Red Capitalists in China

It has become a truism that continued economic reform in China will contribute to political change. Policy makers and many scholars expect that formation of a private sector will lead, directly or indirectly through the emergence of a civil society, to political change and ultimately democratization. The rapidly growing numbers of private entrepreneurs, the formation of business associations, and the cooperative relationships between entrepreneurs and local officials are seen as initial indicators of a transition from China’s still nominally communist political system.

This book focuses on two related issues: whether the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is willing and able to adapt to the economic environment its reforms are bringing about and whether China’s “red capitalists,” private entrepreneurs who also belong to the communist party, are likely to be agents of political change.

Comparisons with other countries, primarily in East Asia and Eastern Europe, historical comparisons with pre-1949 China, primary materials on contemporary China, and most importantly original survey data are used to help clarify the relationship between entrepreneurs and the CCP, the often intense debate over whether entrepreneurs should be allowed into the CCP, and the political implications of the growing numbers of red capitalists in China.

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