

War and States: China's Long March Towards Unity (750 BC – 1911 AD)

Long and deep history is critical for understanding China's past, present and future. This talk will focus on one of the most important and unique features in China political history: the precocious rise of a single unitary empire with perhaps the world's first centralized bureaucracy. I trace the evolution of this process through the construction of a large data base of political ruling regimes and incidences of warfare time series differentiated by types and location throughout two millennia of Chinese history. I show how state formation impacts the long-term changes in the nature of warfare from inter-state warfare towards internal rebellion and nomadic-agrarian conflicts. I show both the changing trend of political unification and fragmentation interacted with the nature of warfare and internal institutional, cultural and infrastructural developments in Chinese history. My talk will examine how the rise of a single unitary state carries huge implications for our understanding on the political, legal and fiscal systems of the Chinese state as well as property rights regime and market structure. I argue that this is a critical factor accounting for the Great Divergence between China and the West in the early modern era.

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Debin Ma is an associate professor in the Economic History Department of LSE. He is also an adjunct professor of economics at Fudan University in China, a research associate with CEPR, University of Warwick and Australia National University. His main research interest is in the economic history of China and East Asia, comparative institutional and legal analysis and long-term global living standards and economic growth. His research has appeared in numerous prominent academic publishers and featured in various public media such as newspapers and TV documentary series in BBC and etc. He is the co-editor of *Law and Long-Term Economic Change, an Eurasian Perspective* (Stanford UP, 2011) and co-author of an extended review essay "From Divergence to Convergence: Re-evaluating the History behind China's Economic Boom" (*Journal of Economic Literature* 2014).

Light lunch will be served. Please RSVP to cals@allard.ubc.ca



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October

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Tuesday

12:30pm –
2:00 pm

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