word being inaccurate (see below), and the second gently subjective. Doubtless the author would say that he is presenting two sides of the argument, but the tolerance of communist jargon sometimes exceeds this reviewer’s comfort zone. After all, when one speaks of “Western-style democracy” versus “democracy with Chinese characteristics,” one is talking about public empowerment versus public disempowerment. Let us not allow euphemisms to obfuscate that. (Some of the problems could have been taken care of with judicious use of quotation marks, such as repeated unhedged statements that SAR chief executive Tung Chee Hwa resigned for health reasons.)

On the other hand, Lo can on occasion be withering in his assessment of the Neanderthal views of the Hong Kong establishment. Regarding the canard that universal suffrage would produce a welfare state that would be inhospitable to investors, he writes that this reflects “a remarkable degree of conservatism and ignorance” (p. 85). And the government’s supporters in the business community, who had been “spoiled” under the British, now spinelessly take their cues from the real authorities—in Beijing (pp. 196–98).

Lo’s assessment of public opinion in Hong Kong is based on various polls that have been taken, which present a somewhat mixed picture of public support for democracy. But the polls often reflect people’s sense of what is possible, and what goals it would be counterproductive to pursue. If there sometimes seems to be lukewarm support for one person, one vote, this is because people realize what a price Beijing would extract if a majority of people seriously sought it; it does not stem from a sense that democracy is not fundamentally a good idea.

The book could have been better edited and is also marred by a few errors. The author refers to “students killed on Tiananmen Square” on June 3–4, 1989 (p. 29); actually, the killings occurred a substantial distance from the Square—from which the students filed out peacefully. Ding Zilin’s name is misspelled (p. 40). And Hong Kong could not possibly have seen “38 billion” mainland visitors between 2003 and 2009 (p. 217).

But these are minor shortcomings in what is a balanced and thoughtful account that probably will long stand as the definitive work on Hong Kong’s indeed tragic quest for self-governance during the past two decades.

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Sophie Richardson’s wonderful book sheds light on a poorly understood dimension of Chinese foreign policy, the Five Principles of Peaceful
Coexistence—peaceful coexistence, mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, nonaggression, noninterference in others’ internal affairs, and equality and mutual benefit. Richardson’s thesis is that the Principles “set particular and predictable limits on the choices available to Chinese foreign policy makers” (p. 5). Her case is the bilateral relationship between China and Cambodia from the 1950s up to about 2008. Richardson presents a credible alternative to traditional schools of international relations theory by demonstrating how China placed—indeed, voluntarily constrained—itself in its international interactions from the 1950s to the present. She shows how this framework explains otherwise perplexing instances of China’s foreign policy behavior, past and present. Her argument explains the perennial mutual mistrust between Beijing and Washington and provides a searing indictment of Americans’ refusal to understand—let alone accept—China’s behavior on its own terms.

Richardson argues that Chinese foreign policy behavior represents rational self-interest, but within a set of constructed constraints quite different from what realists might predict: “Beijing’s policies consistently created a variety of options for Phnom Penh” (p. 197), often at a variance with Beijing’s preferred outcome. And although there are a number of occasions when the Principles were not followed, Richardson argues convincingly that this was attributable to unanticipated exogenous shocks (i.e., the Korean War) or domestic turmoil (i.e., the radical foreign policy of the Cultural Revolution, 1966–68 and 1974–76).

There are, however, some parts of the book that I found less convincing than others. The first is Richardson’s treatment of conditionality. China is fond of saying that it offers foreign assistance without attached conditions, thus providing an alternative to Washington Consensus–based contingencies from Western sources. I agree with Richardson that there is a genuine conceptual and empirically realized difference between the two types of foreign assistance. Yet it seems that Richardson is uncharacteristically credulous of Chinese claims of “no strings attached.” Chinese “conditions” include awarding infrastructure-building contracts to Chinese companies, lobbying for policy decisions that benefit Chinese interests within the recipient country, and market access for Chinese goods, as well as adherence to—and support of—Chinese policies toward Taiwan and Tibet (which are embedded within the Chinese understanding of the Principles themselves). And Richardson’s views on conditionality allow her to conclude that “China has provided considerable support to Cambodia’s economic independence” (p. 193). The view from many inside (and outside) Cambodia is precisely the opposite, that China “owns” an ever-growing part of the Cambodian economy.

Like Richardson, I believe that the only way to wade through the mess of Sino-Cambodian relations between 1974 and 1978 is to do so with an eye on the domestic politics in both states, each of which was undergoing its own revolution that was fundamentally a negation of the other (autarchic socialist utopianism in Cambodia, economic reform and opening in China). But some of the linkages she makes feel forced. For example, Richardson claims that had Zhou Enlai been able to retain his power in the face of declining health and challenges from leftists, it is likely that Sihanouk could have thwarted the radicalization of
the Gouvernement Royal d’Union Nationale du Kampuchéa. It seems to me that the die had been cast well before 1974: Khmer Rouge “liberated areas” of Cambodia had begun to resemble Democratic Kampuchea as early as 1972, as Khmer Rouge policy toward its own administered population hardened (and before Zhou’s health took a turn for the worse). And it is difficult to believe that even someone with the stature of Zhou could influence people such as Pol Pot and Nuon Chea, whose worldviews were not amenable to self-reflection or even, as we now know, to pragmatic self-preservation.

Finally, Richardson’s argument becomes weaker and more difficult to apply to the 1979–92 period, particularly between 1983 and 1985. This is not surprising, as Cambodia ceased to exhibit characteristics necessary for the Principles to function effectively, such as commonly accepted borders, and saw the emergence of competing armies and parties, each with sovereign claims. Thus, her analysis becomes vulnerable to charges of “China adhered to the Principles . . . except when it didn’t.” I personally accept her argument, but it could have been made more forcefully.

Richardson closes her book with a summary of Sino-American relations and follows it with a devastating critique of U.S. misperceptions toward China, a topic that cries out for more conceptual and analytical analyses, which would do well to use this chapter as a starting point.

This gem of a book should be widely read by undergraduates, graduate students, policy makers, and particularly anybody who is interested in Chinese foreign policy and Sino-Cambodian relations.

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How, Robin Visser asks in this timely and valuable study, is Chinese culture changing in the wake of the unprecedented rapidity and scope of its urbanization process? Visser’s answer takes the form of a series of field reports from across the fluid and fast-transforming topography of postsocialist urban culture, touching on phenomena ranging from city planning practices to the rise of cultural studies in the Chinese academy, avant-garde art, cinema, and urban popular fiction. As Visser makes clear, to pose the “urban question” in contemporary China is also to invoke the fault lines of a postsocialist (and particularly post-1992) moment, in which an aggressively developmentalist state and the logic of capital grinds up against local communities, histories, and practices. Visser not only provides a sensitive account of the massive urban demolition and dislocation that has