

China & Globalization

Jeffrey Wasserstrom

Abstract: In recent decades, China has become increasingly enmeshed in global institutions and global flows. This article places that phenomenon into historical perspective via a look back to important globalizing trends of a key earlier period: the late 1800s through early 1900s. The essay draws heavily on C. A. Bayly's discussion of that period, which emphasizes the way that moves toward uniformity do not necessarily produce homogeneity. Bayly's work is used both to illustrate the limitations of some competing ideas about contemporary globalization and how China is or is not being transformed by it, and to provide a basis for arguing that we are again seeing, now in China, important moves toward uniformity that are not erasing important differences between cultures and countries.

How far back in time should one begin in an essay on China and globalization? The term *globalization* may have gained widespread purchase in its current sense only beginning in the 1960s, but ideas, objects, and people have been circulating across the planet for millennia. This has led some analysts to identify precursors to, or even earlier stages of, globalization in eras much before our own. Moreover, it is commonplace to describe China as having a very long history. And recent scholarship – on topics ranging from Silk Road travelers of the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907) to voyages of exploration and visits to Beijing by Jesuits during the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644) – has clearly shown that for much of that extended past, clichés of Chinese isolation and self-containment notwithstanding, China has been continually influenced by, and in turn has had a continual influence on, populations and developments outside its ever-shifting borders.¹

Still, given the current interest in making sense of China's rise during a new stage of globalization, one historical period stands out as a particularly appealing point of departure: the mid-nineteenth century to early twentieth century. The appeal of using this period to frame contemporary dilemmas is twofold. First, in that era, as in ours, new tech-

JEFFREY WASSERSTROM is the Chancellor's Professor of History at the University of California, Irvine. His publications include *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to Know* (rev. ed., 2013), *Global Shanghai, 1850 – 2010* (2009), and *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (1991).

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nologies of communication and transportation were sources of fascination and concern. Second, it was a time, like the present, when China's place in the world was generating anxiety – though the concern was primarily domestic, due to China's decline from a position of centrality, as opposed to today's international concern about its resurgence.

British historian C. A. Bayly's magisterial work, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780 – 1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*, is an ideal launching point for introducing that earlier period into a discussion of China's rise and the contemporary period of globalization. Taking the long view of globalization, Bayly describes the decades leading up to World War I – during which China's fortunes declined dramatically as the Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1912) suffered a series of losses in wars with foreign powers and struggled to contain devastating domestic insurrections – as host to a “great acceleration” of globalizing processes. These were not new processes, but they took on a decidedly modern character.² Here, the similarities with our own era are striking. Then, as now, people had an exhilarating yet worrisome sense of a world becoming ever more tightly interconnected, of a planet shrinking as goods, people, fashions, and cultural forms, but also violence, moved across borders in novel ways and at faster speeds. Then, as now, the leading states of the status quo ante (Britain and France) worried (as the United States does today) about being displaced from their positions atop the global hierarchy. It was a time when leading thinkers within less powerful polities viewed the rise of new powers – such as Germany and Japan, as well as the United States – with a mix of envy, concern, and a desire to figure out how to adapt to their home states the characteristics and growth strategies of the new ascendants in the global hierarchy. They viewed these ris-

ing powers, in short, much as China is viewed by some in this early part of the twenty-first century.

The pre-World War I period, Bayly argues, was on many fronts characterized by a push toward *uniformity*, but not *homogenization*. Countries across the globe became tightly enmeshed in an international order rooted in new kinds of standardization that decreased the variation between places. This new order affected many domains, was registered in many ways, and can be appreciated through the investigation of many different historical developments, including the founding of new kinds of globally minded organizations and the growth of new kinds of globally minded events, in which countries were represented as homologous but distinctive units. The clothes worn by powerful men across the globe during this period is one telling example of uniformity without homogenization. In earlier periods, elite men dressed radically different from each other, with styles varying by location and cultural orientation. But by the early twentieth century, men of power tended to wear the same kinds of clothing, even if, for example, a Japanese leader might add a samurai sash to his frock coat and top hat ensemble.

Today as well, it is useful to see globalization as leading to standardization without eclipsing difference. As venues that emphasize both the basic homologies between and differences among countries, international expositions during the earlier period of “great acceleration” and the Olympic Games today prove useful in illustrating the parallels between the two periods. The country-specific exhibitions at the great World's Fairs of the 1800s and early 1900s, like the opening ceremonies of contemporary Olympic Games, encouraged states to present themselves as mutually intelligible entities, with a similar set of markers (flags of a basic shape), while

also drawing attention to what sets them apart from one another (colors and symbols on those flags). Hierarchical status was also plainly marked: whether a country was the sort that might host a World's Fair or simply host an exhibition at one; and whether a country's exhibition included its manufactures and machines (signs of power and often military might, with large artillery pieces, for example, among the objects displayed) or simply included its handicrafts and antiquities (a sign of a lower place in the global order).

The great international expositions were initially held only in the leading European capitals, but by the late nineteenth century, the United States was taking the occasional turn at hosting full-fledged World's Fairs. At this time, Japan also began holding smaller-scale exposition events, becoming the first non-Western country to do so and the first Asian country to be represented by its advanced manufactures, as opposed to simply its exotic wares. When the United States hosted World's Fairs, it generally followed the template established by the exposition spectacles staged in Europe, but it also experimented by adding novel features, illustrating one of the many ways that rising powers both adapt to and leave their mark on the global order.

The first major non-European World's Fair, the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876, was the largest event of its kind ever held in any country, signaling an American ambition not simply to follow in the footsteps of London and Paris, but to do things on an even greater scale, in turn inspiring others to borrow from the American playbook. Of particular interest to Bayly, however, is the second great American World's Fair: the 1893 Columbian Exposition. The "World Parliament of Religions," held in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition, was a novelty of this World's Fair, an event that re-

flected and carried forward what Bayly calls the era's tendency toward the "bureaucratization of belief." The goal of this parliament was to bring together representatives of the world's "ten great religions" who would together explore the characteristics that these creeds held in common, as well as the features that made them distinctive.³ Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Zoroastrianism were represented, in addition to six other creeds, all with Asian roots. Among these was Confucianism, which has long defied easy classification as either a religion or a philosophy, but was then, in fact, designated as a religious faith by influential figures in the novel field of religious studies.⁴

Prior to the late nineteenth century, some of these ten spiritual schools lacked many of the features that we now associate with leading religions. Not all were organized around clearly specified canonical texts, nor did they all have recognizable hierarchies of leaders. But just as countries were expected to present themselves in mutually recognizable ways, religions were pushed toward standardization. Religious traditions associated with the leading global powers set the model for what a "proper" system of belief was supposed to consist of; thus, Hinduism and Buddhism, which had been structured quite differently from one another and from Christianity, made moves to be less completely out of step with European expectations. Representatives also made efforts to bring Confucianism in line with expectations for a standard "religion," even though it may have been better classified as a philosophical tradition or secular school of thought.⁵ These "world religions" remained different from one another in beliefs, but became increasingly homologous in form, with their core "sacred" texts likened to the Bible (even if, as in the case of Confucianism, these texts stressed the need to focus on concerns of this world), their

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leaders at times referred to as “priests,” and their ritual spaces dubbed “temples.”

The ways in which states organized themselves politically tell a similar tale, and also remind us that as new powers rose, fitting into global patterns while maintaining distinctive elements, the number of possible models to emulate increased. Just as the United States provided a model for hosting international events that could inspire imitation, Japan’s remaking of its political order, via a mix-and-match approach that both borrowed from the outside world and adapted from its own distinctive past, offered a possible script upon which other states could improvise. Japan’s rise toward world power status was facilitated by its adoption of a constitution and its reorganization of its educational and military systems, undertakings that sometimes drew heavily from what one or more Western countries had done before. The result was something unique on the world stage, both because of how imported elements were combined and because of the carry-over of elements from the Japanese imperial line.

When Japan began to be recognized by the European powers and the United States as a nation that deserved a seat on leading international bodies and as a military and economic force to be reckoned with – especially after it defeated Russia in 1905 in the Russo-Japanese War – the Japanese model began to interest leaders and thinkers in many countries outside of the West, a phenomenon explored most recently in essayist and novelist Pankaj Mishra’s *From the Ruins of Empire*.⁶ As that work reminds us, the story of Japan’s rise was one of adapting to, but also in the process influencing, the global order. When other countries looked to Japan for inspiration, they often did so in the same kind of mix-and-match manner that Japan had used to look toward the West, identifying features

they wanted to adopt and others they wanted to avoid. Significant to our discussion, much of the Japanese model of selective adoption and internal adaptation can now be said of contemporary China.

Though these specific details of Japan’s emergence as a world power with a distinctive identity may be new to some readers, the lessons I have drawn – that there is value in looking back at the preceding century or two when trying to make sense of the present, and that rising powers both adapt to and play a role in reshaping international systems – are common sense. Curiously, however, the approach outlined above is revisionist, going against the grain of both an influential theoretical approach to globalization (with implications for understanding China’s rise) and an influential way of thinking about China (with implications for understanding globalization). This influential conception of globalization emphasizes the importance of the end of the Cold War and the birth of the Internet, suggesting that only events that took place within the last three decades really matter. The influential approach to understanding modern China, meanwhile, presumes that with this peculiar “ancient” country, it is crucial, when using history to frame our view of the present, to go back millennia, not just a century or even several centuries to the Song Dynasty (760 – 1279) or the Ming or early Qing Dynasties – all points that some scholars of China point to as the birth of China’s modernity. This ancient-minded approach is often invoked by writers who worry that China will soon “rule the world” (to borrow a phrase from a recent bestseller), or will do so unless determined interventionist action is taken to prevent it. Using a famous writer to represent each approach (for convenience’s sake), I will refer here to the *Friedman Fallacy* and the *Kissinger Confusion* as two mis-

leading schools of thought about China and globalization that put undue emphasis on very recent trends and millennia-old patterns, respectively.

Why Thomas Friedman and Henry Kissinger? Each is prolific, widely read, and often cited in general interest publications and even at times in scholarly ones. In the 2005 *Wired* magazine profile “Why the World Is Flat,” Daniel H. Pink describes Friedman as the “most influential American newspaper columnist since Walter Lippman.”⁷ Kissinger, meanwhile, is widely acknowledged by critics and supporters alike as a singularly powerful voice within the U.S. policy establishment. Friedman’s most famous book, *The World is Flat*, has sold more copies in its many editions and translations than any other book on globalization. His two previous, closely related books also sold well.⁸ Kissinger’s most recent book, *On China*, has also enjoyed very high sales figures, and is one of the principal works that generally educated readers are most likely to consult before taking a first trip to China.

Friedman and Kissinger are also extraordinarily well known and influential within China. They are among the Americans most often quoted in the Chinese media, and Chinese bookstores stock not only translations of their books, but also secondary works, often by academics, that discuss the texts and their ideas. Kissinger has been famous in China since he accompanied Nixon there in the early 1970s, and he continues to meet periodically with China’s current leaders and visit its retired elder statesmen.⁹ Friedman’s standing in China, though of more recent vintage, attracted global attention when reporters for the *Economist* traced the likely role that a Friedman column had played in President Xi Jinping’s choice of the “Chinese Dream” for his first major public slogan.¹⁰

The Friedman Fallacy and the Kissinger Confusion also matter for another rea-

son: the views of the two authors overlap with those of other influential writers on the subjects of globalization and China. When Friedman posits an epochal shift in world affairs beginning in 1989, and foretells mass convergences for countries that formerly took divergent paths, we can hear a clear echo of political scientist Francis Fukuyama’s “end of history” formulations. Similarly, Friedman’s “flat world” visions of a seamless melding of once very different cultures align with arguments made in such works as China scholar Edward Steinfeld’s *Playing Our Game* and the earlier, less sophisticated work of political scientist Bruce Giley, *China’s Democratic Future*.¹¹ Nor is Kissinger’s emphasis on ancient history and “The Singularity of China” (the title of *On China*’s opening chapter) entirely original. His view dovetails with the vision that undergirds former Nixon staffer Stefan Halper’s *The Beijing Consensus: How China’s Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century* – a fearful book about a future of Chinese domination, which comes with an endorsement by Kissinger – and with political scientist Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations*.¹²

In a chapter titled the “New System,” featured in his work *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, Friedman offers a clear sense of the Friedman Fallacy:

Globalization is not just an economic fad, and it is not just a passing trend. It is an international system – the dominant international system that replaced the Cold War system after the fall of the Berlin Wall. . . . [T]he Cold War system was dominated by one over-arching feature – division . . . [and] was symbolized by a single word: the *wall* – the Berlin Wall. . . . The globalization system . . . also has one overarching feature – integration. . . . The globalization system is also characterized by a single word: the *Web*. . . [W]e have gone from a system built around

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divisions and walls to a system built increasingly around integration and webs.¹³

In his later books, Friedman returns to this same view of globalization. In *Longitudes and Attitudes*, after making a near-identical argument to that quoted above, he writes that he is a “big believer in the idea of the super-story,” by which he means a tale that serves as a framework for making sense of the world (what academics sometimes call a “grand narrative”). Friedman makes it clear that he perceives a key super story in the rapid and epochal shift now under way. This shift is due to a mixture of geopolitical changes, especially resulting from the Soviet empire’s collapse, and the development of new technologies, especially the Internet. *The World is Flat* insists that Cold War assumptions instantly became outmoded when the Berlin Wall fell, and that an inexorable trend toward convergence started to trump heterogeneity, as exemplified by global chains serving interchangeable Big Macs.

The implications of this framework for thinking about China and globalization are twofold. First, there is no need to go back any further than 1989 to understand contemporary issues. Second, while every state is bound to become part of the new global order in a distinctive manner, the zeitgeist will make China, like all other countries, more and more like other nations, and in particular more like the United States. The Internet is not the sole driver of this process – Friedman allows for assists from jet plane travel, outsourcing, FedEx, and other global connectors – but he sees the Internet as the new system’s emblematic technology, just as free market capitalism is its defining economic practice. Friedman knows local differences will persist, but emphasizes a kind of homogenization that should come with a “Made in the USA” logo:

[T]his phenomenon we call “globalization” – the integration of markets, trade, finance, information and corporate ownership around the globe – is actually a very American phenomenon: it wears Mickey Mouse ears, eats Big Macs . . . tracks its investments with Merrill Lynch using Windows 95. . . . [C]ountries that plug into globalization are really plugging into a high degree of Americanization.¹⁴

Friedman does not posit easy, swift, and complete Americanization, but he does think in terms of an overall trend in that direction. This vision colors even his criticisms of the United States, as illustrated by the very title of his recent book, *That Used to Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back*. When writing on China, he notes the irony of now having to cross the Pacific to find the kind of ambitious can-do attitude and tendency to think big that formerly defined the United States, and cites examples of Chinese appropriation of once distinctively American processes and industries.¹⁵

But what’s wrong with this picture? Many things, as it turns out. Post-Cold War developments do not represent the complete and radical departure from all previous geopolitical trends, as Friedman suggests they do. Even the Internet is not completely without precedent, given how the telegraph was first announced as a medium that “annihilated” time and space. Consider, for example, how Prince Albert’s 1850 speech promoting the upcoming Crystal Palace Exhibition, the first great World’s Fair, reads today like an outline of a Friedman column:

Nobody . . . who has paid any attention to the particular features of our present era, will doubt for a moment that we are living in a period of wonderful transition. . . . The distances which separated the different nations and parts of the globe are gradually

vanishing before the achievement of modern invention, and we can traverse them with incredible ease . . . thought is communicated with the rapidity and even by the power of lightning . . . the products of all quarters of the globe are placed at our disposal.¹⁶

The Friedman Fallacy also challenges us to understand why so many countries have resisted the wholesale embrace of the allegedly natural and inevitable free-market principles of the United States. One can even identify a bloc – admittedly one quite different from the Cold War vintage, given the lack of professed allegiance to a formal ideology – that stands apart from the type of liberal free-market trends Friedman seeks to chart and champion. This at least is one way to read American journalist William J. Dobson’s impressive book, *The Dictator’s Learning Curve*.¹⁷ And when it comes to the Internet in particular, that bloc is defined not just by webs, but also walls – the firewalls that limit worldwide digital connectivity not just within China, but also within other authoritarian countries.¹⁸

There is a rich literature that, contra Friedman, questions the notion that a Big Mac is a Big Mac is a Big Mac, given how vastly different the menus and meanings of the Golden Arches become as they travel.¹⁹ Cultural globalization is about hybrid forms, as opposed to simple Americanization, meaning a more apt symbol for twenty-first-century globalization than the McDonald’s franchise might be the karaoke bar, which arrived in China around the same time as McDonald’s. While karaoke bars rarely get the same media attention as the burger behemoth, there are now many more locations in China to sing karaoke than there are to order a Big Mac. McDonald’s outlets have American roots, but karaoke bars have a more complex origin story that speaks more effectively to our era: they bear traces – via their organization, look, and play-

lists – of Filipino, Japanese, British, and American influences, and indeed African influences as well.

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Turning to the Kissinger Confusion, we see that he is attracted by a different super-story, at least about China. His *On China* encourages readers to be deeply skeptical about the Chinese state’s potential to become easily integrated into any global order not of its own creation. This is due to its deep indebtedness to specific ideas, many tied to Confucianism (or Kissinger’s conception of that creed), that keep China not just distinctive, but radically so. To Kissinger, the country has always stood apart and always will. The issue becomes one of managing this difference, not expecting it to disappear or even to lessen dramatically on account of the Internet, a rising middle class, or any other factor. Rather than wait for China to be reshaped by globalization, the goal should be to minimize the likelihood that China will take charge of defining the international order. Even China’s shift to Communist party-state rule is seen by Kissinger as in some senses epiphenomenal, due to the number of assumptions contemporary Chinese leaders share with their predecessors, including an unusually intense familiarity and identification with the ancient past.

To illustrate this, Kissinger analyzes one of Mao’s speeches addressed to a gathering of high-level cadres. Kissinger notes that despite Mao’s party’s official view that the pre-revolution past was to be discredited and forgotten, when the Chairman needed to convey a strategic point, he was wont to refer to ancient battles in China’s history. What lesson does Kissinger draw about China’s singularity from this kind of behavior?

In no other country is it conceivable that a modern leader would initiate a major

national undertaking by invoking strategic principles from a millennium-old event – nor that he could confidently expect his colleagues to understand the significance of his allusions. Yet China is singular. No other country can claim so long a continuous civilization, or such an intimate relationship to its ancient past and classical principles.²⁰

One problem with the Kissinger Confusion is that those in its sway tend to ignore evidence that might contradict the view that China's distant past has left it with a "cultural DNA" that is virtually impervious to change.²¹ In *On China*, for example, Kissinger mentions but dismisses the relevance of Zhou Enlai (the first premier of the People's Republic of China) telling him that the United States should be seen as an *older* country than China, since China's current political incarnation goes back only to 1949. Those who focus on China's supposedly "singular" cultural DNA gloss over the fact that, while the mainland and Taiwan had strikingly similar political cultures circa 1960 (they even shared a cult of personality around Chiang Kai-shek, the former president of the Republic of China), within a few decades, the island country had become a lively democracy, while the mainland retained its Leninist political system. As for Kissinger's interpretation of the supposedly singular ability of Chinese leaders to make use of analogies from the distant past, Mao's reaching back more than a millennium for a tale that would make a readily understood strategic point brings to mind obvious counter-examples. For one, Mao's Western counterparts could just as easily refer to "Trojan Horse" strategies and take for granted that everyone in the room would get the point.

What do we gain by casting off the distorting lenses of the Friedman Fallacy and the Kissinger Confusion? We gain a van-

tage point from which to see the relationship between China and contemporary globalization in a new way. We can appreciate traits that today's China shares with the United States and Japan of a century ago, especially when it comes to China's adaptation to and impact on international practices, as well as the way that other countries look to it less as a model for wholesale emulation than as a state from whose toolkit it may be worth selectively borrowing. We can also see some recent moves made by the Chinese state as a restart of abortive processes that began to transform the country during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

First, take the idea of a Chinese "president," past and present. China's first president, Sun Yat-sen, was a poster child for his era in many ways. Sun's political life depended on new modes of transportation and communication that allowed him to travel between China, Japan, and the West to raise funds, and also let him circulate his ideas with expedience via telegraph wires. As the country's first post-dynastic leader, Sun took on an imported moniker, that of president, which brought him in step with political trends of the day for the heads of new nations, as the Republic of China (established in 1912) was then. Sun also participated in an inauguration ceremony that borrowed heavily from Western traditions of political ritual. Yet one of his earliest acts was to visit the graves of the emperors of the Ming Dynasty, the last ethnically Han Chinese rulers of the country. Through this act, he symbolically tied himself to a past Chinese group that had been overthrown by the Manchus of the Qing, thus acknowledging and capitalizing on the role that anti-Manchu passions, as well as globally circulating republican ideas, played in bringing him to power.

Chinese radicals of Sun's day were inspired by many domestic and international

precedents, citing parallels for their cause in the actions of rebels who had challenged unjust dynasties in China, the French insurgents of 1789, and other revolutionaries with righteous causes. Particularly popular among Chinese radicals were analogies to either the revolution the American colonists waged against Britain in 1776, which led to the formation of a new republic, or the efforts that led to Japan's Meiji Restoration, which resulted in the creation of a constitutional monarchy. Sun, while admiring of Japan, relied primarily on analogies with the American Revolution, and was sometimes called his country's answer to George Washington. The constitution of Sun's new republic featured some elements that were homologous to sections of the U.S. Constitution; but it also described a system of government with five branches, two of them tied to China's unique past. So in its very eclecticism, the Chinese constitution also paralleled the new constitution that Japan had adopted, exhibiting Bayly's underlying theme of moving toward uniformity without homogenization.

Sun's eclecticism even showed through in his choice of clothing. Early in his political career, he conformed to global norms, dressing for major political rituals in the sort of suit expected of powerful men of the time, often accompanied by a top hat. Later, however, Sun championed what he saw as a distinctively Chinese yet modern form of apparel. What is now called a "Mao Suit" is actually an adaptation of what was once called the "Sun Yat-sen Suit": a form of dress that was influenced by a mix of Western and Asian models, bearing, for example, some links to the student uniforms worn in Japan.²²

When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, its leaders claimed that they, not Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party across the strait, were the true inheritors of Sun's legacy. This asser-

tion was aided by the fact that Sun, just before his death in 1925, had overseen an alliance of the Communists and the Nationalists, and had expressed admiration for the Soviet Union. The link to Sun was reinforced sartorially, via people of all walks of life wearing the type of suit he promoted – though small alterations were made to the design in Mao's day, and Soviet sartorial styles also later made their mark.²³

It is typical now to see China's political system as an outlier – sticking to Communist Party rule at a time when it had been abandoned by all but three other countries – yet Sun reminds us that this is the case only in some regards. In Mao's China, the powerful did not dress like their counterparts in other parts of the world, nor was "president" or "premier" the designation of the country's leader. Flash forward to the present, and we find a new set of moves toward uniformity without homogeneity leaving their imprint on China's political system. For the last two decades or so, China's most powerful men (the holders of top posts have overwhelmingly been male) have dressed just like their counterparts in most other countries.²⁴ And the top Chinese leader, while still holding the post of General Secretary of the Communist Party, is routinely referred to as the country's "president" (we do not often hear of "Chairman Xi"). Even Mao's appearance on Chinese banknotes, frequently cited as evidence of China's inability to move decisively away from its outlier past, has in some ways conformed to international norms. The faces of past leaders grace the currency of many modern countries; the currency in Mao's own day, which featured anonymous representatives of ethnic or other social groups, was more unusual.

My second set of comments relates to global spectacles, in particular China's hosting of the 2008 Olympics. In the

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lead-up to that event, the potential for the Olympics to bring China into step with global norms was a source of lengthy discussion, though from the beginning, Susan Brownell, a prominent scholar of Chinese sports and the Olympic Movement, suggested that rather than only asking “how the Olympics will change China,” we should also question “how China will change the Olympics.” In the end, Brownell proved prescient, as there are ways in which China both conformed to expectations for a host country and altered expectations for future Summer Games, raising the bar for eye-popping high-tech performances in the games’ opening ceremony, for example. This unusually brash Olympics, followed by China holding its first World’s Fair in 2010 (which was the biggest event of its kind to date), brings to mind America’s bold entrance into the club of international exhibition-hosting countries in the late 1800s. These modern events in China also stirred the global imagination in ways that paralleled Japan during its own period of great acceleration. Japan’s surge inspired a desire among other ambitious peoples to borrow tricks from the Japanese approach, even if the aim was not strictly to mirror Japan’s path, as was the case with Chinese revolutionaries wishing to modernize their country in a Japanese fashion without introducing a Meiji-style constitutional monarchy. And for all the talk of a “Chinese model” today, it is important to consider an example like Brazil, which in hosting the World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympic Games in 2016, will find much to emulate in China’s handling of the global spotlight in 2008, without necessarily reproducing China’s political disposition.

Finally, let us consider the current revival of Confucianism, which would seem to add force to the argument that all Chinese state actions are rooted in the distant past. To begin to see the Confucianist

revival in a different light, however, let us look back to the 1893 World Parliament of Religions, as well as to a 1902 story fragment by Liang Qichao, often described as the leading Chinese intellectual of that era. In Liang’s story “The Future of New China” – which was inspired in part by the 1893 Parliament of Religions as well as an awareness that Japan’s rise above China in the global hierarchy had been marked, among other causes, by its increasingly significant role in various international organizations and spectacles of various kinds – Liang imagines a future when China’s status as a world power would allow it to host, rather than merely participate in, a World’s Fair. He describes such a Chinese-run international exhibition taking place in Shanghai in 1962, featuring elements of the World Parliament of Religions, such as a lineal descendant of Confucius addressing dignitaries and thinkers from across the globe.²⁵

Liang clearly foreshadowed what would take place during the next great acceleration. At the World Parliament of Religions, a kind of revamped Confucianism 2.0 – made as legible as possible to religious leaders in the West – took its place among a family of spiritual creeds in a robustly international setting. Over a century later, the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Games were, in part, a chance for China to give global audiences a sense of a Confucianism 3.0, officially defined not as an indigenous religion (the status accorded to Daoism) but as a philosophy and a symbolically potent state ethos. The event began with a quote by the sage himself, now cast as a secular but revered embodiment of national wisdom whose views do not contradict those of the development-driven Communist Party, which until the 1970s had reviled Confucius as a feudal figure whose ideas were largely responsible for the country’s backwardness. One part of the lavish performance that followed

featured a large number of actors onstage dressed as Confucius's disciples. Confucius's new status in the People's Republic of China – which dovetails with the way he has been or still is venerated in Taiwan and Singapore – has also been marked in other ways, most notably in the founding of state-supported and controlled “Confucius Institutes” in foreign countries.

When searching for meaning in the Confucius Institutes, as with so many topics associated with China and globalization, we should not choose between thinking only in terms of the distant past or another time frame, nor should we choose between thinking of the Chinese state as only either being reshaped by international forces or itself reshaping the global structure. We are instead better off drawing from all of these perspectives at once. Confucius is a figure from the distant past, but he has gone through reinventions before, with the most recent preconfigured not only by Liang Qichao's work of speculative fiction, but also by Chiang Kai-shek's celebration of “Confucian values” in his New Life Movement of the 1930s. Confucius is a Chinese figure, but in classic uniformity-without-homogeneity fashion, Confucius Institutes are modeled in part on what Western nations, such as Germany via its Goethe Institutes, have accomplished in the arena of nationally minded cultural dissemination. In addition, Confucius Institutes bear the influence of recent efforts in Singapore – a country whose economic success and political stability has been admired by Chinese leaders – to combine appeals to traditional “Asian values” with authoritarian politics, in a setting where the Internet is defined by walls as much as by webs.

This essay is not meant to offer a complete alternative vision of China and globalization. To do that, much more would need to be said about the novelties of the

current era as they pertain to both globalization and China. For example, the unprecedented degree to which educational institutions have become globally minded would need to be addressed. So, too, would the related phenomenon of an unprecedented number of Chinese people spending time abroad, whether as tourists, as workers, or perhaps most significantly, as students; the paths taken abroad by all these Chinese citizens could affect the country in profound ways. And there are several important questions about how modern China's rise to global power should be contextualized. For example, contrast the United States, whose rise to global dominance was without precedent in North American history, with China, which can be seen as reclaiming a position of influence it once had but then lost.

My relatively modest aim here has been to show how focusing on one particularly interesting medium-term historical framework, in addition to presenting the Chinese state as both a shaper of the global order and an entity being reshaped by it, takes us much further toward an accurate view of the contemporary terrain than Friedman's riffs on Beijing Big Macs or Kissinger's wonderment at Mao's knowledge of ancient battles. China's rise is one of the most important and complex stories of our time, and there are parts of this tale that are truly unprecedented. Making sense of this critical and intrinsically fascinating tale is likely to remain one of the great intellectual challenges of our time. This essay, if successful, will not have provided a magic key for unraveling the mysteries involved in its telling. Rather, it will have clearly shown how focusing too tightly on the novelty of the now, or assuming that all the answers lie in the distant past and its imagined hold of ancient patterns on a fast-changing present, is to distort the story we seek to bring into focus.

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- ¹ Two appealing introductions to China's past that emphasize far flung geographical connections and encourage a long view of globalization are Joanna Waley Cohen, *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History* (New York: Norton, 2000); and James Millward, *The Silk Road: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- ² C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780 – 1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003).
- ³ On the Parliament of Religions, see the documents, including texts of the speeches given by representatives of different creeds, gathered together online at http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/_includes/history/archive.swf (accessed July 23, 2013).
- ⁴ For background on the debates over how Confucianism should be classified, as well as references to important late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century works on comparative religion, such as those of sociologist Max Weber, see Anna Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion: Contested Histories and Contemporary Reality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013).
- ⁵ Moves toward making Confucianism conform more closely to a standard "religion" include terminological efforts, such as translations of the *Analects* that dubbed it one of China's key "sacred" texts, as well as abortive efforts in the late 1800s and again in the early 1900s, most famously by the Chinese scholar Kang Youwei, to transform Confucianism into a state religion with parallels to Christianity in form and Japan's Shinto in function. On these efforts and the resistance to them, see Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion*; and Yong Chen, *Confucianism as Religion: Controversies and Consequences* (Boston: Brill, 2013).
- ⁶ Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012).
- ⁷ Daniel H. Pink, "Why the World Is Flat," *Wired*, May 2005, <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.05/friedman.html> (accessed May 29, 2013).
- ⁸ Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999); Thomas Friedman, *Longitudes and Attitudes* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002); and Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).
- ⁹ In April of 2013, for example, Kissinger met with current President Xi Jinping, and then in July of the same year, he met with former President Jiang Zemin.
- ¹⁰ "The Chinese Dream: The Role of Thomas Friedman," *The Economist*, May 6, 2013; <http://www.economist.com/blogs/analects/2013/05/chinese-dream-0> (accessed June 3, 2013).
- ¹¹ Bruce Gilley, *China's Democratic Future* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); and Edward Steinfield, *Playing Our Game: Why China's Rise Doesn't Threaten the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- ¹² Juan Pablo Cardenal and Heriberto Araujo, *China's Silent Army: The Pioneers, Traders, Fixers, and Workers Who are Remaking the World in Beijing's Image* (New York: Crown, 2013); and Stefan Halper, *The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2010). Contrast the final words of the subtitle of Cardenal and Araujo's work ("remaking the world in Beijing's image") with the final words of Halper's ("authoritarian model will dominate the twenty-first century"). See also Perry Anderson "Sinomania," *London Review of Books* 32 (2) (January 2010), which includes a review of Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order* (New York: Penguin, 2009).
- ¹³ Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, 7–9.
- ¹⁴ Thomas Friedman, "Big Mac II," *The New York Times*, December 11, 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/11/opinion/big-mac-ii.html> (accessed May 29, 2013).
- ¹⁵ Thomas Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum, *That Used to be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back* (New York: Picador, 2011). See also Fried-

man's use of quotations in his work, such as this, from author Joe Romm: "China is going to eat our lunch and take our jobs on clean energy – an industry that we largely invented," quoted in Thomas Friedman, "Our One-Party Democracy," *The New York Times*, September 8, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/09/opinion/09friedman.html?_r=2&.

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¹⁶ Quoted in *The Economist*, March 23, 1850, 310.

¹⁷ William J. Dobson, *The Dictator's Learning Curve* (New York: Doubleday, 2012).

¹⁸ It seems likely that these firewalls will become even sturdier, and not only in China, given recent accusations and leaks concerning cyber espionage against and by the United States.

¹⁹ James L. Watson, ed., *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006).

²⁰ Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York, Penguin Press, 2011), 2.

²¹ This term even shows up in very sophisticated works, such as David Shambaugh's *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); a work that, overall, takes a much more nuanced approach to Chinese continuities than does *On China*, yet at times falls into the trap (as political scientist Lucian Pye, who Shambaugh cites approvingly, often did) of presenting the country as having a political culture virtually impervious to change, with features hard-wired into its DNA. Another admirable recent work, which refers to DNA in a similar fashion and alludes to a recessive "Confucian gene" that colors the ideas of important Chinese thinkers, is Orville Schell and John Delury, *Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Random House, 2013).

²² On Sun Yat-sen, see Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000); Joseph Esherick, "Founding a Republic, Electing a President: How Sun Yat-sen Became Guofu," in *China's Republican Revolution*, ed. Harold Shiffrin and Eto Shinkichi (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1994): 129 – 152; and especially David Strand, *An Unfinished Republic: Leading by Word and Deed in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 33 – 35 (which notes Sun's dress) and p. 205 (which notes various Chinese senators wearing Western-style dress in 1912).

²³ See the illustrated discussion "Mao Suit," provided by the Powerhouse Museum, http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/hsc/evrev/mao_suit.htm (accessed July 22, 2013).

²⁴ For more details on the symbolism of clothing in recent meetings between Chinese and foreign leaders, see Jeffrey Wasserstrom, "What Obama and Xi's Shirt Sleeves Summit Means," *History News Network*, June 17, 2013, <http://hnn.us/articles/what-obama-and-xis-shirt-sleeves-summit-means> (accessed July 23, 2013).

²⁵ On Liang Qichao's story, see John Fitzgerald, "The Unfinished History of China's Future," *Thesis Eleven*, May 1999, 17 – 31.