be close to Swaine's conclusions. Moreover, it is clear that China's leaders are well aware of the potential dangers.

The foreign policies of countries closely affecting China is not a central focus of Swaine's study. Nevertheless, one of its most important conclusions is that the approach to China of other countries, notably the United States, will be a critical determinant of China's future responses. Already there are signs of growing nationalist sentiments among the Chinese population at large, and perhaps as a result of a number of US actions in the last year or so a stronger popular antipathy to US actions than Swaine allows. Persistent aggressive approaches to China in the future could stimulate strongly anti-Western nationalistic tendencies in Chinese policy-making, with adverse consequences internationally.

Swaine's conclusions lead to suggestions for further close contacts between the United States and China in various fields, including the military; and avoidance of punitive economic and diplomatic actions against China or evangelical pursuit of early democratic change, either of which may be seen as designed to undermine China's political system or China's social stability. Swain also points to the gains from further economic interaction and from engagement of China in cooperative activities in the region.

It is interesting that this study was prepared for the US Secretary of Defense. Commentators from the US defence establishment have been among the more considered and moderate in the US debate. There may be a connection.

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China in Transformation, edited by Tu Wei-ming. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994. xxvii + 253pp. US$14.00 (paperback).

China in Transformation has no subtitle. Nor can the reader easily supply one. Likely tags of 'socialism to capitalism', 'authoritarianism to democracy' or 'order to chaos' cannot be attached to a set of essays notable for a diversity of views on China's past, present and future. Judging by Tu Wei-ming's introduction, this omission is intentional. He describes the volume as a survey of 'a few salient features of the seemingly restless landscape of the Sinic world' (xiii).

Edward Friedman in his essay on 'A Failed Chinese Modernity' argues that 'shifting tectonic plates are remaking China' (p.1). By this he means that the anti-imperialist nationalism fostered by the Communists is weakening its hold ('A cadaver sits on the Leninist throne of national power' [p.15]) and that new political identities, like a southern nationalism that is commercial, regional and hostile to the central state, are on the rise. While Tu Wei-ming

cautions that the volume's 'purpose is neither to judge nor predict, but to *understand*' (xiii), Friedman predicts a chaos he hopes will be creative and condemns the current regime's moribund state.

Friedman's unsympathetic view of the Communist past should be read alongside David Apter's essay on Mao and Yan'an. Apter explains why so many reasonable people placed their faith in ideas Friedman now finds so hollow. Mao's genius lay in his ability to make sense out of China's crisis in storyboard, cartoon-like form. He told a compelling tale of imperialist and feudal oppression that allowed most Chinese to imagine themselves as good and righteous people. What Friedman exposes as lies — the Yan'an myth of good leaders, contrite intellectuals and righteous peasants — Apter usefully terms 'fictive truths'. And with a decisive ending and a new beginning rather than some more complex negotiation with the past and among all parties given paramount importance, Communism made sense to more than a few zealots.

Ying-shih Yü helps explain how the impulse to invent an entirely new China emerged early in the twentieth century, especially among May Fourth era intellectuals, for whom any particular problem was a symptom of a profound underlying disease. Nothing could be done until everything could be done. A radicalism this vast and deep had little effect until Mao and the Communists found the means to make everyone and everything connected *via* storyboard, organizational affiliation, and personal dossier. However, dreaming the impossible resulted in unification of China by radical means and on behalf of utopian purposes in ways that were largely destructive. The common goal of wealth and power became the shared nightmare of the Maoist years. In retrospect, Mao himself oversaw a bloody process whereby avenues of change that initially made the most sense, like complete revolution to solve huge problems, proved dead-ends. This has left people more aware of what they cannot or should not do than what might be possible and appropriate. As Wang Gungwu argues in his chapter, revolution itself, which had seemed to be the sensible way to bridge Chinese experience and the global, modern world, has come to represent a trite story of violent power struggles. China experienced a dynastic transition with no hope of achieving the stability and cultural familiarity of a new dynasty.

Myron L. Cohen exposes one of the most remarkable examples of the political illogic running through the Chinese revolution in his essay on how modern politicians in China like Mao have worked to turn Chinese farmers into 'peasants'. In the process, the bulk of the population acquired great ideological and moral significance as the mass victims of feudalism and imperialism without being credited for their proven abilities to market goods, adapt and exploit economic assets, manage community life, and find religious meaning in times of great change. In fact, the Communists made it their business to destroy such capacities. This was a classic example of a particular problem — rural distress and suffering — being assigned a radical solution that not only failed to solve the problem of production and distribution but

crippled later efforts to place rural China on an equal footing with the cities and consigned rural dwellers to 'second-class citizenship'.

Perhaps China's earlier periods of stability depended on the very incompleteness of the effort to unify and cohere. As Helen F. Siu shows in her contribution, imperial Beijing worried less about China's ethnic diversity than about the ambitions ignited when non-Han peoples assimilated and began to join in the quest for central power. From this point of view, making everyone within the boundaries of China 'Chinese' not only provokes those, like the Tibetans, for whom such identities are offensive, but energizes assimilators on the periphery anxious to claim their enlarged patrimony by any means necessary, including civil wars to reunify the country on their terms.

William P. Alford suggests in his essay on legal reform that laws designed to keep the Communist Party in power by giving it a more complex and universal legal basis are 'double-edged'. Legal oppression of dissidents turns out to be more time-consuming, public and unpredictable than the authorities had imagined. In their contribution, Andrew J. Nathan and Tianjian Shi use new public opinion data to identify what William James once termed the 'ambiguous potentialities of development' of both individuals and societies. That is, the double-edged nature of government institutions may be matched by similarly complex popular attitudes. As it happened, despite abundant evidence of police state controls in China, many people believe that the regime plays little role, positive or negative, in their daily lives. In addition, the *least* educated Chinese have the greatest confidence that the current regime will treat the average person fairly when there is contact. These findings help us understand the inertial force of a regime that seems confident that it need not reform itself. At the same time, although Nathan and Shi identify markedly low levels of political tolerance among the general population, other indicators that they include suggest that most Chinese could live in a much freer and open society and many, in fact, read the consequences of economic reform and prevailing political lassitude as having opened up just such a condition.

Living through the uncertainties brought by grand schemes and small strategies that fail to measure up to utopian promises or pass ethical muster has generated considerable anguish on the part of those who try to speak for culture and people in the largest sense. Matching the external quest for wealth and power is what Tongqi Lin calls 'a search for China's soul'. For Lin, the particular debates themselves — over humanism or modernism — are less significant than the continued vitality of Chinese cultural approaches to apprehending ethical problems. While it is impossible to return to dynastic rule, the moral language of Confucianism permeates the writings of even anti-traditionalists like Liu Xiaobo.

In addition, despite the destruction of traditions as described by Cohen, Yü and Wang, the Chinese can still take a long view in which the rise and fall of dynasties, policies and personal fortunes can be understood as a problem in irony: being aware of not measuring up to past greatness or current rhetoric.

As Benjamin I. Schwartz observes in his contribution to the volume, the Chinese have long been acutely aware of the gap between the 'norms and actualities' of life. A sociologist quoted by Perry Link in his chapter thus shrewdly compares the ups and downs he and his country have experienced to the wild flapping of a fish out of water which acts not because it knows where the next move will take it but only because the 'present position is intolerable' (p.201). As Link explains, the Chinese may not know what 'core values' will work as substitutes for the old ones that have been wrecked and the new ones that have failed. But the Chinese know such a vacuum exists and, in the spirit of crossing out the impossible or unbearable, they know what they do not want: chaos or a loss of Chineseness, for example.

While the old Chinese empire is dead, an inner empire of moral categories and economic strategies remains as a tenuous basis for unity within the 'Sinic world'. What seems to have died today is the will to imagine, grasp and change China as an entity capable of unified movement and consciousness. But it would be a mistake to read political ruptures and stalemates in this century as signs that powerful non-state institutions like the family and powerful ideas like moral autonomy are dead. As Schwartz's closing essay to the volume suggests, neither modernity nor China's past can be escaped in a 'globalized' world. The bad repute of utopian projects has, in effect, reopened negotiations with that past and with the world that provoked such imprudent leaps. Someday, peasants may be farmers and rulers elected politicians. But for the moment, all that can be said, as this very interesting volume underlines, is that negotiations have commenced.

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Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State, edited by Christina K. Gilmartin, Gail Hershatter, Lisa Rofel and Tyrene White. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994. 454pp. US$49.95 (hardcover).

Engendering China is a conference volume that, by design, partakes of the trend toward the decentralization of norms in the analysis of Chinese women. These norms include the use of Western women and Western theory as standards of analysis and often imply a single disciplinary approach or an approach that involves a sole subject position. Where this volume is concerned, decentralization has resulted in a collection of essays that are defined by disparate modes of analysis, linked haphazardly by random themes and concepts. The absence of a central theoretical position or organizing principle in *Engendering China*, not to mention the vast historical periods it spans, makes it less well integrated than a comparable volume, *Body, Subject and Power in China* (edited by Angela Zito and Tani Barlow). As a result, the reader is led to question not so much the value of the individual papers,