

played a part in producing the extraordinary nation which is China, which range across language and political structures and economic sectors, have a "top down" feel. One is left with a powerful impression of imposition from above. Given the indisputable hierarchical and autocratic nature of Chinese political structures, this is, perhaps, to be expected. A short reflection on some basic features of wider human experience, however, suggests that to produce a system so vast and enduring requires widespread support or, at the very least, resigned acceptance even when most of the population is barely literate and poorly educated. Another way of putting this is that the systems which Jenner describes seem somehow to have endured *because they work*. This means that, rightly or wrongly, ordinary people have, over the centuries, found that the systems and the values have had real utility. Even a lack of knowledge of alternatives does not stop ordinary people from knowing when something about their system of government is fundamentally wrong, especially over a 2000 year plus time frame. This is not meant as a justification for the practices of Imperial China (which, as Jenner convincingly explains, continue to this very day in many ways). But it would seem to be a component in explaining the extraordinary durability and continuity of Chinese systems; and the Chinese state. In terms of understanding the history of China and its problems and how they may or may not be resolved in the future, the reader would have benefitted from a greater emphasis on "bottom up" explanations of why certain things are as they are. In East Asia, as in the West, everyone plays *some* part in history even in autocratic history.

All that said, this is an excellent book. It is very well written, clearly presented and highly thought provoking. It provides an especially useful counter-weight to the stream of more journalistic commentary on the PRC, especially from North America. Perhaps the strongest measure of the book's merit is that, having read it, one finds oneself making a firm mental note to seek out other works by the same author as soon as possible.

Richard Cullen

DAVID S.G. GOODMAN / GERALD SEGAL (eds.), *China Deconstructs. Politics, Trade and Regionalism*. London/New York: Routledge, 1994. XIV, 364 pages, £ 12.99 (pb), ISBN 0-415-11834-4. £ 40.00 (hb), ISBN 0-415-11833-6

The present volume is the outcome of a joint project on recent trends in Chinese regionalism which involved a number of British, Australian, American and Chinese authors. It must be given pride of place as the best

integrative study available today on this intriguing, controversial and highly elusive subject. The imminent disintegration of China was one of the pet arguments of political discourse in the early 90s, when Pentagon experts gave China a fifty-fifty chance of breaking up along the lines of the Soviet Union. In recent years the augurs of such prognostications have mostly become silent, as the image of a rising and increasingly self-assertive China has replaced that of the tottering giant. Once again, this fundamental change of perceptions within the brief span of a few years reminds us of the fleeting nature of many judgments on things Chinese. The study at hand must be given credit for the attempt to refrain from such peddling in popular fads. It serves rather as a reminder of the complicated nature of internal Chinese developments and the forces at work holding the Chinese state together.

The book opens with a forceful statement by David Goodman on the factors in favor of Chinese unity: common interest in the benefits of a national market and a peaceful domestic environment, economic growth as a bond between all parties concerned, central control of senior appointments, the strong historic legacy of a unified state. Rather than conflict between the center and the provinces in a zero-sum game, Goodman discerns a pattern of complementary roles within the generally accepted state framework. He notes intense regional competition, economic protectionism, at times escalating to commodity wars, and tensions over revenue-sharing, but credits the center with having diffused many of these problems through bargaining and the devising of new rules. Goodman's assessment is shared by almost all the other contributors to the volume, the notable exception being co-editor Gerald Segal with his concluding comments at the end of the book. Segal maintains that the break-up of China remains a distinct possibility. For him, the model of Taiwan, the influence of the overseas Chinese and economic forces pulling China's coastal regions away from the center remain imponderable factors, turning China into a "Muddle Kingdom". But he admits that these are mostly gut feelings, as sound knowledge about the structure of regional interests, local institutions and elites, interest groups and power relations is rare.

The volume contains nine other contributions, some of them generalising on overarching themes in central-local relations, others focusing more narrowly on specific regions within the country. Most of them concentrate on economic issues such as fiscal relations between the central government and the regions or trade issues. The only exception to this rule is an extremely well composed piece by John Fitzgerald who dwells on the unitary state as the dominating political ideal in both ancient and modern Chinese history. It should be read by all who counsel federalism as the solution for China's political problems and who run the danger of underestimating the force of the statist tradition. Turning to the economic dimensions of regionalism,



Yang Dali discusses the important subject of budget-sharing. Sifting Chinese statistics from the last 15 years, he refutes the notion of an enfeebled center ceding ever greater shares of the budget to the regions. Although some of his points on the role of extra-budgetary funds may be debated, he is right in drawing attention to the far-reaching fiscal reforms of late 1993 which have indeed restrengthened the center. Another interesting contribution comes from Anjali Kumar, who commands a wide range of sources for an analysis of inter-regional trade flows within China. Even if these data are limited to the state sector and rural collectives, this is the best-informed study of the subject which I have come across. It concludes with the observation that while foreign trade of the provinces has increased, inter-regional trade has proportionally declined. The author, who works for the World Bank, sees internal trade in China as relatively less developed than trade within the EU or the FSU excluding Russia. The foreign trade activities of China's provinces are then analysed by Brantly Womack and Zhao Guangzhi, who present the well-known picture of a large gap between coastal regions and the hinterland.

The following six studies are devoted to different regions of China, probing the thesis that regionalism threatens the inner coherence of the country. Recurrent subjects are fiscal relations, the degree of provincial autonomy in matters of economic reforms and the politics of China's special economic zones with their jealously guarded privileges. All authors document bargaining, haggling and intense commercial rivalries, but nobody is able to cite evidence for anything amounting to a federalist program or even separatism. This comes out quite clearly in the studies on Guangdong and Shanghai, which are the regions with the longest history of international involvement and the greatest degree of world market integration. It is because of this characteristic that Goodman, Bruce Jacobs and Hong Lijian, the authors of the respective chapters, succeed in presenting informative and differentiated analyses of recent developments there. Other authors treating Fujian, the Northeast, Xinjiang and Yunnan find it harder to muster enough material transcending the surface of programmatic statements, political speculation and economic report figures. At times, their efforts are rather cursory or read like an old-fashioned gazetteer. While the book thus reassures us as regards the political impact of regionalism in China, it once again reminds us of the unevenness of our knowledge about the country.

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