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China's 40 Years of Reform and Development 1978-2018, edited by Ross Garnaut, Ligang Song, and Cai Fang. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2018. xxvii+679 pp. AU\$95.00 (paper); free of charge as an eBook at ANU Press' website.

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the reform period comes this collection of 31 chapters from scholars around the world—all economists—celebrating different aspects of the People's Republic of China's reform success. Like the previous annual "China Update" books, this volume is the outcome of an annual conference on the Chinese economy at the Australian National University. Since 2007, the conference has been co-organized with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. A Chinese-language version of the book is published by China's Social Sciences Academic Press and released at a separate event in the PRC.

In five parts—(i) The Chinese economic transformation; (ii) Macroeconomic developments and structural adjustments; (iii) The development experiences; (iv) Energy and climate change; and (v) Trade, investment and global integration—the chapter authors discuss the origins, content, consequences, and future of economic reforms. Some of the contributions are strong on personal reflections while others provide a chronicle of reform, pursue a narrow causal question, or elaborate on the latest reform developments. The book is a treasure trove of different views, analytical pursuits, and concise documentation. Readers marvel at the Chinese reform success, and learn how it came about.

The overall tone of the volume appears a tad too celebratory. An early overview chapter observes: "The political cauldron boiled over ... in April 1989 The upper echelons of the CPC [Communist Party of China] divided over the appropriate response. Division was resolved by Deng reaching from outside the formal structures to secure military action" (37). Since when does an Australian academic resort to obscure language instead of the plain "Tiananmen Massacre?"

Thus alerted, I pondered how appropriate this selection of essays is as a review of forty years of "reform and development." Not a single chapter broaches the issues of corruption or asset-stripping, the creation of an oligarchy, the linkages between the "private" sector and the Communist Party, the fortunes held abroad by PRC leaders, the profiteering that was part and parcel of the dual-track price system, the use of China's economic prowess for political if not corrupting purposes abroad (including in Australia), the social credit system and its far-reaching consequences (including for an individual's employment and business opportunities), the censorship of the internet, the extractive behavior of the petroleum gang and its impact on the energy sector, environmental pollution and censorship of those who talk about it too loudly (see the film *Under the Dome* by Chai Jing), the arrest of labor activists and of lawyers, and economic inequality and its implications.

Instead, *China's 40 Years of Reform and Development* is a display of economic success (as in raising measured gross domestic product per capita). This admittedly is the standard fare in China economics, with an occasional quibble about reform "difficulties." I wonder to what extent this volume is a documentation of academics' interest to—consciously or unconsciously—portray a picture of the PRC that does not get them into trouble with the Chinese Communist Party (and thus does not endanger their careers)? In the future, will this volume serve as evidence of how a generation of China scholars has been socialized (if not pressured, for career reasons) into a particular way of viewing the PRC? It becomes particularly striking in a chapter by a mainland author (Chapter 5) that claims to debunk four "myths"—that the economic success of China was due to particular institutions, a particular development strategy, a particular China model, or a particular culture—and instead credits

the PRC's autonomous government and its meritocratic promotion system with being the true reason for China's reform success. On meritocracy, the author must have missed the history of price lists to buy official positions in Heilongjiang Province and elsewhere.

There is a broader criticism to be made of promoting a singular abstraction—one's own causal explanation of an observed phenomenon—that cannot be proven wrong because the counterfactual, a country identical to the PRC except that the hypothesized causal factor takes on a different value, does not exist. The claim here is that the Chinese Communist Party's meritocratic promotion system causes economic success. This claim can neither be substantiated nor disproven because we do not know what the PRC's economic success would have looked like in the absence of the Chinese Communist Party's "meritocratic promotion system" (say, under Chiang Kai-Shek followed by a democratic government)?

Beyond my criticism: The book is full of information and ideas. Numerous chapters in this book will make it into my undergraduate Chinese economy course: Chapter 5 praising the Communist Party's meritocratic system is a prime candidate for a class on different views of China. In another chapter, Bert Hofmann provides a solid overview of the economic reforms for beginners. Dwight Perkins identifies five distinct types of institutions that are fundamental to a well-functioning market economy and evaluates the degree to which China is implementing each of these criteria. David Dollar shares his practitioner's view on decentralization, local innovation, and competition, well spiced with real-world examples. Christine Wong presents an update on the fiscal reforms of the past five years. Nicolas Lardy provides a succinct overview of private-sector development. Barry Naughton reports on the latest developments in state enterprise reform. Bob Gregory and Xin Meng document rural-to-urban migration and migrants' labor-market performance. Jikun Huang and Scott Rozelle make sense of forty years of agricultural development. Zhang Zhongxiang delves into the nitty-gritty details of energy price reforms. Wing Thye Woo presents a U.S. perspective on China's external economic disputes. Other chapters are of varying quality, down to one that reads like a student paper.

Chapters overlap in content (after all, this is a conference volume). Some chapters describe, some summarize literature, some constitute elaborate chronologies, some appear to rehash the author's earlier research (and add some paragraphs on more recent years), some focus on analysis, and others do a combination of things. Some chapters paint broad-stroke pictures of the past four decades, others are updates covering only the last few years. The volume was published in 2018 and the most up-to-date information tends to be for 2016, with an occasional glimpse of 2017. Most chapters are easily comprehensible but occasionally jargon strikes: "This converts a Pareto improvement into a Kaldor-Hicks improvement (Scitovsky 1941)" (21).

The volume occupies a middle ground between Loren Brandt and Thomas Rawski's edited book *China's Great Economic Transformation* (2008), a research-focused volume that dug deep on specific topics and is attractive mainly to academic readers, and publications such as the OECD's bi-annual *Economic Survey of China* that provides a systematic and coherent overview of current economic issues for non-academics.

I recommend the book for a general readership as well as for undergraduate courses on the Chinese economy thanks to its abundance of information, reform updates, and analytical pursuits. In my view, it is somewhat biased in how it approaches China's (economic) reform and development, but so is pretty much everything else that is available. Technicalities, when they appear in an occasional chapter, have been kept to an absolute minimum and the book is easily accessible to readers throughout.

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