

*Book Review*

**CACARES, B. & EAR, S. (2013). THE HUNGRY DRAGON: HOW CHINA'S RESOURCE QUEST IS RESHAPING THE WORLD. NEW YORK, NY: ROUTLEDGE.**

Albeiro Rodas

In *The Hungry Dragon*, Burgos Cáceres and Sophal Ear provide an analysis of the second largest economy's geopolitics and how the interests and needs of the People's Republic of China create a new global order. It is therefore an objective illustration for those interested not only in Chinese economy, but also in globalization, since what the authors call the Chinese "hunger for massive amounts of energy" is doubtlessly driving global economic tendencies.

In its hurry to ensure energy and natural resources, China follows its own way of doing that includes partnership with countries with poor performances in democracy and human rights. The authors present three cases to confirm this statement: Angola, Brazil and Cambodia. At the same time, the fact that China is looking for resources as far out of its own region as Africa and South America serves as evidence of its role as global power.

As a resident in Cambodia, it is easy to perceive China's hunger for the country's developing economy. While other powers such as the United States, European Union and Australia show concern regarding Cambodia's human rights abuses, the extravagance of administrative corruption and the resulting crippled democracy, Sophal Ear asserts that China invests hugely in what is evidently a strategic ally in the region and a good source of natural resources. It creates, certainly, an effective shelter for authoritarian states around the globe that would see in the Chinese approach a mutual benefit for their interests, but this happens to undermine the regimen of international law.

The book also makes evident environmental problems. As expected from any global power that consumes as many natural resources as China – the largest world importer of goods and one of the biggest pollutants of the planet – it both contributes to global warming and has spearheaded more and more renewable energy projects.

The research of Burgos Cáceres and Sophal Ear is easily accessible to a general audience interested in understanding how China became a global power in our century, but

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also provides enough data to orient any study on the topic for academic specialists and policy practitioners.

The Chinese economy has become a cathedra of study in many universities, centers of research and policy makers around the world. *The Hungry Dragon* offers a clear approach to that realm of study by providing an introduction to China, the dimensions of its growth and its great need for enough energy consumption to run its great market. It is this element which spells out why exactly China is moving from continent to continent in search of resources, while challenging the traditional conditions of geopolitics.

*The Hungry Dragon* is also a book about the United States of America and the challenges it is facing now that China is growing as a world power. Would its rise mean a decline of America's first world economy? Personally I don't think so, although some seem pessimistic. But what is real is that the economy and even society of the United States must come to terms with China, this century's new giant. The outcome of this relationship remains uncertain and, certainly, studies like this one are necessary to guide policy makers so they can make decisions which benefit the international community. A friendly relation between both powers may be more beneficial for everybody, but in politics and the economy change comes not just from goodwill. At the end of their book, the authors state that "US military exists not simply to win wars, but to present such overwhelming superiority to potential enemies as to prevent having to fight a war in the first place." (p.149) In other words, the US should not resign as a global power, instead ensuring that new powers like China do not abuse their capacity to alter international orders for its own interests. As former President Bill Clinton says: "We live in the most interdependent age in history. People are increasingly likely to be affected by actions beyond their borders, and their borders are increasingly open to both positive and negative crossings: travelers, immigrants, money, goods, services, information, communication, and culture; disease, trafficking of drugs, weapons, and people, and acts of terrorism and violent crime."

This book is a survey of China's economy, written for the interest of the international community. It is a guide for other powers such as the United States, European Union and Japan on what to expect from China, but also for other fast growing economics like India and Brazil. It is also a guide to understand the dynamism of small economics like Cambodia and its territory that is filled with Chinese factories and land concessions. China is a country in need of resources and energy to survive, a true Hungry Dragon.

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