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CONTENTS

- An Evaluation of "Does Economic Inequality Breed Political Conflict?" Studies *Mark Irving Lichbach* 431
- Democratizing the Quasi-Leninist Regime in Taiwan *Tun-jen Cheng* 471
- Political Institutions and Tax Policy in the United States, Sweden, and Britain *Sven Steinmo* 500
- REVIEW ARTICLES
- Setting Conventional Force Requirements: Roughly Right or Precisely Wrong? *Charles A. Kupchan* 536
- State and Society in Contemporary China *Elizabeth J. Perry* 579
- Index to Volume XLI 601
- The Contributors ii
- Abstracts iii

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ABSTRACTS

AN EVALUATION OF "DOES ECONOMIC INEQUALITY BREED POLITICAL CONFLICT?" STUDIES

By MARK IRVING LICHBACH

Contradictory findings, that economic inequality may have a positive, negative, or no impact on political conflict, are a puzzle for conflict studies. Three approaches have been used to explain the inconsistent findings of the EI-PC (Economic Inequality-Political Conflict) nexus: statistical modeling, formal modeling, and theory building. Because analysts have tended to possess different research skills, these three approaches have been employed in isolation from one another. Singly, however, all three approaches have proved deficient and are unlikely to solve the EI-PC puzzle. The most fruitful approach is to combine the assumptions of the theory builders and the deductive approach of the formal modelers with the various empirical tests of the statistical modelers. Such an approach to the EI-PC puzzle produces a crucial test of the Deprived Actor and Rational Actor theories of conflict. The approach is also our best hope for solving the other long-standing puzzles in conflict studies.

DEMOCRATIZING THE QUASI-LENINIST REGIME IN TAIWAN

By TUN-JEN CHENG

Analysis of the process of democratization should focus not on socioeconomic change, but on the origin and development of political opposition and on the structure of political bargaining between the regime and its challengers. The recent democratic breakthrough in Taiwan is attributable to the capabilities of the political opposition in agenda setting, the shifting of bargaining arenas, and the creation of incentives for the reformist leaders of the regime to play the game. Democratization in Taiwan will continue because the ruling party has been able to maintain its dominant position in new political frameworks.

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND TAX POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES, SWEDEN, AND BRITAIN

By SVEN STEINMO

This essay addresses the question, "Why do different democracies pursue different public policies?" through an examination of taxation policy in the United States, Sweden, and Britain. The essay demonstrates how the different decision-making structures found in these three democracies (characterized as pluralist, corporatist, and party government systems, respectively) bias each polity toward different types of policy outcomes. The key argument is that institutional structures are the context in which political actors must necessarily define their policy preferences and determine their strategic objectives. Institutional structures thus provide a central link between individual choice behavior and macro policy outcomes.

SETTING CONVENTIONAL FORCE REQUIREMENTS:

ROUGHLY RIGHT OR PRECISELY WRONG?

By CHARLES A. KUPCHAN

The author analyzes the basic quantitative methodologies employed in the open literature to assess conventional forces and evaluates the extent to which they can be used to set military requirements with a new degree of reliability and accuracy. The recent proliferation of literature on conventional forces has begun to fill an important gap in the strategic studies field. Insufficient understanding of essential elements of ground combat, the context sensitivity of key variables, and inaccurate and unreliable data bases mean, however, that the output of both static and dynamic methodologies contains high levels of uncertainty. This seemingly irreducible uncertainty precludes the use of existing models to make definitive judgment about military needs. Nevertheless, because such uncertainty enhances deterrence, it may not only be unavoidable, but also preferable.

STATE AND SOCIETY IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

By ELIZABETH J. PERRY

Recent works on contemporary China stress the importance of the nonmarket economy in shaping a pattern of state-society relations quite unlike those found in capitalist economies. Nevertheless, these studies present strikingly different pictures of the Chinese case: a new, party-dominated, divided, yet compliant network society on the one hand; and an enduring, localistic, solidary, and resistant cellular society on the other. The author suggests that such divergent images may be partially reconciled if local variation (by region and social sector) is systematically incorporated into our models of Chinese politics. Calling for a nuanced and dynamic approach to state-society relations, the article argues for the importance of historically grounded research.

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