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What Kind of International Order Does China Want?

Eilo W. Y. Yu and Ming K. Chan (eds), *China's Macao Transformed: Challenge and Development in the 21st Century*,

Hong Kong, City University of Hong Kong Press, 2014, 412 pp.

Éric Sautédé



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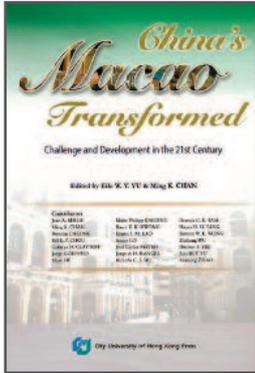
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the future management of inequality and its economic repercussions.

This robustly researched book will be invaluable to anyone wishing to gain a comprehensive overview of social welfare in China.

■ Translated by David Buchanan.

■ Carine Milcent, CNRS-researcher and professor at Paris-Jourdan Sciences Économiques (PSE), has been on assignment at CEFC since 1 September 2014 (cmilcent@gmail.com).



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ÉRIC SAUTEDÉ

Books dealing with current affairs in Macao, whatever the language, do not come often; good publications about Macao are even rarer. At least three sets of reasons can explain this dearth of academic production. First, the Special Administrative Region is small – 650,000 inhabitants on a land area of slightly more than 30 sq. km – and thus does not attract much attention, as its relevance within the broader perspective of China's evolution is considered marginal and is clearly over-shadowed by Hong Kong's more sophisticated, buoyant, and challenging development. Second, it is commonly acknowledged that starting in 1967, in the wake of the "12.3" incident, Macao's polity, even under the Portuguese colonial administration, has yielded to the People's Republic of China's views on its future, and thus any publication regarding Macao somehow constitutes an update of that deferential position – hence not requiring frequent repetition. And third, sources and surveys, when available and/or funded, often exclude one another: government-sponsored research in social sciences is rarely made public and often gets trapped in excessive praise or un-analytical rebarbative descriptions, while more critical writings, when firmly grounded in first-hand and meaningful investigation, often address segmented narrow issues.

The edited volume published by the City University of Hong Kong somehow comes as a counterpoint to these assumptions, thus showing that Macao is indeed a wonderful laboratory for social sciences, not only in itself but also within the Chinese "living tree," according to the expression of Tu Weiming, and as an embodiment of the "one country-two systems" formula in particular, and a case study of "partial sovereignty" in general. This book is therefore a must-read for anybody with an interest in Macao. Moreover, being a collective work divided into five sections – a long introductory and contrasted first part (105 pages by four authors!), followed by the usual politics, socio-economic issues, socio-cultural concerns, and finally external relations comprised of 15 contributions – this volume easily allows for browsing and selecting among very diverse takes. To choose but one exam-

ple, the admirable final chapter authored by Cathryn Clayton on "Macao Local, Macao Global" acts as a conclusive and far-reaching reflection on the hybrid nature of Macao today, but it will also be of great interest to scholars of globalisation and identity-building alike. The great merits of this publication cannot be stressed enough: first of all because this is the end-product of various seminars and conferences held in Lisbon, Canada, Hong Kong, and Macao starting in 2009; and second because it is one of the few, if not only, truly academic publications released in 2014 in English on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the handover. In this age of excessive celebration for everything and anything, this very fact speaks volumes about the precious character of the whole enterprise.

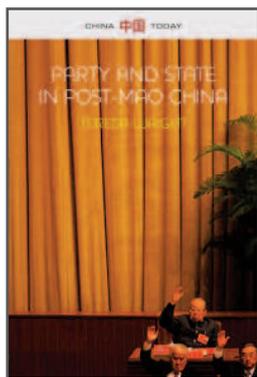
But being a collective endeavour also has the usual drawbacks, which deserve to be stressed. If one cannot blame the book for not being comprehensive, there are several important "loopholes": Bill Chou's chapter on public sector reform is well-rounded, but an additional contribution on public services would have been welcome; then, when it comes to external relations, Macao's place in international organisations or as a signatory to international covenants and agreements deserves attention, and clearly the connection to Europe goes beyond Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries, even though José Carlos Matias' essay on the latter is – as usual – very thorough. Then, collective books are rarely even in the quality and length of the contributions, and unfortunately this one is no exception. The chapter on political reform written by a law professor is far too short, analytically limited, and clearly too static. The chapter on patron-clientelism and elections – such an important feature of Macao politics – fails to bring anything new (*tongxiang* associations deserve a special section!) and simply ignores significant previous publications such as those by Annie Lee Shuk-ping and Lam Wai-man. One of the chapters on identity within the socio-cultural section is grounded on very incomplete data, thus resulting in far-fetched conclusions bordering on the bizarre while mixing Mandarin and Cantonese transcriptions for no justifiable reason – the name of the cousin of the Chief Executive is transcribed as either Chui Sai Peng (usually) or (very rarely) Cui Shiping in *pinyin*, but not as Chui Shiping!

Yet, most of the papers are truly remarkable, starting with Eilo Yu's introduction, which is an extremely courageous, thought-provoking, and well-argued demonstration of the most salient aspects of the "debacle" of the "one country-two systems" formula in Macao, although he trusts that it is never too late to turn things around. Then, in order of appearance, several chapters deserve a special mention for the quality of their research or the novelty they provide: Herbert Yee's update on the practice of "one country-two systems"; Sonny Lo's renewed exploration of casino capitalism; Riccardo Siu and Miao He's detailed exposition of the casino economy model at work; Hayes Tang's thorough examination of the constraints weighing on academic freedom in tertiary institutions; Derrick Tam's extensive and case-study based analysis of the interaction between heritage protection, tourism, and urban planning; Minxing Zhao's original take on North Korean assets transiting through Macao, and how the case of Banco Delta Asia can be seen as the perfect and renewed illustration of the common Chinese idiom of "killing a chicken to scare the monkeys"; and again, the closing chapter of Cathryn Clayton on a possible narrative to better articulate the transformation of a local identity that is both passive and active when confronting global forces.

To be honest, even the long introductory part, besides Eilo Yu's incisive opening, actually justifies an attentive read. Three very different if not contradictory perspectives act as a stimulus for what is to come in the volume:

a scholar-turned-civil servant insists on the achievements of the past 15 years and somehow blames the previous colonial administration for some of the most important present difficulties – while never failing to make multiple references to the “harmonious” nature of society; a former number two in the colonial administration turned head of an educational institute praises the Portuguese heritage and how “accommodation” provided the perfect conditions for a successful transition, but warns nonetheless that fast-paced development constitutes a threat to Macao’s unique identity – whatever that is; and last but not least, Ming K. Chan’s own chapter manages to reconcile these two by pondering Macao’s history in the long run and what he characterises as current issues of “over-development.” Clearly, a diverse and contrasted take on what Macao is today.

■ **Éric Sautédé** is an associate researcher with the CEFC (esautede@gmail.com).



Teresa Wright,
Party and State in Post-Mao China,
Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA, Polity Press, 2015, 200 pp.

ÉMILIE TRAN

Party and State in Post-Mao China is one of 15 or so titles thus far in the “China Today” series of Polity Press, an academic publisher whose stated aim is to reach out to the general readership by inviting leading China scholars around the world to write concise introductory books on key aspects of China’s struggles and accomplishments in becoming a leading world power. In this volume, the author, Teresa Wright, professor and chair of the Department of Political Science at California State University, Long Beach, offers her perspectives to decipher the main China paradox: despite the dramatic economic and social changes in the post-Mao period, China’s polity has remained essentially and steadily authoritarian – “Opposition parties are not permitted, the public has no right to vote for top political leaders, the media is censored, and political dissent is repressed” (pp. 3-4) – thus challenging the assumption that authoritarian regimes are by nature unstable, since “at the same time, Chinese citizens have evidenced remarkable toleration of – and even support for – China’s CCP-controlled political system” (p. 4). In Chapter 1, “Sources of Stable Governance in China,” Wright enunciates the two questions her book aims to answer: “(1) how well does China’s Party-state satisfy the basic functions of government?” and “(2) how has the Chinese government’s democratic and authoritarian features influenced its ability to fulfil these functions?” (p. 12).

The book is then divided into two main parts. Part I examines the nature of the Chinese Party-state, contrasting the features that have endured over time (Chapter 2) with the evolving traits (Chapter 3): whereas Chapter 2, “Party and State, or Party-State?,” offers an overview of the principal entities

of China’s political system, from the highest central level to the lowest local level, showing that although the Party and the state are nominally two separate bodies, the Party has been controlling the state, Chapter 3, “Who Serves the Party-State?,” reviews the demographic composition, selection, and ascension process of the members and leadership of both the Party and the state, arguing that in the post-Mao era they have become more meritocratic, regularised, and somewhat more democratic. However, far from having been conducive to the formation of a multi-party liberal democracy, these latter post-Mao trends have rather been a way to *strengthen* and *stabilize* [italicised in the text] the CCP’s rule, creating a polity that “differs substantially from both the Maoist system and liberal democratic systems in the West, and may remain more or less as is for the foreseeable future” (p. 75).

Having depicted the essence of the post-Mao political system, the second part, comprised of chapters 4, 5, and 6, reviews the extent to which the system has actually fulfilled its functions in “Maintaining Public Relations” (Chapter 4), “Managing the Economy” (Chapter 5), and “Providing Goods and Services” (Chapter 6). The author argues that the stability and longevity of the ruling Party-state is conditioned by its successes or failures in those three areas. Chapter 4 assesses how well the Party-state satisfies key demographic groups, namely private businesspeople, college students and graduates, rank and file workers, farmers, ethnic minorities, and environmental protesters, and concludes that “although the Chinese political system remains authoritarian in many ways, in the post-Mao period it has engaged in an adequate – and generally improving – job of responding to public grievances and satisfying the needs of important demographic groups” (p. 110). Chapter 5 assesses economic policy in the post-Mao era, reviewing rural, urban, and international economic policies and results, and demonstrates that “when it comes to managing the economy and promoting economic growth, the Party-state’s record is much more impressive, [enabling] China’s economy to not only grow at an astounding rate, but also to avoid severe crises” (p. 113), and this thanks to “the attitudes and quality of the political leadership [that] are key in determining the system’s success or failure at managing the economy” (p. 144). The third essential requirement of a stable governing regime is how well the latter facilitates access to necessary goods and services, and alleviates poverty, through the provision of pensions, housing/land, healthcare, education, infrastructure, and a healthy natural environment. Here the record is rather mixed, with impressive achievements in some areas and severe regression in others, aggravated by an uneven distribution of goods and services across the populace and across the country. Nevertheless, Wright notes that “with regards to some goods and services (such as infrastructure), China’s lack of elections may allow the regime to act more quickly and decisively than is the case in many liberal democracies” (p. 179).

The concluding chapter, entitled “Stable Authoritarianism?,” maintains that ideology had been replaced by pragmatism, defined as a “hybrid mixture of authoritarian, democratic, state-interventionist, and capitalist features” (p. 180) that have enabled political leaders who are “competent, pragmatic and open to public input” (p. 195) to enact and effectively implement policies that “adequately fulfil the basic functions of a government” (p. 180), as demonstrated in the second part of the book. However, as Wright briefly presents the new developments under Xi Jinping, she warns that his efforts to control public expression are jeopardising the *modus operandi* of state-society relations in the late post-Mao period that used to savily articulate public grievances and the Party-state’s capacity to respond to those more or less satisfactorily.