

Debating China's Future

Editor's Notes

The Blind Men and the Elephant

In 2005, *China Security* was established with the vision of examining the breadth of China's strategic development – from grassroots social policies to nuclear weapons – and its impact on the world. We did so, eyes wide open, cognizant of the risks of such whopping ambition. Like the blind men touching the different parts of the elephant, each thinking it is something different depending on where he touches, comprehending a colossus like China in any kind of sweeping sense is a similarly confounding task. In addition to the complexity of the country at cultural, political, social and strategic levels, there is also the time factor. Change in China moves at a phenomenal clip.

Despite these caveats, three years into our project, we feel it is time to take stock of how far China has come. Plus, it is open season on China in light of all the attention holding Summer Olympics entails. To mark this important chapter in China's journey, we have invited many of the leading thinkers on the subject, from inside and outside its borders, to reflect on China's accomplishments and contemplate its future – in fewer than 500 words. With the Olympics a kind of "hurrah" for China's 30 years of economic progress, we want to know if China has "arrived" as a great nation. And if so, what does it stand for? What does it have to offer the world besides another economic stanchion for the world economy? Will it challenge the international status quo or invest in its future?

In the essays that follow, a number of thematic threads emerged. Many struggle with the meaning of China's growing economic power matched by its military build-up. Would China be friend, foe or both? Others dismiss talk of China's ascendance in the world as ultimately subordinate to its domestic challenges. "Internal contradictions" are a prevailing theme, particularly among our Chinese authors. Still others attempt to sketch out what a unique worldview China might offer in the decades ahead. If any consensus is discernible, it can best be characterized as a deep uncertainty about where China is headed, how it will get there and the effect it will have on others and itself along the way.

These short essays would otherwise comprise another variant of "China's rising," however, a subtle but important shift has taken place in the discourse. Implicit in most of these think pieces is the assumption that, at least in relative terms, China's rise is a *fait accompli*. Even five years ago, China's rise was spoken of as a work in progress. Now, its ascendance, in an economic sense, has

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reached a certain plateau. Even among those who emphasize the salience of China's internal contradictions as the key to its future, no one disagrees that those domestic issues themselves are a result of China's impressive level of progress.

A number of conclusions flow from this. The certainty of China's specific economic, political or military attainments is juxtaposed with the uncertainty of how China will employ its new-found progress. The discussion has shifted from *means* to *intent, orientation and motivation*. Although China's material rise is indisputable, its direction is highly uncertain. The second phase of China's ascendancy will be a far more complex one to handle, as many point out, both for China, initiating it and those countries on the receiving end.

Perhaps more pertinent than outsiders' peering in with a sense of unease, China herself is not sure. As many of our authors correctly note, China's progress is impressive by most economic and development standards, yet the "contradictions" in society have only increased. This is a profound issue for the country's future, because it is China's citizens who have benefited the most from its material growth and yet their uncertainty remains over what lies ahead. The quid pro quo for raising people's level of prosperity is support for the government. This contract the government has made with its people has thus far held up, yet, the pressure for continuing progress to other fronts such as an effective judicial system, freedom of press, ethnic autonomy, human rights, and more continues. In short, progress has largely been in material terms, not in values, individual freedoms, or as one author calls it, "social capital."

Nationalism has been employed to fill that gap, as several people note, and has succeeded to an extent. But this remains a salve, if a dangerous one, to the uncertainties and contradictions awaiting China. Rallying around the flag focuses on external injustices rather than on China's most profound challenges, most of which are domestic. China must focus energy on building nonmaterial, value-based, even spiritual capital in society. As one essayist puts it, the Chinese must learn to "get along," not just "get ahead."

The uncertainties regarding China's future among the Chinese and outsiders are connected. China's behavior abroad will depend fundamentally on its domestic circumstances more than any other factor. Internal stability and confidence in the future are deeply reflective of their attitudes with the outside. This latest bout of nationalism was directly related to unrest in Tibet, and coincided with rising inflation and a social contract between party and people increasingly under strain. China's domestic state of mind is increasingly felt outside its borders. The Chinese government can no longer control information sufficiently to tame adverse reaction to events, whether its own egregious policy faux pas, the population's reaction to national disasters – witness the nationwide response to the recent earthquake – or national insult as with the torch relay. The latter was not merely a government-controlled overreaction by an easily manipulated and insular populace. It was because of China's high level of connectedness with the outside that images of disruptions in the torch relay fanned resentment and outrage across China. In fact, much of the strident criticism came from abroad, with little government coercion as one of our essayist's points out.

One further implication of the uncertainty over China's future is the window it creates for other nations, particularly the United States, to have a role in influencing it. This may come from a presidential resolve to check China's negative tendencies, as one author writes, but, it also arises from not treating China precisely as the threat we hope it does not become. Most importantly, outside influence, large or small, will not materialize through sermonizing about human rights and currency policies, but helping build the bridges that will connect the Chinese to a larger international community. Because, concludes Xiang Lanxin, ultimately it is Chinese people who will decide the nations' fate, no government can escape that reality. How China will get there is another elephant for the blind men to figure out.

- Eric Hagt, Chief Editor

Meng Luding

Purify



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Li Cheng

Speed vs. Direction

In the middle of a trans-Pacific flight, an aircraft pilot announced to the passengers that he had good news and bad news. “The good news,” he said, “is that we are running ahead of schedule. The bad news is that we are lost.” No story better captures the realities of present-day China.

To many observers, China appears to be a rapidly growing economic powerhouse, but one that seems to be lost when it comes to the political destination it wants to reach. On the domestic front, China’s political system has become increasingly inadequate for dealing

with the complicated, and sometimes contradictory needs of China’s economy and society. Although the Chinese Communist Party has tried to build up its public support on the basis of economic growth, social harmony and nationalism, one-party rule will always have to struggle with the issue of legitimacy.

On the international front, China’s poor image has become a major liability, as evident in the recent widespread protests over China’s human rights problems, its investments in Sudan, and its crackdown in Tibet. Chinese leaders will soon realize, if they have not already, that China’s rise to prominence in the 21st century will ultimately depend on its ability



to adapt to global governance norms, including political pluralism, openness, transparency and the rule of law. To be sure, some of the international criticisms of China reflect Western biases or double standards. Yet, the Middle Kingdom needs to find a sound political vision – and a core value system – to express what China stands for in today's world.

Coincidentally, the generation of Chinese leaders that has just emerged on the national stage is mainly composed of members of the so-called “lost generation.” These individuals, born in the 1950s, lost the opportunity for formal schooling due to the Cultural Revolution. Many were sent from cities to the countryside to work as farmers, and some later entered college when the higher education system reopened. These experiences not only enabled them to put their careers back on track, but also suggest that they are likely to be more flexible and bolder than their predecessors about political reform. A central issue for the next decade or so is whether this unique “lost generation” of leaders, who made drastic changes and dramatic “comebacks” in their own lives, can also

find a path to democracy for their country.

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Thomas P.M. Barnett

The Inevitable Alliance

China's main strategic vulnerability right now is that it possesses economic and network connectivity with the outside world that is unmatched by its political-military capacity to defend. This forces Beijing to “free ride” on Washington's provision of global security services, a situation that makes China's leaders uncomfortable today – as it should. American blood for Chinese oil is an untenable strategic transaction.

The United States faced a similar situation in its “rise” in the late 1800s and set about “re-branding” its military force over a several-decade period that culminated with a successful entry into World War I. Since World War II, the United States has maintained a primarily ex-

peditionary force that is able to access international crises, and since the end of the Cold War has done so with unprecedented frequency. This too is an untenable strategic burden.

America needs to encourage China's effective re-branding as an accepted worldwide provider of stability operations. The problem today is two-fold: 1) major portions of America's military require China to remain in the enemy image to justify existing and new weapons and platforms; and 2) the Chinese military is hopelessly fixated on "access denial" strategies surrounding Taiwan, meaning it buys the wrong military for the strategic tasks that inevitably lie ahead.

So long as both nations insist on such mirror-imaging, their respective militaries will continue to buy one military while operating (or, in China's case, *needing* to operate) another force that remains under-developed. Such strategic myopia serves neither great power's long-term interests, which are clearly complimentary throughout the developing world.

The good news is that both China and the United States are within a decade's time of seeing new generations emerge among their respective political and military leaderships. These future leaders view the potential for Sino-American strategic alliance far differently than do the current leadership generation. If Washington and Beijing can navigate the next dozen or so years without damaging current ties, I fully expect to see a Sino-American strategic alliance emerge.

I do not present this as a theoretical possibility, but as my professional judgment based on years of extensive contacts through both nations' national security establishments.

Grand strategy often involves getting leaders to understand certain future inevitabilities. The global primacy of the Sino-American strategic alliance in the 21st century is one such future inevitability.

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Harry Harding *Blazing a New Trail*

Tentatively, gradually, and as yet unofficially, China is formulating a new development model for the Third World. Chinese don't call it the Beijing Consensus – that's a term devised by Westerners. Nor do they contrast it with the Washington Consensus – if only because they want to maintain good relations with the World Bank. Instead, they call it simply the Chinese model, drawing a contrast with the American model. But, regardless of the term used, they believe their model is superior and that the Third World will come to agree.

The Chinese draw three sets of distinctions between these two models. First, the goals. They say the main objectives for Third World countries are development, stability and human rights, and that all three need to be kept in proper balance. They imply that the United States emphasizes human rights above all other objectives, and is willing to sacrifice development and stability in the name of promoting that priority. Moreover, the Chinese definition of human rights is broader than America's – it includes collective rights in addition to individual rights, and economic and social rights as well as political and civil rights. Their model therefore transcends the single objective of democratization that so many developing countries now associate with the United States.

The second and most important distinction involves the strategy of development. Chinese say their model is based on experimentation, rooted in local conditions, rather than the universal application of an abstract ideal. They advocate an incremental approach to reform, rather than "big bangs" or "shock therapy." Their model features the creation of a powerful state that is committed to development, rather than deregulation and marketization. Democratization should be postponed until a later stage of development, so as not to undermine the effectiveness of the developmental state. When it eventually occurs, it may involve consultative authoritarianism rather than genuine

Yin Qi

Landscape of 2008



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pluralism.

A third distinction addresses the terms of official development assistance. China's aid program focuses on building infrastructure more than on providing policy advice or promoting institutional reform, let alone constructing civil society. The Chinese reject the idea of conditioning their aid on good governance, accountability or environmental standards in the recipient country. Rather, they impose a different set of criteria, packaging their aid with direct investment projects that can give China access to energy and natural resources. This aspect of the Chinese model is actually quite familiar: in some ways it resembles American aid at the height of the Cold War and Japanese aid even more recently. Above all, as their argument goes, Washington has tried to impose its model by force, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, whereas Beijing has not.

The Chinese model appears attractive in

many parts of the Third World, especially to governments who resist the West's conditional aid, reject the American emphasis on promoting democracy, or admire China's rapid and sustained pace of economic growth. But for how long will this admiration last? Much will depend on whether China can continue to perform well at home, despite the growing problems of corruption, inequality, abuse of power, environmental degradation and the erosion of the social safety net. It will also depend on whether the Chinese model works in Third World countries that seek to apply it. Above all, the Chinese model will be competing with the American version – and it remains to be seen whether the American model, with its emphasis on human rights, good governance, conditional aid and civil society, may not prove superior in the end.

Harry Harding is a professor of International Affairs at George Washington University.

Cui Liru

The Absence of a Model

A heated debate has taken center stage about the notion of a “China model” in development. This question is particularly pertinent as China completes 30 years of its unique path of opening up and reform.

As I see it, the principle characteristic of China’s development path is precisely the lack of a model. What this means is that in practice, China has not stuck to one development method, rather it has widely embraced the advantages of a variety of models, adopted measures to local conditions and taken development as the first priority. In other words, China pursues a “comprehensive model” confined by no one set model and embodied by several characteristics.

First, “reform” required a delicate balance based on China’s basic national conditions (economy, history, culture, geography, population and ethnic groups) and the changes in international relations since the start of the reform drive. The point of that effort was to transform China from a planned economy into a market one. To get from one bank to the other required “groping for stones to cross the river.” That is, in the complex domestic and international context of the time, maintaining a comprehensive balance was requisite for survival, and implies gradual policies both internal and external.

Second, there is “opening up,” which means to connect with the outside world. There is no doubt that the current international system is dominated by the West and led by the United States. Thus, to integrate with it one therefore has to admit the dominant position of the West, which China does. China’s merger with economic globalization accelerated after the mid-1990s, a process that was pushed forward by the West. However, in the process, China also became a noticeable beneficiary and key proponent of the system. Though the negative impact of globalization on China is real (a fact that is receiving more and more attention), three decades of history authoritatively

conclude that China’s growing relationship with the world has largely been benign and the interaction mutually stabilizing.

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John J. Mearsheimer

Rivalry in the Offing

History shows that powerful states on the rise often fight wars with other major powers. Does this mean that a rising China is destined to end up in an intense security competition, maybe even a war, with its neighbors and the United States?

Many American and Chinese strategists say no. Some argue that China has a “Confucian culture” which is inherently passive, while others maintain that the economies of China and its potential rivals are too closely intertwined to allow them to fight a war. The economic costs would be too great. Still, others claim that shared dangers of international terrorism or global warming will foster enough Sino-American cooperation to dampen future rivalry. Even nuclear weapons are cited as a potential force for peace in Asia.

But these optimists are likely to be proved wrong. An increasingly powerful China will seek to become the most powerful state in Asia and dominate that region the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere. China is unlikely to pursue regional hegemony so that it can conquer other Asian countries, the way Japan did between 1931 and 1942. It is more likely that Beijing will want to be in a position where it can dictate the rules of behavior to its neighbors, as the United States does in the Western Hemisphere. A rising China is also likely to try to push America out of Asia, similar to the way the United States pushed the European great powers out of the Western Hemisphere.

China is likely to pursue regional hegemony for sound strategic reasons. In a world where states cannot be certain about the intentions of other states, and where there is no higher

Rob Gifford

The Ghosts of China Past and Present: A Dialogue

Past: *Hey buddy, how's it going?*

Present: *A few peripheral problems, but generally pretty good. You?*

Past: *OK, I guess, though no-one seems to pay me much attention these days. They're all too busy looking at you.*

Present: *Well, I have changed a lot, it's true.*

Past: *So what happens next?*

Present: *What do you mean?*

Past: *Well, what's your plan? Your vision for the future?*

Present: *My vision?*

Past: *Yeah, what are you going to become?*

Present: *I'm going to become a strong, powerful nation, respected in the world.*

Past: *But what are you going to do about the internal contradictions between a mobile modern economy and society and a 1950s political system?*

Present: *Don't worry, something will work out.*

Past: *That's not good enough, dude. What are you doing about all the angry peasants? What about those Tibetans? They're not happy.*

Present: *They are just two of China's ethnic minority groups. They are part of the happy family of minorities. And the peasants....their lives are improving.*

Past: *Haven't you learned anything? You can't be open to the world and still retain your territorial integrity.*

Present: *Why not?*

Past: *Because you're an empire, dummy. The contradictions will tear you apart. Can't you spell Q-I-N-G?*

Present: *No, I'm a nation. One of the family of nations.*

Past: *Yeah right. And you feel equal with all those other nations, right?*

Present: *Well, certainly none of them has 5,000 years of continuous civilization, that's true. But we can work together.*

Past: *Tell that to the U.S. Congress.*

Present: *I have. And besides, how the West sees me isn't dependent on what I'm like, it's solely dependent on their own prejudices. Now if you'll excuse me, I have issues to deal with in Africa and Latin America.*

Past: *That's another thing I need to talk to you about. They say you're the new colonialist.*

Present: *What nonsense. I'm just following the usual rules of global commerce.*

Past: *Yes, but they're worried about you, dude. They think you're the new Japan.*

Present: *I would never invade anyone. And besides, it's all I can do just to hold myself together.*

Past: *But you're not what they call a status quo country. That's where you and I are different. You're pretending to be one, but you're not. What are you going to do about Taiwan?*

Present: *That will resolve itself one day, I'm sure. Why are you so pessimistic? Can't you see, I've proved it's possible to be a one-party state and a market economy at the same time.*

Past: *Well, I hope you're right. But all I can tell you, my friend, is that it never worked for me. Plus ça change plus c'est la meme chose.*

Present: *Say what?*

Past: *It's French: the more things change, the more they stay the same.*

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authority they can turn to when threatened by another state, the best way to survive is to dominate your immediate surroundings and make sure that no other great power duplicates that feat in another region. A rival state that dominates its own region will be an especially powerful foe that is free to cause trouble in your backyard. That is why the United States sought hegemony in the Western Hemisphere, and spent the 20th century helping prevent Imperial Germany, Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union from achieving hegemony in Europe or Asia.

This same logic implies that the United States will try to prevent China from becoming a hegemon in Asia. Beijing's neighbors – to include India, Japan and Russia – are likely to help America contain China, leading to intense security competition between Washington and Beijing. War between the United States and China is not inevitable, but Asia is likely to be a dangerous region in the decades ahead.

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Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

The Rise of Uncertainty

One-third of Americans believe that China will “soon dominate the world,” while 54 percent see the emergence of China as a “threat to world peace,” according to a recent poll. Some commentators have argued that China will be as disruptive to the beginning of the 21st century as the Kaiser's Germany was to the 20th century.

But such views exaggerate China's power. Measured by official exchange rates, China is the fourth largest economy in the world and is growing at 10 percent annually, but its income per capita is only one twenty-fifth that of the United States. If both the United States and China continue to grow at their current rates, it is possible that China's total economy could be larger than ours in thirty years. Even then, however, American per capita income will remain four times greater.

Feng Danggang

Stucture



Feng Danggang is a freelance artist.

In addition, China's military power is far behind, and it lacks the soft power resources such as Hollywood and world class universities that America enjoys. In contrast, the Kaiser's Germany had already passed Great Britain in industrial production by 1900, and launched a serious military challenge to Britain's naval supremacy.

The fact that China is a long way from overtaking the United States does not prevent a possible war over Taiwan, which China regards as a lost province. Weaker countries sometimes attack stronger countries – witness Japan at Pearl Harbor.

But such a conflict is not inevitable. China's internal evolution also remains uncertain. It has lifted 400 million people out of poverty since 1990, yet another 400 million still live on less than \$2 per day. It has enormous inequality, a migrant labor force of 140 million, severe pollution and rampant corruption. Political evolution has failed to match economic progress. While more Chinese are free today



than ever before, China as a whole is far from free. The danger is that party leaders, trying to counter the erosion of communism, will use nationalism as their ideological glue, and this could lead to an unstable foreign policy.

Faced with such uncertainty, a wise policy combines realism with liberalism. By reinforcing the U.S.-Japan alliance, we have hedged against uncertainty while at the same time offering China integration into global institutions as a “responsible stakeholder.” The greatest danger is an escalating fear of enmity on both sides that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Joseph S. Nye Jr., University Distinguished Service professor, is also the Sultan of Oman Professor of International Relations and former Dean of the Kennedy School.

Mao Yushi

Change...and its Malcontents

With the dazzling economic successes over the past three decades, China is no longer the country it once was. The society’s material progress has grown but so have its social contradictions, and it is safe to say that the so-

cial contradictions are bound to change this society. As such, China will not be able to repeat its performance in the next 30 years – let alone the next five – using the model of the past. What is not easy to predict is how this change will come about: By violent revolution? Intra-Party division? Financial crisis or international pressure? It is equally difficult to foresee the consequences of such wrenching change: Decades of chaos or the ushering in of a democratic government? A split into a federation or a return to the Mao-style rule?

The more important question is perhaps how China will get there. Compared with the system of other countries, one can clearly see that developed countries have in common the qualities of freedom, equality and democratic rule of law. These are precisely the things that developing countries lack, and the root of China’s social contradictions lies in the deficiency of these values. Although more and more people inside China and out agree with this analysis – including leaders – coming to terms with the solution is highly problematic because of the system’s dissonance between vested interests and meaningful reform. Those with power must yield their vested interests in order to achieve true reform. It strains the mind to envision how this change will transpire, but one thing is certain, change must come.

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Bates Gill

Inside Out

Model or menace? Rogue or responsible player? Great power or weak state? What is the China we will face in the decades ahead? Judgments about China’s strategic future in world affairs requires a close look at how it acts in its own backyard since this nation is shaped most by how it deals with its enormous internal challenges.

Through this analytical lens, two critically important facets come into view to illuminate our questions about China’s strategic future.

First, what happens inside China will increasingly have an impact beyond its borders. China's domestic ability to manage internal problems will inexorably affect its relations with its neighbors and partners around the world, and will determine whether China can claim to be a "responsible" power in world affairs.

Chinese actions to prevent the emergence and global spread of infectious disease from within China's borders will indicate how seriously China recognizes and acts on its responsibilities in the international system. Similarly, steps by Chinese authorities to stem the destabilizing flow of sensitive weapons and technologies from China to other parts of the world tells its neighbors and global partners much about what kind of role China wishes to play internationally. How Beijing chooses to address the country's relentless environmental degradation and its impact on the regional and global environment is another indicator of what kind of China will emerge in the future. The list could go on.

Second, how Beijing chooses to tackle ongoing and emergent domestic challenges will

also affect the kind of sociopolitical system to emerge in the country in the years ahead. China's approach and solutions to a wide range of problems – internal unrest, corruption, delivery of public goods, widening income and developmental gaps, environmental threats, and many others – will tell us whether its governance structures are moving in the direction of greater openness, equity, justice and constructive self-confidence or taking a different, more troubling path. In turn, the nature of China's domestic regime in the future will profoundly affect how China opts to engage the international community.

China's leaders and strategists understand these points better than anyone. They are trying to grapple with domestic challenges in ways that reflect and lead to a responsible approach to world affairs, worthy of emulation and great power status. Whether they will succeed is not yet clear. But we on the outside need to look to China's internal developments and change for insight into what kind of global power it will be.

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Tang Shiping

Coming Intellectual Power

Much ink has been spilt over China as a regional great power and even a potential burgeoning global great power. The focus is on China's growing economic and military might, and secondarily its growing cultural and political influence, or "soft power." Missing in all of this is the intellectual dimension.

Among the four great ancient civilizations (China, Egypt, Greece and India), only the Chinese and the Greeks have left a recognizable imprint upon the enterprise of human knowledge, largely because they have left numerous and profound texts behind. Most of us have studied Socrates and Plato, and many of us have at least heard of Lao Tzu and Confucius.

The development of modern science has allowed the West to eclipse all other civilizations

and dominate the world for the past 400 years. The coming of the West to four corners of the earth wreaked great havoc on many people, but it also brought the growth of knowledge through scientific research.

After slowly absorbing modern science as a "new religion" for more than 150 years, China is now poised to become a major intellectual force. Because genius is born randomly, China – by any measure – possesses the largest talent pool in the world. If so, once China establishes the basic institutional foundation for intellectual growth (achieved in part, though improvement required), it is inevitable that China will once again become a formidable intellectual power.

In some ways China has already arrived. In the field of natural science and technology, China is now recognized as a major force. The

Shen Qin

An Intellectual Dialogue



Shen Qin is a painter at the Chinese Painting institute of Jiang Su.

outside world is slow in recognizing China's power in social sciences largely because most leading social scientists in China do not write in English and most of their work has not been translated.

The day of China as an intellectual power should be welcomed. After all, as F. A. Hayek noted long ago, the growth of human civilization fundamentally depends upon the growth of human knowledge.

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Zhao Tingyang

All Under Heaven

Chinese history offers a rich repository of ideas waiting to be tapped for modern application. *Tianxia* – or, “all-under-heaven” – is one sterling example. Its origin lies in the 3000 year old Zhou Dynasty's founding dilemma: how to gain and preserve allegiance from a disparate collection of potentially more powerful states. Zhou leaders responded by designing a world system with great appeal to the people over whom they exercised dominion. Incorporating elements of geography, society and politics, the *Tianxia* system pioneered the notion of “world governance.”

As a political philosophy, *Tianxia* is strikingly different from the Westphalian system. Whereas the latter implies interstate competition with winners and losers, *Tianxia* seeks to maximize cooperation and minimize conflict. *Tianxia* gives priority to the development of global public interest, thus obviating the need for individual nation states to zealously pursue the interests of “their” people. At the heart of the philosophy is the idea that co-existence is the precondition for existence. That is, nothing exists in absence of a relationship with something else. Mutual benefit, then, is the overarching aim, with compatibility as the only way to reach common prosperity.

Tianxia envisions a far more comprehensive “world” system in which mankind can bet-

ter cope with the challenges of globalization. Where international organizations like the United Nations are inherently limited by state sovereignty, *Tianxia* posits a system of world control over common spaces and resources. Objects of international contention like energy, food, water, the environment and weapons of mass destruction would all fall within its purview. So far the world has lacked the unity to solve global problems. *Tianxia* represents the apotheosis of unity.

Alexander Wendt has identified three kinds of cultures in international politics: the Hobbesian worldview, which mainly sees adversarial relationships between states; Lockean culture, which substitutes competition for war; and a Kantian worldview advocating for alliances. None of these are satisfactory in the Chinese view. Admittedly, to apply *Tianxia* in its ancient form is far too visionary. In the end, even the Zhou Dynasty fell, perhaps a victim of its own idealism. And who is to underwrite *Tianxia* – a system that rejects the very notion of a “chosen state”? Though originally a Chinese concept, China itself would seek no more than to be apart of any such system that might spring from it.

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Robert J. Barnett

One China, Many Chinas

When we speak of the “China model” or an ascendant China, which China do we mean? Behind talk of the country's economic might or growing power projection, there is an underlying assumption that these are the extraordinary achievements of a single people, with a national psyche that appears to share certain beliefs, aspirations and limits to its collective tolerance. A fifth or more of the human population is seemingly grouped behind one set of values, so that the claim “the Chinese people feel this or that” now seems at least credible.

This perception of a popular consensus in

China thrills some and worries others. What is significant is the form it has recently assumed: it seems to have emerged largely without coercion from the Chinese government. The “angry youth” movement of March 2008, when thousands of Chinese people rallied to the defense of China’s handling of the Tibetan situation, seemed at first to have done little more than intimidate their critics and boycott French handbags. But the movement’s leaders included people living outside China, free to read and watch whatever they desire.

For the first time since the 1940s a single national Chinese identity is being constructed without reliance on the tools of crude authoritarianism. One could say that the current form of ‘soft’ Chinese authoritarianism is attracting many of those whom it cannot coerce. This suggests that we may be seeing in the China case a major international power achieving its principal objectives without loss to its economic, moral or intellectual capacity, and without introducing democracy.

But this is a fragile bargain. It could unravel in the face of any incident, leading to fragmentation or internal conflict. This vulnerability is partly the result of economic inequities, but also of larger structural fault-lines in the makeup of Chinese nationalism. There are many Chinas, not just one, and some of them may not be willing participants in the claims made on their behalf by a vociferous majority. This is obviously the case with most Tibetans, and almost certainly with Uyghurs and many Inner Mongolians too. It is striking that the nationalist movement on display this March involved millions of Chinese people defending the happiness and rights of the Tibetan people, without any Tibetans in China freely joining their ranks or, apparently, being asked for their opinions.

A similar exclusion might be taking place with ethnic Chinese who are supporters of Taiwanese independence, the disenfranchised in the countryside, the victims of land encroachment and pollution, or losers in the dash for wealth and market share.

Undoubtedly, something seminal has taken place in China behind the talk of resurrected national pride. But it represents an exclusive sector of the nation, one that dominates and speaks for others. It remains an over-centralized project that suppresses or ignores voices at its peripheries, whether in perspective or geographic. Until China is able to produce a form of nationalism that heeds and embraces the visions and aspirations of various peoples and communities within its territory, the nation will remain a nation of many Chinas, and a deeply vulnerable project.

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David Shambaugh

International Schizophrenia

China wrestles with a conflicted international identity – a kind of schizophrenic personality. On the one hand, it aspires to be, and possesses many of the attributes of, a great power. But Beijing seems to lack the confidence to *act* as a great power – particularly in concert with other great powers. Rather, China remains hesitant on the international and regional stage, taking baby steps towards being a confident global leader.

Part of China’s international uncertainty no doubt derives from the leadership’s domestic uncertainties – as the country is beset with multiple pressing challenges associated with an unprecedented modernization process, and a cautious leadership atop a transitional political system. When China’s leaders wake up and go to bed every day, it is events inside – not outside – their borders that preoccupy them.

Another reason for Beijing’s tentativeness likely derives from the Liberal values and norms that underpin most international institutions. Beijing professes it seeks a “democratic international order,” so as to constrain the hegemonic tendencies of the United States, but it does not share the Liberal premises of a democratic international system (although, as



G. John Ikenberry reminds us, China has benefited enormously from that system). It is difficult to be a “responsible stakeholder” (Robert Zoellick) in an international system with which one does not share the operating premises at home and was not “present at the creation” to shape the system in the first place. In some key areas – like nonproliferation and free trade – Beijing has embraced global norms, but on so many others its hesitancy is obvious. China’s continued preference for multipolarism over multilateralism (states over institutions), reflects its deeply ingrained Realism over a nascent Liberalism.

Failure to fully embrace Liberal norms and institutions does not mean that China cannot be a cooperative partner with others on a purely pragmatic case-by-case basis. We see this on North Korea, for example. But it does suggest that China will continue to act with hesitancy on the world stage. Yet, a partially engaged China is far better than a disengaged China. Selective multilateralism is better than the alternatives.

As China’s international persona remains a work-in-progress, foreigners must be aware of the diverse and dynamic domestic discourse

taking place within the international relations community in China, and should seek to strengthen and work with the multilateralist and Liberal voices.

David Shambaugh is a professor at George Washington University.

June Teufel Dreyer

The Next Superpower?

Unquestionably, China has arrived as a great power. Its large landmass and huge population would make it an important player in global affairs under any circumstances. However, power is measured in terms of military and economic clout as well, and on both criteria China’s progress over the past thirty years has been breathtakingly swift. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is the world’s third largest trading power and holder of its largest foreign exchange reserves. The Chinese economy is expected to grow by double-digit numbers again in 2008.

Militarily, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is the world’s largest, with a virtually unlimited supply of reserve manpower. Thanks to defense budgets that have expanded at even

Yang Moyin

Speak your Mind



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faster rates than economic growth rates, the PLA is receiving more technologically advanced weapons each year. Though not yet at the level of the Japanese military, the PLA does not face the constitutional constraints on exercising force that the Japanese do, and is therefore arguably Asia's most potent military.

Advancing to the next level, that of a superpower, will prove more difficult. Domestically, upward pressure on wages has persuaded many companies to relocate their factories to countries with lower labor costs. Rising prices of raw materials, especially energy and the appreciating value of the yuan may result in a substantial slowdown. The American recession is likely to shrink exports to the United States. The price of basic foodstuffs, such as rice and soybeans, has also risen dramatically. Meanwhile, the one-child policy notwithstanding, the population continues to grow,

necessitating the creation of more jobs for new entrants to the employment market. Like Alice in Wonderland, China must run faster just to stay even.

Militarily, the costs of moving further up the technology chain into state-of-the-art weapons will require a quantum leap in investment in research and development. Since the PRC faces no external enemy likely to invade, however, its increasingly assertive citizenry may question the wisdom of this, given it's the lacunae in basic social services as well as the continued deterioration of the environment. Angry minorities have also pressed their claims more forcefully, as have those improperly deprived of their land.

There is pushback abroad as well against perceived domination by the PRC. Recent protests by several African states against Beijing's desire to ship arms to the corrupt Zimbabwe

regime or South Korea's expulsion of Chinese students engaged in violent behavior during the passage of the Olympic torch, and the willingness to protest the PRC's behavior in Tibet and Sudan are evidence of this. China's image as a friendly giant who wants nothing more than trade and mutual prosperity is being tarnished.

China will likely come to be viewed as what it is: just another imperialist power. Its ambiguous capability but apparent motivation to rise to superpower status will ultimately also be conditioned by the attitude of United States. But the resolve of future U.S. presidents to follow George W. Bush's vow that America will not allow another power to become strong enough to challenge it remains to be seen.

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Pan Zhenqiang

Positioning

For all its impressive economic progress in the past several decades, there are still many uncertainties in China's future development. There is room for much confidence but China must also squarely face its deficiencies, challenges as well as threats.

China is rising in influence. Yet, in terms of both hard and soft power, the gap with Western powers is still immense and clear to see for anyone who wishes to look. Let us not forget that China remains a developing country, in a preliminary stage of socialist development, and still divided as well. In addition, China is yet to be fully admitted by an international community dominated by the West despite China's enormous effort to integrate. Within the international strategic realm, China is and will continue to be greatly constrained. China's ability to truly take independent action abroad whether in economic, security or military terms is actually very low.

Looking down the road, the actual, primary "threat" to China comes from within. Put another way, China's future depends on whether

it can grasp the favorable opportunities both at home and abroad and use them to improve ourselves and further our goals of development. This will be a long and complicated process. Chinese people must steel themselves for the long haul. The greatest risk of undermining this long-term process lies, in fact, in ourselves if we are too rash.

Thus, China must be on guard against being rash by all means. China once made outstanding contributions to world civilization. But, in modern times, it has been bullied by foreign powers, and is still to some degree being bullied. That seems to have led many of us to have an overzealous sentiment to change this state of affairs, eager to once again be a contributor to world peace and development. Since the founding of the new Republic in 1949, China has become victim of such a mentality on many occasions, saying and doing excessive things, ending up in debacles. These bitter lessons must not be forgotten. If it can do so, there is great hope for China.

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Dan Blumenthal

It's not "Just" the Economy Stupid

China's ascendance is one of the great economic stories of the last few decades. The country's leaders and its enterprising people have managed to bring millions out of poverty – a material and moral accomplishment that is the envy of poor countries the world over. Were China's leaders only focused on a better material life for their citizens, America should stand back, enjoy the cheap products coming from China, applaud a tremendous story of successful economic development, and, consistent with American values, hope for greater political liberalization.

But clearly China is after more. When every major power in the world was slashing its defense spending in the 1990s, China was doing the opposite. Over the past decade, it has continued its military build-up at a pace no one

Xue Jiye
Worldview



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predicted. The result: a combination of new Chinese capabilities *and* new ambitions. To wit, China has built a massive new naval base on Hainan island, indicating the desire for a navy that can contest the maritime dominance of the United States and its allies. It has added scores of new submarines to its fleet and commissioned several new classes of destroyers, armed with the world's most lethal, ship-killing cruise missiles. And by the decade's end it could have up to five nuclear subs armed with nuclear tipped ballistic missiles capable of hitting most of the United States. The neighbors are noticing. India is wondering how nuclear subs able to access the Indian Ocean are relevant to "detering Taiwan's independence," the stated driver of China's naval modernization.

The American security umbrella has allowed the region to focus on economic growth rather than military competition. The results speak for themselves: Asia is fast becoming the center of global economic growth. But China's military build-up is sparking a military competition in Asia that could distract the region

from its remarkable transformation. If China succeeds in diminishing American influence, who will keep the regional peace? Who will respond to humanitarian catastrophes (e.g. the Tsunami), who will help defeat terrorists (e.g. in the Philippines), who will stem proliferation (e.g. from North Korea)? Most of the region is not betting that China will attend to the region's well-being, which is why they prefer the oftentimes irritating leadership of America to being left to the tender mercies of the Chinese Communist Party.

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Shi Yinhong
Value-Added

A *peaceful* rise overwhelmingly relies on "soft power," broadly achieved by the tools of foreign trade, the economy, diplomacy, culture and even emigration. All are characterized by nonviolence, progressive accumulation, extensive permeability and so-called "win-win" effects. These are generally irresistible forces, and incur the least resistance. China's rise has been a peaceful rise.

The destination? A sustainable world power. China's peaceful rise is the building of the foundation for changing the nature of world politics. The utility of war as an instrument for achieving national interests is in rapid decline. The paradigm for conducting international relations is gradually transforming from territorial-military security competition to economic and soft-power influence. A state's performance in economic, cultural, and diplomatic terms is superceding military performance. Within this context, China's status as a global "trading state" could have enormous consequences for becoming a world power.

But China's current situation in soft power terms is far from sanguine. Why? Because this issue goes to the heart of the fundamental *value* requirement for a sustainable rise of China. The modern transnational set of values can be summarized as "economic growth," "liberty,"

“social justice,” and the newly born “environment protection.” The primary achievement China has made mainly falls within the category of economic growth. And China’s success in this regard has made an historic contribution to liberty through prosperity around the world. But this *value* itself is not really one of her own creation, while its success has been at the expense of other *values* such as “social justice” and “environment protection.”

China has firm confidence in the growth of her national strength through economic development and contributing to a shift in the world’s modus operandi of power relations. But it is still difficult to foretell what distinctly new *value* China will contribute to the nations of the world. The Chinese people comprehend that China must successfully meet this challenge if she is to realize her greatest aspirations and take her rightful place amongst the great nations of the world.

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Robert S. Ross

The Challenge of Nationalism

Rising nations develop greater military and economic powers which enable them to reshape the international order to improve their security. This is always a difficult process. The demands of a rising power for greater security necessarily challenge the security of the status quo power. Thus, U.S.-China competition and tension are assured. Nonetheless, war is not inevitable. The challenge for policy-makers is thus to preserve U.S.-China peace.

China’s ascendance has already reshaped the East Asian order. America’s inability to turn back North Korean development of nuclear weapons, South Korean opposition to U.S. coercive diplomacy against North Korea, and to greater U.S.-South Korean defense cooperation reflect the rise in Chinese influence throughout the Korean peninsula. Taiwan’s recent election of a leader who supports robust economic and cultural cooperation with Chi-

na and rejects Taiwan independence reflects Taiwan’s acknowledgement of Chinese power and the imperative of cross-Strait cooperation. Both Taiwan and South Korea understand that with the rise of Chinese power the American military can no longer protect them from the cost of war and that their security increasingly relies on cooperation with Chinese interests.

The United States is reconciled to the rise of China on the Korean Peninsula and across the Taiwan Strait. Since 1950, U.S. policy toward the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan conflict has focused on “peaceful resolution.” For the United States, the process was more important than the outcome. Because China has persuaded South Korea and Taiwan to accommodate China while expanding cooperative relations, the United States can reduce its military presence on the East Asian mainland and diminish the likelihood of great power war at no cost to U.S. security. East Asia’s Cold War great powers conflicts are finally ending.

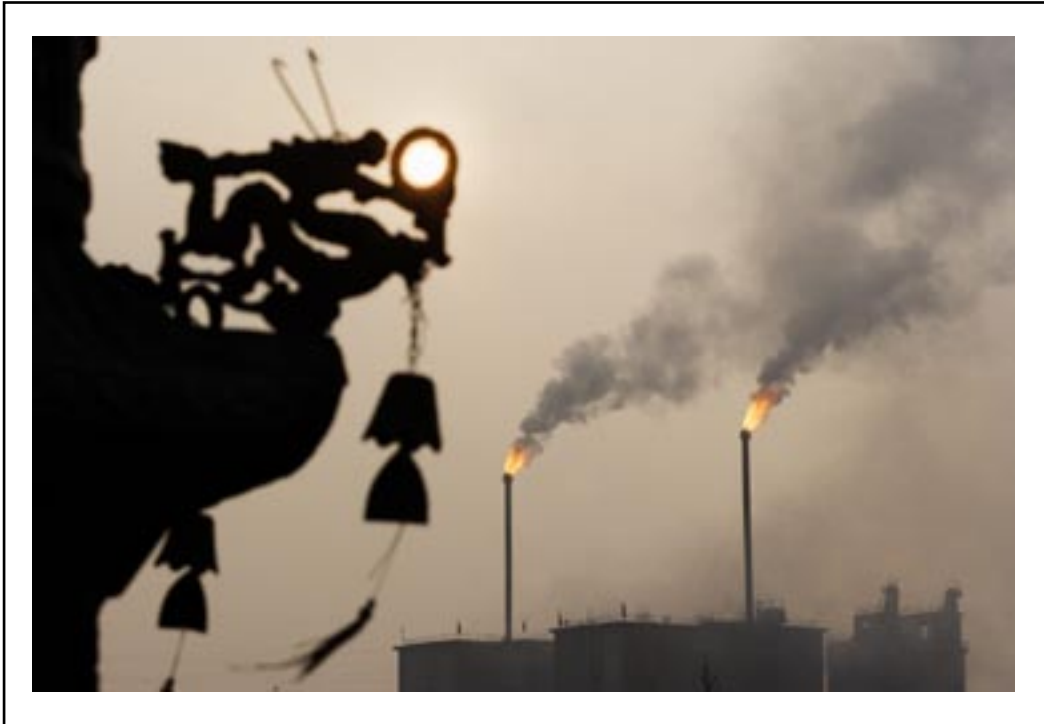
With America’s determined retrenchment from the East Asian mainland to maritime East Asia, the East China Sea and the South

Wang Xiaojin

Redeemed



Wang Xiaojin is a freelance artist.



China Sea are like “moats” separating U.S. and Chinese forces, moderating great power conflict. However, as China’s rise continues, Beijing may pursue naval power that will challenge the American presence in maritime East Asia. Unlike the U.S. response to the growth of Chinese influence on mainland East Asia, it will be difficult for the United States to accommodate this stage of China’s rise. Since World War II, Washington has considered its strategic relationships with Japan and the Southeast Asian countries vital to the regional balance of power. In anticipation of China’s rise, since the mid-1990s the United States has significantly expanded its military deployments and alliance relationships throughout maritime East Asia. In this respect, Sino-American security competition in East Asia will persist.

The course of Chinese nationalism is likely to be a key factor in determining the outcome of that competition. Throughout history nationalism has propelled rising powers to pursue grandiose goals at an inordinate expense to both the nation and the international community. Should China’s leadership be similarly

swayed by nationalistic fervor and seek to bolster its domestic legitimacy through maritime expansion, the United States will resist forceful change of the regional order. In these circumstances, although the United States can easily maintain maritime supremacy, heightened U.S.-China political and military tension is likely. Thus far, the rise of China has been easy, but the greatest challenge may be just beginning.

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Kenneth Lieberthal *Unintended Consequences*

One of the most consequential dimensions of China’s path to development is its impact on global climate change. Both the scale of what is transpiring and the momentum behind its continuation hold stark implications.

In 2006-07 China added power generating capacity equal to those of the entire German or British power systems. But for China, coal

is necessarily by far the major source of power. The lack of available water means that most of that coal is burned unwashed. Since most plants recently built have an expected lifetime of 30-40 years – with the financing structured on that basis – they are not going to be written off soon out of concerns for global climate change.

Each year China adds 2 billion square meters to its building stock – 50 percent of the global total. This astonishing figure reflects rapid urbanization, bringing roughly 15 million people a year to China's burgeoning cities, which is expected to continue on a similar scale until about 2030. Most new buildings, though, are very energy-inefficient, even as China's demand for cement and steel materials has become the largest in the world. China has also become the world's second largest automotive market trailing only the United States.

China has entered a highly resource-intensive phase of development. Heavy industry plays a large role in China's economy, and the PRC's position in the international economy is encouraging additional energy and resource-intensive investment.

In short, China has recently become the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, and the forces propelling that trend are neither short term nor easily subject to policy-based changes. Rather, the momentum behind the China's growth in recent years is fundamental, resting on such elemental drivers as the largest-scale movement of people from rural to urban areas in human history.

The implications for China's future greenhouse gas emissions are grave. Beijing now recognizes that China will suffer enormous consequences from climate change, and it is reacting vigorously. But altering this baseline trajectory will take major international cooperation – including with the United States. Unfortunately, climate change will likely become the most consequential global issue growing out of China's enormous developmental success.

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Zha Daojiong *Getting Along*

As recent as twenty years ago, debates raged in China about the wisest path to take: reject or embrace all things Western. Now, the national psyche has discernibly calmed down. Experience, particularly that garnered over the past thirty years, has taught us that most of the problems *and* solutions China faces are its own by nature and require its own resources to address them. This should be seen as a source of internal strength and ought to reassure others about the benign nature of Chinese behaviors in Asia and beyond.

Among the many domestic challenges facing Chinese society, perhaps the most profound is a shortage of moral differentiation between “getting ahead” and “getting along.” A survival instinct remains at play in Chinese society. When this is the dominant paradigm for human interaction, there cannot be real harmony in society. Rather *trust*, as social capital, is critical to achieving this. But this social quality is lacking and, in many instances, critically so. Further reform of China's public institutions must contribute to an individual's sense of ease in relating to others in the society.

The second agenda is to build the people's relationship with their environment. The Chinese government has correctly identified harmony between people and nature to be a key goal of public policy. For that harmony to emerge, however, people must be prepared to moderate their desires for individual wealth. The gap between Chinese and Western lifestyle, whether true or imagined, has served as a motivating factor for China to succeed. But, China is not the West. China's ecological potential is too limited to entertain the possibility of achieving a lifestyle comparable to that in North America or Western Europe.

Having citizens of China “get along” with those of other nations is another important task. Through tourism, trade, event hosting, the internet and many other channels of communication, interaction between citizens of China and those of other countries is growing



exponentially. Out of this exchange emerges conflicting versions of China, its interests and how they relate to those of other nations. The government can no longer be the only credible spokesman. China's foreign policy agencies have the more challenging task of reflecting these complexities when projecting interests of the country to the rest of the world.

Numerous challenges continue to confront China. The core of public policy, however, must be aimed at addressing endogenous sources of growth and stability.

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John Hamre

Tail of the Ox or Head of the Rooster

Academic debates rage in the United States all the time, but they rarely matter in policy life. It is different in China. An authoritarian hierarchical government structure has trouble with new ideas. Lower level bureaucrats rarely want to challenge official orthodoxy. In order to foster idea development in China, the leadership has encouraged a vibrant debate in academic circles which intersect in interesting

ways with policy circles.

The current debate centers on the question of China's future on the world stage. Deng Xiaoping once admonished China's future rulers to avoid the lead role, even as China's power grew. But China is feeling very energetic these days, pumped up by the Beijing Olympics and the wave of national pride that will crest with this summer's Games. Suddenly the question has become: Is China now a world leader? Everyone is flocking to their doors telling them that they are. If so, what is their role in the world?

Robert Zoellick famously called on China to become a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system. The Chinese at first were confused by the speech. It contained positive and negative elements in their judgment. After considerable internal debate they concluded that it was a genuine offer by the Bush Administration to accept the inevitability of China's rise and make room on the world stage for this newly risen power.

China continues to highlight its prevailing poverty and weakness, yet its confidence in the future is strong and growing. In short, they are

convinced of the inevitability of Chinese power. What to make of this power is still, however, a matter of substantial debate in circles very close to the heart of that system.

So, as a Chinese scholar recently asked, is China going to be “the tail of the ox,” or “the head of the rooster?” On its road to global power status, will China join a game where the rules have largely been fixed by the United States, Japan, and the European powers? If so, China would only be “the tail of the ox.” Alternatively, China can seek a measured path of leadership in Asia and among lesser-developed nations – an established leader and thus “the head of the rooster.”

Americans have a hard time understanding the Chinese reaction to the riots in Tibet. In America and Europe, the Tibetan people are an oppressed minority seeking political breathing room. In the opinion of Chinese people and their government alike, the Tibetans have never had such good lives, and it is only a small band of separatists causing hate and discontent. The Chinese are brilliant at engendering an overwhelming consensus on matters like this.

This was to be expected, but more surprising is how the Tibet events have played in China's academic debates. The dominant sentiment is that the Western powers – led by America and Europe – will use events like Tibet to smack down China and deny its' standing on the international stage. The Tibet crisis has convinced many of these academics that the West is not ready to let China play a lead international role. Thus, Chinese academics and policy leaders are concluding it is better for China to be “the head of the rooster” than “the tail of the ox” for the time being.

This means that China will stay on the path of its current trajectory, continuing to strengthen its national powers by building up and transforming its economy. China will pursue a non-confrontational posture with the United States and the West. But China also will work aggressively to become the dominant leader in Asia and an inspirational leader in Af-

rica and South America.

Chinese leaders frequently harken back to Deng Xiaoping's famous statement that it will take 100 years to build a powerful China. But, Deng's “starting point for the 100 years was Deng's reforms in 1978. By this calendar, China would not become a world power for 70 more years. Now, the academics are saying the 100-year clock began with the Communist victory over the KMT in 1949. Accordingly, Chinese academics (and political leaders) are confident they have moved up the clock to superpower status by 30 years.

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Xiang Lanxin

Not in the West's Image

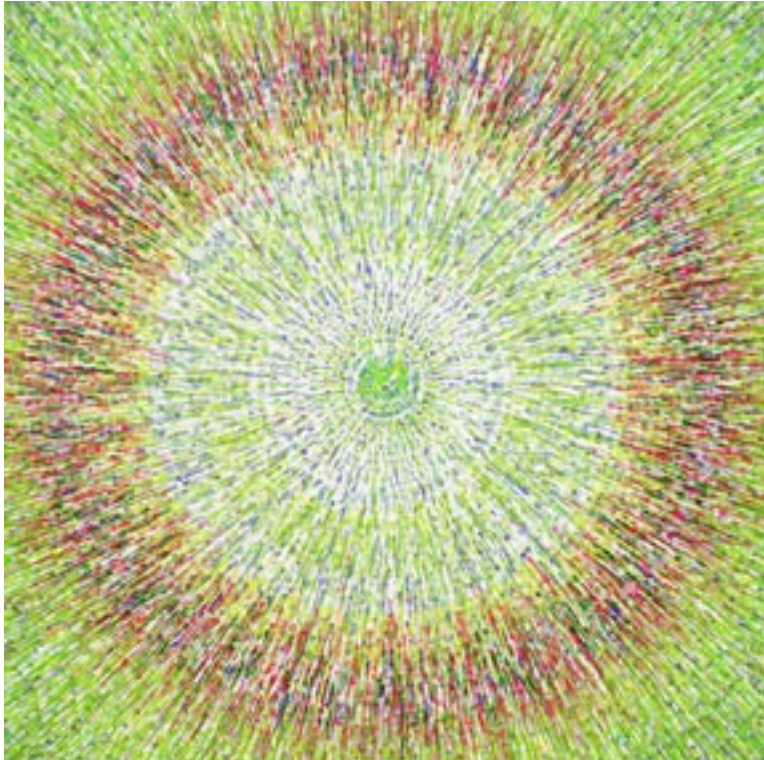
One must understand that China has never offered the world a normative model in the past and will never do so in the future. Chinese tradition stresses a style of governance that is contingent on a historical context. A model would mean a value system that clamours for universal status, but China has never believed in a “universal” principle of any kind. In fact, the word “universalism” cannot even be translated accurately into the Chinese language.

Western democracy in its post-Enlightenment form, while a pseudo-secular system, is still deeply rooted in Christian theology. The United States today holds the last defensive line of a political ideology buttressed by a theology that is generally characterized by a metaphysical interpretation of human history; that human beings have a design and purpose (teleology); and that man has a soul and in death it has a final destiny (eschatological faith). China has none of the above, notwithstanding the debate over whether Confucianism or Daoism is a “religion.”

In other words, the West believes democracy to be the preordained future for all nations. But that is a value judgment based on universalism. On the contrary, traditional Chinese political logic has remained the dominant force

Meng Luding

Yuan Rate



Meng Luding is a painter and professor and has a studio in Beijing.

in China. No dynasty could escape its embrace and the communist party will be no different. According to tradition, politics should be seen like the relationship between *water* and a *boat* where the “water” represents the people, and the “boat” the government. Water can allow the boat to float but can also overturn it. Thus, real political legitimacy in China is not *democratic legitimacy*, but *deeds legitimacy* – based on actual performance of the leadership. Most Western observers have missed this point.

A second issue with regard to a China model rests on the premise that China’s sudden rise as an economic superpower. Things such as the massive trade surpluses with the rest of the world or the embrace of free markets and globalization will change the nature of the international system. But this overlooks the fact that the Chinese have been there before. As China sees it, this is not a *rise*, but rather its

restoration to its historical position of global influence.

In fact, today’s restoration constitutes China’s third great encounter with the West, following the Jesuit missions of the 16th century and the Opium Wars of the 1800s. The current encounter – this time between equals – will produce much more than economic competition with the United States. As China’s economic strength grows, no one, not even the Chinese, can prevent China’s influence from spreading into politics, values and ideology. It is in those arenas that conflicts with the United States can arise, and unfortunately, it is precisely in those areas that misunderstandings between the two nations run rampant.

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