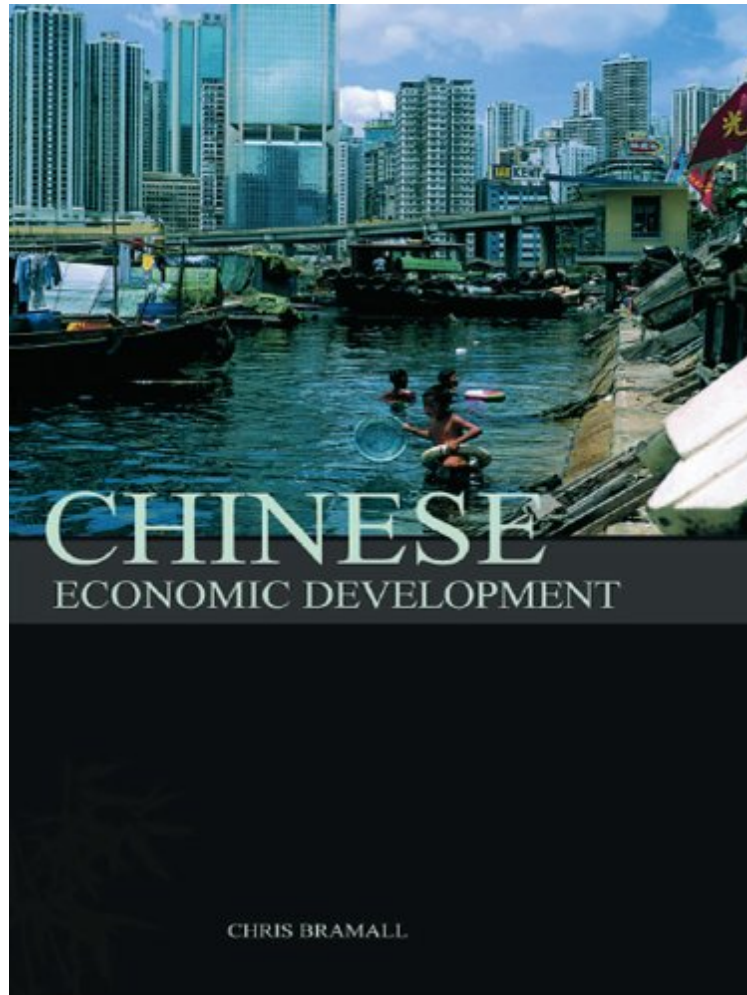


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Chinese Economic Development

Chris Bramall

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Chris Bramall : Chinese Economic Development before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chinese Economic Development:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Excellent study of China's economic development since 1949
By William Podmore
Chris Bramall is Professor of Chinese political economy at Sheffield University. In this brilliant book, he studies China's economic development between 1949 and 2007. Part 1 looks at China's condition before the 1949 revolution, Part 2 at the transition to socialism and early Maoism (1949-63), Part 3 at late Maoism (1963-78), Part 4 at market socialism (1978-96), and Part 5 at China's transition to capitalism (1996-2007). In 1963-78, China rapidly reduced the illiteracy rate, educational inequality and death rates. Girls' educational opportunities improved vastly: "the record of China's system of elementary education was exemplary for a poor country." Large-scale vaccination and better sanitation reduced deaths from infectious disease, especially in rural areas. No country has matched China's pace of death reduction in the post-war era. Under Mao, the irrigated area grew, and large collective farms increased labour productivity, enabling big increases in double cropping. Chinese rural poverty fell by an

extraordinary 200 million in the 1980s, when trade and foreign direct investment were tiny. As Amartya Sen wrote, "communism is good for poverty removal." Bramall sums up, "Mao in his twilight years presided over a remarkable expansion of rural industrial capability - especially skills - which laid the foundation for the extraordinary growth of the 1980s and 1990s and hence provided the basis for rural China's ascent out of poverty. ... In a very real sense, Mao Zedong is the father of China's contemporary economic miracle." In Part 5, Bramall argues that China's "leap into the arms of authoritarian capitalism is a mistake. ... the privatizations of the late 1990s were driven not by concerns about efficiency but by a desire on the part of local cadres to raise money very rapidly and enrich themselves in the process. A revenue-raising scheme was disguised as an efficiency-driven policy initiative." China is now one of the world's most unequal societies. He points out that countries can always compete on the basis of cheap labour or a low exchange rate, but increasing productivity - not competitiveness - raises living standards. "the main consequence of opening up has been a loss of policy autonomy to support and develop infant industries. Given that world historical evidence points unequivocally to the conclusion that protection and subsidies are a sine qua non for catch-up [see Chang, *Kicking away the ladder*, 2002], China's abandonment of these developmental tools is a crucial mistake. It will mean that China will never be more than a middle-income country."

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful.
 Excellent Information -By Loyd Eskildson
 Bramall begins by asserting that we cannot separate economics from politics in explaining the Chinese road to development. Education and culture are also important components. Reordering priorities became necessary after the economy had been brought to the brink of collapse by the mid-1970s. Mao, however, at least recognized the scale of the challenge and the need to address it in a distinctive way. (Thirty million starved to death as a result of his 'Great Leap Forward,' and the 'Cultural Revolution' was another economic and human tragedy.) China is not likely to break up like the Soviet Union - provincial government deviation in key policy areas has been modest since 1949, and its leaders actively continue work to further reduce it. (Eg. Moving Han Chinese into such areas, and facilitating more interchange through high-speed passenger rail travel.) Deng's death led to the abandonment of any attempt to maintain a market socialist economy. Mass privatizations of the late 1990s, joining the WTO, and rapid removal of controls on labor migration made its economy of 2007 capitalist in all but name. The 1987 Central Committee had to assess the prior 20 years in a way that the Cultural Revolution and Mao's latest development strategy could be repudiated without also undermining CCP power. This took until June, 1981. Meanwhile, the government and its leadership were purged of Cultural Revolution and Gang of Four supporters. Deng brought the focus to economics, and away from politics and class struggle. He also agreed that material incentives were necessary to raise productivity. Initial reform reallocated state-investment from defense, metals, and machine-building to inputs for agriculture and consumer durables. Prices paid for agricultural products were increased 22.1%, and even higher market prices were paid for production exceeding quota. New seed varieties, irrigation, and fertilizer availability also helped. Collective farming was dissolved (the typical 'farm' was fragmented into 10 non-contiguous parcels in 1984-85), SOEs were allowed to retain a large proportion of profits and to sell 'excess' production at market prices. Liberalization, not privatization was the goal in this stage. The government also allowed 4 SEZs along with FDI; 25,000 PLA engineers and workers were sent to one SEZ to build its infrastructure. Government spending fell from 31.5% of GDP in 1979 to 22% in 1982; light industry (eg. textiles) rose from 43% to 51%. Nine years into transition, China's GDP had increased 62%, while Russia's fell 42%. Eliminating/reducing the "Third Front" - interior military production begun under Mao as a defense against external attack, sometimes located in caves, also helped improve productivity.

This book outlines and analyzes the economic development of China between 1949 and 2007. Rather than being narrowly economic, the book addresses many of the broader aspects of development, including literacy, morality, demographics and the environment. The distinctive features of this book are its sweep and that it does not shy away from controversial issues. For example, there is no question that aspects of Maoism were disastrous but Bramall argues that there was another side to the whole programme. More recently, the current system of government has presided over three decades of very rapid economic growth. However, the author shows that this growth has come at a price. Bramall makes it clear that unless radical change takes place, Chinese growth will not be sustainable. This large, comprehensive text is relevant to all those studying the economic history of China as well as its contemporary economy. It is also useful more generally for students and researchers in the fields of international and development economics.

"Bramall's comprehensive analysis of China's economic maturation since 1949 is clearly written, consistently informative and resolutely provocative." — R.P. Gardella, emeritus, United States Merchant Marine Academy, CHOICE (September 2009, Vol. 47)
 About the Author
 Chris Bramall is Professor of Chinese Political Economy at the School of East Asian Studies, Sheffield University, UK.