Introduction

For over a decade Western research in the field of Chinese political and social developments have focused on the societal side of the state-society relationship, stimulating a plethora of studies on civil society and Chinese non-governmental developments.[1] This emphasis on society and social phenomena has had the effect of pushing research of the state and party out of the ruling paradigm. Although it seems that the state as a focus of enquiry has been brought back in in recent years,[2] the role of the party is still thoroughly neglected.

Lack of attention to the role of the party seems to be related to the widespread belief that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is a thing of the past, which has difficulties surviving in the modern globalized world. Adherents of this view point to the party's absence in the growing private sector. They argue that new social groups and strata have emerged with considerable economic power, which is bound to turn into political power, thereby challenging the dominant role of the party. They also argue that the young Chinese do not see party membership as a prerequisite to their career advancement, because the most interesting and well-paid jobs (in both the private and the joint venture sectors) are not dependent on party membership. A logical consequence of this line of thought is that the CCP is doomed and will ultimately suffer the same fate as the Soviet and East European Communist Parties and collapse, resulting in a new political order characterized by democratization and power-sharing among different social forces and groups.

I have argued elsewhere that it is too early to pronounce the party obsolete, if not dead.[3] In fact, in recent years the party has gradually strengthened its hold over Chinese society. In personnel management the party has recaptured some of the powers it had handed over to the state personnel departments in 1988. Moreover in the ideological sphere, the ongoing campaign of the 'Three Representations' (*sange daibiao*) ultimately is about strengthening the role of the party in modern Chinese society. In order to grasp these developments, it is time to 'bring the party back in' – to paraphrase the famous 'Bringing the State Back In' call by Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol in their book on the role of the state.[4] It is time to realize that the current lack of awareness in the China field of the crucial role of the party has translated into insufficient understanding of the Chinese political trajectory and the political processes taking place in the transition to the post Jiang Zemin era.

Significantly, it was recently decided to admit private entrepreneurs into the Chinese Communist Party. This decision has given rise to considerable debate in China and many conservative leaders have voiced a concern that this will totally change the composition as well as the historical mission of the party. Jiang Zemin has answered these concerns by launching a massive campaign under the name of the 'Three Representations' (*sange daibiao*). This proposes that the party should represent the most advanced culture, the most advanced productive forces, and the fundamental interests of the majority of the population. Thus Jiang Zemin has initiated a strategy of co-optation vis-à-vis the new economic elites. This demonstrates considerable flexibility on the part of the party in its attempt not to be overtaken and made superfluous by the reform and modernization process.

New figures indicate that the proportion of officials, technicians and public enterprise managers has risen to more than 50 percent of total party membership. Peasant membership has declined from nearly 70 percent in the late 1950s to about 35 percent, with workers now only constituting about 15 percent. Thus important changes in the composition of the party are taking place. Will this process of co-optation succeed? Will the new social groups and elites strengthen the party or erode its organizational capacity? Foreign-funded enterprises are classified as private enterprises in most Chinese statistics. Will Chinese managers from this sector also be admitted to the party? Clearly, the party is searching for new ways to enlarge its base in Chinese society; indeed, according to new statistics, the party is recruiting new members at a rate of more than a million a year.[5]

The papers in this volume address the above-mentioned issues in their contextual theoretical and empirical richness. The paper by David Shambaugh deals with the relationship between the party and the army. He also introduces a third actor in the Chinese political system, namely the state, and argues that since the mid-1990s a 'subterranean struggle' over the jurisdictional control of the army has been played out between the army, party and government in China. However, even though the army has sought greater autonomy from the party and the government, for its part, has tried to increase its jurisdictional control over the army, an 'essential symbiosis' between the ruling party and the army continues to exist. In this sense the PLA is still a party-army rather than a national army.

In her contribution, Heike Holbig discusses the party and private entrepreneurs in China. This is an issue that has acquired some urgency since Jiang Zemin put forward the 'Three Representations' in February

2000. At the recently held 16th Party Congress this 'important thinking', as the Chinese call it, was written into the party constitution alongside 'Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory', thereby given the formal green light for admitting private entrepreneurs into the party. Heike Holbig discusses the motives and strategies behind the new policy of co-opting the private entrepreneurs. She also analyzes available information on the private sector in order to clarify the often confusing Chinese terminology on this issue.

Zheng Yongnian deals with the transformation of the CCP from the perspective of interest representation. Traditionally the CCP represents the interests of five major groups in Chinese society: workers, peasants, intellectuals, members of the PLA and government officials and cadres. As a consequence of Jiang Zemin's 'Three Representations', the party will now also be representing the interests of the private entrepreneurs and 'other outstanding elements' from the non-state sector. However, although the CCP has begun to consider the interests of newly rising classes and social groups, the primary aim is not to initiate a democratization process, but to bolster one-party domination.

In their contribution Ryosei Kokubun and Kazuko Kojima focus on the role of the party at the local level. In recent years the *danwei* system has been emptied of many of its functions. Instead the role of the local residential community has been strengthened. In many cities several Residents' Committees have been combined to form new *Shequ* Residents' Commitees, which often consist of an area (*shequ*) with 1,000-2,000 families. The party has realized the importance of strengthening its presence in these new local organizations in order to be able to counter 'unhealthy practices' at grassroots level, such as the Falun Gong, and it has attempted to organize the local party members under the local party organization. However, many CCP members have taken little interest in local community activities and as the *shequ* performs government activities there is a widespread feeling that the party should not become too involved. In line with the general slogan of the separation of party and government, the view is that the party should just set the overall guidelines and function simply as the 'directive core'.

Børge Bakken discusses party ideology. He argues that the CCP once was based on an ideology that was fundamentally linked to social norms and values. The rationalized and bureaucratized party of today lacks these links. Consequently, ideological campaigns are linked to norms of an order other than the social – they are exemplary norms. It is an open question whether the latest important campaign, that of the the

'Three Representations', will turn out to be yet another 'cynical game' with party ideology or instead the start of a process of party renewal and modernization.

The final paper by Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard is an overview of the changes that recently took place at the 16th Party Congress in China. The paper lists the new members of the Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee and discusses issues such as educational background, age, and regional representation. It concludes that the Chinese succession process for the first time has taken place in a peaceful and deliberate manner, observing norms and rules that have been introduced at lower levels in recent years.

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Notes

1 See, for example, He Baogang, *The Democratization of China* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Brian Hook (ed.), *The Individual and the State in China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Tony Saich, 'Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China,' *The China Quarterly*, no. 161 (March 2000), pp. 124–41; and Gordon White, et al., *In Search of Civil Society: Market Reform and Social Change in Contemporary China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
2 Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Susan Young (eds.), *State Capacity in East Asia: Japan, Taiwan, China and Vietnam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Huang Yasheng, *Inflation and Investment Control in China: the Political Economy of Central-Local Relations during the Reform Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
3 See Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard, 'Cadres and Cadre Management in the PRC.' Paper presented at the conference 'Bringing the Party Back In: How China is Governed,' held in Copenhagen, June 2002.
4 Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
5 See *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), 2 September 2002.