

BOOK REVIEWS

The China Handbook

Edited by Christopher Hudson

CHICAGO: FITZROY DEARBORN, 1998
VII + 334 PAGES, WITH TABLES, APPENDICES, AND INDEX

The *China Handbook* is the first volume in a series entitled *Regional Handbooks of Economic Development: Prospects into the 21st Century*. The aim of the book is “to address complex development issues in a manner accessible to academic and non-academic alike.” It contains twenty-one chapters, which are presented under four main headings: History, Regional Context, Political Economy and Development Policy, and Society and Human Dimensions of Development. The editor, Christopher Hudson, should be commended for inviting not only promising scholars but also recognized experts in the field to contribute chapters.

The Hong Kong-based American academic, Suzanne Pepper, shows in her paper “China and Hong Kong: The Political Economy of Reunification” that, in addition to being a political scientist on China, she is also a Hong Kong affairs analyst. Her conclusion, “China’s political leaders and Hong Kong’s business community have found common cause in their opposition to faster democratization for Hong Kong,” although not new, is accurate.

Penny Kane is well qualified to write on China’s “Population Policy,” and Stanley Rosen’s research background makes him particularly suited to the task of discussing “Education and Economic Reform.” Both essays are distinguished for their clarity and relevance. The sociologist Ching Kwan Lee analyzes the new politics of Chinese labor during the reform era. Her discussion is illuminating but suffers from a minor flaw: she translates *xiagang* as “off-duty,” which should be the rendering for *xiaban*. In fact, *xiagang* is a term in Chinese politics meaning that workers are retrenched by their state-sector employers. To translate *xiagang* as “laid-off” or “redundant” would make it easier for Western readers to understand.

Guangzhi Zhao’s “China and Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Prospects for Economic Cooperation” is not impressive, and fails to demonstrate that he is a specialist on the subject. He offers some risky and controversial opinions, for example: “During the Cold War, China sided with the U.S., albeit marginally, to guard against the expansionist aspirations of the Soviet Union.” As a matter of fact, the Cold War lasted from 1945 to 1990, and Mao Zedong announced the policy of “leaning to one side (the Soviet Union)” in 1949. In addition, the China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park (CS-SIP), regarded by Jiang Zemin as “a new model

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for Sino-Singapore cooperation,” is regrettably not included in Zhao’s discussion. Furthermore, while Zhao presents several factors which he believes will continue to influence the political and economic relationship between China and Southeast Asian countries, he somehow neglects the “Taiwan factor” in his analysis.

On the whole, the book is well structured, with chapters covering a historical overview of the Mao era (Victor Lippit) and of the Deng period (Marc Blecher), economic relations between China and Taiwan (Elizabeth Freund), agricultural reform (Scott Wilson), China’s socialist market economy (Joseph Fewsmith), financial reform (Jude Howell), law reform (Pitman Potter), social welfare reform (Jane Duckett), China’s nationalities and nationality areas (Katherine Palmer), and so on. These chapters address key subjects and succeed in clearly defining contentious issues and categorizing disparate viewpoints. The editor is to be congratulated for bringing together a group of papers on such a wide variety of topics covering history, law, politics, economics, society, environment, demography, foreign policy, and mass communications.

The appendices include chronology, glossary, personalities, government structures, and bibliography. They are useful and up-to-date, but unfortunately there are some factual errors. For example, Chiang Ching-kuo became premier in 1972, not “in 1976.” Ye Jianying “studied with Zhou Enlai in Moscow.” This is far from the truth.

The book may disappoint specialists because the studies are not well documented, and primary Chinese sources are not consulted. Instead, only secondary English sources are used. There is a lack of references, making further research difficult. Written in an easy-to-read style, the book is appropriate as a textbook for undergraduate students. ■

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