

in China involved the creation of individual subjects to facilitate China's global rise. She further discusses several modes of individual subject creation between 1980 and around 2008. During the 1980s when the primary goal of the population programme was to control the quantity of population, in rural areas the policy was enforced mainly through mobilization campaigns, and when these failed, physical coercion. In the cities, policy enforcement was characterized by Maoist "voluntarism" which created "revolutionary-socialist subjects" (p. 41). In the 1990s and the early 2000s, the focus of the population programme was shifted to "human-centered" governance which fostered self-governance of reproduction to create "market-socialist subjects" (p. 41). Furthermore, since the mid-1990s, new self-interested and self-governing reproductive subjects were created, such as the "quality child" and the "good mother" (p. 58). Greenhalgh argues that the making of these new reproductive subjects was through the intensification of globalization and the power of wealth. She concludes by pointing out how the state promotion of reproductive subject creation has resulted in the exclusion of certain categories of "backward" people and the social crises of an imbalanced sex ratio and an ageing population.

The last chapter, "Strengthening China's Party-state and place in the world," explores how population governance has built up state power and has influenced China's rising world position over the last three decades. In particular, through its population programme, the state has expanded its power by the creation of a network of governmental agencies and organizations, the formation of socialist legality to guide population governance, and improvement of the capacity to govern. Furthermore, Greenhalgh examines the expansion of state power on population governance through party slogans, increasing categories of policy enforcement, and the claim of party legitimacy in solving population problems. While criticizing the scientific framework behind the population program, Greenhalgh reveals an increasing role played by social scientists in shaping China's population policy. She further discusses how the control of population has boosted "comprehensive national power" (p. 108) in China.

In sum, Greenhalgh's *Population in the Rise of China* sheds new light on the study of China's population politics by examining the most recent shifts in population governance. Like her previous scholarship on China's population politics, this is another highly engaging and insightful study. Scholars who are interested in the new directions of population governance in China three decades after the initiation of the programme will find the book truly informative and thought-provoking.

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*The Politics of Rural Reform in China: State Policy and Village Predicament in the Early 2000s*

CHRISTIAN GÖBEL

London and New York: Routledge, 2010

xiii + 215 pp.

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The rural tax-and-fee reform has been a major topic of study amongst Chinese scholars and policy circle since its inception, and the subject of a steady stream of publications amongst China observers outside the country. Christian Göbel has made good use of this literature and, together with over 100 interviews with mostly local Chinese officials charged with the implementation of the reform, has produced an encyclopaedic account of this important policy. In its eight chapters, the book covers an account of the institutional and historical origins, agenda-setting processes, policy

formation, implementation and policy evolution, and outcome evaluation of the rural tax-and-fee reform. Given the complexity of the reform processes which spanned two decades, and that many existing studies focus on a part of the whole story only, attempting a full portrait of the reform is itself a challenging, and meaningful, task to do.

The account is structured around a question: why and how did this policy come into existence and then fail? Notice that by “failure” Göbel refers explicitly to a failure to meet the *original*, or initial, objectives of the policy (p. 13), though he has also discussed the lack of substantial improvement in the well-being of the peasants (income, access to public services) subsequent to the rural tax-and-fee reform as an indicator of policy failure (p. 147). The story unfolds as follows. The rural tax-and-fee reform began as institutionally embedded, and decentralized, local experiments which were outcome of local agency, bottom-up pressures from grassroots-level governance, tacit encouragement from upper-level actors, and contingencies. Despite their clear linkages with broader institutional deficiencies (like the unjust national fiscal system which works against the interest of the rural population and the locality, vis-à-vis the urban and the national) (chapter three), the local nature of the early experiments had limited the depth and breadth of their objectives and impacts, which catered mostly to the interest of the local sponsoring governments in *more* efficient collection of rural revenue from the peasants (chapter four). The early reforms’ local concerns meant that other considerations and processes needed to be in place to make the rural tax-and-fee reform a national priority. Dynamics amongst the top elites appeared to be critical; so were limitations and inertia within the pre-existing bureaucracy. The resultant national reform programme was, as in the case of the local experiments, constrained with a truncated vision falling short of the demands of the institutional issues which had called for the reform at the very beginning (chapter five). The faulty design and policy formation process continued to haunt the implementation of reform, and ‘complementary’ support provisions were not made available until much later, undermining – rather than helping – further the interests of the peasants in the interim. Central subsidies flew in only after rural schools were closed down due to a lack of necessary funds, for example. Local governments were blamed as the culprits of excessive peasant burdens and the local origins of the reform (as against the problem) were ignored (chapter six). More details of reform implementation, including local resistance to and adaptations of the national reform, in the case of the pioneering province of Anhui, are given in chapter seven. Chapter eight presents a model to summarize how the original intentions of the reform were “lost” step by step, as the reform progressed from local experiments to national reform and to implementation.

The book captures a great deal of detail when thrashing out the evolution of the reform. Göbel also displays, rightly, a high degree of sensitivity over the limitations of data available and the diversity of local situations, and a consequent caution over generalization. The illuminating discussions on the concept of ‘peasant burden’ (pp. 28–33) and on the peasant burden vis-à-vis rural fiscal reform discourses (pp. 55–63) problematize the foundation of the reform, through questioning the nature and the very existence of “peasant burden.” At the same time, the book is based substantially on existing analysis on the reform, and findings from the author’s interviews and analysis of documents appear more as supporting materials than constituents to the central part of an argument.

Indeed the central thread permeating the various parts of analysis in the book appears to be its weakest link: the explanation as to how the reform has failed, and the definition of policy failure. On the latter, the book has adopted a linear approach: a substantial divergence between initial intentions and subsequent developments and

outcomes suggests failure. Whilst this is a legitimate option, its desirability and utility has not been sufficiently explained. Moreover, the mechanical comparison this approach requires sits uncomfortably with the dynamic nature of the ‘process tracing’ method the book, as well as some existing works, have used for the subject. A major finding from tracing the reform process is that the rural tax-and-fee reform, as a policy, was the outcome of multiple concurrent processes and had been in constant change. This implies a divergence between original intentions and policy outcomes. The problem of the emphasis on these divergences is not in their non-existence – because the divergences did exist and in this sense the reform has *failed*, but in their relevance and significance (so what?) – which the book does not explain. It is also unclear which set of *original* intentions the reform outcomes are compared to: the objectives as intended by the central policy makers when the national reform was formulated around 2000 (p. 154), or the ‘objective’ problem and the broader institutional issues that first of all embedded the grievances underlying the notion of “peasant burden” (p. 5). It is also unclear why we should be interested in defining the divergence as policy ‘failure’ – rather than “manifestations of policy evolution,” which the book has after all dwelt at length. What can be a more robust conceptualization of policy failure than implementation gap?

This brings us to the last point: how the book concludes why the reform failed, and what could have prevented the failure. The cause is, interestingly, assigned to the lack of motivation of local (government) agents to subscribe to the centre’s aims (p. 159). To enhance their motivation, local agents should be encouraged or allowed to take part in policy formulation. In the light of the conspicuous local role in policy evolution described in the book, what this concluding observation entails awaits further elaboration.

In conclusion the book is valuable for its careful collation and meticulous command of the literature and sensitivity over the use of data and materials on an important policy and reform process. The detailed analysis of policy change in networks of actors will be an important resource for advanced undergraduates and students on Chinese politics, policy science studies, as well as multi-tier governance.

LINDA CHELAN LI

*Politics of China’s Environmental Protection: Problems and Progress*

CHEN GANG

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In a rapidly changing Chinese environment in every sense of the word, it is good to see new books assessing current trends in China’s natural environment and the ways China is trying to cope with the downside of growth. Chen’s first chapter sets out to describe the environmental problems. From this survey we can already see that he is primarily interested in pollution and climate change, devoting less attention to topics such as biodiversity, soil erosion, and desertification. The four chapters that follow the introduction review respectively the environmental bureaucracy and the mixed impact of trade liberalization, the legal system and its flaws, the role of civil society and its difficulties at being effective in internal and international contexts, and finally a history of China’s growing environmental diplomacy from the 1970s down to today.