

Book Reviews

***The Problem of China: Persoalan dan Prediksi Masa Depan Cina [The problem of China: Issues and Predictions of China's Future].* By Bertrand Russell (S. Abdullah, Trans.). Yogyakarta: Millennial Readers, 2019. ISBN: 978-602-5689-15-4. (Original work published 1922).**

This book explores the China history, political, social power and its tendency especially in early 20th century, the turbulence period when China Kingdom ends. Based the experience during in China 1920 – 1921, Bertrand Russell wrote this book to explain and analyze China including political commentary, philosophical reflection, and cultural analysis to explain China's challenges and possibilities in the contemporary world. Bertrand Russell, poses multiple related inquiries, why has Chinese civilization endured for centuries despite political instability and foreign intervention? In what ways can China modernize while preserving its cultural identity? He started with the arguments; the key problems in China divided into three parts: Politic, economic and culture, and those parts cannot be separated, those have connected each other. The culture is very vital, when these problems solved, politic and economy would gain the goal. Russell offers more interpretation by emphasizing the intellectual and moral strengths embedded within Chinese civilization.

In the main argument of this book, Russel argues that the modern China is designed by the preservation of its cultural foundations, however foreign interventions exist in China. In this book Russell has own argument that is not like other western writer,

he opposes the westernization. Western imperialism and militarism had tried harm China. He argues that China has ethical and philosophical traditions, especially those linked to Confucianism. It could contribute positively to global civilization. China's longstanding focus on moderation, education, and social harmony offers a contrasting approach to the militant nationalism and industrial militarism prevalent in Europe following the First World War.

One of the book's strengths is the comparison of between east and west civilization. Russel sees the differences in the western industrial society which base materialistic, in terms of wealth and technology, western is in advance but morally exhausted. While China has intellectually sophisticated shown by its fundamental culture yet economically underdeveloped. By his experiences during in China, Russell questioned the modernization which designed by Western, the modernization must imitate western political and social system. Substantially, the social system, education, governance and international relations express the boarder of civilization and human development intellectually, rather than materially. The phenomenon of the western centered in early twentieth century is constructed by limit observations of the China with occasionally relying on generalizations about Chinese society and culture.

The book is divided into several thematic chapters discussing Chinese history, Japan as the influence country to China, the international power, cultural philosophy, education, industry, and China Expectancy. Russell begins with his analysis and describing



the social and political conditions when he came to China. Then, He saw the China principle on its culture is very strong while effects of foreign powers, particularly Japan and Western imperial states on Chinese sovereignty. He argues that imperial competition weakened China politically while simultaneously exposing it to modern economic and technological systems.

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The novelty in this book is Russell saw China had potential to modernize without embracing the militaristic tendencies visible in Europe and Japan. This perspective offered an alternative model that civilization can be adopted in the modern world. The intellectual traditions of Confucianism and Taoism can be tools of China modernization softly and without destruction.

One of the chapters also discussed about stressing the education. For China, national development especially scientific and technical knowledge should be expanded without abandoning traditional Chinese values. Then, Russell argues the industrial growth and modernization should not exploitative capitalism and authoritarian governance.

Overall, The Problem of China remains a significant contribution to early twentieth-century political and cultural analysis. Although some arguments may appear dated today, the book is valuable for its effort to understand China sympathetically during a period of global transformation. Russell's reflections on imperialism, modernization, nationalism, and cultural identity continue to resonate in discussions about China's role in world politics.

