

Bogdan Góralczyk - “Great Renaissance. Chinese Transformation and Its Impact”

A Description

Exactly 40 years ago, in late 1978 seasoned and extremely experienced statesman and visionary Deng Xiaoping initiated an unique process of domestic transformation in China, asking for “freedom of minds” and replacing class struggle by struggle for modernization and economic growth. After four decades of this program, known as *gaige, kaifang*, China now – in comparative terms – looks not as the other country but almost another planet. Due to the rejection of former leftist experiments, very pragmatic approach of “to seek truth from facts” (*shishi qiu shi*) and gradual philosophy of reforms, known as “crossing the river, touching the stones” (*mozhe shitou guo he*), bitter experience of recent Chinese history, known as “one hundred years of national humiliation” (*bainian guochi*) is finally over, China is once again an important global player, like it was for many centuries prior to Opium Wars.

More than 40 years ago, in autumn 1976 young Polish student went to China for the first time and – like many others – just started to sink in Chinese civilization. Afterwards, during some study and his frequent visits to PRC he observed and followed what is going on there, being a keen observer of events. As a result he received a status of “an old China hand” in Poland and abroad, publishing on the subject more and more. This volume, not the first on China in his authorship or edition, pretend to be a kind of coronation of Author’s knowledge and research on Chinese unique transformation or road to modernization.

Unlike many other Western authors, Góralczyk, political scientist and sinologist by education, is constantly mixing Western and Chinese opinions on reforms, modernization, role of the markets and the State, Chinese model of development (*Zhongguo moshi*) or system of rule proposed by Deng Xiaoping (meritocracy). He also adds some deeper explanations of events, including Confucian heritage (and its revival), bitter historical experience of modern China, or the ideas of “one country, two systems” and Greater China blueprint. On the one hand he is quoting some Western, critical voices, like David Shambaugh, Francois Godement, Geremie Barmé, Willy Wo-Lap Lam or Jonathan Holslag, on the other the Chinese working abroad like Yasheng Huang or Minxin Pei, or foreigners working in China, like Daniel Bell, or Robert Lawrence Kuhn, and constantly critically mixing their opinions with those closer to Chinese experience or coming directly from China, like Chi Fulin, Hu Angang, Zheng Yongnian, Wu Jinglian, Justin Yifu Lin or Zhang Weiwei. As a result the reader has a choice: to absorb a Western, or Chinese version of events or their explanation.

Góralczyk is sympathetic to China, but also critical, when necessary, and rather independent in his judgments and thoughts, of course being rather a Westerner not a Chinese. His opinions count. He is trying explain what's standing behind the Chinese Dream (*Zhongguo meng*), and the Great Rejuvenation of Chinese Nation (*Zhonghua minzu weida fuxing*), combining it with Belt and Road Initiative (*Yidai, yilu*) on global arena, and “two centenary goals” (*liangge yibai nian*) of President Xi Jinping on Chinese domestic scene.

He provide an original study of political science, mixed with political and economic philosophy of history, economy, geostrategy and current history, combined with many civilization/sinology explanations. The Author is trying to describe, to understand and to explain what has really happened in China – and with China – in those turbulent years of almost double-digit constant growth. How happened that the Third World, developing country, agrarian and undeveloped, after four decades of fruitful – but also painful and costly – reforms is emerging as a new global power, changing the global map? This is the essence of his penetration and effort, based on extremely rich and diversified bibliography, both Western and Chinese, combined with Author's life-long China engagement.

In the first six chapters the Author is describing the Chinese transformation process under the Five Generations of leaders, in the four final ones he is trying to evaluate what are the results and consequences of it: to China, its neighborhood, a global order or even future of mankind, including the climate change or environmental challenges (the idea of “green revolution”, promoted by Hu Angang and others). As it is more than obvious that such a significant change in a colossus like China had and has an enormous global impact – in practically all fields or spheres. China forty years ago was just a Communist Country, important but not so crucial; China now is a Global Giant – with all its consequences, like it or not.

If you want to know about contemporary China more, even being a Chinese, you should read this volume, just to find another mirror to the story of – so significant in final effects – results of Chinese modernization and reform. You can like some opinions of this volume or dislike the others, but you probably cannot stay indifferent aftermath this reading.