

## Book Review: China's Silent Army

by Imogen Turner

Did you know The Chinese have a monopoly over Peruvian iron mines? No, I didn't either. This is an example of China's sphere of influence spreading and becoming stronger.

The book *China's Silent Army* is a piece of investigative journalism; it explores how China is able to conquer seemingly impossible markets. Major reasons include strong cultural ties and high labour mobility as private companies often import workers from China.

The authors travel the globe from Central Asia to Africa, Burma and South America where they report their experiences first hand. As the book continues, it is easy and interesting to compare and contrast the differences between China's influences across these areas. A common theme becomes apparent where China agrees to invest in infrastructure, education, develop transport systems and help countries develop in exchange for natural resources. However, this is not a fair deal, local labour is often exploited and the environment is damaged. Such is the case in Peru. China's state owned company- Shougang Hierro Peru is the only active iron mine in Peru. Workers are exploited as the pay is half that of the average Peruvian salary, working conditions are poor and there are frequent accidents as old machinery often breaks. Many of the workers suffer from lung diseases from mineral dust and the local fish stock have been poisoned by toxins in the water. The extractive nature of China's foreign activity is currently unchallenged, even though the case of Shougang Hierro Peru has featured in *The New York Times*.

The book summarises China's bad behaviour and examines the major negative externalities of China's pursuit of growth. On the other hand, the Chinese have created jobs and have helped countries develop. Perhaps as infrastructure and institutions develop, these foreign countries will become better equipped to stand up to the Chinese? Nevertheless, China's abuse of human rights, disregard for the environment and exploitation needs to be addressed.

*China's Silent Army* is an easy read and is relevant to development and macroeconomics especially. Although one sided, it does provide a useful recent history of China's economic situation and is a worthwhile read.

If interested, the book *China Goes Global* by David Shambaugh is an extension on China's expansion.

- **Authors:** Juan Pablo Cardenal and Heriberto Araujo
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