terized by one of the most sophisticated control systems in the world, Ringen concludes that the Chinese state is trivial, with no genuine purpose beyond its self-perpetuation.

In a postscript entitled "A Better Regime," Ringen examines a series of potential scenarios for China's political future: continuation of the status quo, regime collapse, or the introduction of democracy. Ringen sees the state muddling along as the most likely scenario, yet also sees hints of fascism, in particular in the imagined fusion of the personal and national will in nationalist ideology. Such possibilities, he argues, could become dangerous with a shift away from self-perpetuating pragmatism toward ever more self-glorifying ideology under the new leadership.

The book is filled with unforgettable stories: from the obsessive state monitoring of Tibetan author Tsering Woeser to the flurry of fawning activity in 2013 surrounding the promotion of the "China Dream." Many China scholars will already be aware of such events but will not have seen them woven together into such a well-documented, powerful critique of the state today. Whether one agrees or disagrees with his conclusions, Ringen's analysis ought to generate extensive discussion about how we discuss the Chinese state. Also useful as a textbook to introduce the operations of the Chinese state, *The Perfect Dictatorship* could be read fruitfully in dialogue with more optimistic portrayals of the Chinese state to generate critical debate in class discussions.

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China's Governance Model: Flexibility and Durability of Pragmatic Authoritarianism, by Hongyi Lai. London: Routledge, 2016. xiii+342 pp. £95.00 (cloth), £31.99 (paper).

Hongyi Lai provides a comprehensive interpretation of Chinese and Western scholarship about "the China model." This book begins with an extended review of literature, and Lai's summary will be useful to anyone wanting an overview of current Western-based writings about Chinese politics as well as writings from a Chinese viewpoint.

Lai describes a Chinese "governance model" that includes a "distinctive developmental strategy, institutions, and ideas" (6). This ontological concept suggests that if one understands what the PRC model is, one can deduce its future. Many other authors, some of whom Lai praises and others whom he criticizes, also take this approach. He concedes, however, that the model changes; its constant aim is to prolong "pragmatic authoritarianism." He notes "the China model exists but is

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still undergoing adjustment, is in a state of flux, and . . . has both advantages and disadvantages" (6). This view's "cautious" aspects (with which it is easy to agree) provide a basis for wide-ranging empirical explorations—but also for saying almost anything about the central concept of the book.

It is possible to skip the quasi-metaphysical platonic aspects of China's model to appreciate the patriotism behind it, and inductions can be made from the rich empirical information Lai provides. He mainly studies improvements or declines in "governance" rather than the probabilities of "democratization," a topic that dominates many other writings about China. Lai's overarching approach is that good governance in the minds of China's leaders has just one purpose: to prolong "the rule of the single party" (6).

Lai writes that "the greatest strength and achievements of China's model of governance lie in its economic governance" (85). This is surely true, but he attributes quick development entirely to central rather than local policies. He documents the "strange mixed blessing of high growth plus high popular resentment"—for which he credits and blames "the Chinese state" (85). Evidence could have been presented that growth and corruption come from both governmental and nonstate institutions, and not just from Beijing. China's industrial rise began in rural areas before 1978, and local entrepreneurs spurred it.

Lai reports problems of corruption, lawlessness, increased inequality, and "pro-growth authoritarianism" among local officials. Quick development created problems that Chinese leaders tried to remedy (120–40). He treats PRC welfare programs as efforts to defuse discontent against the government. Lai praises the rationality of a single party's "power monopoly" to determine what ideas, religions, resources, and organizations are legitimate. He does not imply this pattern should last forever, but he sees it as "practical, adaptive, calculative" and appropriate for China. He admits a shortage of "modern" "crisis management institutions" but stresses that many of these—for example, freedom of speech to criticize Party cadres—are taken by many Party leaders as too "Western."

The book's chapters are organized around kinds of governance crises. One example is the SARS epidemic. "Crisis" in this book refers mainly to the regime's health, not directly to the people's. The SARS epidemic broke out in Guangdong in November 2002. Lai mentions a 1989 law that required prompt publicity of epidemics, but the provincial regime under Zhang Dejiang (later promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee) suppressed newspaper correspondents' reports of SARS as embarrassing to the government, so the epidemic spread with fatal results. Lai sees institutions changing in 2003 after that disaster, but the reforms he stresses were medical rather than political. Lai extends this medical example of crisis to point out that China adopts effective collective and preventive measures against contagious diseases more easily than countries that are liberal democracies. For modern maladies such as cancer or heart disease, however, individualistic curative measures are also useful.

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Because policy is rooted in personnel, the most crucial governance issue in China is leadership succession. Lai notes that Mao's two designated successors, Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao, were killed in 1969–71, and Deng's designated successors, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, were purged in 1987–89. For later successions, Lai relies partly on the work of Cheng Li. He notes that retirement ages, term limits, and the distribution of posts among factions have been institutionalized somewhat since the 1990s, though relations between current leaders close to Xi Jinping and those close to his predecessor Hu Jintao remain hard to predict.

Lai's chapter on intra-Party and grassroots "democratization" provides extensive details on failing local experiments that tried to elect leaders. A hesitant willingness to allow voting in the Hu-Wen era has been followed by authoritarian conservatism under Xi, who associates political liberalism with "the West" and comes close to suggesting it may be treason in China.

Since the aim of governance in Lai's account is to extend regime longevity, he analyzes past dynasties that unified the country, finding that they lasted longer when preceding eras of disunity were short. By this measure, the PRC may be resilient—Lai's predictions go through the twenty-first century, although he says the regime is "constrained by . . . ideational powers of individual rights, the rule of law, transparency, supervision of power holders, and democracy" (268). Neither Lai nor scholars who predict a shorter regime pay enough attention to the role demagogic chauvinism could play in affecting PRC longevity. Lai's book mentions Taiwan eight times, for example, but he never takes account in his predictions of the potential domestic political effects of chauvinism in cross-strait relations.

Hongyi Lai has provided a useful, coherent overview of adaptive authoritarian governance in China. As he observes, "there is no reason the CCP will . . . toll its own death bell in order to win the cheers of international spectators" (321). Ultimately, Lai is unsure whether China's "pragmatic authoritarianism" will "last for decades," and he warns us "to avoid unrealistic expectations and unnecessary errors in observing and interacting with China" (321).

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China in the Era of Xi Jinping: Domestic and Foreign Policy Challenges, edited by Robert S. Ross and Jo Inge Bekkevold. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016. v+306 pp. US$64.95 (cloth), US$32.95 (paper), US$32.95 (eBook).

Despite the fact that Xi Jinping is arguably the most powerful and media-savvy Chinese leader since the end of the Cultural Revolution, a veil of mystery shrouds

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