

The Power of Thinking—The Origins of China’s Re-rise

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100 years ago, China was such a plagued country that the West thought it the world’s problem. A century later, China seems to be the Middle Kingdom when it once was one of the most powerful in the world. China’s great transformation origins from its new political and economic thinking, which will also rejuvenate its culture. Politically, China turned to sinicization, after its failed efforts of westernization. In economy, China has still a long road to run for catching up with the West’s modernization, but China has aimed to rejuvenate itself as a rich and powerful state but rather copied the western capitalism like most developing states, or later the eastern European and Soviet communist states. In the end, China turned away from the western democracy while hungering for science, which implied the clash of civilization for some westerners but the harmony for the Chinese. Chinese has been thinking about China and the world’s future in the western way, but in the coming days, China may play its roles as one eastern center of the world’s diversifying civilizations.

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Introduction

A century ago (in 1921), British philosopher Bertrand Russell claimed in his book titled *The Problem of China*, which he wrote after visiting the country that Chinese problems, even if they affected no one outside China, would be of vast importance, since the Chinese are estimated to constitute about a quarter of the human race. In fact, however, all the world will be vitally affected by the development of Chinese affairs, which may well prove a decisive factor, for good or evil, during the next two centuries (Russell, 2019, p. 3); China’s pursuit of its goals is not only of importance to China, but it is equally important to the world (Russell, 2019, p. 294). China’s problem at that time may be aptly sum up by that famous quote from the Shakespearean play *Hamlet*: “To be, or not to be, that is the question”; for the survival or demise of an ancient empire like China—being much alike the life and death of Prince Hamlet, fundamentally affects the world order. Bertrand Russell deserved the highest honour for his farseeing, except that two centuries is much too far to see. In 2018, Harvard University’s Fairbank Center for China Studies published its *The China Questions—Critical Insights Into a Rising Power*, confirmed China’s coming as a decisive factor. In 2021, China comprehensively accomplished building a moderately prosperous society, and set off a new phase to Chinese socialist modernization and national resurgence. The problem for China at present is all about what the 1990 World Cup theme song extols, “To Be Number One”. And furthermore, “This is what we’ve worked for all our lives;

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Reaching for the highest goal we can; we choose to give it all”. Chinese people striving “to be number one” should be something inherent in the western competing spirit. However, the West simply cannot bear to accept “to be number two”. Along with China’s rise to become a “modernized” nation, the West is forced into a “world cup” competition with a non-western country. The questions for the world are whether the “world cup” competition of the future is for football in which the Europeans can take advantages, or for baseball in which the Americans will much more likely win, or for Ping-Pong in which the Chinese will possibly win No. 1, 2, and 3, and then who will oversee the events, who will make the rules, and who will organize the matches or determine the game prizes. Henceforth, competition and cooperation, conflict and engagement between the two great powers of China and America, between the two disparate sociopolitical systems of socialism and capitalism, and between eastern and western civilizations will become decisive factors affecting the affairs of humankind; these will also be thrust into the limelight as the most significant cutting-edge issues for philosophers and social scientists alike.

From Westernization to Resurgence

British science historian Joseph Needham posed the questions in his 1964 book *The Grand Titration—Science and Society in East and West*: Why modern science had not developed in Chinese civilization (or India civilization) but only in Europe? However, as time passed, he eventually became informed on the science and society of China; another at least equally important question is: Why, from the 1st century B.C. to the 15th century, as humanity’s knowledge of nature is being applied to practical human needs, the Chinese civilization seemed to have been far more efficient than that of western civilization (Joseph, 2016, p. 176)? Then in 1976, American economist Kenneth E. Boulding alluded to this as “Needham’s Grand Question”. But of the aforementioned two questions, only the first is continually being perused. If Professor Needham is still with us today despite the passage of time, he would instantly recognize another even more compelling question in today’s world: Why is the Chinese civilization once again seemingly more efficient than western civilization when we are in the 21st century? Why China, as an ancient civilization, becomes the sole living example of accomplishing the feat of resurgence after decline, whilst all the other great empires in history eventually fell and perished?

The European Miracle

What kind of issues should today’s academic research be focusing on? Historian Alan Macfarlane, a professor from Cambridge University, puts forward the proposition about “how to pose question” in the opening chapter of his book titled *The Invention of the Modern World*. He thinks the way a question is answered depends on the manner in which it is posed, and that an imprecise question would inevitably elicit an unhelpful answer. He feels disaffected by academicians of our time’s indifference to the great achievements of modernity; he is of the view that the industrialization and modernization emanated from England sit at the heart of the “British miracle” or “European miracle”. He applauds the works of Moore, Jones, Landes, Mokyr, Robert, Diamond, North and Thomas, Hall, Mann and Baechler for addressing the issue of “what created the ‘European miracle’ and why it only happened in such a time and place” (Macfarlane, 2013, p. 14).

Author Eric Jones posits in the Preface to the second edition of his book, *The European Miracle*, that “the main theme of the book is that of a grand theme: Why economic growth and development originated in Europe?” (Jones, 2015, Preface) In the opening chapter of *The British Industrial Revolution in*

Global Perspective, Oxford University economic historian Robert C. Allen made explicit the issues to be addressed in this book why the industrial revolution just happened to take place in England, and just in time to enter the global arena in the 18th century (Allen, 2012). In Douglass C. North and Robert Paul Thomas’ *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History*, the authors illuminate on the first chapter titled “The Issue” that the objective of the book is elucidation of the causes for the rather unique historical attainment of ascendancy of the western world. David S. Landes, professor of history and economics at Harvard University, also poses the specific question from a historical perspective in *The Wealth and the Poverty of Nations* that: “How and why did we get where we are? How did the rich get so rich? Why are the poor countries so poor? Why Europe (the West) take the lead in changing the world?” (Landes, 1999, pp. 21-22) The discussions in *Why Europe? The Rise of the West in World History, 1500-1850* by public policy professor Jack A. Goldstone of George Mason University are related to: Why Asia became impoverished and started to lag behind Europe by 1850, at a time when Europe was going about freely to forge its political and economic rule around the world, embarking upon colonization in some regions, strengthening trade treaties with other nations, and all the while enjoying the benefits of advanced technology and material wealth far superior to that of other regions; just how did it all happened (Goldstone, 2010, p. 18)? Robert B. Marks constructs a story about why England was able to escape from common ecological constraints facing all of those regions? How and why the United States emerged as a world power in the 20th century and became the sole superpower by the 21st century, and why the US rise to global hegemony was contingent, not inevitable (Marks, 2019)?

Indeed, the modern world is indisputably ushered by the industrial revolution of the West. It is therefore also a world in which everything is dominated by the West, and moreover, this western-led modern world unquestionably engendered stupendous historical progress. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels illuminated in the *Communist Manifesto*,

steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. ...Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed, increased its capital, and pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages. (Marx & Engles, 2009, pp. 32-33)

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part. The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. (Marx & Engles, 2009, pp. 33-34)

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarcely one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature’s forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor? (Marx & Engles, 2009, p. 36)

In other words, the industrial revolution and industrialization of production was not merely a revolution in productivity; it also ushered a political, social, and cultural revolution; hence it was a great revolution in the whole history of social development for humankind. It emancipated humanity from agrarian and nomadic farming to enter the age of industry and commerce enabling the human society to advance from feudal society into capitalist society.

Westernization and Modernization

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. (Dickens, 1993, p. 3)

Charles Dickens was the first author to depict industrialization and modernization, and since Britain was the first country to attain industrialization and modernization, industrialization and modernization eventually transformed Britain into the greatest empire on earth, upon which the sun never sets.

Regardless of how gloriously beautiful the modern world of capitalism looks to some people, and despite how ignominiously evil it would seem to others, all must accept it. This is much alike what Karl Marx elucidated in the Preface to the first edition of *Das Kapital* (1867),

Intrinsically, it is not a question of the higher or lower degree of development of the social antagonisms that result from the natural laws of capitalist production. It is a question of these laws themselves, of these tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results. The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future. (Marx & Engles, 2009, p. 9)

The industrially less developed countries

suffer not only from the development of capitalist production, but also from the incompleteness of that development. Alongside the modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antiquated modes of production, with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms. (Marx & Engles, 2009, p. 9)

Hence,

One nation can and should learn from others. And even when a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement—and it is the ultimate aim of this work, to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society—it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth-pangs. (Marx & Engles, 2009, pp. 9-10)

Developments in countries of the modern-day world all bear testimonies to Marx's foresight, as no country can skip over industrialization and achieve modernization. The turmoil in the Eastern Bloc and the former Soviet Union also borne out socialism that vehemently rejected capitalism, planned economy that wholly renounced market economics, however rapid it may achieve industrialization, will inevitably run into bottlenecks in the modernization process.

The industrialization and modernization spearheaded by capitalism has been an inevitable process of social development for humankind. Therefore, that is why studies related to industrialization and modernization formed the centerpiece of social science research in our time. Just as Immanuel Wallerstein fittingly points out in his book, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, that the rise of the modern world is as much a central question for the 19th century as it is for today's social science research; people have endlessly argued about the defining characteristics of "modernity", and most of the major theoretical controversies all impinged on this specific contention (Wallerstein, 2013, p. 3). Evidently, western academics in different fields of enquiries ranging from social sciences such as economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, as well as history, philosophy

and literature have been posing and answering the same question from their own perspectives: Why it was the backward Europe and not the more advanced East Asia, more particularly China, that initially ushered the new era of industrialization and modernization? History as we know is thereafter portrayed as a history of the modernization process. Humanity henceforth embarked upon the pursuit of the common cause of modernization.

Although industrialization and modernization underpin the economic basis to the superstructure of the “European miracle” or capitalism; however, from the moment the western European countries and the capitalist system had commanded a dominant position, subservience to Europe and conformance to the capitalist system became the political premise for industrialization and modernization. Because Europe was the first to achieve modernization, moreover, since the West also purposely and actively exported its own brand of modernization throughout the rest of the world, and in addition, as spreading the western mode of modernization was intentionally kept in step with world conquest, consequently, this so-called “modernization” gradually evolved into “westernization”. But then again, as Marx alluded in the Afterword to the second edition of *Das Kapital*,

in so far as Political Economy remains within that horizon, in so far, i.e., as the capitalist regime is looked upon as the absolutely final form of social production, instead of as a passing historical phase of its evolution, Political Economy can remain a science only so long as the class struggle is latent or manifests itself only in isolated and sporadic phenomena. (Marx & Engles, 2009, p. 16)

And as for the case that

in France and in England the bourgeoisie had conquered political power. Thenceforth, the class struggle, practically as well as theoretically, took on more and more outspoken and threatening forms. It sounded the knell of scientific bourgeois economy. It was thenceforth no longer a question, whether this theorem or that was true, but whether it was useful to capital or harmful, expedient or inexpedient, politically dangerous or not. In place of disinterested enquirers, there were hired prize fighters; in place of genuine scientific research, the bad conscience and the evil intent of apologetic. (Marx & Engles, 2009, p. 17)

Putting it more succinctly, all those economists, political scientists, sociologists, historians were not in fact studying industrialization and modernization; they instinctively became apologists for capitalism.

Western Europe was the cradle of industrialization; hence it also became a paradigm for other countries of the world. In order to help the “backward” countries to learn from the “advanced” countries, academic research has always focused on the historical experience of western modernization. Consequently the institutional frameworks that were created during the process of western modernization, including private ownership of the factors of production in economics, resource allocation through the market system, free trade and exchange, democracy, freedom, the rule of law, and individual rights in the political and cultural sense, are all prejudged to be of “iron necessity” that all countries must adhere to and comply with. From the starting point of the western historical experience of modernization, there would be no such thing as “every road leads to Rome”; only the path taken by the West to modernization is the path for success, and the western bourgeois value system is now the utmost common “Universal Value” for humanity.

The Chinese Miracle

It has been over two centuries since Britain ushered in the era of industrialization and modernization. The British Empire is long past its days of glory as “the empire on which the sun never sets”, and the “European

miracle” is increasingly looking like “European fossil”. Just as fittingly exclaimed by Eric Jones in the Preface to the third edition of his book titled *The European Miracle*:

They know very well how they lived, but they still crave knowing what makes things tick. They are eagerly inquisitive about the origin of the factory system, and their being spellbound by the industrial feats in the field of engineering ...are all but mere infatuations with things bygone. (Jones, 2015, Preface)

Quite plainly, the decline of old world Europe is far from anything new, as the Europeans have even become aware of their own decline since the end of WW-I. The point at issue is, the “American miracle” that superseded and replaced the “European miracle” now also seems to fade in glory, and a “Chinese miracle” is underway, ready to substitute for the “western miracle”.

Professor Justin Yifu Lin of the National School of Development at Peking University and Cai Fang, Li Zhou of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) describe their research using data from the World Bank’s “Global Development Report (1997)” in their book titled *The China Miracle: Development Strategy and Economic Reform*. They find that during the period from 1980 to 1995, China’s total GDP and per capita GDP respectively recorded annual growth rates of 11.1% and 8.2%, outpacing the world economy by a long stretch. On a year-on-year basis, annual growth of per capita GDP was 6.5 percentage points higher than world average, 7.3 percentage points above developed countries, and 4.8 percentage points higher than developing countries. Year-on-year comparisons to Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, and Indonesia gave between 1.5 to 3.5 percentage points higher figures (Lin, Cai, & Li, 1999, p. 4). Not to forget that was a time when the West was exuberantly celebrating the fall of the Eastern Bloc and collapse of the former Soviet Union, and “end of history” (Fukuyama, 2006) as few people would pay much attention to a “straggler” like China, if anything, only foretelling of “the coming collapse of China” was echoed (Chang, 2001). The two authors who propounded “end of history” and “the coming collapse of china” achieved instant fame as a result; and even to this day, they are still enjoying the highest rewards in Stanford University—the Chinese people cannot help but beget a sense of self-assurance for their own attainments in social science. The moment when the western academia really starts to get serious about studying China would only come after the dawn of the new millennium, especially after China’s accession to the WTO. Although most observers would still believe China’s economic and political institutions will accelerate “collapse” as a result of “international integration”, but unfortunately for them, China’s economic growth in itself is already starting to bite back at western arrogance. After a decade basking in the superiority complex of “China collapse”, rumbling thunders of “China Rising” (Kang, 2007) and “The Chinese Century” (Shenkar, 2004) are rolling in over the horizon. Nonetheless, such viewpoints are by and large only more often heard amongst the “alarmist” media whilst they tend to fit in with the groups of much less influential “heretics” in academic circles, and that such “tellers of bad fortunes” would never be granted the same reward as proponents of “end of history” and “China collapse”.

The “Chinese miracle” only really came under the spotlight in American academia after the 2008 global financial crisis that erupted in America. The best known example of which is *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydideces’s Trap* (Allison, 2017, pp. 6-7) by Graham Allison, “founding dean” of the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. This book is highly critical of the American academia for underrating the influence of China. Professor Allison says when he presents his “national security” lectures he would always ask his students to start with comparisons of China and America: In 1980, China’s GDP was a tiny 7% of American GDP, which surged to 61% by 2015; China’s total import was a trifle 8% of

American import in 1980, which reached 73% in 2015; total Chinese export was merely 8% of American export in 1980, which reached 151% in 2015; Chinese forex reserves in 1980 was just 16% of US forex reserves, which ballooned to 3,140% of equivalent US figure in 2015. Especially in the years after 2008, China’s biennial economic growth has even been bigger than the economic aggregate of India. Even during the “slowest growth” year of 2015, China’s economy was still creating one Greece every 16 weeks and one Israel every 25 weeks. America’s fastest economic growth occurred during the period 1860-1913, even then it only averaged 4% per annum; in contrast, the pace of China’s average annual economic growth since 1980 has been running at up to 10%; the Chinese economy is thus doubling in size every seven years. He warns that, at present, China’s productivity is still only a quarter of that for America; if Chinese productivity was to raise to half of America’s level, it would mean a Chinese economy double in size of the US; if Chinese productivity draws neck to neck with America, the total size of the Chinese economy will be four times the US economy. He holds the view that, only the use of purchase price parity measure is the best tool for weighing up national economic strength, insomuch as it reveals that China has already exceeded America when measured by PPP; and by 2024, China will have surpassed America, even if the numbers are calculated using dollar exchange rate. Professor Allison is in effect propounding before us a far more unusual rarity than that of the “European miracle” and “American miracle”, i.e., the “Chinese miracle”. But of course, as an academic leader, he could never bestow so beautifying a moniker as “miracle” on the “adversary” of his country, and only the admonishment of “destined for war” is what he wants to be heard by his “countrymen” and “adversary” alike.

Professor Allison broaches the question to himself: What does China want? Putting it in one sentence, it is “Make China Great Again” (Allison, 2017, p. 107). It actually does ring the bell for the Chinese folks when they hear Donald Trump uttering the slogan in 2016: “Make America Great Again”. Four years later, Trump changed this to “Keep America Great!” He seems to have accomplished the goal of “Make America Great Again”; what is left now is just to maintain America’s greatness. This will of course fool no American voter, as some black people even think that “America was never great”. When Biden is elected on the platform of “Build Back Better”, its actual connotation is still “Make America Great Again”. “National revival” is in reality a common ambition for leaders of the major countries in the modern era, for this is even stronger rallying call for the people than the goals of “modernization”, “democracy”, and “freedom”. Yet, all the ancient civilizations or other latter-day modern powers of the world have eventually met their demise. Only China is the sole living example in the world that had experienced rise and fall and it is now once again heralding the bright prospect of great national rejuvenation. If in the years before the dawn of the 21st century it was necessary for countries of the world to study the “European miracle” and the “American miracle” in order to explore the path to modernization, then in today’s world, perhaps the rest of the whole should be looking at the phenomenon of the “Chinese miracle” in order to plot a course for accomplishing national revival.

Professor Justin Yifu Lin of Peking University once pointed out that there has never been a single instance in the history of human civilization of the passage from rise to fall, and then undergoing transition from decline to ascendancy. Therefore, that is why in today’s world of sociological theories, only the expositions for rise to fall or decline to ascendancy can be found. How to explain the miracle of the Chinese civilization’s passage from rise to fall followed by the transition from decline to ascendancy will be a most challenging subject matter of sociological research in the new century. The study of this miracle of the Chinese civilization will not only be significant to China, but it will be equally important for other countries in the world. For this reason, the new

century will be a century for Chinese economists, as much a century for Chinese sociologists (Lin, 2012, pp. 177-178).

From Globalization to Localization

In 2018, in celebration of its 60th founding anniversary, the Fairbank Center for China Studies at Harvard University published a collection of essays by 36 authors titled *The China Questions—Critical Insights Into a Rising Power*. As if echoing the words of Bertrand Russell a hundred years ago, Michael Szonyi, then Director at the Fairbank Center, wrote in the Introduction:

China matters, and therefore that understanding China matters. In a certain obvious sense, China has always matter and always will. What happens to a fifth of the planet’s population is important. But toady China matters not only to the Chinese people themselves but also to Americans and to the entire world in some new, unexpected, and interesting ways—and not only because of China’s large and growing role in the world economy. Of the many pressing problems facing our world—from climate change to economic growth to maritime security to counterterrorism—none can be solved or even addressed without China’s effective participation... Another new and mostly unexpected way in which China matters is that, for better or worse, Chinese policies increasingly have an impact beyond China’s borders. ...China is also playing a new role in the global marketplace of ideas. (Rudoph & Szonyi, 2018, p. 3)

As he puts it in a nutshell, *The China Question* will provide certain key information from a general perspective on China’s past, present, and future; key information relating to China’s past is historically important, key information dealing with to China’s present is high complex, and key information about China’s future is a very tough challenge (Rudoph & Szonyi, 2018, p. 3). What are China’s goals? What is China going to be (Li, 2016)? What is the future China like (Li, 2020)? These are really the most critical questions in philosophy and social sciences. Up to now China as a country with the most enduring historical heritage is not passively accepting the “globalization” pushed by western capitalist countries; it is instead integrating itself into the “globalization” process through “sinicization of Marxism” and “Reform and Opening”, in so doing it must inevitably transform the “globalization” dominated by western capitalist countries.

“When China Rules the World”

China was once a self-enclosed and decaying feudal empire. Western imperialist invaders blasted open China’s doors with guns and warships herding China into the ocean of capitalist globalization. Today, China has become the second biggest economy in the world and will in the near future become the biggest. It has become or will soon become the world’s biggest production and consumption country, the biggest importer and exporter, and the biggest source of investment. Now what worries the West the most is that, along with the ascendancy of China’s influence in economics, military, science and technology, education, and the cultural spheres, China will replace the West as the dominant force in global affairs. In his book *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, British author Martin Jacques alludes to

The age of the West is not only symbolized by the West’s dominant positions in economics and military spheres, it is defined by the West’s dominance in almost all the areas spanning culture and ideology to science and technology, art painting and language, to sport and medicine; western supremacy means everything connected with the West comes with glory and sways absent in other civilizations. (Jacques, 2009, pp. 142-143)

Westerners have a deep-seated superiority complex, such psychological superiority arises as a result of the general prevalence of Western economics, politics, ideology, and moral ethics...and the West tends to think of itself as universal, the absolute role-model and paradigm that everybody must follow...China always think of itself as universal, the centre of

the world, and for thousands of years regarded China constituted the entire world...the result of Chinese modernization quickly de-centricizes and de-deferences the West’s commanding position...and this is the profound significance of China’s ascendancy. (Jacques, 2009, pp. 144-145)

Obviously, this is a viewpoint that strikes hardest at a raw nerve of the West. The author of this book sold 250,000 copies through his personal website and the volume was translated into 11 different languages (Jacques, 2019).

It is well-known that Martin Jacques is no representative figure of western-centric ideology; quite the contrary, he is rather critical of western-centrism. He says:

The problem inherent with wholly or largely applying the Western narrative context to explain or to weigh up China is that it completely overlooks the uniqueness of China, i.e., the things that made China as we know it... as China grows stronger whilst retaining its uniqueness, however unwilling the West may be, it must face up to the very nature and significance of this uniqueness. Understanding China will be one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. (Jacques, 2009, pp. 416-417)

Evidently, Martin Jacques’ utterance will not relax the western nerves to the slightest extent, but rather, it even adds to the West’s apprehension that due to the emergence of China, everything it once “possessed entirely” are now suddenly becoming incomplete and which may even be gradually going the way of being “dispossessed entirely”.

“Han-Centrism”

As elucidated in Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto*,

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery, with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians’ intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image. The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West. (Marx & Engles, 2009, pp. 35-36)

All that being repudiated by Marx and Engels here are in fact venerated by many in the West as western glories!

The Chinese people would never forget how western powers blasted open China’s door with their gunboat policy laying to ruins the Old Summer Palace of Beijing and the Great Wall, any more than they could ever put up with having the east made dependent on the West. However, from the perspective of the West, the question now is: Would there be a Chinese dominated “globalization”? Will a situation arise with “the West made dependent on the east”? In a book titled *How China Sees the World*, the two authors from the College of St. Benedict and Saint John’s University and Cambridge University express a similar view. They think that in contemporary international politics, there is no issue that is more important than “how China sees the world”, and if China really becomes a globally dominant power, it would formulate international policies according to a “Han-centric” doctrine, with which the world will be obliged to adapt to Chinese values, as the West will no longer be able to peddle its own value system (Friend & Bradley, 2018, p. 8). This kind of opinion is what

normally likened to be the so-called “winner takes all” or “zero-sum game” viewpoint; for it deems the rise of China will inevitably lead to the decline of the West, and thus passing the scepter of world rule from the hands of the West into Chinese hands.

There are many people opposing globalization today. Yet, China is the strongest proponent of globalization. But this quite possibly amplifies the West’s fear of China. The West knows full well the intended outcome of globalization was to have “the East made dependent on the West”. When they can no longer dominate the globalization process, they turn their backs to globalization, and especially to globalization embraced by China.

“China Restructuring the World”

The contrary viewpoint to “winner takes all” or “zero-sum game” is “win-win” and “positive-sum game”, which asserts that the rise of China does not mean decline of the West, as China and the West can both reap mutual benefits and win-win results with shared development. The book *Sinicization and the Rise of China: Civilization Processes Beyond East and West* edited by Peter J. Katzenstein, professor of international political economy at Cornell University, suggests sinicization is the fundamental driving force for the China’s ascendancy, except that sinicization is not a linear movement radiating outward from the centre of the Chinese civilization; it is instead a non-linear, all-embracing, two-way interaction accompanying the ebb and flow of the powers of states, nations, and the relative civilizational appeals of empires; hence, it includes re-sinicization and perhaps even de-sinicization. Katzenstein thinks sinicization is effectively a “civilizational” process, for it transcends the simplistic notion of China vs. the barbarians, and in the present day context, it also transcends the adversarial East-West standoff. Therefore, he is of the view that, the global impact stemming from the rise of China will not and could not hark back to the historical Sino-foreign relation, or that it could completely disrupt the existing order in international relations; but rather, it is a reconstitution encapsulated with new and old elements for international relations (Katzenstein, 2012, p. 8). On Mar. 27, 2014, President Xi Jinping articulated in a speech delivered at the UNESCO headquarters that Buddhism originated in ancient India. But after it was brought to China, the religion went through an extended period of integrated development with the indigenous Confucianism and Taoism, and finally became Buddhism with Chinese features. The Chinese people enriched Buddhism and developed some special Buddhist thoughts in the light of Chinese culture, and helped it spread from China to Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and beyond. Over the last 2,000 years religions such as Buddhism, Islam and Christianity have been introduced into China, nurturing the country’s music, painting, and literature. China’s freehand oil painting, for instance, is an innovative combination of its own traditional painting and western oil painting, and the works by Xu Beihong and other master painters have been widely acclaimed. China’s Four Great Inventions—papermaking, gunpowder, printing, and compass, brought drastic changes to the whole world, including the European Renaissance. Its philosophy, literature, medicine, silk, porcelain, and tea have been shared by the West and become part of its people’s life (Xi, 2018). These words may be considered as a most impeccable exposition on the notions of “sinicization” and “globalization”.

Katzenstein’s view may be regarded as comparatively more consistent with what actually happened in China. Leaving aside the cultural exchange and interaction between the agrarian civilization of ancient China and the surrounding nomadic civilization, or those between the agrarian civilization of ancient China and other maritime civilizations, the New Democratic Revolution was in fact a process of sinicization of Marxism, which also featured the de-sinicization process of anti-feudalism. China’s Reform and Opening also effectively

encapsulated a process of sinicization of the attainments of capitalist civilization, and socialism with Chinese characteristics hence also transcended the fierce ideological struggle between capitalism and socialism of the Cold War era. However, this will not make the West feel any slightest better, because the west simply could never accept “Sinicization”, even if it was “Sinicization” after “westernization”.

For the future of globalization, Sinicization or westernization is the question, asked in the Hamlet’s way, so for both the West and East, the South and the North; for all the world, the answer can be and should be localization, which implies to learn from others to rejuvenate themselves.

From Universality to Diversity

Distinguished American think-tank the Rand Corporation published a research report titled *China’s Grand Strategy: Trends, Trajectories, and Long-Term Competition* in 2020. This report thinks China’s grand strategy may best be described as “national resurgence” with the centerpiece of building a well governed, socially stable, economically prosperous, technologically advanced, and militarily powerful China by 2050. The report attempts to address the most anxious questions of the American people arising from this: What exactly will the China of 2050 look like? What will Sino-American relation be like at that time (Scobell et al., 2020)? What it really means for China to pursue the strategic goal of “national resurgence”, and how to live with a “resurgent” China? These are burning questions the West and even the rest of the world eagerly want to clarify. Obviously, when the western countries are treating China as a “problem” to be “resolved”, then it could never be just an issue for the West; it will also an issue for China that the latter would have no other choice but to squarely confront it.

“Dominating Civilization”

Professor Ian Morris of the Classics Faculty, Stanford Archaeology Center makes plain that the first question he wants to address in his book titled *Why the West Rules—for Now: The Patterns of History, and What they Reveal About the Future* is why the West rules the world in our time. He is of the view that the reason this question attracts attention is because of a second question, namely, whether this state of affairs could go on, for how long, and in what form (Morris, 2014). Although Professor Mark Mazower of Columbia University readily admits in his book titled *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present* that the world bears all the hallmarks of poly-centrism and multipolarization and arrives at the conclusion that the notion of ruling the world is yesterday’s dream, he also acknowledges he focuses his attention on Europe and America because they were the ones who initially formulated or propounded those notions of far-reaching significance on international institutional systems, and that his goal is to provide reference answers helping people to understand what is governance rule, who could bring welfare and well-being for the civic society and so forth (Mazower, 2015, p. XVIII). That is effectively an exposition of the thinking of a transition from directly maintaining military, economic, and political dominance to seeking an indirect form of control on ideas; the cornerstone for this is the advocacy of “the individual is the driving force for development in the world” hence attaining the objective of championing the cause of “capitalist civilization” (Mazower, 2015, p. 344). Ian Morris reflects whilst alluding to the “rule” of the West that, for over a century, it was the westerners that marched their armies into Asia and not the other way round. Governments in East Asia were agonizing over the theories of western capitalism and communism, but no western government would ever contemplate governing society by Confucianism or Taoism. Setting this in stark contrast is that oriental people can often overcome the

language barrier by communicating in English, but very few Europeans would communicate in Chinese or Japanese (Morris, 2014, p. XVII). In other words, even when the West is not directly marching their armies into Asia, they still expect to carry on western “rule” by providing countries of the world with the “ism” for governing their countries, and the “language” as means of communication between individuals.

It then follows that research studies on the origin of industrialization and the modern world are not “mere infatuations with things bygone”; it is more about providing an ideological and academic narrative for western world rule. Western politicians and academics usually divide the hitherto human history into the three stages of pre-industrialization and traditional society, industrialization and modern society, and post-industrialization and post-modern society. The hidden political and academic ambition in this is that the West shall not only assume a leadership role steering countries of the world on the path to industrialization and modernization, the West shall also continue to take helm in the post-industrialization and post-modernization new era, and countries of the world must in any event dance to the steps of the advanced capitalist West if they were to attain progress and development. To put it in another way, research studies into the beginning of industrialization and modernization in Europe and its culmination at the apex of achievement in America effectively encapsulates the aim of demonstrative proof of the value system of capitalist ideology and Western liberalism, as much as it is an concrete undertaking to cement and bolster the ruling position of the West in political and cultural spheres. Couched on such an academic effigy, the so-called “universal value” that has been pushed by over two hundred years of propaganda is now the mainstay political and cultural product peddled to the rest of the world by the West. “Modernization theory” is first and foremost a theory for the West to achieve modernization; it is as much a theory for the undeveloped countries to learn to follow the footsteps of the West. Research into the issues of “modernization” in those western countries that have already accomplished their missions of modernization is ultimately exploration by the western academia to seek out new means for world rule, that is to say, the “soft power” for world dominance fashioned by leveraging the western administrative management framework systems, ideological and cultural appeals, as well as other draw cards (Nye Jr., 2005, pp. 107-108).

Today, the West not only has to explicate the “European miracle” and “modernization”; it is also obliged to explain the future with “western decline” and about “modernity”. In his book titled *Mass Flourishing: How Grassroots Innovation Created Jobs, Challenge, and Change*, Nobel Economics laureate Edmund S. Phelps makes an effort at describing the “European miracle” whilst tries to explain how the West went into decline and how to once again achieve resurgence. His answer is that since institutional and value systems enabled the West to be the first to usher modern economics, in order to ensure the West can accomplish the feat of resurgence, it is necessary to revive the capitalist institutional systems and values (Phelps, 2013, p. 391). The biggest vengeance in intellectual circle is the “rule” that dominates the process of human civilization; even if it is being continuously eroded on the “economic basis”, it still yearns to command the “height” of the “ideological superstructure”. All those narratives alluding to “end of history” or the “free world”, “beacon of civilization”, etc., are all about wrestling cultural and ideological “rule” or “dominance”. Yet, reality bites. An “irony of reality” has gradually taken root in western societies, and it even provoked certain forms of “clash of civilizations” in the international arena.

“Clash of Civilizations”

China of toady is not only a global factory; it is also a force to reckon with in the world’s marketplace. The total value of China’s merchandise import and export, total inbound and outbound investment, total outbound

tourism, as well as the openness of the country’s domestic consumption market have not only far surpassed the former Eastern Bloc top power of USSR; other assiduous students of the West in the names of Japan, South Korea, and Singapore have also been left in the wake. There is not much fundamental difference in the lifestyle of the Chinese people today as compared to people living in the advanced capitalist western countries. The West is no longer consumed by fear of China’s “communism” or “socialism”, as when the US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo tried to use the pretext of “communism” or “socialism” to incite western countries into a suppression campaign against China he did not receive much of a response.

Today’s younger generation of the West had neither any inkling of the shortcomings of the Soviet model of socialism, nor an inherent aversion to China as a communist-led socialist country. On the contrary, they generally tend to have a strong impression of China’s rapid development under the leadership of the communist party. Many people do in fact marvel at the Chinese communist party’s competence in governance and public administration. Anyone who had ever been to China would be in a best position to know the socialist China is nothing to be feared. For the American people, and even people of the European countries, they most certainly would not indulge in hatred of China just because some politician allegedly contends that China is a communist-led socialist country. But nonetheless, stressing the fundamental differences between Chinese culture and western culture, especially hyping up divergence of East-West values, as for example, China is a secular country; these may well make people in the West very alarmed about China. This situation is not unlike the Chinese folks generally would not have any resentment toward America just because it is a capitalist country; on the contrary, most young people are rather keen to visit these advanced capitalist countries. Then again, if westerners were to try converting them into western religion, belittling the Chinese folks’ attachment to their families, then the Chinese people would most likely feel pretty disgusted. Nowadays even in America, the ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism is no longer as contentious as in the past. Bernie Sanders entered into the race for US presidency waving a banner of “socialism”, and he even garnered rather sizeable following at some point.

As a point of fact, ever since the “tumultuous changes in the Eastern Bloc”, most people in the West are no longer paying much attention to “ideological” issues. This is the circumstantial basis why the “end of history” proposition can capture such a huge market. Under this context, the most provocative political propaganda that can rattle the nerve for people in the West is actually not about “ideological” differences; it is the so-called “clash of civilizations”. The late Professor Samuel Huntington once said: “After the Cold War ended, people’s identity and the symbolisms of such identity started to undergo drastic changes, as the world begins to realign itself along civilization boundaries” (Huntington, 1996, p. 19);

In this new world, regional politics tantamount to nationalist politics, global politics becomes the politics of civilizations, and superpower rivalry has given way to clash of civilizations...In this new world, the most commonplace, most important, or most dangerous conflicts are no longer latent in the different social strata, the rich and poor, or other groups defined by economic interests, but rather, these are now entrenched amongst people belonging to different civilization categories or cultural models. (Huntington, 1996, p. 28)

Of course civilizations do not inevitably come into conflict. Professor Huntington did not say clash of civilizations is inevitable; on the contrary, his writing has a question after “clash of civilizations”.

The issue is not about whether civilizations will inevitably clash; the issue is all about whether “clash of civilizations” can be expediently incited. Professor Huntington merely astutely pointed out the fact that “clash of civilizations” is one of the “hot issues” for conflict to occur, warning the West to discard its western-centric

cultural premises, accept cultural diversity, and endeavor to avoid “clash of civilizations”. But regrettably, it is in the West that certain elements are now willfully fanning up or even constantly manufacturing “clash of civilizations”. On Jan. 7, 2015, the Paris head office of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* was attacked, resulting in 12 people being killed, five badly wounded; Oct. 27, 2018, shooting incident in a Jewish church in Pittsburgh, US, causing the death of 11 people and wounding 6 others; Mar. 15, 2019, two mosques in the city of Christchurch in New Zealand were attacked by gunmen, resulting in the killing of 50 people and 50 others wounded; Oct. 16, 2020, a French high school teacher was “beheaded” by a knife-wielding attacker by the school gate after showing a cartoon of Mohamed the Prophet to students in the classroom. All these horrific violent incidents were clearly first and foremost acts of terrorism, but their root causes had a casting shadow of “clash of civilizations”. If these are not handled properly, it may lead to widespread international conflagration. Over two decades after publication of Professor Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, western scholars now generally regard “clash of civilizations” as a most compelling academic idea.

Today’s American academia often discuss China’s value quest from a cultural perspective, or that they would eventually ascribe the East-West competition to clash of cultures and value systems. In *Sinicization and the Rise of China: Civilizational Processes Beyond East and West* by Peter J. Katzenstein (Ed.), a title page is dedicated to commemorate the late Professor Samuel Huntington. From China’s perspective, the issue is also not really about whether a clash between the civilizations of China and the West is or is not inevitable; the issue is that the West is constantly finding political expediency to inflame and manufacture “clash of civilizations”. For instance, Kiron Skinner, Director of Policy Planning at the US Department of State has been openly touting “clash of civilizations”; Michael Pompeo, for his part, called for the closure of all Confucian Institutes in the US; all these are examples of willfully inciting “clash of civilizations”. Criticisms of the theory for “clash of civilizations” will not resolve this problem to the slightest extent. People of the world must remain highly vigilant of the “clash of civilizations” issue while fully recognizing the gravity of this issue, hence joining actions against the acts and utterances that incite and manufacture “clash of civilizations”. Today’s American people are perhaps becoming extremely disillusioned by the bourgeoisie represented by Wall Street interests; however, this is in no way signifying the American people are increasingly approve of socialist China. Quite to the contrary, today’s American people are taking on increasingly negative views of China, and this is on the whole a direct consequence of the western propaganda pushing “clash of civilizations”.

“Community With Shared Destiny”

Just as the author of *The Clash of Civilizations* has pointed out,

What impart appeals to culture and ideology? When these are viewed as conquest and influence rooted on material gains, they are alluring. Soft power can become a form of power only if it is hinged on the basis of hard power. The growth of hard economic and military powers may bolster confidence and the sense of ego, as well as reinforcing the belief that one’s own culture or soft power is more superior by comparison to other nations, and hence greatly boosting the attraction of this culture or ideology to other people. A decline in economic and military powers would engender self-doubt, identity crisis, which would elicit the undertaking to seek out the secrets of economic and military success from other cultures. (Huntington, 1996, pp. 88-89)

Chinese people are well aware of the significance of the pursuit of development being the “hard truth” and the means to bolstering cultural “soft power” (Li, 2009); therefore, the whole nation has been committed to the

overriding endeavor with “dedication for social reconstruction, wholehearted devotion to development” since the onset of Reform and Opening in 1978.

China is already the second biggest economy in the world. However, economically, it has not adhered to the privatization and free market blueprint laid out by the West; politically, it has not accepted the western brand of democracy, freedom, rule of law; and culturally, China is even less interested in the so-called “universal value” of the West. As Xi Jinping has pointed out: “The Chinese nation is a broadminded and tolerant people; over the course of a longstanding historical process, we always learn from other people’s forte, adding it to our own strength, this gave rise to our distinctive national characters” (Xi, 2019);

trailblazing socialism with Chinese characteristics has been a hard-earned accomplishment, it is epitomized by the achievement from over three decades of stupendous pragmatic endeavor in the name of Reform and Opening, and the outcome from a six-decade quest since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the climax of an enduring historical development journey for the Chinese nation over the past 170 years of the contemporary epoch, as much as it being an integral part of the Chinese nation’s 5,000-year cultural heritage that comes with profoundly deep historical significance as well as pervasive modern-day relevance. (Xi, 2013)

Ever since the dawn of the contemporary era, in order to accomplish the undertaking of great national resurgence, the Chinese people have been learning from the successful experience of socialist countries, and we have also learnt from the attainments of capitalist civilization. The most critical aspect in it all has been the integration of the successful experience of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc socialist countries, as well as positive elements of capitalism in Europe, America, Japan, Singapore, and other countries into a development blueprint attuned to the pragmatic circumstances for China’s revolutionary undertaking of reconstruction and reforms, thus giving rise to the theory, strategy, and institutional systems of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The “soft power” of the West is in reality hinged on the “hard power” framework of industrialization. Nowadays, those things that had long been held to be self-evidently nothing but the universal truth are steadily losing luster in governance effectiveness or simply fallen into self-contradiction. Taking to extremes with abusive use of the power and instruments of the US federal government to oppress Chinese companies like ZTE, Huawei, and TikTok, or the attempt to raise tariffs to blackmail China, or finding outrageous pretexts for closure and intrusion into Chinese consulate, or even inducing Canada to abduct senior Huawei executive Ms. Meng, or imposing visa restrictions or refusing visas for Chinese officials and students, etc., have all self-evidently exposed the hypocritical nature of capitalist liberal democracy in the eyes of the Chinese people and people of the world. The utterly bungling performance of the US during the novel coronavirus epidemic as well as the waves of public protests touched off by persecution of African-Americans had most dreadfully disgraced capitalist liberal democracy in the international arena, as its allure in the western world is also steadily slipping away.

On Jan. 18, 2017, in an address delivered at the UN Headquarters in Geneva, President Xi Jinping said, “What has happened to the world and how should we respond? The world is reflecting on these questions”, “and China stand for building a community of shared future for mankind and achieving inclusive and win-win development” (Xi, 2017, pp. 588-590). The essential basis for China’s rise is peaceful development. Just as Lee Kuan Yew once said, “The approach by China is consistent with that shown in the TV documentary Rise of the Great Nations. ...Germany and Japan’s mistakes were they challenged the established order. The Chinese are no fools, they have avoided this mistake” (Allison, 2013, p. 7). China’s rise has become a problem in eyes of

the western powers, which is mainly because the latter are worried that Chinese ascendancy will mean erosion of the West's economic, political, and cultural sways, as well as erosion of its dominance in the international arena. From the perspective of the West, the China issue is about responding to the power imbalance engendered by China's ascendancy; it is also a question about maintaining western supremacy. From China's perspective, the China issue is a question of maintaining peaceful coexistence with the West whilst ensuring its own development; it is as much a question about making contributions for world peace and development.

Conclusion

The social sciences of the West spanning the fields of economics, political economy, and sociology are not only failing to explicate China's hitherto rapid economic development, lasting social stability, and good law and order; nor could they explicate, much less to resolve, the internal economic decline, political struggles, and social conflicts in western societies; and the world is sorely in need of innovation in philosophical sociology. The research studies into the China issue which is a cutting-edge field in today's philosophical sociology that is most likely to witness a "scientific revolution".

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