

ROSS TERRILL, *The New Chinese Empire and what it Means for the United States*. New York: Basic Books, 2003. 384 pages, \$30.00 (hb), ISBN 0-465-08412-5; \$16.95 (pb), ISBN 0-465-08413-3

American observers of China tend to take a global perspective, analyzing China's potential as a future global player in balance-of-power politics. (In this sense the subtitle of the book could be a question posed to Europe about its China policy.) Following that distinctly American tradition in a book rich in historical references (with an excellent index), Ross Terrill focuses on remnants of empire in today's modernizing China. After graduating from the University of Melbourne, the Australian-born author first visited China in 1964 and decided to learn the Chinese language while working on his Ph.D. in Philosophy at Harvard. As journalist and sinologist he has followed China's development ever since and published various books and many articles on the country. Today he divides his time between teaching political science at the University of Texas, Austin and working as a Senior Research Associate at the John King Fairbank Center/Harvard University.

The imperial state is characterized as obsessed with doctrine. To bridge the gap between ideal and reality two philosophies were combined. Confucianism is a system of morals that constitute virtuous behavior (respectful and obedient conduct of son towards father and of subjects towards ruler), while Legalism, as an authoritarian model of law and order, builds on a rigid penal code. Their combination might be one reason for the longevity of the Chinese empire. While Mao Zedong Thought was to guide general conduct in society (and revealed its idealist Marxism in the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution), Mao's successors have emphasized Legalism, or, in Terrill's reading, 'the Leninist side of the Chinese political system'. The totalitarian aspect in Mao's regime did not even permit quiet dissent but required individuals to participate in mass movements. Hu Shi, an intellectual from the 1920s, is quoted as having left his home in Beijing for Taiwan because he at least wanted to enjoy the freedom of silence.

Examples of elements of empire are 1) rituals like scripted banquets, techniques over which overly impressed American diplomats have repeatedly lost political battles, 2) a posture of infinite patience used to regain Hong Kong and today applied to the Taiwan question, and 3) the aggrieved stance as former victim of colonial aggression used to instill guilt in others and exact political concessions (p. 281). In Terrill's view, China's autocratic tradition threatens the country's development. In the 1895 negotiations at Shimonoseki Japan's obvious success from opening to the world did not entice China to overcome its own backwardness. Instead, being defeated by Japan was considered by the late Qing leaders as a loss of face. This backward-looking perspective prevented China's reorientation toward economic and political development. The Mandate of Heaven became a Mandate of History under Mao. This cognitive rigidity

long prevented modernization. Today the decline of Marxism might strengthen old imperial patterns.

Nixon and Kissinger greatly admired Chinese statecraft in their encounters with Mao and Zhou Enlai. Nixon even capitulated and left the interpreter to Zhou because American officials supposedly could not keep secrets (p. 5). In Terrill's words, the American leader had come to China to 'be sinified' in the imperial tradition applied by the Chinese empire to civilize inferior peoples. The national security adviser under Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, objected sharply when Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal, during a visit to Beijing in 1979, criticized China's attack on Vietnam. Clinton is portrayed as a most gullible leader, least prepared for serious negotiations, while relations were much better under Reagan.

Terrill blames Nixon and Kissinger for undermining their public stance on Taiwan in 1971-72 by privately assuring Zhou that they would regard Taiwan as part of China and diplomatically recognize China during Nixon's second term. Little noticed in Europe, Taiwan remains one of the most contentious issues between the U.S. and China. In 1928 the Taiwan Communist Party was founded in Shanghai with Taiwan independence in its program (p. 209). In 1946 the American government considered the fate of Chiang Kai-shek on Taiwan as an internal issue. Only when Mao supported Kim Il-sung's attack on South Korea in 1950 did the U.S. stance change drastically. Mao decided to support North Korea in 1950 against Stalin's advice. He resented Stalin, to whom he owed China's control over Xinjiang. In another respect Stalin effectively, if not intentionally, helped Mao: The blockade of Berlin in 1948 coincided with Mao's march to victory across China while American airplanes were focussed on Europe.

Terrill describes China as the last remaining major multicultural empire (p. 190) and quotes a remark by Mao to Kissinger, "The Chinese are very alien-excluding" (p. 195). However, reference to China as an 'ethnic state with pre-modern elements' invites a broader comparison with 'identity politics' in other countries, not least the United States. Samuel Huntington (*Foreign Policy*, March/April 2004) has just outlined his concerns about too many Hispanic immigrants in American society. The debate about 'identity' as an instrument to construct political cleavages merits attention not only in China.

Concerning Beijing's opposition to the Falungong movement, Terrill refers to the millenarian Taiping Rebellion that threatened the Qing dynasty. Part of the not-so-secular aspect of China is the reemergence of Mao worship in parts of the countryside. Some people long for the egalitarian regime of the early Mao period. Given the authoritarian tradition in China, an alternative to the Chinese Communist Party need not be democratic. Yet Terrill emphasizes China's own democratic tradition under the late Qing dynasty and in the early republican period, which deserves further study.