

HUDSON INSTITUTE

RISING CHINA REDUX:

IMPERIAL MEMORIES IN A MODERN MILIEU

Part Two
[Subject to Revision]

By

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July 25, 2006

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1. Introduction

The first part of this study looked at things that happened in the past in the light of how they have come to be interpreted in the present. Our purpose was to imagine how contemporary China's view of great periods in the nation's history may influence the development of China's grand design and national strategy in today's Rising China. Those chapters in China's history underscored the point that the twenty-first century is hardly the first time that China has had to define and redefine itself as its own circumstances and world circumstances require.

One striking fact that emerged from the discussion in Part One is how rich and varied China's past experiences have been in this regard. Though we tend to think of "China" as something fixed and immutable, we have seen instead that it can organize itself in different ways, can relate to the world in different ways, and alter the ways it thinks about the world. Indeed, we have seen that, while Chinese political philosophy rests on a long tradition, this apparent consensus has never precluded sharp and spirited debate about proper policy. All Chinese do not all think alike. They have had intense arguments about politics; some were so bitter that they could be resolved only by violence and civil war.

We also did precisely the thing which good historians are not supposed to do, but which they almost always do nonetheless: we discussed the past not only in the context of present-day arguments about the past itself, but also in the way interpretations of the past quite deliberately inform present-day political debates. In describing past instances of Rising China, we also did what good political scientists are not supposed to do either: we engaged not only in "mirror imaging" but, even worse, in "rearview mirror imaging," for we suggested

that the past will be more usefully understood if we impose on it concepts and vocabulary from our own time. Thus, in discussing the Yuan dynasty of the thirteenth century, we stressed how its main historical contribution was to integrate China into a genuine world system, a system consisting of several great cultures and traditions, each one useful in developing China's polity, society, economy, and culture. We saw, also, that this particular Rising China was a place of great strategic ambition which sought to expand its influence into Central Asia and Southeast Asia, and which was capable of mobilizing large armies and great armadas in support of those objectives.

Our sense of the Ming dynasty of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, was comparable, for we saw how it became part of an even larger worldwide system that now included the New World, a system that quickly developed complex political, economic, and strategic links among Europe, South America, the Near East, South Asia, and East Asia. These were truly enormous changes, creating a world far more complicated and integrated than the already-complex world of Yuan times. We saw how the expansion of China's sense of the "known world" led also to an expansion of Chinese thinking about that world, how strategic planners in Ming-era Rising China sought first, to understand what was happening around them and, second, to address how to adapt China to it. The appearance of this new international economic and political system presented novel problems. China's own society could be profoundly shaken by events on the other side of the world, events altogether different from those of Mongol/Yuan times. We then saw how Ming-era China, through the use of its maritime power, tried to enhance its position in this new configuration. Not surprisingly, we saw how the history of that effort has been enlisted by strategists in today's Rising China who would like to do the very same thing.

Precisely because it is the dynasty closest to us in time, the Qing provided us with the best insights into the Rising China of the twenty-first century. We saw how the Qing emperors created a vast, Asia-based continental system, akin to what the Yuan dynasty had done, yet more sophisticated and enduring. We described how Qing strategists, faced with a transformation in the world system far greater and far more threatening than even the astonishing worldwide transformation of Ming times, tried to steer their empire—keeping in mind that “China” was only one part of that empire—through dangerous times. We also wanted to find continuity between that time and our own, and we concluded that we should expand our understanding of today’s Rising China by looking more closely at the Late Qing era.

Like the China of the Late Qing, a China thought to be in decline, today’s Rising China is in a multi-ethnic polity. China today is also thoroughly involved in an integrated international system, akin to the era of globalization during the Late Qing, that is, between 1870 and 1912. Just as the globalization of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a time of astonishing technological advance which, in one generation, introduced the world to electricity, automobiles, motion pictures, wireless, and airplanes, so too are today’s new technologies—in telecommunications, in biology and medicine, in computer science, in nanotechnology—a defining feature of twenty-first century globalization. We saw, also, how “popular opinion” of the traditional kind, an opinion that was once expressed in peasant violence and rebellion in the name of folk religion or Han Chinese racial solidarity, began slowly to give way to popular opinion of the modern kind, supportive of new Western-derived concepts of politics that included words like “constitutionalism,” “representative government,” “democracy,” “socialism,” and “communism.”

China's two experiences of globalization in modern times have featured massive internal changes as well. Slowly at first, but then at an ever-increasing tempo, society is transformed from rural to urban, from agrarian to industrial, from industrial to technological. A merely populous society becomes a "mass society," where ways of life, modes of thought, and tastes in art and culture unimaginable a generation before spread throughout the country. First, there is "the rise of the masses," followed by what the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset called "the revolt of the masses," followed by the breakdown of deference to old authorities, followed by cultural incoherence, political confusion, and finally, breakdown.

The Chinese call this condition *luan* ("chaos") and in one form or another it has been the specter haunting every Chinese governing group since the time of Confucius. The cataclysms in Europe in the twentieth century and the appearance there of crazed social theories and murderous political ideologies testify to the dangers of rapid modernization. The very modernization that must occur before any grand design has real power behind it is also a great threat to that design's realization. Understanding how today's Chinese construe this dilemma is an essential part of speculating about the future of China's grand strategy.

China reached its low point in 1900, when the armies of eight foreign countries occupied Beijing after suppressing an outbreak of violent xenophobia known as the Boxer Rebellion. In 1949, after decades of war and violence, the People's Republic of China was established and it set out to restore China's position among the leading nations of the world. For all its revolutionary fervor, New China also drew on much that was well-established in Chinese tradition. We saw how historians connected Maoism to Chinese "heterodoxy," the polar opposite of Chinese "orthodoxy," and how one can look at the story of modern China as the struggle between radical utopianism embodied by Mao Zedong, the Great Helmsman of

the Chinese Communist Party, or Hong Xiuchuan, Heavenly King of the Taiping Uprising, on the one hand, and practitioners of time-honored statecraft and state-building, like the “self-strengtheners” of the Late Qing or the “pragmatic” followers of Deng Xiaoping.

We described a world both fascinated and frightened by the Rising China of Mao Zedong. In the 1960s especially, China seemed to be at one with powerful forces sweeping the world that bid fair to overturn the entire international order. In an effort to understand how this had happened in China, we followed many paths of interpretation and argument, all trying to identify elements in Mao’s China which were “Chinese”, which were “Communist,” and which represented features common to all political and social systems. Maoism, as practiced in the first twenty-five years of the People’s Republic, turned out to be short-lived: in the end, it remains a mystery. There is no broad understanding of why or how it came to grief, whether its failures were peculiar to China’s circumstances, history, and culture, or whether its failure—if we may paraphrase some old Marxist lingo—was principally a manifestation of the General Crisis of Communism in the Current Historical Epoch.

We began the introduction to Part One of this study with the idea that today’s China seeks to understand what makes for success and what makes for failure in the fate of grand national designs, and one subject that will interest us in Part Two is the differing ways Chinese account for the collapse of the Soviet Union and the success of the United States. We concluded Part One by invoking an ancient Chinese curse, “May you get what you wish for.” As the twenty-first century began, the great changes in China during the last quarter of the twentieth century seemed to vindicate American ideas about the way the world worked. Every day, China was coming ever more to resemble what we thought a modern Asian society ought to be—Japan, South Korea, Taiwan. To be sure, China’s transformation was not yet complete,

but was it likely there would appear in China some unique variant of modern society that could stand against the irresistible forces of the age? However much reassurance was offered on this score, it did not overcome concern, followed by anxiety and, now in many quarters, plain dread about what today's Rising China portends for the United States.

We are not alone in having achieved a long-sought result which may prove problematical. Twenty-first century Rising China must also live with the curse of hopes fulfilled. China is rich and powerful, but it is the product of the same modern history which, having created the riches and the power, has also planted inside the country the seeds of its possible undoing. The basic geographical structure of the People's Republic, resting on the great multi-national empire it inherited from the work of eighteenth-century Manchus, runs contrary to the twenty-first century's ideas about identity and autonomy for ethnic groups and their cultures. The country's basic mode of governance—"democratic centralism," an increasingly creaky arrangement based on a now universally repudiated Leninist political theory—runs contrary to a worldwide trend toward democracy. The regime may very well contemplate a Chinese national strategy of traditional expansionism supported by equally traditional nationalism and patriotism. But this, too, comes up against the emerging High Culture in China (and the world), which, wholly unlike the high culture of rising nations in the great age of imperialism, does not buttress nationalism and patriotism, but works to undermine them, whose mission for "cultural studies" is the "deconstruction" of culture as a mainstay of the political order. This is an especially powerful trend in today's China, where intellectuals and creative artists of every stripe recall Mao's brutal efforts to put Politics in command of Culture and believe that it is their bedrock obligation to resist even the half-hearted attempts by China's government of today. And beyond this, there is the political

counterpart of economic globalization—”regionalism,” “multilateralism,” “transnationalism”—which works to restrict the freedom of action of major strategic actors and to subordinate them to international organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental.

The transformation of “China” into “Greater China,” which includes Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and a strategically well-located diaspora around the world, has been another byproduct of the post-Mao era, and it is inseparable from any consideration of Rising China’s grand strategy. Greater China and Rising China are now intimately connected, but they are not the same thing. Greater China was the decisive contributor to Rising China’s economic transformation and, more recently, to its ongoing institutional and technological advances. But even as it contributes to Rising China’s accretion of power, Greater China introduces new and contentious and potentially subversive ideas about culture and politics into Chinese society. We have seen this before in China’s history, when the components of Greater China have been points of entry for the modern, and the up-to-date, pushing China itself in directions that were wholly unanticipated.

Finally, in Part One, we had the advantage of writing about things that happened in the past. Part Two will lead to a discussion of what has not yet happened. The government of China can decree a strategic design if it likes, and then set out to subordinate the entire nation to that vision. But in the end, as we wrote in concluding our introduction to Part One, China’s Grand Design can no longer be the creation of a handful of isolated Politburo members in Beijing, but the result instead of the now always-changing give-and-take of real life throughout the Chinese world—indeed, throughout the entire world.

It is precisely this give-and-take which connects “imperial memory” to the “modern milieu.” Stories of past greatness are reinterpreted by new audiences whenever those tales are retold. They gain in their effective power to the degree that they can somehow be rendered into a “modern” idiom. Thus, Germany’s Kaiser, for all that his title was meant to invoke the greatness of imperial Rome, also claimed that his country was in advance of its contemporaries in the modern measures of imperial power. Russia’s Tsar, another titular incarnation of the Caesars, claimed for his country and its capital a place in a grand Christian scheme of things—Moscow as the Third Rome, succeeding Rome itself and then Constantinople as the seat of the true faith—even though the first Caesar had died decades before the birth of Christ. The Nazis, for another example, styled their regime “The Third Reich.” The First Reich, the Holy Roman Empire, was a very loose confederation of German-speaking Catholic states; it was set up in A.D. 843 and was not formally dissolved until 1806. The Second Reich was the German empire proclaimed in 1871, but which lasted only until the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II in November 1918. The Third Reich—the self-proclaimed descendent of, and successor to, both these empires—also called itself “national” and “socialist.” In these ways, imperial memories are brought up to date.

The most radical and revolutionary of states have pondered this problem. Lenin or Stalin could have decided to rule Russia from a place other than the Kremlin, but the Bolsheviks governed from the Tsars’ seat of power. As we shall see later, Mao Zedong could have moved New China’s capital to a place with weaker connections to the Ming and Qing dynasties; indeed, he could have ordered the construction of a new capital, as other regime founders in China had done. But he did neither. The men who run China today are not turning away from China’s imperial past either, and we have seen how historians inside and outside

of China today continue to refashion the imperial past so as to make it seem more congenial to the governmental requirements of the present. We have also seen how the evaluation of imperial strategies can inform contemporary strategic analyses.

If the first part of our study had to do with the recovery of these imperial memories, the second part will address the “modern milieu” into which those memories are being introduced, for the “imperial” and the “modern” have an ongoing *yin-yang* relationship. As we shall see, as challenging as it may have been to evaluate how the present looks back on the imperial past, reaching an understanding of the “modern” in today’s China is much more difficult. The basic question is beguilingly simple: “What is it that makes Modern China modern?” And the beguilingly simple answer is that modern people live in the modern way.

Thus, in our own discussion of China’s “modern milieu,” we will be interested in how Chinese people live but, more importantly, in how they think. We will speculate about how various “modern” ways of thinking both enable and disable the great projects and grand designs in the mind of a Rising Power that is rising *today*, neither hundreds of years ago, nor a hundred years from now. Precisely because we will be interested in how Chinese today think about their present and their future, our discussion will be wide-ranging. It will carry us into ongoing debates not only about political and economic history, but also about literary and artistic history. In the end, though seemingly disparate, these inquiries share the common purpose of trying to gain a better understanding of how China proposes to fit itself into the world.

I. “The study and the interpretation of history is a very serious business.”

For centuries, we in the West have had a stake in China's struggles about its political culture and its mode of governance. In particular, we have believed that a triumph in China by one or another of our major religious or political creeds would tip the balance of power in the world. Thus, in the sixteenth century, Catholic missionaries sought the conversion of China not only in the interests of the Middle Kingdom's lost souls, but in the interest of Christianity as a whole; a Christian China, if one could be brought about, would be the decisive factor in Christianity's worldwide struggle with Islam. Within the Christian tradition itself, the rivalry between Catholicism and Protestantism was, for a while, thought to hinge on which variant of Christian teaching would gain the upper hand in China.

The same was true for our secular creeds. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European sinophiles saw in China an enlightened despotism based on "right reason" that might inspire, and also bolster, the same thing in the West. Later on, Western liberals, socialists, and communists believed that the conversion of China to one or another of their creeds would tip the world's ideological and political balance entirely. Lenin himself is supposed to have said that "the road to Paris lies through Peking;" so the prediction that the conversion of China to Bolshevism would shake the entire world was hardly Mao Zedong's invention. In the event, we saw how heavily the world weighed the implications of Mao's call for a new world order based on a kind of Sino-Leninism.

Today, with the seeming conversion of China to a belief in open trade and market economics, we face a situation where, for the first time in a long time, the principal countries of the world appear not to be separated by the ideological differences so prominent and dangerous in the twentieth century. But we have also seen how the mere adoption of one or another of the Western creeds by Chinese is but the beginning of the story, for both the

introduction of Christianity in the nineteenth century and of Communism in the twentieth produced results that neither Western churchmen nor Russian Bolsheviks very much liked.

Thus our own effort here, which we have described as writing a history of the future, will be informed repeatedly by these cautionary tales. And we are not the only ones who have disappointments to ponder. Chinese who had sought the collapse of their own imperial system and who thought the solution to their country's problems lay in emulating the great Western nations of the nineteenth century were profoundly shaken by the political, moral, intellectual, and spiritual destruction that was World War I. After that, many Chinese believed that their country's salvation lay in emulating a great rising power of the twentieth century—the Anti-West, that is, the Soviet Union. In the twenty-first century, China appears to be betting its future on emulating the Anti-Soviet Union, that is, the United States. But what is to be the fate of American-inspired and American-led globalization and how will China be affected?

We have more than an important interest in how China poses this question to itself and in the methodology it uses to arrive at an answer. We have already seen how China once interpreted its own past in the light of yesterday's failures, and how it is coming to a new appreciation of its past in the light of today's successes. Thus, the past itself will have a future, and we need to speculate about that future in order to assess Rising China's sense of the world in which it now finds itself. Just as a century ago, when China had difficulty in understanding what we call World History and China's place in it, the need to make sense of those same things still exists today. The difference—and it is an important difference—is that today's China is not under pressing mortal threat, and thus has the luxury of a more leisurely examination of its prospects. But even without the sense of existential threat, the intellectual

competition among interpretations and schools of thought is no less intense, and its outcome no more predictable, than it was a century ago.

* * *

Toward the end of our discussion of the Late Qing period, we referred to a critically important event of that era—the abolition, in 1905, of the centuries-old Confucian examination system. We said that, for centuries, the civil service examinations, the sole route into the leadership, had required mastery of a curriculum of the classics, properly interpreted. But the value of such a classical education, once the way to wealth, power, and prestige, came to an end in Late Qing times, and the habits and institutions which it had propped up reached the end of their useful life.

In this respect, the end of the examination system in 1905 was the single most important milestone in China's journey from the "imperial" to the "modern." As no one other thing could, it ratified what had become a painful consensus among thoughtful people in China and throughout the entire Chinese world: a new intellectual regime, already under construction but not yet completed, would have to consolidate its power before the country's recovery of national power could begin in earnest. In the century since then, the struggle over what would replace—in Professor Benjamin Elman's phrase—the "cultural regime that had thrived in its imperial form since 1450" would determine the shape of everything else that has happened. In the ensuing sections here, we will look at that struggle over the future of China's "cultural regime" from different and diverse points of view. We will, for example, evaluate

how new ways of studying history, or writing fiction, or designing and building cities are contributing to the creation of China's visions—and to China's strategic vision especially.

One useful place to begin is in the early twentieth century with a discussion of Liang Qichao (1872–1929), the most brilliant and the most formidable public intellectual of his time, and certainly one of the most important men of his era. In the 1890s, he was one of China's leading advocates of reform and was forced into a fourteen-year exile in 1899. During that time, he traveled throughout the world—he met once with President Theodore Roosevelt—but he spent most of his time outside China in Japan. Headquartered in Yokohama, there he established several Chinese-language journals, which he used not only to rouse China's national consciousness against the then-reigning Manchus, but also to introduce the Chinese-reading world to the latest developments in the political and intellectual life of the Western world. He became the single most influential Chinese “reformist” writer of his day.

In his personal politics, Liang began as a constitutional monarchist, but he then had an important role in the new Republic of China. His reputation survived the brutal ideological combat of the twentieth century, and he remains an icon. In the view of Professor Andrew Nathan, a scholar of the evolution of democratic politics in China, Liang Qichao was an intellectual godfather of the program of most pro-democracy political reformers—even those inside China's Communist party since the late 1970s, including its now-legendary general secretary Hu Yaobang (1915–1989).¹

Of particular interest to us is the enormous influence Liang Qichao exerted over the study and writing of Chinese history. In 1902, he published “The New Historiography,” a six-part article. He argued for a new historiography, he said, because the new citizens he wanted

¹ Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

to help create in China needed one. The “new historiography” involved a recasting of many subjects, including traditional Chinese approaches to geography, science, literature, and literary criticism. In its simplest rendition, it was a call for China to study the nations of the world so as to understand China’s own place in the world, because “world history” had now come to supersede any one “national history.”



Portrait of Liang Qichao, 1901

Liang himself was a polymath of the sort produced every so often by Confucian training and, over time, he would change his mind about the methodology and the direction of the new historiography that he advocated. He was a man of great intellectual and physical energy, for the range of his interests and the sheer quantity of his writing was enormous. His prodigious output bespoke his interest in a larger “cultural reform”—of which the “new historiography” was to be but one part. For one example, one of the journals he founded was called *New Fiction* and, years before many of his compatriots, he called for a literary revolution that would produce Chinese fiction engaged in the ongoing problems of the country. He himself translated Jules Verne’s 1888 adventure novel *Two Years Vacation* into Chinese. His own failures as a political reformer, Liang once said, had led him to call for a grand rethinking of fundamental Chinese ideas about almost everything.

In this respect, Liang Qichao believed that China was indeed in need of a cultural revolution, but of a complex kind. Thus, early in his career, he wrote to introduce his countrymen to a wide range of Western political thinking and he translated several of its canonical texts. He wrote biographies of four nineteenth-century European nation-builders—the Hungarian Louis Kossuth and the Italians Giuseppe Mazzini, Giuseppe Garibaldi, and Camillo di Cavour. As the twentieth century began, he argued that China should fit its own history into what today's historians now call “the enlightenment narrative,” that is, an interpretation of the history of the world that argues for the universality of Western values. But as we shall see, by the 1920s, Liang would become more interested in what we, in contemporary jargon, would call the particularities of China's experience. In this, he would be expressing China's post-World War I disillusionment with much of “modern” thinking about culture, society, and politics. The great Western empires had collapsed and, with them, the credibility of many of the ideas associated with them.

Along with his work as historian, literary critic, and advocate for literary renovation, Liang also tried his hand at writing novels. In 1902, even as he was at work on other projects, he published a political novel, *The Future of New China*, that began with a description of the prosperous China of 1960, sixty years hence. As Professor David Der-wei Wang describes it,

the first scene depicts a lecture given by a descendant of Confucius in the seventy-second generation to an enthusiastic crowd of thousands, including students from all over the world. The novel continues on as an instructional political treatise where the virtues of various modes of government are lucidly debated.

Professor Wang tells us that Liang had intended to write a trilogy, imagining different outcomes for China, based on how these arguments might resolve themselves. One volume, to

be called *The Future of Old China*, was to describe a dysfunctional China that had refused to change and, in the final volume,

New Peach Blossom Spring, Liang planned to describe how the descendents of a group of exiled Chinese who, two centuries earlier, had established a flourishing society on an island, return to China and help reconstruct it...The trilogy, of course, was never written; even *The Future of New China* comes to a sudden stop in chapter 5... We know its beginning all at once, but not the middle part that would have bridged the beginning and the ending... The future appears as a magical moment that stands at the other end of history.²

Somehow or other, as we can imagine, the brilliant and patriotic Liang Qichao would certainly like China to end up as one of the great nations of the world, but as both a political thinker and as a novelist, he was stymied about how to get there.

Despite its truncated form, *The Future of New China* inspired other novels, akin to scenarios about the future of China. One such was *New China*, by Lu Shi-e, published in 1910. In Professor Wang's description,

The novel depicts its narrator's visit to China in 1950, a prosperous China in every aspect. Advanced industries have long been established; universities are thriving everywhere; women enjoy equal rights; and Tibet has become a province. To the citizens of this 'new China' the social evils of old China sound like nothing but fiction; the only problem that besets them is a surplus of national wealth.³

Even better for our purposes and, we can imagine, also more intriguing from the contemporary Chinese perspective, is Biheguan Zhuren's *New Era*, published in 1908. Once again, Professor Wang's description is worth citing *in extenso*:

Set in the year 1999, the novel starts with a panoramic view of China as the supreme world power. By the end of the century, we are told, China will have long been a constitutional

² David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-Siecle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849–1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 302–304.

³ Wang, p. 306.

monarchy. Central and local parliaments are functioning well; parties with different political platforms are free to express their ideas...Advancements in science and technology have prompted China's triumphant return to its erstwhile world supremacy. Its total population amounts to one trillion. China is no longer an old, decaying, oriental empire, but a new potential "yellow peril" (*huanghuo*) with the power to dominate Western countries...

The core of the novel is a world war...As the war develops, Chinese immigrant workers establish their own country in the western part of the United States...They seize the Panama Canal, a move that shakes the American government to seek an alliance with the European forces against China...Chinese workers in Australia also form their own nation. Upon learning that their other country is waging a war with the Western powers, Chinese from all five continents pledge their loyalty by joining the Chinese troops...

Combat between China and the Europeans takes place somewhere near the Suez Canal....As the war continues, the battlefield moves to the Indian Ocean, then to the red Sea, and finally to the Adriatic off the coast of Italy...In its epic scale the novel is a maritime version of the Mongol conquest of Europe.

Newly invented weapons replace magic tricks...Besides balloons and submarines, which are represented as common military vehicles, the author introduces more than twenty new inventions, such as marine sensors, torpedo detectors, amphibious shoes, high-power telescopes, electricity repellant clothing, radioactive dust, bullet-proof satin, and various poisonous gasses....⁴

In the end, in a decisive battle at sea, a Chinese fleet defeats a European fleet by setting it ablaze. Professor Wang reminds us of this particular scene's resemblance to a famous episode in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, where an enemy's fleet also meets a fiery doom: "*New Era's* future war is a strange recapitulation of the war in the second century, which decided China's fate for the next century."

⁴ Wang, pp. 307, 308, 309.

In the novelist's mind, science fiction, science fantasy, futuristic literature, vernacular classics, political imagination, geopolitics, strategic planning, and grand designs can all somehow be brought together in one satisfying conclusion. Yet, as Professor Wang points out, "between present and future there is a mysterious time span in which everything about China has been reversed; between now and then, *something* will transform China from a declining empire into a superpower...China's metamorphosis presupposes a marvelous, invisible, time machine, capable of turning present things into everything they are not...There is a mysterious gap between the present and the future, and how to imagine the future hinges both on how we look at the present and how we evaluate the past."⁵

That "mysterious gap," of course, was to be filled up by the events of the twentieth century. Liang Qichao himself joined in the practical work of government, serving as minister of finance and as minister of justice in some of the new Republic's early, and ineffectual, cabinets. It was a chaotic era, featuring a failed attempt at imperial restoration, a failed attempt by the leader of the republican movement Sun Yat-sen to expand his authority, the devolution of political power into the hands of local warlords, and a host of foreign policy problems brought on by World War I. It was, as Professor James Sheridan has written, a time when some of the most formative events in modern Chinese history took place. "It was during those years that young China repudiated Confucianism, that Chinese anti-imperialism entered a more intense phase, that the Literary Revolution occurred, that Marxism was introduced into China on a significant scale, that the Communist Party was established and the Kuomintang [Nationalist Party] reorganized, and that Chinese social disintegration accelerated."⁶

⁵ Wang, p. 310.

⁶ Xiaobing Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 170.

Liang Qichao was a member of China's delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919. The first casualty was China's high regard for Japan as a model for modernization. Japan had inspired Liang himself, Sun Yat-sen, and many others, and it had also served as China's most important tutor in Western ideas and practices. But Japan was now no longer a friend and an inspiration, but a predator. Similarly, liberal internationalism and international law, which China was supposed to adopt as a replacement for its inherited concept of the world order, turned out not to serve China's interests either; instead, they were used to shore up the West's various privileges inside China.

As Liang traveled widely in post-World War I Europe, what he saw there was a blow to his intellectual self-confidence. As Professor Xiaobing Tang describes it, "contrary to his previous belief in the positive influence of modern intellectual constructs, Liang now evaluated the major social theories and ideologies of nineteenth century Europe far more critically. Liberalism did help to accelerate political reform and economic development, but "it also planted the seeds of social disaster for the future."⁷ In his account of his post-World War I stay in Europe *Excerpts from Impressions of Travels in Europe* Liang focused especially on the advance of science and the speed of change which characterized modernity and globalization in their early twentieth-century manifestations:

As a result of the development of science, the organization of industrial production underwent fundamental innovation. Changes were carried out at such a fast speed, and also on such a large scale, that people were always and everywhere at a loss when they tried to make their inner life agree with their outer life. The most obvious example is the drastically opposing ways in which urban life in the present and village life from before are experienced.⁸

⁷ Tang, p. 179.

⁸ Tang, p. 181.

In this respect, Europe's early twentieth century surely foreshadows China's early twenty-first, and Professor Tang's summary of Liang's encounter with then-modern Europe can serve as a primer, an introduction to what we will find in China today:

The alienating urban landscape appeared to Liang to be most symptomatic of the modern malaise for a number of reasons: aggregation of a large population throws together people connected not by emotional affinity but by a mere relationship of interest; the inevitable disappearance of landed property gives rise to a sense of perpetual uncertainty and rootlessness; the fluctuation and complexity of social situations demand strenuous attention and lead to mental fatigue and weariness; work and diversion follow upon each other at dizzying speed and therefore both are depleted of any pleasure; and finally, with the public's desire continually stimulated, consumer goods keep getting more expensive and the competition for survival even fiercer.

The disconnection between a fast-shifting public 'outer life' and a weakened private 'inner life' causes much anomie and anxiety...The emphasis placed on constant change has raised the issue of political and cultural legitimacy...

"New authority," [Liang wrote] has difficulty establishing itself, and yet old authority is abolished beyond restoration. Consequently, the entire society is thrown into skepticism, despair, and fear, just as a ship without a compass caught in a storm and enshrouded with a heavy fog at the same time. No one has any idea of what the future will be like...The Europeans have had an enormous dream about the omnipotence of science, and now they begin to decry its bankruptcy."⁹

Until his death in 1929, Liang elaborated a political program of his own for the new Republic of China. It resembled what we would think of as moderate or democratic socialism within a strong parliamentary system, an altogether reasonable response from a reasonable man to the problems of his day. Even so, Liang's description of Europe's disintegration prophesied China's future. Modernity itself—"globalism" as we would call it today—had separated politically into the opposing camps of Wilson and Lenin and had divided

⁹ Tang, pp. 181, 182.

economically into the competing systems of Capitalism and Communism; culturally, modernity more than merely divided; it shattered. Whether by deep structural cause or only by emulation, China splintered in the same way, and its opposing camps also spent decades fighting viciously among themselves for supremacy.

Attentive Chinese of every political and philosophical stripe were affected by the collapse of the nineteenth century's version of the modern and the global. Some changed their opinions; others became more confident in the ones they held. Thus, while those who had rejected the "traditional" way now fought among themselves to decide what "modern" was supposed to mean, the traditionalists and the unreconstructed Confucians, who had resisted the new cultural and educational consensus represented by the abolition of the centuries-old imperial examination system in 1905, felt their predictions had been confirmed. They, too, entered the post-World War I debate. They argued that China, having taken off after the West and having overcommitted itself to things Western, was now itself falling apart as the West was. Indeed, a leader of these so-called "traditionalists" or "neo-Confucianists," Liang Shuming (1893–1988) felt emboldened enough to assert the universality not of Western values, but of Confucian ones. "I see the pitiful condition of the Westerners who, desiring spiritual restoration, are running all over searching...Should I not guide them to the path of Confucius? I also see Chinese slavishly imitating the shallowness of the West and some of them mistakenly studying Buddhism...Should I not guide them to the best and most beautiful of lives, the Confucian one?" Indeed, Liang believed that Western culture had played out its role and that "future world culture will be a revival of Chinese culture...Humankind will turn from an epoch of material want to one of spiritual unrest." This, he was convinced, would

produce “a decisive basic change for Western culture, which would follow completely the Chinese road.”¹⁰

As we now know, things both East and West were to get far worse before they got better. The “dilemma of modernity” became a triangular battle involving the seemingly-overmatched liberal followers of Wilson, Hitler’s following throughout almost all of Europe, not merely in Germany (and in Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia also) and Stalin’s following, one even wider than that. China’s twentieth-century political history was a proximate analogue; even as these doctrines acquired “Chinese characteristics” they would lose nothing of their virulence.

These divisions have now receded and a more benign understanding of modernity has appeared today, not so very different from the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century version with which we began our discussion. It is a consensus, but is it only an interim one? If, as we have done, we look forward from the Late Qing era of the 1890s, we are pointed toward a “globalism” and a “modernity” of stability, peace, progress, and philosophical and cultural homogeneity. But if, as we have also done, we look backward from the early Republican period of the 1920s, we see a failed “globalization” scheme and a discredited “modernity.”

A strategic planner in Rising China must decide in which direction he is pointed at the beginning of the twenty-first century. For that, he will need once again to begin with the study of World History as it is understood in his own time and with the study of China’s own history, a history that is increasingly the product of a new historiography, still in progress.

¹⁰ Guy S. Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 125, 105, 106.

II. "It is worth starting with visions, because they establish hopes and fears."

As we have seen, one of China's greatest and far-reaching discoveries in the nineteenth century was that the world was no longer what it had once been thought to be. China was hardly alone in having to readjust its most basic sense of things, for this was a problem for the entire "non-Western" world. The West itself had also gone through similar conceptual crises, and the World History which the West presented to the world in the nineteenth century was but the latest iteration in a long series.

Classical historians like Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Livy, and others, had developed a sense of what belonged in the world and what did not, and whether the story of any one great nation or empire was the story of everything, or only a part. Judeo-Christian historians understood History and its purposes as an unfolding of God's plan for all human beings and, therefore, for the entire world. Historians during the Renaissance revived Europe's interest in their classical predecessors and used their accounts of Greek and Roman times as manuals of instruction for the conduct of then-modern politics. At the same time, the geography of History expanded enormously as Europe established new relations with empires and cultures all over the world. The World History of Jewish prophets, Greek and Roman historians, Christian theologians, and Renaissance writers also grew to incorporate what we now know as the World, including a New World that became linked to the rest of it during the sixteenth century.

The West's sense of the world changed once again as ideas about Enlightenment and Progress began to inform the West's study of its own history and of the world's history. The enormous shift in the world's balance of power during the nineteenth century seemed to

validate the West's ways of thinking and acting, and the globalization of the early twentieth century imagined world history as but a further elaboration of the then-regnant political and philosophical order. World War I, as we have seen, put such notions to rest, making it seem that the "teleology"—the purposeful direction—of world history needed a thorough re-examination.

World History thus became the provenance not only of historians, but of writers, theologians, philosophers, sociologists, and artists. Generally speaking, the optimism of the nineteenth century was superseded by a gloomier outlook, sometimes called "Spenglerian," after Germany's Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) author of a hugely influential book, *The Decline of the West* (1918.) Even so, World History remained a popular topic, and practitioners of it—like Britain's Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975), author of a twelve-volume history of the world that appeared between 1925 and 1961—could become world-renowned celebrities for a while, before disappearing into now near-total obscurity.

The historian who best embodies the link between that bygone era in the understanding of world history and today's understanding of the same words is the American (though Canadian-born) William H. McNeill (b. 1917) McNeill began working on a one-volume history of the world at about the same time as Arnold Toynbee was putting the finishing touches on the last of his twelve volumes. McNeill, as he was to put it later, "turned Spengler and Toynbee on their heads." In the first place, the very title of his *magnum opus*—*The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (1963)—played off Spengler's vision of the West in decline. Second, his view of the relationship between the great civilizations of the world was diametrically opposed to theirs. McNeill believed that "both had erred in asserting the independence of civilizations, which made external influences seem

relatively incidental.” McNeill was a so-called diffusionist, “who focused from the start on points of contact between civilizational centers and the resultant stimuli produced by cultural diffusion.”¹¹

McNeill’s book comported well with the spirit of the time; it was widely praised by professional historians and was also very successful in the publishing marketplace. (It is still in print.) From his vantage point of the late 1950s and early 1960s—that is, in the midst of the Cold War—McNeill saw a world that, despite its profound and threatening rivalries, was in fact moving toward greater integration; unlike the post–World War I pessimistic generation, his own post–World War II generation was well-situated. “The dangers and complexities of the day,” he wrote—a reference, no doubt, to the advent of thermonuclear weapons—“oppress the minds of many sensitive people [but] foresight, cautious resolution, and sustained courage have seldom counted for more...Our world assuredly lacks neither dangers nor the possibility of failure, but it also offers a theater for heroism such as seldom or never been seen before in history...Men some centuries from now will surely look back on our time as a golden age of unparalleled technical, intellectual, institutional, and perhaps even of artistic creativity....Life in Demosthenes’ Athens, in Confucius’ China, and in Mohammad’s Arabia was violent, risky, and uncertain; hopes struggled with fears; greatness teetered perilously on the brim of disaster. We belong in this high company and should count ourselves fortunate to live in one of the great ages of the world.”¹²

In the spring of 1990, McNeill published an essay “*The Rise of the West after Twenty-Five Years*,” the first article in the inaugural issue of a new journal *Journal of World History* that he had helped found. The essay was also printed in a new edition of his book. Three of

¹¹ Guy S. Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 125, 105, 106.

¹² *The Rise of the West* (New York: New American Library, 1963), p. 807.

his observations are relevant to our own discussion. First, in looking back on his treatment of the period between A.D. 1000 and 1500, he notes how “new scholarship since 1963 has pointed the way to a firmer and better understanding of what was going on in the Eurasian world,” leading him to realize that he “had overlooked the ultimate disturber of world balances in the era itself: that is, an efflorescence of Chinese civilization that raised China’s culture, wealth, and power to a new level, far outstripping all of the rest of the world for a period of four or five centuries...”¹³ He would later describe in his autobiography how he came to understand, as one example of the power of the “trans-Eurasian market” that China had created, that even “the rise of towns in medieval Europe was best understood as a distant offshoot of far more massive commercialization taking place in China and along the shores of the Indian Ocean.”¹⁴

McNeill’s second self-criticism is that “the book is flawed simply because it assumes that discernibly separate civilizations were the autonomous social entities whose interactions defined history on a global scale... The central methodological weakness of my book is that while it emphasizes interaction across civilizational boundaries, it pays inadequate attention to the emergence of the ecumenical world system within which we live today.”¹⁵ Finally, he said that he had also come to think that the global cosmopolitanism that he had described as a post-1850 phenomenon had begun centuries before that.¹⁶

In the 1990s, McNeill’s notion of “the emergence of *the* [emphasis added] ecumenical world system” comported well with that decade’s sense of itself. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the acceleration of capitalist-like growth in both China and India, the world

¹³ *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community; with a Retrospective Essay* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁴ *The Pursuit of Truth: A Historian’s Memoir* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), p. 127.

¹⁵ *The Rise of the West* (1991 edition), pp. xx, xxi, xxii.

¹⁶ *The Rise of the West* (1991 edition), p. xxix.

as a whole seemed to have reached an agreement about the once-divisive contest between East and West. Called by some the “end of history,” or by others only a “holiday from history,” this sentiment encouraged some world historians to develop new concepts which would subsume everything that had gone before.

The West is still the one part of the world that continues to generate different ways of understanding the whole world. Oftentimes, such intellectual constructs correlate with political preferences and are therefore invoked in support of various policies and programs. Some of them reflect enduring sentiments about the nature of things. We know that, a generation ago, certain readings of world history were put forward to buttress calls in the 1970s for a “New World International Economic Order” as an alternative to the world economic system of liberal, internationalist capitalism. One of these, “world-systems theory,” once part of the critique of liberal capitalism pre-1991, has taken on a comparable role in the present. Its major creator and advocate Immanuel Wallerstein maintained that capitalism could not exist without a world economy to sustain it and, in this particular world system, the strong—whether states, peoples, or individuals—would always do better than the weak, given that the capitalist world economy has as its basic requirement the unceasing accumulation of capital above all else.

Wallerstein did not like this system then, nor does he like it now. Accordingly, he and like-minded thinkers would like to see these arrangements eventually run their course, after which History will replace them with something new and maybe even better. Their analytical task is to discover whether analyses drawn from history and the social sciences can reinforce that hope, or at least be seen as reinforcing that hope. One can be discouraged by the near term, yet optimistic when thinking in longer-range historical categories. Thus, Wallerstein

himself believes that the capitalist world economy has been in serious crisis since about 1968 and the crisis may continue on for another fifty years or so, before the system's inherent contradictions transform it into something else.¹⁷ Presumably, a far-sighted man—or government—should plan accordingly.

For some, however, such theorizing, especially its focus on commerce and economics, is far too narrow and, moreover, too old-fashioned in its vocabulary. According to them, “world history” as such must now give way to “global history,” the study of the things which have produced “globalization” as we know it—a “globalization” which itself is but a way station en route to dramatically new modes of economic, governmental, and cultural organizations on the planet. In all of these schema, older notions about economic, diplomatic, and political history, even nations themselves, are thought to have been superseded by new sets of human relationships—whether to the biosphere, or to the world at-large, or to what may be only “imagined communities.” Thus we are encouraged to think about things like Macrohistory, Megahistory, and Metahistory, and, recently, Big History.

In 2004, Professor David Christian, who coined the latter term, published a 600+ page précis of the subject called *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*. William H. McNeill wrote an effusive foreword to the book which, he said, “unites natural history and human history in a single grand and intelligible narrative... a great achievement...analogous to Issaac Newton and Darwin...It starts with the Big Bang 13 billion years ago... 4.6 million years ago, planet Earth formed and soon became the seat of more complicated processes, including life in all its forms...Human societies became uniquely capable of concerting

¹⁷ *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 24, 59, 77.

common effort and later of expanding into varying niches of the ecosystem around each of them, and which by now surround all of us in a single, global system.”¹⁸

There is intellectual history here also—the twentieth century’s effort to connect advances in the natural sciences to the work of historians and social scientists; that is, to find similarities between patterns of transformation in the natural world and patterns of transformation in the societal world. Thus, in Christian’s view, “in the early universe, gravity took hold of atoms and sculpted them into galaxies...By a sort of social gravity, cities and states were sculpted from scattered communities and farmers.” As these communities became denser and more complicated “social pressure rose until in a striking parallel with star formation, new structures suddenly appeared together with a new level of complexity.”¹⁹

Of course, this is hardly the first grand narrative that has been put forward to explain everything. It is reminiscent of many such in the twentieth century, but it is not gloomy. Nor does it make a twenty-first century case for so-called “chaos theory.” Instead, Christian’s main achievement, in the opinion of William McNeill, is his “discovery of order amid the ‘endless waltz of chaos and complexity.’”

[*Maps of Time*] is a historical and intellectual masterpiece...It is a magnificent synthesis of what scholars and scientists have learned about the world around us in the past hundred years, showing how strangely, yet profoundly, human societies remain a part of nature, properly at home in the universe despite our extraordinary powers, unique self-consciousness, and inexhaustible capacity for collective learning.²⁰

In this respect, all great powers, whether rising or already risen, must decide whether the future should be understood in the light of these newer visions, or whether the future is

¹⁸ McNeill, foreword to *Maps of Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. xv, xvi.

¹⁹ Christian, p. 245.

²⁰ McNeill, foreword, p. xvii.

better understood by assuming the ongoing relevance of more traditional ways of thinking about the world. One part of the difficulty is expressed by Professor Arif Dirlik, who believes that “globalization entails the end of Euro-American-centered history” and who is also very happy about that, but who nonetheless also thinks that “globalization and localization are different aspects of the same processes that produce different results according to different historical circumstances,” and that both “homogenization” and “heterogenization” can be occurring at one and the same time.²¹

So far as China’s leadership is concerned, a simpler question to ask is whether it will conclude that China is becoming more like the rest of the world, or more different from it; whether the ongoing changes in China, which are transforming the country into a rich, powerful, and “modern” force in the world are also creating a China fundamentally different from the place that existed when its Rise began twenty-five years ago; whether the present shape of the world presents something new—or at least new enough—so that the country’s “strategic culture” and “strategic tradition” should be adjusted to accommodate it; whether, in sum, the world is working in accordance with some inherent tendency toward disorder, or whether in fact the world is moving toward ever-greater order amid an “endless waltz of chaos and complexity.”

These are not unprecedented questions. In fact, in their own way and as we have seen, they track the questions posed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when visions—that later proved chimerical—also dominated the debates among China’s political and cultural leaders.

²¹ “Confounding Metaphors, Inventions of the World: What is World History For?” in Benedikt Stuchtey and Eckhardt Fuchs, eds. *Writing World History, 1800–2000* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2003), p. 132.

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As it happens, when it comes to trying to fit China into some great scheme of things, we in the West have a far longer and richer experience than do the Chinese themselves. We have been doing it for almost a thousand years, and it has been a millennium of mood swings. We have already discussed the visit of Marco Polo to the Beijing court of the Great Khan in the thirteenth century and the Italian's lavish praise of every facet of life in China. We know that, during the Renaissance, China's aura grew brighter still, as China's interest in scholarship, the arts, and its own classical learning were highly regarded. For one example, Gregory Blue describes the writings of Giovanni Botero (1544–1617), best-known as a critic of Machiavelli's political doctrines. For Botero, "China was the model of prosperous urban culture, based on the skill of its artisans, its internal waterways, and its access to the sea... The political wisdom of the Chinese was shown by the fact that unlike certain European states, China placed limits on expansion and refrained from pursuing a course of unbridled aggression."²²

European *sinophilia* continued throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth. Competing belief systems in Europe sought to enlist China either as an intellectual ally or a real one. For a long time, the Roman Catholic Church found no irreconcilable contradiction between traditional Chinese teachings and Catholic ones, and therefore imagined that China could be made a part of the Catholic world order. Other Europeans believed that China's political philosophy and its practice of Confucian statecraft placed it not in the transnational Church of Faith, but in the transnational Empire of Reason. Yet, as Blue

²² "China and Western Social Thought in the Modern Period," in Timothy Brook and Gregory Blue, eds., *China and Historical Capitalism: Genealogies of Sinological Knowledge* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 60.

reminds us, “anyone who studies the evolution of ideas about China is soon struck by the radical reversal of Western judgments about almost all aspects of Chinese culture which took place from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century...The shift seems to have resulted not so much from any new empirical knowledge about the country, but rather from changes in Western perspectives.”²³ The West was doing very well in the world and associated success anywhere with Western ways of thinking and acting. Thus, like both Catholicism and Reason before it, Liberalism, Capitalism and, later, Modernity saw a place for China in a world order of their making. Similarly, those who sought the overthrow of Capitalism worked hard to bring China into *their* preferred world order, the world of “proletarian internationalism.”

How was a bewildered Chinese *literatus* or statesman supposed to make sense of these competing claims? We have already discussed how millions of Chinese in the mid-nineteenth century embraced the eschatological Christian vision of the Taiping Uprising and how millions more later accepted a utopian Communist vision proffered by Mao Zedong. Today, we have before our eyes evidence that millions of Chinese have accepted commercial capitalism with an enthusiasm that surpasses any in the world. Even so, as we have seen previously, China’s embrace of Western-created visions of the world has often produced, in the event, great disappointment, and oftentimes anxiety and fear.

Yet the ambivalence and unpredictability seemingly built into China’s modernization was detected early in the twentieth century by one of the great masters of fiction in the Late Qing era Zeng Pu (1871–1935). Just as we have seen how one kind of imaginative writing could lay out a happy future for China without ever really describing how the country was going to get there, other writing could, on balance, accept the necessity of modernization and

²³ Blue, pp. 70, 73.

even its desirability, and yet worry that Western ideas might produce something else entirely once planted in the ground in China. Zeng's masterpiece *Flower in a Sea of Retribution* [*Niehhai hua*, also known in English as *Flower(s) in a Sea of Sin*] was published in 1905, to great critical acclaim and commercial success. Writing in 1928—about a quarter-century later, that is, during the cultural and political turmoil of the 1920s—Zeng offered a characteristic understatement: “The core meaning of this book consists of my view of how during the thirty years [i.e., 1868–1898, the years depicted in the novel] our China went through a huge transformation from new to old, consisting of one part cultural development and one part political change. Phenomena both alarming and pleasing occurred in this period one upon the other.”

Here then a modern Chinese writer's invocation of a *yin* and *yang* pairing for his own time, this one an ongoing interaction between alarm and pleasure. Professor Theodore Hutters, a literary historian who has made a careful study of *Flower in a Sea of Retribution*, has elaborated on it, pointing out that

One of the most striking things about the novel is the prominence given to the presentation of the foreign...This figuration of a world that is at once beyond China but which has also become profoundly imbricated with Chinese society is highly complicated...Part of this complexity arises out of a sharp awareness that indigenous knowledge would be lamentably insufficient in the new international age, and yet there is a profound ambivalence about what the coming of the West means for China....

In the novel, Western ideas, no matter how noble and practical they have proved to be on their native terrain, never seem to work out once they are imported into China and grafted on to the preexisting Chinese way. When these Western practices come to China, for all the inevitability of their presence, they somehow come to embody a crudity and an amorality that cast doubt on the desirability and even the stability of Chinese participation in the Western-dominated new

world order...Something about the Chinese context renders the universality of Western ideas problematical.”²⁴

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China’s literary imaginings of a hundred years ago have thus prepared us for encountering some contemporary Chinese examples of what political scientists today call the “law of unintended consequences.” Just as we saw how William McNeill could take the gloomy world historical outlook of Oswald Spengler and turn it on its head, we see in today’s China an example of how the central conceit of Mao Zedong has also been turned upside down. Mao’s vision for both China and the world was expressed, we remember, as a prediction—and an exhortation to the World Countryside—to surround the World City. Instead, the Chinese City and the World City have taken the offensive, not merely surrounding the Chinese countryside and the World Countryside, but rapidly destroying them. This reversal of roles will have an enormous influence on the shape of any Grand Strategy that comes to be developed by China’s leadership.

The reversal is, first of all, important for its influence on the imagery of Chinese urbanization and helps explain why so many millions of Chinese have opted for it, even beyond economic necessity. For example, in reflecting on the history of modern Shanghai, China’s most important and most cosmopolitan city, Professor Wen-hsin Yeh encourages us to understand the notion of “surrounding of the city by the countryside” not merely as a metaphor for a tactic of guerrilla warfare, but also as a shorthand way of expressing Mao

²⁴ *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), p. 175.

Zedong's ambition to overcome Shanghai's Western-derived reaction and decadence with the revolutionary and modernizing force of "scientific socialism."



Mao Zedong (1893–1976)

Yet Shanghai, once rejected by millions of Chinese as the embodiment of everything bad that the world had done to China and, worse, a major weapon that once served Western interests against Chinese ones, is now seen as something else entirely—the incubator and disseminator of the creatively modern, a place that demonstrates China's capacity to comprehend everything included in the contemporary definition of modernity, whether in politics, economics, science and, especially, culture.²⁵ But the reversal between countryside and city is important for another reason, not just a metaphorical one. We saw how Liang Qichao, in his post-World War I disillusionment, imagined modernity's urban future—and, therefore, China's urban future—as exciting and as necessary to China's rejuvenation, but also as unsettling, even nightmarish. Like Zeng Pu before him, he experienced both pleasure and alarm.

²⁵ "Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a Republican City", in Frederic Wakeman, Jr., and Richard Louis Edmonds, eds. *Reappraising Republican China* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2000).

Today, as a clearer vision of that future comes into focus, what does it presage for the twenty-first century? As China rises, it is being transformed, becoming something very different from what it was when its contemporary rise began. It has thus become a New China yet again and, in its own way, it is experiencing a new Great Leap, that is, a profound re-making of society. The difference is that the Great Leap of the 1950s had as its objective the radical remaking of China's *rural* society into a new kind of rural society. That is not the intention nor the design of what is happening today, even though rural China is being fundamentally, even radically, remade. Rather, as Chinese journalists Zhou Qun and Lin Yanhua (among many others) tell us: "Whether in scale or speed, China's ongoing urbanization is unprecedented in human history. In the past decade, China's cities expanded at an average rate of 10 percent annually. From 1978 to 2004, China's urbanization rate rose from 17.9 percent to 41.8 percent and its urban population increased from 170 million to 540 million. By the middle of this century, the country's urbanization rate will rise to 75 percent or so in order to support its overall modernization process. China will complete in just a few decades the urbanization process which took western developed countries three to four hundred years."²⁶ In the next twenty years alone, Chinese cities will probably absorb more than 300 million new migrants from rural areas.

The implications of this prediction are daunting—requirements for housing, and otherwise providing for, an additional urban population in China equal to the current population of the United States; economic growth sufficient to absorb many millions of new urban workers; enlarged supplies of water and electricity; new transportation networks. The capital requirements are by themselves immense; the challenge to established methods of governance is unprecedented; and the implications of all of this are far from obvious.

²⁶ *China News*, Nanning, November 11, 2005.

What has happened only thus far has been enough to provoke uneasy brooding about the future. The photography critic Christopher Philips has described how some Chinese photographers are documenting today's rapid urbanization, thereby creating a contemporary visual record of the realization of Liang's Qichao's early twentieth-century forebodings about urban China.

"Drastic urbanization" is a term often used to describe the extraordinary wave of demolition and construction that has swept through the country since the early 1990s. During that period, China's economically booming cities have added an astonishing 20 million new inhabitants each year, with no slowdown in sight...

In response to the resulting strains placed upon the infrastructure of Chinese cities, grandiose renovation projects have been launched, which typically commence with the wholesale leveling of "dilapidated" areas—that is, the remnants of the historic urban fabric...

Cities which were once quite architecturally distinct are becoming almost indistinguishable, as generic megastructures, both commercial and residential, rise on the rubble of local building traditions. The speed and blithe efficiency with which the traces of the country's urban past are being erased have led critics to predict that the signature urban form of twenty-first-century China will be the city without memory.²⁷

And, if this were not enough, the countryside—according to many reports at the time of this writing—is in great disarray, increasingly unproductive economically, unstable socially, and in a surly mood politically. The rural system of publicly-provided social services is increasingly dysfunctional—non-functional in many places. In response to these conditions, the central government, early in 2006, promised massive new investments for rural reconstruction. This suggests that rural China will now begin to live through yet another dramatic transformation of its own.

²⁷ *Art Journal* (Winter 2004).

These phenomena, in city and countryside alike, are changing the nature of the realm—changing the very sense that Chinese have of their own country—and thus requiring China’s leadership to ask whether the means for the “defense of the realm” must also change accordingly.

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We have seen that, in Yuan, Ming, and Qing times, a great capital was called into being because a great dynasty wanted to make a statement about its own magnificence. As a byproduct of such efforts to overawe the population, a set of economic and trading relations grew up around the great city, as if also by decree, for these relations would not have arisen otherwise. In this one respect, the history of a city like Beijing displays the penchant to “place politics in command,” long before Mao Zedong coined the phrase. The appropriation of Beijing by the People’s Republic of China is but the most recent example.

As we have seen, Beijing as a capital goes back to Mongol times, but it reached its zenith when it was the nerve center of an enormous Manchu empire. It served as the capital of the new Republic of China from its founding in 1912 until 1928, when the new National Government of Chiang Kai-shek moved the capital to Nanjing (Nanking.) The new governing powers in Beijing set out to transform their old imperial city into a suitably new republican metropolis. “Beijing needed to break down the cumbersome structures of the past,” as Professor Madeleine Yue Dong has noted,

and adopt a network of metal rails and asphalt streets distinguishing a thriving, industrialized, city. An important motivation was the creation of a new spatial order that would train imperial subjects to become Republican citizens...The

Chinese nation-state needed to establish itself as modern and at the same time secure the “distinct Chineseness” of the new nation. To live on in continuity with the imperial past would imply “stagnation;” yet inability to claim the past would indicate a lack of “civilization.”²⁸

Beyond the fact that there was a new national capital to the south after 1928, Beijing was further isolated from the rest of China as Japanese influence expanded throughout the 1930s. “Manchukuo” was portrayed as a successor state to the Qing dynasty with the “Last Emperor” as its nominal head, and was thus connected to Beijing, the old Qing capital. The connection was both metaphorical and real, in that Beijing also lived under Japanese occupation from 1937 until the end of World War II.

Beijing thus had a troubling dossier. It had more than its fair share of collaborators with the Japanese—who, in addition to their other sins, had worked to promote nostalgia for the old Chinese imperial way of doing things. Beijing’s commitment either to Chinese republicanism or, especially, to Chinese Communism was suspect. In any case, Mao Zedong decided that Old Beijing would be New China’s capital rather than, say, having its capital in a different city, or building a new capital city from the ground up as other great dynastic founders had done in their time. There would be no Chinese version of Abuja, Brasilia, Canberra, or Washington.

As Professor Wu Hung describes it, the juxtaposition of old and new, of political statements and practical purposes, immediately became contorted:

How could this old city be transformed into the capital and a shining symbol of New China? Two different solutions were soon caught up in heated debate. A group of conservation-minded architects envisioned building an administrative centre west of old Beijing [but] an unlikely coalition of left-wing Chinese architects, Soviet specialists, and Western-trained urban planners of modernist bent argued for locating the

²⁸ *Republican Beijing: The City and Its Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 100, 101.

government in traditional Beijing... Mao himself decided to locate the government's offices in the old city, thereby insuring the inevitability of the destruction of old Beijing. To Mao, such concerns were irrelevant, because revolution meant destruction and transformation...

To welcome the new millennium, Jiang Zemin, who had succeeded Deng Xiaoping in 1989, constructed the mammoth Millennium Altar. But instead of putting it in Tiananmen Square, he placed it in Beijing's new urban space...Jiang's architectural legacy will also include the National Theater...After an intense international competition, which went three rounds and lasted a year and a half, the top leadership finally made a decision in July 1999. The design that Jiang approved was by the French architect Paul Andreu, who proposed building a shiny egg of glass and titanium, encircled by a large pool, and entered through an underwater tunnel...

The great difference between Jiang's vision for a "socialist monument" and Mao's became unmistakable...By constructing an ultra-modern structure next to the Great Hall of the People, Jiang connected himself to the Mao era while simultaneously separating himself from it.²⁹

In this, we see a blending of both a traditional Chinese way and a modern Western way of making great things happen, that is, from the top down. A small group of like-minded men have a vision, and a grand design flows from it. Whether by inspiration or coercion, the requisite resources are mobilized, and the project is completed. That project may be a great city, but it is also the entire world in miniature; it brings together ideas, attitudes, and ways of doing things which are intended, sooner or later, to be expanded, first on a national, and then on a truly grand scale. This is the story of China's urbanization in the twentieth century—prior to the dramatic departures in social and economic policies after 1978.

²⁹ Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 7, 8, 240, 241.



The Forbidden City and Imperial Palace, Beijing



The Great Hall of the People, Beijing



The Millennium Altar, Beijing

In the first eight decades of the twentieth century, Chinese had before them the example of the imperially-decreed, awe-inspiring, and monumental metropolis. But political requirements changed, and it was believed necessary to bring into being cities which would embody the spirit of the new age—democratic, scientific, and modern. A famous example was the small city of Nantong, on the north bank of the Yangzi River, about seventy miles up from Shanghai. In the 1890s, it was still a backwater of a town, but in the ensuing decades it was transformed under the guidance of a local Chinese scholar-businessman Zhang Jian. He, and other members of the local elite, not only caught the spirit of the modernizing Late Qing era, they also realized that they could cement their own influence and bring in outside capital in the bargain.

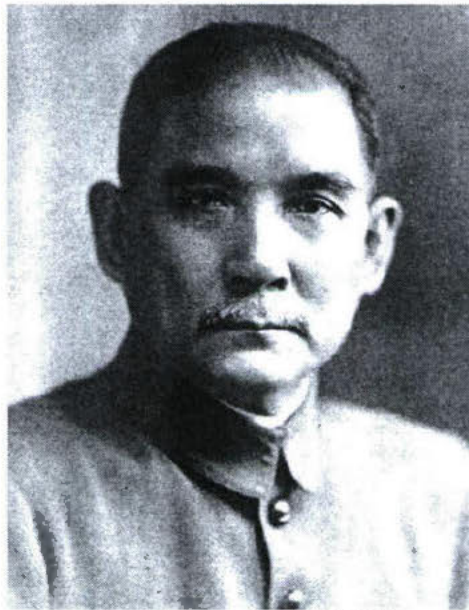
In his detailed study of the history of Nantong—essentially a textile-producing company town—from its founding until its effective demise around 1930, Professor Qin Shao describes for us both Nantong’s founding vision and its implementation:

The plan was to transform a country seat into a cosmopolitan city by opening its ancient walls, providing paved roads, importing mechanized clocks, electric street lights, and Western-style buildings... A Zhang Jian-controlled shipping company offered discounted fares to visitors; famous opera stars performed in Nantong; national and regional conferences were held there; tour guides containing statistics, photos, blueprints and maps were published; film companies were created...

By the late 1910s, Nantong was recognized as an outstanding model of modernity....Liang Qichao called it “the most progressive city in China.”...Its success was an inspiration for an alternative path to China’s urban-centered, foreign-dominated modernization...Nantong became a tourist attraction....John Dewey made a stop there in 1920.³⁰

³⁰ *Culturing Modernity: The Nantong Model, 1890–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) pp. 2, 3.

The Nantong vision was, in the end, the response of a local conservative elite that had been the product of generations of Chinese habits of governance. In the early years of the new Republic, the roots of visions for the renovation of China came from other places. Sun Yat-sen himself (1866–1924), the founder of the new Republic of China, was in no sense a product of old China; rather, as his most recent biographer, Marie-Claire Bergere, describes him, “he was a pure product of maritime China, the China of the coastal provinces and the overseas communities, open to foreign influences.” He was educated in Honolulu, later trained as a physician, and was also a Christian. “The education that the young peasant received in missionary schools initiated him into the modern world and aroused in him a desire to give China a rank and role worthy of it in that world.”³¹



Sun Yat-sen (1866–1924)

Sun built his first political base outside of China by organizing overseas Chinese around the world. Like the world famous Chicago urban planner and architect Daniel Burnham (1846–1912)—the creator of modern city planning who had become well-known in China—

³¹ Marie-Claire Bergere, *Sun Yat-sen*, tr. Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.3.

the Father of the Chinese Republic did not believe in making small plans. In 1919, Sun published his own vision for China, *A Plan for National Reconstruction*.

With the passion of a demiurge, Sun modeled the future China, recommending “gigantic methods,” wiping from the map whole towns, cutting across 100-kilometer-wide loops to rationalize the course of the Yangzi, and making provision for “the establishment of a direct rail link between Zhili [the province of Peking] and Capetown [South Africa].

These plans were supposed to be realized thanks to the reconversion of the industry of the United States and the European powers, which, with peace restored, would devote 25 percent of their erstwhile annual war budget to financing Chinese modernization.³²

Sun’s plan also imagined the Three Gorges dam, “a million miles of highway,” and a national rail network. For being the father of such grandiose national blueprints, he would become a heroic figure in Communist, as well as in Nationalist, China.

Sun Yat-sen sent his only son, Sun Fo (1891–1973) to study at the University of California and at Columbia, where he apparently became interested in urban planning. Upon his return to China, the younger Sun published a paper on the subject, arguing that China’s future lay in cities built and administered on Western scientific principles; he thought that traditional Chinese people who lived in such cities would be transformed into modern Chinese people. His father arranged for him to become Mayor of Canton (“Guangzhou” today) in 1921 but, like the rest of the Nationalist Party’s hierarchy, he followed Chiang Kai-shek north in 1927 to Nanjing, where he became the Minister of Railways.

³² Bergere, *op. cit.*, p. 281.



Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975)

The new National Government established in Nanjing had as its aim the physical as well as the cultural remaking of China. “If in Shanghai, modernity could be defined as the ‘material transformation of everyday life,’ Nanjing was consumed with the industrialization of *national* life...The new government planned to ‘reconstruct’ China to make it modern. A gleaming capital would rise out of the mud alleys of Nanjing, a city twice destroyed in the previous century.”³³ Within a year of the founding of the regime, as Professor William Kirby recounts, a team led by an American-trained engineer had produced a detailed plan. It called for a new airport, modern water and electrical systems, a new ring road to circle the city, new railroad connections, a new government district, twelve new parks, and many tree-lined avenues, along which seedlings imported from France were planted.³⁴ For all this, in 1937, the city which was supposed to become the Paris of the East, was instead immortalized as the site of one of World War II’s signature atrocities.

³³William C. Kirby, “Engineering China: Birth of the Developmental State,” in Wen-hsin Yeh, ed., *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 137.

³⁴ Kirby, pp. 139, 140.

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As we have seen, the next new national government, that of the People's Republic of China, continued the Chinese tradition of making large political statements through the design and redesign of its capital, and also of other large cities. But China's great cities, upon deeper study, turned out to have another role. Their deep structure was first noticed by the pioneer in the study of China's urban history G. William Skinner (b. 1925). "Fairly early in my research on Chinese cities," Skinner wrote in 1977,

it became clear that in late imperial times they formed not a single integrated urban system, but several regional systems, each only tenuously connected with its neighbors...The region they jointly defined coincided with minor exceptions to a physiographic unit. I eventually came to conceive of urban development—the formation of cities and the growth of their central functions—as a critical element in regional development, the processes whereby regional resources of all kinds, social, cultural, as well as economic and political, were multiplied, deployed with greater effectiveness, and exploited with increased efficiency....³⁵

...In late imperial China, field administration was designed not only to promote social order and foster the well-being of the populace but also—and more importantly—to ensure the regular flow of revenue, to defend the various part of the realm against internal and external enemies, and to prevent the concentration and consolidation of local power that might pose a threat to imperial control.³⁶

In Skinner's understanding of how these systems actually worked, he distinguished between the weak power structure represented by the imperial bureaucracy and what he called the "informal parapolitical systems" on the local scene which attended to those aspects of governance not focused on the court's overriding concern with revenue and defense.

³⁵ G. William Skinner, "Regional Urbanization in Nineteenth Century China," in G. William Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), p. 211.

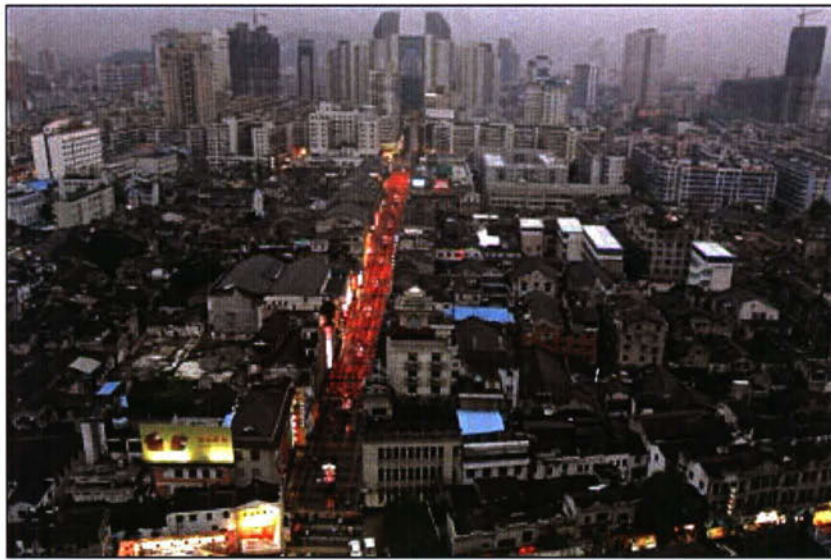
³⁶ Skinner, "Cities and the Hierarchy of Local Systems," *op. cit.*, p. 307.

In this variable division of labor, the tasks of the informal parapolitical system included resolving civil disputes and maintaining local order; apprehending and punishing criminals, dispensing famine and disaster relief and other welfare services; promoting education and supervising institutions related to imperial examinations; constructing and maintaining public works; and licensing and regulating certain semiprofessionals and businessmen.³⁷

In the generation since Skinner introduced these and related concepts to the study of how China “really works,” his ideas have become building blocks for a more expansive analysis. Skinner had looked on the nine “macroeconomic regions” that he had delineated primarily as physiographical entities, that is, as products of China’s natural geography. Thus created, they were not contingent on the vagaries of international trade, or on changing *ideas* about the origins of, and the generation of, real wealth. Today, even as observers of Chinese economic behavior remain very much interested in “real” regions, they also think in terms of what we can call “virtual” regions, that is, a regionalism that is the product of shared economic activity and a shared outlook about it. Thus, the “macroregions” first discovered by Skinner have now become much bigger, literally and metaphorically. In the past, the analytical focus was the relation of regions, one to another, inside China. Today, the focus is on the relation of the various regions, not to each other, but rather to the outside world. To borrow some current jargon, the regions are no longer “regions of China” as such, but “transboundary regions,” created and defined by activities which transcend existing political borders. These new and rapidly growing “transnational macroregions” are functioning entities; each one has an internal cohesion of its own, a cohesion that separates it from its immediate neighbors, and more important, from its national government.

³⁷ Skinner, *ibid*, p. 338.

This important transformation is too-easily hidden behind the off-putting academic argot about the “reification of bounded space” or “theoretical emplacement” or “embeddedness of subjectivity” that is often used by specialists to describe this phenomenon. Indeed, in China, real changes are happening so rapidly that they are outpacing even the ability of economists, sociologists, anthropologists, and geographers to invent neologisms that purport to describe them. However, if we may invent some jargon of our own based on more familiar catchphrases, G. William Skinner described an “urbanization and regionalization with *Chinese* characteristics;” now we have to describe a “Chinese urbanization and regionalization with *global* characteristics.”



The new city towers over the old in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province.

The suddenness with which China reversed course at the end of the 1970s, and the unexpectedly rapid and successful transition to the new way—all its profound problems notwithstanding—should make us wonder in retrospect whether China was as oblivious to worldwide intellectual debate as it appeared at the time. Throughout the 1970s, economic growth as such came under attack, and much dissatisfaction was expressed with what had

happened in the Third World during the 1960s and early 1970s. One approach was to reject the notion of a so-called international division of labor. In a series of conferences and studies, the various arms of the United Nations called for self-reliance and advocated the weakening of, if not the severance of, a country's ties to the world economy and to multinational corporations. "This implied," as Professor David K.Y. Chu put it, "that countries should adopt territorially-based, autonomous development."³⁸ From this, there arose concepts like "agropolitan strategy" and "ecodevelopment."

It is certainly fair to call this a Leftist critique of the liberal, capitalist, international economic order. But the Left was far from united on the matter. We have already noted in another context, that, in the 1970s, so-called "world systems theory" was developed and propounded by Immanuel Wallerstein. His ideas were hardly designed to buttress the then-existing world economy, but he did not believe in economic isolation as a solution. Instead, "his work projected a new role for cities as part of the larger historical movement of industrial capitalism. The new world system production of markets would be spatially articulated through a global network of cities—the world cities. Life in these cities would reflect, to a considerable extent, 'the mode of their integration into the world economy...; the mode of world system integration...will affect in determinate ways the economic, social, spatial, and political structure of world cities and the urbanizing processes to which they are subject.'"³⁹ Thus an argument for ending traditional Maoist "self-reliance" by restarting China's international economic activities could be construed as a perfectly respectable Leftist position, even if it were not the dominant Leftist position in the world of that day. An intra-Communist Party debate over whether, in effect, to reintroduce a form of capitalism into China could

³⁸ "The Hong Kong-Zhujiang Delta and the World City System," in Lo Fu-chen and Yueng Yue-man, eds., *Emerging World Cities in Pacific Asia* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1997), p. 78.

³⁹ Chu, *ibid.*

readily be construed as but an argument among good Communists, not a single “capitalist roader” among them.

In the event, the main premise of the post-Mao reforms, famously known as “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” was that future economic development would be driven by re-connecting China to the world economy. The rapid urbanization of both the coast and the hinterland has been the result. These new agglomerations could not survive were they ever to be severed from the international economic networks that sustain them. Chinese urbanization and the regionalization that it anchors have thus moved beyond the “local” and even the intra-Chinese to become “the visible tips of icebergs of social networks that extend around the world.”⁴⁰ Though this outward-reaching process is farthest advanced in Southeast China anchored by Hong Kong and Guangzhou, it is no less the reality in the Yangzi delta anchored by Shanghai. Less remarked on, but part of the same development, are Southwest China’s ongoing integration with mainland Southeast Asia, “the Greater Mekong Economy;” Northeast China’s meshing with Japan, South Korea, and Far Eastern Russia; and even the “transborder” economic integration of Northwest China’s Muslim region with the countries of Central Asia.

As this process continues to accelerate, these emerging “transboundary regions,” though not themselves states in a traditional political or juridical sense, nonetheless begin to take on some attributes customarily ascribed to states. Sometimes, for example, they have a name—like “Greater China”—or sometimes the common characteristics attributed to them are akin to a national identity. Thus, in many places, and especially in today’s China, as Professor Carolyn Cartier observes, “there are collisions between the historic norms of nation-

⁴⁰ Alan Smart, “The Hong Kong/Pearl River Delta Urban Region: An Emerging Transnational Mode of Regulation or Just Muddling Through?” in John R. Logan, ed., *The New Chinese City: Globalization and Market Reform* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), p. 104.

state governance and the new realities of transboundary and transnational processes.”⁴¹ Indeed, as she also notes, the famous slogan “one country, two systems,” which Beijing used to describe its formula for re-establishing Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong, is in fact an acknowledgement of the inability of China’s existing political system to cope with this phenomenon. In fact, even the mega-cities in China proper are governed under novel arrangements; the six largest ones have become “special municipalities,” having the status of provinces, but also some attributes of what we would call regional authorities.

The irony, and the challenge to a national government which seeks to devise Grand Strategy that incorporates China’s growing power, is that the very growth in that power creates ever greater “disaggregation.” This, in turn, is leading to an ever-growing recognition that the political system needs adjusting to reflect these changes, and that the adjustment will have to come at the expense of the power of the national government. Two systems are not enough. It may be that the better formula, to borrow again from Professor Cartier, is “one country, all kinds of systems.” Such a notion, she thinks, “may be read as a postmodern alternative to the modern state system.” For example,

analysts concerned with the future of Taiwan have suggested that China adopt a policy of “one country, four systems,” in order to recognize the differences in political culture between the mainland and Taiwan...In a twist that prioritizes differences in political systems, suggestions for a “one country, five systems” model included autonomy for Tibet... [In 1999] former Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui wrote about China as a system of seven distinct economic regions. In this model, Taiwan is its own region. The other six are Tibet, Xinjiang, Mongolia, Northeastern China, Northern China, and Southern China...President Lee defined the seven-regions model as an administrative approach that would redistribute the power of the central government, but not create separate sovereign systems.⁴²

⁴¹ Carolyn Cartier, *Globalizing South China* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), p. 235.

⁴² Cartier, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

From the point of view of the actually-existing People's Republic of China, these are not primarily questions of public administration or of bureaucratic organization; they are strategic issues of the highest order. As we have pointed out, the empire which the People's Republic inherited from its Manchu predecessors was not primarily the product of a public administration mindset either; it was the product of strategic calculations. And as we have also pointed out, the very nature of the continental empire constructed by the last dynasty had planted within it a strategic challenge to *any* successor regime. Well before "world maritime society" even began to pull on the continental empire, that empire contained strategically significant, *internally-generated*, stresses. Today, Chinese regionalization is based on powerful networks of personal connections which extend beyond Beijing's current political reach. Organization theorists and management experts call this a problem of "the span of control." Strategic analysts also need to study it on their own plane.

Once again, we need to take some inherited ideas and stand them on their heads. For example, students of China know that local affinity, loyalty to native place, and connection to family, clan, and ancestral home are important components of traditional Chinese civilization. These are reinforced by language and local dialect and by geographical variation across the country. The political history of regions and localities is also important, especially in modern times. After the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty, for example, a locality might claim for itself the mantle of "Ming loyalism," that is, loyalty to the preceding ethnic Chinese ruling house. That was a shrewd thing in to do in 1912. After 1949, a locality might claim for itself an old allegiance to the Communists, and that would have been a shrewd thing to do also.

"Localism" has also always been understood as a source of resistance to overbearing central authority, whether in imperial times or in the twentieth century. Such localism persists

in China, even beyond the “macro-economic regionalism” we have mentioned. But localism in the post-1980 era of “Opening Up and Reform” has been manifesting itself in unexpected ways. It used to be something which complicated the internal workings of China’s polity. Now, counterintuitive as it may seem, Chinese localism is aiding in the expansion of the country’s foreign ties.

To be sure, even older localism as a source of resistance to central authority would be enough of a challenge to Beijing’s “span of control.” There now exists in China a huge “floating population” of workers in the megacities who are clustering by “native place” affiliations. They are creating urban ghettos, defining themselves by common occupations, and organizing native place associations. But, unexpectedly, there has sprung up a growing relationship between the local and the global; localism is now intertwined with globalism, and the two are fostering each other. There is historical precedent for this seemingly unlikely partnership going back to the Late Qing era which, as we have seen, was another period of “opening up and reform.” Indeed, some historians now believe that this trend was only temporarily interrupted during the High Maoist era between 1950 and 1976.

Professor Tim Oakes has created the phrase “translocal China” to help in our understanding of this new development. He points out that traditional appeals to localism or regionalism do indeed seek “to negotiate the tension between provincial autonomy and central power. In so doing, however, they appeal to broader networks of economic power. This is now “part of a strategy whereby local [Chinese] elites attempt to promote a cultural identity attractive to global capitalism...seeking to align themselves with broader forms of political and economic power in very specific ways...They attempt to position themselves into the pathways of power that circulate throughout China, the Asian Pacific area, and the world.”

In this respect, Oakes thinks that “contemporary globalization is not just an expanded version of capitalism, but an altogether new form of capitalism.” It has created what he conceives of as a “new local imperative: not to resist the incursions of transnational capital, but to align with those flows.” And the reverse of this is also true: “Local cultural diversity and difference are no longer regarded as obstacles to capitalist development, but have become core features of its expansion.” In other words, the traditional Chinese localist outlooks, which might once have been isolationist, anti-foreign, and obscurantist, today are creating something else entirely.⁴³

Beyond its powerful effects in China, this phenomenon needs also to be appreciated both in an Asian and in a worldwide context. Today, there are twelve cities in Asia with populations over ten million, ten of them outside China. Three of these—Tokyo, Osaka, and Seoul—are in East Asia; two—Jakarta and Manila—are in Southeast Asia; four—Delhi, Bombay (now Mumbai), Calcutta (now Kolkata), Dhaka, and Karachi—are in South Asia. These cities, whatever their varying degrees of economic development, technological sophistication, and organizational effectiveness, are now the critical nodes in their native countries and in these regions, and they are increasingly connected to other expanding “megapolis” areas around the world, whether in the “first” or “third” worlds.

The writer and commentator Martin Wolf took the occasion of the death of the renowned urban historian Jane Jacobs (1916–2006) to remind us of the long argument among economists and economic historians about the roles of “nations” and “cities” respectively, and how they in turn fit into an even larger scheme of things.

[Jacobs’] best book, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (1984), was nothing short of a direct challenge to Adam Smith’s

⁴³ Several related aspects of “translocalism” are discussed in Tim Oakes and Louis Schein, eds., *Translocal China: Linkages, Identities, and the Reimagining of Space* (London: Routledge Falmer, 2006).

Wealth of Nations. Smith, Jacobs argued, was wrong: cities, not nations, are the sources of development. Nations are merely “political and military entities.” Once we “try looking at the real economic world in its own right rather than as a dependent artifact of politics, we cannot avoid seeing that most nations are composed of collections or grab bags of very different economies”.

Above all, according to Jacobs, “We cannot avoid seeing, too, that among all the various types of economies, cities are unique in their abilities to shape and reshape the economies of other settlements, including those far removed from them geographically.” Cities, not countries, Jacobs insisted, are the constituent elements of a developing economy and have been so from the dawn of civilization.⁴⁴

Jacobs herself was not averse to following her own arguments where they led. She coined the term “transactions of decline” to describe how the productive wealth generated in cities was siphoned off by national governments to subsidize failure in other parts of the country. In the early 1980s, she viewed both the Soviet Union and China as governments that “depended to an extreme degree on transactions of decline to hold the political unit together;” she saw in both places “the spectacle of old empires still holding together at all costs....the end products of huge and tenaciously preserved sovereignties.”⁴⁵ As things have turned out since then, the Soviet Union imploded in a failed effort to hold itself together, whereas China has pulled itself out of this particular death spiral, at least for a while.

All this, Jacobs thought, argued for a “multiplicity of sovereignties” as the most economically rational arrangement for economic relations over large territories; she regarded such an “expedient division of sovereignty” as far preferable to transactions of decline. And the logical outcome of it all—which, to be sure, she herself described as a utopian fantasy—was a league of great cities on a global scale. “If unhampered trade with one another were all

⁴⁴ “National Wealth on City Life’s Coattails,” *Financial Times*, May 2, 2006.

⁴⁵ *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (New York: Vintage Books USA, 1984), p. 218.

that cities needed to flourish, a single world government would be the economic ideal, and all the great empires of the past as well as those of recent times would have remained splendid environments for cities. But they didn't."⁴⁶

More prosaically, Professor Aprodicio Laquian, who has spent decades studying urbanization—and especially the new Asian megalopolis—as an interconnected local, national, and international phenomenon, finds that, in its present manifestation, these developments are inseparable from globalization. Individual nations awkwardly attempt to get out of the way of globalization, and yet operate in its midst at one and the same time. “The increasing role of transnational corporations, the construction of new trading blocs, the globalization of economic and socio-cultural development, and the persistence of international debt, all find expression in these cities...As international trade, global finance flows, cross-border manufacturing, offshore industrial investment, outsourcing of production, and the use of advanced information technology encompass more and more countries, these urban centers have turned into crucial hubs of development in a global network of settlements, even as they have remained important engines of economic growth in national development.”⁴⁷

But, at the same time, “a particularly disturbing effect of globalization in many cities in Asia has been the resurgence of particularistic movements, based on religion and on cultural and ethnic identities. Globalization is supposed to erode primordial loyalty and identification with family, clan, tribe, linguistic group, or religion. This is supposed to occur more rapidly in cities that are more exposed to globalization. However, even a quick look at

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 209.

⁴⁷ *Beyond Metropolis: The Planning and Governance of Asia's Mega-Urban Regions* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 139, 140.

what is happening in many Asian mega-urban regions reveals that religious fundamentalism and identification with ethnic enclaves are on the rise.”⁴⁸

And there are still other complicated and interrelated phenomena. In the network of global cities, each has more in common with a counterpart far away than with the nation in which it is situated. Hence, such places, tied together more by business, trade, and finance—even in the use of English as their common language—evinced a desire to form, *de facto*, a league of their own. Yet they also wish to participate in “nation-building” inside their respective homelands; indeed, they aspire to direct it, and thus, even if they are committed to patriotic purposes and to their nations’ aggrandizement, they weaken the sway of the national government’s authority at the same time. They may yet end up in a Jane Jacobs–type transnational municipal league in spite of themselves.

We do not know how these various tensions will resolve themselves. We in the West like to think, as Professor Laquian does when he cites Aristotle’s famous remark that “city air makes men free,” that “city regions may play a very important role in the spread of norms of democratic governance, the values of environmental protection, social justice, and human rights...It is that commitment to *civitas*, the right to citizenship in a free community and assuming responsibility for actions that uphold the common good, that makes citizens’ involvement the keystone for city-region development.”⁴⁹

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For all of this, we, in our own discussion, must remain concerned primarily with one aspect of these developments, that is, their possible effect on the strategic outlook of China’s

⁴⁸ Laquian, p. 140.

⁴⁹ Laquian, p. 421.

leadership, political and otherwise. That leadership, as do we ourselves, sees before it an enormous transformation in degree throughout Chinese society—indeed, in societies all over the world. At what point should they, and we, begin to consider that, cumulatively, the change has become one not merely of degree, but of kind?

Since 1991, as we have noted more than once, the world's sense of itself has changed in many ways. So far as academic study was concerned, the reorganization of the world following upon the collapse of the Soviet Union changed not merely political boundaries, but also scholarly ones. For one example, what we had thought of as "Eastern Europe" essentially disappeared, and what we had once thought of as Central Asia re-appeared in an entirely new guise, that is, as a strategically-relevant area in its own right. This in itself was not surprising, because it is the kind of thing that routinely happens after great upheavals. As Professor Karen Wigen reminds us, this redrawing of intellectual boundaries was hardly unprecedented; before World War II, some of the areas which became the basis for "area studies" were once European colonial empires.⁵⁰

Accordingly, one question today is how, or even whether, the upheavals of our own time should actually shape the analytical frameworks we use to explain them. In Professor Wigen's account, scholars of all political stripes were discontented. The "Left" wanted to do away with traditional "area studies" because it thought they helped further the strategic interests of the United States. "Mainstream" social scientists criticized "area studies" for focusing too much on a region's particularities, and not enough on more universalistic models. And even "traditionalists" were becoming unhappy with their centers for regional studies and their ever-growing bureaucracies for becoming overly regionalistic and insufficiently supra-regional.

⁵⁰ "A Maritime Response to the Crisis in Area Studies," *Geographical Review*, April 30, 1999.

One suggestion that emerged in the late 1990s from this frothy debate was the use of the ocean as the foundation of regional analyses, thereby regrouping area studies around maritime basins. In this way, the relations among the littoral societies are in the foreground and the connections among them become the key concern. To use a bit of academic jargon, “this was a move away from static ‘trait geographies’ in which East Asia, for example, was defined as the land of ideographic writing, Confucianism, chopsticks, and the like, toward ‘process geographies’ in which regions could be conceptualized as both dynamic and interconnected.”⁵¹

These notions have implications for historians and students of culture, but they can also have meaning for those looking for insight into appropriate national strategic and military doctrines. We have already seen, in our discussions of China’s history, many examples of the important connections between China’s coast and the world, and the effects of those connections on China’s hinterland. Twenty-first century globalization certainly marks an enormous change in degree in both sets of effects. In our discussion of China’s urban transformation, we have highlighted the key difference between this era and previous ones, namely, that the growth of cities today is the product of, and is now inseparable from, China’s integration into the world economy.

That the change in degree has become a change in kind has been well understood since the late 1980s, acknowledged in ways both ordinary and melodramatic. China’s urban-maritime-global coming of age was affirmed in the famous six-part television series “River Elegy,” broadcast in China in 1988. The film offered an astringent portrayal of China’s isolationist eras and the disasters wrought by the Maoists’ attempt to deal with them. None of this was stated literally of course. Instead, viewers watched the great Yellow River flow into

⁵¹ Wigen, *op. cit.*

the sea leaving the “Yellow River culture” behind and entering the “blue ocean culture” which connected China to the other cultures across the sea. The Communist Party, in its customary way, acknowledged the correctness of the documentary by subjecting it to relentless denunciation. Several of those associated with the production fled the country.

“What strikes the geographer about *He shang* [River elegy], writes Professor Carolyn Cartier

is the dramatic way in which landscape images were made to tell the full sweep of imperial and national history. In contrasts between the landed river empire and the mercantile coasts, the series suggested the dynamic possibilities of urban maritime cultural economies. It also evoked the challenges and opportunities posed by a globalizing cosmopolitanism – one that brings the West and its cultural-economic complex along with it.

The seriousness of the reaction to the series was based in part on an understanding that China had once produced a material and cultural civilization unprecedented in world history. The challenge for China’s leaders is to acknowledge China’s cosmopolitanism as an integral part of that history.⁵²

The computations of China’s State Statistical Bureau provide a more prosaic way of making the same point. China’s economy, once isolated and striving for autarky, is now built on large imports and large exports. Foreign trade, which accounted for ten percent of Gross Domestic Product in 1978, rose to thirty percent in 1990, and to seventy percent in 2004. Hundreds of thousands of enterprises of every size and description, all created by foreign investors, engage in trade and manufacturing that presupposes China’s continuing links with the outside world. With large-scale movements in materials, funds, technologies, and human resources, China is more sensitive than ever to international politics and market changes. China is now dependent on foreign suppliers for necessary raw materials; it imports about

⁵² “Cosmopolitics and the Maritime World City,” *Geographical Review*, April 30, 1999.

forty percent of its oil, half of its iron ore, and a vast assortment of other primary products. It is, in particular, a voracious consumer of forest products and, as agricultural lands are turned into four-lane highways, China will become more reliant on the international market for its food supply. Withal, China's trade is now worth more than \$1 trillion and is growing, and the lion's share of that moves across the Western Pacific.

This, then, is China's contribution to, and its role in, what we like to call "Pacific integration." Its visible indications are economic and cultural, but its deep structure is strategic. Indeed, the structural strategic foundation for these arrangements—the necessary condition we can even say—is hegemony. As Professor Paul Blank points out, naval hegemony in particular has been critical to ongoing pacific integration for centuries. "The arrival of the Spanish on both sides of the [Pacific] basin in the sixteenth century initiated the process of integration...It established Spanish silver and the Spanish dollar as a medium of exchange throughout the [Pacific] basin... The search for raw materials and new markets in the context of industrial capitalism stimulated the settlement and integration of the Pacific under British hegemony...This included the expansion of the China trade, the settlement of Australia, and the exploitation of new opportunities created by the independence movements in Latin America ...New commodities and products created new markets which were then linked by steamship, railroad, and telegraph with each other and with the Atlantic economies."⁵³

The replacement of British naval hegemony by American naval hegemony is an oft-told tale. However one explains the origins of the naval rivalries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is undeniable that, in the end, they contributed mightily to the globalized and wired world of the twenty-first century. As Professor Jon Tetsuro Sumida, a

⁵³ "The Pacific: A Mediterranean in the Making?" *Geographical Review*, April 1, 1999.

naval historian, points out, the technological and organizational sophistication of modern navies and the skilled manpower which operated them were “the precursors of the large industrial organizations which dominate the economies of the modern world...Navies generated fundamental breakthroughs in computers and related electronics, and were a major contributor to the information revolution....Finally, major navies were components of a transnational system of naval security that fostered the growth of international trade. Naval supremacy, therefore, had two faces—as an agent of great power rivalry to be sure, but contrarily as a force that encouraged international co-operation and the emergence of a global economy.”⁵⁴

Thus, whatever may be said about the decline of the nation state in our global era, and however much traditional components of national power may be “deconstructed” by many contemporary students of world affairs, there remains a recognized need for strategic hegemony. That need may be acknowledged only reluctantly, quietly, and tacitly, and spoken of only *sotto voce*—but it is a need, nonetheless. *Whose* hegemony—whether *somebody’s* or *something’s*—may in the end not matter, *if* one can be confident that the happy results of the present arrangement will continue on during some yet-to-be-described new dispensation. But, in the meantime, this is a predicament for any Rising Power that may in fact have hegemonic aspirations—whether it be China, the “international community,” the United Nations, a coalition of non-governmental organizations, or a planet-wide cartel of the richest multinational corporations. How is any transition to be arranged? How can it happen without destroying the actually-existing ecumenical system of the day?

⁵⁴ “Reimagining the History of Twentieth-Century Navies,” in Daniel Finamore, ed., *Maritime History as World History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), p. 180.

For China, this is a great and grating irony. The success of China's great project of national renovation depends, in the last analysis, on a world arrangement that remains reliable and predictable only because of American strategic hegemony. Does China crave a strategic independence that it can achieve only by becoming, in its own right, the maritime hegemonic power—the world's navarch and, therefore, the archon of the Maritime World City? If so, is there any realistic prospect that China can do that? Has it already concluded that there is no such realistic prospect? Or does the Chinese leadership believe that such a goal is indeed achievable, even as it must superintend an epochal national transformation and govern an already enormous and increasingly fractious continental empire?

Some decades from now, even after Rising China has become Risen China, acquiring control of the World City will be a formidable task, comparable in its own way to Chairman Mao's vision of a China-based transformation of the entire structure of world politics. But gaining control of the World City, and then governing it over the longer term, is not at all like gaining control of the World Countryside and then governing it. After all, explicit in the Maoist countryside strategy was its reliance on violence. There could be no Peaceful Rise of Chinese power; such a thing could not even be imagined. Nor would patience alone—the mere conduct of China's daily business-as-usual—lead to dramatic changes over time.

In today's world however, China's Peaceful Rise, seems both a theoretical and a practical possibility. China's patience and persistence—time on task by a busy population of more than one billion—could achieve in a mundane manner what grandiosity and violence could never attain. In this, the counsel of patience is reinforced by the West's own prognostications about China's great future—so long as it stays on its current path. In this, we sense a traditionally "Chinese" view of things. And yet China's imperial memories—the great

achievements which make them memorable—are alive in the modern milieu precisely because the creators of those great empires were not content to wait. China’s greatest political leaders always pushed the pace.

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In the meantime, China continues to build its great cities into real and symbolic representations of its present rise in the world. Both China’s commercial capital, Shanghai, and its political capital, Beijing, are in the midst of transformations unprecedented not only in China’s history, but in the history of the world. In Shanghai, its selection as the site of “World Expo 2010” has become the pretext for an acceleration of what is already a huge building boom. “By the standards of recent urban projects in the West—the so-called Big Dig in Boston, say—the scale of what the city is undertaking is astounding...A 2,000-plus-yard-long stretch of the waterfront is being razed and re-developed...Nearby, there will also be a modern passenger ship terminal; the world’s fastest commercial train service, a high-speed magnetic levitation line from Shanghai’s international airport will be extended to Hangzhou, a city 100 miles to the southwest...The airport is adding a second terminal whose futuristic design is to complement the original terminal, designed by the French architect Paul Andreu...Shanghai already boasts 4,000 skyscrapers, nearly twice as many as New York, and plans to add 1,000 more in the next decade.”⁵⁵ Even the model of New Shanghai, on display at the city’s Urban Planning Exhibition Hall, is on a grand scale. “The urban planning

⁵⁵ Howard W. French, “Shanghai’s Boom: A Building Frenzy,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2006.

museum is Shanghai's monument to its future. The centerpiece is a 600-square meter-model—the size of two tennis courts—that shows what Shanghai will look like in 2020.”⁵⁶

And in Beijing, an international event has also touched off major urban projects. On July 14, 2001, the International Olympic Committee announced that it had selected China's capital as the site of the 2008 summer games. (For the first time, it also allowed two members of the international committee to host events in the same Olympics, when it subsequently permitted Hong Kong to serve as the site of the equestrian events for the games.) For the government of China, this was the culmination of a long effort to secure the games and what they symbolized for China's new status in the world. Serving as the Olympic venue had been important to other nations which had wanted either to introduce themselves, or reintroduce themselves, to polite international society—a kind of debutantes' ball for *nouveau riche* counties. Berlin's hosting of the 1936 Olympics had become infamous for that. More recently, Tokyo's hosting of the games in 1964 had served as Japan's final re-introduction to society, marking the end of its probation. The 1972 Munich games were designed to do the same for Germany, but athletic competition and political symbolism were overshadowed by a still-*notorious* terrorist atrocity. The 1988 games in Seoul were a symbolic introduction to the Rise of Asia and to the Pacific Century. In 2008, China will indulge in the self-display of an *arriviste*, but on a grand world stage. Indeed, it has hired Steven Spielberg, the American film director, and his Chinese counterpart Zhang Yimou to produce and to stage the opening and closing ceremonies of the games.

The significance of this to China can be seen not only in its worldwide diplomatic effort to secure the games, but in the elaborate construction plans the Olympics have brought forth. Olympic Beijing will be a major statement and, therefore, like the plans a decade ago to

⁵⁶ Geoff Dyer, “How China Looks to the Future to Forget the Past,” *Financial Times*, June 13, 2006.

re-build Berlin after German reunification, or the debate in the United States about what should replace the World Trade Center buildings and what memorials should mark the attacks of September 11, 2001, it has engaged passion and politics. For, as Deyan Sudjic, who directs the Design Museum in London, has pointed out,

In recent years, it is architecture more than any other aspect of contemporary culture that has touched the rawest nerves. ...It was architecture that Saddam Hussein used to consolidate his grip on Iraq. And it was architecture that the Serbs and the Croats deployed in the first stages of their bloody battle over the division of the former Yugoslavia. Both sides marked out their territory by building churches: steel and glass modern for the Catholic Croats; neo-Byzantine in so-called traditional stone and tile for the orthodox Serbs. ...

Architecture matters because it lasts... It matters because it is big, and it shapes the landscape of our everyday lives. But beyond that, it also matters because, more than any other cultural form, it is a means of setting the historical record straight... Arguments over architecture are arguments over how a society understands its past and its values. Until those arguments end, architecture will never cease to incite.⁵⁷

Billions of dollars have already been invested in upgrading telecommunications and transportation infrastructure throughout the country, but it is the Olympics-inspired major renovations in Beijing that will display post-Mao China in a way it has not been displayed before.

A new fifteen-mile-long boulevard will be constructed between the Olympic Park north of the city and the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square in the center of the city. To help design the new boulevard, urban planners in Beijing's municipal government hired the German urban planner and architect Albert Speer Jr., son of Albert Speer, Hitler's personal architect. Some see an eerie resemblance between the new Beijing North-South axis being

⁵⁷ "Engineering Conflict," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 21, 2006, pp. 23, 25.

created by the younger Speer, and the North-South axis once planned by the elder Speer for Hitler's New Berlin, which was to be called Germania.⁵⁸

The main argument, however, has been between "traditionalists" and "modernists." Over the past several years, there have been growing complaints from practicing Chinese architects that the city's signature projects are being designed almost exclusively by Western firms. For example, the new headquarters of the country's largest government-owned bank is a project of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill of New York. A Dutch firm won the competition for two new buildings for CCTV (China Central Television), the state-owned broadcaster—one to serve as its headquarters, the other to serve as a cultural center to also include a large hotel. The headquarters building, skyscraper though it will be, is already renowned for its radically untraditional appearance and the difficulties its shape has presented to the people who are actually building it. And, as already noted, the new National Theater, an egg-shaped structure with a titanium skin now under construction adjacent to the Great Hall of the People, is the work of French architect Paul Andreu.



Grand National Theater (under construction), Beijing

The 2008 Olympic projects afford the present government of China an opportunity to revamp the nation's capital, an opportunity at least the equal of any of the great capital

⁵⁸ Antoaneta Bezlova, "Friction Builds over Beijing's Olympic Revamp." *Asia Times*, March 18, 2003, p. 2.

builders in Chinese history. But if these billions of dollars of new construction are supposed to alert us to Rising China's preferred definition of itself, the signals are mixed at best. On the one hand, the government has undertaken a major effort to refurbish many traditional sites in Beijing and environs in anticipation of 2008. The most conspicuous of these is the multi-year plan for restoration within the Forbidden City. But the Olympic facilities themselves are far more conspicuous for being "cutting-edge."

The centerpiece of the Beijing games will be the new National Stadium, already dubbed the Bird's Nest, because of the startling intricacy of its appearance and construction. It is the product of collaboration among three architectural firms—Swiss, British, and Chinese. It has already set the *avant garde* standard for stadium design and construction anywhere in the world, and it has drawn attention from builders because it is also unprecedented as a "high-challenge" engineering project. As one of the design firms, Arup and Partners of Britain, describes it, "inspired by randomness in nature, and patterns found in Chinese style 'crazed' pottery typically found in Beijing markets, there are, in fact, several layers of patterns that the eye does not pick up on the stadium's apparently random structure. The very irregular nature of the structure meant looking for new methods of designing structural steel sections."



The National Stadium, or "Bird's Nest," Beijing

The National Stadium is hardly an anomaly. One of its co-designers was also a member of the winning team that designed the swimming and diving venue, quickly dubbed the Water Cube. The contest for the latter was a hard struggle, at least as one of the victors, describes it.

The competition, which was judged by a panel of international architects, engineers and pre-eminent Chinese academics, commenced with submissions from ten international consortia and also involved a public exhibition and vote... To arrive at the building's structural design, which is based on the natural formation of soap bubbles to give a random, organic appearance, we used research undertaken by two professors of physics into how soap bubbles might be arranged in an infinite array... This US \$100 million premier recreation centre will have five pools, including one with a wave machine and rides that are six times the size of an Olympic pool. There will also be an organically shaped restaurant area carved out of the bubble structure.

Thus, the nationalistic and patriotic energies embedded in Beijing's hosting of the Olympics are being expressed in an internationalist idiom. Yet it is far from obvious how this seeming contradiction should be interpreted. In one respect, it is but the latest example of one facet of China's interest in the modern; for a century and a half China's desire to be modern and up-to-date has indeed been expressed by what has been built there. But we know that this

has not been its sole manifestation. In culture, and in politics especially, the modern has also come to China in the form of murderous ideologies and blueprints for renewed Chinese imperialism. Moreover, there has always been a dangerously fine line between what seems to be modern but what actually turns out to be decadent. That line is even harder to detect in a country, like today's China, which is being "deconstructed" and "re-constructed" at a rapid pace, and which is thus vulnerable to all the dangers that thinkers and writers like Liang Qichao and Zeng Pu called to their countrymen's attention one hundred years ago.

On the other hand, there are signs of balance and accommodation in the implementation of the modern in today's China. If new buildings can be said to tell us something about the kind of China under construction both literally and figuratively, then the career of prominent Chinese architect Yung Ho Chang is an illuminating illustration. His father, also an architect, designed the Chinese People's Museum of the Revolution (1960) on Tiananmen Square, but he was somehow able, even during the Cultural Revolution, to send his son to study in the United States. The younger Chang graduated from the University of California at Berkeley and later taught at the University of Michigan and Rice University. In 1993, he returned to Beijing where he opened his own firm and also became chairman of the architecture department at Beijing University.

The architecture critic Daniel Elsea, who has paid special attention to ongoing developments in China, thinks that Chang's work "stands in contrast to the flamboyant airports, concert halls, museums, office campuses, and stadia that non-Chinese architects are designing in China; Chang's projects are pared-down and intimate, and concern the fields of education, the arts, and civic building. While Chang is doing some work in Beijing, most of his designs are in the "other" China: the provinces where the vast majority of the country's

population lives, and which are largely left out of China's relentless economic growth...He has become the first Mainland Chinese architect to work overseas, with a publishing house in Paju, Korea; a public housing project in Gifu, Japan; and the temporary Chinese national pavilion at the Venice Biennale.⁵⁹

Chang's internationalism is now both a style and a career. In March, 2005, he became chair of the School of Architecture of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology but he will also spend part of his time tending to his firm in Beijing and to its ongoing projects in China, Japan, and Korea. He will continue, he says, "to fuse the universal modern and the Chinese."⁶⁰

For all of this, the Communist Party of China, the People's Republic of China, the Beijing Municipal Administration, and China's Olympic Committee remain exasperating patrons. Arthur Labow, a writer who has been following the fate of some *avant garde* architectural projects in China, has described how

innovative foreign architects are often in the dark, frequently blindsided by forces they never anticipate or fully comprehend. Even the identity of the true decision maker can remain mysterious.

Everywhere in the world, not only in China, the struggle to realize a design is vulnerable to forces outside the architect's reach: the budget shrinks, the program changes, the financing collapses, the building code alters, the client reneges. In an authoritarian and secretive state that is trying to spur capitalist initiative without relinquishing government control, however, these calamities occur with less warning or transparent reasoning. "It's like two walls in front of each other," one of them says. "You have no clue what really happens, what are the dynamics really."

...Both the reigning government bureaucrats, who respond to social and political pressures, and the newly ascendant

⁵⁹ *Metropolis Magazine*, March 15, 2005, pp. 1, 2.

⁶⁰ Elsea, *ibid.*

capitalists, who try to anticipate market conditions, make sudden and seemingly capricious decisions. Their explanations are incomplete and unconvincing.⁶¹

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It is in competing visions of the world's urban civilization that the future of China's national policies will be found. China, as we have seen, finds itself at the leading edge of unprecedented urbanization and must decide how to cope with its consequences. Paying the costs of its own advances at home will affect China's capacity to pursue grand ambitions overseas—even as the advances at home are based on, and therefore require and compel, more and deeper international involvements. We may have become used to thinking of some fundamental tension between “domestic” and “foreign” policy, but it appears as if China's domestic policy has become its foreign policy; the two are becoming inseparable.

As we have seen in our discussion of a hundred years of Chinese foreboding about the consequences of following the Way of Modernity, there has been no shortage of grim forecasts. It is now for China's contemporary leadership itself to decide how frightened it is of what it has wrought. The social scientists in the network of “think tanks” will find no shortage of dire predictions to bring to their patrons' attention. They might, for example, pick up but one very typical example of the new literature of urban dystopia and summarize it, as Michael Davis's book *Planet of the Slums* (2006) was described by Pepe Escobar in May 2006:

Davis sees the future as a realist, not as an apocalyptic visionary: “This great dragon-like sprawl of cities,” he says” will constitute the physical and demographic culmination of millennia of urban evolution. The ascendancy of coastal East Asia, in turn, will surely promote a Tokyo-Shanghai ‘world city’ dipole to equal the New York–London axis in the control

⁶¹ “The China Syndrome,” *The New York Times Magazine*, May 21, 2006, p. 70.

of global flows of capital and information.”

....But most of all, the dire consequences of the hypercity explosion will be inevitable: appalling inequality within and between cities and, as far as China is concerned, the terror gripping their urban experts—the unbridgeable gap between small inland cities and coastal hypercities. Nobody yet has examined in full the implications of China ceasing to be the predominantly rural society it has been for millennia.⁶²

All this can be made to seem scarier still, as speculation about China’s urban future takes off from the urban present of megacities throughout the developing world. They are, as Davis portrays them, “the radical new face of inequality, a grim human world largely cut off from the subsistence solidarities of the countryside as well as disconnected from the cultural and political life of the traditional city...This is the edge of the abyss, the new Babylon ...based on an architecture of fear and a culture of the absurd...The future of warfare lies in the streets, sewers, high rise buildings and sprawl of houses that form the broken cities of the world...”

The People’s Republic of China, the product of a rural insurgency, has shifted its base of operations. Having left the Countryside more or less to its own devices, the Party’s rule is now bound to the City that it once regarded as its mortal enemy.

III. “The dream of reason produces monsters.”

We saw that, a century ago, a few of China’s most brilliant and insightful thinkers imagined a stellar future for their country—a China which, as we are today able to see for ourselves, is under construction before our very eyes—but none of them envisioned the details of the intervening hundred years, the actual events that would occur between then and now. From

⁶² “The Accumulation of the Wretched,” *Asia Times*, May 20, 2006.

the perspective of 1905, neither utopian philosophy nor religious conviction nor science fiction provided even a hint of the horrific occurrences of twentieth century history. And no pessimist—no prophet of dystopia—could even have begun to foresee them either. One of our main tasks thus far has been to re-examine great eras in China's past and to speculate how those imperial memories could inform China's national politics and grand strategy today. We have also examined far more recent developments in both intellectual and political history—in both China and in the West—and we have speculated about *their* influence on China's emerging sense of today's world.

If we think about the formulation of Grand Strategy as intellectually creative activity—that is, as an imaginative activity ultimately not very different from any other activity which seeks to imagine the future—we should infer that a “strategic vision” is no less the product of the cumulative experience of any country than is a “literary vision” or an “artistic vision” or an “architectural vision.” Indeed, in certain fundamental respects, each one of these visions not only informs the others but each, in its own way, feeds into the completion of the others. Put more simply, each of them can tell us something useful about the others.

In China today, these visions can be wildly different from each other, even as they are all the products of the same history of the same country. In this respect, a Chinese strategist who seeks to draw exclusively on the triumphant episodes of the past as practical and inspirational templates for what can be achieved in the future is not the sole entrant in a competition for control of the popular imagination. There is a competing vision that is far less ambitious; it draws on horrific memories of the past, not uplifting ones. The competition between these two in today's China is, in and of itself, a fundamental strategic datum. It is

another case of the age-old struggle between Culture and Politics in China, and it could very well serve to constrain great societal plans which seek national power and national aggrandizement.

For us to understand how a test of wills of this kind may come to unfold in China, we need to look beyond “history” itself—that is, beyond the study and writing of history—and examine other kinds of writing which are shaping China’s sense of its past situation and its future possibilities. Such a discussion can conveniently focus on a single theme: to paraphrase that too-frequently-quoted sentence from the *Communist Manifesto*, there is a specter haunting China, and it is the specter of violence. As Professor David Der-wei Wang, reminds us:

One can hardly read modern Chinese history without noticing a seemingly endless brutality... At least one million Chinese lost their lives during the Warlord and Nationalist periods, and more than fourteen million were killed during the Second Sino-Japanese War. More than two million fled China after the Communist seizure of power, while almost five million perished during the same period.

After the founding of the People’s Republic, at least thirty million perished during Mao’s Great Leap Forward, which was followed by the Great Famine and Retrenchment Period, and an estimated fifteen million were persecuted and executed every year between those famously bloody wars, campaigns, and movements.⁶³

And to these, one could readily add the deaths of about one million Chinese “volunteers” in the Korean War, and all the civilian and military deaths that resulted from the forcible incorporation into the new People’s Republic of China of Tibet and East Turkistan, parts of the old Manchu empire which resisted becoming a part of the new Maoist dispensation.

⁶³ *The Monster That Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 2.

The central premise of Professor David Der-wei Wang's own examination of one cumulative effect of these episodes is that "modern Chinese historiography has not sufficiently addressed the scale of the moral and psychological aftermath of China's violence and pain and that literature, particularly fiction, can be drawn on as a complementing *and* [emphasis in the original] contesting discourse."⁶⁴ Wang draws for his central image on a mythical creature of ancient China, the so-called *taowu*, a ferocious monster known for its power to see the past and the future.

Over the ages, this monster became identified in China's culture with History itself, but as a supplier of its missing pages, a kind of Greek Chorus which, over the ages, provided unofficial commentary, a necessary supplement to history as written by officials, so that important facts would not be forgotten. It is thus history recorded from the point of view of those on the receiving end—the victims of history, not its perpetrators. The role of the *taowu* was, and remains, to keep alive the memory of outbursts of violence and brutality in China. Just as Standard History and Dynastic History were designed to perpetuate the memory of great achievements so as to instruct the future, the counter-history preserved for us by the *taowu* provides a different kind of instruction all its own. Thus, the study of History as such can teach us only part of what we need to know.

Nor is the offering of deep explanations for violence and destruction, and the preservation of memories of them, the provenance of intellectuals and poets alone. China, even after a quarter-century of urbanization and globalization, remains the home of more than 800 million peasants. Embedded in *their* part of Chinese culture is a sense that "power operates in two separate, yet related, realms, one visible, the other invisible. Between these two, there exist causal links, meaning that invisible powers sometimes produces visible

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

outcomes...In theory, the cosmology of the Party-state was an antithesis of this, since it purported to render the social body amenable to the dictates of reason. In practice, however, the Party subscribed to a worldview that was almost as occult; it assumed that the world of appearances was intrinsically deceptive, masking a hidden world whose nature was dark, cruel and deceptive.” In any case, as Professor Steven Smith further notes:

Since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, there has been an astonishing revival in the People’s Republic of China of what the government calls “feudal superstition.” The 1980s and 1990s saw a rush to rebuild temples and ancestral halls, the resurgence of spirit mediumship and exorcism, renewed interest in divination and geomancy, and the reemergence of heterodox religious cults, notably Falungong....

This raised questions about the nature of the beliefs and practices that revived during the era of economic reform. Were these manifestations of a tradition that had been preserved unscathed in the face of turbulent socioeconomic and political transformations? Or were these substantially new configurations of beliefs and practices adapted to the changed power relations of the reform era?”⁶⁵

Professor David Der-wei Wang, in an analogous way, maintains that the persistence of awesome violence across the generations must cause one to ponder.

Could History itself be regarded both as an embodiment and an indictment of monstrosity? To what extent has the contemplation of history entailed insight as well as indifference?...Particularly in view of the massive scale of violence and pain that Chinese administered to China in the name of enlightenment, rationality, and utopian plenitude, one senses that the line between understanding and complicity has never been so difficult to discern.⁶⁶

This way of approaching things may seem recondite and impractical but, as we have pointed out, it defines one of the challenges facing any maker of Grand Strategy: the first

⁶⁵ S.A. Smith, “Talking Toads and Chinless Ghosts: The Politics of “Superstitious” Rumors in the People’s Republic of China, 1961–1965,” *American Historical Review* 111, no. 2 (April 2006): 423, 405.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

requirement for the organization of a great national project is what today's academics call a "grand national narrative" or what used to be called a "great national epic." However, if careful students of contemporary Chinese culture are to be given credence, the country is still far from the creation of any such story.

It may well be that China, closer in time to many of the representative horrors of twentieth-century totalitarianism, is more apt to carry its psychological scars; Hitler died in 1945, Stalin in 1953, Mao not until 1976. At the same time, as compared to other "post-Communist societies," China has moved further and faster from a brutal Communist/Socialist past to an intense capitalist/commercialist/consumerist present. Some outside China might think of this as an inspiring experience and wonder why this better-than-expected historical outcome has yet to be reflected in an outpouring of cultural exuberance.

Be this as it may, the *taowu* is alive and well, and its influence can be seen in contemporary China's intellectual and artistic life. Professor Ban Wang, writing in the late 1990s about the relation between "politics" and "history" in post-Mao Chinese cultural creation until that time, gives us a good sense of how things appear to many Chinese writers and artists:

History is the shock that forebodes a horrible and crushing calamity. The foreboding turns out to be devastatingly real: what happened was death, murder, disappearance, some incomprehensible upheaval...History as a series of catastrophes finds a heart-wrenching emblem in Zhang Yimou's 1994 film *To Live*...In this film, some unexpected calamity always lies around the corner; some calamity is always about to fall out of the blue...

The Chinese literary critic Meng Yueh has culled scenes from numerous works of Chinese fiction into a comprehensive vision of Chinese society in the twentieth century... For her, the catastrophe is a nightmare that cannot be fully interpreted and

grasped, a darkness that cannot be fully illuminated and redeemed.⁶⁷

Professor Ban Wang also wants us to see a sharp contrast between this view of history as propounded in writing and art and what it replaced. “Writers were once exhorted to write novels, stories, and plays singing the praises of the great campaigns and movements that the Chinese people, led by the Party, have waged and are still carrying out in breathless and epoch-making endeavor...witness the many novels and plays written about military campaigns, massive land reform projects, and large scale political movements. Even the classical historical novel is often cast in terms of sequences of gigantic and historical events, retroactively signifying and affirming a vast underlying master narrative.”⁶⁸

But, in the 1990s, by Professor Ban Wang’s account, Chinese writers were already displaying, at one and the same time, the influence of Modernity in their writing styles and the subjects they chose to write about *and* the influence of Post-Modernity in how they interpreted the actual consequences of modern life. To develop this point in a graphic way, Professor Ban Wang comments on the uses that Chinese writers have made of a famous image created by the legendary “post-modern” German literary critic Walter Benjamin (1890–1942), an image that has since become an icon for rejection of belief in progress. Benjamin’s inspiration was a painting *Angelus Novus*, by the Swiss artist Paul Klee (1879–1940). After contemplating the angel Klee had painted, Benjamin would later write that what he had seen was a “being with his eyes staring, and his mouth open...” He continued:

This is how we imagine the Angel of History, with his face turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like

⁶⁷ *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 238.

to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress."⁶⁹

In this way, Benjamin offers a graphic comment on the outcome of modernity in Europe – murderous ideologies like Nazism and Bolshevism, the mass murders of the Holocaust and the Purges. Yet insofar as many contemporary Chinese writers are concerned, though this may be the end of the story in Europe, it is only the beginning of the story in China; the denouement of China's story has not yet been reached. Thus, in Professor Ban Wang's powerful presentation, even as the Angel of History may usefully serve to instruct Chinese about the past, there are at least three more angels who are now serving to inspire writing about the present and the future – the angels of the fantastic, the schizophrenic, and the grotesque.⁷⁰



"Angelus Novus" by Paul Klee

There may be something of the melodramatic and even of the histrionic in analyses of this sort, but they feed into an ongoing discussion of the significance of the modern Chinese

⁶⁹ *Theses on History*, #9 (1940), Hannah Arendt, ed., Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 257–258.

⁷⁰ Ban Wang, *Ibid.*, p. 229.

experience, and they are no less meaningful than the works of academic historians. Li Tuo, editor of the Beijing magazine *Reflections*, places the discussion within the framework of the basic question of China's response not so much to "the West," but to "modernity." He points out that the most recent thoroughgoing critiques of modernity as such began to appear in Chinese writing at about the same time that Deng Xiaoping announced the famous "Four Modernizations." To be sure, the reforms were welcomed at one level but, like a hundred years ago, many Chinese thinkers remained skeptical and worried:

China, like other non-Western countries, is already saturated with cultural values associated with modernity. Is Chinese modernization entirely a reprint or a copy of Western modernization? Or does it have its own particular quality, its own particular experience? Do we Chinese have the possibility or necessity to form our own discourse of modernity, or do we open a "branch office" of the Western discourse of modernity in China?⁷¹

Luo also finds—and he is hardly alone in this observation—that after 1985, a trend began among writers to write about smaller subjects, rather than larger ones—"experimental novels," "searching-for-roots novels," "new realism," and so on. These writers are, in their way, escapist, even if they see themselves escaping to places more mundane than the Fantastic, the Schizophrenic, and the Grotesque. What ties all of these things together, however, is the contrast with previous eras in Chinese writing when, as we have already seen, the large and the great and the national and the socially-transforming were among the subjects of interest.

How should these particular contemporary developments enter into our discussion of China's future national strategy? How does a Chinese strategic planner incorporate them into

⁷¹ "Resistance to Modernity: Reflections on Mainland Chinese Literary Criticism," tr. Marshall McArthur and Han Chen, in Pang Yuan-chi and David Der-wei Wang, eds., *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century: A Critical Survey* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 143.

his evaluation of China's longer-term capabilities? Is he even aware of them? If he is, does he think they matter?

To be sure, Chinese and Americans alike need to understand more about this. But when we turn to contemporary cultural analysis, we discover that it tends to be written in a specialized academic (and very off-putting) jargon. The terminology originated in French or English and, for Americans, the academic English of cultural analysis must first be translated into normal English before we can begin to reflect on its usefulness for strategic analysis. Similarly, its translation into comprehensible Chinese is difficult—in a country, let us remember, whose linguists disagree about how to translate even so seemingly harmless an English term as “stakeholder.”

For example, phrases such as “politics of marginality,” or “poetics of hybridity,” or “global contextualization,” or “local articulation,” or “mimetic realism,” have been applied to the post-1980 Chinese cultural and literary scene, as has been a discussion of the relationship between “geopoetics” and “geopolitics.” What could this mean? It means in the first instance, as Professor Pang-yuan Chi has written, that the production of Chinese writing is now widely dispersed over China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and in the worldwide Chinese diaspora. The overseas writers, many of them exiles, are increasingly influential; “they show fewer symptoms of an obsession with China,” but instead feel “compelled to ponder the consequences of choosing nationalist causes over individual quests.”

The new diaspora of Chinese literature is made possible by new technologies and increasingly global circulation of economic and cultural capital...Writings by Mo Yan, Su Tong, and Wang Anyi, three of the most prominent mainland literati, now often see first publication in Taiwan or Hong Kong....Jin Yong and Li Bihua, two of the most popular writers based in Hong Kong, have become household names in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, owing to cinematic adaptations of their works

and to shrewd market promotion... All these Chinese writers are writing at a time when the master narrative is already fragmented and anachronized...”⁷²

From here, Professor Chi goes on to observe that “the grand epic narrative has dissolved into fragmentary impressions, fortuitous events, and pointless monologues, foregrounding a historical experience deprived of any authentic lived experience except linguistic configurations.” She cites as one example, the well-know Taiwanese writer Li Yu, “whose writing not only reflects social malaise and human aberrations; it is writing that can also become a remedy to soothe the wounds left by the atrocities of history.”⁷³

Without a doubt, China’s government has been successful in convincing many millions of Chinese that its particular modernization program is a good thing and that it should be supported. It may also be succeeding, to a substantial degree, in convincing many millions of Chinese that further aggrandizement of China in the world-at-large is also a good thing. Indeed, it may well be convincing them that the risks associated with the implementation of a truly Grand Design—a design, for example, without precedent in the imperial history of the country but similar to one once propounded in the Maoist era, that is, becoming the world’s hegemonial power—are well worth taking. But it has not convinced everyone.

There is, first of all, the legacy of what Professor Ban Wang calls “the classic critique of modernity.” It is still alive and well in China, especially since China has the benefit of examples of countries that came to modernity a century earlier.

Industrialization, technology, and urbanization, the prime movers of modern history, created a radically new environment that severed huge populations from traditional

⁷² Pang-Yuan Chi and David Der-wei Wang, eds., *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century: A Critical Survey* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. xxxii, xxxv.

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. xxxvii.

ways of life...It was nothing less than an epochal transformation from a mode of social organization based on the traditional family and the village to a new socio-economic structure embedded in urban existence, an anonymous market, and the rule-bound and abstract relations of a civil society...

Critics of modernity at the advent of the modern age characterized this new condition as alienating, abstracting, traumatic, and catastrophic. For them, the overriding image of technological progress was the metropolis; the urban environment was monstrous in its widespread impersonal administrative structure and its regulative power.⁷⁴

The transformation of China now underway is a modernity of this kind, but even more so. It resembles the first coming of modernity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and yet, in this way of looking at things, it is today even more intense, more rapid, and more disorienting because it is a part of so-called post-modern globalization. The main difference is that the first coming of modernization affected the Western world and propelled the West to a position of worldwide influence, such that it brought the Western version of modernity to the entire world. Modernity, in the countries of its birth, had many destructive and catastrophic consequences. The fear that some in China now express is that the post-modern globalization now underway in what was once called the “underdeveloped” or, more politely nowadays, the “developing” world—a part of the globe less prepared for the shock of it—may bring catastrophes even worse than those that appeared in the West.

Thus, the skeptic in today’s China will speak of the “psycho-cultural trauma of globalization,” and “a disenchanting effect on communities once buttressed by tradition, collective memory, folklore, and kinship relations...In the rush to embrace economic development, consumer goods, and a uniform mass culture, many societies risk losing their cultural heritage and history...The lifeworlds constituted by relatively stable associations, by

⁷⁴ *Illuminations from the Past: Trauma, Memory, and History in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 183.

shared collective memory and commitments, by time-honored attachments and structure of feeling, are fading from the horizon. ...The attempts to preserve the valuables of these lifeworlds are also fading...The merger between the global metropolis and the village is all too treacherous and the prices for changing one's identity and inventing one's history every few minutes have not been calculated."⁷⁵

We have already encountered foreboding of this sort more than once in our discussion. We saw that Chinese writers and philosophers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—whether welcoming of, or resigned to the necessity of, or grudgingly accepting of the inevitability of—the modernization of a post-imperial/Confucian China—worried about what could happen in the process. And, as we have also seen, the actual content of China's story was far worse than any one of them imagined. Like the twentieth century, the twenty-first century in China begins with comparable dread in many of the same precincts. What should we make of it?

Even our brief encounter with Chinese literary and intellectual life reminds us of how literary imagination, that is, what begins in a writer's imagination, can become an inspiration for subsequent political, including strategic, behavior. In fact, in China, there has been a close connection between the two. After all, we saw how, in the late Qing period, the *beau ideal* of a proper Chinese man changed profoundly—from a Confucian *literatus* to a man of modern education and attainment. After the end of the imperial system, in the writings of the 1920s and 1930s, the *beau ideal* of a good and loyal subject of the old Dynasty was replaced by the *beau ideal* of a good and civic-minded citizen of the new Republic. And, with the establishment of the People's Republic, the literature of "socialist realism" announced that this mere "citizen" was now to become a "new socialist man." Even more significantly, as

⁷⁵ Ban Wang, *ibid.*, p. 182.

Professor David Der-wei Wang emphasizes, the transformation in the portrayal of what it means to be a proper Chinese woman—from dutiful Confucian wife and mother, to modern career woman, to matriarch of but a one-child family—has been rapid and profound.⁷⁶ This alone has had, and will continue to have, enormous effects on Chinese life and society.

Our encounter with early twentieth-century “science fantasy” writing is also very suggestive, and Professor David Der-wei Wang’s discussion of the connections and parallels between those visions and today’s creations is well worth pondering:

Just as in the late Qing, utopia and dystopia remain Chinese science fantasy writers’ favorite subgenres. By imagining a future landscape for Taiwan or China, these writers test their political anxieties or desires...

According to Yao Jia-wen (1942-) Taiwan will have declared independence from China and rejoined the stage of world politics, and helps the Chinese government solve ecological problems and even avert a political coup...The mainland writer Liang Xiaosheng (1952-) *Fucheng* (*Floating City*, 1992) deals with the disastrous consequences when a southeastern Chinese metropolis (Shanghai?) is mysteriously disconnected from the mainland; it drifts aimlessly...

In Bao Mi’s 1991 novel *Huanghuo* (*Yellow Peril*), a stupendous novel of more than half a million words, China has split into parts, and politicians fighting a civil war employ nuclear weapons;[M]ore than a billion Chinese emigrate to the rest of the world; wherever they go they cause political and economic crises...Bao Mi’s end-of-the century vision is a bleak one: the “new era” so anticipated by late-Qing writers may still arrive, but only after China has managed to ruin, not rule, the world...

Writing in an era of “post-history,” contemporary Chinese writers have tried to make sense of history by invoking its fantastic other...This fantastic inclination seems to take us full circle to a point almost a century before, when the forerunners of modern Chinese fiction imagined a new China by means of utopian constructs...But unlike their predecessors,

⁷⁶ *Fin-de-Siecle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 158 ff.

contemporary writers diversify the future of the new China by conjuring up various political and scientific possibilities.⁷⁷

In this way, the great ambition of Chinese strategists now vies for control of the Chinese imagination with the unsettling imagery of Chinese literary artists. As the strategists advance their political program, the novelists advance what is in effect a political program of their own by invoking China's memory of violence and destruction. At the same time, the destruction wrought by Taipings and Maoists informs the outlook of others who, as we have seen, had no use for modernity in any of its variations. Such people, who have long dreaded the consequences of China's modernity whatever its guise, still repair to the Confucian ideal of *tatong*, the Great Harmony. Still other Chinese suggest another kind of Chinese approach, the Middle Way, an idea that the competitiveness, both internal and international, which History has shown necessary for China to move ahead and recover its proper standing, is not inconsistent with Peace, and can therefore be sustained indefinitely without catastrophic breakdown either at home or in the world.

Yet history of the last century's violence is the history of abrupt and dramatic change—from the “Confucian” Qing dynasty to the “bourgeois” Republic of China; from Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China to Mao Zedong's People's Republic of China; and from Mao's China to Deng's China. It is only this last startling, and wholly unexpected, change which has been accomplished thus far without wholesale upheaval and without widespread violence and destruction. It is also the only one that is generally regarded as successful, at least for the moment, and it is, for any twentieth-century Chinese dispensation, comparatively long-lived. An American must say this with some irony, for Deng's China is only thirty years old, not the span of even one generation. But in Modern China, that is a long time. It is for us

⁷⁷ David Der-wei Wang, *ibid.*, pp. 335, 336, 337, 341.

to imagine how this unfolding experience is affecting China's "strategic culture" and how, or even whether, it is contributing anything to China's "strategic tradition."

Whatever conclusion we reach, our own judgments and the competing ones of Chinese strategists themselves will seem shallow and even tongue-tied when placed against the verdict delivered by one of twentieth-century China's literary masters Gao Xingjian (b. 1940). In 2000, Gao received the first Nobel Prize in Literature ever given to a Chinese. The government in Beijing kept conspicuously silent about this unprecedented international recognition of a still-living Chinese writer, but its silence is easily understood when contrasted to what Gao himself had to say. In giving the traditional lecture in Stockholm which follows upon presentation of the prize, he spoke on behalf of his lost comrades and against any renewed effort to enlist art in the service of any grand political design.

Chinese literature in the twentieth century time and again was worn out and indeed almost suffocated because politics dictated literature: both the revolution in literature and revolutionary literature alike passed death sentences on literature and the individual. The attack on Chinese traditional culture in the name of the revolution resulted in public prohibition and in burning of books. Countless writers were shot, imprisoned, exiled or punished with hard labour in the course of the past one hundred years. This was more extreme than in any imperial dynastic period of China's history...

During the years when Mao Zedong implemented total dictatorship even fleeing was not an option. The monasteries on far away mountains that provided refuge for scholars in feudal times were totally ravaged and to write even in secret was to risk one's life...

This is an age without prophecies and promises and I think this is a good thing. The writer playing prophet and judge should also cease since the many prophecies of the past century have all turned out to be frauds, and there is no need to manufacture new superstitions about the future. It would be best

also for the writer to revert to the role of witness and strive to present the truth...⁷⁸

The Chinese text of Gao's lecture continues to circulate inside China and throughout the Chinese-writing world.



Portrait of Gao Xinjiang

IV. The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Empire

Any discussion of the future of national epics and national narratives in China as a contributor to strategic thinking should begin by examining the fate of the very story that was put forward not so long ago as the greatest of China's modern national narratives—the coming of the People's Republic of China. And central to an understanding of that particular tale is the radical way in which it attached China's history and China's future to concepts that were not Chinese at all—Marxism, Dialectical Materialism, Proletarian Internationalism, and Stalinism. Beyond these abstractions, China's future was also attached to a recently-established, actually-existing, political regime—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—a

⁷⁸ Nobel lecture, December 7, 2000.

regime that governed the lands of the former Romanov Empire. One might have imagined, as many Chinese had once done, that the denouement of the story of modern China would be a Sino-Japanese bloc, or a Pan-Asian Bloc, or even some version of a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere with China as its leader. Instead, in a truly Great Leap to an unanticipated climax, modern China's story came to rest in none of these places. Instead, China left the Asia where it used to live, and migrated to a New World altogether. In 1950, Mao Zedong famously predicted that "the Soviet Union's today will be our tomorrow."

Mao believed that the Soviet model would lead China toward its own economic development. In the early years of the People's Republic, Soviet material assistance and Soviet advisors were seen as integral to the success of China's revolution. The Soviet manual of economic and governmental organization was adopted in China, and Stalin's approach in the late 1940s to rebuilding his empire's war-damaged economy was closely studied and became decisively influential in developing New China's first central plans. Overall, as Deborah Kaple, a careful student of the first years of Mao's China, summarizes it, this era is best characterized as the "Triumph of High Stalinism."⁷⁹ Later on, as we know, Mao Zedong came to prefer a more distinctly "Chinese" model of Communism. This led him to undertake the hugely destructive and self-defeating political campaigns that began in the mid-1950s and lasted in one form or another until his death in 1976. In the polemical parlance of those days, these programs represented a Chinese critique of Soviet ideology, but from the Left. In Mao's view, after Stalin died, the Soviet Union began to practice Revisionism, not Marxism.

With Mao's death and the subsequent adoption of Deng Xiaoping's reform program, China's discussion of the Soviet Union took yet another abrupt turn. Now, Chinese

⁷⁹ *Dream of a Red Factory: The Legacy of High Stalinism in China* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1994), pp. 108–115.

economists and sociologists were instructed not to document and denounce the Soviets' backsliding and revisionism but rather to look sympathetically at the history of the liberalization and decentralization efforts within the socialist camp, whether in Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, or especially, in the Soviet Union itself.



Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997)

The results were disconcerting. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, many insightful Chinese observers began to detect a reversal in the momentum of the Soviet-American contest, and the first signs that the Soviet Union might enter a period of sustained decline. In a remarkable investigation into the situation as it appeared to both Soviets and Chinese at the time—published in 1987, four years before the doom of the Soviet Union was finally sealed—Professor Gilbert Rozman laid out the content of these ominous discussions. In an earlier section our study, we invoked the metaphor of “a slow Pearl Harbor” to describe the crisis that came upon the Qing dynasty in the early nineteenth century, even as its performance and prospects seemed bright. Today, to read the work of Professor Rozman is to recognize the applicability of that same metaphor to the Soviet Union as the twentieth century was coming to a close.

Thus, on January 30, 1982,

People's Daily carried an article called "Signs of Crisis as Soviet Economy Enters a New Year" which quoted Western newspapers on Soviet failures to achieve planned economic growth rates...A week later *Xinhua* analyzed the Soviet global strategy for 1982. It asserted that the Soviet harvest shortfall of 1981, together with the protracted war in Afghanistan and the Polish crises "has more or less shackled the feet of the Soviet giant in pressing ahead with expansion abroad..."

A month later, in an article in a journal published by Shanghai University, the Chinese economist Zhang Yueming evaluated the prospects for the Soviet Union and the United States, "both still plotting to gain a monopoly position and world hegemony." In the 1960s, the United States had been on the offensive; in the 1970s, and even on into the 1980s, it was the Soviets. But, Zhang said, a change in the balance was now visible. In Rozman's recapitulation of Zhang's argument,

In the mid-seventies Soviet economic development began to stagnate, and Moscow was no longer narrowing the gap with America. Entering the eighties, the Soviet economic situation further deteriorated, while it faced larger military competition from America...The Soviet decline was underway...Although the results of recent expansion had widened Moscow's sphere of power, its economic problems could not be overcome.⁸⁰

We now know that much of the Soviet leadership had been reading the situation in the same way. We also now know that Mikhail Gorbachev, who came to power in 1983, brought with him an agenda for large-scale reform in the Soviet Union not so very different in its spirit and in its sense of urgency from that of Deng Xiaoping's program. The contents of these two programs were different, as were their outcomes. But even in the early 1980s, the terms of intellectual trade inside the Communist camp had been turned upside down. The Chinese Communist Party had been learning from the Soviet Union since the 1920s, but now it was the

⁸⁰ *The Chinese Debate about Soviet Socialism, 1978–1985*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 101, 103, 107.

other way around. Many Soviet economists and sociologists, who had looked upon the Maoist version of Communism as increasingly irrational and dangerous, studied Deng's program as a plausible way out of the USSR's crisis. As one of them remarked, "Communism had saved China, and it was now China's turn to save Communism."

By the late 1980s, there was a palpable sense of crisis in both countries. Gorbachev arrived in Beijing for an official visit on May 15, 1989, with Eastern Europe already in turmoil, and less than six more months before the end, when the Berlin Wall would collapse on November 9. Deng's China was less than three weeks away from the climactic events of June 4 in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Indeed, it seemed to many—not least to Deng Xiaoping himself—that it was the system *in China* that was in imminent danger of collapse.

Just as it was peculiar that China and Russia had become joined at the hip in a wholly unexpected way, equally unexpected has been China's reluctance rapidly and wholly to separate itself from its fraternal twin. It has been a slow process, with China still interested in asserting at least some formal continuity between the Soviet experience and its own. When China began its wholesale reforms of the late 1970s, it did so within the context of their relationship to other Communist countries. Chinese social scientists, economists, and Communist Party theoreticians labored mightily to fit Deng Xiaoping's program into the grand sweep of the World Revolution's history. Thus, even if only by negative example, the death of the Soviet Union—and the discrediting of the ideology on which it had been constructed—remain important to China's understanding of its own situation. The fate of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and its ruling Communist Party is not easily quarantined, especially psychologically, from the future of the People's Republic of China and its ruling Communist Party.

Of course, at the time, the historic events of 1989 throughout the Communist world seemed closely connected, but in what ways? The final collapse of the USSR in 1991 came only two years into the post-Tiananmen era in China. Was this the end of the turmoil, or only its beginning? China and Russia once had a common Communist program but, as it turned out, after the historic events between 1989 and 1991, the People's Republic of China was left standing, but the Soviet Union was not. This was a traumatic event for Communists everywhere, and especially for the severely-shaken Communists in China. Jiang Zemin, by designation of Deng Xiaoping, became general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in late June 1989, then president of the country in 1993, and then, finally, preeminent leader after Deng's death in 1997. Jiang's rise to power had coincided with inauspicious omens. "After more than seventy years of socialist construction in the Soviet Union," he himself observed, "the great tragedy of the Soviet collapse occurred. Why? The reasons and the lessons need to be concluded profoundly and comprehensively....The study of the reasons for the Soviet collapse is very important for China at this time...It will help us build the foundation of socialism with Chinese characteristics and help us govern the country into the future and keep China safe, stable, and standing."⁸¹

China's "profound and comprehensive" examination of these issues has been carefully analyzed by Professor Christopher Marsh, who has begun with, and then significantly expanded on, Gilbert Rozman's pioneering studies. In Professor Marsh's summary:

Following Jiang's call, research institutions that had previously studied the USSR as a means of generating insight into an adversary, such as the Institute for Soviet and East European Studies at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, switched their focus to examining the implications of the Soviet past for China's future. Other research centers were created,

⁸¹ Christopher Marsh, *Unparalleled Reforms: China's Rise, Russia's Fall, and the Interdependence of Transition*, (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005), p. 107.

whose purpose is to analyze regime evolution and collapse, especially with reference to the former USSR....

Research into the Soviet collapse is not something the Party just left up to academics. The Communist Party formed working groups comprised of the country's leading specialists with the specific charge of studying the causes of the collapse and the lessons to be learned. These working groups have been the source of much of the research in this area, which has included government sponsored conferences and has resulted in numerous books on the Soviet collapse, many with special sections devoted to the lessons to be drawn from the Soviet experience.⁸²

These efforts, as one would imagine, have produced a myriad of analyses, ranging across the ethnic conflicts in the USSR, to the competence of individual Soviet leaders, to ideological dogmatism, to excessive timidity in carrying out reforms, to choosing the wrong reforms, to moving too fast, to moving too slow. To the extent that there is a consensus position, it is that the Soviet Communist Party could not make the transition from a Revolutionary to a truly Governing party; that Marxism-Leninism can no longer be the main source of legitimacy for the rule of the Communist Party in China, but that the Party should rely instead on things more traditionally Chinese; that economic prosperity and honest leadership are required.

At the same time, some argued that there were other dangers to the Soviet regime and, in retrospect, we now see how their analyses informed one part of future action by the Chinese government. "By their own admission," Professor Marsh writes, "China's policymakers are pursuing their restrictive religious policy due to their understanding of the role that religion played in the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union." One of the Party's own journals saw the threat this way:

⁸² Marsh, *op cit*, pp. 108, 109.

We need to learn from the lessons of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and precipitous changes in Eastern Europe...As a result of the errors of the former socialist countries in their handling of the religious question, religion became an instrument in the hands of political dissidents for stirring up trouble when the domestic politics and the economy became mired in trouble and all kinds of social contradictions sharpened. That hastened the downfall of the Soviet and East European Communist parties.⁸³

From these wide-ranging discussions of the Soviet experience, one can tease out many of the elements in contemporary China's domestic policies, both for better and worse—the commitment to high economic growth rates; the ongoing efforts to correct regional imbalances; the promotion of interest in “old China's” cultural and literary achievements; the invocation of vaguely-defined phrases like “spiritual civilization” as adjuncts to the country's official materialist ideology; the unceasing police activities directed against dissenters of both secular and religious bent.

But there is another part of the Soviet experience that is relevant—the lessons of Soviet foreign policy. Many Chinese students of the Soviet collapse have seen in the USSR's international ambition the seeds of its ruin. In 1998, for example, Shen Jiru, an obviously well-connected researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, published a book carrying an approving forward by the academy's vice president. Her book, *China Doesn't Want to be “Mr. No”: Problems of International Strategy for Today's China*, was a four-hundred-page discussion of the future of China's international relations, based on the notion that the post-Mao reforms had so changed Chinese society as also to change the country's sense of itself, especially its sense of its place in the world and what it wanted from the world.

Shen's analysis began with a discussion of the causes of the Soviet collapse, and Soviet foreign policy figures prominently. The Soviet Union wanted to be a hegemonic world

⁸³ Marsh, *op cit.*, p. 115.

power, but with the result that “it created enemies, lost friends, and wasted national economic strength.” Soviet foreign policy was one of confrontation; Soviet military policy reduced to attempting to match the United States weapons system for weapons system, thereby exhausting the Soviet economy.

We ourselves need to provide some context for this analysis. The phrase “creating enemies and losing friends” harks back to an essay written by Mao Zedong in 1926, which famously began: “Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is the revolution’s most important question.” Mao Zedong had picked the Soviet Union as China’s friend, but the relationship turned out badly. As for the Soviet Union, its erstwhile friend and disciple China had somehow become a mortal enemy, in part because of avoidable errors in the conduct of the Soviet Union’s foreign policy in general, and its China policy in particular.

In any event, in the 1970s, China chose the United States as its new friend, and that turned out to be a shrewd decision. Capital and technology have poured into the country not only from the United States itself, but also from the European Union and Japan—allies of the United States and both part of an American-dominated security and economic network. Relationships with other rich and powerful international networks, networks run by Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Southeast Asia, were reactivated, leading to the re-establishment of a China-dominated Asian economic system. In these respects, China’s current project is well-begun.

All of these things, whether openly stated or merely hinted at, argue for China’s acceptance of the obligations of the international economic and political system and China’s promotion of greater openness in its own society so as to become more competitive while remaining at peace. In Shen Jiru’s view—and presumably in the view of her sponsors and

mentors—this is a winning strategy over the long run; the problems posed to China today by American hegemony will solve themselves as American primacy slowly but surely recedes. Thus, for one example, China does not need military forces that even begin to approach the size and capability of those of the United States.

At one level, analyses of this sort are seemingly supportive of what purports to be a liberal internationalist approach to world affairs. But one can also view it as “liberal internationalism with Chinese characteristics.” After all, it projects calm self-confidence that China’s patience and diligence will ultimately be rewarded; it implies that American foreign policy—in its global ambitions, in its impetuosity, in its desire for quick results, and in its costly worldwide military operations—will likely fall victim to the same self-destructive compulsions which destroyed the world position of the old Soviet Union. In this view, China, on other hand, can allow history and human nature to work on China’s behalf, confident that the United States, like the Soviet Union, will succumb to its excesses, excesses which, in best dialectical fashion, are the products of its own virtues. In this respect, we are once again sensing the enduring dissonance that has been a prominent feature of the thinking of modern-minded Chinese intellectuals for more than a century: the West in general and the United States in particular are much to be admired and emulated, but only to a point.

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In 1994, Beijing University inaugurated its China Center for Economic Research. The keynote speaker at the center’s opening ceremony was Professor Douglass North, who the year before had received the Nobel Prize in Economics. North (b. 1920) is an economic

historian and he was honored for his role in pioneering what he and like-minded thinkers called the New Institutional Economics. As the phrase suggests, North believes that the history of economic development—especially why it occurred at some times and in some places, but not at all times and in all places—can best be explained by reference to the complicated relationships among institutions, politics, belief systems, and cultural history in any particular country. In his Nobel Lecture of December 9, 1993, North contrasted this approach to pristine economic theory:

It is necessary to dismantle the rationality assumption underlying economic theory in order to approach constructively the nature of human learning. History demonstrates that ideas, ideologies, myths, dogmas, and prejudices matter; and an understanding of the way they evolve is necessary for further progress in developing a framework to understand societal change.

The rationality assumption of neo-classical theory suggests that political entrepreneurs of stagnating economies can simply alter the rules and change the direction of failed economies. But it is not that rulers have been unaware of poor performance. Rather the difficulty of turning economies around is a function of the nature of political markets and, underlying that, the belief systems of the actors. The long decline of Spain, for example, from the glories of the Habsburg Empire of the sixteenth century to its sorry state under Franco in the twentieth century was characterized by endless self appraisals and frequently bizarre proposed solutions...

We cannot account for the rise and decline of the Soviet Union and world communism with the tools of neo-classical analysis, but we can begin to do so with an institutional/cognitive approach to contemporary problems of development.

North stresses the role of political communities in shaping economic performance.

“Politics significantly shape economic performance because they define and enforce the economic rules. An essential part of development policy is the creation of politics that will

create and enforce efficient property rights. However, we know very little about how to create such polities because the new political economy (the new institutional economics applied to politics) has been largely focused on the United States and developed polities... While economic growth can occur in the short run with autocratic regimes, long run economic growth entails the development of the rule of law.”

In 2004, Professor North was again invited to speak at the China Center for Economic Research to mark its tenth anniversary. His presence was confirmation that, after another decade of debate in China, there were still some well-situated adherents to his belief that open-access political markets are as important as open-access commercial markets. Indeed, he and his Chinese supporters maintain that the main task before the country is in fact the application of the New Institutional Economics to the Chinese polity so as to build, in China, a regime which creates and enforces efficient property rights.

Accordingly, after his return from Beijing, North recapitulated the uncertainty surrounding China’s grand project as he had seen it unfold over the years:

China has partially opened competitive access to its economic markets. But China is only halfway there. The society is still dominated by a political dictatorship and, as a result, personal exchange rather than impersonal rules dominate the economy. How will China evolve? It could continue to evolve open-access economic markets built on impersonal rules and gradually dissolve barriers to open political markets...Or the political dictatorship could perceive the evolving open-access society as a threat to the existing vested interests, and halt the course of the past decades.⁸⁴

The regime in power in China today is thus called on to accelerate its own subversion today in the service of China’s national greatness tomorrow—and all in the name of yet another of the West’s theories about the way to wealth and power.

⁸⁴ *Wall Street Journal*, April 7, 2005, p. A-14.

V. "A Heap of Loose Sand"

We have seen how, in course of the past century, the modern has presented itself to China in very appealing guises—only to leave disappointment behind. The promise of the first great age of liberal globalization at the turn of the twentieth century gave way to disillusionment, as European civilization collapsed in the wake of World War I. After that, the promise of a new revolutionary internationalism, when implemented in a new People's Republic, led not to a restoration of China's glories, but to mind-boggling material and psychological damage, to international isolation, and almost to open war with a once-inspirational Soviet Union. Most recently, we saw how China sought to explain its own good fortune in avoiding the fate of the Soviet Union, and how its alliance with the capitalist United States and its embrace of the American-dominated international system will somehow ensure the thriving of "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

Along the way, we stressed how Chinese today have a hard time making much sense of this story. Indeed, to many, the welter of details has foreclosed even the possibility of a coherent recounting of modern China; accordingly, they think it is inevitable that China's next great national undertaking will end up like the ones that have preceded it. At the least, we saw great confusion about how the experiences that created Modern China should be represented. It is one thing to find such bewilderment among intellectuals and artists who pride themselves on being opponents of the regime in power. It is quite another thing to observe, as we have repeatedly done, that the regime itself, led by a self-proclaimed all-knowing Chinese Communist Party, repeatedly shifts its ground. Whether the subjects are elevated ones like

Modern History, Modern Literature, or Modern Architecture, or mundane ones like tariffs, trade, and transportation, the Party scrambles for ways of explaining how it thinks and why it acts in the ways that it does. Indeed, the regime in power is indefatigable in its search for a unifying theme or a consistent story to serve as a basis for a Grand Design and a National Purpose.

We saw that, in response to Jiang Zemin's call for a thoroughgoing inquiry into the causes of the Soviet demise, new institutes and research centers were created to study the evolution of regimes and their collapse. One such, the China Reform Forum, was set up at the Central Committee's Central Party School. The forum is also thought to be part of a network of "think tanks" connected to the State Council and to the prime minister's office. The forum, and its long-time head Zheng Bijian (b. 1932) are well-known to research institutions in the West for organizing international conferences about China's economic and social policies. As for Zheng Bijian himself, his official biography tells us that he has also been involved in the development of the Party's outlook on various things for many years. Indeed, he has lived through more than his fair share of Party history.

He joined the Communist Party of China in 1952. He completed postgraduate studies in political economics at People's University of China in 1954...

Zheng has conducted Party-oriented research for the state government, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the Party. He was deputy chief for the theory group of Mao Zedong Works Editing Committee at the CPC Central Committee in the late 1970s. He was later Deputy Director-General of the International Affairs Research Center at the State Council in the late 1970s. In 1988, he served a four-year stint as the vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He concurrently worked as the Director of the Research Institute for Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought at the Academy.

Following his Academy positions, Zheng became deputy head of the publicity department at the CPC Central Committee. He is Executive Vice-President of the Party school of the CPC Central Committee.

Zheng also has an unofficial biography as constructed by Western China watchers; he is believed to have served as a personal assistant to two “liberal” general secretaries of the Party—Hu Yaobang (1915–1989) and Zhao Ziyang (1919–2005)—who were both iconic and inspirational figures for the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrators. When Zheng Bijian began his service as vice president of the Central Committee’s Party School, it was headed by the current president of the People’s Republic, Hu Jintao.

Among those who have survived the gauntlet of higher Party politics these past five decades, Zheng Bijian is probably not unusual either in his intellectual adaptability or in his political agility. In fact, we would not have selected him as an exemplar of either, except for the fact that he has had his proverbial fifteen minutes of fame among “China watchers;” he is the inventor of the phrase “Peaceful Rise” as the definition of China’s Grand Strategy. Zheng introduced the phrase in November 2003, and has frequently written and spoken about it. In fact, in June 2005, the Brookings Institution of Washington, D.C., published a small compendium of his speeches on the subject.

As much as the notion of a “Peaceful Rise” has been linked to globalization and liberal internationalism, the phrase has proved flexible enough to represent additional ways of relating China to today’s world and to the history of the world. For one conspicuous example, Zheng Bijian himself, writing in April 2006, connects China’s Peaceful Rise not to any Western-derived scheme but says, instead, that “the profound substance of China’s peaceful development is the revival of Chinese civilization, a process in which Chinese civilization is

rehabilitated through autonomous innovation; realizing the revival of Chinese civilization is the profound substance of China's peaceful development."⁸⁵

We can interpret a comment like this not so much as a culmination but, rather, as a point on a three-decades-long continuum that connects China's most recent era of reform to things "Chinese" as well as to things "Western." We saw in Part I of our discussion that, almost as soon as Deng Xiaoping's program was launched, there was a conscious effort to link it to China's sixteenth-century commercial revolution. Indeed, as Professor Harriet Zurndorfer elaborates, this was part and parcel of a trend throughout the Sinic world.

In the 1980s, the governments of Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea gave official approval to Confucian values as a collective guide to economic practices...By the 1990s, the PRC authorities sanctioned historical Confucianism as a major component of China's intellectual tradition and modern-day economic progress. It became common during that decade to find in the PRC's official newspaper, *People's Daily*, articles praising business leaders as *rushang* (Confucian entrepreneurs).

On the occasion of the PRC's forty-fifth anniversary, in October, 1994, an international conference was held in Beijing where various official and semi-official organizations from Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the United States, and Germany were invited. This meeting inaugurated a new organization, the International Society of Confucianism, with the former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Gu Mu, a former Chinese vice premier, elected honorary president, and vice-president, respectively.

Thus, it would seem that by the end of the twentieth century the PRC had aligned itself with traditional anti-communist ideologues in a purportedly non-political discourse that ultimately linked present-day economic initiative in a globalized capitalist world with a 2000-year old cultural legacy.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ "China's Peaceful Development and China's Civilized Renaissance," *People's Daily*, April 10, 2006.

⁸⁶ "Confusing Confucianism with Capitalism: Culture as Impediment and/or Stimulus to Chinese Economic Development," paper presented at the third conference of the Global History Economic Network, Konstanz, Germany, June 5, 2004, pp. 2-3.

We cannot but be impressed by the ease with which the Communist Party of China can transform Capitalism from a system forcibly-imposed on China by militant Western imperialism into a system deeply-rooted in China's millennia-old culture. But it is a mistake merely to be dismissive; analytically and politically, this one episode of conceptual legerdemain raises important questions about China's future understanding of itself as a nation, as a culture, and as a civilization. It may be a clue to how China may decide to project itself into the world and into the future history of the world.

In one respect, can it be surprising that China wishes to represent itself to the world as—China? If it is not “China,” what else could it be? Writing about what they call “China's soft- power offensive,” Professors Pernendra Jain and Gerry Groot report that, in 2002,

Beijing established what it calls the Confucius Institute, with a mission to promote the Chinese language, culture and a range of other aspects of learning about China. Several of these institutes have already been established around the world, in such places as Japan, Australia, Sweden and the United States, and Beijing aims eventually to open some 100 of them.

The choice of the name is instructive, since for years it was Communist Party dogma that Confucianism held back China's development. In recent years, however, Confucianism has undergone a kind of political resurrection in China, and in any case has no threatening connotations. A “Mao Zedong Institute” probably would not be welcomed in most countries.⁸⁷

This seems straightforward enough on the face of it, a seeming indication that China may well be headed back to being “China,” no more and no less. If so, we can anticipate that Chinese everywhere will re-examine their decades-old debate—their still vigorous debate—about the meaning of “China” and things “Chinese.” And, as they have in the past, these speculations will figure prominently in how these words should be part of the country's ongoing strategic calculations.

⁸⁷ “Beijing's Soft Power Offensive,” *Asia Times*, May 17, 2006.

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Throughout our discussion, we have looked at China's ever-changing understanding of itself in different contexts, whether as a geographical expression, or as a cultural or even anthropological one. Nor should we be afraid to note how a "discourse of race" (to use Frank Dikotter's term), in all its ramifications, has been part of China's self-analysis, especially since the late nineteenth century when a presumed "racial" difference between the Chinese and their Manchu rulers began to matter in entirely new ways. This distinction, of course, was rooted in the very creation and enlargement of the Manchu empire, and we saw how cultural and ethnic sensibilities influenced the governance of the empire for centuries. Indeed, they were inseparable for the Manchus' larger strategic sensibility.

A "discourse of race" was also introduced into the analysis of international relations. At the turn of the twentieth century, many Chinese—and Westerners also—saw world politics as a White-Yellow race war to the death. Racial solidarity figured on both sides, as the "white man's burden" and his "civilizing mission" encountered "pan-Asianism." As China's political system devolved, first into a Republic and then into a People's Republic, "race" became "nation" became "class."⁸⁸

Thus, the twentieth century's invocation of the Yellow Peril, the Aryan Race, and the Yamato Race remains a conscious part of contemporary China's experience. It is a memory invoked ironically, and sometimes bitterly, by Chinese themselves, as we saw in the 1991 novel *Huanghuo (Yellow Peril)* a fantasy in which a Chinese writer imagines a China that has

⁸⁸ *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), the definitive discussion of this subject.

become a threat to the world. Meanwhile, in the larger world, both “clash of races” and “clash of classes” have, for the moment, given way to “clash of civilizations” as the catch-phrase for defining major political fault lines. Need a rising power base its grand strategy on any such slogan?

To be sure, this is not the only available shorthand. We saw how Chinese connected their sense of themselves to things which were not “Chinese” at all—to liberalism, socialism, Christianity—but, most of all, to the “modern,” and to all the ways that term has been interpreted for the past one hundred and fifty years. A perennial frustration of China’s most important political figures of modern times was with what they took to be the backwardness of their country and their countrymen. Sun Yat-sen himself—Father of the Republic, whose political program was suffused with what we today would call anti-Manchu racism—was for all his Chinese racial sensibility a quintessentially “un-Chinese” man, a maritime Chinese, an outsider reared in Hawaii, a physician-practitioner of Western medicine, and a baptized Christian. It was he who, in 1924, famously described the Chinese as “a heap of loose sand,” maddeningly incapable of creating a modern state.

In this, Sun was reiterating the judgment of the renowned Liang Qichao himself, who, during his exile from China in the first years of the twentieth century, had similar frustrations.

Liang visited North America in 1903. As Professor K. Scott Wong describes it,

Liang came to the United States ideologically rooted in Confucian ideals of political reform and social hierarchy, but also influenced by Social Darwinist notions of race and power that privileged Anglo-Saxon supremacy. Dismayed by the turn of events in China and inspired by the example of growing Japanese power, Liang believed that the nature of the “Chinese character” had to be transformed in order for political and social reform even to be possible. That transformation, however,

would call for national self-examination, generated by and resulting in a restructuring of the Chinese worldview.⁸⁹

“Chinese can be clansmen, but not citizens,” Liang wrote. “They cling to the family and clan systems to the exclusion of other things.”⁹⁰

In the century since Liang Qichao, visiting his countrymen in an already-functioning modern state, despaired of their ever being able to create a modern state of their own, the effort to relate what is quintessentially “Chinese” to what is quintessentially “modern” has only intensified. Today’s self-consciously academic phrase for this quest is “the construction of China’s national identity,” but the activity itself is not especially exotic. We Americans, for example, have been at it for quite a long time, sometimes relying on a foreign observer like Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) or on a native-born historian like Daniel Boorstin (1914–2004) to explain us to ourselves. We continually work at defining ourselves as a “nation,” as a “country,” as a “people,” and as a “culture.” More specifically, and related to the formation of what we have been calling Grand Strategy, we pursue our national strategies based in large part on our assessment of the ways in which other peoples are like us, and the ways in which they are different and, therefore, of the ways in which our own views about politics and economics are transferable to other people and transplantable into other places.

These are fundamental issues in the history of China also. To recapitulate, we saw in our discussion of three great dynasties—two of which, Mongol and Manchu, were not “Chinese” at all—that the definition of what was “inside” and what was “outside,” of what was “civilized” and what was “barbarian,” figured decisively in the formation of imperial strategies. We saw how, in the waning days of Manchu rule, both the dynasty and its internal

⁸⁹ “The Transformation of Culture: Three Chinese Views of America,” *American Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1996): 213.

⁹⁰ Wong, *op. cit.*

enemies struggled for control of the very definition of “China” and “Chinese.” We discussed two episodes of violent revolution—the Taiping uprising of the nineteenth century and the Maoist insurgency of the twentieth. We saw how both of them attributed great intellectual flexibility and adaptability to China’s people; the leaders of these movements assumed that belief systems from the other side of the world as taught by two Jews, Jesus Christ and Karl Marx, would somehow become the basis of a durable Chinese political and social order. We followed the debates about the applicability of the West’s “modern” to China’s own “modernization” in every realm of life. Though the largest ambitions of Hong Xiuquan and Mao Zedong were not fulfilled, Christianity and Communism still exert powerful influence; High Modernity did not prevail either, but it occupies a prominent place in China’s culture.

The post-Mao reforms are yet another chapter in the story of China’s effort to relate developments in a world to which China is daily more connected on the one hand, to changes in what Liang Qichao called “the Chinese character” on the other. One pole in this discussion is represented by the work of Chinese intellectuals like Sun Longji and Jin Guantao who are associated with the idea of the “ultrastability” of China as a cultural system. As summarized by Professor Tim Oakes, Sun and Jin

found in cybernetics and systems theory alternatives to the orthodox historical materialism of Chinese Marxism and argued that China, as a cultural system, displayed an “internal resilience” and a capacity for adjustment” so that revolutionary upheavals and disruptions were absorbed into an “ultrastable” system. ...As Jin Guatao writes, “China has not yet freed itself from the control of history. Its only mode of existence is to relive the past. There is no accepted mechanism within the culture for the Chinese to confront the present without falling back on the inspiration and strength of tradition.”⁹¹

⁹¹ China’s Regional Identities: Reviving Regionalism and Reinventing ‘Chineseness,’” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 667, 682.

Oakes himself draws on this idea of an essential “Chineseness,” but to make another kind of argument. He uses the term “cultural regionalism” to distinguish among the increasingly disparate definitions of “Chineseness” as between coastal and interior areas, and he maintains that the province in turn is becoming the focal point of this regionalism; many provinces in China are promoting ideas about “provincial culture” and “provincial identity.” In Oakes’ observation, these efforts are similar. “They seek to convey a message about the “spirit” of Chineseness as distinct from the West, but a spirit that is equally distant from China’s own revolutionary Marxist heritage.”

The provincial elites who do this may very well believe it, but it is also their strategy for connecting themselves to people and things “Chinese” all over the world, not only to those in China itself. “It is here,” Oakes thinks, “that we encounter the link between the broader civilizational discourse of ‘Asian values’ and the flexible accumulation of global capitalism.”⁹² As we have already seen, some argue that the successes of Chinese businesses anywhere are related to time-honored Confucian values everywhere; some academics regard such explanations for the success of Chinese capitalists as myths, while others believe in them. As we have also seen, the “Chinese” governments in Greater China endorse the connection, even as they often see in “Confucianism” an obstacle to “modernization.” But the non-Chinese governments, especially those in Southeast Asia which are the sovereign hosts of powerful Chinese business networks, are leery of claims of an irrevocable connection between their Chinese citizens and some other mother country or mother culture

On the face of it, the efforts to offer a “culturalist” explanation for the successes of China and the Chinese during the late twentieth century appear to be in the interest of the “nation-state” that is the People’s Republic of China. And, moreover, it is incontrovertible

⁹² Oakes, *op.cit.* p. 673.

that Beijing's patriotic appeal to Chinese around the world to invest in China's post-1978 reform project has been a successful strategic initiative, in every sense of that term. But at the same time, the preferred method of reform, post-1978, has placed Beijing's preferred definition of Chinese-ness under great stress.

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By now, most people in the world who pay close attention to China are familiar with a phrase coined by Deng Xiaoping to encapsulate the aim of his reform program—"socialism with Chinese characteristics." Since then, the beguiling notion of "Chinese characteristics" has been linked in China's policy pronouncements to many products of the Western world—"democracy with Chinese characteristics" especially. But what do Chinese themselves understand the qualifying phrase to mean? "The Chinese drive for modernisation," writes Elena Barabantseva, "has brought about the reinterpretation and reformulation of the origins, composition, and ideals of the Chinese nation."

In the Republic and under Mao, it was believed that the Chinese people since ancient times were centered in North China...[but] it is currently believed that China originated not in the isolated northern-plain culture, but in the interplay between several centers. Within the framework of this conviction, the southern provinces have become the vanguard and the personification of the ideals of Chinese modernisation...

The qualities and values cherished by communities on the outskirts of "civilizational China," and condemned for decades have come to the fore and shape the cultural image of China....Dynamism, flexibility, commercialism, and openness have been promoted from the regional to the national level.⁹³

⁹³ "Chinese Nation-Negotiation in the Period of Modernisation," School of East Asian Studies Working Papers, vol. 2, no. 5, University of Sheffield, pp. 13, 14.

A Chinese patriot, in the literal rendering of the Chinese characters that make up the term, is someone who loves his country. But what is it that he is supposed to love? To what is he supposed to be loyal? Over the decades of the modern era, as China's situation went from bad to worse, Chinese patriotism had a constantly changing agenda. As Professor Michael Hunt has written,

the continued decline of the state and the widespread popular apathy over China's future convinced Chinese patriots that only a China thoroughly made over could be made to function effectively in international affairs, perhaps even to survive at all. The idea of a revolution that would "make the people new" by effecting fundamental social and economic changes gradually gained adherents...But the result was to push patriots into positions that seemed paradoxical. To save China meant destroying important parts of it...The state would have to be torn down....Destruction of the old political order and social system was the painful but unavoidable path to unity and order and ultimate renewal.⁹⁴

It was always assumed that building a state powerful enough to "save China" would, in and of itself, produce solidarity and cohesion which would, in turn, make the state even more powerful and effective. Today, no one disputes that, by the customary measures, contemporary China is the most powerful and efficacious Chinese state of the past two centuries. And yet, as we have seen in several different contexts and from several different perspectives, the process of creating an efflorescence of Chinese power is also corroding the very "unity and order" which were its original inspiration. The regime in power in Beijing may continue to insist that there is an unbreakable union among Nation, State, People, Party, and Culture, but the more it persists in its reform program, the more it brings on a kind of destruction—hopefully "creative destruction" from its point of view—but far from inevitably that.

⁹⁴ "Chinese National Identity and the Strong State," in Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, eds, *China's Quest for National Identity* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 69.

Indeed, the regime in power itself proclaims “one country, two systems” but we know that many observers now imagine “one country, many systems.” We know that “One China” is but one of several Chinas within “Greater China,” and we know that the “China mega-economy” is creating intra-national regions that seek their own independent relations with the outer world. We have imagined that great cities on the China coast could come to join a league of their own with other great cities, similarly situated, but within other national jurisdictions. We have seen that the energy and creativity in contemporary Chinese cultural creation, more often than not, works against China’s ongoing National Project. In these and other ways, the very notions of “Chinese-ness,” and of the “Chinese nationalism” it is supposed to produce, are becoming elusive, not merely to outside observers but to the Chinese themselves.

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When we discussed the legacy of the Qing dynasty to the new Republic of China, we stressed the terminological sleight of hand that transformed a multi-national empire into a national state. The Republic now claimed vast territories and whole peoples whose relationship to “China” and “Chinese-ness” had long been problematical, and whose place in Chinese consciousness and in China’s strategic and political scheme of things had changed many times over the preceding centuries; sometimes they were seen as useless wastelands, other times as vital assets. We saw how these shifting judgments reflected the state’s sense of its own internal governance requirements, its assessment of regional and international power balances, and its judgments about the relationship between the domestic and the foreign. All

these became central to the strategic calculations of the new People's Republic, and they still are.

In our discussion of contemporary China's changing perspectives on the country's modern history, we anticipated the publication in 2012 of the "official" history of the Qing dynasty that would mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the Manchu abdication. And, as the date approaches, we cannot but notice how the questions propounded a century ago—about the shape and size of the country, about its governance, about its "identity," about its "culture," about its expectations for the future, about its relations to the world—are still very much in play today. The terminology may seem abstract and somehow disconnected from actual facts, but it is well-embedded in the facts on the ground.

If *Chinese* people inside the People's Republic of China, that is, people who think of themselves as "Chinese" in some sense, have opposing views of what the term means and are therefore conflicted to one degree about their own relationship to the People's Republic as a state, what about people who are in no sense "Chinese?" Such "ethnic minorities," to use the sociological term, are only about seven percent of the population of the People's Republic—some 90 million of 1.3 billion. But the five "autonomous regions" in which the one or another constitutes a majority of the population comprise about half of the state's territory—about 1.8 million square miles of some 3.7. To look at a map of the People's Republic is to see that "China proper" is nestled within the crescent formed by the autonomous regions. It is thus obvious that the autonomous regions are inside the People's Republic of China because they are strategically located—which is why, of course, they were incorporated into the Qing empire in the first place and, later, into the Republic of China.

In that we are coming up on one hundred years of “republicanization” of the non-Chinese parts of the venerable Manchu empire, we can wonder about the success of the undertaking. Tibet and East Turkistan—or sometimes Chinese Turkistan, but *always* Xinjiang (“New Territories”) in Beijing’s designation—are the most conspicuous for their discontents, and there is substantial evidence that neither the Nationalist nor the Communist version of Chinese republican rule is regarded as satisfactory in these areas. In the early 1950s, Tibet’s *de facto* autonomy was ended by its forcible incorporation into the People’s Republic. Yet the very brutality of Tibet’s re-conquest created strategic vulnerabilities for the new overlords. Indeed, the United States, for almost a decade, was able to draw upon Tibetan discontent and supported a guerrilla war by Tibetans against the Chinese army. The Dalai Lama, who then went into exile in 1959, became a man of international renown; more to the point, he is, today, Beijing’s interlocutor in discussions about Tibet’s future governance. Tibet remains a problem that China has still to solve, one made no less worrisome by the widely-bruited Rise of India.

Meanwhile, the Muslim population of Xinjiang—thirteen million *in toto*, of whom about eight million are Turkic Uighurs and the rest an assortment of other Central Asian ethnicities—has acquired a strategic salience out of all proportion to its numbers. We saw how the Qing dynasty pondered the role of this immense piece of territory—about 600,000 square miles, or three times the size of France—as the dynasty had to balance the threats of barbarian incursions, Russian expansion, and Western aggrandizement. Today, Beijing’s concern with Xinjiang is the product of the Islamic Revival and Clash of Civilizations, the Energy Crisis, and the War on Terrorism.

With the outer world, China shares five literal borders with Islam—Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan—and Chinese-ness in its many varieties

shares metaphorical borders with various manifestations of Islam-ness. China relies for trade and investment on a Chinese diaspora in Islamic Southeast Asia. It also relies increasingly on oil from countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia, which are influenced by China's treatment of its Islamic minority, and which could have considerable influence on that Islamic minority if they ever chose to exercise it. As China competes for influence in Central Asia, it is comparably mindful of the kinship among the Central Asian peoples. That the "Xinjiang Autonomous Region" is not, today, an independent "Islamic Republic of East Turkistan" is one of History's accidents. All this gives to Muslim inhabitants of China's northwest substantial leverage in their ongoing wrestling match with Beijing about their future in China's grand scheme of things.

Indeed, in modern times especially, Xinjiang's relationship to China has been influenced by the ebb and flow of politics elsewhere. The Manchu dynasty ended in 1912, the Romanov in 1917. The other empires based in Western Europe either disappeared or were debilitated after World War I. Xinjiang was too far from Wilson's influence to gain its independence, but even though the new Chinese Republic acquired legal title to the place, the struggles among the warlords, and the Nationalists and the Communists, and the Chinese and the Japanese, were tantamount by default to Xinjiang's independence from China. During the same period however, Xinjiang's Central Asian neighbors suffered the return of Russian influence in the form of the Soviet Union and its Stalinist mode of governance. Thus, East Turkistan had good reason to cherish its separateness from its Sovietized neighbors in the adjacent "Stans." In fact, between 1944 and 1949, there was even a formally-proclaimed East Turkistan Republic. It was soon brutally crushed by the new People's Republic of China, even as Beijing was enthusiastically offering support to decolonization movements elsewhere. In

this convoluted way, the re-assertion of a Beijing-based authority as envisioned by Manchu and Chinese strategists in the nineteenth century was finally brought about.

In the early 1950s, the regimes in both Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao's People's Republic were sufficiently synchronized in their brutality so that a Turkic person on one side of the line had no particular reason to envy his brother on the other. But with the death of Stalin in 1953, the inhabitants of East Turkistan began to see some moderation of conditions to the West, in contrast to their own experiences of Maoist madness during the Great Leap Forward and then the Cultural Revolution. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the advantage moved again to the East, for the post-Mao reforms could be contrasted favorably to the last-gasp effort to shore up the Soviet Union. But with the Soviet collapse in 1991, the Muslim peoples of Xinjiang could only envy their brethren who had not only gained independence but, in an astonishing feat of bureaucratic legerdemain, had even become a part of Europe—as members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation, and with their “desks” in the Bureau of European Affairs of the United States Department of State.

Thus, the “geopolitical” map of China's boundary with Islam has shifted over time and a “geo-cultural map” has been as hard for China to draw as a topographical one. The rise of Islam is itself closely coincidental to the flourishing of China's great Tang dynasty (618–907), a dynasty renowned through the ages for its many splendors. There are Chinese accounts of Arab traders in Canton offering a dazzling array of goods. There are records of intrepid Chinese pilgrims like Xuanzang, the A.D. seventh-century monk who traveled the Silk Road westward. There are Chinese versions of the travels of Hungarian-British archaeologist Aurel Stein (1862–1943) and the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin (1865–1952), famed travelers in Central Asia once well known to European schoolboys as well as to their Chinese

contemporaries. There have also been many political travelers across the centuries, many of them advocates of expanding Chinese influence—whether Imperial, Confucian, Republican, or Communist—into historically Islamic domains. Recently, some contemporary Chinese literary travelers have been recovering an older Chinese sense of the Journey to the West (that is, to Inner Asia,) as a route to personal self-discovery and introspective escapism.

China also produced its own version of a *chinoiserie* mania in the form of a venerable interest in natural and manmade artifacts from far-off Islamic lands. A generation ago, the aspiring student of Tang-era China learned how the country created part of its sense of wealth, worldliness, and conspicuous consumption by reading Edward Schafer's canonical catalogue of wonders *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand* (1963). In earlier centuries, of course, the cultivated Chinese mandarin had himself come to the topic through books based on this sensibility, "pre-political" in a way, yet celebratory of the great Islamic emirates that provided the Chinese empire and those who ran it with useful and beautiful things from all over the world.

The contemplation of such vaguely-defined and exotic realms far away was, for a very long time, just a pleasure and not a problem for Chinese scholar-officials. But, as we have seen, it did indeed become a problem when first, the Manchu Empire, and then its Republican successors concluded that many millions of Muslims of Central Asian origin belonged inside "China." An empire's subjects" may have become a new Republic's citizens, but Xinjiang and its people were in "China" then and simply had to stay there now. The political relationship, born of mere strategic calculation, even has an aura of geological permanence. Indeed, majestic mountain ranges like the Pamirs and the Tianshan almost surround the territory, but Xinjiang's defining topographical feature is at its center—the great Taklamakan

desert, “a true wilderness,” as one visitor once described it, “intimidating, beautiful, dangerous, a place that preys on the mind and enslaves the senses”. These are phrases that capture the forbidding spirit of an inland ocean of silicon that can record fifty degrees below zero (centigrade) in the winter and experience blinding sandstorms in the summer. A traveler in Xinjiang today will be told by local Chinese that “Taklamakan” means “you go in, but you don’t come out.” This aptly expresses what they think about Xinjiang’s entry into China more than two hundred years ago.



SUNLAND www.xinjiang-tourism.com

Map of China showing location of Xinjiang Province; map of Xinjiang, showing Taklamakan Desert

Here, then, is a fine example of an encounter between the imperial and the modern. Xinjiang is the last place of its kind that is still part of someone else’s multi-national empire, but contemporary Chinese rule is modern enough in name; Xinjiang is a “self-governing autonomous region of the People’s Republic of China.” But Beijing is not at all modern-minded in the matter of “diversity;” it proclaims a total sameness of “Xinjiang” and “China.” In the same way, Xinjiang is thoroughly up-to-date-in the Islamic Internationalist character of the political challenge it presents to Beijing—an “Islamist” problem instantly recognizable in

its form, in its vocabulary, and in its worldwide connections; but it is “modern” only in its immediacy. The *modern* liberation struggle had as its objective the creation of a “democratic republic” but an *Islamic* liberation struggle has as its objective another kind of regime entirely.

This is a novel problem for China, and a droll Chinese general, sensitive to this particular manifestation of the struggle between the old and the new might describe it as “People’s War with Islamic Characteristics.” Like the Tibetan Buddhists, the Xinjiang Muslims seem incorrigible, but there has been no worldwide upsurge in Buddhist Fundamentalism to inspire a resumption of violence in Tibet. In Xinjiang, on the other hand, there has been ongoing violence, and Beijing reports to us about it from time to time. Executions are announced and successes against local separatist and terrorist cells are publicized. The “splittists” will occasionally assassinate pro-Beijing collaborators, murder local officials, and set off bombs, not only in Xinjiang, but even in China proper. Sometimes there are reports of communal rioting. People outside the country who support their Xinjiang kinsmen describe Chinese repression even beyond that which Beijing itself publicizes. Beijing admits to “hundreds” of arrests, while others say “thousands;” Beijing admits to “dozens” of executions, while others say “hundreds.” We also know that Beijing has deployed to the territory ever-larger numbers of regular army forces as well as so-called People’s Armed Police. Further to transform “Xinjiang” into “China,” Beijing sponsors migrations of Han Chinese into the area and promotes large-scale investments, which are also intended to help narrow a growing and politically dangerous income gap between the country’s hinterland and its far more prosperous coastal areas.

The longer-term success of this enterprise will depend on Beijing's capacity to disentangle Xinjiang from a pre-modern Islamic consciousness, even as the requirements of its own modernization strategy push China into ever-closer relationships with the modern Islamic world. To be sure, these efforts have a history. Long before it worried about Islamic extremism, China was hard at work building back doors through the geographical Islamic world to the world beyond as, for one example, the fabled Karakoram Highway chiseled into forbidding mountains, ultimately designed to connect China's far west to the Pakistani port of Karachi and to the new Chinese-financed port of Gwadar. There is also the need for oil; China is now a major importer and, therefore, a competitor for access to energy in the Persian Gulf area, the Caspian region, the Indonesian archipelago, and the waters adjacent.

Obviously, these and other projects are advanced by the co-optation and isolation of extremist Islam, not only by China, but also by others. In the end, though, we can imagine how these experiences of Islam at home and abroad have created a kind of cognitive dissonance in the Chinese political mind. Everywhere it encounters Islam it appears at best opaque, more often as irrational and dangerous to China and the Chinese. Yet the imperial memory lingers, a major component of an as-yet unalterable commitment by Beijing to keep millions of such bloody-minded people under Chinese control.

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We have focused on Han-Turkic relations in Xinjiang because they offer the most conspicuous example at the moment of the inherent difficulty Beijing faces in producing a "Chinese national consciousness" on the territory of what was once a multi-ethnic empire. But

the problem is deeper and more persistent, indeed, structural. In the first place, “Han nationality as invented national unity”—to borrow Professor Dru Gladney’s phrase—is itself of recent vintage, a product of twentieth-century anthropology and linguistics. Today’s Chinese state, which, for one example, controls the content of the entrance examinations for access to higher education (we recall the centuries-old Confucian curriculum required by the old imperial examination system as a way of institutionalizing a common cultural outlook), also has available to it the centralizing tools of a modern quasi-capitalist state—railroads, highways, broadcasting, national banks, stock exchanges, currency printing presses. The army is supposed to be another such centralizing institution supportive of the creation of a truly “national outlook.” Yet, as Gladney points out, “In June 1989, when China’s future hung in the balance, there was significant concern about which armies would support Deng’s crackdown, especially those based in Sichuan, Hunan, Canton, or Beijing, all with their own local concerns.”⁹⁵

Even if, as a result of conscious attention, greater national unity within the armed forces has been achieved since then, we have already noted how other policies, essential to economic growth, have been having precisely the opposite effect. We have discussed at length how the economic activity which has propelled China into the first rank of states over the past generation has set in motion many powerful centrifugal forces. To these, we must now add the problem of “Chinese identity” as such, for, as Gladney reminds us, “China’s very economic vitality has the potential to fuel ethnic and linguistic divisions,” and strategically significant religious ones also. For a regime in Beijing which, as we have seen, still seeks greater

⁹⁵ “China’s National Insecurity: Old Challenges at the Dawn of the New Millennium,” paper presented at a symposium sponsored by the National Defense University, March 8, 2000.

understanding of the Soviet collapse, widely-circulated phrases like “national disunity,” “national disintegration,” and “the Soviet Union as China’s prologue” are very unsettling.

To observe China’s rise in the world is thus to be in the grip of two powerful, yet conflicting, concepts—yet another fine example of “cognitive dissonance,” for our speculation about the future must somehow combine radically different visions. How will contemporary strategy embody that ancient Chinese sense of the interaction between *yin* and *yang*, between unity and disintegration, between honor and humiliation, between victory and defeat, between hegemony and subjugation, between survival and extinction?

We are told that, from ancient times, Chinese philosophy existed to help its students find the Middle Way. Even before being tutored in the classics of statecraft and strategy, the aspiring man of affairs was presumed somehow to have absorbed the sensibility of Chinese cosmology and its notion of perpetual change. Indeed, the most ancient of the classics, the *Yijing*, (the *Book of Changes*) is an impenetrable text that has defied explication for centuries. But to some commentators, the book’s indecipherable sentences are itself its message: the ebb and flow of unfathomable impermanence and inexpressible unpredictability—these are the ways of the universe and, therefore, of human affairs also. Ordinary, more easily understood teachings, like Confucianism or Daoism, exist to cultivate the self-control any man—the statesman most of all—must have in order to steer through it all.

VI. Rising China’s Grand Design: Imperial Memories in a Modern Milieu

In our discussion throughout, we have considered how the present imposes itself on its understanding of the past, and how those perceptions of the past come to interact in the

present with the making of grand plans for the future. In our examination of past eras of Chinese greatness, we saw far more an adaptation to changed circumstances—often dangerous circumstances—than we saw an implementation of some pre-existing vision. We noticed that Chinese strategy, whatever could be said about its fixed principles and philosophical assumptions, was often the product of bitter, and even violent, argument within the political system, argument which was, in turn, the result of a very complicated relationship between the system of governance and the content of high culture. We also saw how circumstances in the world around China could change abruptly, thereby setting in motion wholly unanticipated developments inside the country. Indeed, even with the passage of centuries, the inner workings of those relationships in the distant past are still fodder for spirited debates in the present.

Today, the recollection of past national greatness occurs within a context which we have called the modern milieu. To be sure, modernity (the term we have more often used) is a rich concept. We think of the “modern” as bound up with the advance of science, the progress of technology, and the wealth that combination produces; we connect the “modern” to the productive and to the efficient. But we are also aware of the “modern” as a way of thinking about things, or as an outlook, or as a sensibility. We especially resort to “modern” as a way of describing some cultural products, for we immediately recognize that “modern art” and “modern literature” are different from what preceded them. Thus, there is more than one way for a man to be “modern-minded,” and the man who embraces the “modern” as a way of living in one realm of life can utterly reject the “modern” as a way of living in another. We saw that Chinese observers were, and still are, deeply fascinated by the consequences of modernity in the Western world. And precisely because China’s own encounter with

“modernity,” in all its aspects, has thus far proved both highly productive and immensely destructive, Chinese today are both highly energized and immensely unsettled by it.

All of this is on display in central Beijing; it is as if the contending forces of the past two centuries have converged on one small piece of urban real estate. The Forbidden City of the Qing emperors abuts the northern edge of Tiananmen Square. Its complex of palaces and offices is a quintessential expression of the finest in traditional Chinese architecture—symmetrical, balanced, and reflective of ancient Chinese principles of cosmological harmony. But the Forbidden City was more than a work of art; it was also the nerve center of one of the great empires in the history of the world, designed to intimidate and to inspire awe.

Across the street, immediately adjacent to the Forbidden City, is another two-hundred acre imperial compound, the Zhongnanhai (literally, “the South and Central Seas,” sometimes called the Water Palace.) Since 1949, the Qing buildings enclosed within its walls have served as offices and residences for the highest-ranking officials of both the Chinese Communist Party and the national government; both Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai lived there, as the highest-ranking officials today still do. Like its next-door neighbor before it, the Zhongnanhai serves as the nerve center of a truly enormous polity—New China. The compound today is as forbidden and as forbidding as it was in High Qing times, and it is an impressive example of the expropriation of a great past by an ambitious present.

But the “modern,” in more than one guise, is close by. A short walk from Zhongnanhai will take a Chinese citizen to the Great Hall of the People, at the western edge of Tiananmen Square. In all its Stalinoid ugliness, this huge building was completed in 1959 to mark the tenth anniversary of New China’s founding. At the southern edge of the square, the citizen will also find the Mao Zedong mausoleum, which contains the embalmed remains

of the Great Helmsman. The structure is topped by a large portrait of the Chairman, and he gazes out over the square as if benignly blessing what is transpiring beneath him. Between the Great Hall and the Mao Mausoleum sits the new National Theater, which we encountered in our discussion of Beijing's recent urban history. This is the so-called Big Egg, a titanium-clad structure designed by contemporary French architect Paul Andreu. It is another version of modernity, as incongruous and, yes, as ugly and as off-putting in its own way as the proletarian *grotesquerie* right next to it—and also as spectral as Mao Zedong's resting place.

And, just steps away, another representative of modernity is on display. In 1992, McDonald's opened the first of its now hundreds of outlets in China, just off the southeast corner of the Tiananmen Square. Thus, in 2006, when China's President Hu Jintao declared as his main goal the creation of "a harmonious society," he assumed the leadership of China's mediation between the great Qianlong Emperor and those iconic figures of the modern age—Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Walter Gropius, and Ronald McDonald.



An employee sits with Ronald McDonald in front of a Beijing McDonald's

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In Part One of this study, we encountered various approaches to the governance of vast territories in Asia, each one impressive in its scale and in its success. We discussed especially how the achievement of the peace inside these realms, and the continuation of that peace, depended on the ability of the political leadership to recognize the implications of changes on a regional and on a world scale. But we were not so much interested in understanding the past in its own terms as we were in learning how contemporary concepts could inform our sense of the past; in other words, we sought to translate the successes of the past into the political language of the present day. And, of course, we were not alone in doing this; we saw how the present government in China sought to legitimize its post-1978 policies by finding relevant antecedents in past heroic epochs.

We were surprised at how different these great ages were from each other, and how they embodied decidedly different strategic concepts and modes of political organization. Indeed, during the time of the *Pax Mongolica*, we saw that China functioned successfully as part of someone else's empire, a genuinely global scheme of things. In that China's culture was but one of several great traditional cultures represented in the Mongol empire, a high imperial policy of tolerance and acceptance made perfect sense. China, in particular, was encouraged to reflect on its connections to "world history" and "world civilization" rather than dwell on "Chinese characteristics" as such. Seen in this way, the theory and practice of *Pax Mongolica* is readily translatable into the familiar twenty-first century political jargon of

multiculturalism and provides a certain practical component to it. No matter the intention of the creators of the concept, it can be interpreted as a potential contributor to China's rise in the world; to use a term from ancient China's lexicon of strategy, it has *purchase*.

Another historical echo of the *Pax Mongolica* is that China today is once again part of someone else's global system. Theorists now argue whether the post-Soviet world order dominated by the United States is at bottom an "empire," but today's global system, however one praises it or insults it, operates by rules which were established by people who were not Chinese. The system, in its formal aspects, derives from post-World War II arrangements for the United Nations, the World Trade Organization (then known as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) the International Monetary Fund, and a host of other institutions, some—like the International Postal Union and International Telecommunications Union—even descended from the long-defunct League of Nations. The old Republic of China may have been "present at the creation" of these organization and a founding member of almost all of them, but it had very little to do with their real establishment. Later, the new People's Republic of China dissociated itself from them altogether, opting instead to join another international system also of someone else's making—the Socialist Camp, designed and dominated by the Soviet Union.

To be sure, the Soviet Union was a more dominant hegemon inside the Socialist Camp than the United States was within the Free World, but China's rejoining of the American-designed global system was China's acknowledgement that it had to acquiesce in arrangements not of its own making. That was twenty-five years ago; circumstances have changed since then, and so has the balance of influence within the system. How is this balance going to evolve? As a matter of strategic self-interest, how hard should China push the pace of

that evolution, and to what result? Should it seek somehow to supplant over time the United States as the system's dominant figure, so that China's long-term strategic objective becomes one of inheriting the existing global regime more-or-less intact? Or is China's strategic self-interest better served by the establishment of an altogether new, or at least substantially altered, global regime?

As we have seen, China has lived through a series of world systems, each one expressing the vision of the hegemon of the age—whether the Mongols, the Manchus, or the West—and each of these systems has been supplanted in its turn. China may think that, this time, through its continuing accretion of wealth and power, it will finally gain an opportunity to get out in front of History and to be present at the creation of a new international system in a way it has not been for centuries. If so, how might such a system come into being? How might it work?

Comparable questions descend from the historically different situation of Ming times that we called *Pax Sinica*. Then, we found a more cohesive and unitary China—a China with a more highly developed sense of itself and of its difference from others—but a China also drawn very deeply into a worldwide revolution in technology, commerce, and economics. That presaged a comparable transformation of world politics. In particular, in the importance of worldwide maritime commerce to the China of that era, we saw how the Chinese government of today found an irresistible analogue to its own policy preferences. China's contemporary scholars, thus empowered, investigated this era more carefully, and they revealed to us not only new statistics about the terms of trade, but also how the effects of participation in a world economy stimulated Chinese thinking about economics and politics.

As we learned, Chinese discovered that they could be powerfully affected by the new economic forces now loose in the world, but they were not at all satisfied by how well they understood them. The workings of what we now call the global market were mysterious, and the inability of the Chinese to decipher them to their satisfaction created a sense of vulnerability. Thus, there were those, then, who embraced the new way and those who rejected it.

Meanwhile, there is yet another argument from history—one that descends from the history of the Qing dynasty, or what we called the *Pax Manjurica*—that haunts ongoing debates inside the Zhongnanhai. For the Chinese strategist, the task is to assess the vulnerabilities presented to his country by the globalization of today and then to offer a way to hedge against them. Here, mediation between the imperial and the modern is well-established, for modern history is instructive about how rising powers cope with the vulnerability and uncertainty that accompany the growth in wealth and power that derive from involvement in the international economic system. For one pertinent example, a generation ago, Professor James Crowley wrote a canonical book describing modern Japan's strategy for squaring this particular circle.⁹⁶ Japan sought not so much to overturn the entire global system as to reorganize the system of political economy in East Asia and Southeast Asia that had been set up by Westerners. In China particularly, this meant replacing the system of treaty ports, leaseholds, perpetual Chinese indebtedness, and spheres of influence—which, having supplanted the *Pax Manjurica* with a new Western-dominated regime, had turned China into a *faux* sovereign state in any case. Japan set out to supersede both of these Old Orders with a new scheme, a plan for integrating a Japan-dominated China into an Asian regional economy

⁹⁶ *Japan's Quest for Autonomy: National Security and Foreign Policy: 1930–1938* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

also dominated by Japan. This arrangement, which the Japanese called the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, would function as an essentially self-contained unit to the benefit of all, yet would give to Japan itself both prosperity *and* self-sufficiency at one and the same time.

This was a very ambitious undertaking and violence would prove essential to its implementation. Meanwhile, Japan, as the dominant political, economic, and military driver of this vast reorganization, contemplated a variety of political arrangements within its sphere of control. Thus, Korea was to be an outright Japanese colony; northeastern China was to be a monarchy with its own emperor—and a Manchu emperor at that; China, now reduced to its old pre-Qing-dynasty dimensions, would have a new national government, one that harked back to the spirit of the early twentieth century, when many Chinese patriots (like Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek themselves) believed that the salvation of their own country lay in Sino-Japanese collaboration against the West. The West's colonies in Southeast Asia would become independent republics, based on a revival of an earlier twentieth-century pro-Japanese pan-Asian sentiment. To be sure, this was an ambitious plan, a genuinely Grand Design, but in its scale and pretentiousness, it was no more ambitious or pretentious than the great reorganizations of Asia successfully carried out by Manchus and, later, by Westerners. In fact, it was less ambitious and pretentious than the total political and economic reorganization of Asia that the People's Republic of China would later attempt between 1950 and 1970.

“What need have we for the world?” This renowned, though probably apocryphal, query is said to have been posed by the emperor Qianlong in 1793 as he pondered his formal response to proposals from Britain for expanded trade. But even in the late eighteenth century, his presumption of the Manchu empire's self-sufficiency was not well-founded; the Qing state was very much involved with the world, but it was not dependent on the world. We recall

that, around 1800, the Manchu empire's economy may have accounted for about thirty percent of the world's gross domestic product, and it was to that economy that the rest of the world sought expanded entrée, not the other way around. We recall, also, that the Manchu court had both defenders and deniers of the value of international trade. The benefits and risks of the great prosperity in High Ming times were intensely discussed from many perspectives, including a moral one: the traditional Confucian view was that great wealth was the precursor to great ruin, and that splendor and decadence went hand in hand.

For all of this, the Qing dynasty had been in its own way a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere nonpareil. It thus presents an imperial memory with intriguing modern possibilities, for it might figure into contemporary China's analysis of the deep structure of the world. The China "mega-economy" of today is creating a regional economy that is already huge and growing rapidly. Its parts include the very large East Asian economies of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, and the not-so-large economies of mainland Southeast Asia, Indonesia, and Austral Asia. The even less developed economies of Central Asia and Russia's Far East are also being drawn into it. This regional integration may proceed by fits and starts, but the process seems inexorable. At some point in this century, it will certainly account for thirty percent of world domestic product; indeed, the Greater China component alone will be able to do that.

From our vantage point, however, it seems improbable that this economic arrangement, though clearly destined to grow in scale, will enhance the region's self-sufficiency. For it will remain a trading and manufacturing enterprise above all, inextricably connected to the larger world economy beyond. Its ever-growing requirements for energy and commodities have extended its reach into Latin America and Africa, but it is a reach that

extends its grasp. The fear in the rest of the world is that China will feel required—and will become rich enough to become emboldened—to try to bring its expanding market under an expanding security umbrella of its own making. It may well be thinking about how to do this but, as of today, this seems a daunting, close-to-impossible, task.

Moreover, this China-dominated regional entity, though more closely integrated economically, remains an area of great political diversity. The founding members of this second coming of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere include the constitutional monarchies of Japan, Thailand, and Cambodia; the parliamentary regimes of South Korea and Taiwan; the “reformist” Communist regime in Vietnam and its antediluvian cousin in North Korea; members in good standing of the British Commonwealth of Nations, Australia and New Zealand; the world’s largest functioning constitutional Islamic Republic, Indonesia; even a place ruled by an old-fashioned military junta, Burma. Steering this entity in a single direction is already a challenging task for the government in Beijing, and it can only become more so.

Moreover, we have seen how economic integration within China itself has, paradoxically, created powerful centrifugal forces inside the country that are very challenging, and which by themselves raise serious questions about the durability of China’s new internal dispensation. And it is more than a merely political or administrative problem. For at the base of it all are the bedrock arguments about the competing variants of modern life, and which among them is best for China. These arguments define the tension between “strategists” whose work is construction and “culturalists” whose work is deconstruction. In one form or another and at one level of intensity or another, all of China’s Asian neighbors have had comparable distress with their lives in the modern world.

In the twentieth century, none of these problems could be confined to the national or the regional; instead, they spilled out into the larger world, becoming part of the great violence that swept through it. The twenty-first century is the product of the astonishing worldwide transformation that resulted. Its problems will be resolved, if they are ever resolved at all, on a worldwide basis, and the failure to resolve those problems will be played out on the same worldwide scale.

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China's own consideration of strategy, politics, economics, and culture, as it has turned out, is not readily divisible into separate components. We thus had to explore what, in 1953, the great American sinologist Joseph Levenson (1920–1969) called “the mind of modern China.” “How can a Chinese be reconciled to the observable dissipation of his cultural inheritance?” Levenson had wondered. “How can a China in full process of westernization feel itself equivalent to the West?”⁹⁷ However one might have imagined the mind of modern China more than five decades ago, it is something else today, and it will be something different a decade from now. And because the mind of modern China is now inseparable from the mind of the modern West, it cannot be studied in isolation from thought in the rest of the world. In this respect, China and the West will proceed in tandem, whether along a parallel course whose lines will never get closer, along an asymptotic course whose lines may come tantalizingly close, but which will never quite touch, or along paths which will eventually intersect.

⁹⁷ *Liang Chi'ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 5.

Our own examination of the past century has been suggestive of all three possibilities. Many Westerners and Chinese who actually lived through these experiences believed that somehow the great issues would soon be resolved. Thomas Metzger, who has written extensively and described in considerable detail the relationships between Western and Chinese ways of thinking about the world, cites studies which have demonstrated that modern and modernizing societies are becoming increasingly similar in their institutions and political and cultural patterns. But he also cites those who, with equal acuity, have observed “that culture and religion lead to great differences in how the good society is conceptualized. They have an equal effect on how the actual given world is perceived, for they are the saga of suffering and glory with which every ‘community of memory’ defines its goals...It is thus clear that Chinese today are still free to influence these trends, tilting their civilization one way or the other. Policy-makers will do some of that steering, but so will public opinion and the intellectual trends competing to influence it.”⁹⁸

In our own effort to describe how China’s Grand Design may develop in the next decades, we have maintained that it will not unfold in isolation, that it cannot exist alone, that it cannot float above the rest of the battle, as if embodying some uniquely immutable set of principles. Instead, it, too, will be an ever-changing product of the meeting of memory and modernity, a part of the world’s saga of suffering and glory from which every great nation must now create its future.

⁹⁸ *A Cloud across the Pacific: Essays on the Clash between Chinese and Western Political Theories Today* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2006), p. 291.