

Hello, and welcome back to As It Is from VOA Learning English.

I'm Jerilyn Watson.

Today on the program, we talk about China and two new books about it. One writer describes it as rising. The other says it faces serious difficulties.

Timothy Beardson is the author of "Stumbling Giant: The Threats to China's Future." He says China may have only 20 years to deal with some serious issues that could hurt its economy. We will hear from him in the program.

But first, we talk with Denny Roy who has written a book called "Return of the Dragon." He says China plans to build a strong military, protect its economic interests, and rise to what it believes is its right place in the world.

VOA's Jim Stevenson spoke with both authors. Today Bob Doughty joins us to tell us about those talks.

## **Return of the Dragon: China Rising**

Jim Stevenson recently spoke with Denny Roy of the East West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Mr. Roy is an expert on Asia Pacific security issues, especially those involving China. His latest book, "Return of the Dragon: Rising China and Regional Security," was published in July.

In the book, Mr. Roy says China sees its current rise in power and influence as natural. He says China believes it is a return to the position it always should have had in world issues.

"The Chinese see themselves as having gone through a recent period of victimization, of being knocked off the top of the hill and thrust down to the bottom of the hill -- what the Chinese call the 'century of humiliation.' So, China has from its historical background kind of a combination of number one, entitlement and, number two, a sense of having been recently and brutally victimized and therefore having to take great care that it's never in a, such a vulnerable position ever again."

Denny Roy says this period of victimization, as China sees it, is why China does not support modern international law. He says it also is the reason China does not accept other nations -- especially the United States -- trying to limit its rise.

He says China wants to guarantee that other nations will never disrespect it again. He says that means China will seek to protect itself with a strong military and protect its economic interests. He says this includes the gathering of valuable minerals, oil and other resources.

“China sees it (as) natural that a strong country has strong military forces.

The Chinese would consider that to be the case for any country, but certainly all the more so in China’s case because China is a very large country and also has ample reason to suspect the designs of the other great powers because of its recent history as a victim.”

In “Return of the Dragon,” Mr. Roy says China sometimes seems unable to hold a clear identity. Is it a developing nation or a superpower?

“China’s often charged by critics with sort of wanting to have it both ways -- on the one hand still arguing in some fora that they’re a developing country and therefore they deserve certain breaks that developed countries are no longer eligible for. And that they’re too poor to pay the costs of big global initiatives that benefit other countries, where China still needs to build itself up. But on the other hand, the Chinese demand, you know, the full right of having a say at, at every table and being treated as a newly great and powerful country -- maybe even in some cases on par with the United States.”

Mr. Roy says the increased American attention on Asia makes Chinese leaders nervous and suspicious of American intentions.

“If there’s a conflict between the United States and China, this is set up by larger, tectonic movements: It’s the arising of a new great power in a region that has already long been under the, the near domination of another great power -- the United State of America.

The key thing is, can the two countries articulate their interests to each other in such a way that the other party finds the deal offered by the other side to be acceptable?”

## **Stumbling Giant: The Threats to China’s Future**

Timothy Beardson is the author of the new book “Stumbling Giant: The Threats to China’s Future.” Mr. Beardson was the owner of a large investment bank in Asia.

Mr. Beardson says China’s aging population and relatively low birth rate is one problem. He says the responsibility for caring for these people will fall to China’s younger generation. Most of that population is single children. They have no brothers or sisters to help care for their parents and grandparents. Timothy Beardson says the government will have to assist them.

“Hundred million over 65 (years old) now, by 2030, 300 million over 65. But, coupling that with the fact that the shape of the Chinese family is changing - - now a couple of young adults would have maybe four parents alive and maybe eight grandparents alive and that simply becomes overwhelming for a, a couple now to look after all those elderly.”

Timothy Beardson says at the same time, falling birth rates mean the population will start to shrink quickly.

He believes that by the end of this century, China and the United States will have the same number of people. China’s lead in a manufacturing workforce will end.

“The workforce, which has been abundant, growing rapidly -- and therefore wages have stayed low and China’s been a very competitive place to be making cheap manufactured goods -- and that is all changing because the last 30 years the number of births has gone down, and that’s now coming through to the fact the labor force is starting to shrink.”

And, Mr. Beardson says China will suffer because of its one-child policy. Chinese parents generally seek male children over female. He says the country will experience great social insecurity when millions of Chinese men are unable to find a wife.

“In a society like China they tend to want to have boys not girls -- and they tend to stake steps to make sure that’s the case. So what we’ve seen for the last two decades is that six boys have been born on average for every five girls. And therefore we know that in the next 20 years we’re gonna be about 50,000,000 men who are not gonna get a wife, and these people are gonna be bitter, angry and will eventually, I suggest, be a source of social instability in China.”

Many of these trends cannot be changed, he says, so China must move on other reforms, especially in education and innovation.

“There are a lot of problems in China which can be addressed and I suggest that it’s better for China to make its reforms early, rather than to delay. I think there’s a window of maybe 20 years to get reforms done, and I think there hasn’t been (a) sufficient sense of urgency amongst policymakers in China in recent years.”

Mr. Beardson also says poor environmental conditions threaten the health and longevity of China’s population. He says the country has strong environmental laws, but it has not enforced them.

I’m Jerilyn Watson.

And that’s As It Is for today.



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