

intensive or traditional—undertaking research in China still requires tremendous understanding of local context. And such understanding comes only from time in country, familiarity with language, and extensive face-to-face dealings with facilitators and research subjects alike. As *Contemporary Chinese Politics* underscores, the China field has benefited greatly from the adoption of modern social science methods, including statistical techniques that permit the aggregation and assessment of vast amounts of data. Yet, such techniques, rather than obviating the need for local knowledge and interaction, in many respects make that need only stronger. How else to ensure that survey questions actually convey the meanings their designers intend, that respondents understand and trust the processes to which they are being exposed, and that the subjects of study do not intentionally distort the information they are being asked to provide?

The point really is that there are no shortcuts to be had. Far more information is available now than in the past, and all manner of advanced methodological tools can now be brought to bear to assess that information. But as *Contemporary Chinese Politics* makes clear, for those tools to be used effectively and accurately, they must be coupled with traditional investments in the study of language, history, and culture. That is a point worth considering not just for the China field, but for political science as a whole.

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Will This Be China's Century? A Skeptic's View. By Mel Gurtov. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013. 205 pp. \$49.95 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

China is rising. People can draw this conclusion from many facts such as China's rank as the second-largest economy in the world, the rise of China's military power, and her assertiveness in the related territorial conflicts. It is easy to move, then, to the following questions: Will this century be China's century? If yes, what are the implications for the United States and the world? How does the Sino-US relationship evolve in the twenty-first century? Mel Gurtov tries to answer these questions in his new book.

In *Will This Be China's Century? A Skeptic's View*, Gurtov tries to address the question, "To whom will this century belong?" Gur-

tov examines the global and domestic status of China in detail, and reviews the US status briefly. He then concludes that this century will belong to neither of these world powers. Therefore, in Gurtov's view, there is a pressing need for renewed efforts by the United States and China to engage each other for their own sakes as well as the planet's.

This book can be divided into four parts. In the first part, Gurtov introduces the chief purpose of his book (ch. 1), and frames the key question, "Will this century be China's century?" (ch. 2). In the second part, Gurtov draws a comprehensive picture of China's rise as a global power, and implicitly concludes that there are many challenges in the way of China's emerging global influence. He evaluates China's place in the world from the aspects of "Harmonious World," Beijing Consensus, world leadership, and the contentious debate over China's military threat (ch. 3). He also discusses China's influence in the third world including Africa, Southeast and South Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America (ch. 4). He dedicates a special chapter to China's bilateral relations with key players such as Japan, Korea, and India (ch. 5), and another chapter to China's domestic challenges related to human underdevelopment, prosperous and problematic economy, social instability, and the limit of soft power (ch. 6).

US global and domestic status are addressed in the third part of the book, in which Gurtov concludes that, based on the overseas cost of US exceptionalism and neglect at home, it is difficult to say that the twenty-first century will belong to the United States (ch. 7). In the last part, Gurtov reaches the conclusion that the twenty-first century will belong neither to China nor to the United States (ch. 8). Therefore, he suggests that Sino-US reengagement must be pursued (ch. 9) through taking remedial steps by both the United States and China to reduce tensions and to promote trust to widen the basis for mutual cooperation (ch. 10).

This book has several merits. First, Gurtov tries to transcend traditional zero-sum US-China games and "take a human-interest approach to international affairs, which puts the global community's security and well-being—specifically, the impoverished and repressed people of the world—ahead of any one country's priorities" (p. 2). This transition from national security to global and human security is more demanding and can make the highest ethical point in this discussion. Second, Gurtov's comments about China are relatively objective and unbiased, especially in the evaluation of China's domestic development. For example, Gurtov uses the phrase

“not all that it seems” to describe the current situation of China’s economy (p. 86). Third, Gurtov is critical of US foreign and domestic policy. For example, he argues that US encouragement of Japanese “normalcy” has fed China-Japan rivalry and US “long-standing reluctance to deal directly with North Korea contributed to the North’s insecurity and consequent development of nuclear weapons” (p. 107). He also criticizes strongly the domestic situation: “the richest country in the world is actually among the most unequal” (p. 110) and “civility has vanished from political debate” (p. 112). The fourth interesting feature of this book is Gurtov’s description of China’s rising in a big-picture context using accessible language and catching the key points and relevant issues. The supporting material is fairly current and up-to-date.

Despite its merits, this book has a few shortcomings. First, the conventional approach used in Gurtov’s analysis appears relatively weak compared to today’s social scientific perspective, research design, and methodology standards. Of course, Mel Gurtov has already admitted this in the preface of his book: “Beyond being a research project, the book is an appeal for common sense about China and US-China relations” (p. ix). Perhaps, Gurtov should have initially defined the specific features of a nation’s century based on historical cases, before examining China’s potential development by using the features. Second, when discussing China’s global role, Gurtov completely neglects China’s relations with Europe as well as Russia. Third, Gurtov’s stance toward China appears to be somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, he has a pragmatic view about China and declares, “I don’t think we have much choice: either we will find common ground with China or we will eventually find ourselves in a new cold war with that large country” (p. ix), but on the other hand, Gurtov shows his fear or suspicion toward China by stating, “And let’s be clear: a rising, self-confident China is a far tougher, more demanding adversary than it ever was under Chairman Mao” (p. ix).

In conclusion, this is a relatively unbiased, informative book that covers many aspects of China’s global status in the twenty-first century. I found this book helpful in facilitating the debate about an important emerging superpower.

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