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The Urbanisation of Rural China

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prospects for these firms depend critically on building business within developing countries such as China.

However, despite China's rapid economic growth in the past few decades and its eagerness to rise (or, according to Nolan, "renaissance," as the country was the world's largest economy before the Industrial Revolution), "there is still a wide development gap between China and the high-income countries" (p. 66). China's huge population, tremendous environmental pressures, and widespread collective protests all constrict its indigenous development. In contrast, thanks to China's "reform and opening-up" policy, many multinational companies have successfully extended their organisations and influence into the world's largest emerging market. These firms may "have made a critically important contribution to China's growth and modernisation" (p. 93), yet their success in China primarily reinforces their own technological, financial, and marketing superiority. Conversely, due to adverse factors such as increasingly hostile international political circumstance, large Chinese firms remain mainly bound within the domestic economy. Despite the Chinese government's endeavours to promote a "going-out" policy for the country's leading companies, "Chinese firms have been conspicuously absent from major international mergers and acquisitions" (p. 98), and "the efforts of China's large firms to acquire businesses in the high-income countries have mostly ended in failure" (p. 99). As Nolan sharply points out, the scales of China's FDI and foreign exchange reserves are very small compared to those of major countries and funds in the developed world, and Chinese firms face numerous insurmountable obstacles as they try to extend their organisations and business influence into the high-income countries.

Nolan further elaborates on the blurring of boundaries between emerging Chinese companies and the established large firms of high-income countries in the fourth chapter. Taking typical examples from the banking and aerospace sectors, Nolan shows that major Western companies are heavily involved in some critical strategic industries in which China appears to be taking full control. Therefore, as the conclusion observes, most leading positions in the value chain are occupied by large firms from the high-income countries, and China is not anywhere near "buying the world" due to its technological, financial, and political disadvantages in global competition.

In spite of its brevity, this highly readable yet rigorous volume closely engages many essential issues that directly concern the future of the world's economic and political orders. There is, of course, much more to learn from the book beyond Nolan's insightful answers to the academically, politically, and practically important question in the book title. In fact, this book should be regarded as another excellent production of Nolan's fruitful academic career. Consistent with Nolan's many earlier works that demonstrate his expertise in areas of development, globalisation, and economic transition, this new book successfully highlights some crucial yet often neglected aspects of China's development; for example, while the conventional wisdom claims that China is taking over the world's markets through cheap labour, heavy pollution, intensive resource consumption, and unfair competition strategies backed by an authoritarian regime, Nolan finds that the real picture is much more complex, and he clearly features the many challenges and obstacles developing countries encounter in the course of catching up. Moreover, this book sheds new light on the dominant roles played by large firms in and beyond the world economy, and invites readers to reflect on the impacts of capitalist globalisation on the power relations between developed and developing countries. In fact, Nolan uses China as a typical case to illustrate the challenges that most developing countries have to face during their rise. In other words,

this book adopts a comparative perspective in a single case study. As a result, while the author puts particular emphasis on China's distinguishing features, the academic and practical implements of this book are not limited to China.

This is certainly a very successful volume that fully achieves the author's goals. However, inspired by such a fascinating book, interested readers may allow their thoughts to continue beyond the scope of the author's intentions. Yes, China is not buying the world and is unlikely to be able to do so in the near future, but the country's constant high rate of growth is, after all, significant to many people in and outside China. Therefore, a series of questions closely or distantly related to this book may also be worth thinking about: Will China's rapid economic growth last long, given the numerous challenges to its social stability and environmental sustainability? What does a richer and more powerful Chinese state mean to its own people, its neighbouring countries, its business partners, and its potential competitors? How can China effectively deliver its messages to the world? How can China better manage the world's impressions and expectations of it? How should the developed world interpret and accommodate China? What lessons should researchers and the general public learn from the rise of China? In an interview to promote his book, Nolan said that China's bureaucratic system is "stimulating, accepting, encouraging, but also regulating the market in a non-ideological fashion" with a high degree of professionalism. While such an argument is likely to be welcomed by scholars such as Sebastian Heilmann (2011), it may also have many sceptics, among them probably Yasheng Huang (2008) and Minxin Pei (2006). The debates over China's future development and impact will definitely continue as the country's influence continues to increase in the international arena.

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AURÉLIEN BOUCHER

This volume is part of a "blue book" (*lanpishu*) collection. With 19 others published in 2013 – on subjects as diverse as education, the economy, and special economic zones – it must be seen as an official "report" (*baogao*), meant to make a first assessment of national and/or local public policies. Published since 1993, the blue book on "analyses and projections for Chinese society" is mostly the work of scholars from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). It is one of the missions of the academy, whose role consists of standing alongside the government in the "reform" process. Since early in the last decade, studies compiled by CASS have fo-

cused on issues such as the development of a welfare state (health care system, retirement pension, and unemployment insurance), jobs, social mobility, labour relations, and the evolution of rural societies.

In terms of the themes dealt with, the 2013 edition makes no break with previous ones. It is part of a movement that began in 2009 calling greater attention to university graduates' professional integration, Internet usage, and food and environmental safety. Five of the 26 articles in the 2013 edition deal with these subjects while the others take up traditional themes. The only notable change is that for the first time, the book has no article specifically devoted to the issue of corruption (*fubai*).

On the whole, the writing follows the highly restrained style of previous editions. The authors avoid going into generalities and linking the construction of categories of analyses. They also take little notice of criticisms made by social agents toward Party leaders. Even the article by Zhu Huaxin, Liu Peifeng, and Shan Xuegang on the expression of public opinion on the Internet – discussing among other things the way citizens see national and local officials – is restrained (pp. 193–212). Apart from a passage of ten lines or so addressing comments on corruption and officials' lifestyles, the authors prefer to tackle this sensitive topic through occasional references to "incidents" (such as torrential rains in Beijing that led to the mayor's exit, and the "Wang Lijun/Bo Xilai affair"). Authors' criticisms come through implicitly in the overly politically correct idea that "the Internet represents (for the government) a means of adjusting its relationship with society and pacifying social challenges" (p. 211).

Whatever the subject, all authors adopt the same strategy. It is as if they had necessarily to stress the presence of "solutions" to "social contradictions" (*shehui maodun*). In their defence, the authors had little elbow room. They were given guidance reminding them that they were not free to pass judgment (*panduan*) and that they had to stick to facts and figures. Despite this relative homogeneity in conveying expert opinions to the state, the work remains instructive if one ignores some articles and reads between the lines. Indeed, some articles clearly stand out with their wealth of information and depth of analyses. While an article on migrations by Tian Feng merely describes in words the data contained in the statistical tables and another on agricultural cooperatives is practically devoid of empirical data, Li Chunling's is a clever one on the problems faced by young university graduates (pp. 164–176).

In this chapter, the seasoned sociologist accustomed to field studies on social mobility and inequalities in the Chinese education system offers a fine analysis of the way university graduates see politics through their integration into the job market, itself correlated to household resources. It is based on a longitudinal survey of a cohort of 6,000 students who entered universities after 2003, half of them in prestigious institutes of higher learning (six of the 12 institutions belong to the 985 Project – involving the best funded institutions such as Tsinghua University or Peking University). Although no interviews are used, the study does rely on qualitative materials as well.

Li Chunling notes at the outset that Chinese students have little faith in the future. A mere 26.6% of those polled thought, before graduating, that they would face no difficulty in finding jobs. According to Li, this apprehension explains the importance they attach to joining the Party and to the frenetic acquisition of all sorts of qualifications and degrees (languages or accounting, for instance). No question of joining the Party to serve the nation ... The figures and the tone Li employs on the employment situation are equally alarmist. Three years after the end of their studies and after re-

ceiving their degrees in 2007, some 10% of the graduates remain unemployed (p. 167). This is similar to the proportion of unemployed French graduates at times of low growth (Bref CEREQ No. 283 March 2011, "Le diplôme: un atout gagnant des jeunes face à la crise" [Degrees: A winning formula for youth during economic crisis], p. 2).

Furthermore, a third of new entrants to the job market admit to pursuing vocations "with no link to their university study." In the case of medical students, that proportion reaches five-sixths (p. 169). It is therefore understandable that half of the graduates declare they are "not satisfied with their professional integration." Li notes that this dissatisfaction is not only due to the lack of suitable jobs. It is anchored in experiences in the job market where social competition is skewed heavily in favour of those who enjoy "back-door entry." Citing indigenous expressions such as "having connections" and "backed by family links," the author airs the anger that rumbles on the Internet. In line with Lian Si's work on "ant tribes" (*yizu*), Li highlights the rise of a new politically risky class, stressing that "the graduates who earn paltry amounts and whose work and living conditions are far from stable are also the ones who comment the most on political matters." She also notes that those left behind in social competition are the ones who earn the least and admire Western societies the most. Analysing their political participation through Internet use, she clearly brings out that students "disinclined towards political education work while in school" regard the "Western democracy model" (*xifang shi minzhu zhidu*) as a reference point, even though they acknowledge that given "China's development level and (low) quality of the people" it cannot be envisaged in the near term (p. 173).

This article thus comes across as a true warning to the new leadership team. It is all the more valuable as it is part of a new generation of studies that gives prime place to one's relation with politics. It would be desirable for Chinese scholars to keep on this path; why not come up, in a year from now, with some studies on how Xi Jinping's "Chinese dream" has been received? In this regard, the recent death of Lu Xueyi – former director of the Institute of Sociology under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and founding father of the blue books on transformations and perspectives on Chinese society – introduces uncertainty as regards the continuation of a project that is already much less bold than initially. The charisma and political capital of "Lao Lu" helped open doors for academic publications. There is no guarantee, therefore, that future publications will not amount to a mere avalanche of figures rather than focusing on as yet untouched sensitive issues such as the condition of ethnic minorities, religion, and social movements.

■ Translated by N. Jayaram.

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