

约翰·奈斯比特 多丽丝·奈斯比特，中国大趋势。译者：魏平。吉林出版集团，中华工商联合出版社。2009-09-01 出版。ISBN：978-7-80249-158-8/D·001

約翰·奈斯比 & 桃樂絲·奈斯比，中國大趨勢：八大支柱 撐起經濟強權。翻譯：侯秀琴；天下遠見出版社，2009 年出版。

John & Doris Naisbitt, *China's Megatrends: The 8 Pillars of a New Society*, translated into Chinese by Hou Xiuqin, Taipei: Tianxia yuanjian, 2009, 283 pp.

This Taiwanese version of John and Doris Naisbitt's new book was published two months after mainland China's version (transl.: Wei Ping; Jilin Publishing Group and China Industry & Commerce Associated Press Co. Ltd), which was released in September, prior to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of People's Republic of China. The original English version is scheduled for release in January 2010. The schedule for publication of the various language versions in different parts of the world are all arranged by the authors and their associates (pp. 283-4).

To the people from mainland China, this book contains nothing new, but John Naisbitt's reputation and status as one of the best futurist writers in the world make this book appealing. Twenty-five years ago Naisbitt's *Megatrends* was a best seller throughout the world and one of the sources from which the then Chinese president, Mr. Jiang Zemin, obtained fresh ideas relating to China's development (pp.279 – 80). In 1996 Mr. Jiang invited Naisbitt to write a book about China, but he did not accept the invitation at that time. The Naisbitts have now co-authored this book, revealing a China that has challenged the democratic model prescribed by the West, while achieving amazing success in the past thirty years.

The book is structured around “eight pillars”, which refer to eight aspects from which the Naisbitts describe and discuss their observations of China. The phrase “eight pillars holding an economic power (*jingji qiangquan* 經濟強權)” in the title of this translated Taiwanese version differs slightly from the original English wording “the 8 pillars of a new society”, which was translated faithfully in the mainland China edition. Perhaps this reflects a Taiwanese preference for emphasizing mainland China as an economic power rather than a new society.

The “eight pillars” make up the titles for eight chapters. They commence with Deng Xiaoping who initiated the move towards “emancipating the mind and seeking truth from facts” which, as the starting point for all the policies regarding economic reform and China's opening up, is the primary pillar. On the basis of this first pillar, the authors creatively built the second pillar - the Chinese model of democracy - which they describe as vertical instead of horizontal as in Western countries. According to the authors' description, in this vertical model ultimate power rests with the leadership, but people can make proposals (pp.55-6). In their view, this Chinese model can be more efficient than the typical western democracy (pp.56-7, 80).

The other chapters build on this key point from various perspectives. Chapter three expands on this Chinese model of democracy. It argues that western countries expect China to

conform to their concept of democracy, and do not accept that the Chinese model is actually a new form of democracy. Chapter four elaborates on the challenge China's development model presents to the West. The idiom *mozhe shitou guohe* (to feel the rocks as one crosses the river) is adopted to describe this fourth pillar, which vividly illustrates Deng Xiaoping's determination to seek China's own path to modernization and the pace at which it is travelled. In the view of the authors, democracy is the final destination of western countries, but for the Chinese the goal is to develop a *xiaokang* (well-off) society which aims to provide a basic living standard while seeking sustainable development (pp.119-20). The authors employ their key concept of Chinese vertical democracy to address the issues that were often raised by western critics of China, such as freedom of speech. They acknowledge that the Chinese government controls the media and internet, however they criticize western critics who, in their view, have exaggerated the problems (pp.123-6). They defend China by arguing that mistakes and problems are inevitable in the course of development; like people who are crossing a river, China might have a fall but would continue its journey and reach its destination (pp.124, 142).

Chapter five focuses on the development of art and scholarship in the past thirty years, while chapter six documents China's efforts to become a member of the international community. Chapter seven discusses issues relating to freedom and equity. The authors believe that China's vertical democracy model has the advantage of balancing the demands for social welfare and economic development, that is, balancing most people's demand for social services and the entrepreneurs' continuous pursuit of wealth. They point out that education is the key to people's independence and well-being, and it opens the door to freedom and fairness. The final chapter forecasts that China in the near future will become the most creative nation in the world, and move to the centre of the international stage.

This Taiwanese version has a forward written by Professor Charles H. C. Kao (Gao Xijun) of the Dept. of Economics, University of Wisconsin, River Falls, who encapsulates the different views on China's future. Professor Lin Zujia of the Department of Economics, Chengzhi University, provides readers with a guide to this version. While summarizing the "eight pillars", he emphasizes three points. Firstly, China may not adopt the Western political system in the future, as China differs from western societies and any judgments based on western values and concepts may not be correct or appropriate. Secondly, the rise of China to the international stage cannot be denied or ignored, regardless of whether one likes or dislikes China. Thirdly, in the search for a true China, one should realize that the diversity of views and forecasts for China reflects the fact that there are many facets to China's politico-economic situation and society. For this point, Professor Kao's metaphor is even more illustrative: foreign scholars may view a mole on a lady's face as a beauty spot because they use a telescope from a distance, while local people may see it as a blemish because their daily life experience is like a microscope (p.v).

The authors claim that they take an 'inside-out perspective', and provide a wholesome picture of the changing Chinese society. Their acknowledgements reveal the impressive network they have forged with Chinese leaders and elites, but one cannot help noticing that the book

includes very few dissidents' voices. This undoubtedly reflects Naisbitt's forte as a futurist writer, as the book lacks the rigour of a scholarly work. However, based on his past record, his predictions may well prove to be correct again. Time will tell.

Above all, this is definitely a book that will please Chinese leaders, as Naisbitt's reputation makes his representation of China and his forecast for China's future direction much more convincing than any Chinese official documents or media hype. This is also a book that would inspire patriotism and pride in Chinese people, while also providing the West with a different window from which to observe China.

Review by Bai Limin

**Bai Limin** is senior lecturer and Director for the Chinese Program in the School of Languages and Cultures, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Her primary field of research is Chinese intellectual history and education from the late seventeenth century to early twenty century. She also works on the issues relating to contemporary Chinese society and education. Currently she is working on a book project on Darwinism, nationalism and the development of modern Chinese textbooks in the 1890s – 1910s. She has published extensively on Chinese history, society and education in both English and Chinese. Among her publications are *Shaping the Ideal Child: Children and Their Primers in Late Imperial China* (Chinese University Press, Hong Kong, 2005), and *Meeting the Challenges: Chinese Students' Experience in New Zealand* (East China Normal University Press, Shanghai, 2008); and numerous research articles in prestigious journals, such as *Late Imperial China*, and *China Quarterly*.

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