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World power status of China on the international arena

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REVIEWS-REPORTS

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WORLD POWER STATUS OF CHINA ON THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

**Joanna Marszałek-Kawa, *Contemporary China. The Condition of the State*,
Adam Marszałek Publishing House, Toruń 2011, pp. 195**

The book published by Joanna Marszałek-Kawa from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń is one of a few up-to-date Polish scientific studies strictly on China. As the author states, the need for a thorough research on the condition of contemporary China from the perspective of its internal and foreign rose as a result of a sudden growth in importance of this Asian state on the international arena. Undoubtedly, there are other publications on various Eastern matters¹; however, the book discussed has a number of unique features.

The monograph comes from the *Library of Asia and the Pacific* series published by Adam Marszałek Publishing House. The author decided to publish her work in English only, which is a rare practice amongst Polish academics. Thus, the book contents are easily accessible to international academic environment. On the one hand, such a practice has a considerable cognitive value, on the other, it allows for more possibilities of academic criticism of the author and her work, therefore allowing for a fuller participation in the academic discourse.

In her book, Joanna Marszałek-Kawa states that the 21st century belongs to China in many respects. She considers political, economic, military and cultural dimensions. According to her thesis, the strong expansion of China in the abovementioned areas allows for a conclusion that China attained the status of a superpower. The current geopolitical international environment points to Chinese hegemony not only in the Asian subregion. One of the author's conclusions is that "China will soon become a superpower. The question remains what impact it will have on the international

¹ Among valuable Polish publications on the subject are: B. Drelich-Skulska, *Azja-Pacyfik. Obraz gospodarczy regionu* [Asia-Pacific. The Region's Economic Picture], Wrocław 2007; B. Góralczyk, *Chiński feniks. Paradoksy wschodzącego mocarstwa* [Chinese Phoenix. Paradoxes of the Rising Powers], Warszawa 2010; Z. Wiktor, *Chiny na drodze socjalistycznej modernizacji* [China's Socialist Modernization Way], Toruń 2008.

community and how the Middle Kingdom will use its influence. We can definitely say that in the interest of the whole global community China should become a “responsible guard of the international system” (p. 150).

The book is divided into two parts. The first, entitled *Inter-subjective relations in China's foreign policy* contains information on the foreign policy carried out by the People's Republic of China. The second part, entitled *China's Foreign (and Internal) Policy Objectives*, includes a description of the most important goals of Chinese internal and foreign policy. Such a division allows for creating a complete image of contemporary China.

The first part of the book is opened by a chapter concerning the current condition of the Chinese state. It is fairly interesting as it contains a synthetic evaluation of both Chinese economy and society. The author, mostly on the basis of indicators, states that “Today, China is in the centre of the world. The United States has lost the position of the only guarantor of peace and safety in the world which it gained after the Second World War. The unipolar world is over. In the 21st century we are entering an era of multipolarity” (p. 43). It is noteworthy, that a rapid growth of economic indicators in China is accompanied by a dynamic development on field of innovation and new, unique technologies.

The subsequent six next chapters describe inter-subjective relations of China with other entities of international law. Joanna Marszałek-Kawa presents a number of most important directions of Chinese foreign policy. Chief among them are the relations with the developing South: African and South American countries. These countries are often politically unstable, yet, due to their great potential, they are often subject to political and economic influences. The second important direction of Chinese diplomacy is the Russian Federation and East European states. The book addresses also the issue of Polish-Chinese contacts that are maintained on several levels. The two following chapters contain an evaluation of the relations between China and the United States and between China and the European Union. The author described the development of bilateral relations between these players in the international arena stage in the 20th and 21st century. These deliberations can be summarized with a statement that the sudden growth of the “Asian tiger” weakened the position the USA and the EU in relation to China. The last two chapters of the first part are devoted to relations with Asian states – Japan and other countries neighbouring China.

The second part of the book contains a description of internal and external objectives of Chinese policy. The author discusses the issues most relevant to her thesis. In the first chapter of this part she touches upon China's approach to worldwide terrorist threat. This topical subject is discussed in the context of the membership of the People's Republic of China in such international organizations like the United Nations or the ASEAN on the regional level. The following chapter presents the internal political order of China. One of the main goals of Chinese authorities was to create a society based on a strong national identity and modern principles. The last two chapters of this part treat on complementary issues of national security and energy politics. In the contemporary

world these issues cannot be treated separately – there is a strong correlation between national military security and energy security and raw material policy.

The image of contemporary China that emerges from the analysis of its internal and external aims, allows, on the one hand, to state that “There is no doubt that the 21st century belongs to China. The transformation it has undergone over the past few decades results in interdependence of China and other countries of the globe: when the Middle Kingdom changes, the whole world changes. China dynamically influences the global system. If the Chinese Dragon is successful, not only America will thrive as well. Other countries also hugely depend on the well-being of China” (p. 150).

However, it seems that the author of the monograph omitted a few issues vital to functioning and the image of China on the international arena. One of them is the problem of adherence to human rights by Chinese authorities and another is the issue of Tibet. Of course, it is possible to say that these matters do not significantly affect the overall functioning of the Chinese state; however, they are noticed and discussed by the international community.

The book is based on numerous sources in Polish, English and Chinese. It contains also fragments of Chinese politicians’ official speeches translated into English. Undoubtedly, they can prove valuable for other researchers interested in China. At the end of the book there are tables with data on such subjects as the list of agreements on exemption from visa requirements or a list of trade relations of the People’s Republic of China with other states.

In the light of the above observations and remarks, it is undisputable that Joanna Marszałek-Kawa’s book has great academic and cognitive value. This publication may be of interest both to academics dealing with international relations (who are interested in the theoretical dimension), as well to diplomats (who value the practical dimension). It is very likely that the issue of changes in China and on the Asian continent as well shall be very topical in the next several dozen of years. At present, China’s world power status on the international arena is a vital research problem.

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DO INTERNATIONAL SYSTEMS MATTER?

**Barry Buzan, Richard Little, *Systemy międzynarodowe w historii świata*
[International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations], PWN Publishing House, Warszawa 2011, pp. 565**

The first edition of Barry Buzan and Richard Little’s influential work *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* was originally published in English in 2000. The Polish translation was published in 2011 under an arrangement with Oxford University Press. Barry Buzan is a professor at the London