

There are also some historical inaccuracies, as Chen writes that “unlike the Soviet Union or Cuba, the PRC has never labelled emigration as traitorous.” He is ignoring the years of Mao’s rule when emigration was outlawed and emigrants were considered as traitors to the motherland.

Another drawback of this book is that the author does not say a word about opposition activities in Hong Kong, where the Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Movement in China has organized vigils every year since 1990, or the various organizations which support *weiquan* lawyers, the labour movement, and so on. I assume that the author does not consider Hong Kong “overseas,” as it is now part of China. This position can be accepted, but I sincerely hope that Chen will write another book on this subject in the near future.

Overall, this is the best book ever written on the contemporary Overseas Chinese Democratic Movement, presenting an objective analysis of its strength and weaknesses, with a certain amount of empathy. It is very well informed and is a must-read for anyone who wants to approach this important subject.

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*China's Urban Champions: The Politics of Spatial Development*

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“Picking winners in space,” the subtitle of Kyle Jaros’s introductory chapter in *China's Urban Champions*, conveys his central claim that provincial governments select some cities over others for ambitious urban development plans that serve as the anchor for provincial growth strategies. Just as developmental states of old were said to have singled out individual firms and sectors as “national champions,” China’s provincial governments in the 21st century have deployed what Jaros terms “spatial development strategies,” by steering investment flows toward preferred urban clusters at the expense of other cities and sectors within the same province. State-led urbanization in China has become a popular topic of inquiry over the past decade, with studies on land requisition, governance, migration, infrastructure and various dimensions of inequalities. Jaros adds to this literature by identifying provincial governments, rather than city-level officials, as key actors in China’s urbanization.

The type of urban development strategy that provincial leaders choose is highly consequential. “Metropolitan-oriented development models,” in which a single city (usually the provincial capital) and its smaller satellite cities benefit from favourable investment policies, produce showcase infrastructure and industries, but also a spike in intra-provincial inequalities, uneven development, unsupportable flows of migrant labour, and even social unrest. By contrast, a dispersed development strategy – in which investment resources are spread across the province through numerous cities and largely rural counties – brings about more stable and equity-enhancing growth patterns. A mixed development strategy, combining more restrained metropolitan growth with some degree of dispersed development, represents a third outcome. As Jaros shows, these vary both across provinces and within provinces over time. He argues that the structure of inter-governmental interactions better explains this variation than do accounts that attribute differences in development policy choices to the

preferences or worldviews of provincial leaders or to the dictates of the central government.

At the central level, the Chinese Communist Party leadership has traditionally pushed for dispersed growth strategies over metropolitan-led growth, out of caution for the social and political consequences of creating large restive urban populations. In the Maoist era, dispersed urbanization was predominant. Metropolitan-dominant growth advocates held sway during the spectacular growth of coastal centres in the 1990s. During the Hu Jintao era (2002–2012), the central government pushed for more dispersed patterns of provincial development. But as Jaros demonstrates, central–provincial interactions are insufficient to account for variation in provincial government strategies: the relations with sub-provincial prefectures and counties are also crucial for understanding why provinces chose metropolitan-oriented development, dispersed development, or mixed spatial development, and for why these change over time within a province.

The multilevel framework outlined in chapter three identifies three crucial explanatory variables that account for variation in urban development strategies: the administrative authority of a provincial government relative to its sub-provincial units, the extent to which it controls financial resources within a province, and the political capital and connections of its leaders with the top leadership in Beijing.

A controlled case comparison with four provinces follows in four empirical chapters, tracing the urban development strategies of provincial governments from the 1990s to the 2010s. Hunan province pursued the metro-oriented model from the outset, and like a classic “late developer” in the state-led development literature, it mobilized resources in an attempt to catch up with richer provinces. The Changsha–Zhuzhou–Xiangtan (CZX) cluster became a signature growth region, but at the expense of intra-provincial inequalities and lingering poverty in peripheral areas. Jiangxi province in the 1990s was similar to Hunan in being a growth laggard and lacking an advanced metropolitan centre. Yet Jiangxi leaders pursued a dispersed pattern of urban development, with only a short-lived orientation toward metropolitan development in the early 2000s. Jiangxi had no showcase metropolitan area by the 2010s, but it made impressive gains in the rural sector and in rural poverty alleviation. The relatively prosperous Jiangsu province, known for its regional disparities between north and south, witnessed dramatic switches between the metropolitan and dispersed development strategies over the period under study. Finally, inland Shaanxi province gradually moved toward a Hunan-like metropolitan-oriented model, with the Greater Xi’an region absorbing just over two-fifths of the province’s entire fixed asset investment between 2001 and 2010.

In a concluding chapter, Jaros explores the external validity of the argument using quantitative analysis from 26 provincial governments in China, and in a qualitative analysis of selected sub-national governments in Brazil and in India. The urban development strategies in the states of Minas Gerais in Brazil from the 1960s to the 1990s and the states of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal highlight the similar push-and-pull seen in the Chinese cases, in which state government preferences shifted depending on the alignments with central and sub-provincial units.

In these accounts, it is tempting to think that learning or diffusion effects also matter. Did officials in laggard provinces seek to emulate the rapid growth of Shanghai and Shenzhen and choose metropolitan-oriented development in a mimetic process? The central government certainly became more permissive of such strategies in 2001. In addition, leaders who pushed metropolitan development in one province were often transferred to interior provinces to carry out the same strategy. Jaros addresses these potential rival explanations, showing for example that even a figure such as

Meng Jianzhu, who arrived in Jiangxi from Shanghai in 2001, had to trim back his ambitious metro-development plans toward a more dispersed pattern by 2006.

In this impressively researched and thoughtfully written account, the question emerges as to whether all development is in fact spatial. Conventional accounts of state-led development, fixated on industries and firms, tend to overlook the politics of land and location. Economic geography assumes that cities are merely clusters of firms that seek positive spill overs from proximity. In this sense, *China's Urban Champions* should gain readership beyond the fields of Chinese politics and urbanization, to engage broader debates over development policy and the role of states and market actors in promoting different forms of urbanization.

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*The Private Sector in Public Office: Selective Property Rights in China*

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How secure are the property rights of private enterprises in China? Yue Hou provides a parsimonious answer that focuses on the characteristics of individual owners and their firms. The key to security is the entrepreneur's ability to signal, by obtaining a seat in a people's congress, high political capital, understood as connections to party-state officials. In this study, secure property rights means the ability to resist burdensome fees (*tanpai*) – what Hou refers to as expropriation; she argues that high political capital, especially status as a people's congress deputy, affords effective protection against expropriation.

Hou offers a methodologically sophisticated analysis based on a range of data, including interviews with a convenience sample of entrepreneurs and officials, available survey data, and an original online audit experiment. The interviews enable Hou to generate hypotheses, which she tests through the statistical analysis of survey data. The audit experiment confirms that invoking the people's congress signals political capital. The main alternative argument that Hou controls for is that party membership provides political capital to protect entrepreneurs from expropriation.

The study, written for a political-science audience, makes a contribution to the understanding of private sector development in China by highlighting the role of informal bargaining between entrepreneurs and officials and the role of discretion on the part of tax collectors. There is much to like in this compact volume. It also prompts a few questions.

With her focus on the individual level of analysis, the institution that Hou engages theoretically and empirically is the people's congress. Other aspects of the institutional environment in which revenue extraction takes place receive less attention. Local bureaucrats appear as individuals but not as institutional actors. Hou's statistical analyses control for provincial context; however, the relevant institutional context is the county/district or prefecture/municipality, the levels of government that regulate and extract revenue from private firms. Importantly, extractive practices vary systematically at these sub-provincial levels. For example, prefectural and county-level governments are assigned targets for growth and quotas for tax collection that shape their governance practices. Indeed, the "corporate tax burden in China is usually lower than statutory tax rate, because China's tax law enforcement