

Book Review: Handbook of the Politics of China by David S. G. Goodman

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Goodman, David S. G., ed. *Handbook of the Politics of China*. Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2015. xx + 553 pages. Hardcover, \$280.00.

This book is a collection of over two dozen chapters on various aspects of Chinese politics. The chapters were first presented at a workshop at China's Nanjing University in May 2014. The purpose of the *Handbook*, as the editor David Goodman suggests, is to provide a study tool for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as academics, interested in research on different facets of Chinese politics as a field of study.

The *Handbook of the Politics of China* is organized into four parts. The first section deals with leadership, structures, and the institutions of politics. The second part examines the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) public policy. The third section concentrates on topics related to the PRC's political economy and social changes, and the final part addresses China's foreign relations. Part I includes seven chapters covering topics ranging from the central government to provincial politics, and from the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party to the post-Deng transformation of the People's Liberation Army. Part II has seven chapters including topics such as China's economic policy, regional development, minority rights, education, as well as welfare and social security. Part III contains six chapters on rural development, corruption, class politics, non-governmental organizations, gender, and social unrest. Part IV includes six chapters addressing China's role in the world, its economic statecraft, and its relations with East Asian countries, the United States, Southeast Asia, and the European Union.

The book highlights several key concepts in Chinese politics such as Guanxi, Hukou, Neibu, Weibo, Wechat, Falungong, Danwei, Chengfen, and apparat or Xitong. The contributors, each of whom reviews the literature on a specific topic and presents the latest research findings, include some of the leading scholars in China Studies such as Zheng Yongnian, Dali Yang, Bo Zhiyue, Bates Gill, Jean Oi, and You Ji. Several junior scholars also contribute to the *Handbook*, and together they present a broad and clear picture of how Chinese politics is conducted and why Chinese politics is so complicated.

The book as a whole studies the continuities in China's politics and explores whether the PRC as a polity will change. As a professor of China Studies, Goodman argues that, like all other political systems, China's politics is both unique, as a civilizational state with a long history, and also comparable to other developing countries sharing similarities and differences with other East Asian developmental states. However, change is ubiquitous in every aspect of China's political life. For a revolution and a fundamental regime change to occur, three conditions must be met simultaneously, that is, a state crisis (usually financial) as well as mass unrest coinciding with a split elite. Even then the result may not necessarily be liberal democracy. In other words, it is unlikely that China will become a democracy any time soon.

Overall, the *Handbook of the Politics of China* contributes to a general understanding of Chinese politics and society. However, like other books on contemporary China, due to the rapid changes in China it will need to be updated almost immediately. Much of the data used in the book refer to 2013 and 2014, and many changes have taken place in China's politics, economy and society since then. For example, the one-child policy was officially abolished in 2015, and with the 19th Party Congress in the Fall of 2017, new political and economic changes are expected. In addition, some topics that are not included in the book but perhaps should be addressed in a future edition are: environmental challenges, consumerism, entrepreneurship, and China's relations with other key players such Russia, Africa, and the Middle East. China's growing investment in the Western world, which is fundamentally impacting the international political economy, should also receive some attention in a future edition of the book.

As Goodman humbly states, the book makes no claim to provide the last word on Chinese politics, but it does aspire to provide an introduction to most of what students will need to know, as well as provide readers with a comprehensive bibliography. Indeed, the *Handbook of the Politics of China* provides a thorough survey of various aspects of Chinese politics, which scholars and students alike will find very useful.

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