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agenda resonated with the structural adjustment programmes of the same decade, which emphasized good governance and anti-corruption.

In the 2000s, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) saw an opportunity to carve out more space and funding for itself; all it required was the connecting of crime to the development and ‘rule of law’ agendas. With this link, the UNODC was able to position itself as a provider of technocratic expertise and assistance. This meant promoting a depoliticized understanding of crime that supposes a clear separation between licit and illicit activities and locates criminal issues in the global South. In chapters seven and eight, the authors explain how this is the version of the crime–development nexus with which we live today. The book argues against this depoliticized and technocratic framework, urging a focus on harm rather than crime (and sustainability rather than development), to better account for the fact that ‘not every action that is harmful is criminalized, and not every criminalized activity is necessarily harmful’ and that ‘criminalization is itself harmful’ (pp. 207–9).

No book can cover everything, and the authors acknowledge two blind spots: gender and the local implementation of the global crime agenda (p. 20). I would add another: race. Given, on the one hand, the deep connection between processes of criminalization and racialization and, on the other, a growing IR scholarship on the central role of race in the construction of global orders, this would be a particularly fruitful avenue for future research. Overall, this is an empirically rich book that tells a complex story with many moving parts, from the global political economy to individuals. It contributes to broader debates on the construction of ‘problems’ in global governance, the role of international organizations in the (re) production of hegemonic orders and the continuities between the colonial past and the postcolonial present.

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After more than four decades of economic reform, China is now the world’s second-largest economy and a much-desired business partner for multinational corporations around the world. In Mao and markets, two business researchers critique some of the conventional wisdom about contemporary China and offer advice for international businesses seeking to trade with and invest in the country. As a starting-point, the book questions two familiar beliefs: first, that free-market economies are more efficient than state-controlled economies; and second, that the development of a market economy will lead to freedom in other spheres of life, including political freedom. As Christopher Marquis and Kunyuan Qiao rightly point out, China has experienced remarkable economic growth since the 1980s while the state has maintained considerable control over the economy. Furthermore, one-party rule has not collapsed following market-oriented economic reforms in the country;
instead, the Communist Party of China has consolidated its power in recent years. The authors argue that, to make sense of China’s successful combination of market mechanisms and state control, it is necessary to appreciate the history of the country, especially the enduring influence of founding leader of the People’s Republic, Mao Zedong.

The bulk of the book explores the various ways in which Mao’s legacy has shaped enterprises and economic governance in China. It draws on government documents, corporate reports, interviews with business executives and survey data. Marquis and Qiao argue that contemporary Chinese business principles, such as ‘country over capital’, resource consciousness, reliance on informal norms and persistence, have their roots in Maoist ideas and policies (pp. 237–9). Similarly, Maoism also informs Chinese principles of governance, including the idea of ‘politics at the centre’, economic decentralization, ideological pragmatism and moderatism (pp. 244–6). The authors are right to point out the fallacy of the conventional wisdom and to call for a deeper understanding—though not necessarily endorsement—of the role of the party-state in China’s economy. The book reminds readers not to judge the party’s involvement in the economy from the perspective of western liberal orthodoxy, but to empirically examine its logic and consequences. For instance, following the Maoist tradition, most private enterprises in China have created party branches. While western observers may assume that this would undermine the enterprises’ independence and efficiency, the authors suggest that it is often beneficial to the enterprises: giving them easier access to capital; building better teams; and providing workers with better insurance.

Nonetheless, the main argument of the book, regarding Mao’s legacy, is debatable. First, much of the evidence comes from an uncritical reading of politicians’ speeches, government statements and corporate annual reports. These documents typically proclaim adherence to socialism, devotion to the Chinese nation and applaud the practice of corporate social responsibility—all of which the authors argue is consistent with Maoist teachings. But can we assume that such rhetoric reflects reality and practice? Second, the authors build their perspective on imprinting theory, which contends that people are shaped by ideas and experiences to which they were exposed at critical junctures of their lives. This theory leads Marquis and Qiao to believe that Chinese business leaders who grew up during the Mao era became believers in and practitioners of Maoist principles. But how do we account for the vast variation among individuals in the same generation? How does the theory explain the many individuals who experienced the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and became strong opponents of Maoist ideology?

Third, the book would have benefited from a greater effort to separate Mao’s legacy from other sources of contemporary Chinese business strategies and governance. Almost all of the main Maoist principles that the authors highlight—nationalism, frugality and devotion to the masses of people—can also be attributed to other historical experiences and cultural traditions. Furthermore, the centralization and decentralization in China’s political and economic governance oscillated and evolved both before and after the Mao era. Thus, it is more likely that specific
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political and economic imperatives have played a larger role in recent trends, rather than Mao’s general ideas and practices.

Overall, this book is a well-written and welcome contribution to the debate about China’s model of development. Scholars and business practitioners should keep in mind its emphasis on the influence of history on contemporary China. The specific argument about the enduring relevance of Mao certainly invites further research and discussions. Dotted with interesting vignettes, the book is a pleasure to read.

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Energy, environment and global health


Climate change and environmental degradation are very much a threat to livelihoods and economies, as well as growing drivers of geopolitical tension. However, climate change is not breaking news: Eunice Foote, in 1856, and John Tyndall, in 1859, independently showed the reality of the greenhouse effect, whereby increasing the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere could warm the planet. In 1982, scientists at Exxon projected climate-warming trends, and predicted that in 2023 the world would be at 1.2 degrees Celsius of global warming. Four decades later, they were proven right: we are at about 1.15 degrees Celsius. Since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988, it has produced six reports, each broadly confirming the previous conclusions and adding to the sense of growing urgency. Therefore, when it comes to climate change, the science is settled and the risks are clear. While progress has undoubtedly been made, it feels glacial relative to the problem. Why is that? Simon Sharpe addresses this key question in Five times faster.

Sharpe has an insider’s view from his time in government, and he played a key role in guiding the United Kingdom’s leadership at COP26 in Glasgow. Moreover, he understands climate realpolitik like few others. Having crossed paths with him many times over a decade, I once described him as ‘one of the smartest people I have met’. While Sharpe was not formerly trained as a climate scientist or an economist, his insights about these fields have greater depth and clarity than those of many of my academic colleagues. In the book, Sharpe makes a three-pronged argument. First, he observes that science has failed to make the case for addressing climate change. The IPCC process focuses on reviewing the literature to ensure that what is reported is the most robust science. What this translates into, predominantly, are projections of the average climate as the world continues to become warmer. However, for Sharpe, what is really needed are proper risk assessments outlining the plausible worst-case scenarios and their impacts on livelihoods. This would require scientists to ask different questions and to relay their answers in different ways.