

Europa lernen, Frankfurt 1982; and, published in the same year as Kühne's book, U. Menzel/D. Senghaas, Europas Entwicklung und die Dritte Welt. Frankfurt 1986). Moreover, even though Kühne's plea for precise empirical research and continued refutation of existing theories deserves to be commended, he appears to ignore the fact that recent years have seen a return to the case study type of research. The era of grand theoretical designs and bold cross-national and cross-cultural generalizations has come to an end – at least for the time being.

However, these minor objections should not obscure the fact that with his recent study Kühne has produced another fine scholarly work. Without doubt the study is one of the major German contributions to development research on South-east Asia.

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Tai-chün Kuo/Ramon H. Myers: Understanding Communist China: Communist China Studies in the United States and the Republic of China 1949-1978. Stanford, Cal.: The Hoover Institution Press, 1986. XII + 172 pages, US Dollar 9.95

This book is not a bibliography as one might expect by a first glance at its title. The authors' aim is to analyse and classify in different typologies the attempts of China-experts in both the United States and the Republic of China (ROC) to understand events and development in Mainland China. It covers the thirty years between the founding of the People's Republic and the beginning of a new era which has been named postmaoist.

It is not surprising that *Chapter 1 "The Problem and Our Approach"* (p. 1-15) starts with the question: "How can the members of one society understand the behavior and interpret the events of another society which is different in culture, language, and history from their own?" (p. 1) It seems to be a good beginning to place the US and ROC efforts to understand Mainland China in the greater political and economic context after World War II. It is a pity, however, that the interests underlying official research activities in both countries remain isolated from the rest of the book, i.e. from the research results under discussion: to be aware of the danger of conscious or unconscious bias is an approach which should not be easily dismissed in a study evaluating the interpretations of members of one society by another.

From the different approaches listed by the authors "which might be used independently or in conjunction to understand behavior in foreign countries" viz. the "descriptive typology", the "narrative approach", the "social science theory", this book is committed to the so-called descriptive typology method.

Chapter 2 "Understanding by Means of Typologies. Research in the United States" (p. 16-39) deals with the four typologies constructed out of US research writings: "communist-totalitarian, which characterized research of the 1950s; the modernizing communist regime, which became the major typology of the 1960s and 1970s; the revolutionary-socialist regime, which challenged the last-named typology in the late 1960s and 1970s; and finally, the Chinese communist regime, which represented the work of a small group of scholars and coexisted with the last two typologies." (p. 17)

First, the "communist-totalitarian" view identifies development in China with the "key features common to communist and fascist dictatorships in the twentieth century" which are supposed to be: an official, standard ideology, a single mass party, typically led by one man, a terroristic system of police control, party control of mass communications, party control of the army and of the weapons, party control of the economy.

Second, the "modernizing communist regime" view is related to the emergence of a new generation of China-observers who considered the above-mentioned interpretation too simplistic and, at times, erroneous. They underlined the modernizing efforts which revealed a pattern of both instability and mixed success, but without any long-run, serious dysfunctions in Chinese society.

Third, the "revolutionary socialist regime" view is associated with the "Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars" who stressed the positive aspects of the development in Mainland China, specifically the improvement of the welfare of the Chinese people compared to China "before liberation" and the creation of a more egalitarian society, as well as the development of human beings "encouraging them to realize fully their manifold creative powers". (p. 29)

Fourth and finally, the "Chinese communist regime" view, a typology associated with the 1960s and 1970s. It differed from the first-mentioned "totalitarian" typology only in so far as it emphasized the fact of struggle for power and party factionalism.

Despite the authors' appraisal of the research advantages of China-experts on Taiwan (better information, mastery of the language, better understanding of culturally and historically rooted behavior patterns p. 12) the ROC research material, as it is discussed in *Chapter 3 "Understanding by Means of Typologies. Research in the Republic of China"* (p. 40-51), represents one monolithic view. It is identical with the first-mentioned US typology: "Chinese communist totalitarian regime". The obvious lack of diversity and dissent in the ROC view of Mainland China might have been understood as a warning against biased and interest-loaded research results. But it is not done so by the authors.

On the contrary, *Chapter 4 "Verification of Typologies"* (p. 53-63) maintains

that the first and fourth US typology as well as the one ROC typology (with their overwhelmingly gloomy picture) come nearest to the truth; while the second “seems flawed” and the third “was furthest from the mark” (p. 60). Since, as mentioned above, the authors do not relate the researchers’ individual, social and cultural context with the danger of prejudice, their criterion of the “truth” is not very convincing: The new information flowing out of China since 1978 may not be the whole truth either, but what of views of insiders no less biased and opportunistic at a time of political change?

The *Chapters 5 and 6* “*Understanding Communist China by Means of Prediction*” and “*Understanding by Means of Interpretation of the Event*” (p. 64-83 and p. 84-108) follow this line of argumentation in reviewing the interpretations of three major events: The socialist transformation 1949-1957, the Three Red Banners Campaign (or Great Leap Forward) 1958-1961, and the Cultural Revolution 1968-1978. Conclusion: “Except for occasional insight the US China-experts were unsuccessful in predicting future events, while, after some initial mistakes, the predictions of ROC experts were remarkably successful” (p. 72). I refer to the above-mentioned reservation that current Mainland-Chinese interpretations of the events of the last decades may not represent the truth either. In *Chapter 6* the authors dwell too much on the view of “big men-history”, reducing any development to a mere power struggle. Without an eye for the perceptions, initiatives, hopes and wishes of the different strata of the people the result is the theory of the “injured and seduced innocence” or the “dull people”, i.e. a lack of insight into the dynamics of the relationship between rulers and ruled.

In the concluding *Chapter 8* (p. 125-133) the authors return to their initial question of how to achieve a better understanding of foreign societies, specifically communist ones. The advice ranges from a skillful, imaginative use of social science methods to a profound understanding of language and culture as well as of Marxism-Leninism. I would like to add: To be aware as a researcher of one’s own culturally, socially, and individually rooted – conscious and unconscious – prejudices – this is what we might learn from this book, even if it was not exactly the authors’ intention – apart from the many interesting deliberations on approaches, typologies, misunderstandings, and a useful bibliography presented in the notes.

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