucracy.

Because this new class had not been formed as a part of the economic and social life before it came to power, it could only be created in an organization of a special type, distinguished by a special discipline based on identical philosophic and ideological views of its members. A unity of belief and iron discipline was necessary to overcome its weaknesses.

The roots of the new class were implanted in a special party, of the Bolshevik type. Lenin was right in his view that his party was an exception in the history of human society, although he did not suspect that it would be the beginning of a new class.

[...]

This is not to say that the new party and the new class are identical. The party, however, is the core of that class, and its base. It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to define the limits of the new class and to identify its members. The new class may be said to be made up of those who have special privileges and economic preference because of the

administrative monopoly they hold.

(Djilas 1957, 39)

Djilas argued that the rise of the new class of party bureaucracy diminished the role of party itself. The party transformed from a compact organization full of initiative into the oligarchy of the new class.

The party makes the class, but the class grows as a result and uses the party as a basis. The class grows stronger, while the party grows weaker; this is the inescapable fate of every Communist party in power.

(Djilas 1957, 40)

Critical opinions of the realities of the one-party state socialist regimes were articulated by members and leaders of the parties themselves. The most notable case was the attempted democratization and decentralization undertaken by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia under the leadership of Alexander Dubček in 1968, which became known as the Prague Spring and which was suppressed by the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact members.

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia's Action Program, adopted on April 5, 1968, celebrated the Party's role in the country's development but at the same time pointed to an acute social crisis, which was stimulated by the inadequacies in the Party's rule.

Socialist democracy was not expanded in time, methods of revolutionary dictatorship deteriorated into bureaucracy and became an impediment to progress in all spheres of life in Czechoslovakia. [...]

The main link in this circle was that of remnants or reappearance of the bureaucratic, sectarian approach in the Party itself. The insufficient development of socialist democracy within the Party, the unfavorable atmosphere for the promotion of activity, the silencing or even suppression of criticism – all of this thwarted a fast, timely, and thorough rectification. Party bodies took over tasks of State and economic bodies and social organizations. This led to an incorrect merging of the Party and State management, to a monopolized power position of some sections, unqualified interference as well as the undermining of initiative at all levels, indifference, the cult of mediocrity, and to unhealthy anonymity.

(Communist Party of Czechoslovakia 1970, 4)

The reform plan did not, however, downgrade the position of the Party which was to keep its leading role and become “the vanguard of the entire socialist society” with “the victory of socialism.” It was, however, not supposed to be “a universal ‘caretaker’ of the society, to bind all organisations and every step taken in life by its directives” but instead

was expected to arouse “socialist initiative” (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia 1970, 6–7). Although the Prague Spring of 1968 was suppressed, it further stimulated transnational dissent in state socialist countries in Eastern Europe (Alexeyeva 1987; Trencsényi et al. 2018).

Whereas the Soviet Union provided state-building blueprints and advice to the dependent parties, the degree of dependency and own experience of such parties contributed to the diversity of vernacular approaches to governance. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which replaced the KMT as the dominant party in the China in 1949, for instance, allowed the formal survival of several other parties (Rudolph 2021). Long Yang (Chapter 8) shows that the CCP developed a number of original formal and provisional bureaucratic institutions over the 1920s–1960s. He traces the origins and development of replacing formal Party and government organs’ functions with provisional institutions and argues that the war context shaped the CCP’s bureaucratic practices. In the 1920s–1940s, the context of the Civil War proved especially important for such institutions, while in the 1950s and 1960s, the provisional institutions acquired the characteristics of their formal counterparts as Chinese leaders restructured the Party and government organs in the context of the Cold War.

During the early Cold War, several previously coherent territories became divided between competing regimes, some of which came to be dominated by one party. Such was the case of mainland China and Taiwan, which had come under the control of the Republic of China after the end of the Second World War and whither the KMT government relocated in 1949, after being defeated in the Chinese Civil War (Cheng 1989; McCormick 1990), as well as the case of North and South Korea. Natalia Matveeva (Chapter 9) discusses the former, exploring the formation and formalization of the Workers’ Party of Korea’s policies toward women in the 1950s and the 1960s and comparing them to those in the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China (PRC). She argues that although the North Korean elites followed the Soviet example, adopting laws on gender equality and emancipation, the emulation of the Soviet Union of the 1930s did not extend to the social sphere and to gender policies. In North Korea, the Marxist–Leninist concept of women as active participants in the public life and an important part of the labor force was transformed into “mothers of the nation,” tasked with providing overall support to the Party’s policies and raising the next generation of revolutionary fighters with loyalty to the Party and ultimately to the Great Leader Kim Il-sung.

Whereas in North Korea the one-party regime started with the Party, which soon gave way to a personalized dictatorship (Simotomai 2009), in South Korea the development of the regime followed the opposite way. Kyonghee Lee (Chapter 10) offers insights into the party-political formation initially intended by the South Korean military junta under the leadership of Park Chung Hee when it founded the Democratic Republican Party in 1963. South Korea’s first military junta sought to acquire a popular mandate to

stay in power by a demonstration of its adherence to the pledge of a swift return to civilian rule, albeit one in which its members would retire from the army and run as candidates for its own political party. With anti-communism becoming the cornerstone of any political program in the country, the leading members of the junta spoke of an alternative democracy, different from the ill-fitting Western democracy, but had to deny labels like “guided democracy.” What resulted was a political party that spoke much more frequently about what it did not believe in, namely communism, Western democracy, and the one-party system, than about what it did.

The relations between state socialism, the notion of an overarching country-wide community, and substate nationalism proved difficult to navigate for the ruling communist parties, with nationalism playing an important role in the collapse of socialist federations in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Suny 1993). Discussing the case of Yugoslavia and focusing on Slovenia, Jure Gašparič (Chapter 11) addresses the contradictions between the country’s federalist structure and the single ruling party. During the power monopoly of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (the Communist Party of Yugoslavia until 1952), the Yugoslav state was reformed along corporatist and federalist lines, with the six constituent republics becoming states, while the Party and the state were supposed to fade away gradually. Gašparič demonstrates that when the Yugoslav political crisis intensified, the Party started losing its influence and became increasingly divided along the borders between the individual republics.

Exploring the case of Czechoslovakia, another socialist federation, Adéla Gjuričová (Chapter 12) takes a *longue durée* perspective on the ruling Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The Party, founded in 1921, became the most important radical protest party during the interwar democratic period and underwent all the key developments of the socialist movement. It was made illegal in 1938, but its wartime underground activity won the Party a completely new reputation after the Second World War. Gjuričová reviews the Party’s rhetorical and practical strategy of gaining full control of the government and focuses on the institutional aspect of the “twist from party to government” in 1948–1989, discussing which of the institutions of the previous democratic framework were preserved and how they were adjusted to the regime. Gjuričová pays particular attention to time and speed, the tempo in the Party and governmental politics that reveal shifts and unnoticed continuities and ruptures in what has often been described as “forty years of static Communist rule and general timelessness.”

Perestroika in the USSR and the state’s eventual collapse had a tremendous effect on the communist parties, both those solely in power and those competing for voters in more democratic regimes (Di Palma 2019). It was itself also part of a global period of – at least nominal, although not always substantial – political democratization and liberalization. In the 1970s, several dictatorships in Southern European countries (Portugal, Spain, and Greece) crumbled, marking the start of this “third wave of democratization”

(Huntington 1991). In Latin America, military dictatorships gave way to competitive presidential systems during the 1980s (Gargarella, 2013, 148–171). In Taiwan, where the KMT government had tolerated and tightly controlled the presence of two minor parties – the Young China Party and the Chinese Democratic Socialist Party – President Chiang Ching-kuo 蔣經國 lifted martial law and the ban on the establishment of new parties (*dangjin* 黨禁) in 1986. A newspaper commentary of the time, still written in the cautious tone of a country coming out of the world’s longest martial law regime, demonstrates how the political liberalization reflected long-standing internal aspirations as well as the international trends of the time:

In recent years, Taiwan has achieved a considerable level of democratic politics. Unfortunately, due to the existence of “martial law” and the “ban of parties,” it has always been difficult in the international community for the image of democracy to reach perfection. [...] The immediate effect of the lifting of martial law and the allowance of political parties is that it makes democracy live up to its name. The long-term goal is to make the substance of democracy loftier!

(Kao 1986)

However, the expectation present in the 1980s and 1990s that competitive multiparty democracy would prevail as the world’s principal political system, and that single-party systems were relics of the past bound to gradually wither, proved to be premature. The year 1991 did not mark an end for the ruling communist parties. Some of them, namely the CCP (which engaged in market-oriented reforms since the late 1970s), the Communist Party of Vietnam, and the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party, departed from state socialism. Despite the introduction of capitalist economies, the three parties retained control over the respective regimes (Bui 2016; Malesky et al. 2011; Schuler 2021; Vu 2016). Some of the previously ruling communist parties, like the Mongolian People’s Party, also survived in new competitive landscapes (Smith 2020). Furthermore, the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century in fact witnessed an expansion in one-party autocracies, with one-party regimes becoming the most common type of authoritarianism (Magaloni and Kricheli 2010).

In China, where the government of the Communist Party had also undergone a severe crisis in the late 1980s, several decades of strong economic growth, the country’s increased international power, and the perception that multiparty regimes are chaotic and unable to tackle the societal and economic problems they encounter, have created considerable internal support for the Party and confidence about the country’s political system. This confidence, however, has not fully supplanted insecurities about it nor dispelled fears of a possible “Tocqueville effect” endangering the CCP’s dominance (Moniz Bandeira 2020, 135–42). Against this background, the political leadership around Xi Jinping 習近平, who took office as the Party’s

General Secretary in 2012, has identified ideological weakness as one of the main reasons for the Soviet Union's collapse, and put great effort in emphasizing the CCP's leading societal role (Xi 2012, 21). In this vein, Xi stressed at a ceremony to celebrate the CCP's 100th anniversary that:

China's success hinges on the Party. The more than 180-year-long modern history of the Chinese nation, the 100-year-long history of the Party, and the more than 70-year-long history of the People's Republic of China all provide ample evidence that without the Communist Party of China, there would be no new China and no national rejuvenation. The Party was chosen by history and the people. The leadership of the Party is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics and constitutes the greatest strength of this system. It is the foundation and lifeblood of the Party and the country, and the crux upon which the interests and wellbeing of all Chinese people depend.

(Xi 2021)

After periods of more competitive politics, one-party dominance also re-emerged in Russia and Turkey, where United Russia and the Justice and Development Party (AKP), respectively, have been dominant in a situation of insubstantial political competition (Babacan et al. 2021; Carney 2015; Öney 2018; Reuter and Remington 2009). For example, in the elections to the Russian State Duma held on September 17–19, 2021, only those parties which openly supported President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin managed to win seats, while United Russia retained a constitutional majority (Mislivskaia 2021). Commenting on the then upcoming 2021 election, the economist Vladislav Inozemtsev maintained that there was no opposition in Russia anymore, since the term implied that such a group would have legal and democratic means to come to power, and noted the return to Soviet-style politics (Inozemtsev 2021, 6).

In Russia, there remains one party [United Russia] and several of its spoilers – this embodies either the traditional for the Soviet Union “indestructible alliance of communists and non-party members,” or, which may be familiar to Putin, the political system of the GDR [German Democratic Republic], where the Socialist Unity (the mention of unity is very noteworthy) Party of Germany was assisted by several other party structures and even (what a coincidence!) the National Front, “in which mass organizations united all the forces of the people to move along the path of building a socialist society.” So, we understand where we are going, and we can only hope for the absence of a Berlin Wall, in case of an attempt to cross which the soldiers would shoot without warning.

[...]

The vote on September 19 of this year (which has been clear for a long time, but with which until recently some opponents of the regime could not come to terms) will become not an election to the State Duma, but an appointment of 450 extras who imitate lawmaking in the interests of the Kremlin.

(Inozemtsev 2021, 7)

Developments like in Russia show that wishful assumptions about a teleological and well-nigh automatic development from single-party to multi-party, and more generally from authoritarian to democratic regimes were not justified. Single-party regimes themselves emerged as one of the dominant regime types in Eurasia in the first part of the twentieth century to a large extent as a reaction to the perceived failures of the parliamentary regimes which had been installed amidst high hopes during the transformations of the Russian, Ottoman, Qing, and other empires. They were far from uniform in their ideological premises and internal organization, but they responded to similar situations and made similar promises of economic and social development. Eventually, they only partially delivered on these promises, and their subsequent histories saw many ruptures and shifts which ended in the demise of many of these single-party regimes. Yet, the democratic backsliding experienced in the first quarter of the twenty-first century shows that the end of history (Fukuyama 1989) has not been reached, and that single-party regimes will remain a significant type of government in the global political landscape for the foreseeable future.

Notes

- 1 Although the Bolsheviks pursued a state socialist program of modernization in the Soviet Union, nation-building also remained important, with the establishment and maintenance of separate institutions for the constituent nationalities of the multilevel Soviet federation coexisting with the centralized and hierarchical single-party regime (Suny 1993).
- 2 RGASPI (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History), f. 558, op. 11, d. 143, l. 67 (*Konstitutsii burzhuaznykh stran* [Constitutions of bourgeois countries], vol. 1: *Velikie derzhavy i zapadnye sosedi SSSR* [Great Powers and Western neighbors of the USSR], Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1935, with notes by I. V. Stalin).

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