

determining their rights in the workplace, but the state also retreats in defining workers' rights, leading to capital having overriding power in determining workplace and labour market conditions.

doi:10.1017/S0305741023000048

Work Safety Regulation in China: The CCP's Fatality Quota System

Jie Gao. London and New York: Routledge, 2022. xiv + 247 pp. (hbk). £96.00. ISBN: 978-1-138-18244-8

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Risk and safety issues are prominent on the agendas of governments around the world, and in the worries of their citizens. Countries experiencing rapid industrialization and economic growth often face a whole series of novel safety problems. Post-liberation China is a fascinating case for exploring safety challenges since these are closely related not only to rapid economic growth but also to the reform of its socialist planned economy. The rapid deterioration of workplace safety following the introduction of market forces, the appearance of new forms of ownership and structural reforms in government in the early reform era presented China with a surge of accidents and deaths. Jie Gao provides us with a carefully researched and detailed account of the challenges, the means chosen to address them, and the achievements and limitations which followed. Her focus is on the introduction of the “fatality quota” (*anquan shengchan kongzhi kaohe zhibiao*) system, a system of numerically expressed safety standards for evaluating the performance of local elites.

Gao carefully traces the evolution of worker safety systems from Maoist times through the early reform era. With its clear central direction and strong ministerial controls, the pre-reform system became manifestly unsuitable in the reform era of marketization, ownership changes and bureaucratic restructuring. The surge of accidents, in the 1990s and early 2000s, made it clear that new approaches were needed. In 2004, the Hu–Wen administration turned to the “target responsibility system” (*mubiao zerenzhi*, or TRS) for inspiration. Widely used by the party-state in other policy areas to incentivize local elites to follow central directives, the “fatality quota” system added standards to prevent accidents and reduce worker injuries and fatalities to the list of performance evaluation standards for local officials.

China's great diversity in levels of economic development and types of economic activity created a series of difficult problems for establishing realistic quotas in different provinces and localities. Various formulas were therefore needed that would, on a location sensitive basis, address firstly the absolute numbers of deaths and accidents; second, accidents as a function of local economic performance; and, finally, the total number of “severe” as opposed to “minor” accidents. Inevitably, some degree of bargaining between central authorities and local elites characterized the system, as both sides sought to establish appropriate quotas. To ensure that work safety quotas were not sacrificed for other targets, measures were introduced to prioritize safety management.

Gao's work is rich in detail, providing both extensive quantitative data on accidents and detailed accounts of the institutional changes introduced to implement new policy initiatives. For this one policy area, she provides an informative account of the Chinese state in action and, in the face of bureaucratic stovepiping and official recreancy, inaction. While the fatality quota system has produced impressive safety



improvements, especially in reducing work-related fatalities, accident-reduction gains have been harder to achieve in coalmining, construction, transport and fire-related incidents, according to Gao. Not surprisingly, the fatality quota system also reflected many of the characteristic problems – forms of data manipulation by local elites, coverups and other forms of cheating – found in other areas where TRS is employed.

In her final chapter, Gao describes changes introduced during the Xi Jinping era. In 2016, the fatality quota system was abandoned at the national level without explanation, perhaps to better account for the complexities of workplace safety issues not captured by quantitative approaches alone. The Xi government has brought the diverse agencies with workplace safety responsibility under the new Ministry of Emergency Management and, in keeping with Xi's thinking about the role of the Party in governance, Party officials at various levels are now expected to share additional responsibility with local state cadres and enterprise managers for creating safe workplace environments. With the development of China's "platform economy," Gao notes several new and ongoing challenges, including problems of work-related diseases, road deaths occasioned by e-commerce and the rapid growth of small delivery vehicles, and the growing problems of "death by overwork." The 2021 revision of the Work Safety Law (first introduced in 2002) reflects awareness of the changing workplace safety issues.

Gao's study is a useful contribution to understanding the practice of public administration in China and, more generally, the party-state's response to governance challenges. She concludes with reflections on how the case of work safety pertains to current debates about the resilience of China's political arrangements. But the study also contributes to our broader understanding of the significance of the Chinese case for the comparative study of worker safety and risk management. While China has increased its reliance on worker safety law and accident insurance in its repertoire of safety risk management, the dominant approach has been the development of a safety regime through administrative mechanisms backed by ideological appeals. These approaches have clearly produced results but, as noted, they are not without bureaucratic abuses. Notably absent in the Chinese case is a more complex ecosystem contributing to safety, including a vigorous investigative free press, greater respect for technical expertise in characterizing problems, genuinely autonomous labour organizations, a greater measure of political accountability and robust insurance schemes forcing more responsible economic management. One suspects that the creation of such a complex ecosystem will be necessary for future resilience. Whether the party-state can create it remains an open question.

doi:10.1017/S0305741023000140

City on the Edge: Hong Kong under Chinese Rule

Ho-fung Hung. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 316 pp. £20.00 (hbk). ISBN 9781108840330

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Hong Kong's protest movement of 2019 was a landmark event. It involved the demise of liberalism without democracy at China's offshore, the playbook of contemporary social movements, and geopolitical tensions in Asia-Pacific. Many articles and books have been written on the event, and more will come. Ho-fung Hung's *City on the Edge* provides a solid framework and vivid analysis that uncovers the upheaval across time and space. Yet Hung's book goes beyond merely explaining