
Preface

It is a daunting prospect to be asked to edit a handbook of anything, let alone a *Handbook of the Politics of China*. This is a subject that has not only very broad and porous borders, but also a continually expanding literature. Even getting to the planning stage would not have been possible without considerable discussion across and support from a range of colleagues. In particular, a recognition of particular gratitude must go to my colleague at Nanjing University, Zhou Peiqin; Sujian Guo, at Fudan University; Lu Peng at CASS; as well as to many of the contributors to this volume.

The chapters of this *Handbook* were first presented to a workshop at Nanjing University in May 2014, and a recognition of particular gratitude must go to Professor Zhou Xiaohong, who hosted the event. In addition to those who have contributed to the final product a recognition of particular gratitude should also go to Bruce Dickson, Jean-Louis Rocca, Deborah Davis and Suisheng Zhao, who participated in the workshop as principal discussants and gave freely of their time and expertise in discussing large numbers of the papers and the issues. It was an exceptional intellectual event, ably organized by Kai Zhang (University of Sydney).

The editor and the contributors owe a considerable debt of gratitude to the publishing team at Edward Elgar, who have been a tower of strength in seeing this *Handbook* through production, not least because of its length.

The purpose of the *Handbook of the Politics of China* has been primarily to provide a study tool for students – undergraduates and postgraduates – interested in academic research on the various different aspects of politics as a field of study. In producing their chapters, contributors were asked to review the literature, and to both present and comment on the latest findings of research. The goal was to produce a useful work of reference with some challenges to received wisdom. Of necessity there will and should be debate about both the topics to be included, and the judgements that are presented. The production of a handbook, like the practice of politics itself, is the art of the possible as well as the discussion of interesting ideas.

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