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Martin K. Dimitrov

Die Entwicklungspfade der Wirtschaftsreformen in China und Kuba

Trajectories of Economic Reform in China and Cuba

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Abstract

Cuba began implementing reforms in 2008 and today is roughly where China was in terms of economic reforms on the eve of the 1989 Tiananmen protests. This raises an important theoretical question: namely, to the extent that Cuba is adopting various features of the Chinese reform experience, why is it doing so with a three-decade delay? This article argues that the temporal sequencing of reforms in these two post-revolutionary single-party communist regimes stems from a key contingent factor: namely, the death or incapacitation of the founding leader. In both China and Cuba, this development (the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the incapacitation of Fidel Castro in 2006) presented a political opening that could be exploited to initiate reforms in 1978 and in 2008 respectively. Studies of policy diffusion tend to favor explanations that focus on structural similarities across regimes that make learning and copying possible. The paired comparison of China and Cuba offered in this paper suggests that we also need to be mindful of the role of contingent events for the initiation of reforms.

Über den Autor

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