

examination of how recent land property rights reforms, in particularly the ones adopted since Xi Jinping took power, have affected institutional credibility, conflict and economic development. For example, in the area of farmland, reforms significantly limited the scope of land redistribution within village collectives and established a stronger legal base for contracted land sublease and transfer. Do these institutional developments reduce institutional credibility and cause more land-related conflicts? If so, how do strengthened land-use rights and reduced institutional credibility affect development?

Ho's book sets an admirable example for theoretically sophisticated and empirically solid research on institutions and development more generally and on land and housing in China more specifically. Readers interested in these subjects will benefit greatly from its broad scope, comprehensive and rigorous theory-building, and well-managed analysis of some of the most complex institutions in contemporary China.

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*China's Global Identity: Considering the Responsibilities of Great Power*

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This is a thought-provoking book which tackles the important and highly topical issue of China's global identity evolution as a responsible great power (RGP). It focuses on the emergence of Chinese debates in this discourse rather than simply offering Western notions of what this term might mean, and it does so over a timeline that recognizes China's re-emergence as a great power rather than one whose rise is only recent. This historical contextualization is important as it enables the work to take a more considered view of identity construction. Indeed, Hoo Tiang Boon makes clear early on that there have actually been two interconnected but distinct Chinese narratives, the first being the notion of a "great power" and the second the idea of "responsibility," and that now these concepts have converged to express what is termed an "aggregate" RGP identity (p. 29).

The book delineates its discussion across five chapters, beginning with a summary of historical context from imperial times until the commence of the reform era. The core of the book examines different dimensions over the last four decades, starting with chapter two, "Incipient identification as a responsible great power, 1978 to 1996," examining the Deng period. This is followed by an exploration of the growing influence of the United States on China's RGP narrative in chapter three, "Expansion of the RGP narrative and US influence, 1997 to 2004." This then builds into a particularly informative chapter four, "America's 'responsible stakeholder' call and the sharpening of debate, 2005 to 2012," which explores arguments over how China reacted to demands by the US for it to shoulder greater responsibility within the prevailing international system. The final chapter, "Xi's China: post-responsibility since 2013?," seeks to bring discussion up to date.

The book's main finding is that the evolution of China's RGP identity can best be understood by categorizing domestic debate into three groups, "the internationalist, developmental, and skeptics' position" (p. 166). An internationalist outlook urges China to assume more responsibilities at the global level as this offers China strategic

incentives and overlaps with the country's moral and normative accountability to world society as a great power. Developmental advocates are not averse to assuming global responsibilities but argue that these should be framed within China's own level of development so as not to overburden delivery of important domestic outcomes. The sceptics, on the other hand, are dismissive of arguments from both other camps and see external calls for China to assume responsibility as a plot to overburden China with the objective of maintaining American hegemony. Boon concludes by outlining how these debates might have important implications for our understanding of Chinese behaviour in different real-world international relations.

The book offers particularly interesting insights into how carefully China's growing strength is observed and measured domestically, with reference made to China's own international status report. This is followed by an examination of the conundrum that Chinese leaders found themselves during the global financial crisis, when they had to ensure that domestic development continued in times of unprecedented international pressure whilst also being seen to be doing something good for others in distress. Whilst external pressures may impact Chinese reactions to different issues at different points in the four-decade timeline, the main position put forward by this work is that these narratives have been part of an ongoing internal debate over the direction and content of China's RGP identity. This is a useful argument that stimulates thinking on the evolution of ideas within China's elite.

However, the book is not without weaknesses. One problem is the internal design of the chapters which appears to follow a rubric of narrative block then followed by some analysis, with a further reprise in the Conclusion chapter. The work would have been considerably strengthened with a greater synthesis of analytical depth alongside individual chapter narrative, which would also have helped to elucidate more about what the author thinks regarding particular points being raised. At times, Boon's voice seems noticeably absent.

There are also some parts of the narrative which present empirical events in ways that noticeably overlap with a Chinese point of view. Whilst this is fine if the author is genuinely persuaded by the balance of evidence, at times there is a perceptible absence of critical engagement with these Chinese positions which renders the text a little one-dimensional. This was especially visible in the final chapter on the contemporary era of Xi Jinping, which was the weakest in the book. For example, there was a simplistic discussion of sovereignty controversies in the South China Sea and no effective attempt to examine how China's recent assertiveness could be characterized as overlapping with great power responsibilities. Moreover, when describing the OBOR/BRI as "a key conduit through which China will express its identity as a responsible great power" (p. 142), readers might have expected more on contemporary debt diplomacy controversies and some analysis of the sharp differences of opinion in recipient state attitudes to the perceived benefits of BRI engagement.

Despite shortcomings, Boon's book is an enjoyable read and could be included in a course reading list, although the absence of a bibliography is a pity. Its key attribute is to improve our understanding of China's own domestic discourse on the country's evolving identity as a responsible great power and, in so doing, it does make a contribution to current knowledge.

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