

Pacific Asia in the Twenty-First Century World Order

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At the dawn of the twenty-first century, what can we reasonably expect as a new world order that may shape the direction of world affairs and set the agenda for the community of nations? How does Asia fit in the picture within this global order?

In my discussion here, I will focus on the role that Pacific Asia, especially China, is likely to play in the twenty-first century and its significance for the world at large.¹

The New World Order at a Glimpse

In a nutshell, the new century will witness the combined real or potential challenge from (1) the rampaging forces of environmental degradation, and (2) the ravaging effects of globalization. On top of the world community's agenda, this combined challenge will place *comprehensive security*, a catch all phrase for the extension of traditional national-defense concerns (or military security) to other fronts, namely, economic security, environmental security, and human security.

Human security is a shorthand label for the sanctity of life and well-being of ordinary people who are often victimized in their own country because of both structural and ex-structural threats. *Structural threats* are tied to the inequities found within a society, and most of which can be traced to the ineptitude or truculence of

the government. Those sources of human insecurity include income inequality, illiteracy, and a shortage of food, clean-water, and housing. Although some or all of these problems are found in many places, it took the tragedies of Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo to drive home the salience of human security. In Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, just as in Pol Pot's Cambodia and elsewhere, the government relentlessly committed genocidal crimes against its own nationals.

Ex-structural threats to human security, on the other hand, include acts of terrorism committed by external forces of which bin Laden's al Qaeda troops are the most perverse example. Another threat to human security arising largely, though not exclusively, from external sources is that of infectious disease, as typified by the AIDS epidemic.

The environmental challenge and the flip side of globalization are strange bedfellows that may find a common cause. A concrete example of this was the demonstrations that first took place in Seattle outside the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in November 1999 and were later repeated elsewhere. These massive demonstrations, staged by an odd coalition of labor movements, environmental groups, and social-rights advocates, offered a brutal reminder of the extent of their disgruntlement. Their wrath was aimed at the international economic order that has been in place since the end of World War II. Their collective demands included building labor rights, increasing environmental protection, and incorporating social standards into trade accords and the protocols of international financial institutions. Those demands provided a wake-up call for all (Mazur 2000). It is time for the rich and transnational corporate interests heed to the yearnings of the poor, the downtrodden, and the struggling multitudes who live in a threatened ecosystem called Planet Earth.

In view of this development, it will not be far-fetched to suggest that the call for greater socioeconomic equality and for reducing the disparities between rich and poor nations will most probably be the world's new guiding precept for the twenty-first century. I have called this new systemic value one of *social justice*.

Not long ago, the World Bank launched a study, the Voice of the Poor, which found that the deepening crisis of world poverty presented what James C. Wolfenson (2000), the president of the World Bank Group, calls a "challenge of inclusion" (6). "Poverty," according to the study, "is much more than a matter of income alone. The poor seek a sense of well-being which is peace of mind; it is good health, community, and safety" (7). As Wolfenson put it, "the voices of the poor will be louder, but will they be heard?" (8). As we shall see, they will strive to make their voices heard, to undo the international social Darwinism that has dominated the world since Westphalia. And indeed there are signs that their voices are increasingly being heard.

The world's richest nations took a constructive and reassuring step forward when they reached an agreement, at the turn of the new century (in December 2000), to forgive loans to twenty-two of the world's poorest nations for that year.

The richest nations, including the United States, Japan, and the European and other industrial countries, acted in fulfillment of a promise to accelerate debt relief and to give a token of the West's unprecedented prosperity to the world's poor nations.² The amount forgiven, \$20 billion, was small compared with the estimated value, which would be \$125 billion if the debt was to be paid off before year's end. But, it offers encouraging signs of a shared conviction that, to loosely paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, we cannot have half the world enjoying lush prosperity and the other half hopelessly impoverished. In a small way, the gesture was an answer to the demands for social justice in the world.

Potential Perils of the Yearnings for Social Justice

Although social justice seems to have become an appealing new systemic value, it also carries grave potential perils. We may recall how the preceding systemic value—that of self-determination—encouraged decolonization in the second half of the twentieth century. Under the banner of self-determination, Western colonial empires, some built over several centuries, collapsed like the walls of Jericho. More than eighty former Western colonies or dependencies had gained independence by 1990. In addition the sweep of self-determination eventually brought down the Soviet empire, and it fueled the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia.

Thus, we should not rule out the possibility that the new systemic value of social justice might similarly influence world affairs in the new century. It might bring on the coalescence of two overlapping genres of conflict in the world: That between the less-developed countries (the South) and the rich and more industrialized nations (the North), and that between certain non-Western nations (e.g., in Asia), including many with highly successful economies, and the West, cutting across the levels of development. (If the ideal of greater social justice should inspire wider support for collective decision-making, in contrast to the unilateral whims of a hegemon, then we should be prepared to accept dissensions within the Atlantic alliance itself, for which the old mode of decision making under U.S. hegemonic leadership may prove anachronistic and disconcerting, as we shall see.)

As a forerunner of conflicts of the first genre, let me cite the battle drawn, since the 1980s, in the United Nations General Assembly in which countries of the South have launched a "right to development" crusade. At the strategic level, the South identifies its past economic subjugation by the predatory West, as well as the unjust distribution of wealth in the postcolonial stage, as the sources of its continuing misery.³

Tactically, the South insists that all human rights are "indivisible" and defines development as an "inalienable human right" of nations.⁴ With this linkage, the nations of the South deftly placed their claims to the right of national development on a par with the West's concerns for individual rights, such as the right to

liberty and security of person. The South's "alternative" approach to human rights,⁵ in effect, redirects the limelight from the world's fight for human rights to the poor nations' claim that the West has a responsibility to help them realize their right to development. And it equates "empowerment of the poor" with democratization (UNDP 1998). This crusade by the South nations is most likely to continue through the twenty-first century and will probably weigh as heavily on world affairs as did the drive of decolonization during 1960 through 1990.

Whereas the South's crusade was limited to the economically underdeveloped nations—generally in Africa, with some in Latin America and elsewhere—the more affluent Asian bloc of nations stood up in a different challenge to the West (read the United States), which falls under the second genre of conflict cited before. For example, at an international meeting in Bangkok in 1993, all forty-nine Asian countries, including the most economically successful, gathered to air their collective grievances against the West (i.e., the United States) for imposing its own standards of human rights on the non-Western world and for its "double standards" for human rights at home and abroad (see Hsiung 1997). The Bangkok Declaration, issued at the end of the conference, stressed "the universality, objectivity, and *non-selectivity* of all human rights" (Art. 7, emphasis added).⁶

The declaration recalls the alternative approach of the nations of the South, although they believe that their self-proclaimed economic deprivation by the West outweighs the human rights issue per se. One common link between the two genres is a common yearning for social justice and the unfulfilled "revolution of rising expectations" that it has generated.

If the potential common ground between the Asian nations and the South might be expected, the growing convergence of expectations between Pacific Asia and European nations was quite surprising. Starting in 1996, members of the European Union and Pacific Asia have met at two year intervals, first in Thailand (1996), next in London (1998), and most recently in Seoul (2000). The series of meetings, known as Asem, was prompted by a pledge to forge a "strong partnership." It turned out that Asem's "mutual respect" motto meant noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries, which was a veiled criticism of U.S. policy.⁷

Joint undertakings that spun out of Asem include an Asia-Europe university program and a network integrating a trans-Asian railway with the trans-European railway. Other measures include the creation of a permanent Asia-Europe Foundation in Singapore and of an Asia-Europe Environmental Technology Center in Thailand. A document of the European Commission even spoke of increased cooperation on "soft security" issues as a priority item in the Asem process.⁸

The Asem move bespeaks a powerful centrifugal force wrenching Europe away from the United States toward Asia, breaking the traditional ties linking the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Not only is Europe moving away from a long tradition of partnership with the United States, but the trend has progressed even to a point of abandonment. In May 2001, the European members on the U.N. Eco-

conomic and Social Council voted the United States out of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.⁹ This vote was sacrilegious, as the United States had been on the commission since its inception and had nurtured it with the caring hands of Eleanor Roosevelt in 1946.

The incident should be a wake-up call for the United States, because its European allies are increasingly turned off by Washington's ever-worsening reliance on unilateralism in foreign affairs. The single-handed move by President George W. Bush, shortly after he came to office in 2000, to take the United States out of the 1998 Kyoto Protocol, for instance, has shocked and alienated European allies. In addition, Bush's move to kill the 1972 ABM treaty and, despite a chorus of dissent, to initiate a destabilizing national missile defense (NMD) program, casts America's unilateralism into bolder relief.

The bottom line is that, however woefully, the twenty-first century begins with a global environment in which Washington finds itself having to face not only the convergence of African and Asian grievances, but worse still, the drift of an alienated Europe away from the United States toward ever-closer partnership with Pacific Asia.

The Mythology of Unipolarity and Multipolarity

I now turn to the next crucial ingredient in the new world order, namely, the power figuration in our Westphalian system during the twenty-first century, or the distribution of power across the system's units (states).

The senior President Bush, at the time of Desert Storm (1991), mentioned the idea of a new world order that would prevail in the post-Cold War world. He believed that it would be dominated by the United States as the sole surviving superpower. On this point, he could count on the support of many academics, including Samuel Huntington (1999), who likewise thought that the new world order would be a unipolar one led by the United States. Other academics (e.g., John Mearsheimer and Robert Jervis), by contrast, believed that multipolarity would prevail. Viewed in hindsight, however, either epithet seems premature.

As Hans Binnendijk (1999), editor in chief of *Strategic Forum*, suggested, we may seek guidance from history for an answer. After identifying and defining the five previous international systems—starting from 1713 (the Treaty of Utrecht) through the Cold War between two superpowers—he found that each of the previous five systems¹⁰ had a common life cycle: There was a tendency for fluidity and initial multipolarity to turn into rigidity and bipolarity. Bipolarity would, in turn, result in large-scale conflict of a Cold War genre, and then the demise of the existing system would start the cycle all over again.

In view of this tendency of multipolarity (following a brief unipolar period) to move toward bipolarity, as was found in all previous systems, Binnendijk concluded that the next or sixth system will also be bipolar. Although he cites Russian

Prime Minister Primakov as having once conceived of a loose Russian-Chinese-Indian alliance directed against Western dominance, Binnendijk seems to think that a Russian-Chinese alliance would be a more real possibility.

Even if we assume we that bipolarity is likely to emerge in the twenty-first century, however, how can we be sure which two opposing great powers (or power centers) will be dominant? And when will this new bipolar system emerge?

If Binnendijk's projection from history is bold, the assessment of a group of adherents to the Organski power transition theory is even bolder. In a joint study (Tammen et al. 2000), they applied the theory developed by their mentor, the late University of Michigan professor, A. F. K. Organski, to the next century, after first testing it against developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After scanning massive amounts of data on population, productivity (GDP growth rates), and political capacity, the Organskiite group concluded: "China has the demographic, economic, and political potential to catch and overtake the United States, first in the size of its economy and then in power" (154). Thus, this view saw not only an intensifying US-China rivalry (a transient bipolarity?) but also the eventual rise of China as a challenger, ultimately overtaking the United States to become the next superpower by midcentury, possibly after a hegemonic war.¹¹

A Pax Sinica?

Indeed, this scenario is mind-boggling! Skeptics may legitimately raise doubts about the reliability of the data that the Organskiite group used because much of it—including the cited studies by the World Bank (1997)—seems to predate the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998. However, it is a sobering reminder that in most previous rosy forecasts, a common assumption was that China's GDP would need to maintain only a minimal 4–4.5 percent annual growth. Staffan Linder (1986), for instance, based his forecast on a Chinese growth rate of only 4 percent, from 1985 through 2000. Angus Maddison (1998), working on the basis of an estimated 4.5 percent annual growth, projected that China will continue to be an economic magnet in that it will position the Asian region to strongly influence world economic activity by the year 2025, with 55 to 60 percent of the world's income. Despite the Asian financial crisis and its aftermath, compounded by a global recession and a sluggish U.S. economy since then, China has been able to maintain a hefty 7–8 percent annual growth rate.

Furthermore, the earlier, pre-1997 projections did not take into account the effects of China's accession to the WTO. According to the estimates of the China Business Council (2000), a trade group in Washington, D.C., China's WTO accession and related growth in foreign direct investment (FDI) will add about 0.45 percent to Chinese annual GDP growth in the first five years (2002 through 2006). Despite the WTO entry's negative impact, especially on Chinese state-owned enterprises, the general consensus is that over the long haul the gains for China

will outweigh the losses. One study even predicts that Chinese exports will shoot up by 61.5 percent during the first five years, using 1995 constant dollars as the basis of calculation.¹²

Hence, the wild-sounding projections cited above seem to be unassailable in retrospect, unaffected by the temporary deflections caused by the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998. If anything, the record of China’s performance during and since the crisis, plus the estimated effects of the Chinese entry into the WTO, will only make a stronger case for its projected potential. That being the case, the challenge is: How is one to visualize a world in which China is the new dominant power, as the Organskiite group has projected?

Stating the obvious, in the run-up to China’s dominance, the competition between the United States and China will be nasty, brutish, and long—unless of course both powers can find a way to remove the causes of their contentious relationship, not the least of which is the Taiwan issue (cf. McNamara and Blight 2001). In the following section, I will skip what is likely to transpire in the drawn-out interlude known to the Organski transition theory as a *rear-end collision*, when the number-two power overtakes the number one power. Instead, I will speculate on the consequences of the situation suggested by the Organskiite group.

What Lies Ahead

I do not doubt that the prospect of a *Pax Sinica* is a haunting specter for many people concerned about the twenty-first century world order. Plenty of analysts have been mulling over the “China threats” and the potential “challenges of China.”¹³ However, I doubt how many analysts, even futurologists, have thought through what the world is going to be like under a *Pax Sinica*. Will it be more, or less, stable than it would be under *Pax Americana*, for example? Will it be more, or less, hierarchical? Ignoring such domestic issues as democracy and human rights, will it be more, or less, consistent with the demands of social justice on the international plane? Indeed, in view of the conventional wisdom that power corrupts, will this hold true in the Chinese case come 2050?

I do not profess to have a definitive answer. Surely, it would be popular to paint a dismal picture rather than a not-so-dismal one. And as is true with the telling of ghost stories, many in the audience would probably prefer to hear that the ghost is spooky, tricky, and ferocious, instead of being not quite so bad after all, despite its reputation. Nevertheless, in the next section, I would like to address a number of points that are often overlooked and also raise a question as to the possibility of an alternative outcome to the usual worst-case prophecy that China-bashers are espousing.

To put things in perspective, it is instructive to keep in mind that the prospective rise of China—as heralded by a growing number of writers from Linder (1986) to Kristof and WuDunn (2000)—does not make China a new upstart. I

shall repeat: not a first-time upstart, because it is not. It will not put China in the same ranks as

- England after the Industrial Revolution (eighteenth century),
- France after the French Revolution,
- Japan after the Meiji Reform,
- Germany following Bismarckian unification and acquisition of superior modern military technology,
- the Soviet Union under Stalin, or even
- the United States after winning World War II.

In each of those cases, the upstart spent its energy on overseas expansion or pursuit of hegemony. England used its newfound power from the Industrial Revolution to build a colonial empire on which the sun would never set. Postrevolution France was embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars. Likewise, riding on the crest of industrial success, post-Meiji Japan was pushed into overseas aggression in Asia and conflict with the United States after Pearl Harbor. Post-Bismarckian Germany, which had mastered modern technology in warfare, brought the two most ferocious wars known to humankind. The Stalinist Soviet Union, rising on the crest of an informal empire built during wartime, provoked the onset of the Cold War. And the United States, after winning World War II, reversed its erstwhile isolationism into an unchecked internationalism to become the world's policeman.

China, if its predicted resurgence comes true, will be categorically different. It is not a first-time upstart. As a vast "globalist" literature (see, for example, Frank 1998, Maddison 1995, and Maddison 2001) reminds us, China had dominated the world economy for at least one thousand years before the West's rise after 1500. It was not until after Columbus's discovery of America that Europeans used the silver extracted from their American colonies to buy their entry into an already flourishing and expanding Asian market (Frank 1998, 52–130). During the fourteenth through the mid-seventeenth centuries (the Ming Dynasty), China's GNP was 28–30 percent of the world's total output. By 1800, China did even better, accounting for 33 percent of world manufacturing output (cf. a not-so-friendly source, Segal 1999, 25). Even the lower figure during the Ming Dynasty (28–30 percent) already exceeded by far the U.S. share of the global GNP at the turn of the twenty-first century, when America is the world's reigning superpower. China's behavior during the long historical period when its economy topped the world provides ample evidence for how a re-emergent China is most likely to behave.

During 1405 through 1433, China, in a departure from its agrarian earth-bound tradition, began a series of seven seafaring expeditions. The first expedition, in 1405, preceded Columbus's discovery of the New World by eighty-seven years. In the largest expedition, Zheng He (Cheng Ho), who led all seven ventures, had 30,000 sailors and 400 ships under his command.

The group sailed from southern China, through Southeast Asia, to reach as far as today's Persian Gulf and East Africa. A British historian, Gavin Menzies even found evidence that Chinese explorers who first discovered the Americas in 1420, seventy-two years before Columbus did.¹⁴ But contrary to expectations and in stark contrast to Western maritime expansion, Zheng He and his men did not establish a single colony overseas; they did not even lay claim to any piece of the territories they visited, flaunting discovery.

What does this tell us about Chinese behavior when the country wielded superior power vis-à-vis other peoples and lands? First, it clearly demonstrates that the Chinese were not in a habit of grabbing other people's land or colonizing others for their own gains. It is important to keep in mind that all this happened at a time when they were not weak, but when they had the world's largest economy and the power that came with it.

Second, the reasons behind China's noncolonizing tendencies may have come from two sources, one economic and one cultural. The economic reason was that China's traditional agrarian economy, supported by a vast subcontinental landmass and an extensive web of navigable rivers and waterways, was more than self-sufficient. It had no need for overseas markets or material resources. The cultural reason was that Confucius taught the Chinese to win people's hearts by suasion and exemplification (*wangdao*), not by coercion or threat of force (*badao*).

Third, the Chinese example as such provides a counterpoint against which revealing comparisons can be made with other cultures derived from nomadic or mercantile origins. Nomads, after exhausting the water and food and grazing resources in one spot, had to move on to search for new oases. They did so even if it occasionally meant crashing into somebody else's land or coming into conflict with other nomadic groups. Mercantile economies—that is, economies that depended on manufacturing and trading—were pressured to find new markets and external sources of supplies. The pressures were understandably greater in the case of nations confined to islands or similar resource-dependent geographical milieux such as England and Japan, thus explaining why England was engaged in such a furious push for ever more colonies after the Industrial Revolution had both augmented the country's power and created an insatiable need for more overseas markets. For Japan, the problem was further complicated by the latent threats of its volcanic islands. Hence, in its search for Southeast Asia's rich natural resources, the U.S. presence in the Philippines after 1898 was but a detestable roadblock.

Fourth, if at the peak of their overwhelming power, stretching at least a thousand years before the modern age, the Chinese showed a record of not abusing their power at other peoples' expense, what would change their behavior in the event they regain their former pre-eminent status? This is why I have raised the point about a crucial difference separating a re-emergent China from the first-time upstarts. For lack of a better term, I call this the true *Phoenix factor*.

A complementary factor is that globalization of the market (plus the Chinese entry into WTO) has made it unnecessary for a resurgent and admittedly postagrarian China to use coercion to gain access to overseas markets and resources. That complementary factor will add to the Phoenix factor to back up the counterargument as to why our alternative view is more plausible than the favorite worst-case scenario embraced by the China-bashers.

Furthermore, a resurgent power like China, on its way to regain its former pre-eminent position, differs in another way from the first-time upstarts previously mentioned. During its eclipse, China sustained humiliating injustices at the hands of foreign countries that were powerful but less than scrupulous. Thus, a resultant smoldering revolt against foreign injustices has given the Chinese the desire for equality and justice for all and an empathy for the world's less fortunate and downtrodden. We can find proof for this in China's role in the making of the final wording in Article 2(3) of the United Nations Charter: "All Members [of the United Nations] shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and *justice*, are not endangered" (emphasis added).

The words "and justice" were not in the original text of the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals prepared by the United States. They were inserted at the insistence of the Chinese government, through its envoy Ambassador Wellington Koo at the 1944 Dumbarton Oaks talks. It was here that the Allied Powers, including the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China (France was in exile), were drafting the charter of the future United Nations. Among them, only China had endured the crushing blows of foreign imperialism. Only China had experienced the ruthless inroads and injustices from foreign powers since the mid nineteenth century (the British, the Russians, and the French, in that order, as well as the Japanese). The British even used a war to ram opium down the Chinese throat in 1840. In its wake, even many among Chinese elites became addicted to opium, which the British grew abundantly in their colony in India. China was reduced to a helpless weakling at the mercy of Britain and other foreign powers. It even lost its customs autonomy to the British, not to mention the various slices of territories that it had to cede under duress to foreign predators—for instance, Hong Kong to Britain; Annam (today's Indochina) to France; the Korean peninsula and Taiwan to Japan; a territory eleven times the size of New York state to Russia, and so on. In addition, China had to pay excruciating indemnities to foreign belligerents after each defeat from wars that were imposed on it.

From this experience, China knew that peace, even if achieved, would not necessarily be just, for it could simply be an imposition of the arbitrary will of the powerful. And, no peace without justice could be stable or secure. Hence, the final seemingly odd wording in Article 2(3), "that peace and security, and justice, are not endangered" (where "and" is repeated twice), resulted from China's insistence (China Institute 1956, chapter 1).

Skeptics might ask: Where did this idea of justice come from? The answer can be traced back to Confucius (see Peerenboom 1990; Chen 1997), who believed that justice must be the cornerstone of all human relations (by logic, this could extend to relations among nations as well).

Other critics, pointing out that China is now ruled by a Communist regime, may ask whether that makes any difference. To answer this complex question adequately, we need to do two comparisons and one test.

First comparison. Most international relations scholars who worry about China under communism derived their fears from the Soviet experience. Indeed, the Soviet Union (under Stalin through Brezhnev) engineered or abetted the spread of communism to East and Central Europe, Mongolia, Vietnam, and Cuba. The Soviet Union also created and patronized Communist North Korea in 1948. During the Cold War, it was trying to export communism to much of the Third World. Moscow created the Warsaw Pact and the Comecon to keep East and Central Europe under its power. The Communist empire, created and supported by Moscow, brought on the Cold War. It confronted the United States and its allies, in fact the rest of the world, with the threats of nuclear holocaust. However, unlike its sister Communist Soviet state, China, even under the erratic and radical Mao Zedong, was never caught with material evidence of similarly exporting wholesale communist revolution or building a communist empire in its own image abroad—notwithstanding the alarmist U.S. charges to the contrary. This is all the more revealing when viewed against United States efforts to export democracy (read: to destabilize other regimes) abroad, as in Sandinista Nicaragua and Castroite Cuba.

Peter Van Ness (2000), reacting to the U.S.-perceived China threat, offers an illuminating comment on why the Chinese have behaved quite differently from U.S. perception. “The Chinese,” he explains, “have argued that a peaceful and stable international environment is absolutely indispensable for their efforts to modernize their country. On balance, they have practiced what they have preached” (270).

If anything, modern Chinese nationalism and post-Mao market communism will most likely coalesce to fuel China’s zeal for promoting prosperity at home and, externally, promoting acceptability of distributive justice, as well as communitarianism, in the new world order. But that is not evidence that a re-emergent China under Communist rule is necessarily going to pose a threat to the world, as Communist Russia once did.

Second comparison. We need to see whether China under communism has acted any differently on foreign policy matters from the noncommunist government immediately before the Communists came to power in 1949. I am thinking of the Nationalist Government under Chiang Kai-shek during 1945 through 1949. This was a crucial period, because it came after the end of World War II, when China emerged as one of the victors. It was a time when China’s options regard-

ing its lost territories first surfaced. During the war with Japan, Chiang Kai-shek had sent some of his troops into Vietnam to fight the Japanese occupying forces there. France had snatched the territory (then known as Annam) from China in the nineteenth century. But during World War II, the French had temporarily withdrawn because of the war effort back at home in Europe. After the war was over in 1945, Chiang Kai-shek was faced with the question of whether to withdraw his troops from Vietnam. Following nationalist reflexes, the Chinese troops in Vietnam could have stayed on to prevent the return of the French and to claim back Chinese control of Vietnam. But the troops were withdrawn without delay.

By comparison, after signing of the Armistice Agreement in 1953 ending the Korean War, the Communist Chinese faced a similar decision whether to withdraw their troops ("Chinese volunteers" as they were called) from North Korea. The Chinese troops had been in Korea since October 1950, to shore up the North Koreans' war effort. They successfully reversed the tide against the advancing American and United Nations forces. Recall that through much of history, the Korean peninsula had been under Chinese suzerainty. During the period of 1895–1945, however, Korea was ceded to Japan and lived under Japanese colonial rule. In 1953, the Chinese could have re-claimed the Korean peninsula. (Stalin, if he had been the one to make the decision, would have kept the troops there, even in the absence of any historical claims, to make sure Korea would become a satellite.) But the Communist government in Beijing faithfully withdrew its troops.

This comparison reveals that, despite assumptions to the contrary, the Communist government in Beijing has not behaved differently from the preceding non-Communist Government that it had overthrown in 1949, at least in this particular case. The significance of this point is much greater than meets the eye, for the issue of lost territories is an extremely touchy one. It is at the very heart of China's painful memories of the encroachments of foreign imperialism, which once threatened the nation's very survival.

The test. One additional factor that may bear on the future disposition and behavior of China as a dominant power is the Chinese Communist leadership's attitude on the question of social justice. As we have seen, the dictate of social justice is the prevailing systemic value most likely to shape world affairs of the twenty-first century. Beijing's attitude on this may foretell where China will stand as a future leader on world affairs. Recent domestic developments in China may not have advanced the cause of human rights or democratization to the liking of Freedom House or Amnesty International. On the other hand, however imperceptibly, those recent domestic developments seem to complement China's international posture in support of the yearnings of the less fortunate and the downtrodden. In 1995, for instance, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for the first time officially celebrated the birthday of Confucius. The Haidian District in Beijing, home to two of China's best universities (Beida and Qinghua), has in recent years become known as the home for the reblossoming of Confucian culture.

Confucianism, as noted before, puts premium on the value of justice and harmony, in contrast to the dictate of social Darwinism or reliance on unilateral self-help. Jiang Zemin, the Chinese president and head of the CCP, has called on his fellow countrymen to uphold, among other traditional virtues, *zhengqi* (justice and uprightness), in his much touted three exhortations on national rejuvenation. There is enough evidence to lead one to doubt whether China will behave on the world scene any differently than it did under a non-communist government.

Conclusion

From the discussion thus far, the most striking conclusion is that there is a convergence between (a) the world's emergent systemic value of social justice in the twenty-first century and (b) the projected return of China to the pre-eminent position it had occupied for over 1,000 years before the modern age arrived that put the West ahead.

Most projections differ only on how far China's re-emergence will reach. The difference boils down to whether China will be the next superpower by mid century or whether it will join the United States to form the basis of a new bipolar system. Regardless of which of the two projections comes true, the safest bet is that China's influence on world affairs will be very profound. For the reasons already discussed, this augurs well for the coincidental rise of social justice as the next first principle governing world affairs.

I would only wish to add two observations on what is likely to result from the eventuality of a Chinese re-emergence.

First, the much vilified Asian values will probably receive a new fillip. Let us note that despite the usual Western perception, the most important element in Asian values is not its exaltation of authority at the expense of individual rights but rather its stress on inclusiveness (Moore 1967). This inclusivist bent attests to the agrarian origins of Chinese culture. Like the value of justice, inclusivism was much emphasized in Confucian culture. In combination, they will offer an antidote to the international social Darwinism that has dominated the Westphalian system in past centuries.

For Pacific Asian nations, this body of Confucian-influenced Asian values, because of its inclusivist spirit, has proven instrumental in integrating newly acquired industrial hi-tech know-how into pre-existing traditional virtues and values. It makes the two work in harmony with each other, as could happen in other places. Because of this stress on education and on having the best brains serve in government (Chung 1989), plus the importance they place on the family and on social solidarity, Asian values have underscored Pacific Asia's economic success, often called miraculous. The real miracle is that these Asian nations have been able to develop economically and, at the same time, are able to maintain social cohesion and political stability, a feat not universally repeated elsewhere.

Many Western cynics pronounced the death of Asian values at the first sign of the Asian financial crisis in 1997. Yet the Asian economies not only recovered but did so sooner than was expected. From the lessons one can learn from the Asian financial crisis, one generalization can be maintained: Those Asian societies that are the most heavily imbued with Confucian influence fared the best and recovered the fastest. Those that rank low on the scale of Confucian influence fared the worst and were recovering the slowest (Hsiung 2001). Hence, with China's resurgence, Asian values will have a better chance of receiving the respect they are due, both within and outside the Asian region. In addition, China will replace Japan as the growth engine and, increasingly, even as a source of FDI and Overseas Development Assistance (Saywell 2001). For its part, Pacific Asia will probably be the model for emulation by the world's aspiring nations that want to elevate themselves out of poverty but prefer a route to development other than what the West has shown.

Second, studies of China's leadership style in the past—when East Asia, before the coming of the West, lived in a China-led system of its own, inspired by Sinic virtues and values—have found that the system was characterized by formal hierarchy but informal equality (Kang 2001; Krasner 2001; Ahn 2001). That China-led system contrasts sharply with the Western tradition of international relations that consisted of formal equality between states, informal hierarchy, and almost constant interstate conflict (Kang 2001, 123, table 1). This hierarchy in the Asian system was not the same as the hegemony known to the West since Westphalia. By contrast, the Sinic system was found to have been more stable (129). One study suggests that Asian nations, from Korea to Vietnam, would actually welcome the return of the Sinic system of yore. It may explain why the United States faces severe difficulties in attempting to build an Asian coalition to counterbalance a re-emergent China (Kang 2001, 148–58; Ahn 2001, 250).

Korea and Vietnam are among the Asian nations that were part of the traditional Sinic system. They are the most qualified to testify for both the system, as it existed before and for what is likely to happen once China resumes its traditional role as a leader.

It might not be too far-fetched to speculate that in the event China regains its past pre-eminent position, its habitual leadership based on formal hierarchy but informal equality will most likely return. This style of leadership, I might add, was consistent with the Confucian exhortation of *wangdao*, or governance by suasion and exemplification. Its return, therefore, is not likely to disappoint anyone who cares for the world's yearnings for more social justice and less social Darwinism. To put it another way, it may in the least do no more harm, very possibly even less, than if the world continues to live under a system based on hegemony.

To recapitulate, if social justice prevails in the twenty-first century and if the next dominant power supports it then it is safe to infer that our century will be distinct from previous centuries in that its goal is not just peace, but peace with equity.

Until the end of World War II, Asia, from the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific, had only three independent states. Other than China, Japan, and Thailand, the rest were under colonial rule. Japan, following the “Leave Asia” urgings of Yukichi Fukusawa (the country’s intellectual giant of late nineteenth century), chose a course that culturally abandoned Asia and embraced the West. It even copied the West’s power politics to a fault. Thailand, ever nimble at keeping away potential predators at its door, managed to lead a reclusive existence. China, however, succumbed to the pillaging rampage by the West and a westernizing Japan.

For a long time all of Asia was at the receiving end of the whims, wishes, and influence of the Western powers that came to its shores—and, in the Chinese case, even into its theretofore cloistered inlands. In the transition of the twenty-first century, however, the tables have turned. Pacific Asia, or to be more exact, post-colonial Pacific Asia, has to adjust itself to the likelihood of being a world power. Let us hope it will give more benevolence than it used to receive.

NOTES

1. In this paper, “Pacific Asia” denotes the area covered by what is usually known as Asia Pacific but without the United States. It covers East Asia and Southeast Asia, including China, Japan, the four “Asian Tigers” (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore), ASEAN-5 (Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei), and the Indochina states (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). The questions asked here are explored in my edited book, *Twenty-First Century World Order and the Asia Pacific* (New York: Palgrave, August 2001).

2. *New York Times*, 23 December 2000, p. 6.

3. U.N. Doc.: C/CN.4/Sub.2/1987/23, p. 44.

4. GA res.41/128: Arts.6 (2), 9(1), and 1(1).

5. GA Res. 39/145.

6. U.N. Doc.: A/Conf.157/ASRM/8

7. *New York Times*, 3 March 1996, p. 3.

8. See Brian Bridges’ chapter in Hsiung 2001, especially pages 170–71, and page 173, note 17.

9. For the background of the loss of the U.S. seat on the U.N. Human Rights Commission, see the *American Journal of International Law* vol. 95, no. 4 (October 2001): 877.

10. The five previous international systems Binnendijk identified are: (1) The Treaty of Utrecht to Waterloo, (2) Congress of Vienna to the Crimean War, (3) the rise of Germany to World War I, (4) the interwar period (1918–1939), and (5) the Cold War period (1945–1990).

11. A “hegemonic war” is defined by Gilpin (1981, 15) as one that determines which state or states will be dominant and govern the system.

12. Peter Chow and Francis Tuan, “The Impact of WTO Membership on Economic/Trade Relations Among the Three Chinese Economies,” unpublished paper, dated March 1997. Although the paper was written before China’s WTO entry in December 2001, Peter Chow, of the Economics Department, City College of New York, advised me in a private communication that the statistics and analyses in the paper remain sound and reliable. Also see Chow, Tuan, and Wang 2001.

13. Typically, the Institute of National Strategic Studies (INSS), of the National Defense University in Washington, held a symposium on “Asian Perspective on the Challenges of China,” in March 2000. The event brought together “representatives of the policy community” and academe from Australia, India, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and the United States, as well as China. But the discussions only touched on how developments in China might affect the future policies of countries in the region. They did not touch on the kind of questions I am raising here.

14. *New York Times*, 17 March 2002, p. 8.

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