

Regime Type, Political Institutions, and Food Systems in the US and China

The process of globalizing the food system in the 1990s shows that the American diet is symbolic of modernity and is a goal for developing countries. For example, there was belief in 1990s Beijing that the standardization of McDonald's food processes met modern, scientific standards previously rejected in favor of Chinese cultural norms (Watson 1997).

Literature Review

Theories of Development:

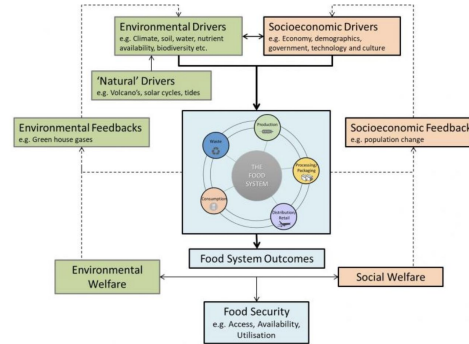
- Pro-Development
- Anti-Development

Regime Types and Development:

- Democracies foster development
- Authoritarian regimes foster development

Institutions and Development:

- Institutions matter for development while regime type does not



The food system and its drivers. Adapted from Ericksen 2008

Hypothesis: *If development is defined as the quality of economic growth, anti-development theory holds true, and regime type does not impact development, then political institutions in the US and China should mirror one another with regard to the safety, security and sustainability of food systems.*



Findings

The US and China have not traveled the full pathway to development. Although the general assumption is that the US and China are different on the premise of regime type, institutions matter more for development. They are more similar than assumed, as they seem to be converging with regard to the food systems. Legislative institutions in the US and China mirror each other with regard to weak legislative enforcement and minimal consumer transparency of food safety, security, and sustainability.

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