

is. On the other hand, for some readers, it might be hard to find the whole volume helpful and coherent.

Because of its valuable cases, as well as its comprehensive theoretical analysis, the book's audience will be scholars interested in the actual debate on local economic development. A presentation of different aspects of local participation in global economy, it might also serve as a helpful introduction to the topic for graduate students of public policy.

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China's Regulatory State: A New Strategy for Globalization. Roselyn Hsueh. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011. 303 pp. \$35 (paper).

If anything was ever close to "a mystery wrapped in an enigma," to quote a famous phrase by Sir Winston Churchill, it is the Chinese miracle. How could a Communist, backward society running a wrecked economy become, in less than a third of a century, the world's second major power?

Part of the mystery will probably remain stealth and concealed forever, but Roselyn Hsueh's excellent book unfolds most of the enigma by shedding light on both the history of China's economic growth and the nature of the "strategic value logic" that accounts for the patterns of that growth across sectors, regions, and periods.

This book combines the accuracy and knowledge-based relevance of an academic study, by the best research standards, with a clear, fluent, and pedagogical way of introducing the reader to a rather complex set of issues. The quality of the book itself—a text perfectly edited, balanced, displaying the appropriate tables and figures in the right places and allowing any level of reading, from the layman up to the specialist, deserves compliments.

But there is more than that: Hsueh raises the question of China's specificity as shown by a deeper investigation into the rationale of the country's development since 1978. Scholars contend whether China's surge was an outcome of the inflow of liberal ideas from abroad together with foreign development investment, like in many successful countries around the Pacific western rim, or instead a felicitous aftermath of state power. Examples can be collected to back up both theses, as well as any blend of both, as China's development has varied according to periods, regions, and sectors.

Noting that China's liberalization process did not match previous models, Hsueh puts to test the idea that Chinese leaders have tuned liberalization and regulation according to the strategic value of each and every sector, while at the same time reshuffling the distribution of power, controls, and leverage, among the various levels of authority, in order to steer the process of change toward China's long-term interests.

Based on a range of case studies, with additional reference to an impressive spectrum of specialized literature, Hsueh carves out the evidence that China has managed its own development by blending liberalization with re-regulation. The story is not that of the glorious victory of markets and the rule of law over state-run economy, but the continuous creation of a new brand of economic change, made of a smart mix of strategic leadership and wise openness. China is not opening up to the world, nor is it catering the world: It is building a new power, made of interaction with the rest of the world, combined with designing a solid basis at home for anything that matters in order to count among the most developed countries in the world.

The key to understanding the gist of that policy is the comparison between what Hsueh calls strategic sectors versus nonstrategic ones, like telecommunications versus textiles, for example. An in-depth and detailed analysis of such sectors shows that neither the participation in the World Trade Organization from 2001, nor the various phases of the inside fight between conservatives and liberals, nor the highs and lows of the world economy at large can fully account for the real story of the pace of development. To reach the goal of building a range of world industrial leaders in a few strategic fields, the State Council has played with the complexity of this huge country, shifting power from one level to another according to the need to either facilitate or better control the inflow of investment and the consequent development features. While a deliberate reinforcement took place in strategic industries, nonstrategic industries enjoyed a decentralized engagement, allowing, for example, textiles to undergo a dismantling of the central control long before the World Trade Organization era. Doors were opened wide where, and up to the point where, the benefit of foreign investment and imported technologies were maximized to contribute to the overarching goal of turning China into a modern power. The sometimes contradictory picture of exposure to the world along with closed shop practices is part of the story. Moreover, while a genuine strategic thinking appears to underpin the whole process, it cannot be tracked back to some initial vision being unraveled over time. It rather suggests an ongoing process of learning, thinking, and adapting, geared by a common commitment to keep China aloft over any other objective, and served by a very specific blend of joint understanding and fierce competition among a large range of leaders, from top politicians down to local officers and entrepreneurs.

As it showcases how China has continuously muddled its way up into a new type of development, neither imported through liberalization nor brought about by a powerful state, but smartly designed while in the making, this book is a major contribution both to understanding China's growth better, and to opening up to a new way of thinking about development. It is now time to understand that China is no longer in the process of catching up, if it ever was, but in the process of unfolding a new relationship between harnessing a country with all it needs to prevail

among nations, and benefiting from being exposed to the flows and streams of the world.

As such, this conveys a lot of evidence, thinking, and arguments that challenges conventional wisdom: Developing countries should obviously tap a lot of useful ideas and examples from that book, but affluent democracies as well might wish to draw a parallel between the efficiency of what Hsueh calls China's regulatory state, and their own pitfalls when it comes to nurturing the kernel of their own future.

Such a great academic contribution to understanding one of the most impressive breakthroughs of our time will spark thoughts and questions about transformation and the challenges of reform in the times to come.

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Governing Fables: Learning from Public Sector Narratives. Sanford Borins. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2011. 306 pp. \$45.99 (paper).

Sanford Borins' *Governing Fables* is not your father's public management book. It is instead a highly original and absorbing analysis of the images of public management, policy, and politics constructed by the popular entertainment media: books, television, and cinema. Borins uses some of the more accessible literary theory—narratology—to frame his approach to the stories that novelists, screenwriters, and directors tell us about the behavior and interactions of the human beings inhabiting our public institutions. A fascinating set of genres and tropes emerges.

Governing Fables explores a couple of dozen recent products of popular culture including icons such as *Yes, Minister* and *The West Wing*, *The Remains of the Day*, *Advise and Consent*, *The Queen*, as well as the superb documentary *The Fog of War*. Borins offers a four-cell grid from which to categorize the genres, in which key protagonists either grow or decline and organizations either renew or decline. He reveals a healthy share of tragedy and cynicism in public sector narrative, seasoned by occasional heroism, both real and fabricated.

Borins writes fluently and incisively; the reader is carried along by his obvious enthusiasm for the subject matter and the narratological approach. It is hard to imagine a greater departure from the earnest but, on occasion, somewhat predictable scholarship characteristic of public management. Here, we have to face the human side of unwelcome truths about the public sector: the omnipresence of principal-agent problems, the looming influence of electoralism, the just-so stories sold as great innovations and later revealed to be largely smoke and mirrors, and through it all, the fluctuating mix of ambition, on the one hand, and passion for the public weal, on the other. None of this is novel in itself, but it has never been so colorfully dissected nor has the significance of interpretation(s) of public narrative ever been so well, and so entertainingly, exposed and