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- 1 For almost ten years Bruce Dickson has worked as a political scientist on mainland Chinese entrepreneurs. Following from *Red Capitalists in China: The party, private entrepreneurs, and prospects for political change* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) and *Wealth into Power: The Communist Party's embrace of China's private sector* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), he has co-written a new contribution with Jie Chen, also a professor of political science. This volume adds to the already abundant literature on the lives of the Chinese business class (by Margaret Pearson, David Wank, David D.S. Goodman, Kellee S. Tsai, among others). During the last 20 years the private sector has developed at a very rapid pace and today constitutes the leading driver of economic growth and the primary source of employment creation. The authors wonder about the political consequences of this structural transformation of China's economy and society; their questioning, as they remind us, rests within a tradition that started from the first works of political science on the link between economic and political modernisation (Seymour Lipset, 1959). In the case of China, the question

regarding the possible role of the business class in democratisation arises in a particular configuration: since the state is the architect of economic and social transformation, the private sector does not emerge in opposition to the state but as a result of its initiatives.

- 2 The book's conclusion is pessimistic and conforms to what all authors agree with today: this social group that arose from the policies of reform and opening is favourable to the political status quo and is thus not likely to incite change towards more democracy. Private entrepreneurs depend on the party-state for their prosperity; co-opted by the CCP, often with a state apparatus background – former state or party cadres, former managers or employees of state enterprises – they are also its allies. As a methodological consequence, the authors did not envisage the entrepreneurs as a group or social class, but rather from the perspective of their relations with the party-state.
- 3 The novelty of the book is supported by the weight of the evidence presented. It deals with quantitative data retrieved from more than 2,071 entrepreneurs. In collaboration with the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (*Zhonghua quanguo gongshangye lianhehui* 中华全国工商业联合会), the survey was conducted in 2006-2007 on a representative sampling of private enterprises (*siying qiye* 私营企业) of the five coastal provinces where the private sector is most developed (Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong). The survey concerns enterprises of different sizes and various sectors, in regions more or less prosperous. Since 70 percent of Chinese private enterprises are located in these provinces, the sample is representative of two-thirds of the private sector. The data assembled enable an evaluation of the support of the business class regarding democratic ideas. The data allow the general testing of a number of hypotheses depicting the relationship between the economic characteristics of enterprises and the personal and institutional links maintained with the state, the relations between these links and the values the entrepreneurs adhere to, and the relations between these links and the type of political activities of businessmen. In other words, the survey identifies the causes of the entrepreneurs' political behaviour and the relationship between entrepreneurs and the state.
- 4 With a multivariate analysis, the authors obtained results that are both fine and detailed. In Chapter Four, for example, the relationship between the entrepreneurs and the state is broken down into four dimensions: financial support from public banks, institutional links, shared values, and the evaluation of public policies. Statistics led the authors to an expected outcome: all things being equal, the entrepreneurs who received bank loans from state banks are less inclined to support democratic values or institutions (multiparty, freedom of organisation or candidate suffrage, or elective procedures with executive responsibility). Other results are more surprising and contradict previous studies: the entrepreneurs who manage the largest enterprises are, all things being equal, more likely to support democratic values and institutions. The authors explain this positive correlation between the size of the enterprises and the support for democracy by a possible dissatisfaction with the current regulation that limits the growth of private companies. Even more surprising, the authors show that the institutional links woven between entrepreneurs and the state – as members of the Party or of national or local assemblies and professional associations – do not determine their political opinions. The corporatist strategy followed by the regime

since 2001 – including entrepreneurs in the system – has not had the anticipated results.

- 5 Support of entrepreneurs for the regime, the authors find, is principally determined by two elements: their positive evaluation of the policies, and their personal views. This constitutes a predictable factor: if the entrepreneurs are not satisfied with economic policy or change their opinion of democracy, then their political attitude may become less favourable towards the current regime.
 - 6 The book possesses the defaults of its qualities. Although the explanation is driven by method and rigour, readers are unable to hear enough of the voices of the entrepreneurs. Uniquely based on quantitative data, the book lacks the human element. It lacks portraits of well-known figures – certainly there are some notable public figures – and a typology that draws the plurality of personal itineraries and positions in the diverse space in which they experiment: the press, their blogs, and the hagiographies published by the most famous among them.
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