

Weiping Wu / Mark W. Frazier (eds.): The SAGE Handbook of Contemporary China, London: SAGE Publications 2018, 1269 pp.

The Sage Handbook of Contemporary China encompasses 58 short articles about China's economy, political culture and system, nationalisms, social change, and global role. The focus on contemporary China, however, only allows the reader brief glances into the country's history. The somewhat confined character of the handbook is maintained throughout as the articles are kept concise. The structure, with several dozen partially highly specialized articles organized in 10 chapters, tends to be overloaded and at certain points confusing. For example, China's role in global structures is described in an extra chapter, not as part of China's "normal" development. This leads to certain repetitions, with one article summarizing China's energy situation and another one China's role in global energy governance. Both report on China's energy resources, with a slightly different focus as the latter includes strategies in respect of exports and imports (which is, nonetheless, very inter-

esting, as it identifies two factions in the country's economic bureaucracies – one promoting self-reliance, the other international integration – which struggled over hard-currency oil exports and technology imports before China became a net oil importer again in the 1990s).

Exemplary for what a global historian could expect from such a handbook is Chris Bramall's depiction of Chinese economic history in the twentieth century in the form of controversies on continuities and ruptures. Many of these controversies circulate around one crucial question: was Maoism a hindrance to development before China's economy was liberated by market reforms, or were the industrial legacies of the Mao era the fundament of China's rise to becoming a global economic power in the twenty-first century (still based on state policies to a large extent)? Thus, while many of the articles focus on contemporary life and quantitative methods – and thus are rather oriented towards social scientists, or even practitioners of economic, political, and cultural exchange – there are exciting points to be found for (global) historians as well.

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