

# Book Reviews

**China's Regulatory State: A New Strategy for Globalization** by Roselyn Hsueh. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2011. 320 pp. \$35.00.

The widely accepted narrative of China's reforms since 1978 reads as that of a communist party-state embracing the market and enmeshing its economy within the global system. It is a compelling story of an autarkic Maoist regime starting cautiously by privatizing agriculture at the local level and opening a handful of special coastal zones to foreign investment before ultimately unabashedly embracing a booming nationwide market economy and absorbing more foreign direct investment than any other developing country.

Roselyn Hsueh's careful research reveals why this plot line is not only unsatisfactory but also inaccurate. Delving beneath the outer macroeconomic layer, the author uncovers a cyclical pattern of central government policies in which waves of liberalization are followed by counter-waves of "reregulation." Hsueh labels this dance the "Liberalization Two-Step," whereby what the state deregulates with one hand at the macro level, it reregulates with the other hand at the micro level. According to Hsueh, China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 did not significantly alter the situation, as Beijing has sought to give the appearance of complying with WTO commitments by loosening economy-wide regulations while at the same time retaining "selective controls at the sectoral level" (p. 3).

And this dance varies by sector, depending on the strategic value assigned to a particular industry. If Chinese leaders determine that a sector involves essential high technology and/or is vital to national security, then it will get special attention. Of Hsueh's two major case studies: one, telecommunications, is a strategic industry and the other, textiles, is not. The former is methodically re-regulated, while only specific segments of the latter sector are controlled. Other factors also determine Beijing's level of state control: how state institutions are organized in a particular sector, and the specific history of a sector's experience with the global economy.

Through extensive interviews and painstaking research, Hsueh demonstrates a distinct pattern of government re-regulation even after China joined the WTO. In the process, she demolishes the myth of an increasingly unfettered

Chinese economy. “China,” asserts Hsueh, “only appears to be a more liberal state” (p. 3). Unlike the orthodox “developmental state,” writes Hsueh, China has welcomed “foreign competition and know-how”; it has adopted “sectoral reregulation” of strategic industries; and has prioritized “bureaucracies and state-owned companies” (p. 267).

This book is a must-read for students of political economy and for those seeking to make sense of contemporary China’s complex economic landscape.

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**The Struggle for Civil Society in Central Asia: Crisis and Transformation** by Charles Buxton. Sterling, VA, Kumarian Press, 2011. 256 pp. Cloth, \$75.00; paper, \$24.95. **Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia** by Eric McGlinchey. Pittsburgh, PA, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011. 232 pp. Paper, \$26.95.

The study of Central Asian politics is experiencing a mini-boom for practitioners and scholars alike. These two recent additions make important contributions to this growing field, even as they focus on strikingly different actors, processes, and regional connections.

Charles Buxton provides an overview of the trials and tribulations of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Central Asia, noting their uneven pattern of development and, in the case of Uzbekistan, recent regression. His book distinguishes among various phases (late-Soviet, transition, state-building) and is packed with interesting anecdotes and glimpses into these advocacy campaigns. Some are relatively well known, such as the Kazakh Semipalatinsk movement against nuclear contamination and the more-recent Kyrgyz campaign against the international Highly Indebted Poor Country initiative. Others, such as the Kazakh non-governmental organizations (NGOs) serving the homeless in the early 1990s, pensioners movements in Kyrgyzstan, and women’s community-based development groups in Tajikistan, are less so, yet the author carefully highlights their modest but important victories for their constituents. Case chapters of NGOs engaged with environmental issues (chap. 4), political rights (chap. 5), and women’s issues (chap. 6) provide additional examples, analysis, and political context, while the final chapters consider the international and global dimensions of these campaigns.

Eric McGlinchey explores the dynamics of post-Soviet state-building regime survival and patronage politics in the cases of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and