

BOOK REVIEWS

5

Eating Together: Food, Space, and Identity in Malaysia and Singapore. By Jean Duruz and Gaik Cheng Khoo. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015. 262 pp. \$70.00 (cloth).

10

This study is highly commendable given the magnitude of its endeavor. It offers insights into the evolution of ethnic identities and the rise of a sense of national belonging in multiethnic and multireligious Malaysia and Singapore. The book undoubtedly provokes thinking about the reality of the rise of a Malaysian and Singaporean identity that transcends race, though not necessarily religion.

15

The study's other dimension, though one the coauthors inadequately analyze, is its class perspective. Their focus is not yuppies—that urban, urbane, cosmopolitan middle class that reputedly subscribes to a nonracial view of society. Instead, the authors assess “everyday” and “creative” ethnicity lived out in food stalls and coffee shops in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Penang, hardly haunts of yuppies who prefer transnational establishments like Starbucks and Coffee Bean. As the authors' respondents note, at these inexpensive locales they pay a mere five ringgit or less (about US\$1.30) for a tasty meal with friends that can stretch long into the night. These gatherings are crucial contact points to discuss politics, policies, and marginalization as well as modes to foster political change.

20

25

30

35

40

The book's primary intent, with original empirical evidence, is to understand newly emerging identities as well as their different forms, and to determine why there is a perceptible hankering by people for a past society where racial and religious differences did not stymie strong friendships. This past sense of community and openness to difference was manifested not just in food shops that people then patronized and the meals they shared. It was also seen in the making of food unique to these countries, an amalgamation of ingredients from the diets of different ethnic groups to create a Malaysian/Singaporean cuisine. After all, only here can one find rojak, nasi lemak, and the exotically named bubur-cha-cha. The book's great strength is its method to capture identity transitions in rapidly modernizing multiethnic countries.

Since this study is of everyday ethnicity, it is unfortunate that the authors do not review related concepts in similar research. Researchers in this area include Malaysia's Shamsul A. B. and S. Mandal, and Singapore's B. H. Chua. By failing to engage with their work, Khoo and Duruz do not indicate their entry point into this literature. Where these coauthors principally differ from other academics is their method.

A core concern among scholars of the evolution of ethnic and national identities has been the need to identify appropriate research methods. These methods have to be of the sort that best capture transitions in societies as people grapple with the implications of modernization. Through its historical review the authors note, albeit briefly, defining processes that shaped particular configurations of ethnic and national identities. These processes include the rise of Islam in the 1970s, the imposition of neoliberal policies from the 1980s, the struggle for democracy and its suppression in the 1990s, and the unexpected turn against long-ruling dominant parties during elections from the late 2000s.

The authors stress the permeation of multiculturalism in spite of the implementation of neoliberal policies. This is problematic because the value of the concept—and policy—of multiculturalism is now heavily critiqued. Charles Hale, for example, has raised the issue of “neoliberal multiculturalism,” arguing that neoliberals support multiculturalism in order to demonstrate the progressiveness of their reactionary economic agenda. In this context then, questions arise that the book alludes to but inadequately analyzes. Are these small food establishments a form of protest against neoliberal multinationals? Are social discourses about national identity a mechanism for society to fend off divisive economic and political ideas foisted on them as elites pursue a development agenda that suits their own interests? And what of new social cleavages created by neoliberal policies and religious-based discourses?

The authors acknowledge new religious and class cleavages in both societies when they note the growing importance of consuming only food that is *halal* and how their respondents take pride in being different from their fellow urbanite yuppies. However, in their analysis of national identities, they do not grasp the predicament of peoples confronted with alienations of different sorts. The changes people want are insufficiently discussed, apart from a return of the type of society they grew up in. Do people really want an economic system that is not neoliberal in orientation, in favor of the current sys-

tem characterized by heavy state intervention? Do all Malaysians, including the cohort they analyze, want to end long-standing race-based affirmative action policies?

5 Other crucial questions arise. What are the similarities and differences of what is transpiring in Malaysia and Singapore? Both governments are controlled by long-ruling dominant parties, and recent electoral trends in both countries indicate a shift to the opposition, or more precisely, a call for change. Why are forms of national identity in Malaysia and Singapore so similar when Malaysia's dominant parties and discourses are race- and religion-based, while in Singapore such institutions and discourses are frowned upon? Isn't the commodification of religion and of history through small food enterprises empowering and enabling as well as divisive for communities on the ground? Are political activists employing small-scale capital to astutely extend their political platform beyond exclusively urban middle-class concerns to encompass a broad-based subaltern? Evidently, the immense complexities of today's global capitalism are creating new extremely complex forms of businesses and social ties.

10
15
20 These questions draw attention to the book's fundamental problem: it lacks a thoughtful conclusion. This collection of essays by Khoo and Duruz about Malaysia and Singapore, respectively, compiled as a book, is bound by the theme of forms of food catering and consumption and the insights they offer into newly emerging identities. A concluding comparative analysis of the consequences of unjust forms of political and economic development and how this has shaped peoples' understanding of their identities and their relations with each other would have made this an outstanding study.

30 ■ Edmund Terence Gome

*Faculty of Economics and Administration
University of Malaya*

35 ***The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia.*** By Bill Hayton. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014. 320 pp. \$35.00 (cloth).

40 Opining knowledgeably about any foreign policy dispute requires a certain proficiency in key facts. This is especially true in the case of the sovereignty disputes of the South China Sea. For the uninitiated, Bill Hayton's *South China Sea* provides an accurate and well-

researched primer on all the relevant issues. The only drawback to this highly readable overview is a hesitance to make a consistent, clear argument about the major source of the conflict and a potential solution. Nonetheless, the service this book provides in outlining the sources of the conflict ensure that Hayton's contribution will be required reading for any scholars or students looking to get up to speed on this complex issue.

The dispute under consideration centers on competing claims over the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. China and Vietnam both claim all the islands, while the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei also claim portions of the Spratlys. Given their tiny size, the islands themselves are of little economic or strategic value. Of greater value are the fishing stocks, the ability to explore for oil and natural gas, and the control of the sea lanes that may or may not come with them. Because the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) grants countries with coastlines with exclusive economic rights off their shores, ownership of these islands could theoretically grant the country with access to valuable strategic and economic resources.

The book succeeds in explaining how the countries came to occupy the various island outposts (often little more than rocks) in the sea, the basis for their claims, and what international law would provide for if the claims were settled. The opening chapters detail the historical claims to the islands, arguing that none of the rival claimants have an exclusive claim as cultural heirs to the sea. Rather, the best evidence points to a distinct Nusantao culture that lived primarily on the coastlines of all the land areas surrounding the sea as the cultural ancestors of the region. This historical claim is important, because as Hayton notes, the Chinese claims in particular have no basis in international law.

As Hayton's account also makes clear, UNCLOS, which all the claimant countries have signed (but the United States has not), stipulates that twelve nautical miles from the coastlines are sovereign territory. A further 200 nautical miles fall within a country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), where international vessels may travel, but only the coastal country has the right to profit from it.

Hayton also does well to highlight the often misunderstood fact that most of the oil and natural gas resources do not lie in areas near the disputed islands. Rather, most of the resources lie close to the shores of the coastal countries, areas that should not be disputed even if the claims over the islands remain disputed. This, in recent years,

has been the source of most of the provocative acts on the part of the Chinese. In the last five years or so, Chinese coast guard and fishing vessels have harassed Vietnamese and Filipino ships operating close to their shorelines, but within China's vaguely defined U-shaped line. This line hugs the shorelines of Vietnam and the Philippines well beyond the boundaries that would likely be set even if it did own all the disputed islands.

While these facts are not unknown to experts on the region, Hayton provides the clearest overview of all the relevant details currently available in a single volume. What is less clear from the book is the author's assessment of the primary cause of the problem and a way out. While he could be excused from providing an answer to this complex issue, he does intriguingly tease the reader with the possibility that such an answer will be forthcoming: "What can be done to prevent war ever breaking out? How could the resources of the Sea be equitably shared among the undress of millions of mostly poor people living around its shores? Read on" (p. xviii). In reading on, the analysis often seems to point the finger at China as the key instigator of the conflict and the country that bears the most responsibility to solve it. Indeed, the conclusion in the epilogue clearly asserts that stability can be achieved "if a line is redrawn"—a clear allusion to the U-shaped line (p. 269). This clearly places responsibility at the foot of the Chinese.

However, at other points, he acknowledges that the issue of sovereignty is not clear-cut in the favor of any country (p. 99). Furthermore, the existing rules of the game are not favorable to China and were written, perhaps unfairly, when they were less powerful than they are now. UNCLOS clearly favors certain countries with expansive coastlines over others that are locked in: "The arrangement of the continents and national borders have left some coastal states with access to great expanses of sea and others with much less" (p. 120). On this count, China, blocked by Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, is clearly disadvantaged. He also details how the United States arguably abuses UNCLOS to sail spy ships close to China's shore.

Reading between the lines, the totality of the book seems to implicitly point to a perspective that the sovereignty disputes may not be resolved, but that peace can be achieved if countries could agree that the area under dispute is actually quite minimal, which is the overall goal of the recent Filipino suit to the Hague. Seen in this light, the real problem is the U-shaped line and not the issue of the sovereignty of the islands. However, as Hayton also acknowledges,

5 this resolution is unlikely because China has expended so much effort to convince its domestic audience that the entire sea is an integral part of Chinese territory. Furthermore, China seems reluctant to simply accept the terms of UNCLOS that allow US spy ships to set up show a mere twelve miles from its shores and that prevent it from enjoying as large an EEZ as less geographically constrained countries such as the United States and Japan. In short, the reader is left with a wealth of knowledge about how the problems began, but few clues as to potential ways forward.

10 ■ Paul Schuler

*Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center
Stanford University*

15 ***Southeast Asia and the European Union: Non-Traditional Security Crises and Cooperation.*** By Naila Maier-Knapp. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015. 140 pp. \$145.00 (cloth).

20 In this book Dr. Naila Maier-Knapp analyzes how the European Union has been an actor during nontraditional security crises in Southeast Asia and uses these events as a practical and analytical setup to evaluate interregional EU-ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) relations.

25 Southeast Asia has in recent years been struck by several crises ranging from the Asian financial crisis to the Bali Bombings and avian influenza. Disasters such as these are not directly linked to security issues in a traditional sense but are increasingly framed within the EU's collective security perspective. This contribution aims to analyze how the EU has been and can be an actor through humanitarian, financial, and peacekeeping support in a region driven by strategic concerns. It adds a new angle from which to look at the EU's exertion of normative influence. Dr. Maier-Knapp concludes by answering some broader questions on the EU's actorness.

30 The research is innovative by introducing nontraditional security (NTS) to the analytical framework for an evaluation of EU-ASEAN relations. Central is the concept of securitization or how "a traditionally non-security issue [becomes] an existential threat requiring an emergency response" (p. 13). The book is embedded in constructivist theorizing within the international relations literature and makes a valuable contribution through the depth of the analysis and its focus

on Southeast Asia. The empirical work is based on over twenty interviews conducted between the end of 2008 and mid-2010, complemented with extensive document analysis.

5 The analysis begins with an overview of the wide range of instruments the European Union has at its disposal to activate its actor potential in NTS challenges in the region. In essence such tools serve developmental and humanitarian purposes, but are increasingly used in the function of strategic and security goals in the region (pp. 24–30).

10 Chapters 2–5 contain in-depth case studies. The case selection strategy remains unaddressed, yet the studies are essential building blocks for the argument. They cover a range of threats in different policy fields: the Asian financial crisis, haze due to fires in Indonesia, the Bali bombings, the avian influenza, and the Aceh Monitoring Mission.

15 The financial crisis in (Southeast) Asia in 1997 began the debate on NTS threats, but the EU did not adopt an “NTS perspective on financial activities” (p. 49). The case study on the Indonesian haze, a smoke blanket caused by fires in 1997 linked to agricultural practices of slash and burn, shows the “interplay between climate phenomena, socio-economic and institutional factors” (p. 52). The main finding here is the increasing importance of nonstate EU actors in the role-concept of the EU (pp. 59–62). The 2002 Bali bombings could be considered a likely case to trigger a security response from the EU. However, the EU was not a unitary actor on the matter and the competence in counterterrorism still lies with the member states (pp. 20 72–73). In the case of the 2003 avian influenza the research finds trade interdependence to be a crucial element as the EU aims to protect European consumers. Domestic NTS concerns move to the international scene (p. 82). How the EU contributed to peace and stability in the region through the Aceh Monitoring Mission in 2005 was a prime example of the EU’s taking on an NTS role in Southeast Asia, although all parties involved remain uncomfortable with “the notion of the EU as a crisis manager” in the region (p. 98). Chapter 6 adds more examples of NTS challenges the EU and ASEAN have addressed in their interregional dialogue: a global food crisis and the devastation of Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

35 Altogether the book’s case studies show for several NTS crises how ASEAN and its member states were open to European assistance, thus creating an opportunity for norm diffusion. To conclude that the EU is a blurred normative actor in Southeast Asia is not nec-
40

essarily revolutionary, but the application of the NTS frame puts forward several new insights on the EU's role in Southeast Asia and other regions far from Europe.

5 However, the book neglects two important issues. First, it shies away from critically assessing the relevance of the interregional level, both for policy and research. One of the central research questions deals with the value of the EU-ASEAN dialogue, but the concluding remarks remain ambiguous. Examples of the importance of the bilateral level are abundant throughout the book: the differing interpretations by the United Kingdom and EU of the Asian financial crisis (ch. 2), the haze as a problem specific to Indonesia (ch. 3), the Danish initiatives following the Bali bombings (ch. 4). Under what circumstances the interregional level becomes the relevant level for action is not fully addressed in the book.

15 Second, how does one make the distinction between the influence of the EU and the United States? In the introduction Dr. Maier-Knapp rightfully acknowledges the complicated situation in the region and positions the EU's efforts as complementing US military power (p. 8). But the actorness of the United States in nontraditional security crises remains an open question throughout most of the case studies. This could be an element of importance when explaining the obstacles to the interregional EU-ASEAN relations.

25 This book is a crisis-centric monograph that sets out to evaluate the EU as an actor in Southeast Asia. It represents the increasing policy and academic interest in the region. Dr. Maier-Knapp manages a strong build-up of her arguments in great detail and guides the reader through the interesting case studies. The findings in this work pave the way for further research on the role of the EU and, most importantly, how the actorness of the EU is perceived in the receiving region.

30 ■ *Marjolein Derous*

*Department of Political Science, Centre for EU Studies
Ghent University*

35 ***Ruling, Resources and Religion in China: Managing the Multiethnic State in the 21st Century.*** By Elizabeth Van Wie Davis. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 182 pp. \$95.00 (cloth).

40 Authority and control over resources and religion in China have been, since the Imperial era, of crucial importance for the state as

they are intrinsically linked to governance strategies. *Ruling, Resources and Religion in China*, written by Van Wie Davis, tries to connect these three issues through the Tibetan and Uyghur issues.

5 The objective of the author was to demonstrate mainly two things: how party-state policies regarding minorities are creating long-term problems for the latter and, maybe more importantly, how control over resources is important for the developmental autocracy. This issue, as argued, is of tremendous importance considering that resources are often located in frontier regions inhabited by ethnic and religious minorities. As such, minorities-related policies can have consequences for the state's ability to secure resources as treatment of minorities can sometimes imply other actors (e.g., regional and international).

10 The book, which includes seven chapters, can be divided into three sections: (1) ruling and governance, leadership and resources; (2) regional challenges for resources and religion, Tibet and Uyghur questions; and (3) ruling resources and religion and outcomes.

15 Chapter 1 provides a very brief overview of recent institution-building and the direction of reforms as well as some internal governing mechanisms (e.g., intraparty and local elections) and explains the difference between the Tibetan and Uyghur issues (e.g., more religious based in Tibet and ethnic-religious in Xinjiang) and how the state copes with the latter (i.e., mainly through economic development for Tibet, and by both economic tools and policing in Xinjiang [p. 31]). Chapter 2 goes over the five generations of leadership's attitude toward resources and religion as well as some of their governing modes. The author tries to show how the relationship and priorities in terms of resources and religion have changed from the early 1950s to the Xi-Li administration (e.g., from suppression and repression [p. 34] to more freedom and compromises and how resource control became an issue under the third and fourth generations [p. 20 25 30 35 40 45]).

In Chapter 3 the author gives a descriptive overview of some of the conflicts between minorities and the party-state and links those with other regional issues (p. 66) while also assessing the role of other powers in Central Asia. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the causes, development, responses of the party-state, outcomes, and international implications in both the Tibetan and Uyghur issues.

Chapter 6 summarizes what the Central State did to cope with the conflicts and tensions underlined in Chapters 4 and 5. The author also goes as far as to say it could serve as a possible model for some

of the region's countries. The last chapter posits that China needs to assess new means for handling these issues in both the short and long term.

5 This book has three strong points: (1) it vulgarizes sometimes complex issues, making the book more accessible to a broader range of non-academic publics, therefore extending inquiries outside of academia; (2) it ties the issues of ethnic policies and their effects on the local and regional political scenes with the consequences of the latter on the party-state's ability to rule and to control resources; (3) 10 it draws our attention to the importance of considering domestic, regional, and international factors in both resource management and minorities-related policies.

I raise a few questions regarding this book's scope and frame- 15 work. To begin with, I could suggest the author include a clear definition of *religion*, as well as a discussion regarding the notion of *ethnicity* or even *identity* in the Chinese context. These issues are of importance to the author and a greater inclusion of the latter would certainly benefit her analysis. Therefore, I would also suggest the author review the recent debates surrounding religious 20 revival/renewal in China and the numerous state-religion relations studies existing on the matter. For example, those of Yang Fenggang, André Laliberté, David Palmer, Vincent Goossaert, Adam Chau, John Lagerway, Fan Lizhu, Pitman Potter, to name just a few, could be of interest to the author.

25 I may also suggest the author consider looking into the dual structure (in terms of ethnicity) that exists in China (majority/minorities) and its governance implications as documented by Dru Gladney (2004). An ulterior project would certainly benefit from adding some of these elements as it would broaden the scope and the depth of the 30 analysis.

A few questions regarding the analytical framework could also be raised. As such, I would suggest an inquiry into the still-in-use fragmented authoritarianism framework. A discussion regarding central-local dynamics in shaping domestic governance strategies or on 35 bureaucratic resistance in policy implementation could also be of interest. The latter would assist the author in explaining different policymaking problems (related to both energy and minorities) in the People's Republic.

40 I would also recommend the author look into other resources-related (especially oil) studies (e.g., Philip Andrews-Speed, Kong Bo, Erica Downs, Jean Garrison, Lim Tai-Wei, to name just a few) as I

feel it would complement some of her observations regarding the question of resources in frontier regions (p. 118). These studies, focusing on the same regions, would also improve her description and analysis of the current energy issues in China and its surroundings.

The book, tries to build an argument linking ruling, resources, and religion, tends to sometimes fall into a more descriptive work, which may fail to convince some readers. In a certain way, this book appears to be both a peculiar mix of comparative and foreign policy analytical angles and an elaborated policy paper, especially for US interests in the region.

Considering its simplicity and concision, this book would be more recommended for undergraduate students, diplomatic staff, or members of the private sector looking for general information on both the Tibetan and Uyghur issues as well as a brief synopsis of Central Asia's current geopolitical situation.

■ Alex Payette
School of Political Studies
University of Ottawa

Chinese Social Policy in a Time of Transition. Edited by Douglas J. Besharov and Karen Baehler. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 314 pp. \$74.00 (cloth).

Welfare Through Work: Conservative Ideas, Partisan Dynamics, and Social Protection in Japan. By Mari Miura. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012. 224 pp. \$39.95 (cloth).

The Korean State and Social Policy: How South Korea Lifted Itself from Poverty and Dictatorship to Affluence and Democracy. By Stein Ringen, Huck-Ju Kwon, Ilcheong Yi, Taekyoon Kim, and Jooha Lee. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 146 pp. \$58.00 (cloth).

What lessons, if any, do the strategies for economic development in Japan and South Korea hold for China? Although differences are stark between the regional, ethnic, and cultural complexity of the continent-sized China and the quasi-homogeneous cultural makeup of the Japanese archipelago and the southern tip of the Korean peninsula, similarities in the state's role in directly encouraging the development of infrastructure and pro-

moting exports certainly invite comparisons. Japan and South Korea pioneered the state-directed approach to development that China has adopted and that has served it so well. The three countries also face the same problem of responding to mounting pressure from a rapidly aging population to address social services and health care. But two kinds of differences in conditions weigh enormously. First, China has to cope with a much heavier pension burden on public finances than its neighbors, because of previous commitments inherited from the People's communes and the reliance on state-owned enterprises for key industries. Moreover, the Chinese government can face this issue, and other aspects of social policies, without giving much concern to pressure from their electorates, unlike their counterparts in Japan and South Korea.

As China emerges as the largest economic powerhouse in the global economy, it makes sense to consider the challenges its leaders confront in light of the approaches adopted by their Japanese and South Korean counterparts, whose citizens have reached high standards of living much earlier than China's. How much Chinese leaders are likely to learn from these two neighbors and whether it will adopt similar social policies remain to be seen: after all, China's earlier approaches to social policies were radically different five decades ago from those of Japan and Korea at similar levels of development. The Communist Party then promoted universalistic values premised on redistributive justice that its population still takes for granted, despite decades of growing inequalities—values that still shape the expectations of many with regard to social policies from the cradle to the grave. In the case of Japan and South Korea, on the other hand, conservative governments, whether democratically elected or imposed by military juntas, have based their legitimacy on their ability to develop strong economies before considering redistributive policies. It is tempting to see a convergence in East Asian national political economies, with China putting more emphasis on the development of productive forces, and the Japanese and South Korean governments having to respond to electorates to reap the rewards of decades of sacrifice. Certainly, the volume edited by Douglas Besharov and Karen Baehler as well as the monographs of Mari Miura on Japan and Stein Ringen, Huck-Ju Kwon, Ilcheong Yi, Taekyoon Kim, and Jooha Lee on South Korea, when read together, suggest that China can learn from observing the travails of social policies in the Japanese and South Korean societies, which have reached levels of affluence for most of their citizens that a majority of the Chinese population has yet to reach. The fact that lessons can be learned, however, does not mean that China will follow in the steps of Japan

and South Korea: the specificities of historical trajectories will make that very difficult.

5 Although China's economy surpasses those of Japan and South Korea in size and influence in the twenty-first century, it still faces enormous challenges, as the many contributors to the edited volume of Besharov and Baehler testify. Japan and South Korea, as members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, both qualify as developed economies; but China, as its leaders pointedly continue to assert, often rightly, is still a developing economy. Although cities such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Beijing stand out as outposts of the first world with connections to the rest of the global economy, they represent islands of affluence in seas of poverty, exploiting parts of the country that often experience social and economic conditions that qualify as underdeveloped. The efforts to expand infrastructures and link the coastal megacities to the hinterland are addressing these gaps and China can look forward to reaching a stage of development comparable to Japan and South Korea, as measured by its citizens' levels of affluence and economic security. However, the levels of cross-regional disparities and the cultural gaps between the Chinese ethnic majority and the periphery's minorities represent formidable obstacles that South Koreans, and to some extent Japanese, did not experience after World War II.

Each of the case studies assembled by Besharov and Baehler focuses on one of the different aspects of social and economic disparity within the country. The overarching theme of this edited volume is a focus on macroeconomic trends such as the need to share responsibilities in the funding of social services "between employers, employees, and the state," wide variations in the coverage people receive for social protection, and the problem of creating greater risk pools to cover different forms of social insurances (p. 15). Besharov and Baehler admit that many questions are left unanswered in the case studies they present, regarding unemployment insurance, labor mobility vs. community building, ensuring pension obligations without burdening younger generations of workers, and ensuring social protection without undermining social norms of family care (pp. 15–16). The number of issues they discuss, nonetheless, is impressive. Some challenges are unique to China, and most respond to the imperative of adapting to a market economy without destroying the social bonds nurtured by the previous forms of social organization in the collective and state-owned enterprises (p. 16). This collection of essays represents a fascinating survey of the achievements of Chinese social policies, and it provides many prescriptions to address the problems that remain unsolved.

The chapter by Jonathan London in Besharov and Baehler's volume compares China's and Vietnam's welfare regimes, as examples of "productivist welfare regimes" (p. 41) sharing a political culture relying on universalist values that bring pressure on governments. As both countries become more prosperous, he argues, they will be more capable of investing in health care and education, but Vietnam, he notes, has displayed a greater commitment than China in maintaining the structure allowing for the redistribution of resources. Qin Gao, Martin Evans, and Irwin Garfinkel pursue this comparison between China and Vietnam, focusing on the social benefits addressing social inequalities in both countries. They confirm the conclusions of London: they note that China could learn from the Vietnam experience to achieve greater equalization of its system of social benefits and address the rural-urban gap. Conversely, they add that Vietnam could follow the example of China by expanding its system of social benefits and its access to education. This choice of comparison represents a perfect case of a comparative research design with most similar conditions. It is a pity it was not undertaken elsewhere in the volume.

The chapter by Josephine Smart, Reeta Tremblay, and Mostaem Billah in Besharov and Baehler's volume that analyzes the intersection of migration, citizenship, and social welfare in China and India represents another example of international comparison with a most-similar-conditions research design. This time, the ideological differences between the two governments are bigger than is the case between the governments of China and Vietnam, but the similarities in the scale of the Chinese and Indian economies, as well as their regional diversity, warrant this comparison. Smart and her colleagues have found that while labor migration to cities has generated significantly positive impacts in China, it has not produced any in India. Their findings raise an uncomfortable truth: the policy of household registrations, or *hukou*, has provided strong incentives for migrants to keep links with the sending communities, often by leaving relatives behind, and therefore it has encouraged economic development through the sending of remittances. Indian internal migration has not produced similar results, as migrations led to permanent resettlement in the migrants' destinations, and remittances to places of origin have been limited. The conclusion the authors of this chapter reach is stark: if China were to abolish the *hukou*, it may slow the pace of economic and social development in rural areas. Left open in this excellent essay is whether the Chinese policy on housing registration will be sustainable in the future, as the proportion of China's urban population, already larger than its rural counterpart,

reaches levels comparable to those of its immediate neighbors, South Korea and Taiwan.

Barry Friedman's chapter, which follows from London's, observes the evolution of social security and employment policies in the long run. His analysis brings forward the delicate balancing act of the authorities, faced with growing demands for social services coverage and concerns over mass employment. He notes that it took fifteen years after the beginning of the reform period before the state authorities finally decided to restrict employment in state-owned enterprises. In a sobering conclusion, the author asserts that we still lack evidence to evaluate the "pain" inflicted by the process undertaken since 1997. Juan Chen and MaryGallagher's investigation of social insurance provisions for urban workers adds nuances to Friedman's survey and help explain why it is so difficult to reach conclusions on the effect of government's employment and social policies. They reveal that despite official requirements to provide every urban worker with coverage, huge gaps remain between the benefits received by employees of state-owned enterprises and foreign firms, and those of domestic private firms' workers and self-employed. In addition, they found out that coverage varies between cities with higher levels of economic development and those that lag behind.

The disparities observed among urban residents contrast with the conclusions reached by Song Gao and Xiangyi Meng in their study of health insurance in rural China. They have found that the government has successfully managed to provide universal access to insurance coverage. This is a positive development that needs to be put in context, however: it can offset some of the negative side effects of migration to the cities, but it is not clear if it is meant to slow down the rural exodus, considering the expressed preference of the central government to encourage further urbanization. Xin Zhang, looking at welfare spending equalization between wealthier provinces on the coast and the poorer ones in the hinterland, addresses another important dimension of inequalities: the regional gaps that prove difficult to narrow despite constant efforts by the central government to redistribute wealth. This survey concludes optimistically that a fiscal federalist approach "embedded within a market economy can reconcile equality with efficiency" (p. 139). However, this is a statement that is more programmatic than factual, an issue in many other essays of this volume. This is the case too with the study of child education financing for migrant children by Jing Guo, who offers recommendations for central and provincial governments, based on observations about migrant populations in Zhejiang and Beijing. Its key finding is that provincial governments can play a key

role in implementing redistributive justice to lower levels of government lacking resources to meet the demands of migrant populations.

The above chapters altogether point to remarkable successes in China's effort to steer the country toward economic growth while ensuring some measure of social equity for a majority of the population. However, other chapters point to issues that are more difficult to address. Yuping Zhang and Emily Hannum focus on perhaps the most baffling and frustrating shortcomings of China's social policies addressing inequalities: the inability to prevent a regression of women's status in Chinese society despite the passing of numerous antidiscrimination legislations. They point to the greater burden falling on women for household responsibilities after marriage and parenthood (p. 243). Considering the fact that this issue affects more than half of China's population, and that many of the issues to address in social policies depend on gender equality, it is somewhat intriguing that the editors have relegated this important chapter near the end of this collection. The study by Wei-Jun Jean Yeung on the implications of college expansion also points to a serious problem that can potentially undermine the central government's achievements in redistribution. The expansion of higher education has brought benefits to all social and economic groups, but they warn that huge gaps remain, for groups defined by rural/urban *hukous*, ethnicity, regional disparities, as well as parents' socioeconomic status. In other words, they note that "elites will manage to maintain their advantages" (p. 264) and that the impact of higher education on social stratification will be long-lasting.

Three other chapters address issues that affect minorities and vulnerable populations. These categories of people, at the periphery or the margins of mainstream society, matter despite their small numbers. Their welfare matters for strategic reasons as well as for basic decency. Ignoring their needs risks aggravating their sense of alienation, but on the other hand, there is no question that addressing their needs requires very expensive commitments. The examination of education policies for ethnic minorities by Bob Adamson, Feng Anwei, Liu Quanguo, and Li Qian notes unequal levels of success in the provision of trilingual education for minorities: education in the mother tongue, Mandarin, and in foreign languages. That study suggests that efforts to achieve these goals vary among minorities and that much more needs to be done. The study by Zunyou Wu, Sheena Sullivan, Yu Wang, Mary Rotheram, and Roger Detels on the evolving response of the government to HIV/AIDS reveals that "after a slow start and reluctance to recognize the existence of risk activities in its population" (p. 288), the Chinese authorities have proven

responsive to pressures from the international community. The survey of urban elderly residents by Zhilin Liu and Yanwei Chai serves as a cautionary tale about the needs of a socioeconomic category that is going to constitute the largest financial burden for China's social policies in decades to come. Their detailed ethnography reveals that the work unit (*danwei*) "represents a form of social networking and support system that is valued by senior residents" (p. 215) and argues that authorities must factor that into their social policy planning. Overall, these chapters serve to demonstrate the extent of the challenges Chinese authorities face to ensure that the welfare of citizens can catch up with the phenomenal growth of its firms. A more complete description of the political obstacles the implementation of these policies has faced would be welcome, but the scope of Besharov and Baehler's very dense collection of essays is nonetheless impressive.

If the complexity and diversity of the issues faced by the Chinese government inspire qualified optimism, the study of Japan's social welfare presented here invites more pessimism, while the recent history of South Korea's social welfare leads to an almost unbridled optimism. The study by Miura on Japan's welfare regime is sobering: she has showed that the structure of the labor force in Japan, distorted by what she calls a gendered dual system, had made it very difficult to address welfare issues, despite the assumed advantages of an open and liberal democratic society. Her study argues that Japan's social protection system from the beginning was not a regime of income maintenance but a mechanism of "welfare through work" whereby social protection was provided by the employer or the state. The system could function, she argues, only as long as there was a high employment rate for all categories of workers. Changes in the Japanese economy since the 1990s, which saw an increase in the number of nonregular workers without adequate social protection, have undermined that welfare through work system. The reliance on women as primary caregivers, and as part-time employees or cheap labor, had long provided flexibility to that system (p. 3). Changes in the Japanese economy, such as increasing unemployment, increase in part-time work, and an end to job security, have, however, put too much pressure on the gendered dual system. China can learn some very valuable lessons from the stagnation of Japan's economy and its causes. Although China does not have a gendered dual system, trends pointing to the decline of women's status in society need to be addressed urgently to ensure that China can address its many challenges in social policies.

South Korea does not come to mind as a global economic power the way China or Japan does. Yet it is a model of rapid transition from a poor

country to a first world economy, as well as one of the few successful transitions to democracy. Its trajectories appear to vindicate the view that after reaching a certain threshold of GDP per head, authoritarian regimes become unsustainable in the long run, as middle-class demands on government increase. A detailed study of South Korea's economic and political transitions should not only test this theory, but also shed light on whether specific tactics that facilitated that transition can be replicated successfully elsewhere. Ringen, Kwon, Yi, Kim, and Lee try in their monograph to unlock the two mysteries of South Korea's political economy: How could the country become so quickly a prosperous and efficient economy after a devastating war, and how could a harsh authoritarian regime transform so quickly into a fledgling democracy? They argue that South Korea's state-led approach to economic growth relied more on soft power than the hard power of authoritarian rule, and they define this soft power as the state's restraint toward nonstate actors (p. 113). The development of the welfare state, they argue, served as legitimation for the authoritarian state, a process that continued to work for elected leaders when South Korea embarked on its democratic transition. The comparison with China is imperfect on that score: South Korea was never a party-state, and it experimented with a full-fledged, even if flawed, democracy before the coup by General Park Chung Hee in 1961. Yet, one lesson may matter for China nevertheless: the expansion of the welfare system made the democratic transition relatively orderly, and suggested that authoritarian regimes that are responsive to the basic needs of their population can accept democratic openings without fearing the outbreak of civil unrest and disorder.

■ *André Laliberté*
School of Political Studies
University of Ottawa