

Week 9 Section Plan

Start out by talking about China:

- Presentation by Steve and Lizbeth
<http://www.economist.com/blogs/analects/2014/04/environmental-protest-china>
- Why do people protest in China?
- Alternatively, why does the ruling party allow protests in China? Why might it want to let them occur, why might they want to shut them down?
- Do protests represent a weakening political order, or do they demonstrate the strength of the Chinese government?

In the OMPs, Vanessa and Ariana asked about the distinction between Chinese and Western notion of rights

- What are the differences? (socioeconomic rights and political rights)
- Ariana asks: What is the relationship between socioeconomic rights and political rights? Is there some sort of threshold where once you get to a certain level of socioeconomic rights that you also open the door for what we see as political rights? Or is all this too historically engrained?
- Vanessa: adds on to this question by pointing out that when Perry was writing, there wasn't a push towards economic justice in the United States. But now that we've had the Occupy Movement, does this change the interpretation of rights in the US, or challenge Perry's argument about social movements in the US? Does the rise of economic protests in the US tell us anything about the potential for the rise of political protests in China?
- What is Perry trying to say with her reading? Does she give us an explanation for why we might not see democracy in some places?
 - o Lower classes can mobilize, but not be a threat to an authoritarian regime if they are mobilizing around economic issues rather than civil liberties
- What might be the policy recommendations that come out of her work?

More generally...

- What is the role of protest in a democracy? Elections?
- What are elections like in Russia and China? [As Jackie points out, Putin fairly won his elections]
- Why do non-democratic states have elections? [show video of stuffing ballot boxes]
 - o <http://observers.france24.com/content/20111206-russia-election-fraud-caught-video-ballot-stuffing-erasable-ink-putin-protests>
 - What are elections doing for a democracy?
 - What are elections doing for an entrenched leadership?
- Based on the readings, what is democracy in Russia? In China?
- How does it relate to democracies in other societies you've read about?
- Why might we not consider Russia and China democracies? What does a democracy require?

- Under what conditions might we consider a one party system a democracy?

Moving to Russia:

- How would you describe the political system in Russia?
 - o Is it highly controlled or complete anarchy?
 - o How can we have such a totally different picture of all this?
 - o Where does oil and resource wealth come into play?
- What is the role of bribery in Russia's political system?
 - o Does bribery help support hierarchies or weaken them?
- What is the role of populism in Russia?
 - o What is populism?
 - o What kinds of threats does populism pose for the democratic nature of the country? Is populism necessarily a bad thing? Can personalism ever be good for democracy? What are the downsides?
 - Should we interpret the personalism as Putin's hold on the country or his lack of control?
 - Show silly Putin pictures.
 - [http://www.washingtonpost.com/pb/world/vladimir-putin-his-many-feats-of-strength/2012/09/05/f7281be2-f7a7-11e1-8b93-c4f4ab1c8d13_gallery.html#item18]
 - Why bother with these photos?
 - Holmes talks about how no system can be stable if it depends on the well-being or survival of one man - motivation
 - Do you agree?

Thinking about Russia (McFaul/Stoner-Weiss) in the context of our discussion last week...

- what is going on here with the relationship between economic growth and regime change?
- Tiffany and Jasmine ask: McFaul and Stoner-Weiss suggest "If there is any causal relationship between authoritarianism and economic growth in Russia, it is negative," The question is when Russia can no longer sustain growth and their economy collapses, what will be the result? Will Putin still be able maintain his power? Will an economic collapse – perhaps in the price of oil provide an opportunity for change in the polity's structure?

Takes us to transitions to democracy...

- What is necessary for a democratic transition?
- Huntington
 - o Shows us that it's not an easy/static/binary process
 - o Historically has happened in three waves, with reversions- diffusion, regional
 - o What is the potential for democracy in Russia or China? What might bring it about? What will make it stick?